



GROUP AND TEAM COACHING PRACTICUM

Module I: Know Thyself

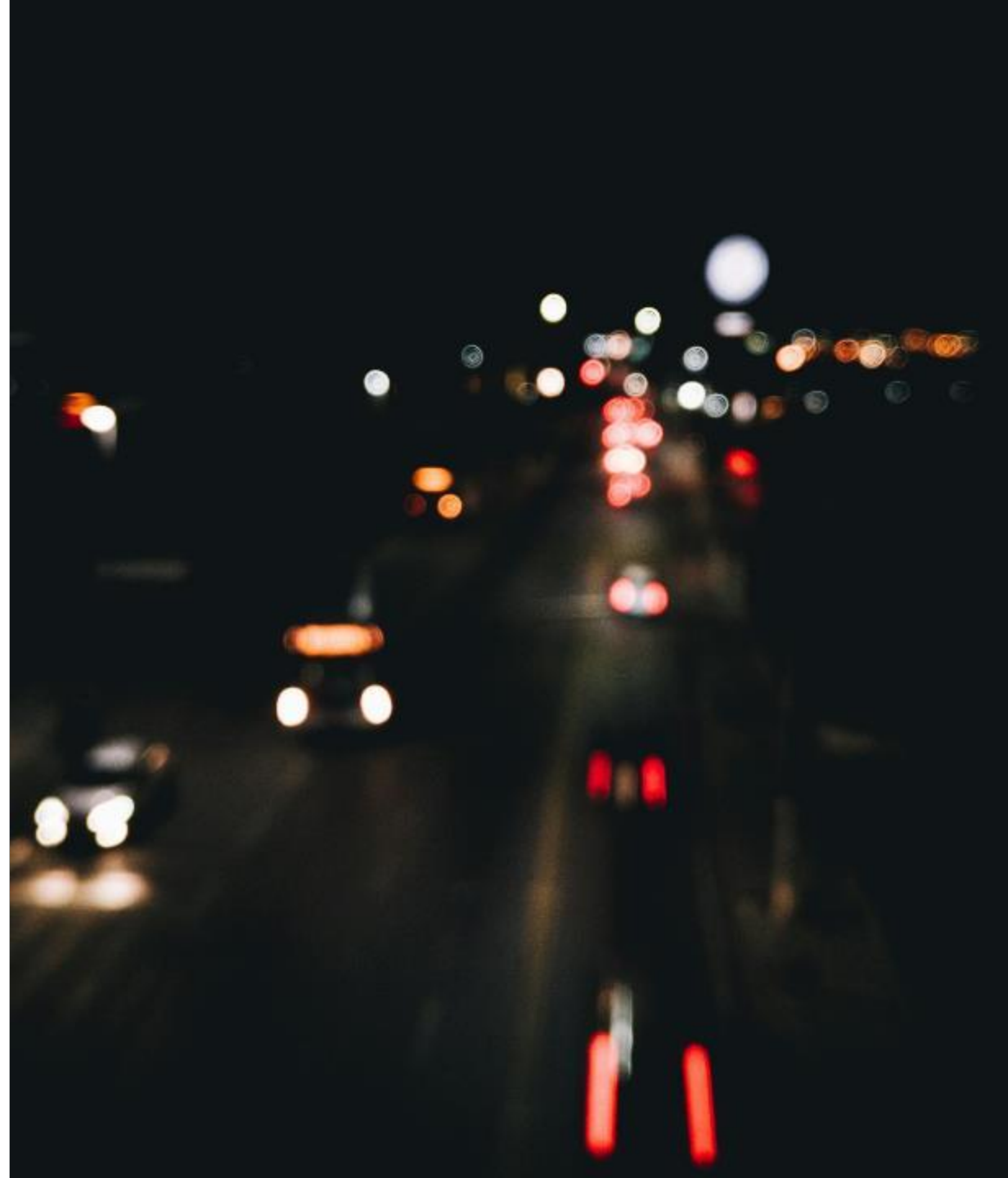
Psychodynamic Foundations & Self as Instrument

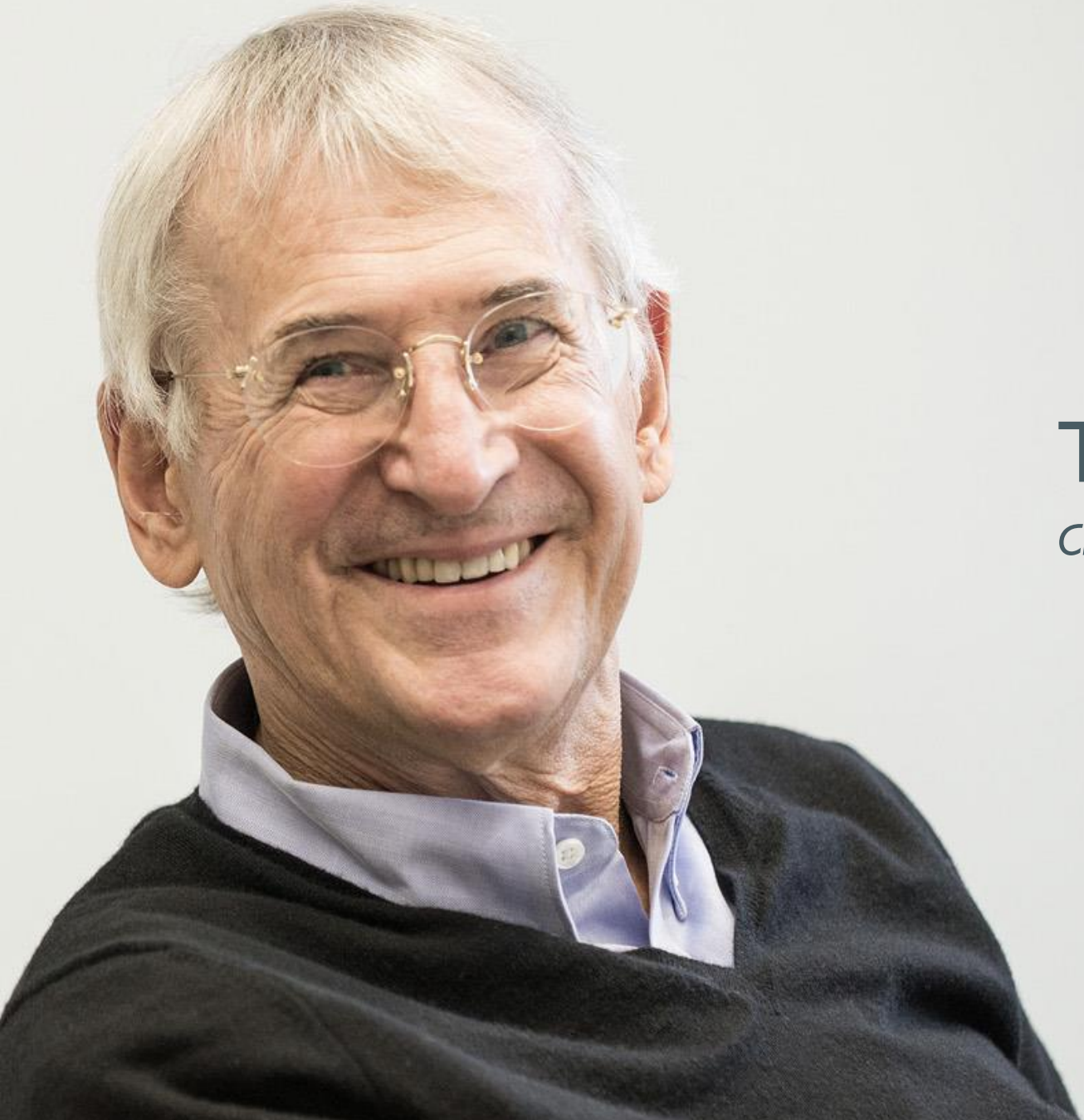
7, 9 & 11 September 2026

Psychodynamic Foundations

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The Clinical Paradigm

Clinical meaning “beside the bedside”

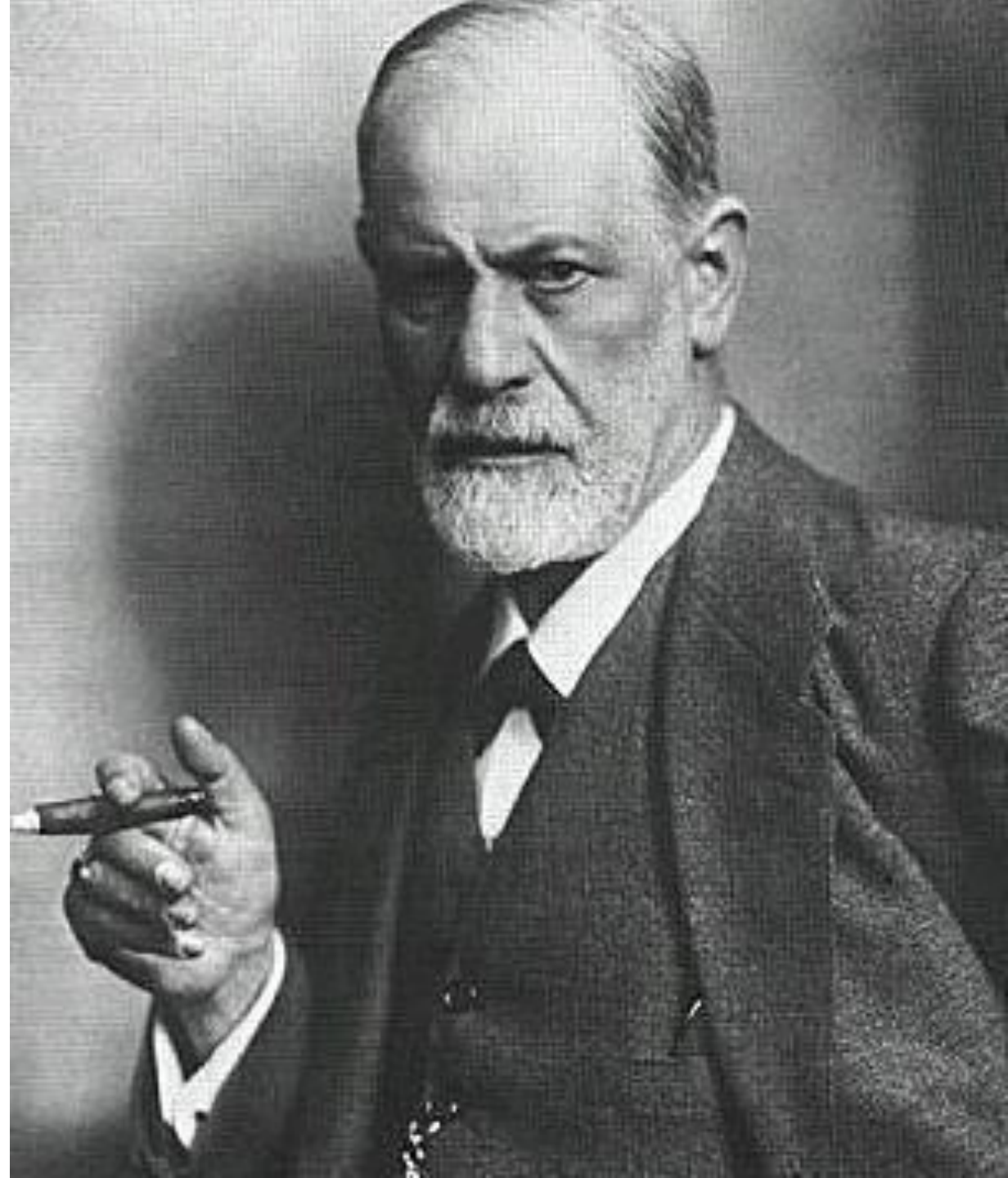


Clinical Paradigm

A way of seeing, listening, and making meaning that fundamentally transforms what a coach notices, asks, and does.

Key premises

1. **Rationality** is an illusion.
2. Much of what happens to us is **beyond conscious awareness**.
3. The **past** is the lens through which we can understand the present and shape the future.
4. Nothing is more central to who we are than the way we **express and regulate emotions**.
5. We all have **blind spots**.





What changes when we use the clinical lens?

The clinical lens does not pathologize ... it widens your perception

Listen below content

Content matters, but emotional tone, timing, silence and repetitions may carry the most important data.

Treat emotions as data

The coach notices what is stirred in self and others rather than dismissing it as noise.

Ask what is protected

Much behaviour is understood as serving a function, often protecting against anxiety, shame or loss of control.



The Unconscious (Freud)

Important feelings, thoughts and desires that remain out of awareness and cannot be brought to awareness by an ordinary effort of will,

and yet

these feelings, thoughts and desires serve as major sources of motivation and determinants of behaviour.



The Inner Theatre (McDougall, 1985)

People often replay old relational dramas in new organisational settings.

Internal cast

We carry internalised figures, voices and emotional memories that shape how we see ourselves and others.

Enduring scripts

Early experiences become relational scripts on approval, authority, closeness and threat.

Triggered roles

Current situations activate old roles and expectations, often outside awareness.



Further reading: McDougall. [Prologue from the Theaters of the Mind](#) Academy for the Psychoanalytic Arts.



Attachment theory (Bowlby)

Helps explain why the past becomes present in the room

- Early attachment experiences influence trust, dependency, autonomy and closeness.
- Under pressure, old patterns can be reactivated in current relationships (work & home).
- *The coach listens for how participants seek safety, recognition, authority, distance or belonging.*
- *New relational experiences can create new emotional pathways!*

Further reading: [Attachment theory](#)





Determine your attachment style

A. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, others want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.

B. I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.

C. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to get very close to some people and sometimes it scares people away.



Determine your attachment style

A. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, others want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being. **AVOIDANT**

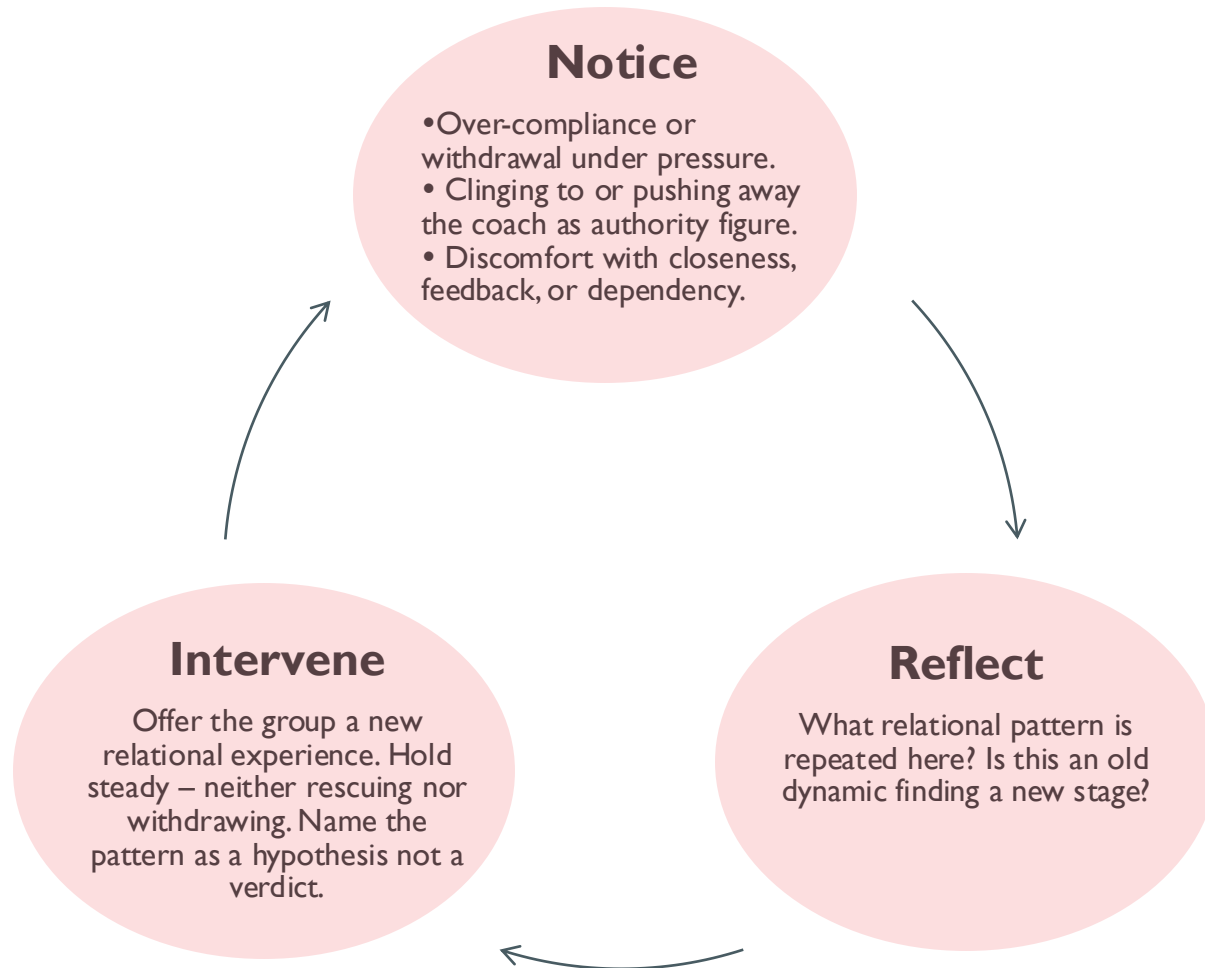
B. I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me. **SECURE**

C. I find that others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to get very close to my partner, and this sometimes scares people away. **ANXIOUS**



Coach application: Address emotional and relational dynamics

Listen for how participants seek safety, recognition, authority, distance, or belonging and what those needs activate in the group.



IN THE COACHING ROOM...

SECURE

Engages openly, tolerates challenge and closeness, supports others' risk-taking.

AVOIDANT

Stays intellectual, resists dependency, keeps emotional distance from the group.

ANXIOUS

Seeks reassurance, fears exclusion, may over-share or pursue the coach's approval.



Defense Mechanisms (Freud /Vaillant)

- Defences are a normal part of human functioning. They are not pathology.
- They protect us from anxiety, shame, threat or psychic pain.
- They appear most strongly under pressure or feedback.

In coaching work, the coach looks beneath the visible behaviour to ask:

- ❖ What is this behaviour *protecting*?
- ❖ What *anxiety* might be present in the room?



Primitive Defenses

Protecting the self at the cost of reality, relationships, or growth.

Denial



Refusing or minimising what is emotionally difficult to acknowledge.

Repression



Pushing threatening feelings, memories, or wishes out of conscious awareness.

Acting out



Impulsively expressing unconscious desires or conflicts through actions.

Projection



Attributing one's feelings or impulses to another person, experiencing them as coming from outside rather than within.

Splitting

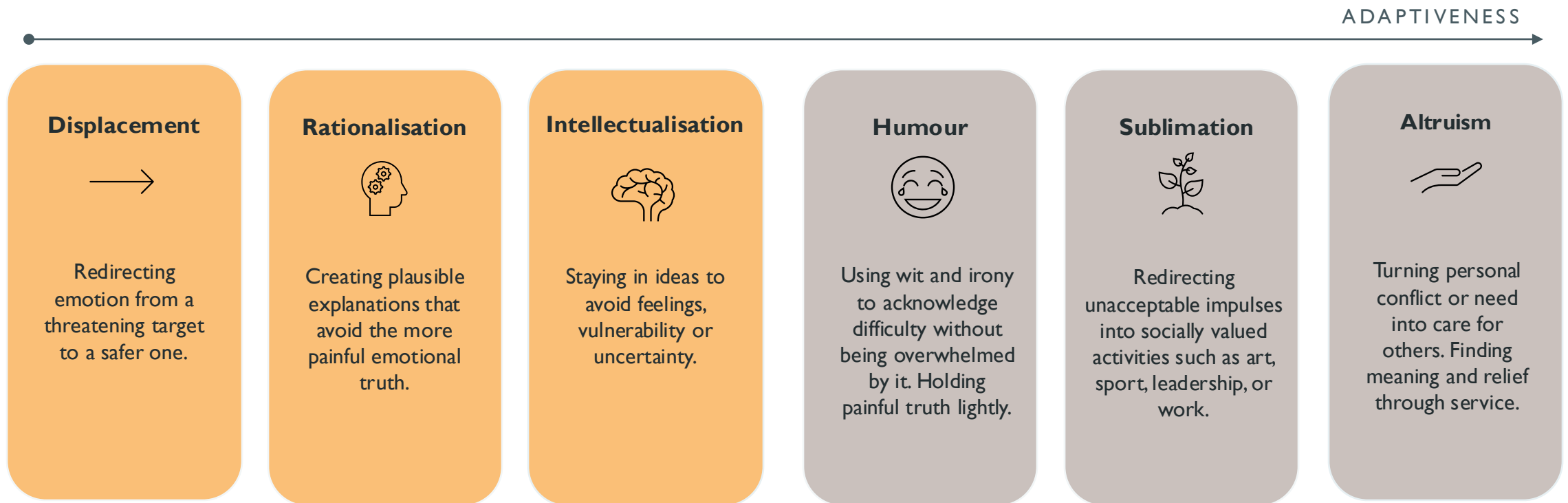


Dividing people or situations into all-good or all-bad, eliminating ambivalence and complexity to reduce anxiety.

Notice the *function* of the defence, not only the behaviour. Ask what is this *protecting against* and what *anxiety* is alive in the person/room right now?

Mature Defenses

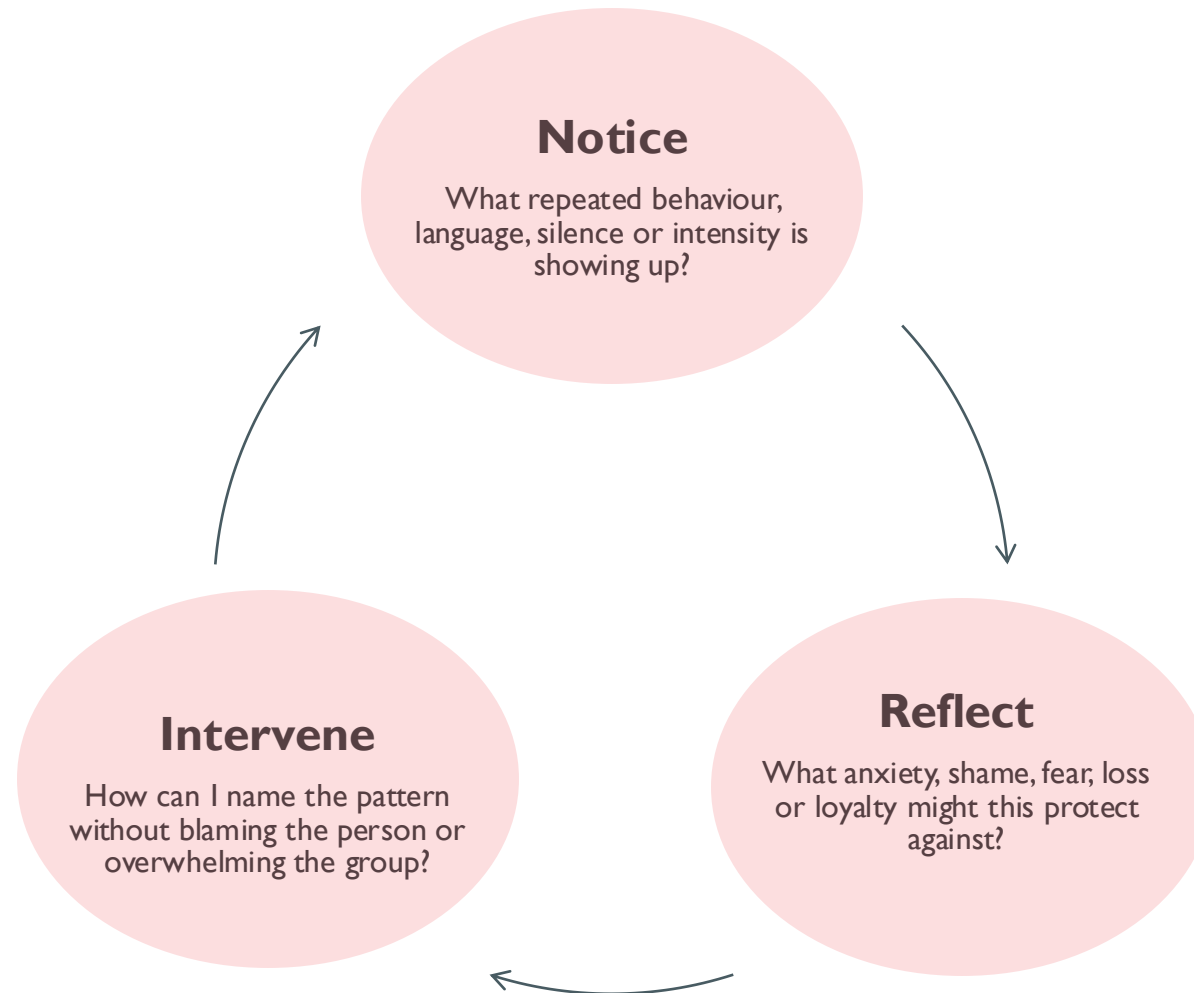
Acknowledge difficulty while managing it constructively, protecting the self without losing contact with reality or others.



Mature defences are not the absence of defence; they are its most sophisticated form. The coach recognises and reinforces them as assets, while staying curious about what they may still be protecting against.

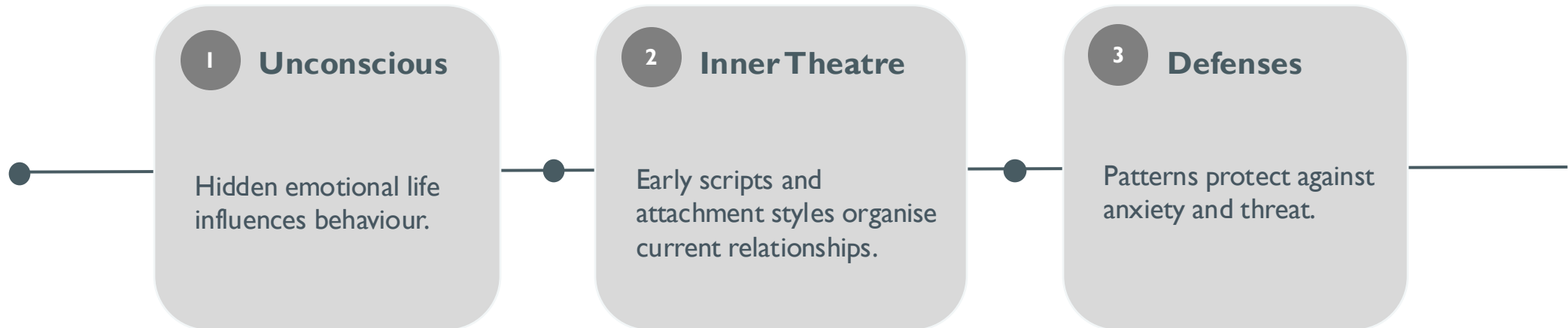
Coach application: From defense to pattern

Name patterns, not people



The inner system so far

The afternoon moves from understanding patterns to working with personal change.





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Lunchbreak

Back at 13:00 CET

