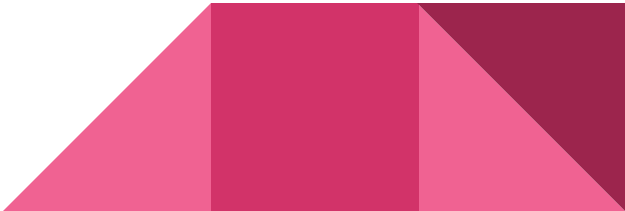


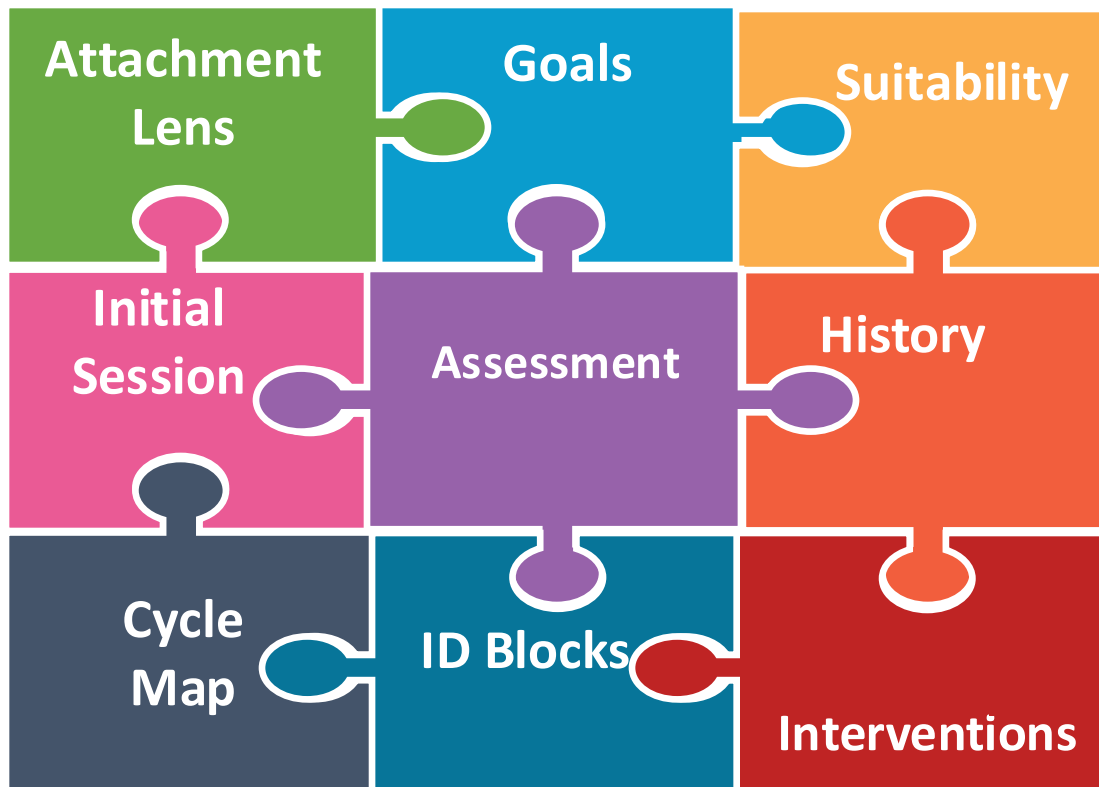
The top right corner of the slide features a decorative graphic composed of several overlapping triangles in various shades of blue, ranging from dark navy to light sky blue.

Attachment Focused Assessment in Couples Therapy

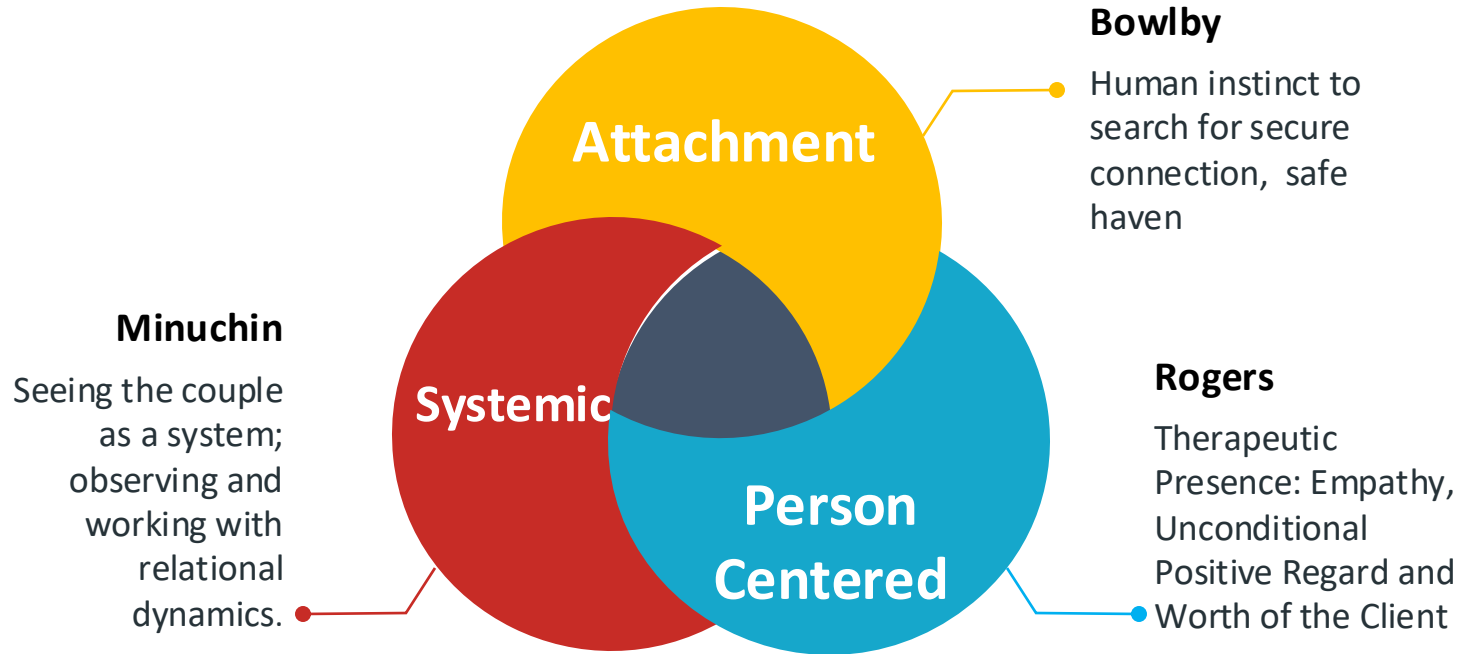
Objectives

- Differentiate between an attachment focus and other approaches.
 - Learn the goals of assessment in couples therapy
 - Identify the components of assessment
 - Identify key interventions during the assessment process
- 

Pieces of Assessment



“Attachment Lens”: Lens Trifecta



Warm, Compassionate



“Stuck”



Here's what's
happening.



What's happening
here?

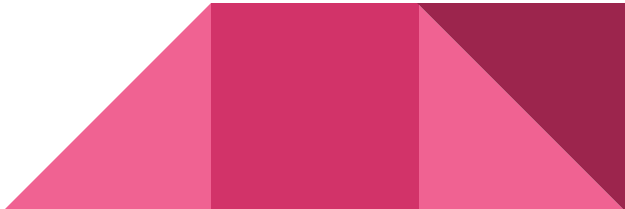


Attachment Lens

- Emotional states and behaviors = protective adaptations or relational strategies
- Therapeutic focus is on attachment concerns: internal and relational safety, trust, contact, and the obstacles that lie in the way
- Outcome fosters connection, emotional regulation, and security



Therapist Goals in Assessment

- Alliance with both partners - Heard, Held, and Seen
 - We have to make it safe
 - Assess the nature of the problem and the relationship, including suitability for couple therapy
 - Assess each partner's goals and agendas for therapy.
 - Are the goals feasible and compatible with each other and with the therapist's skills?
 - Therapeutic agreement between the couple and the therapist as to goals and how therapy will be conducted.
 - Agreement not always possible
- 

Contraindications for Couples Therapy

- Mixed agendas
- When there is ongoing abuse/violence in the relationship, when vulnerability puts a partner at risk of abuse
- When there is an active affair
- Where there is severe and untreated addictions or mental health concerns



First Session

- Who are they? What is their life like?
- What's bringing them to couples therapy at this time? What do they want to accomplish?
- What do they say are the problems in the relationship, and how does it go when they talk about problems?
- How do they cope with disconnection? (Look for addictions, affairs)
- What's the worst it gets between them? (screen for IPV)



First Session, cont.

- Strengths - Do they each see strengths in the relationship? What keeps them together?
- How's their sexual relationship? (Look for addictions)
- Abuse, Affairs, Addictions, Agendas, if not already outlined
- Start enactments. Notice how they respond to it.

Reflect on: How did each partner describe emotional experience? How does the couple generally interact in the session? How does dialogue in office evolve? What messages are conveyed by each partner's nonverbal responses?



Sessions 2-3: Individual Sessions

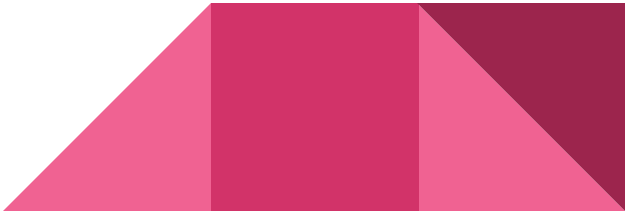
- Foster the alliance with each partner
- Observe and interact with each partner in a different context where partner is not present
 - What is it like to be in your skin in this relationship?
 - Check hypotheses that are difficult to explore with partner present, like commitment to the relationship, affairs, addictions, contraindications, how they perceive their spouse, etc.



Attachment History

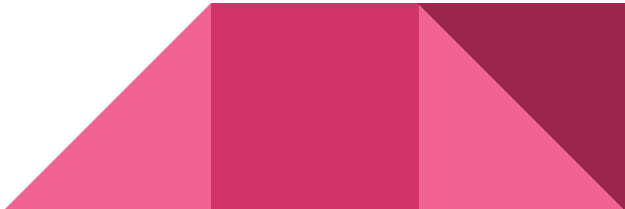
- Who lived in their house with them when growing up?
- Safe Attachment Figure? Describe yourself around them.
- Danger Attachment Figure? Describe yourself around them.
- What was the relationship like with each of their family members?
- Could they rely on their caregivers to be there for them?
- What were the rules for emotion sharing, and how did you feel about yourself when you would share?
- How did you feel about yourself in relationships with peers? Were you bullied? Did you feel like you fit in?
- Learn their experience around sexual development, coming out stories, etc
- BIPOC - what do they want you to understand about their experience?

Attachment History, cont

- Did they experience any significant losses while growing up? Traumatic events?
 - Describe a time when you were hurt by someone you loved.
 - History of significant romantic partners.
 - Has a stronger wiser other ever showed up for them in their inner, most vulnerable world?
 - Given all your history, how has it impacted how you show up in your most important relationships?
- 



Session 4 (and often 5): Conjoint

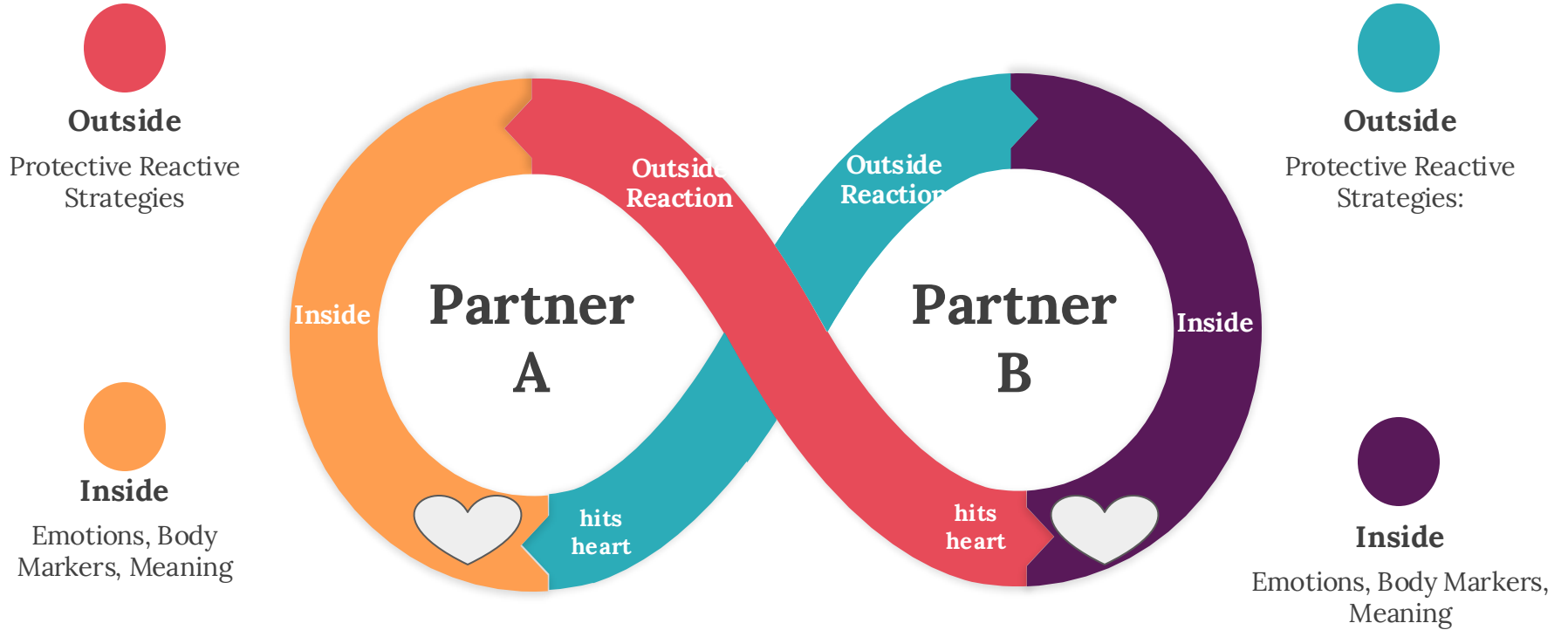
- History of the Relationship
 - What is the story of their relationship?
 - What drew them to each other?
 - How did they originally feel being around each other?
 - What changed?
 - What defining incidents or injuries are present in the relationship?
 - Notice how they communicate around key issues: money, sex, parenting, roles, etc..
 - Who pursues/blames/criticizes?
 - Who gets defensive or shuts down?
- 

Session 4-5 cont.

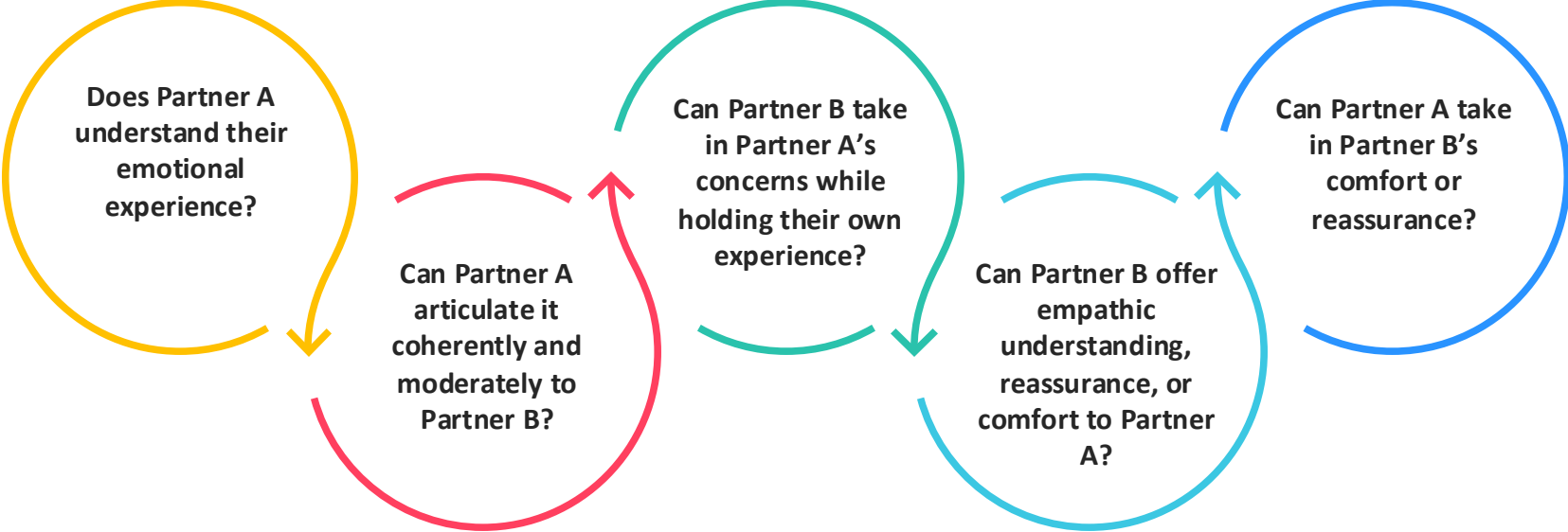
- Assessment tools and measures relevant to couples work
 - ACE
 - Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale
 - Couples Satisfaction Index
 - Experiences in Close Relationships Scale - R
 - Partner Violence Screen
 - E-HITS screening



Conflict Cycle



Can They Repair?



Interventions in Assessment

- Reflect Present Process -
 - Pass in front of them over and over about what you notice is the circular interaction between the partners.
- Simple affect assembly -
 - What happens on the inside - Connect to what they do on the outside
- Micro Interventions:
 - Reflection, Validation, Evocative questions, Tracking and Reflecting Interactions



Be Mindful Of...

- Over Assessment
- Clients with Trauma - the work will be slower; adjust expectations
- You will lose your attachment frame from time to time. Go back and read their attachment history to get re-oriented.
- Self of Therapist Issues



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Resources

For all things EFT: <https://iceeft.com>

If interested in attending an EFT externship here in Oklahoma, please let me know!

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