

**Taming the Anxiety Beast Within:**  
 Structuring our work in family law to diminish conflict and optimize success

October 19, 2023  
 Benjamin D. Garber, Ph.D. • Family Law Consulting, PLLC  
 Nashua, New Hampshire USA  
 bdgarberphd@FamilyLawConsulting.org

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This program contains ideas and images that may cause anxiety.

Please feel free to excuse yourself at any point and to alert me to your particular needs.

Thank you,  
bdg

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**Spoiler alert:**

1. Anxiety is a universal, necessary and natural experience
2. Anxiety fuels conflict
3. Family conflict can harm children
4. Structure diminishes anxiety
5. Therefore, structure can diminish conflict and benefit children
6. How we structure our work and how we help families structure their interactions benefits children

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**Spoiler alert:**

How we structure our work  
and how we help families  
structure their interactions  
benefits children

1. Anxiety is a universal, necessary and natural experience  
2. Anxiety is a universal, necessary and natural experience  
3. Family structure and work structure fit  
4. Structure and work structure fit  
5. The fit between family structure and work structure benefits children  
6. How we structure our work and how we help families structure their interactions benefits children

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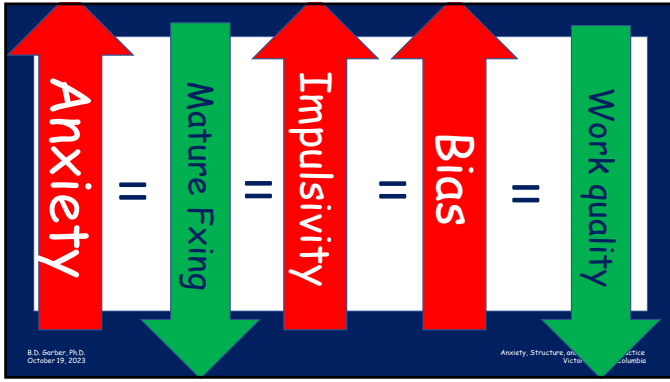
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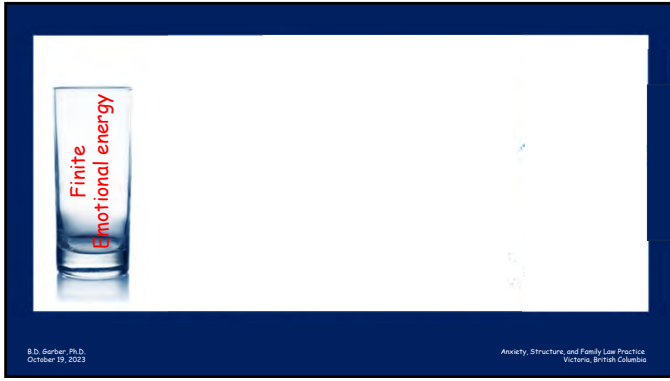
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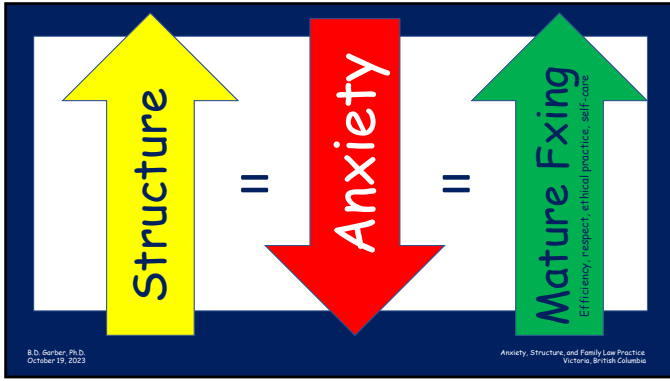
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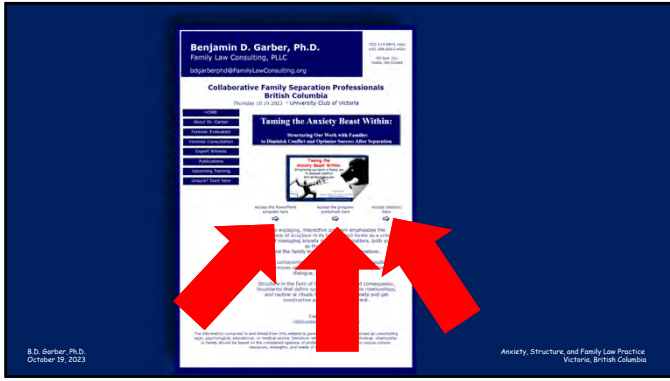
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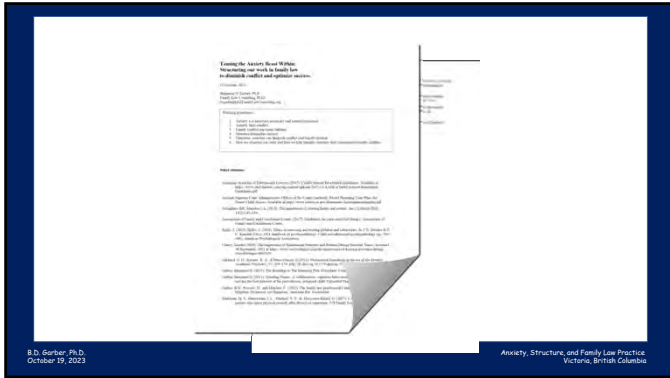
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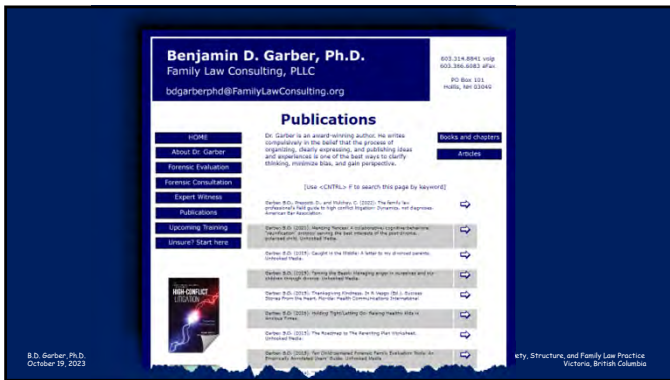
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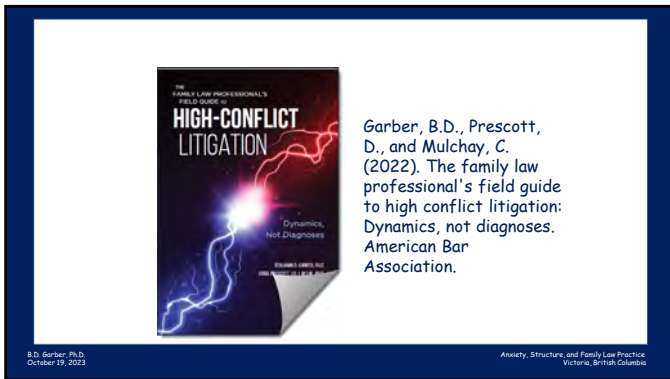
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Garber, Benjamin D. (2021). Mending Fences: A collaborative, cognitive-behavioral "reunification" protocol serving the best interests of the post-divorce, polarized child. Unhooked Media.

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### Caveat Lector

- ❖ Time is short. The topics presented here today each deserve in-depth examination. Take this presentation as introduction only. Please use the references and links provided to learn more.
- ❖ Make this the beginning of a dialogue. Contact me any time at: [bdgarberphd@FamilyLawConsulting.org](mailto:bdgarberphd@FamilyLawConsulting.org)



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### Caveat Lector

- ❖ These ideas are always evolving, so this presentation must as well. Please reach me for up-to-the-minute materials.



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**Caveat Lector**

- ❖ This presentation refers to developmental norms and generic fact patterns.
- ❖ None of this information should be construed as case-specific.
- ❖ Always defer to the expert opinion of a child-centered mental health professional who has first-hand knowledge of the individuals involved.



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**Caveat Lector**

- ❖ Gender references and images are arbitrary for the ease of expression unless specifically noted
- ❖ **"Parent"** refers to any primary caregiver without regard to biological or genetic status, legal ties or cohabitation status unless specifically noted.



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**Caveat Lector**

- ❖ The dynamics at issue can occur within any caregiver-child dyad regardless of legal, biological, or genetic relatedness or proximity; i.e.,
- ❖ **This is not only about divorce.**



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**Caveat Lector**

❖ We don't know if or how this conceptualization may be culture-specific.



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**GREEN slides**



I'll interrupt myself now and then using green slides to ask you to think, answer a question for yourself, and/or to huddle at your table and share with the group.

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**TO DO**

1. Start a page that you'll use throughout today
2. Put your initials at the top
3. Divide the page in TWO columns
4. Choose ONE of your professional roles and write at top of left column
5. Choose ONE of your personal roles and write at top of right column
6. Create four rows horizontally
7. Don't lose this page!

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Professional role

Initials

Personal role

4 rows (horizontal)

Evaluative Husband

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Summary thoughts

Bias and binary thinking

Applications

What is structure?

Anxiety is universal

A systemic perspective

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An agenda is one type of structure.

You're likely less anxious about today ("what's he going to cover?" "Darn, I should have brought my knitting!") because you now know what to expect.

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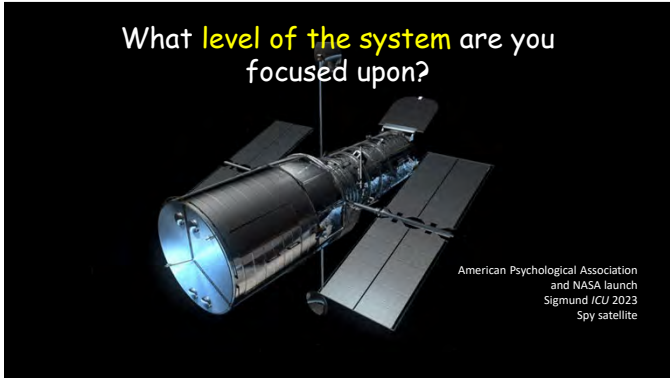
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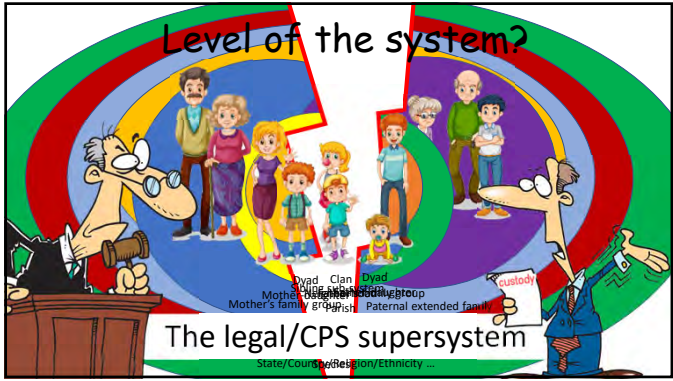
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**Diagnoses**  
include for example:

- Major Depressive Disorder-Mild (ICD-10 F32.0)
- Generalized Anxiety Disorder (ICD-10 F41.1)
- Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (ICD-10 F43.10)
- Alcohol use disorder-severe (ICD-10 F10.20)



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By contrast,  
patterns of feelings,  
thoughts, and behavior  
among people  
are called  
**dynamics**

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**Dynamics**  
matter when your focus  
is on relationships



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**Dynamics**  
include for example:

- Enmeshment
- Estrangement
- Alienation
- Coercive control
- Intimate partner violence



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**?Diagnosis or Dynamic?**

- ❖ Parent-Child Relationship Problem (ICD-10 Z62.820)
- ❖ Child Affected by Parental Relationship Distress (ICD-10 Z62.898)
- ❖ Uncongenial Work Environment (ICD-10 Z56.5)

"... conditions and psychosocial or environmental problems that may be a focus of clinical attention or otherwise affect the diagnosis, course, prognosis, or treatment of an individual's mental disorder... the conditions and problems listed in this chapter **are not mental disorders.**" (DSM5 TR p. 821)

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Family law is concerned with

**dynamics  
not  
diagnoses**



Garber, R.D. & Simon, R.A. (2018) Individual Adult Psychometric Testing and Child Custody Evaluations: If the Shoe Doesn't Fit, Don't Wear It. *Journal of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers*, 30 (2), 325-341.

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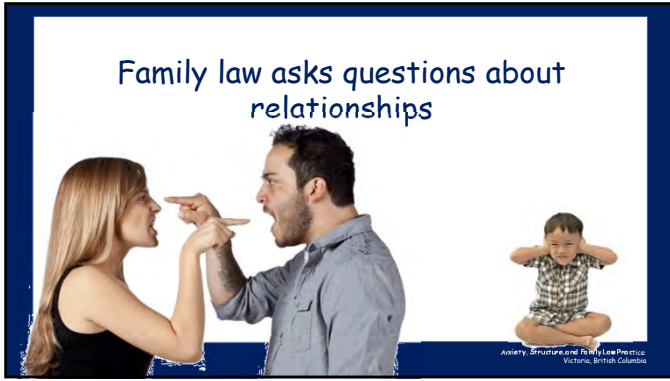
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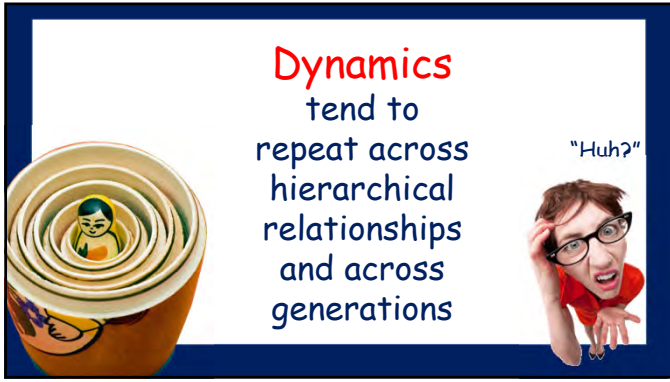
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Can you define the hierarchy of resources and control within your office?

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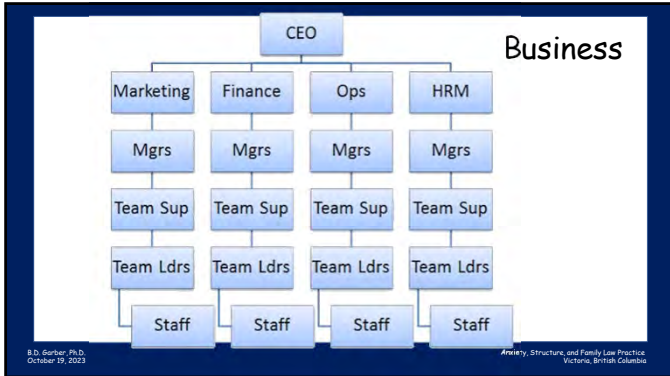
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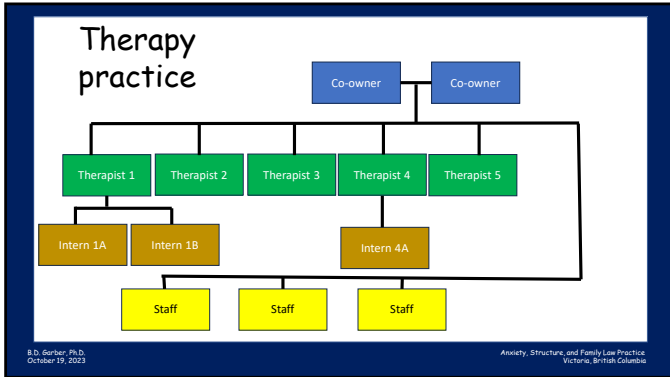
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Can you define  
the hierarchy of  
resources and control  
within a family?

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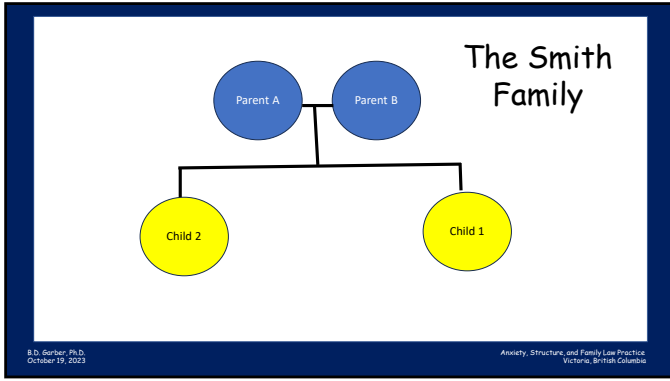
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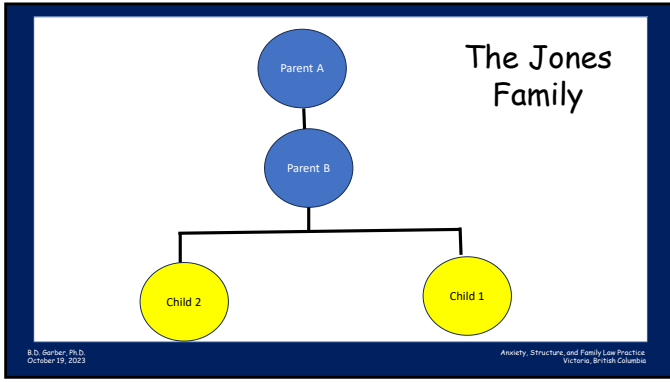
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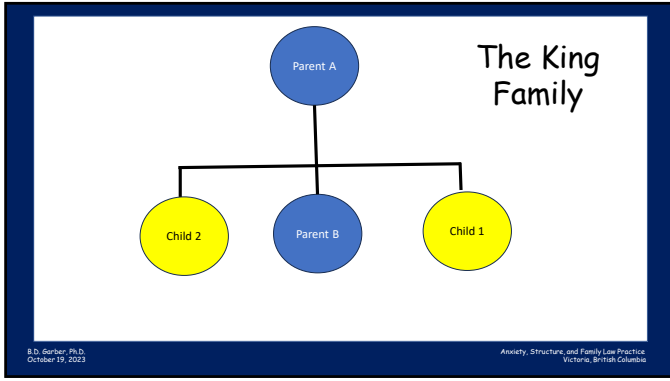
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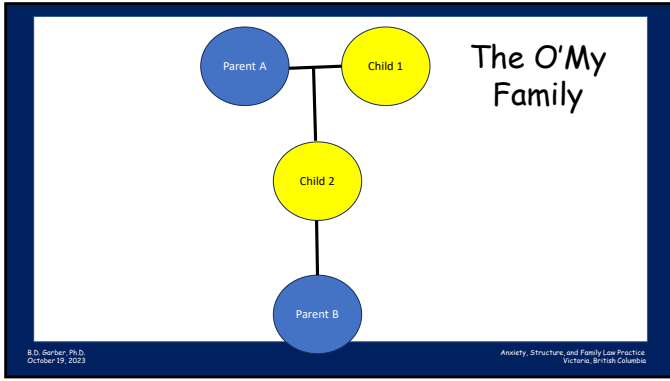
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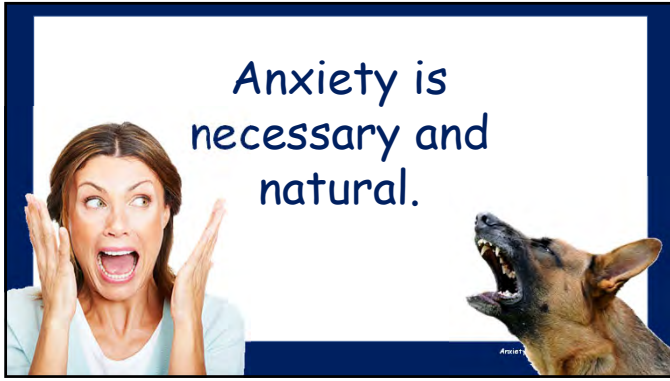
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**Anxiety is adaptive.**

Anxiety modulates our bodies' responsiveness to the perceived environment




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**Anxiety runs our bodies and our perceptions**



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Anxiety

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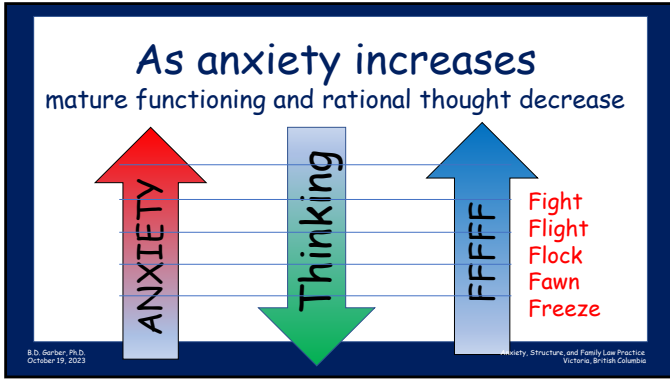
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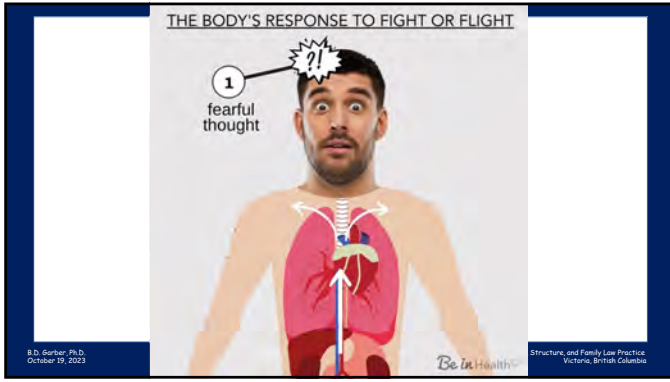
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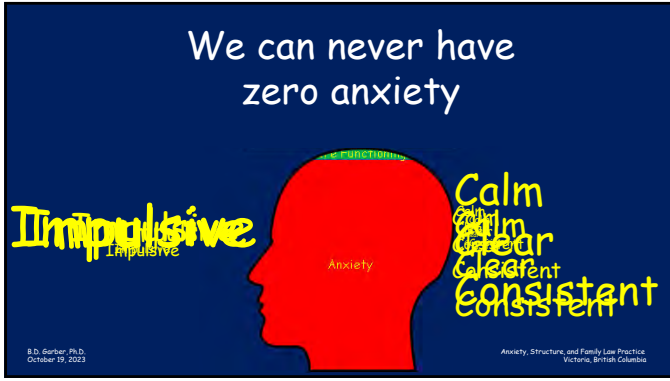
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**Anxiety is not necessarily pathology**

Anxiety can become pathological when it is disproportionate to actual threat

Lepidopterophobic

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**Trauma**

is the result of prolonged and/or intense anxiety in the absence of adequate coping such that neurochemical changes occur affecting thinking, feeling, and behavior

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**Anxiety escalates conflict at every level of analysis**

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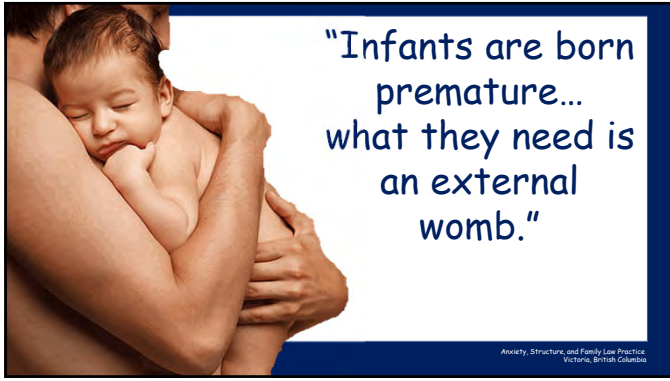
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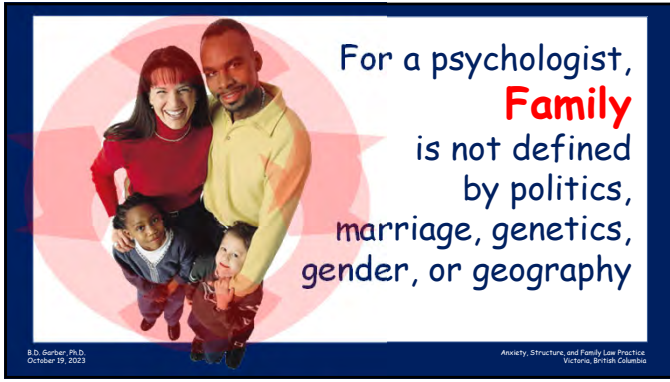
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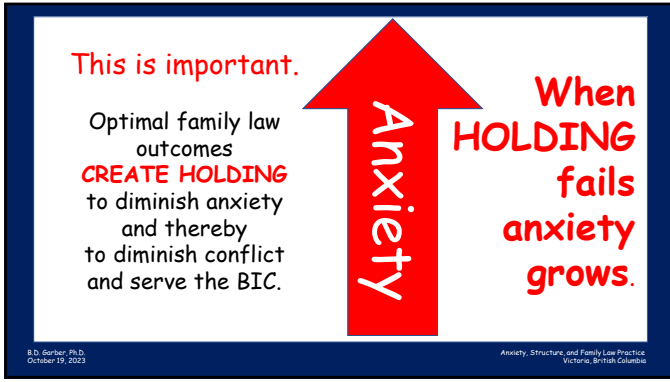
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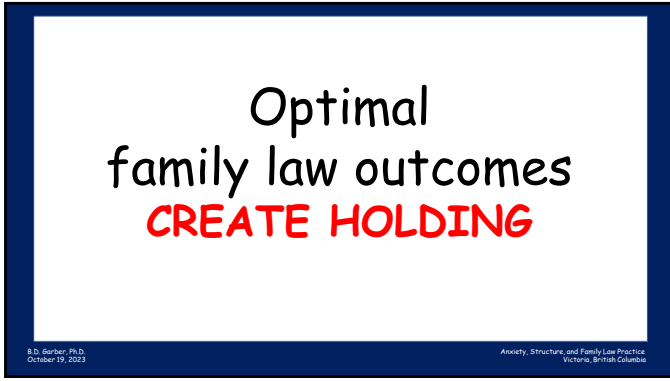
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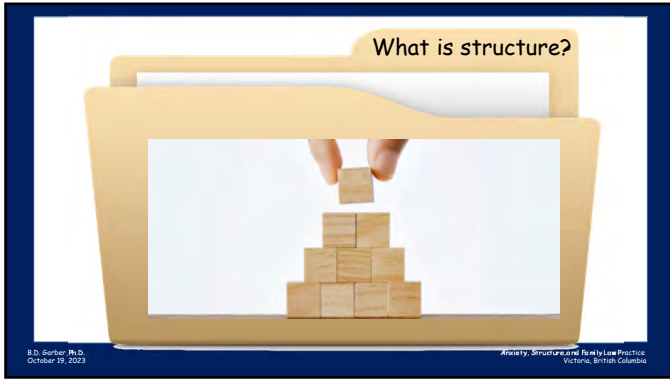
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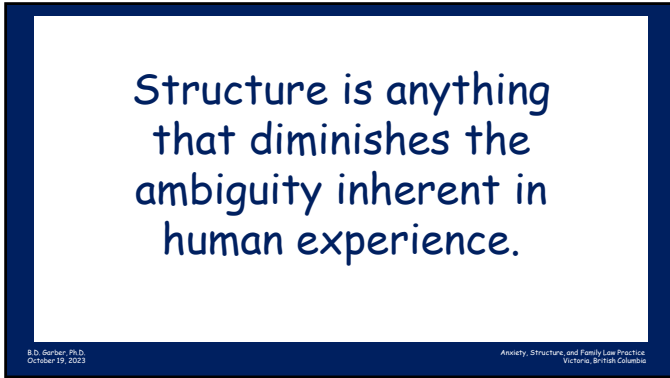
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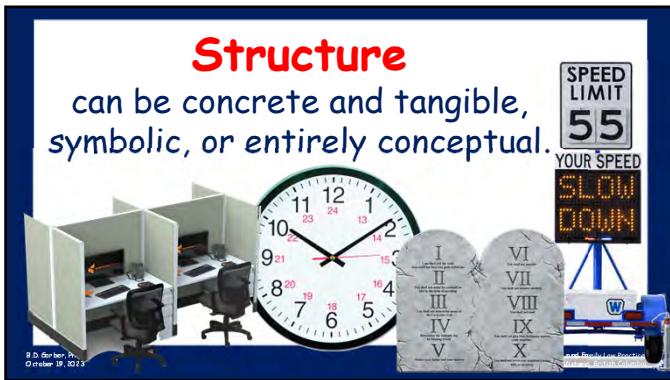
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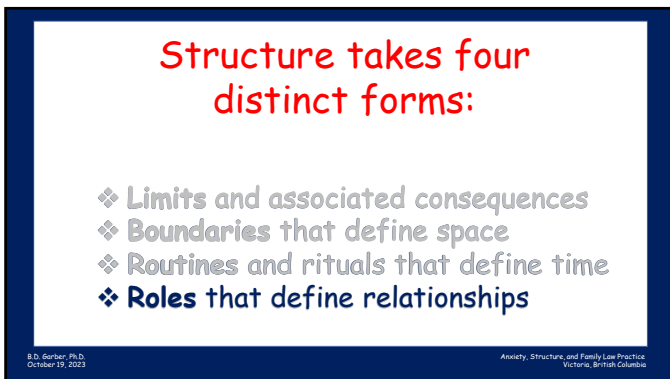
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The remainder of today asks you to understand how you create and maintain these structures in your personal and professional life.

- ❖ Limits
- ❖ Boundaries
- ❖ Routines
- ❖ Roles

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**Limits and associated consequences**

- ❖ Define behavior
- ❖ Establish if... then contingency
- ❖ Motivate choices
- ❖ How specific are the limits?
- ❖ How salient are the consequences?



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**Consequences**  
are NOT the same as  
**punishments**

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Consequences  
are the  
**"THEN"**  
in the "if ... then" formula



Consequences mean that the structure **"has teeth"**

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**Consequences??**

**Negative consequences**  
(i.e., punishments)  
may have a more  
immediate impact  
(but don't  
teach  
alternatives).

**Positive consequences**  
(i.e., rewards)  
may be less salient  
but build self-esteem,  
cooperation,  
and teach better  
choices

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**Professional  
role  
Limit and  
consequence**

	Evaluacion	Husband
1		
2		
3		
4		

**Personal role  
Limit and  
consequence**

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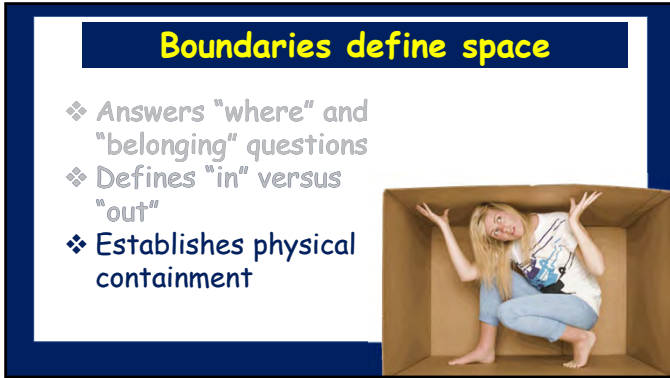
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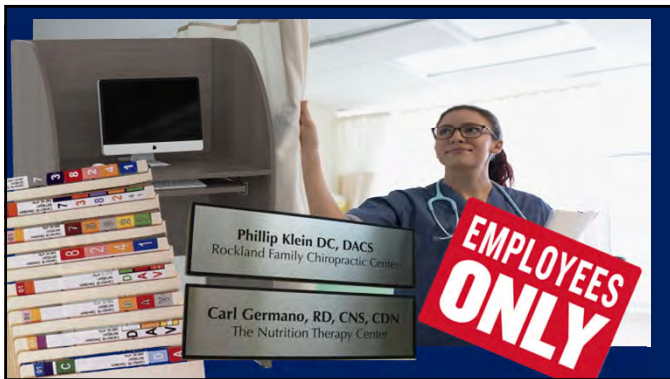
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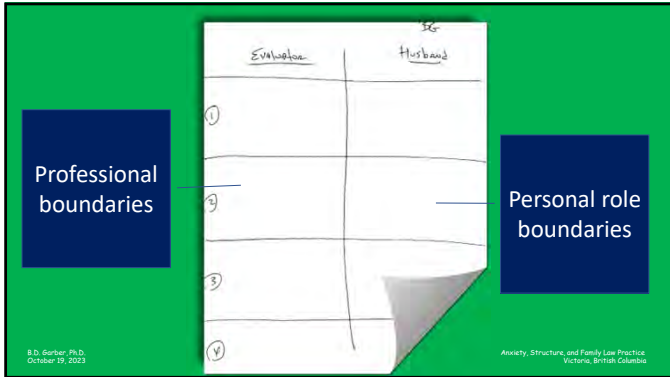
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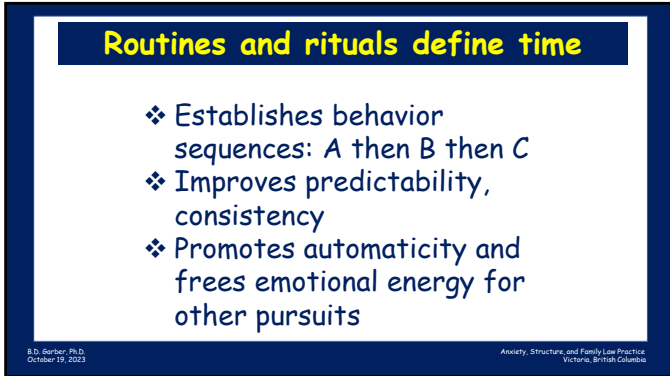
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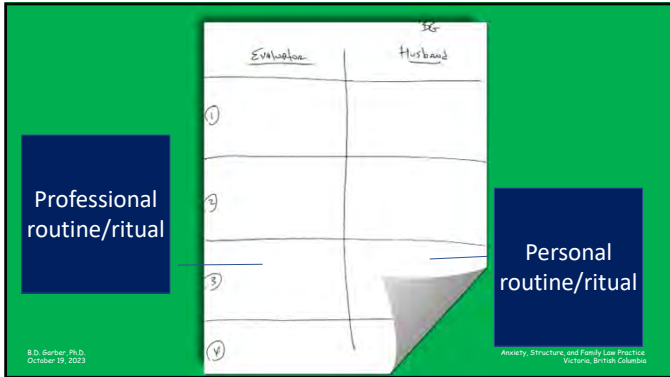
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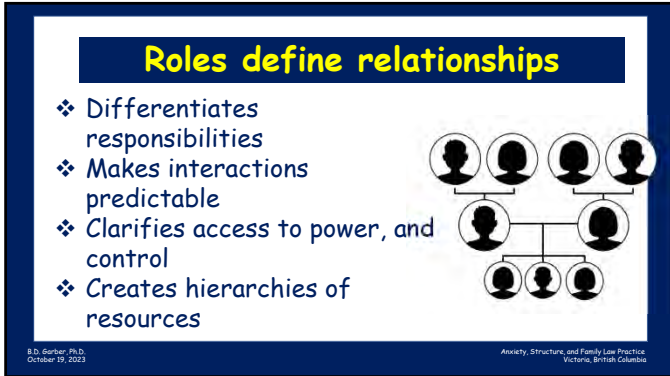
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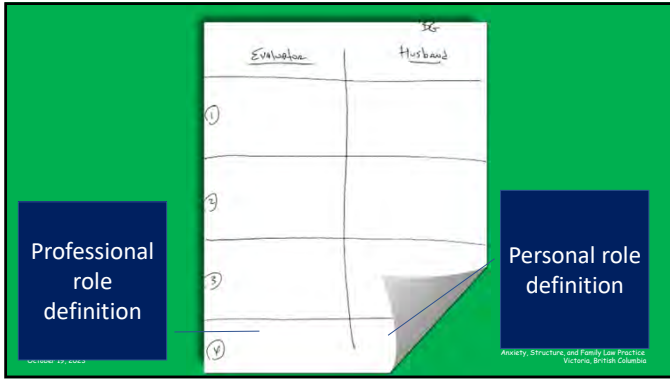
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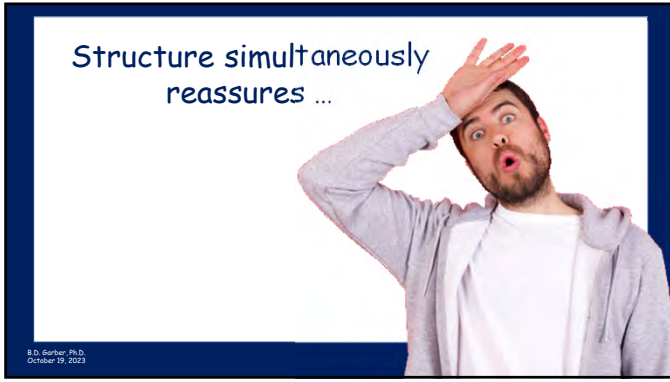
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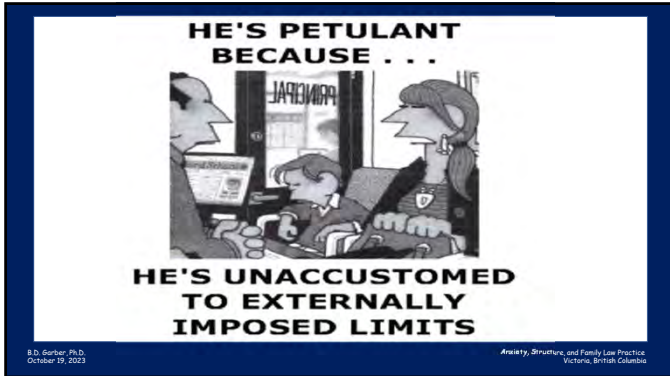
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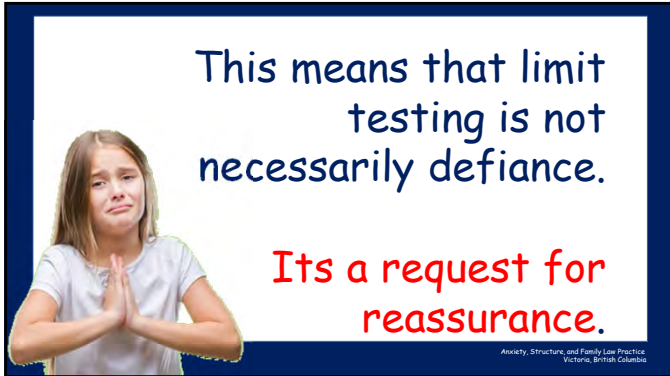
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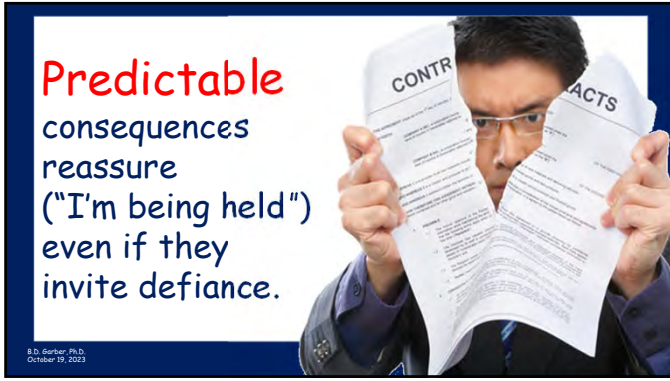
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**Predictable**  
 consequences  
 reassurance  
 ("I'm being held")  
 even if they  
 invite defiance.

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**Predictable**  
 consequences  
 reassurance  
 ("I'm being held")  
 even if they  
 invite defiance.

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This means that parent  
 child relationships exist in a  
 constant tension between

<b>Hold me tight!</b>	<b>Let me go!</b>
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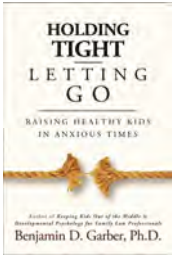
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**HOLDING TIGHT  
LETTING GO**  
RAISING HEALTHY KIDS  
IN ANXIOUS TIMES

Author of *Anxiety, Not War of the Worlds: Developmental Psychology for Family Law Practitioners*  
Benjamin D. Garber, Ph.D.

Garber, Benjamin D. (2016). *Holding Tight/Letting Go: Raising Healthy Kids in Anxious Times*.

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This dance of ambivalence is the essential drama of humanity, replayed over and over again from that first cry of birth through our last breath... its how identity emerges, self-esteem is built, and confidence is fueled."

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Do you follow-through calmly?



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Do you communicate clearly?



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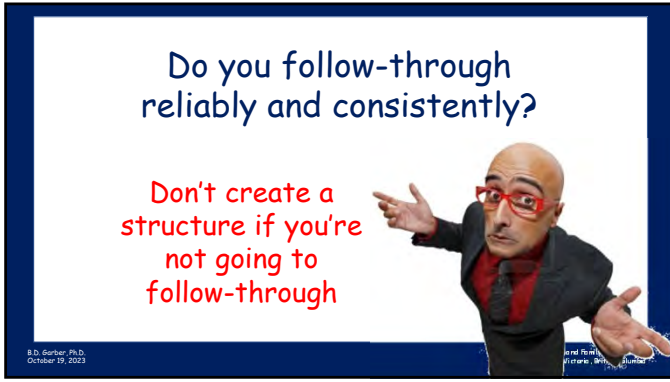
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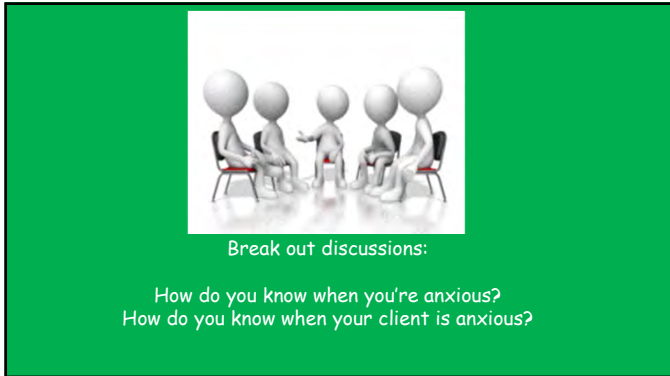
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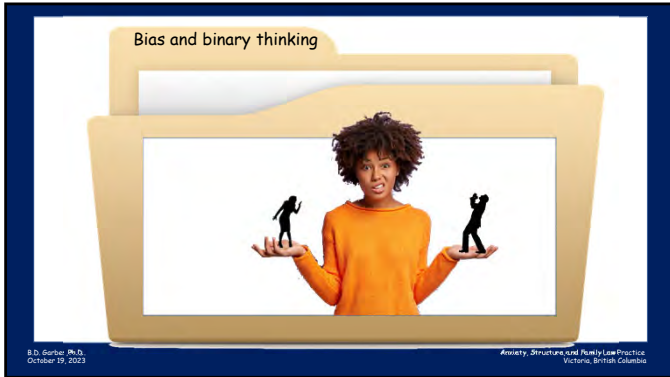
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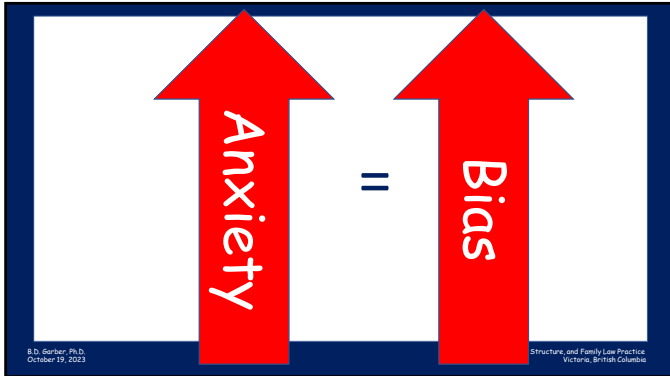
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**Bias**  
means assimilating (forcing) new data into an old model



Anxiety consumes the energy that otherwise invites accommodation (i.e., updating the model)

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**Do you believe what you see?**  
(=open minded, accommodating = low anxiety)

**Do you see what you believe?**  
(=biased, assimilating = high anxiety)

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**Many kinds of bias**  
Bias is inescapable.  
The best that we can do is be aware and work to minimize

- ❖ Confirmational Bias
- ❖ My-side Bias
- ❖ Binary Bias

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**Confirmational Bias**

The self-serving tendency to interpret experiences consistent with one's own needs and expectations



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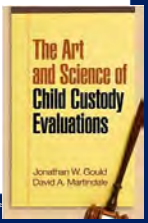
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"Uncovering information that supports one's initial impressions is inherently gratifying, while uncovering information that calls into question one's initial impressions generates discomfort."



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"I think we're out of ketchup!"



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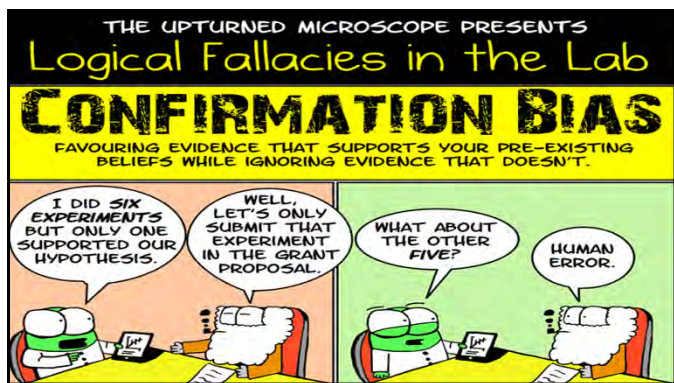
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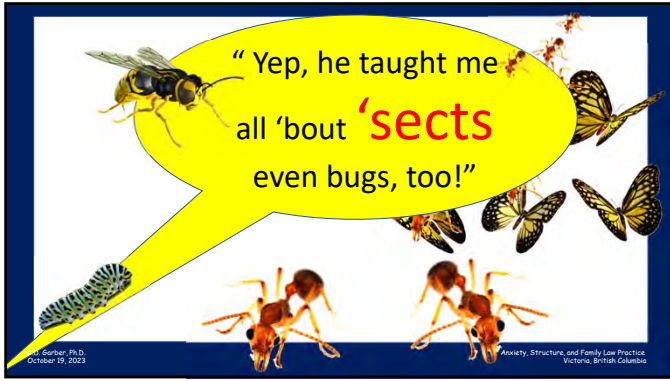
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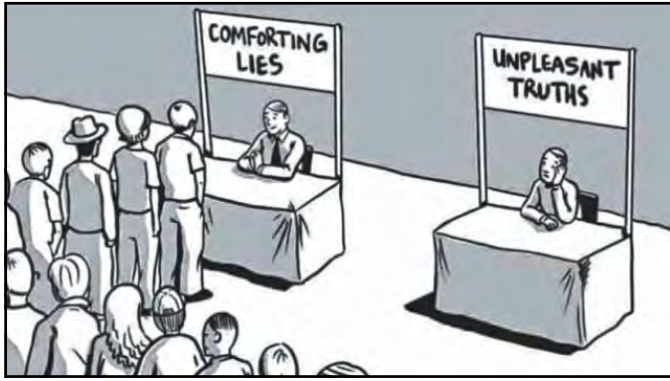
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**Experts minimize bias in part by carefully structuring the role**

- ❖ Retain impartiality by limiting what employing counsel communicates
- ❖ Establish child-centered impartial position in up-front Service Agreement
- ❖ Do not accept "select" documents for review
- ❖ "You can buy my time, not my opinion."
- ❖ Clarify limits, abide by ethics

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"There is a difference between principled retained experts, who will practice in a manner consistent with ethical codes of conduct and professional practice guidelines, and unprincipled experts, who will testify to any opinion that someone pays them to testify about ...."

Dale, M. and Gould, J. (2016). Science, Mental Health Consultants, and Attorney-Expert Relationships in Child Custody. Family Law quarterly, 48(1), 1-34

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**Binary Bias**

The human predisposition to reduce complexity to either/or black/white mutually exclusive alternatives



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Our brains (and therefore, our courts) default to linear, sequential, **binary** thinking



If/then  
Either/or  
Cause/effect  
Guilt/innocence  
Victim/perpetrator  
Good guy/bad guy

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**"Who started it?"**  
implies binary either/or causality



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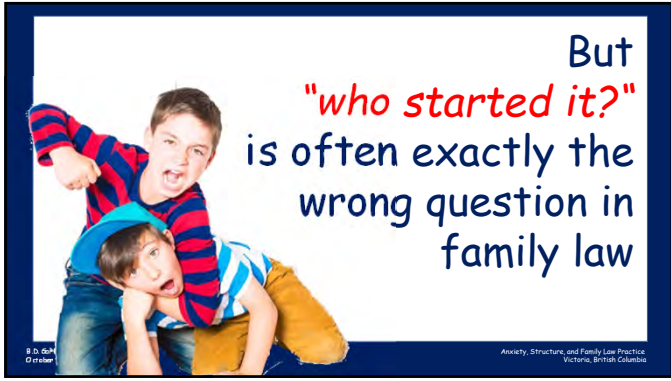
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"In her report,  
 [the GAL] opined that  
 it would **not be productive**  
**to determine whether one party**  
**is more responsible than the other**  
 for the family's problems.  
 The court wholeheartedly agrees.  
 The critical point is that  
 both of the parties are responsible."

Lucier v. Lucier ME BDDC-FM-17-252 07.07.2023 ruling

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"Who started it?"



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"Who started it?"



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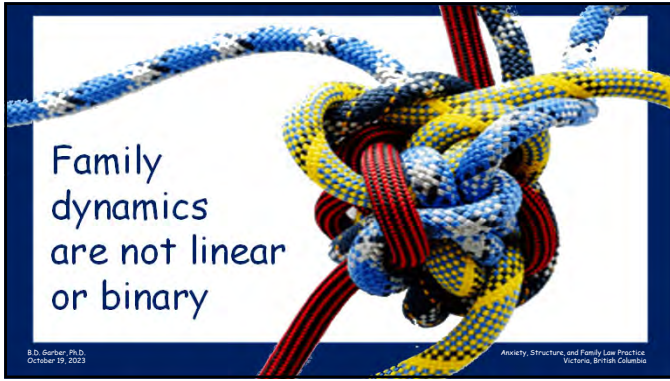
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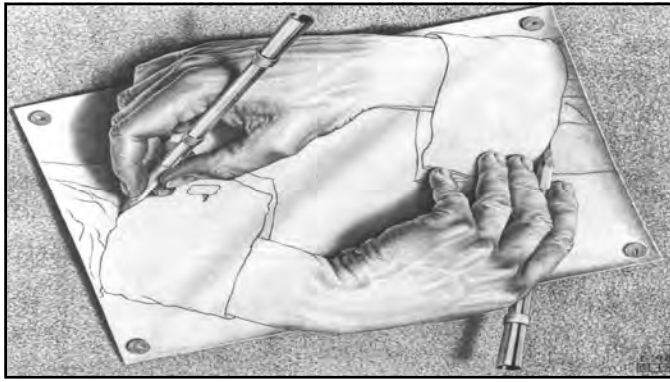
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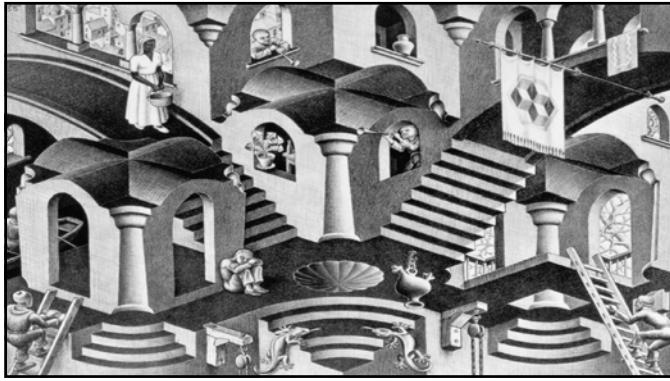
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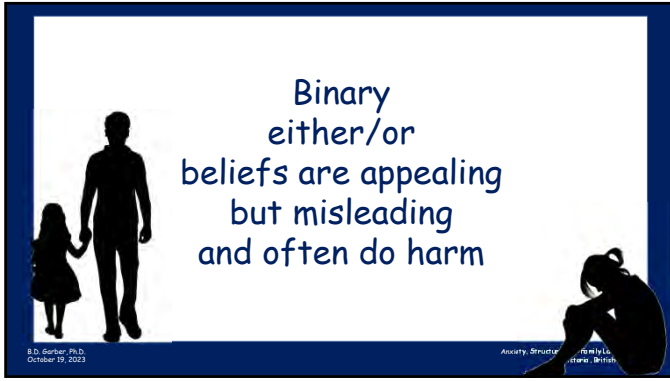
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Case-in-point:  
the  
misconception  
that RRD/PCCP  
is due  
EITHER to alienation  
OR to abuse

She abused my daughter and deserves to be rejected!

He alienated me from my daughter!

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"...when abuse or neglect have not occurred, it is highly probable —to 99% clinical certainty— that alienation is the cause of the rejection."

601146b\_L.J. (2019). Reunification Therapy for Severe Parental Alienation or for an Unreasonably Disrupted Parent-Child Relationship. Online program description access 20 February, 2020, at [http://endparentalalienation.weebly.com/uploads/3/1/0/9/31091731/12-22-2019\\_tprff\\_treatment\\_protocol\\_x\\_4\\_6\\_18\\_ext\\_protocol\\_for\\_severe\\_alienation\\_rejection.pdf](http://endparentalalienation.weebly.com/uploads/3/1/0/9/31091731/12-22-2019_tprff_treatment_protocol_x_4_6_18_ext_protocol_for_severe_alienation_rejection.pdf)

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Visible light

Infrared light

Ultraviolet light

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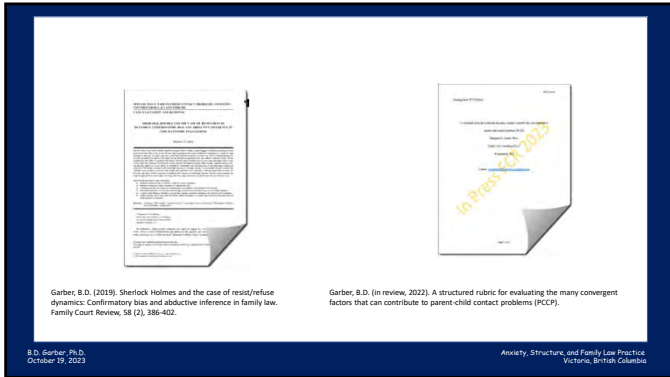
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**Blinders... because she Shies New Ideas**

"Flying machines, horseless carriages... they all had their skeptics... All we ask that you go and see Electrolux with your eyes wide open. Judge the facts first hand."

Refrigerator add circa 1932

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**We must reject linear thinking and a pathology-focused approach in favor of systemic understanding and a strengths-based approach**

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**We must work to minimize our own biases and help others see beyond theirs**

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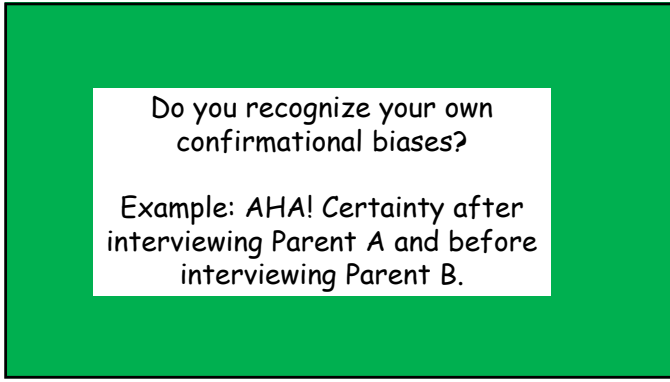
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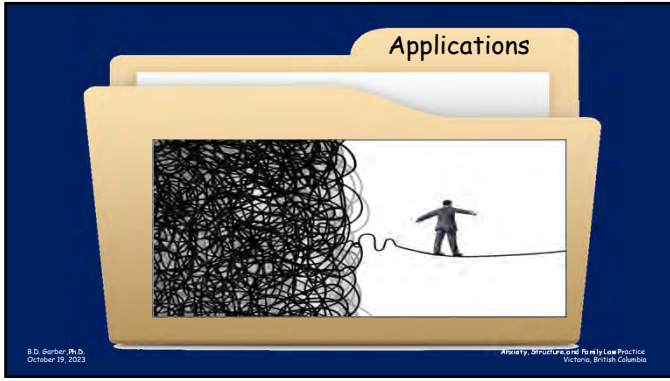
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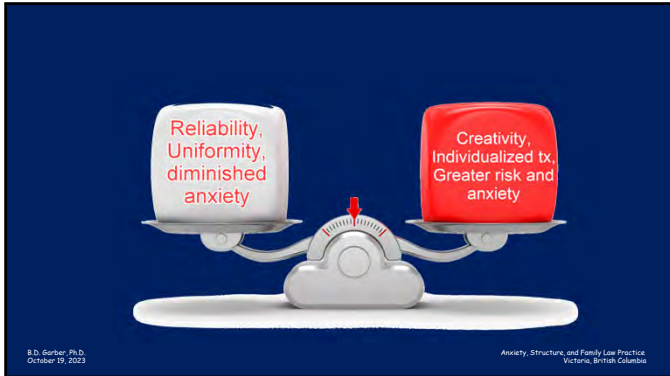
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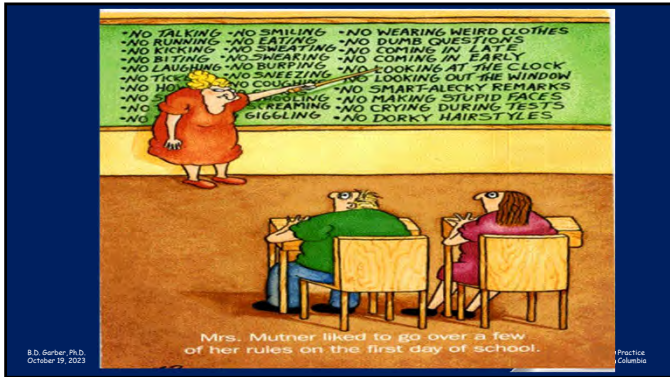
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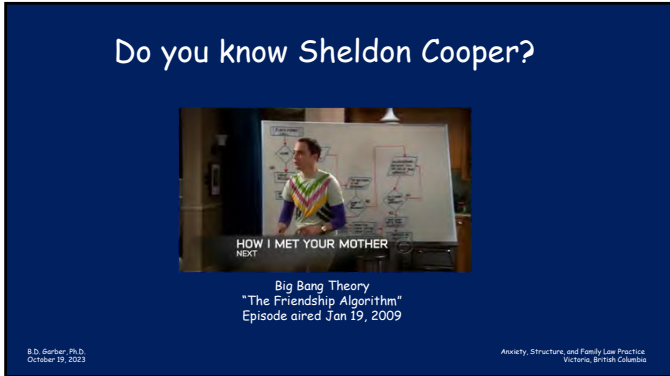
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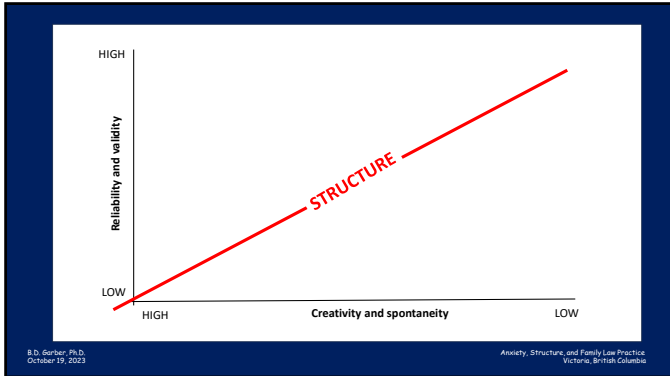
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For better or worse,  
structures  
(limits and associated  
consequences, boundaries, role  
definition, routines)  
fill our literature, ethical codes,  
best practice guidelines and  
standards.

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Our professional limits, boundaries, roles, and routines are defined by

- ✓ Jurisdiction specific laws
- ✓ Ethical codes
- ✓ Professional standards
- ✓ Professional guidelines
- ✓ Idiosyncratic structures

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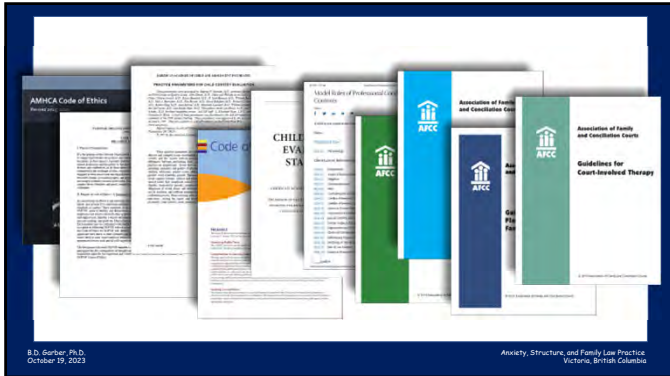
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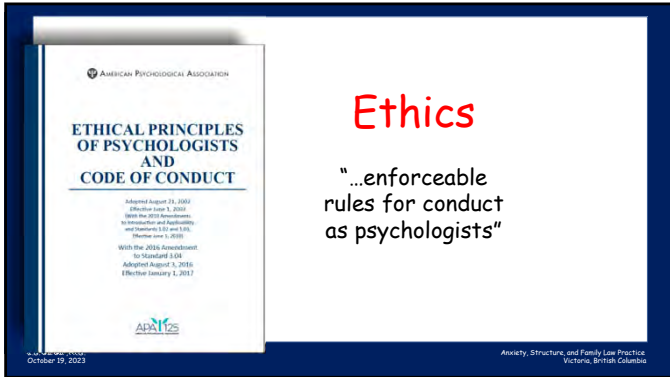
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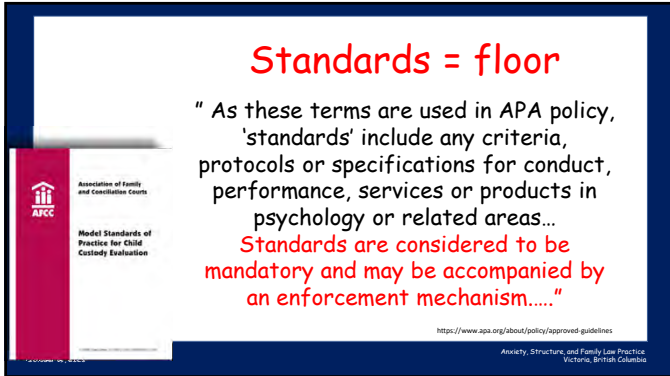
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**Guidelines = ceiling**

" These Guidelines ... are aspirational in intent. As guidelines, they are not intended to be either mandatory or exhaustive. The goal of the guidelines is to promote proficiency in using psychological expertise in conducting child custody evaluations."



Grooman v. State Bd. of Psychology, 825 A.2d 748, 757 (Pa. Cmwe. Ct. 2003)

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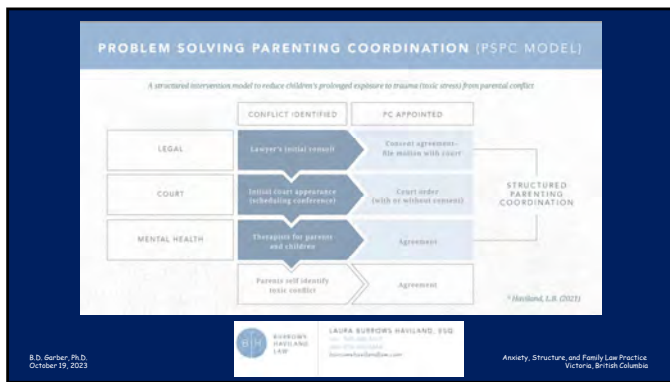
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**Table 2**  
Planning a Process-Oriented Observation Protocol for a Family Comprised of Two Parents and Two Children (Times and Durations are Arbitrary and for Illustration Only)

Time	Event
08:30 a.m.	Parent A delivers children to office; introduction and orientation
09:00 a.m.	Parent A is excused to adjoining waiting room.
09:30 a.m.	Sibling group interview observation ensues.
10:00 a.m.	Parent A returns to collect Child #2.
10:30 a.m.	First individual interview with Child #1.
11:00 a.m.	Parent A collects Child #1 and delivers Child #2.
11:30 a.m.	Five individual interviews with Child #2.
12:00 p.m.	Parent A and Child #1, science with Child #2 and evaluate
12:30 p.m.	Parent A family observation ensues.
01:30 p.m.	Transition: Parent B arrives.
02:00 p.m.	Parent A departs premises.
02:30 p.m.	Parent B family observation ensues.
03:00 p.m.	Parent B is excused to waiting room with Child #1.
03:30 p.m.	Second individual interview with Child #2 ensues.
04:00 p.m.	Parent B collects Child #2 and delivers Child #1.
04:30 p.m.	Second individual interview with Child #1 ensues.
05:00 p.m.	Parent B and Child #2 collect Child #1.
05:30 p.m.	Parent B and children depart.

Garber, B.D. (2016). Exploring a process-oriented forensic family observation protocol. Family Court Review, 54(2), 261-276.

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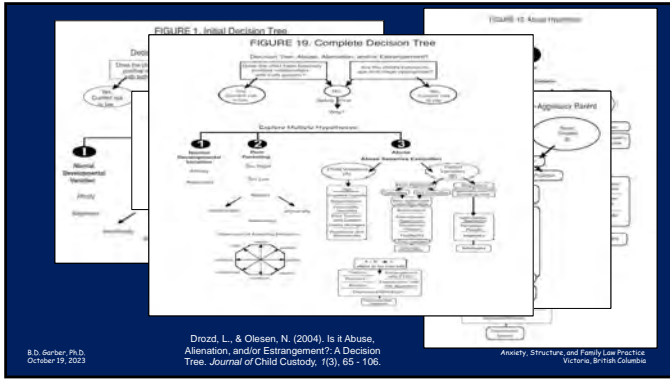
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How can you improve your professional **limits and consequences** to diminish anxiety?

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❖ Do you have a Service Agreement (aka., Statement of Understanding)?


❖ What are you NOT willing to tolerate?

❖ Under what conditions will you withdraw from this role?

❖ How do you manage payment? No-shows? Treatment of office staff? Time limits?

❖ Do you entertain communications at all hours? Via all media?

❖ How do you document these limits and consequences?



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### Serving as a testifying expert

14. **Confidentiality and privilege.** My records will remain confidential and privileged and considered subsidiary to your work product. My records will be maintained consistent with relevant ethics, guidelines, and standards. Nevertheless, my records may be disclosed under conditions including but not limited to:

16. I retain the right to withdraw from this agreement at my sole discretion should I believe that my continuing service poses an ethical, legal, or practical conflict or threat of any kind.

position that safety supersedes all else. On this basis, I interpret my assumed reporting responsibility to require that otherwise confidential and/or privileged information must be disclosed in a good faith effort to serve safety interests, e.g., by reporting to child protective services or alerting the police of a perceived imminent threat.

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### Serving as a family systems evaluator

14. I reserve the right to conduct or decline to conduct any interview, observation, document review, or other relevant process in any manner of my choosing, including any condition that the unavoidable and unexpected failure of technology and/or infrastructure.

25. **Closure date.** Understanding that this evaluation seeks to characterize longstanding and ongoing family dynamics, in the interest of closure I will alert you to a date after which I will no longer accept new data. Events that occur after this date will not be incorporated into the final summary report.

(c) Conducting relationship observations (e.g., parent and child) may require your advance cooperation managing technology and setting.

(d) Home visits will be conducted or not conducted at my discretion depending on the nature of the matters at issue. In some instances, it may be appropriate to ask you to provide a video tour of the home and environs as a less time-consuming and expensive alternative.

(e) I may require that space be rented for one or more days for the purpose of conducting in-person interviews and/or observations proximal to your homes. Should I deem this to be appropriate, all costs incurred will be deducted from retainer funds received.

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### Serving as a Parenting coordinator

- (a) I will not distinguish costs based on who is in attendance. All costs incurred are presumed to be your shared responsibility except as defined below.
- (b) A joint meeting will begin only when all parties expected for that meeting are present. Please alert me via email and call or text your co-parent(s) if you are delayed.
- (c) I reserve the right to charge either of you the full cost of any scheduled meeting if you fail to arrive for that scheduled meeting, except in the case of abrupt injury, illness, inescapable technological failures, or extreme weather, in my sole discretion.
- (d) In any case in which one of you is present for a scheduled meeting and the other is absent without notice, I will ask the co-parent who is present to wait twenty (20) minutes after which time the meeting will be cancelled and the absent parent will incur the full cost of the scheduled service except as noted above.
- (e) I reserve the right to assign costs disproportionately to any party whom I believe to be using our time in an obstructive manner, solely at my discretion.
- (f) All fees are due in full at the time of service. Services will be suspended pending payment of any outstanding balance from either party at my discretion.
- (g) I will provide you with a full accounting upon your request.

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### How can you improve your professional boundaries to diminish anxiety?

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### The physical office (if you still have one ... I don't)



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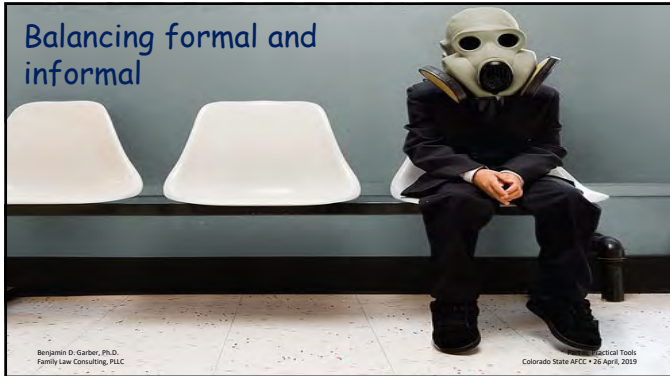
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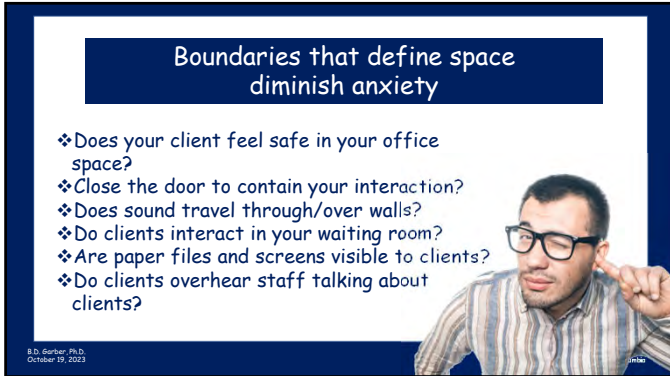
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**Boundaries that define  
PERSONAL space  
diminish anxiety**

- ❖ Personal space communicates safety and respect
- ❖ Culture can determine what is appropriate (e.g., orthodox Jewish women)
- ❖ People with trauma histories may be acutely attuned to personal space

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**Respect personal space**



"Seinfeld" Season 9 (episodes 18-19)  
originally aired April 28, 1994



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**Boundaries that distinguish  
personal from professional  
diminish anxiety**

❖ Especially social media




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How can you improve your professional **role definition** to diminish anxiety?

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**Roles that define relationships diminish anxiety**

- ❖ How and when do you explain roles to each client?
- ❖ How do you define what you can and cannot do?
- ❖ How does office staff interact with clients? With you? With one another in front of clients?
- ❖ Are office staff privy to private information?



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How can you improve your professional **routines and rituals** to diminish anxiety?

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**Structured procedures  
will diminish your anxiety  
and theirs**

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**Frontloading  
questionnaires**



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**"Front-loading the  
evaluation process in  
this manner can help  
the evaluator to  
narrow the scope of  
inquiry and use time  
more efficiently."**

Garber, B.D., Mulchay, C., & Knuth, S. (2023). Questionnaires in child custody evaluations: The forgotten ubiquitous medium. *Journal of Family Trauma, Child Custody & Child Development*, 20(1), 20-36.

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**Rapport! Rapport! Rapport!**

Follow up

“What if...?”

“What can you tell me about your family?”

“Custody? What’s that mean?”

Check consistency of report

Check vocabulary meanings

Clarify details

Hope remind me

Help me understand

Any changes? New perspectives?

Idea’s since we spoke?

Thank you

Play dumb

Beware vocabulary!

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**The Query Grid**

Garber, Benjamin D. (2007). Developing a structured interview tool for children embroiled in family litigation and forensic mental health services: The Query Grid. *Journal of Forensic Psychology Practice*, 7(1), 1-18.

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**The QUERY GRID**

Billy H.  
07.09.2010  
8 yo

	Happy	Sad	W/M (mins)	Score
HOME WITH DAD				
SCHOOL				
HOME WITH MOM				

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### The QUERY GRID

Billy H. 07.08.2010 8 yo	Happy 	Sad 	Mad 	Scared 
HOME with DAD 	I'm happy when dad reads me bedtime stories.	I'm sad when dad's away on business.	I'm mad at dad's when I have to go to moms.	I'm scared when dad is drinking.
SCHOOL 	I'm happy at school when I can go out to recess.	I'm sad at school when Mitchell beats me up.	I'm mad at school when I have to go to the principal's.	I'm scared at school when ... Mitchell chases me
HOME with MOM 	I'm happy at home with mom when my friends come over.	I'm sad when my mom yells at my dad.	I'm mad at mom's when she grounds me.	I'm scared at mom's ... almost all the time.

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### The QUERY GRID

Time 1:  
Accompanied by dad

Billy H. 07.08.2010 8 yo	Happy	Sad	Mad	Scared
HOME with DAD	X			
SCHOOL				
HOME with MOM		X	X	X!

Time 2:  
Accompanied by mom

Billy H. 07.08.2010 8 yo	Happy	Sad	Mad	Scared
HOME with DAD		X	X	X!
SCHOOL				
HOME with MOM	X			

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### The QUERY GRID

Billy

Billy H. 07.08.2010 8 yo	Happy	Sad	Mad	Scared
HOME with DAD	X			
SCHOOL				
HOME with MOM		X	X	X!

Sally

Sally H. 07.08.2010 8 yo	Happy	Sad	Mad	Scared
HOME with DAD		X	X	X!
SCHOOL				
HOME with MOM	X			

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**Structured protocols**



Garber, Benjamin D. (2021). Mending Fences: A collaborative, cognitive-behavioral "reunification" protocol serving the best interests of the post-divorce, polarized child. Unlooked Media.

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**CBT4REU**



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**1 Parallel, simultaneous relaxation training**

- ❖ Anxiety is contagious
- ❖ All involved must learn to reduce anxiety
- ❖ Parallel, coordinated interventions:
  1. Progressive muscle relaxation?
  2. Centered breathing?
  3. Directed imagery?
- ❖ Beware of relaxation-induced anxiety common among abuse victims and associated with PTSD

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**② Learn to quantify and express anxiety**

- ❖ Learn to quantify and express anxiety
- ❖ Wolpe "Subjective Units of Distress"  
0-100 or 0-10  
(Wolpe, J. (1954). Reciprocal inhibition as the main mechanism in the treatment of anxiety. Proceedings of the South African Psychological Association, 14. Wolpe, J. (1958). Psychotherapy by reciprocal inhibition. Stanford University Press.)
- ❖ How full is your balloon?



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**③ Create success ladder**

- ❖ REU therapist and child create anxiety ladder (=fear hierarchy)
  1. Brainstorm full range of contact options
  2. Dispose of impossible options
  3. Assign anxiety numbers to each
  4. Order deck least to most anxiety-inducing

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... if you got a present from him?

... if you saw a video of him?

... if you Skyped with him?

... if you went to McDonald's with him?

... if you saw pictures of you together from long ago?

... if you saw [unclear] down the street?

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**Table 1**  
 Kayla's Hierarchy of Fears Associated with Reconciliation with Her Mother

Item	How scary?
Seeing pictures of her	1
Her voice on the answering machine	2
Playing Minecraft with her online	3
FaceTiming with her	4
Seeing her in the waiting room	5
Going to McD's with her for nuggets	6

Garber, Benjamin D. (2023). Cognitive-behavioral methods in high conflict divorce: Systematic desensitization adapted to parent-child reunification interventions. *Family Court Review*, 33(1), 95-112.

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### 4 Prepare for exposure

- ❖ REU therapist coordinates with individual therapists to begin exposure:
  1. Obtain identified items (e.g., letter, photos, video, gifts)
  2. Feedback to adult therapists
  3. Feedback to child's therapist

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### 5 Coach parents

- ❖ Singly or together?
- ❖ REU txist or adult indiv txists?
- ❖ Goals include:
  1. Sidestep confirmational bias
  2. Model anxiety management
  3. Boundary (re-)definition
  4. Script respectful words and actions
  5. Endorse REU as healthy and positive

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**⑥ Symbolic contacts**

- ❖ **Mediated, representational contacts:**
  1. Letter, email: content caution! Indiv txist = coach?
  2. Photographs, videos
  3. Transitional objects
  4. **Parallel activities help to grow common foundation?**
    - (a) Chapter book?
    - (b) TV show?
    - (c) Riddles?

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**⑦ Monitored, distance contacts**

- ❖ **Initial (distance) connections: Sidestep confrontation, defenses, guilt and blame; (re-)build shared positive experiences:**
  1. "Words with Friends"?
  2. Gaming allies, e.g., GTA? WofW?
  3. Text messages?
  4. **Shared interest/activity?**

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**⑧ Proximal contacts**

- ❖ **Live proximal contacts:**
  1. In the next room?
  2. Child dictates approach/distance
  3. One-way mirror?
- ❖ **Successive approximation/anxiety reduction until child and rejected parent are in the room together**
- ❖ **Shared activities or competition? Them against you?**

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**9 Alternating family meetings**

- ❖ Alternate family meetings: (re-) define roles, rules and respect
- ❖ TWO FAMILIES model
- ❖ Loving one parent is never a betrayal of the other

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**10 Launching**

❖ **Sandwich meetings:**

1. Favored parent drops child off, leaves
2. Rejected parent arrives
3. Check-in with REU txist
4. Parent and child go out (e.g., lunch)
5. Parent and child return to debrief
6. Rejected parent leaves
7. Favored parent retrieves child



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**Structured protocols**

A Rubric for evaluating and adjudicating RRD

Garber, B.D. (in press, 2023). A structured rubric for evaluating the many convergent factors that can contribute to parent-child contact problems (PCCP). Family Court Review.

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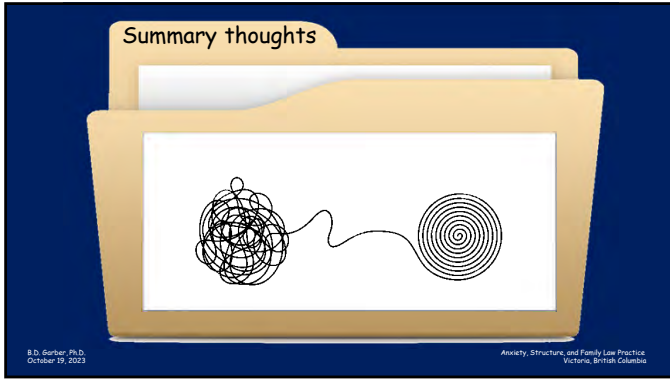
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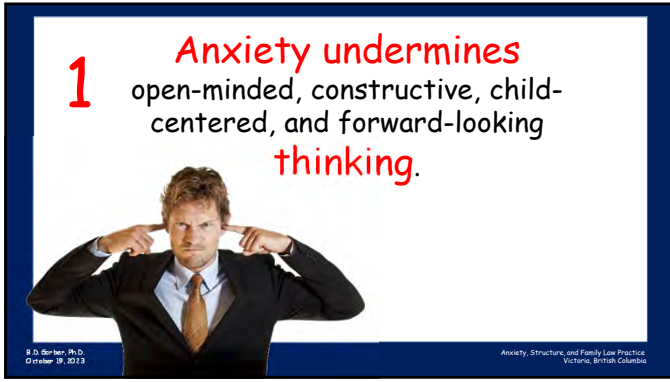
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**3** Anxiety fuels conflict.

Conflict harms children.



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**4** Anxiety fuels bias which creates more conflict



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**5** People need to feel (emotionally, psychologically, physically) held.



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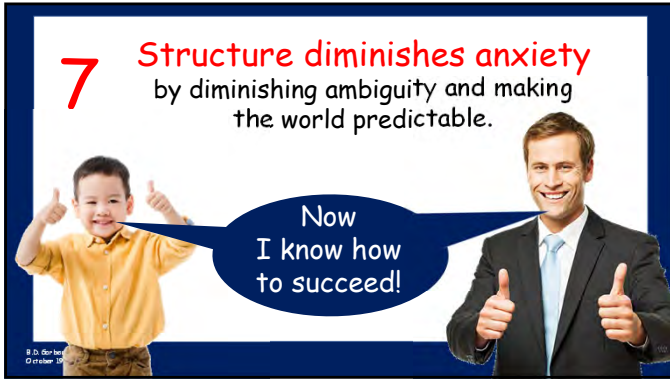
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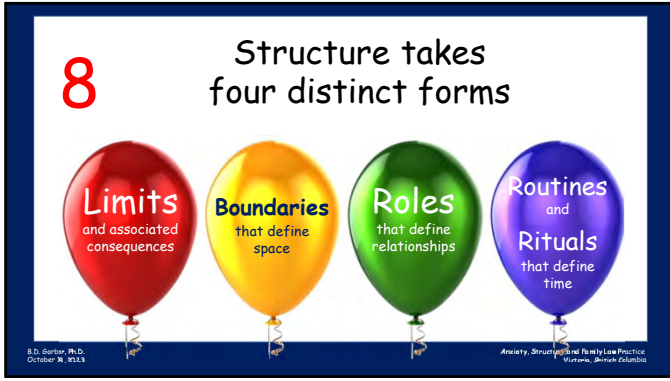
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**9**      **Structure**  
**invites limit testing**  
 (as a means of seeking reassurance)



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**10**      **By increasing structure**  
**in our personal**  
**and professional lives**  
**we can diminish anxiety,**  
**diminish bias,**  
**diminish conflict**  
**and better serve the best**  
**interests of the child**



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*We can do no great things,  
 Only small things with great love.*



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**Please reach me to talk further**

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 bdgarberphd@FamilyLawConsulting.org  
 FamilyLawConsulting.org

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