Introduction to EMOTIONAL AVAILABILITY SCALES 4th ed

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1. Background
2. Core Concepts
   - Reliability & Validity Studies: empirical findings
3. Clinical Use
   - Case Presentations + practice
Assessing Interaction, examples

Videotaped interaction
- Screeners
  - Care Index (Crittenden)
  - EAS-screener (Biringen)
- Free Play
  - EAS 4th (Emotional Availability, Biringen)
- Structured
  - Crowell-procedure (Crowell)
  - PC-ERA (Clark)
  - MIM (Marschak)
- Specific Situations
  - Still-face paradigm (Tronick)
  - Feeding: Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Chatoor)
- Attachment measure
  - SST (Ainsworth)
  - PAA (Crittenden)
Emotional Availability Theory

Focus on affects

The parental ability to express genuine positive affects (sensitivity) AND control own negative affects (nonhostility)

Children’s ability to respond and initiate emotionally
Attachment background

- J. Bowlby’s internal working models

- M. Ainsworth’s secure-base behavior
  - Physical/emotional? Proximity seeking

- Ainsworth’s ‘original’ concept of sensitivity
  - Broader view on sensitivity
  - Including negotiating, perspective taking,
“A sensitive mother is a one who sees things and the world from the child’s perspective”

Ainsworth
Links to mentalization theory?

- Mentalizing is a form of imaginative mental activity, namely perceiving and interpreting human behavior in terms of intentional mental states (e.g., needs, feelings, beliefs, goals, purposes, and reasons)
  - Fonagy

- The child learns to mentalize through MIRRORING
  - Parents’ ability to emotionally reflect on infants internal states in a way that doesn’t overwhelm the infant

- Similarities underlying the whole EA conceptualization of emotional dyadic relationship?

Indeed, maternal mind-mindedness has been related to better EA (Lok & McMahon, 2005; McMahon & Meinss, 2012)
Points of divergence

- Attachment behavior is activated under stress/danger
  - Development of Strange Situation Procedure instead of using Home Observation
  - Coding relies on the regulation of negative emotions and distress
- EA emphasises positive affect, dyadic and child perspective
Emotion theories

- Margaret Mahler on “refueling”
  - Focus on autonomy &
  - Child’s self-organizational skills

- Robert Emde on therapist-patient relationship
  - Empathy
  - Attunement (also Stern)
Emotional Availability

- Expressing genuine emotions
  - Face, voice, body/gesture
- In contingent relation to other’s emotional signals
- Inviting (secure haven) and being there (secure base)
Emotional Availability Theory

- Integration of attachment and emotions frameworks
  - And mentalizing?

- Contexts of observation: stressful and nonstressful

- "The EA scales capture the affective tone of the dyadic relationship under any set of circumstances"

- But

- If the goal is to predict a specific phenomenon such as disorganization of attachment, a separation-re-union context should be included
  - Biringen & Easterbrooks, 2012
EAS Scales

- Original version published in 1987
- Coding is multimodal: facial, vocal and physical signals and displays of positive and negative emotion are taken into account
- Not a general reference to good parental qualities, but assessment of dyadic/relational capacity for mutual emotional awareness, perception, experience and expression

- Biringen 2005
EAS dimensions

- Operationalized as comprising 4 adult
- Sensitivity
- Structuring
- Nonintrusiveness
- Nonhostility,
- 2 child
- Responsiveness,
- Involvement) components
- Each scored on 7-point Likert-type scales
Applicibality

- In research:
  - Can be used from infancy to school-age
  - Re-measurements can be done close in time
  - Can be used with different caregivers (including nonparental figures)
  - Continuous measure can assess improvement; more sensitive to changes in pre-post designs
• In clinical work:
  • User friendly: setting/context does not matter

  • Continuous measure can assess improvement; more sensitive to changes

  • Useful in planning intervention: the needs for changes in specific areas but not all
When using EAS scales..

- Videotape as stressor
- Child is cue to the relationship
- Focus on emotional cues, how each partner gives and receives
- Clinically sensitive and not counting of discrete behaviors

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Core Concepts

- EAS 4th ed scale includes the
  - Manual (only to be used with full EAS training!)
  - Clinical Screener
  - EAS intervention manual – a group parenting intervention

- Applications to couples, pregnant mothers..
EA 4th edition; Caregiver sensitivity
7-point scale

- Affect
- Conflict
- Awareness of timing
- Flexibility
- Creativity in play
- Parental acceptance
- Amount of interaction

but warmth is not enough

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Number 4: Inconsistent sensitivity

- Mid-point of the 7-point scale
- Inconsistency between the caregiver and child
- Inconsistency between behavior and affect
- **Warmth without sensitivity**
- Double-bind in terms of communication theories
- Oversensitive
Tripartite control: structuring, nonintrusiveness, nonhostility

7-point scales
Caregiver structuring: guiding, suggesting
inconsistent structuring is the mid-point

7. Optimal, structuring in “right” zone
4. Inconsistency
1. No limits, passive

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Nonintrusiveness

Caregiver nonintrusiveness
7. Spacious, nonintrusive
4. Educational, didactic school teacher
1. intrusive, perhaps physically
Caregiver nonhostility

7. nonhostile, good emotion regulation, good frustration management, patient

4. big dose of covert hostility: boredom, discontent

1. overt hostility

Hostility not directed to the child also counts.
Child emotional availability

7-point scales

- Child responsiveness to the caregiver: affect and responsiveness

- Child involvement of the caregiver: initiating interaction; including in interaction
Measurement Issues

- Multi-dimensional framework fully utilized
- Descriptions of separation between EA dimensions
  - Halo effect?
  - 4th ed uses two-tiered system
  - Separate coders for parent and child
- Min. 15-20 (preferably 30 min) observation
  - Increasing the duration of naturalistic home observation increased the magnitude of the correlations between EA and attachment (Biringen et al., 2005)
- Can be used in multiple settings (free play, stressful contexts)
Example of bottom-up scoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Affect</th>
<th>Clarity of Perceptions</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Flexibility</th>
<th>Acceptance</th>
<th>Amount of Interaction</th>
<th>Conflict</th>
<th>Total score (29 points)</th>
<th>Direct score (1-7 points)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-7</td>
<td>1-7</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

7 = 29  
6 = 27-28  
5 = 20-26  
4 = 18-19  
3 = 11-17  
2 = 9-10  
1 = 7-8

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Risk status

- Scale points
  - 1-3 "Risk"
  - 3,5-4,5 "Some risk"
  - 5-7 "Nonrisk"
Clinical Screener

- Range 1-100
- **DYADIC EMOTIONALLY AVAILABLE 81-100**
  - E.g., 5-7 sensitivity/responsiveness
- **COMPLICATED EA 61-80**
  - E.g., 3,5-4,5 sensitivity/responsiveness
- **DETACHMENT 41-60**
  - E.g., 3-3,5 sensitivity/responsiveness
- **PROBLEMATIC**
  - E.g., 1-2,5 sensitivity/responsiveness
  - Obs. All scales are taken into account
Training

- Training done by 1 lab
  - [www.emotionalavailability.com](http://www.emotionalavailability.com)
  - Re-reliability after 2 year
  - Copy rights
Reliability

- **Stability**
  - During infancy and toddlerhood moderate stabilities 5-20 mo
  - From infancy to middle childhood
    - Easterbrooks, Bureau, & Lyons-Ruth, 2012
Validity: EA predictive of Child Outcomes

- **EA and Attachment**
  - EA scales are predictive of attachment categories (A_B_C) regardless of contexts
  - Empirical links found during infancy
    - Cassidy, 2008; Swanson et al., 2000; Ziv et al., 2000
  - When measured in the context of separation-reunion the scales also have been predictive of attachment disorganization in middle childhood
    - When mothers were less sensitive after an hour-long separation, their children showed more disorganization
    - When mothers were hostile, their children were more punitive and more caregiving
  - Easterbrooks et al 2012
Early Self-regulation

- Maternal Sensitivity related to sleeping patterns during infancy
  - Scher, 2001; Teti et al., 2010
- Low maternal EA related to Eating Difficulties during early childhood
  - Wiefel et al., 2005; Merras-Salmio et al., 2012
- Maternal Hostility related to Difficulties regulating negative emotions
  - Little & Carter, 2005
Cognitive Development

- Maternal sensitivity and structuring related to better language development at 8 and 24 month old normative Finnish children
  - Salo & Flykt, 2010
- Similarly, among at-risk group of drug-exposed infants low maternal sensitivity and high intrusiveness were related to lower level of cognitive development
  - Salo et al, 2010
Development of EA

- Maternal attachment style predicts maternal EA
  - During vaccination avoidant mothers were less sensitive among 3-7 year-olds
    - Edelstein et al, 2004

- Maternal security vs insecurity predicts maternal sensitivity (54%) and structuring and child responsiveness and involvement
  - Biringen et al. 2000
Mentalization

- Maternal mind-mindedness
  - Mentalization comments predicted less hostility with 4-year-olds
    - Lok & McMahon, 2004
  - The capability of making especially positive mentalizations about the child predicted more sensitivity
    - McMahon et al 2010
  - Finnish study among depressed mothers examining PDI and EAS
Maternal well-being

- Maternal depression during infancy predicts low sensitivity and structuring at 7 years
  - Easterbrooks, Biesecker, & Lyons-Ruth, 2000
- Especially low sensitivity during infancy if depressed mom had low socioeconomic status and low self-esteem
  - Van Doesum et al 2007
- Important clinically: maternal psychiatric status during pregnancy did NOT predict high stress levels in the baby BUT her low sensitivity
  - Kaplan, Evans, & Monk 2008
DURING INFANCY

- Mother’s of opioid exposed infants scored lower in Maternal Sensitivity, Intrusiveness, and Structuring (EAS 3rd ed; Biringent et al., 1998)
- Infants scored lower on Bayley Scales and Infant Involvement
- Maternal own childhood foster care and criminal record correlated with sensitivity and intrusiveness
- Significant risk for physical abuse

BY 3 YEARS OF AGE

When compared to the biological mothers’, foster mothers scored systematically higher on Maternal Sensitivity, Nonhostility and child Responsiveness and Involvement, and Bayley Language and Cognitive

Salo et al., 2009, 2010

- In pregnancy drug-abusing mothers (n=50) had more negative representations of self as woman and of child’s father.
- Postnatally, they tended to first idealize their child and own motherhood and later experience disillusionment of idealization.
- Negative prenatal representations and negative pre- to postnatal representational change predicted mother-infant interaction problems among all mothers.
- Among drug-abusing and especially the PGT-mothers, also idealization in prenatal representations and representational change were associated with problematic dyadic interaction.
Background and Personality Factors

- Maternal age increases sensitivity and structuring
  - Bornstein, Suwalsky & Breakstone, 2012
- Teen-aged mothers especially intrusive
  - Easterbrooks, Chaudhuri, & Gestsdottir, 2005
- More social support, better quality of home environment correlate with sensitivity
  - Stack et al., 2012
- Higher level of education, intelligence, and knowledge of child development correlate with sensitivity
  - Bornstein, Suwalsky & Breakstone, 2012
Special Groups

- **Adopted Children**
  - More sensitive the adopted mother – less indiscriminate the child and more responsive 2 and 6 months after adoption
  - Van den Dries et al., 2012

- **IVF**
  - IVF and non-IVF Mother-child dyads did not differentiate from each other in EA
  - Gibson et al., 2000

- **Autistic children**
  - Parents of autistic children did not differ from normative when children aged 2 in sensitivity. Children less responsive at age 4
  - Van Ijzendoorn et al., 2007
EA Intervention: Parents and child care providers

- Psychoeducational work with caregivers
- Videoplayback technology
- Focus on the child’s experience

Pilot study: feeding difficulties and allergy suspicion during infancy

- There is evidence of problematic EA among infant-parent dyads where infants have unspecific gastrointestinal symptoms
- Often interpreted as symptoms of cow’s milk allergy
EAS points

p=0.0192*

DBPCFC negative group
Nonintrusiveness Involvement
p=0.0085*
Structuring Nonhostility

** ** **         **

Normative data

DBPCFC positive group

DBPCFC negative group
Parent-Infant EA intervention

- 4 meetings
- Translated EA parent workbook
- Material for the parents
- Theraplay activities included
EA Self-report: Parent and Caregiver versions

- Perceptions
- Links with observations
Please respond to each question or statement.

Asteikko: Almost Never – Sometimes - Almost Always (1 2 3 4 5) Hyvin harvoin – Joskus – Lähes aina

1. My baby is upset whenever I leave the room and seems to play mostly near me. / Lapseni häätääntyy aina, kun poistun huoneesta ja tuntuu leikkivän enimmäkseen lähelläni.

2. My baby doesn’t seem to notice when I come back into the room. / Lapseni ei tunnu huomaavan, kun palaan takaisin huoneeseen.

3. My baby doesn’t crawl/walk to me much. / Lapseni ei konttaa/kävele luokseni paljoakaan.

4. I wish my baby were happier when with me. / Toivoisin lapseni olevan tyytyväisempi, kun hän on kanssani.

5. My baby looks at me and listens to me when I try to talk to him (or her). / Lapseni katsoo minuun ja kuuntelee minua, kun yritän puhua hänelle.
6. My baby likes to be with me the most. / Lapseni haluaa olla juuri minun kanssani eniten.

7. My baby is lots of fun to be around. / Lapseni seurassa on hauska olla.

8. My baby is very independent and mostly likes to play on his/her own. / Lapseni on hyvin itsenäinen ja tykkää leikkiä enimmäkseen itsekseen.

9. My baby seems to “light up” when he (or she) sees me. / Tuntuu siltä, että lapseni ”ilme kirkastuu”, kun hän näkee minut.

10. After I leave the room, my baby seems really happy that I’ve come back. / Poistuttuani huoneesta ja palattuani takaisin lapseni näyttää olevan hyvin onnellinen paluustani.

11. My baby barely notices me. / Lapseni tuskin huomaa minua.
12. My baby is “cranky” most of the time. / Lapseni on enimmäkseen “kiukkuinen”.

13. My baby seems to understand what I mean most of the time. / Useimmiten lapseni vaikuttaa ymmärtävän, mitä tarkoitan.

14. I feel my baby tries to communicate with me. / Minusta tuntuu, että lapseni yrittää kommunikoida kanssani.

15. When I try to play with my baby, he (or she) seems to be busy and mostly moves away. / Kun yritän leikkiä lapseni kanssa, keskittyvän hän tiiviisti omaan toimintaansa ja enimmäkseen siirtyy pois.

16. It’s hard to get my baby to play with me for very long. / On vaikea saada lastani leikkimään kanssani kovin pitkään.

17. I wish my baby could play a little more on his (or her) own. / Toivoisin, että lapseni voisi leikkiä itsekseen vähän enemmän.

18. My baby and I have lots of fun together. / Lapsellani ja minulla on hyvin hauskaa yhdessä.

19. When my baby seems to not want to play with me, I feel hurt. / Kun lapseni ei näytä haluavan leikkiä kanssani, pahoitan mieleni.

20. I don’t feel close to this baby. / En tunne läheisyyttä tähän lapseen.
21. I try to see things from my baby’s perspective. / Yritän nähdä asiat lapseni näkökulmasta.

22. When things go wrong, I get bent out of shape easily. / Kun asiat menevät pieleen, menen pois tolaltani helposti.

23. I am usually in a good mood around my baby. / Olen yleensä hyvässä tuulella lapseni seurassa.

24. When things go wrong, I tend to be flexible. / Kun asiat menevät pieleen, minulla on tapana joustaa.

25. Even if my baby doesn’t get it right, I let him (or her) have the experience. / Vaikka lapseni ei aina osaa, annan hänen kuitenkin kokeilla.

26. It’s difficult for me to say “goodbye” or separate from my child when I leave the house or leave him (or her) with a sitter. / Minun on vaikea sanoa “heipat” tai erota lapsestani, kun lähden kotoa tai jätän hänet hoitajalle.

27. I shadow my child’s every step as if it could be his (or her) last, and I worry much too much. / Seuraan lapseni jokaista askelta aivan kuin se olisi hänen viimeisensä ja huolehdin aivan liikaa.

28. It is hard to soothe my baby and he (or she) seems to be distressed a lot. / Lastani on vaikea saada rauhoittumaan ja hän vaikuttaa usein hätääntyneeltä.
Clinical Practice

- In HUCH / Helsinki University Central Hospital / Small Children’s Unit
- Children from 0-6 years old
- Regulatory / Socioemotional problems (F93, F98)
- Multidisciplinary Team
Process

- Assessment (3 meetings)
- More through examinations
  - Psychological assessment (Bayley III/WPPSI III, socioemotional testing)
  - Parent-Child Interaction Assessment (MIM. Free Play, Home Observations)
  - Family System Interaction (Family MIM)
  - Parent Interviews (WMCI, PDI)
Case examples

- Video examples
Discussion

- EA offers a unique ‘language’ for understanding and describing relationships
- It is user friendly in clinical settings
- Through training, reliability of assessment maintains
- Offers tools for working with parents
  - Questionnaires
  - Intervention model
  - Psychoeducation (books)
- Cultural aspects need to be explored
- Understanding parental state of mind needed too
Assessing: parenting

- **Parental Internal Models / Reflective Functioning**
  - Working Model of the Child Interview (Zeanah et al., 1998)
  - Adult Attachment Interview (Main, Crittenden DDM)
  - Pregnancy Interview, Parent Development Interview (Slade et al., 2005)
  - Mind-Mindedness (Meins et al., 2001)
  - Insightfullness (Oppenheim & Koren-Karie, 2002)
  - Hughes Interview (Theraplay Training)

- **Questionnaires**
  - Parenting Self-Efficacy Scale (SEPTI-R; Coleman & Karraker, 2003)
  - Emotional Availability Self-Report (Z. Biringen 2009)
  - PSI (Parenting Stress Index)
    - etc.
Mentalizing

- Holding mind in mind
- Attending to mental states in self and others
- Understanding misunderstandings
- Seeing yourself from the outside and others from the inside
- Giving a mental quality to or cultivating mentality
- Thinking about feeling and feeling about thinking
- Allen, Fonagy & Bateman 2008; Target 2003