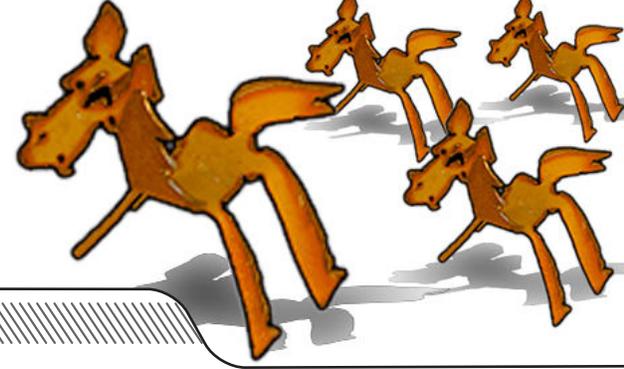


# The School-Age Assessment of Attachment



## COURSE OVERVIEW

The School-age Assessment of Attachment (SAA) is a clinical and research tool that identifies (a) children's self-protective strategies, (b) dangers that elicit the strategy, and (c) distortions in information processing that regulate the child's behavior. These give precise information that is different from a diagnosis and relevant to selecting treatment approaches.

The SAA is appropriate for children between 6 years of age and puberty. It is one of a life-span series of assessments of attachment, fitting between the Preschool Assessment of Attachment (PAA) and the Transition to Adulthood Attachment Interview (TAAI). Like all of Crittenden's assessments, the SAA uses the Dynamic-Maturational Model (DMM) of attachment and adaptation and, thus, has the patterns shown in the diagram below as well as unresolved trauma/loss and various modifiers (depression, disorientation, and reorganization).

**This course is suitable for professionals and researchers working with school-aged children in health, educational, social welfare, and psychotherapeutic settings.**

**The course will teach participants to administer and evaluate the SAA. It includes a reliability test. Follow-up advanced clinical seminars address treatment applications.**

The *School-Age Assessment of Attachment* is a clinical tool that offers reliable and valid assessment of children's attachment, taking into account the developmental implications of children's behavior at this stage in their lives. It is intended to provide information on (1) children's self-protective strategies (i.e., why they do what they do when they are under stress), (2) the sorts of stressors that are most troubling to them, and (3) how they process information to arrive at their understanding of their experience. Knowing the strategy will be helpful for parents and professionals as they consider how best to respond to children, knowing the stressors can help everyone to prevent problems, and knowing how information is processed can help mental health professionals to structure beneficial treatment (and avoid inappropriate interventions).

The SAA consists of 7 picture cards depicting threats that school-aged children frequently face or imagine facing. The interview protocol asks for an imagined story about the child on the card and then recall of a similar episode in the responding child's life. For each story, the child gives the sequence of events (cognition) and the child's feelings (affect), the child's thoughts about attachment figures' thoughts and feelings (perspective-taking and theory of mind), and reasons why the child did what he or she did and ideas about what he or she might do in the future (concrete reflective functioning regarding the self).

The interview is audiotaped and transcribed. The transcript is then annotated for specific discourse markers in each of six memory systems; the discourse markers are derived from the DMM method for analyzing the Adult Attachment Interview (Crittenden, 1999a) as adapted to fit the speech patterns of school-aged children. Using written guidelines, each SAA protocol is assigned a DMM classification.

### **Patricia McKinsey Crittenden, Ph.D.**

Patricia Crittenden has many years experience as an academic and practitioner in the fields of child abuse, attachment theory, and family therapy. After her training with Mary Ainsworth, she served on the Faculties of Psychology at the Universities of Virginia and Miami. She has held visiting positions at the Universities of Helsinki and Bologna, as well as the Clark Institute of Psychiatry (Canada), San Diego State University (USA), and Edith Cowan University (Australia). She is well known for having developed the Dynamic-Maturational Model (DMM) of attachment and adaptation and is one of the founders of the International Association for the Study of Attachment (IASA). In 2004, she received a Career Achievement Award from the European Family Therapy Association. In addition, she has published more than 100 scientific papers and several books.



### **The SAA course teaches:**

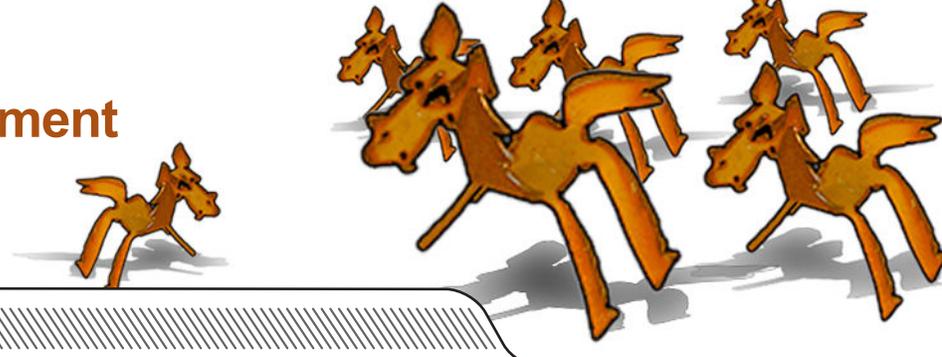
1. Interviewing skills
2. Discourse tools

### **Reliability requires:**

1. Diligent practice after the course
2. Minimal reliability for levels 1-2 (screening, personal clinical use)
3. Moderate reliability for level 3 (research coding)
4. High reliability and Advanced Clinical Seminar(s) for level 4 (authorization to report or write results in clinical records)

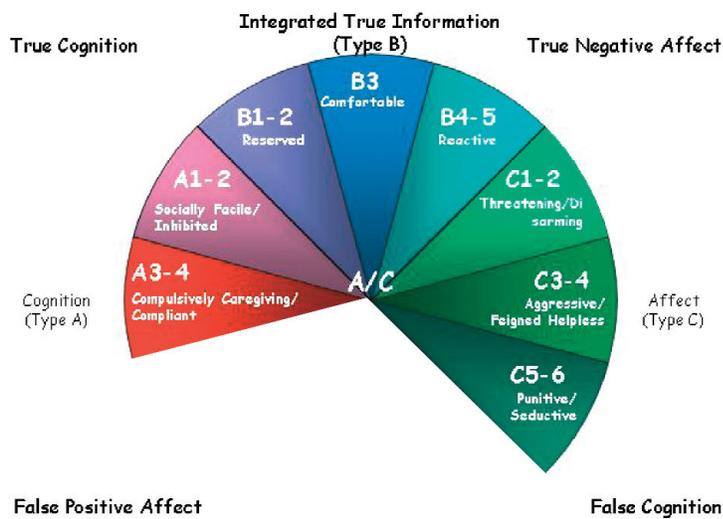


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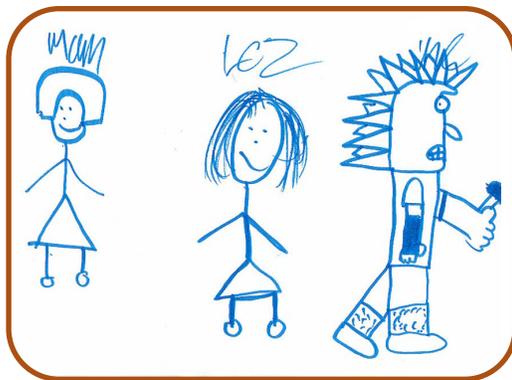


## The Dynamic-Maturational Model of Attachment & Adaptation

The Dynamic-Maturational Model (DMM) is the only truly developmental model of attachment currently available. Based on maturation and children's expanding contexts (from home to school to work and the establishment of new families), the DMM offers an age-related array of self-protective strategies. The following strategies are available to school-aged children:



The model is strengths based, respecting the need for survival strategies, emphasizing the functional nature of behaviour and, thus, highlighting the importance of intervention which is based on evidence rather than judgments or assumptions.



For further general information about the DMM and courses, see [www.patcrittenden.com](http://www.patcrittenden.com). For information about SAA course locations, dates, and costs, contact Dr. Crittenden at [pmcrittenden@att.net](mailto:pmcrittenden@att.net).

### The SAA can be used with other family information to:

- Assist parents to understand their children's behavior
- Develop new understandings of children's development through research
- Develop functional formulations of family problems
- Guide decision-making around placement, fostering, and adoption
- Evaluate children before offering psychological services

