The Triangle of Experience

The transformative experience of moment by moment tracking!

Core Affect (AEDP)

Core affects include grief, anger, disgust, fear, joy and surprise. They are genuine (primary) and serve a purpose in navigating life's challenges.

Each bodily rooted emotion has “a pulse towards completion” and has a corresponding **adaptive action tendency (know what is needed, what to do)**.

Grief ⇒ acceptance Sadness ⇒ comfort, belonging Anger ⇒ assertion

By defending against core affect we can remain stuck in overwhelm, avoidance and collapse.

Undoing the aloneness in the face of overwhelming affect. Using dyadic regulation in secure attachment relationship to move through emotion that was once stuck or overwhelming.

Core emotion will rise, reach a peak and then dissipate. We can do this together with client’s consent. Often the fear of connecting with core affect is that it will last forever or it will be too much to bear (“child consciousness”).



Default vs. Primary Emotion



Primary Emotion

Consistent with current situation
Often not familiar
Need organically emerges
Aliveness and social engagement
Heart Connection
Authentic/spontaneous expression of inner experience
Take us into unchartered territory
Connection to self and other

Default Emotion

Familiar
Manipulative- cry to diffuse anger in other.
Pulling from the past; not appropriate with current situation
Feeling stuck in the work
Collapse or tension/overwhelm
Repetitive, habitual, automatic

Defenses (just a sampling)



Joking
Sarcasm
Smiling
Laughing
Vagueness
Changing the Subject
No eye contact
Eye Rolling
Mumbling
Constant apologizing
Not talking
Not Listening
Spacing Out
Tiredness
Criticizing
Perfectionism
Procrastination
Preoccupation
Irritability
Depression
Excessive caretaking
Negative thinking
Judging others
Judging ourselves
Prejudice
Racism
Grandiosity
Misogyny
Working too much
Numbness
Helplessness
Over-exercising
Over-eating
Under-eating
Being secretive
Cutting
Obsessions
Addictions
Suicidal ideation
Fantasy
Misguided aggression (angry at your partner when you're really angry at your boss)

Ways to bypass or melt defenses

Defenses are a way to shut down/avoid core affect. If we can welcome our clients' emotions, it can act as an antidote to shame and anxiety and the corresponding defenses!

Can we bypass or melt defenses to give our clients the opportunity to start to ride the emotion wave to completion?

First, build alliance and safety with client. This is not about "jackhammering" defenses. Assess window tolerance to regulate with less defenses.

What would be feeling right now if you weren't blaming your friend? Could you say that again without judging yourself?

What do you fear most when you think about grieving the loss of your brother? I would cry and never stop crying. So, you **have this idea (or belief)** that you would never stop crying?

Ways to bypass or melt defenses

Defenses are positively reframed as protectors and adaptive: A way to sustain the attachment relationship. “What a brilliant solution in that situation!” “You made yourself small when dad raged.” “You shut down your feelings and needs to be there for your mom.”

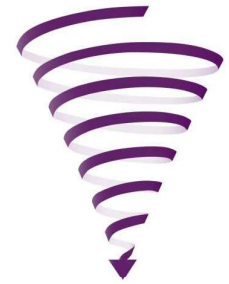
Explore the cost of holding onto defenses: Loneliness, burn out, emptiness, feeling stuck, anxiety, dimmed light.

Self-disclosure: Genuinely Moved or delighted. Softening can happen when therapist is genuinely vulnerable (AND IT IS SHARED).

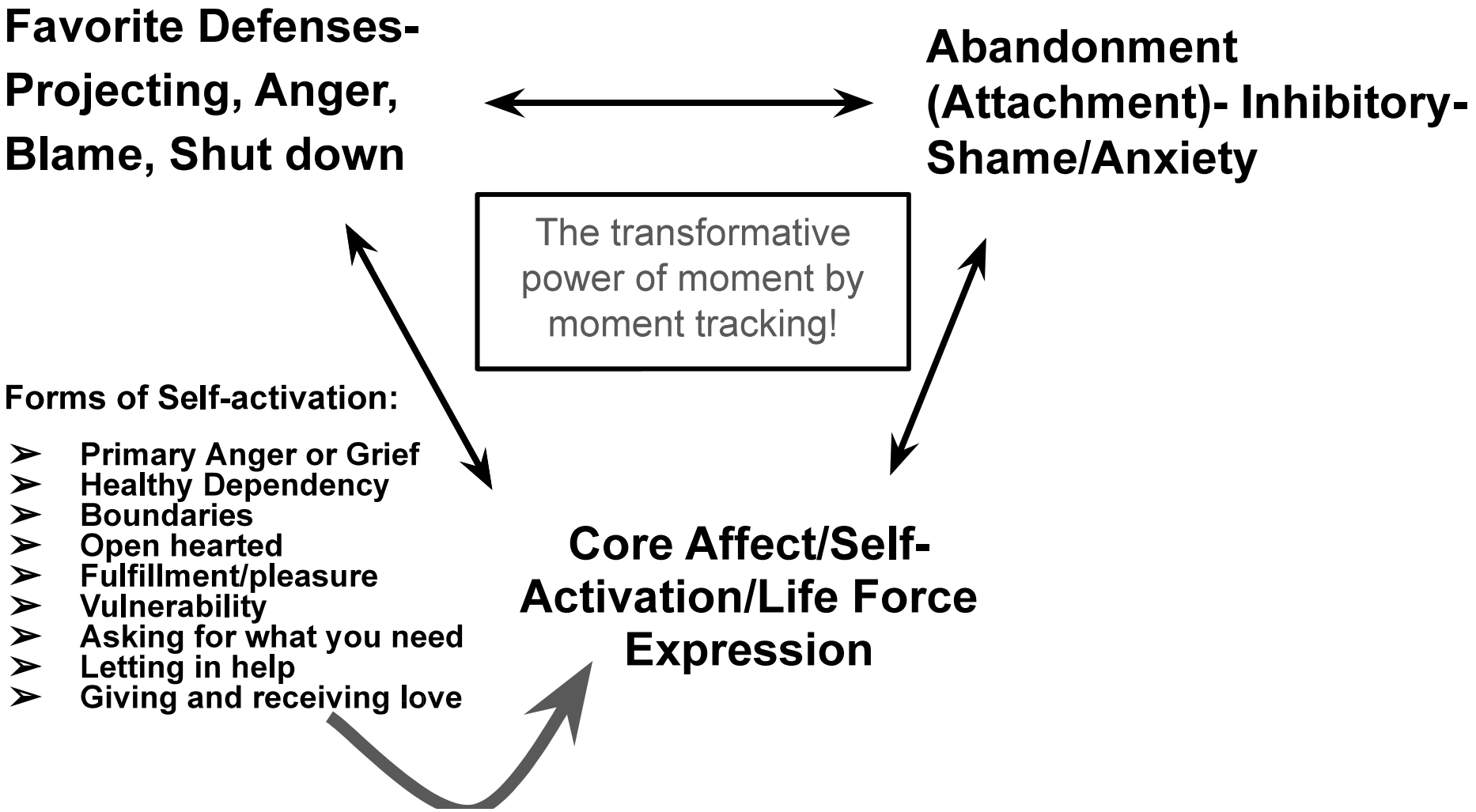
How might someone else feel in the same situation.

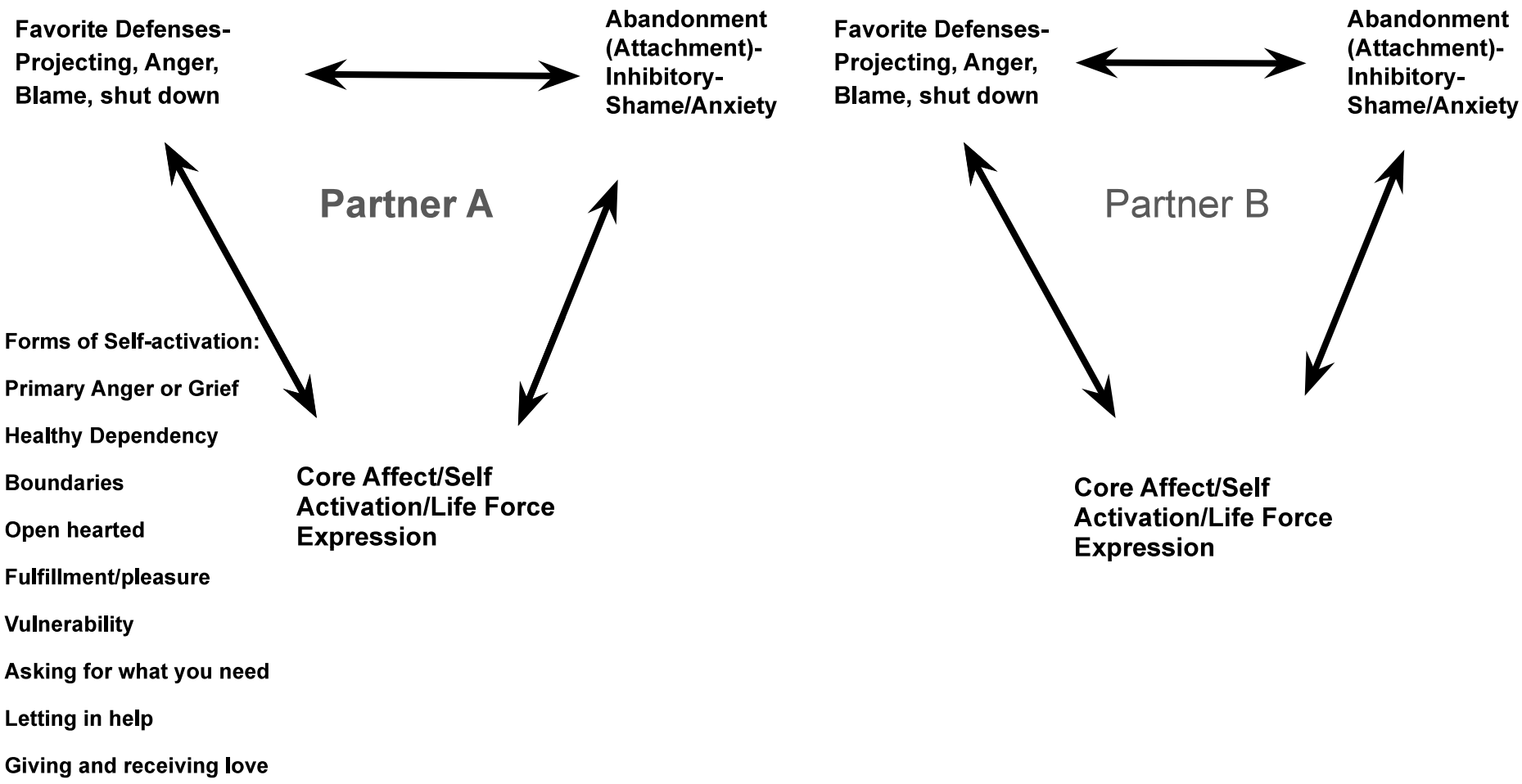
How client is living their life contrasts with their intention for therapy.

- Name core emotion
- Validate & Accept it.
- Sense in body.
- Reassure accompaniment (“We will do this together.”)
- Stay with sensation
- Metaprocess
- Use fantasy to satisfy impulse.



Virtuous Cycle


Favorite Defenses- Projecting, Anger, Blame, Shut down
Abandonment (Attachment)- Inhibitory- Shame/Anxiety
The transformative power of moment by moment tracking!
Forms of Self-activation:
➢ Primary Anger or Grief
➢ Healthy Dependency
➢ Boundaries
➢ Open hearted
➢ Fulfillment/pleasure
➢ Vulnerability
➢ Asking for what you need
➢ Letting in help
➢ Giving and receiving love
Core Affect/Self-Activation/Life Force Expression


Favorite Defenses-
Projecting, Anger,
Blame, shut down
Abandonment
(Attachment)-
Inhibitory-
Shame/Anxiety
Partner A
Forms of Self-activation:
Primary Anger or Grief
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Core Affect/Self
Activation/Life Force
Expression

Adaptive Survival Styles

Each survival style is named for a missing or compromised resource during that developmental stage. The child disconnected from important capacities to survive trauma and/or neglect- ADAPTIVE!

These styles are formed as a way of adapting to environmental failures and an attempt to maintain attachment. These styles persist into adulthood and express themselves moment by moment.

Reich/Lowen	**NARM**	**Compromised Capacity**
Schizoid	Connection	Be in touch with body/emotions and others.
Oral	Attunement	Attune to needs and take in nourishment.
Psychopathic	Trust	Health dependency, vulnerability
Masochistic	Autonomy	Appropriate boundaries; authentic expression.
Rigid	Love/Sexuality	Open heart and sexual expression

Connection Survival Style

I don’t belong I have chronic anxiety I often hate myself

Relationships are hard for me If I feel, I will die or fall apart

I don’t belong I value thinking over feeling

I experience a nameless dread Shame at existing

Difficulty tolerating intimacy Drawn to spiritual/astral worlds

Distance and withdrawal during conflict

Deep sense of loneliness

Connection Survival Style



Connection survival style develops in the earliest development stage (in utero to six months): Pre-verbal and pre-psychological.

When early life experience has been traumatic (neglect/abuse), the trauma lives on in the form of ongoing systemic high arousal states.

Baby is completely dependent on parent. Can feel like a death when neglected.

Not securely and warmly welcomed into their bodies and into this world when born: Traumatic birth, unwanted child, neglect/abuse, postpartum depression/anxiety, attachment trauma. Ask client about their birth story.

Know the cost of maintaining this survival style (anxiety, frozen, isolation) and also terrified to give it up (core dilemma).

The essence of trauma is disconnection...

So the real question is: “How did we get separated and how do we reconnect?”

(Gabor Maté)



Connection Survival Style Healing Process



Create safety to start process of reconnection
No agenda
Authentic, not gimmicky
Focus on the here and now
Don’t push quickly into the body
As important to work with fear of feeling as it is to get into a feeling itself.
Short, soft, simple
Monitor your pacing- Slower is faster
Normalize the rhythm of connection and disconnection.

Connection Survival Style Healing Process



"Respect the hell" out of their defenses
Use eyes and eye contact to track connection-disconnection
Allow them to be seen and understood often for first time
Titration/pendulation
How do you **experience** the words you are saying?
Over time, integrating healthy aggression

Titration/Pendulation
Somatic Experiencing
Helping clients reconnect with themselves



Build safety with client
Focus on a pleasant somatic feeling (warmth of blanket, feet on the floor)
Guide client to briefly touch on distressing somatic sensation (trauma fragment)
And then pendulate back to pleasant feeling.
Continue this process to build capacity to stay with difficult feeling without overwhelm or collapse.
Reassure accompaniment.
Slower is faster. Less is more.

Moving toward resolution

Establish contract: Connecting with self and other. Now explore what is getting in the way: “I want connection, but I am terrified of it.”

Start to experience other human beings (including therapist) as welcoming and not threatening.

Be present to contact and contact rupture on all levels of experience (somatic, affect, relational).

Important to titrate small doses of contact as increased aliveness/connection can feel threatening.

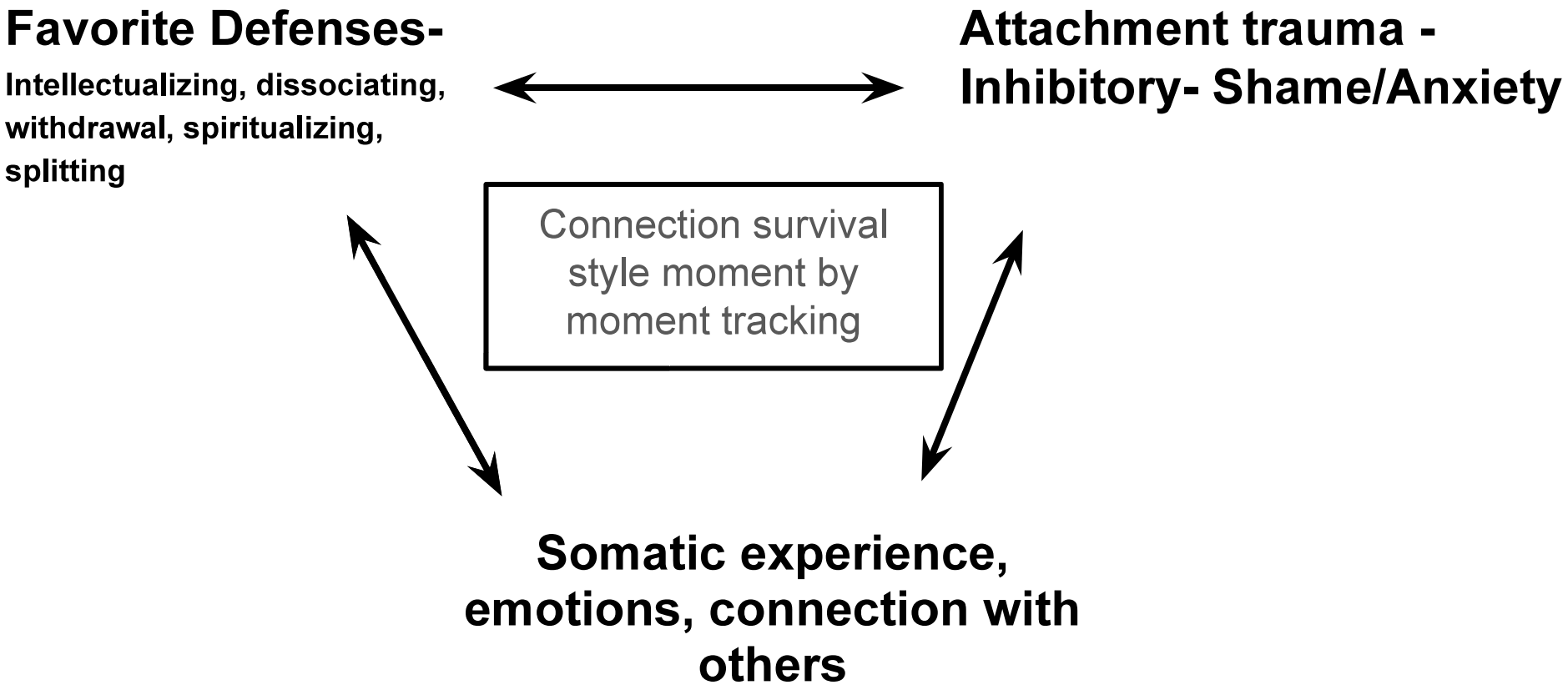
This can be a very slow process of inhabiting their bodies and connecting to their feelings; perhaps mention to client.

Reality: YOU SURVIVED!

This is a systemic response to very early trauma. Help normalize as a way of chipping away at shamed based identification.

Symptoms/Syndromes

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder
Dissociation (bearing the unbearable)
ADHD/ADD
Fibromyalgia
Panic Attacks
Chronic Fatigue
Chronic anxiety
Depression

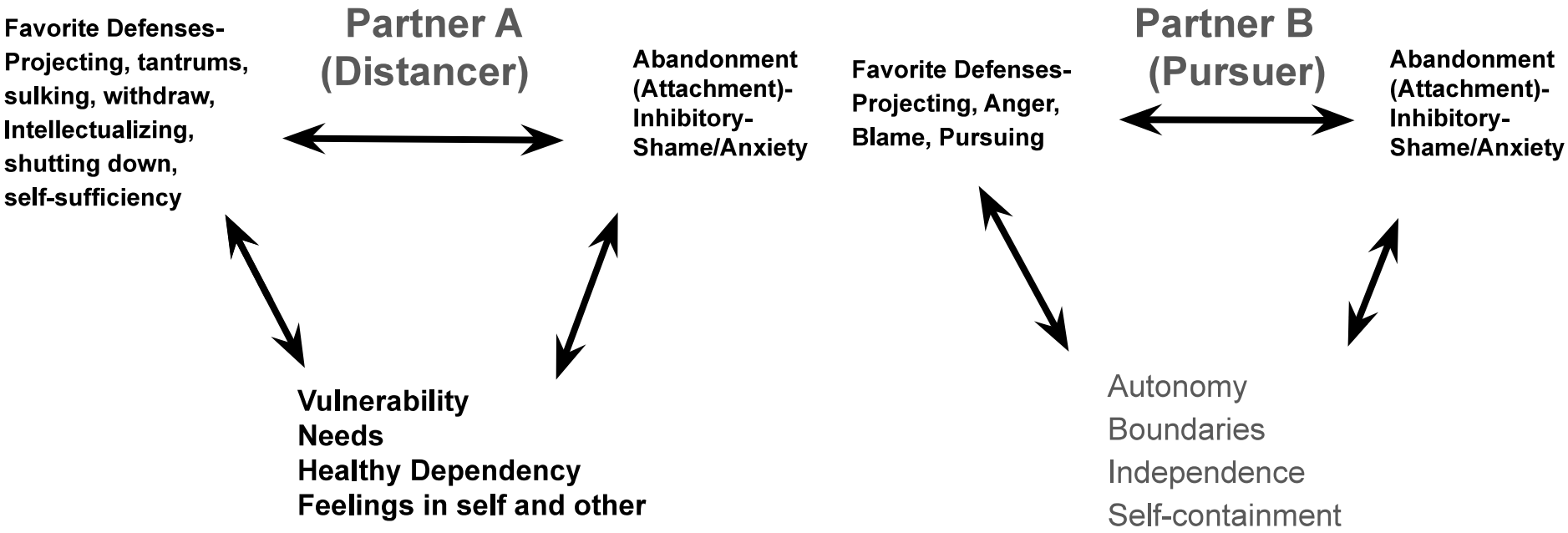

Favorite Defenses-
Intellectualizing, dissociating, withdrawal, spiritualizing, splitting
Attachment trauma - Inhibitory- Shame/Anxiety
Connection survival style moment by moment tracking
Somatic experience, emotions, connection with others

Connection Survival Style

"When there is early trauma, the ensuing biological dysregulation forms the shaky foundation upon which the psychological self is built."

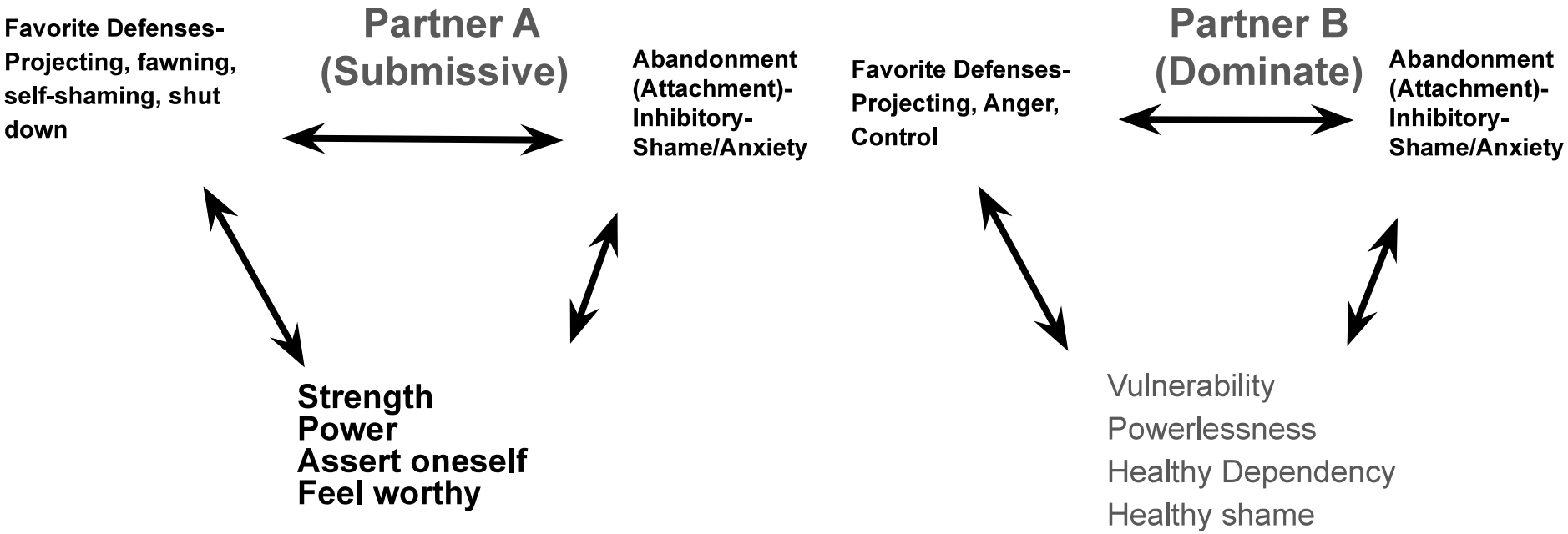
Dr. Laurence Heller, developer of NARM

The Dance of Pursuer/Distancer



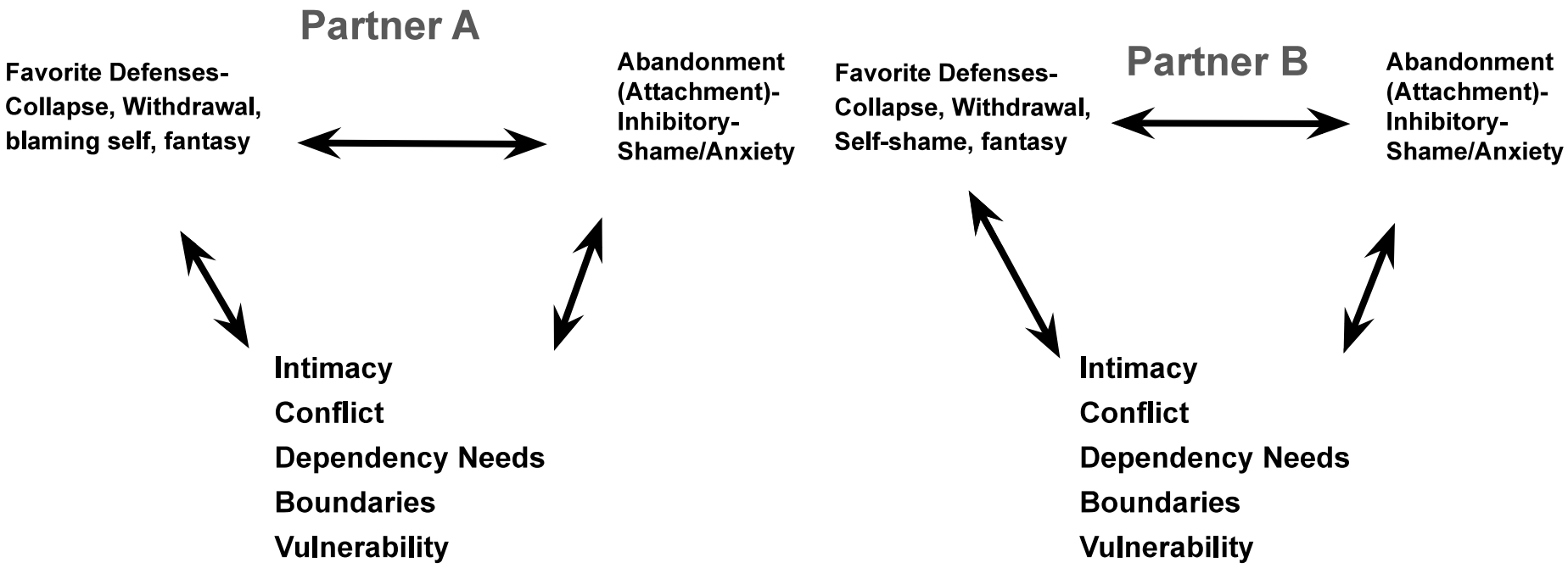
For distancer, dependency is seen as a flaw and to be avoided. The Pursuer equates autonomy with abandonment and intolerable anxiety. Pursuer holds anger and dependency for both partners.

The Dance of Dominate/Submissive



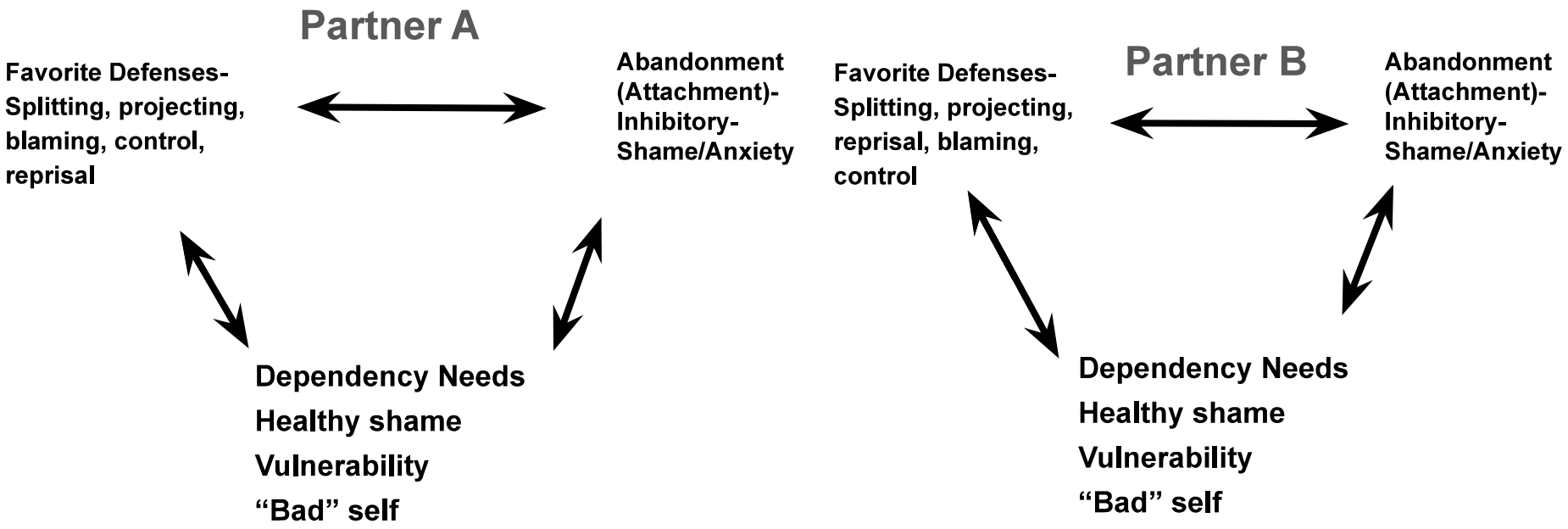
Both partners need to integrate the split internally and own their own strengths alongside their felt perceived weakness.

The Dance of Distance



Both partners use withdraw and cut-off to manage their intimacy anxiety because of low self-esteem (do I matter/am I worthy). Help both partners own their need for healthy dependency and their anger at the partner for not meeting their needs.

The Dance of Conflict



Both partners cannot hold shame so they split off and project the "bad" self onto the partner who is then experienced as rejecting, harsh and critical. Help partners own their shame, hurt, feeling of inadequacy and dependency needs and stop projecting. "Do you want to be married or be right?!"

Reflective Exercise

Do you feel comfortable in the interpersonal (vulnerable) space with your clients?

A core element in healing and transformation is dyadic regulation and secure relating.

Make it known that you are genuinely impacted by your client.

“How is it for you that I care?” “How was it to move through your grief with me?” “Wow! We did this to together. I am so proud and moved.”