

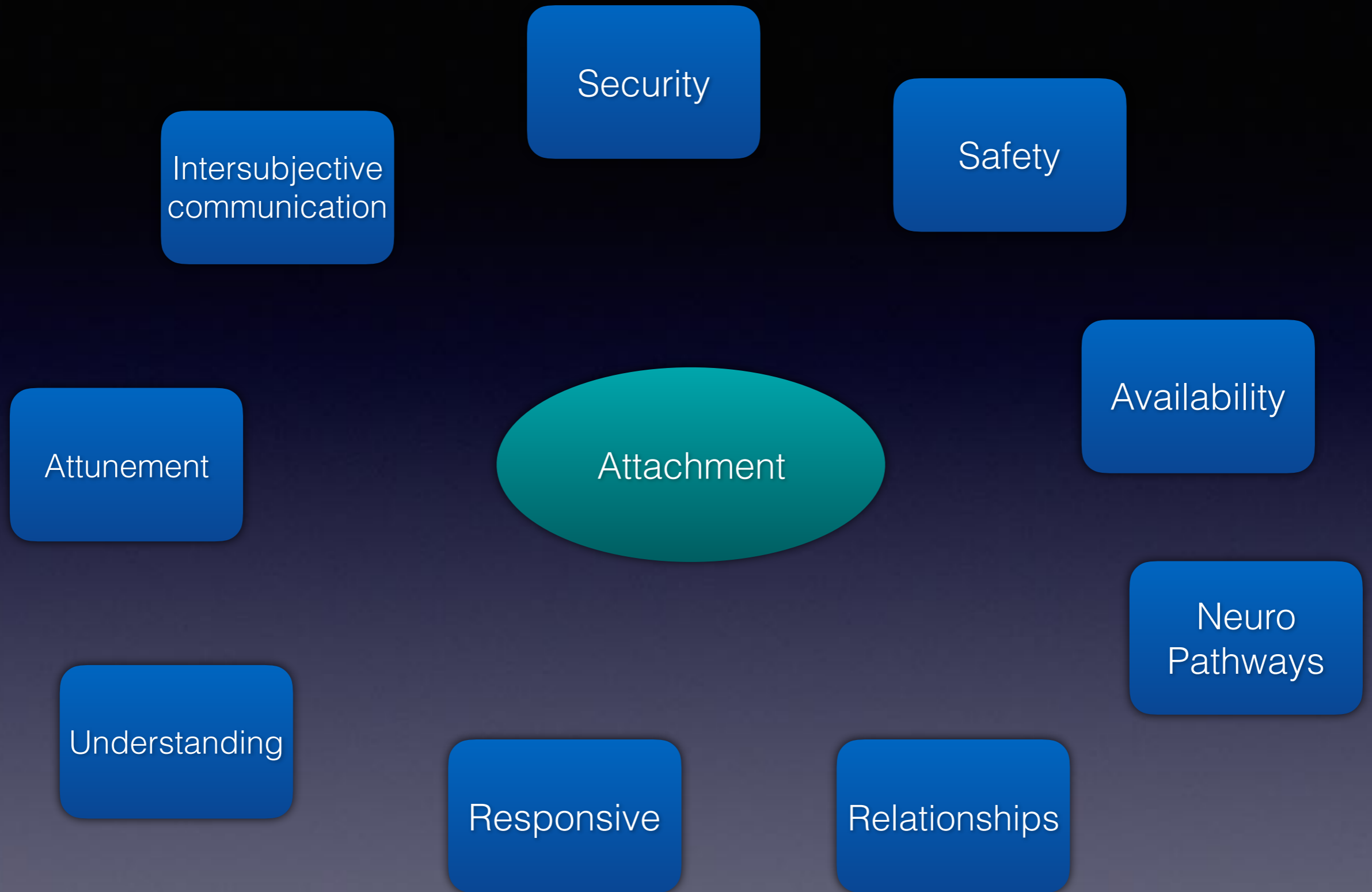
# The Importance of Attachment in Adolescence

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# What is Attachment

- Attachment is a deep and enduring emotional bond that connects one person to another across time and space (Mary Ainsworth, 1973 & John Bowlby, 1969).





# Secure Attachment

- Related to attuned parenting
- self reliance & resilience
- ability to make and keep friends
- empathy
- problem solving abilities & intellectual development
- good communication skills
- feelings of self worth and self efficacy
- Psychological and emotional regulation

# Insecure Attachment

- Anxious Avoidant - related to cold, emotionally unavailable and distant parenting which elicits feelings of rejection - children often present as self-reliant, controlling and pseudo-adult
- Anxious Ambivalent - related to inconsistent/unpredictable parenting - children present as clingy and desperate for adult attention

# Disorganised Attachment

- Results from conflicted emotional states within the child when they need safety but their secure base is frightening them (trauma)
- 'Fear without solution' Main & Hesse (1990)
- There is no organised strategy that works for the child
- Child struggles to: self regulate, mistrust, cant understand other's emotions, misinterprets others actions, displays controlling behaviour
- Can be associated with aggression, anxiety, depression, hyperactivity, behavioural issues
- Can lead to Reactive Attachment Disorder

# Attachment and Neuroscience

- The fight-flight response of the amygdala
- Stress - increase in cortisol and adrenalin
- Mirror neurons - co-regulation
- Bonding hormones - oxytocin vasopressin
- Role of the pre-frontal cortex in attunement
- Neuro plasticity - hope

# Adolescence & Attachment

- Rapid neurological, cognitive and social changes
- Secure attachment allows, as it did in infancy, for safe exploration
- Healthy transition to autonomy and adulthood is facilitated by secure attachment and emotional connectedness to parents Moretti & Peled (2004)



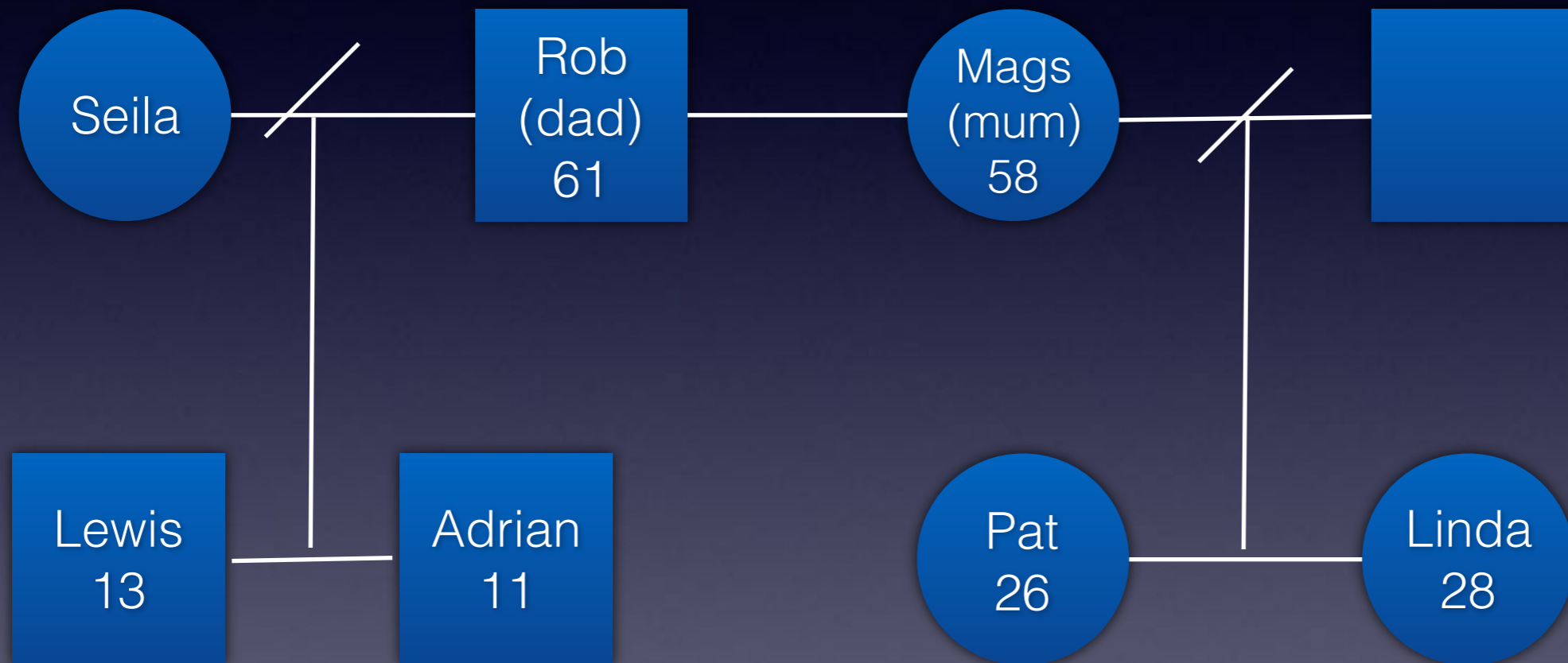




# Adolescent Behaviour or Attachment Difficulties?

- Withdrawn v's Avoids physical contact
- Argumentative v's Controlling
- Disobedient v's Conduct Issues
- Short Temper v's Anger issues
- Detached v's Little sign of conscience

# Lewis and his Family



# Assessment Factors

- Diagnosis of ADHD
- Symptoms of FASD (since diagnosed Alcohol related neuro developmental disorder)
- Aggression towards parents, sibling and peers
- High levels of anxiety & anxious to be with parents
- Low mood
- Need to be in control

- Unable to maintain friendships
- Parental physical and mental health difficulties
- History of trauma and neglect
- Past and recent Child Protection Issues
- No contact with birth mother who continues to abuse alcohol
- Mutual mistrust

Systems around  
the child

Team around the  
child

Attachment  
focused parenting

Family work

# Intervention

- Ensure supportive systems in place
- Team - Social Work, Education, Health (CAMHS) & Community Project
- Attachment focused work with parents
- Family work
- Purpose is to build a feeling of connectedness between Lewis and his parents



# PACE

- Playfulness - hopefulness, lightness and more spontaneity
- Acceptance - unconditional acceptance of the child's experience
- Curiosity - an active, non-judgemental interest in child's experience
- Empathy - actively experiencing/ understanding of child's experience and reflecting this back. The child feels 'you get her'

# References

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