

Cognitive and Affective Balance 2

The clinician identifies the balance and flexibility of the four mentalizing poles at any point in a session. If a patient is rigidly fixed at one end of a dimension, the clinician intervenes to balance the process. This can be done in a number of ways. On the one hand the clinician can stimulate the counterbalancing component of the dimension (say affective to balance cognitive processing) in the mind of the patient (self); on the other hand the clinician can stimulate the counterbalancing component by asking the patient to consider the clinician's different perspective (other). This is part of a general stance in MBT to stimulate a process facilitating mentalizing around the topic under discussion.

In this example the patient has logically worked out that if she is to have any chance of getting her children back and released from child protection she has to behave in certain ways and tell people that she is 'fine'. Following this, she states that she does not want Alice, her youngest child, in care and she has worked out a rationale to prevent this. The clinician takes this as a cognitive process overall and tries to rebalance the process to encourage integration of the affective and cognitive dimensions around the topic of her child. To do this he states his own (other) understanding of her mental state from an affective perspective (marking). He states 'I was thinking that it was your actual love for Alice.....'. This is an affectively loaded statement using his understanding of her feelings of her child which are currently not articulated.

00.55 The patient agrees immediately. At this point the MBT clinician has to consider if he has triggered pretend mode and needs to listen out for it. In this case the intervention seems to lead to a related narrative about her father that has more affect suggesting that it is not pretend mode.

1.11 The patient now describes an affect of sadness. The clinician is now in a position to start exploring affect and asks the patient to reflect on what is so sad. This leads to her recognition that she has only ever wanted a 'happy family'.