



Practice Tool

Team as secure base model

Introduction

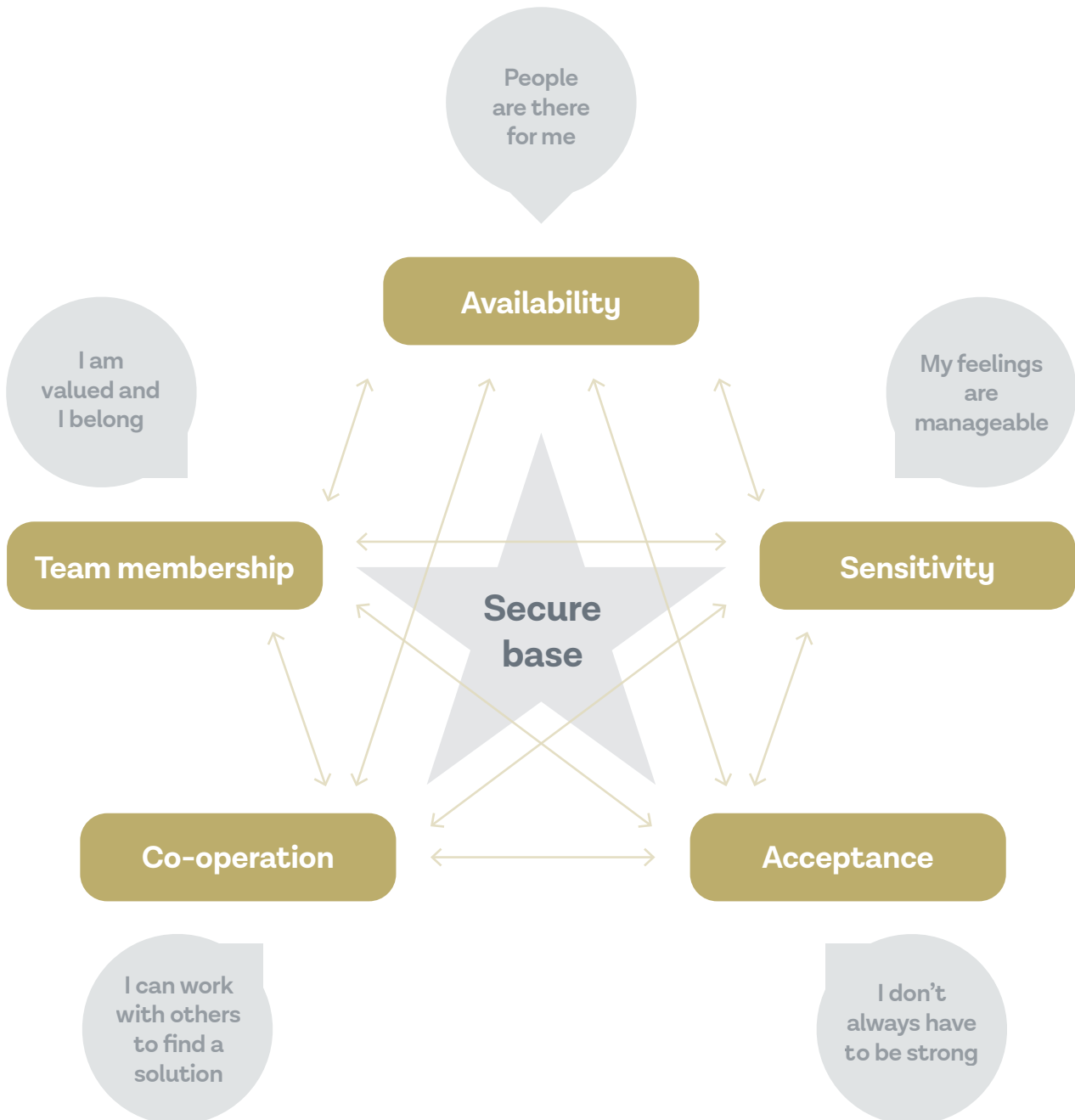
Using the team as secure base model helps to develop a culture of resilience. The idea of the secure base comes from attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969). When we have a secure base, we have people we can turn to who are available, sensitive to our needs and reliable when life is stressful. In emotionally demanding work contexts, practice supervisors and their teams often provide a work-related secure base.

The team as secure base model includes five different domains:

- > availability
- > sensitivity
- > acceptance
- > co-operation
- > team membership

The diagram on the next page which shows the five domains and the qualities of resilience that this promotes.

The team as a secure base model



The team as secure base model can be used by practice supervisors to promote a secure base for their team.

Availability

Teams work well as a secure base when members of the team are available, either in real-time or virtually, and if members of the team can also rely on other members to be available to them.

Questions for reflection

Do team members feel they can call on support from each other and yourself when needed?
Have you asked your team directly about this?

How could you create systems and a culture of availability in your team?
Can you think of any examples of what you or the team currently do to be available to each other, which you could build on?

How could you involve team members in creating this culture, so it becomes a joint responsibility?

How might diversity in the team affect availability (e.g. gender, carer status, geographical location, age)?
How could this be managed so that everyone can contribute to creating a sense of psychological availability?

Sensitivity

Team members who demonstrate empathy (e.g. by noticing other people's feelings, offering advice or opportunities to talk, or sympathy, tea or food) and help each other believe they can manage their feelings.

Questions for reflection

How well do you know the individuals in your team?

Are you aware when work is going well for your supervisees, and what their successes are?
Do you know when your team members are stressed?

Are you aware of their individual needs in relation to managing emotional parts of the job?

How might diversity affect the ways in which team members express and manage their emotions?
How could this be acknowledged in the team?

How might power differences affect the extent to which team members feel confident about sharing vulnerability?
How can you ensure support in spite of this?

Acceptance

Team members who can provide constructive help and advice when things go wrong, show an understanding that everyone makes mistakes and that it's unrealistic to expect to be perfect all the time. Beliefs around the need to be seen as 100% competent at work can create unrealistic expectations, which can lead to stress.

Questions for reflection

How do you react to mistakes made by team members?

How do you create a learning culture which encourages everyone to use mistakes as an opportunity to learn and improve?

What impact do you think your reaction to mistakes has on team members?

Do you acknowledge or praise staff when things go well?

How could you provide constructive feedback when things go wrong?

How might culture, ethnicity and diversity influence the kinds of judgements team members make about each other?

How could this be managed?

Co-operation

Team members who work together to provide direction and give advice help each other feel confident that solutions to problems will be found. This helps alleviate feelings of isolation, which can be a source of stress.

Questions for reflection

How do you encourage collaborative problem solving?

How do you encourage skills sharing?

How do you encourage team members to share their strengths?

How do you make it clear that diversity in a team can be a strength?

Team membership

Shared ownership of work, and recognition of each other as both colleagues and human beings, helps contribute to team members believing that they're valued and they belong, which helps sustain self-worth.

Questions for reflection

Do you always welcome new, and say goodbye to old, team members?

Do you provide careful induction?

Do you show an interest in your team members' personal lives (where appropriate)?

Do you acknowledge the different roles in the team?

Are you aware of team members' strengths and weaknesses?

How do you help them to develop skills?

Do you get them together for 'away days' to review work and team culture?

Do you offer opportunities for team members to contribute to local changes in ways of working or wider organisational issues?

How do you manage change?

How do you celebrate diversity?

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