Father-Daughter Retreat

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Unconditional Love is **NOT** Enough

Female Adult: I knew deep down my entire life that both of my parents loved me unconditionally.

- Client presents with some of the most resistent, challenging problems I've worked with
- No major "capital T" traumas
- Mostly a life of attachment needs not being even closely met by either parent
- Some of the deepest, most profound insecurities in close relationships
- **YET: still believed parents were unconditionally loving**

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Challenges of Being a Female

Source: Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of APA (DSM-5)

- **Depression**: Beginning in early adolescence, **females *1.5-3.0 times* higher rates**
- **Specific Phobias** (e.g., flying, heights, animals): **females *2 times* higher rates**
- **Social Anxiety Disorder**: **females *1.5-2.2 times* higher** rates
- **Panic Disorder**: **females *2 times* higher rates**
- **Agoraphobia**: **females *2 times* higher rates**
- **Generalized Anxiety Disorder**: **females *2 times* higher rates**
- **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder**: **adult females *slightly* higher rates**

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Challenges of Being a Female (cont.)

Source: National Institutes of Health

- **Migraine headaches** 2x common in females
- **Chronic pain** more common in females
- **Sleep deprivation** incr. blood pressure more in women

**Source: Center for Disease Control and Prevention**

- **1-in-5 women have exper./will exper. completed or attempted rape** (compared to 1-in-38 men)

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Attachment Theory

- Implicit, dyadic emotional bond with "stronger, wiser" caregiver
  - E.g., **Parent**, Spouse, **God**
- Attachment figure provides protection, attunement, comfort and encouragement as needed
- Experiences with human attachment figures influence how adults think, feel, and behave in regard to God and other spiritual figures

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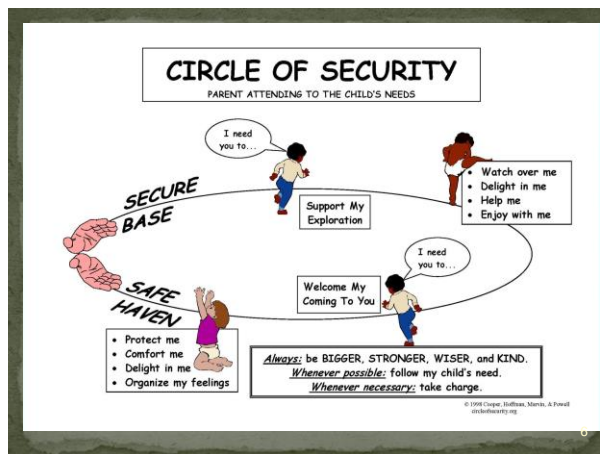
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Primary Conditions that Promote Security

1) **Felt Safety / Protection**
- Caregiver's reliable protection results in "felt safety" in the world and in close relationships
- Take measures to keep daughter from harm
- If harm occurs, responsive to daughter's needs for well-being

- King David and Valley of Shadow of Death
- Woman Caught in Adultery

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Primary Conditions that Promote Security

2) **Feeling Seen and Known**
- Fathers are attuned to (a) daughter's behavior, (b) internal experience, and (c) developmental range
- **Not expecting too much** of daughter based on developmental range
  - 3-year-old not required to recite Shakespeare in Latin
- **Nor expecting too little**: Encourage daughter to work in "zone of proximal development" to elicit state of "being in flow"
- Spiritual: God hears the cries of the poor and sends Christ

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Primary Conditions that Promote Security

3) Felt Comfort / Soothing & Reassurance
- Fathers are reliably responsive when daughter is upset, offering
  - Physical comfort
  - Emotional Soothing and/or
  - Verbal reassurance
- Peter Levine: Hold distressed child until they get bored

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Primary Conditions that Promote Security

4) Feeling Valued / Expressed Delight
- Some clients: "I always thought my parents hated me!"
- Often most lacking condition in adult clients
- Fathers focus more on **Joy** of parenting rather than **Job** of parenting and **Who the Child Is** rather than **What the Child Does**
- Feeling valued assists in **self-confidence** and **positive meta-cognitive development**
- **Jesus' Baptism in the Jordan**
- "**Joy is the most infallible sign of the presence of God**" Fr. Teilhard de Chardin.

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Primary Conditions that Promote Security

5) Support for Best Self / Unconditional Support and Encouragement
- Daughters feel father's encouragement to explore internally and externally
- Fathers set aside self-serving agendas, don't feel threatened by daughter's healthy exploration
- Father's encourage development of daughter in God's image, and not the (biological) father's image
- Father's are "**co-rowers in the canoe**"
- **St. Joseph supportive of Christ's public ministry**

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Secure-Base Script

"If I encounter an obstacle and/or become distressed, I can approach a significant other for help; he or she is likely to be available and supportive; I will experience relief and comfort as a result of proximity to this person; I can then return to other activities."

Mikulincer & Shaver (2016). *Attachment in Adulthood*, p. 189.

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Catholicism is Healthy

Even when considered by non-Catholics . . .

Dr. Jordan Peterson, the famous Canadian psychologist and lecturer, a person who is hesitant to say that he believes in God, **said of Catholicism** ***"<u>that's as sane as people get</u>"***

- On Claiming Belief in God, commentary and discussion with Dennis Prager; Jordan Peterson podcast, 7/7/19
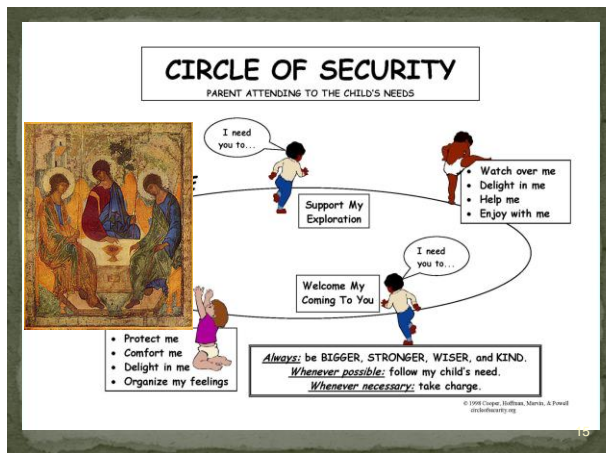 - BTW: Dennis Prager is a Jew

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Trust is Essential to Moral Development

Original Sin and all subsequent sin is tied to a type of insecure relationship with God, a lack of trust in Him and/or His goodness. [paraphrased]

Catechism of the Catholic Church, 397.

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CIRCLE OF SECURITY
PARENT ATTENDING TO THE CHILD'S NEEDS

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Seeking and Finding

Jesu, spes poenitentibus
Quam pius te petentibus
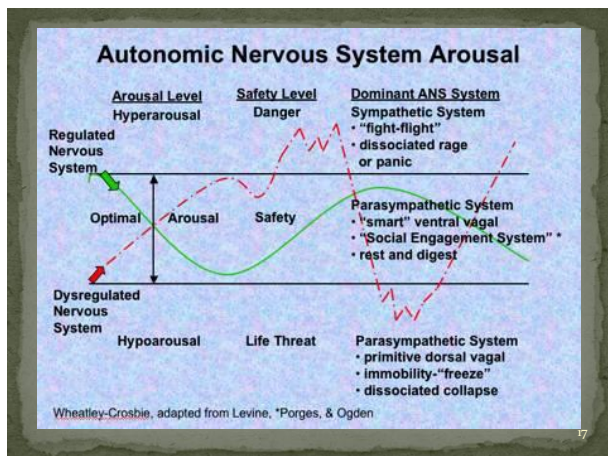*Quam bonus te quaerentibus*
O quid invenientibus

Jesus, hope of the penitent
How kind You are to those who ask
How good You are to those seek
What must You be to those who find?
        —St. Bernard of Clairvaux
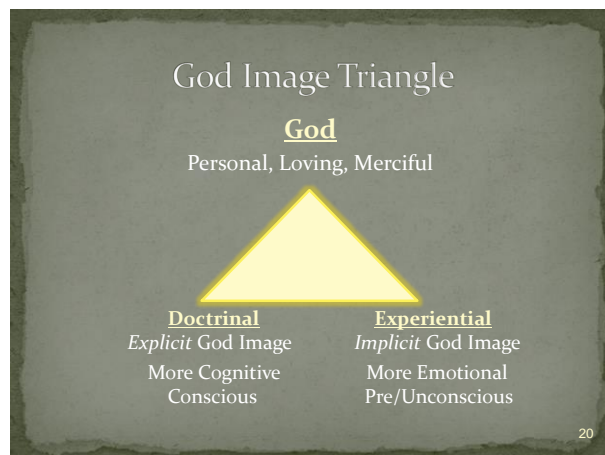In B. Groeschel. *Spiritual passages.*

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5/28/2021

Autonomic Nervous System Arousal

Wheatley-Crosbie, adapted from Levine, *Porges, & Ogden

Authentic Masculinity Continuum

Wimpy	Humility	Servant Leader	Magnanimity	Machismo

Men rely on God, their brothers & confreres, wives (Mystical Body of Christ) to be better men!

God: "Who do you say that I am?"

Slave Master   vs.   **Merciful Father**

Woman who had abusive father.

God Image Triangle

God
Personal, Loving, Merciful

Doctrinal
Explicit God Image
More Cognitive
Conscious

Experiential
Implicit God Image
More Emotional
Pre/Unconscious

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God Image Triangle – Many Clients

God

**Doctrinal**
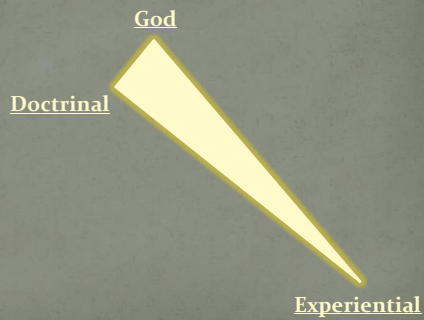
Experiential

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Davis, Granqvist & Sharp (in press; cont.)

- **Metaphorically**: "'head' (doctrinal representations), 'heart' (experiential representations), and 'hands' (behavioral expressions)—are well integrated and working in harmonious synchrony"

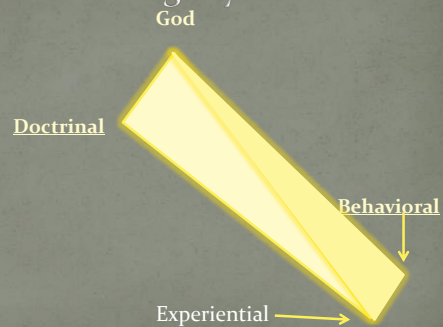 (p. 9; cf. Hollinger, 2005; Pargament, 2007; Zinnbauer, 2013).

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God Image Pyramid

God

Behavioral

Doctrinal   **Experiential**

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God Image Pyramid

God

Doctrinal

Behavioral

Experiential
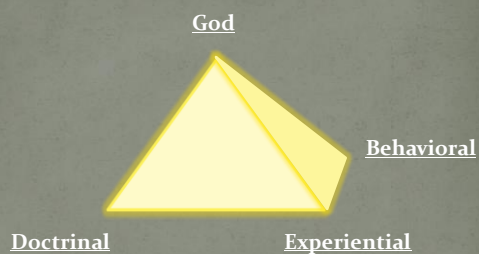
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Spiritual Resourcing (cont.)

Fergus & Rowatt (2014). Examining a purported association between attachment to God and *scrupulosity*

- **Attachment anxiety** toward God **positively correlated with scrupulosity**
- Can conceptualize compulsive behaviors as hyperactivated attachment system and repeated attempts to attain proximity to God.
- Authors recommended "using subliminal primes with representations of attachment *security* to God" or other supernatural figure to assist tx of scrupulosity

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Faith-Integrated Therapy

"Resource Figures"

- *A) Protectors* – St. Michael Archangel, Christ, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal
- *B) Nurturing* – Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Christ, St. Faustina, St. Jude, St. Dymphna
- *C) Wisdom* – Christ, Our Lady of Good Counsel, St. John Chrysostom, Father (God), St. Augustine, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, St. Thomas Aquinas, etc.
- *D) Encouragers* – Christ, Father, Blessed Mother, St. Faustina, St. John Paul II, St. Teresa of Kolkata

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Forgiveness Requires Strength

"God is the *Father* Almighty, . . . God reveals his fatherly omnipotence by the way he takes care of our needs; by the filial adoption that he gives us . . . finally by his infinite mercy, for **he displays his power at its height by freely forgiving sins**"
– *Catechism of the Catholic Church #270*

It takes a strong, secure father to consistently pursue the healing of an attachment bond with a child. **And God is the exemplar of this.**

Repairing relationship ruptures is the most essential thing to parenting

Daniel Siegel, MD
Specialist in Attachment and Neurobiology

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Suggestions on Forming Your Daughter as an Intentional Disciple

- Focus on virtue development, sacramental life, but also the *Five Primary Conditions that Promote Secure Attachment*

- *Be* the **Catholic Intentional Disciple**, the authentic witness, your daughter needs
  - So she will want to emulate you
  - So she will look for this in a future spouse (i.e., either a man or Christ)
  - **So she won't see the Gospel as the "bad news"**: beatitude and happiness requires attaching to yet another deadbeat dad!

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Power of Witness

"Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."

—Pope St. Paul VI—

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Suggestions for Forming Your Daughter as an Intentional Disciple (cont.)

- Rely on the Mystical Body of Christ
  - Rugged independence is a pseudo-security
- Get involved / Get communal
  - That Man is You!
  - Parish events
  - Charitable efforts
  - Adoration

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Suggested Resources

- Feldhahn, S. (2007) *For Parents Only: Getting Inside the Head of Your Kid.*
- Wood, S. (2005) *Legacy: A Father's Handbook for Raising Godly Children*

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