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Introduction to Emotional Availability (EA)TM

Emotional availability (EA)TM is a suite of copyrighted/trademarked assessments and interventions, developed by Zeynep Biringen, Ph.D. through rigorous research within the past 20 years. Below is the description of some of these instruments and curricula, which all require training.

Emotional Availability (EA) Scales (pp.4-5)

(4-day in face-to-face, vivo, group training or self-paced distance training through distant training materials)

The Emotional Availability (EA) Scales (Biringen et al., 1998; Biringen, 2008) describe and assess six dimensions, with four on the adult side—sensitivity, structuring, nonintrusiveness, and nonhostility, and two on the child side—responsiveness to adult and involvement of adult. An asset of the EA Scales is that two dimensions measure child qualities—child responsiveness to the caregiver and the child’s involvement with the caregiver, thus capturing not only the adult’s side of the relationship, but also the child’s side of the relationship. The key to the success of this instrument is that, although culture impacts how parents and children interact with one another, the emphasis on the presence of an emotional *connection* makes this tool an important one, even in varying cultural contexts. In fact, the EA Scales have been utilized in over 20 countries, including European and Asian countries, as well as in numerous subcultures in this country (e.g., Aviezer, Sagi, Joels, & Ziv, 1999; Biringen, 2000; Biringen, 2004; Biringen et al., 2005; Bornstein, Gini, Leach, Haynes, Painter, & Suwalsky, in press; Bornstein, Gini, Suwalsky, Leach, & Haynes, in press; Easterbrooks & Biringen, 2000; Easterbrooks & Biringen, 2005).

Emotional Availability Interventions

(require 5 days of training, which include the 4 days noted above, plus one day of additional face-to-face/in vivo group training, followed by additional time on one’s own and supervision)

EA Parent Curriculum (pp.6-12)

An important and unique facet of the EA model is training both the professionals and the parents to think and interact using the emotional availability principles. Because of this dual use, we create emotionally available environments for children. The EA Parent Curriculum will be delivered in 6 program sessions (approximately 2 hours each). The 6-week program involves a video playback component that is seen in the field of child development as crucial for real change in caregiver quality, and particularly in attachment security and emotional availability. The focus is on secure bonding and emotionally available interactions during daily activities, including joint book reading and other intellectually enriching interactions conducted in an emotionally available way. The EA Parent Curriculum offers a step-by-step process for EA Parent Instructors to engage parent figures (who may be mothers, fathers, grandparents, or foster parents). The session begins with the class watching a video together (for about 45 minutes) in which key ideas for that session are described, and the remainder of the session revolves around activities and discussion of these ideas. In between sessions, parents complete questions and activities in a Parent Workbook (Biringen, 2008).

The EA Parent Instructors conduct specific closed groups of parenting sessions. Each parenting group is closed when the class size is 10 and will not accept new members so that the confidentiality and cohesiveness of the group is maintained. Make-ups are occasionally scheduled so that all participants receive the full dose of the program.

The EA Professionals Curriculum (pp.13-14)

The EA Professionals Curriculum involves two components, one group-format and psychoeducational and the other practice-oriented. This 3-session psychoeducational professional development (scheduled over a 3-week-period) is followed by 3-4 interactive EA coachings at the sites (over a 3 month period); it is described in detail in Biringen and Easterbrooks (in press), Biringen et al. (in press) and is in operation in Larimer, Boulder, and Weld Counties in Colorado since 2004, through private foundation funding. The group of professionals are seen for 3

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sessions (that last two hours each) after work and include topics of emotional attachment, emotional availability (EA), and the links between mental health, attachment, EA and challenging behaviors in the classroom. The professionals are asked to read a book and Training Manual on each topic and there are video guides for each of the sessions that bring up key ideas (Biringen, 2008). Discussion of real cases of children ensue.

After these psychoeducational sessions, **the practice component begins and is customized to the educational and skill level of the professional (so far, we have tested this curriculum with child care professionals/teachers)**. This practice component is done right at the centers as teachers go about their normal day, with the exception of one appointment to watch the video of teacher-child interactions that is filmed as part of the pre-test assessments. The EA Professionals Coach visits the classroom 3-4 times over the course of 3 months and uses an EA Checklist, which describes in detail the behaviors that exemplify high qualities in sensitivity, structuring, and each of the other dimensions of EA. This EA Checklist is completed after each session and is given to the teacher as a form of written communication about the coach's view of that session. The program is strengths-based, noting both areas of strength, as well as areas for growth. Occasionally, the EA Professionals Coach and teacher chat about what was observed and all communications are in the context of a solid, rewarding relationship based on emotional connection so that the teacher is supported in his or her efforts to see interactions from the child's point of view and in modifying his or her behavior so that the attachment and mental-health needs of the child are addressed. The goal is to address the emotional and relational needs of the children so that they become secure, positive, and easy in the context of relationships. Videotapes of role model teachers are used to demonstrate emotional availability skills.¹

Training of EA Professionals Coaches and EA Parent Instructors

EA Professionals Coaches are trained in four steps: (1) Distance training on scoring with the EA Scales (called BASIC training, which can take approximately 4 days) or face-to-face/in vivo group training which takes the same amount of time; (2) Reading one book (Biringen, 2008 a); (3) one day face-to-face training in conducting the child care intervention (ADVANCED); and (4) supervision every two weeks, using Skype or sending of videotapes.

EA Parent Instructors are trained in several steps: (1) Distance training on scoring with the EA Scales (called BASIC training) or in vivo training which takes the same amount of time; (2) reading two books (Biringen, 2008); (3) One day face-to-face training in conducting the parent intervention (ADVANCED), which involves going through the EA Intervention Training Manual (Biringen, 2008) and provision of background information; and (4) ongoing supervision through checks on treatment fidelity and provision of feedback on videotaped sessions. Supervision is conducted as described earlier for the other program. The PI has trained individuals in 20 countries (several hundred practitioners and researchers alike) through distance training for the scoring of the EA Scales since 1998, and has a DVD library for training.

Training for practitioners on the EA Clinical Screener (1-day + distance training, p. 14)

¹ Recently released evidence from the EA Professionals Curriculum (Biringen et al., in press; Easterbrooks & Biringen, in press) indicate that (at post-test as compared to pretest) teachers in the Intervention Group are more likely to improve in most aspects of emotional availability, whereas teachers in the Control Group remain consistent. Further, the children in the Intervention Group are more likely to show improvement in levels of Child Involvement of the adult but lower levels of Dependency, as measured by the Attachment Q-Set (Waters & Deane, 1985) from pre- to post-test, as compared to the Control Group. That is, after experiencing the intervention, they become more emotionally available toward the teachers but less clingy toward them. The EA Parent Curriculum has been implemented in the Denver metro area as well as Pueblo, Colorado. Findings indicate that primary caregivers (grandmothers, mothers) as well as children in the Intervention Group show improvements in almost all aspects of emotional availability and report that their children have become less demanding and challenging, on the Parenting Stress Index (Abidin, 1995).

The Emotional Availability (EA) Clinical Screener (Biringen, 2008) is a Clinical Version of the EA Scales, to be used by practitioners in the real world who may or may not be able to videotape others' parent-child interactions. It is not meant to have the precision and calibration of the EA Scales, but is patterned after the EA Scales. In contrast to the EA Scales, the EA Clinical Screener can be utilized without filming the clients' interactions and is planned to approximate the scores from the EA Scales and is a preparation to using that system, since it is fully compatible with it. It is a brief (6-page) screener, on each of the 6 dimensions of EA, using 7 components for each dimension, and yielding a final 7-point score for each dimension.

Credentials: For all training programs, trainees who lack the equivalent of a Master's degree or appropriate license/certificate, the supervisor needs to assure Biringen of the qualifications of the trainee. **A**

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Emotional Availability (EA)TM Scales; 4th Edition.

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PART 1: INFANCY TO EARLY CHILDHOOD VERSION

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Please reference: Biringen, Z (2000). Emotional availability: Conceptualization and research findings, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 70, 104-114.

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Relationship Check-Up:

Emotional attachment and emotional availability/unavailability (EA) for parents and children

Zeynep Biringen, Ph.D.

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Relationship Re-make:

Emotional attachment and emotional
availability/unavailability (EA) for parents
and children

Zeynep Biringen, Ph.D.

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**RELATIONSHIP CHECK-UP
AND RELATIONSHIP RE-MAKE:**

**Emotional attachment and emotional availability/unavailability (EA)TM
between parents and children (to be used for parents of children 0-14 years)**

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**TRAINER'S MANUAL
PARENT WORKBOOK**

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Next cycle of training

Additional topics for future weeks, based on Relationship Re-Make additional chapters, are:

Week 1--"Your pro-active discipline",

Week 2--"Common pitfalls when you 'feel' your child is emotionally unavailable to you",

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Week 3--“EA with your special needs child or child who has some social/emotional challenges”,

Week 4--“When your life is especially stressful, rev up the language of emotional availability”,

Week 5—“Your relationship check up with your child can help you check up, understand, and rev up all of your relationships

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**The Emotional Availability Factor:
Leaders can understand, assess, and
change relationships about children
and families**

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Emotional Availability (EA)TM 4th ed., CLINICAL SCREENER: One-day training to professionals so that they can screen with respect to these 6 dimensions

EA ADULT SENSITIVITY

EA ADULT STRUCTURING

EA ADULT NONINTRUSIVENESS

EA ADULT NONHOSTILITY

EA CHILD RESPONSIVENESS TO THE ADULT

EA CHILD INVOLVEMENT OF THE ADULT

EA CLINICAL SCREENER (1-7 CONTINUUM IN EACH OF THESE DIMENSIONS OF EA)