

BONDING BOARD

**An instrument for
diagnostics, counseling, therapy and supervision
in issues related to
attachment, relationship and stress**



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Structure of the Bonding Board

The bonding board is reminiscent of a game board. It therefore has a highly stimulating character and takes away some of the severity of the possibly burdensome topic. It is divided into two mirror-symmetrical halves, in each of which a person can be symbolically placed with a figure in a 4x4 field scheme. The playing figure cannot leave the half of the game assigned to it. The left side is marked with A, the right side with B. In the educational context, the left side is used for the adult attachment figures, the right side for the children or adolescents. Four columns and four rows are distinguished within each half of the game board.

The board

The emotional closeness to the second person is shown on the **X-axis**. The following four gradations are used for this, with the numbers indicating the distance from the center line:

'Close': If you place a figure in the column 'near' (X1), this means that the person is currently close to the second person or is looking for him to be close.

'Reachable': The second column (X2) means that the person who is placed there is not close to the second person at the moment, but could be reached by the person opposite if necessary. For example, a child plays for himself without paying attention to the mother or it is in another room, but if suddenly stressed, it could call for help at any time and would be open to accept help.

'Unreachable': The third column (X3) means that the person is emotionally unavailable to the person opposite him at the moment and is therefore closed to him.

'Absent': The furthest column (X4), shown in a paler color, means that the person is physically absent, for example when a parent is at work or a child retreats into the bedroom.

With the first three columns it should be noted that it is not about physical, but emotional closeness. Of course, we humans use physical proximity or distance to send emotional signals. If, however, someone sits right next to me in a sulking mood, the person is physically close, but would be shown on the bonding board as 'unreachable' - since I cannot reach it emotionally at the moment. Conversely, a mother who is not there, but comforts her child in an empathetic way over the phone, would not be depicted as 'absent' but as 'close'.

Since the search for proximity and distance is defined by each person, the game board was not designed like a chess board. If one chess piece moves towards the other, they both come closer. However, this does not correspond to the reality of relationships. In the presented board with its two symmetrical coordinate systems, however, one piece in the 'near' column can seek proximity, while the other piece in the 'unreachable' or 'absent' column withdraws.

The emotional state of the respective person is shown on the **Y-axis**. There are also four levels here. They are numbered from bottom to top, from blue to red:

'Calm': If a figure is in the first, the lowest, blue line (Y1), this means that it is calm and relaxed at the moment. Her adrenaline level is very low, she is in a relaxed, content state.

'Active': The second, green line (Y2) shows that the person is active, possibly fully focused on work, but not under stress.

'Stressed': The third, yellow line (Y3) shows that a person is under stress, be it because of real or imagined dangers or troubles or because of work or relationship stress.

'Scared / Angry': A figure is placed in the fourth, topmost, red line (Y4) when the person loses emotional control, 'ticks out' and only acts from flight / fight mode.

The figures and additional game pieces

The **playing figures** are stylized in order to be able to serve as a projection object for a wide variety of clients, regardless of gender, skin color, etc. They are available in three sizes, symbolic for adults, adolescents and children. They have a hole in the belly. When they are placed on the board, this hole shows the color of the board below. If it is pushed around, the current emotional state of the person can be read 'in the belly' - the intuitive seat of the emotions.

There are also thin **disks** with different hole sizes: The **ring** disk with a large hole, the **perforated** disk with a small hole and the fully filled **circular** disk. They are available in the four basic colors of the Bondingboard, blue, green, yellow and red as well as in brown, black, gray and white. If you put it in the hole of the figure, it is shown that the person, regardless of its position on the game board, feels **a little, mostly or completely** the emotion that corresponds to the color of the disc. If you put a yellow ring in the belly of a child figure, for example, this shows that it is under slight chronic stress, even if, for example, the mother has led the child to the blue line, i.e. externally visible calmness. The color brown is used when a diffuse emotion is perceived, however, it remains unclear whether it is positive or negative in nature. The white disks are used when the person has only limited or no access to emotionality. The color under the hole in the belly area is then not or only partially visible. This can be used to indicate that a person is having difficulty self-perceiving their own emotion, or that it is difficult to perceive by those around them. We have not yet assigned any meaning to the gray and black disks. They are available for creative use.

The long **bars** and **arrows** are also still in experimental use. The white bars can be used to indicate when certain fields are inaccessible for a person, if for example calmness or closeness are not possible. The arrows can be used when a figure rejects the other person or leans in one direction. The gradually colored bars can be placed on the edge of the board if you want to show that the emotional state of a person depends on the distance. In the case of a self-insecure child, it is therefore with the blue end on 'near' and the red end on 'absent' while it is turned around in a child with traumatic experiences of abuse, since closeness is linked to fear of the attachment person and distance is linked to calm and security.

The whole set is supplemented by **symbolic game pieces** that can be arranged in the belly of the pieces or on the board, for example as goals or fears. The Kasperle characters can be used, among other things, in connection with the symbolic interaction game in the attachment oriented CARE program. Empty game pieces, which can be painted by the users or clients themselves, enable a diverse, creative use in counseling and therapy.

The **animals**, which are also shown stylized, can take the place of people. They are able to support the emotional regulation of people, especially when there is physical contact. Cats, dogs and horses are our fellow mammals and basically show the same attachment reactions as humans. The two smaller amorphous game pieces can also be used in a similar way, symbolically for a guinea pig, rabbit, a snake or even a teddy bear, a cuddly towel or another emotion-regulating object.

The Products

The bonding board is currently available in three versions.

The game board in cardboard: It has the advantage that the clients see something concrete in front of them, which can also be manipulated directly. It is used for freely configurable consultation processes or structured interviews from the beginning to the end of a consultation.

The game board as a WebApp: It is the digital version of the game board and serves as an entry point for professionals who want to try the bonding board first without having to buy it right away. With the additional whiteboard note options, it can also be very helpful for counseling, be it for supervision, for online therapies or if you want to save the progress of the counseling work.

The diagnostics WebApp: In this App, everyday stressful situations are 'read' aloud to parents, teachers and children by an avatar. At the same time, the person figures mentioned are displayed on a digital bonding board and typical reactions corresponding to the attachment styles A, B, C and D are mentioned. The clients then rate each type of reaction using Likert scales to determine how closely it corresponds to the child's behavior. These video story questionnaires offer a time-saving and entertaining access to self-assessment and external assessment of attachment styles in the family and school context.

All products merge seamlessly and can be used in parallel as required. In this way, diagnostic information, visually presented, can be used immediately in the counseling process.

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