

Sustaining relationships in austere times: challenges and opportunities

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Where are we heading?

Understanding current times

Identifying how austerity and anxiety impact on our capacity to relate to others and ourselves

Developing and sustaining relationship-based practice

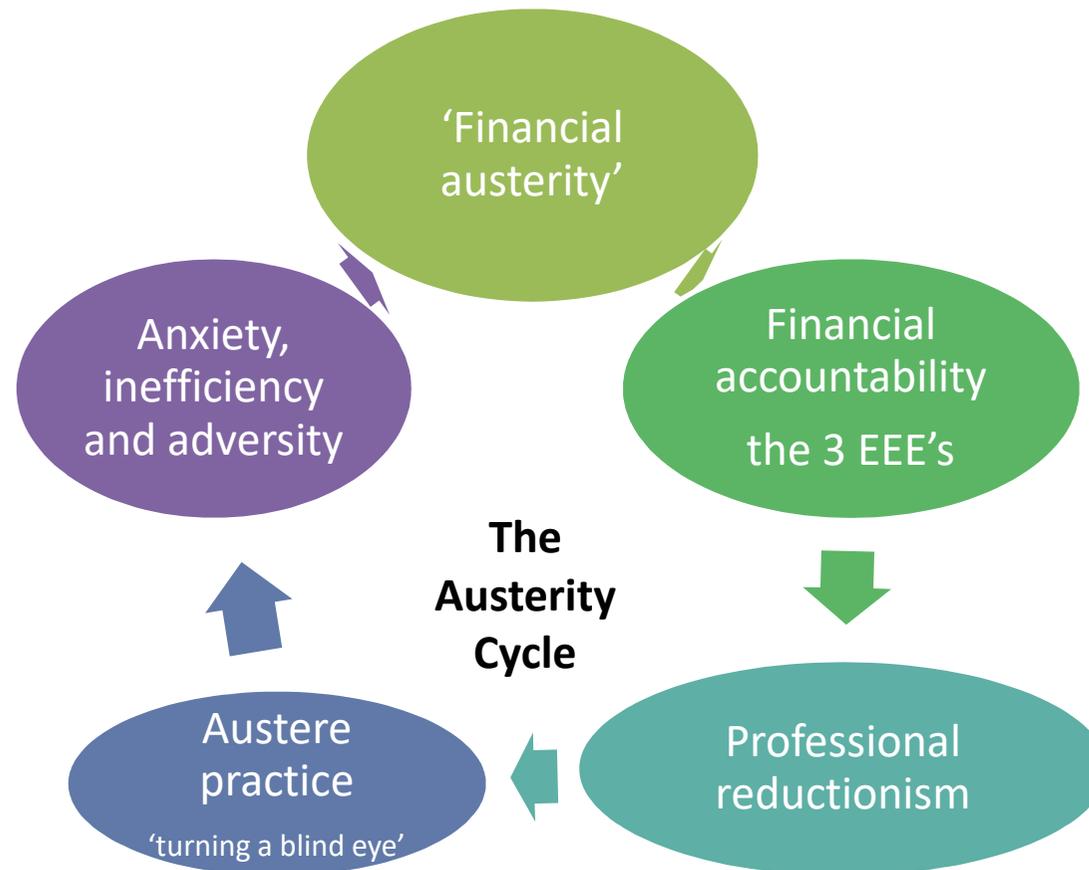
New Public Management plus austerity

- **Efficiency**
- **Effectiveness**
- **Economy**

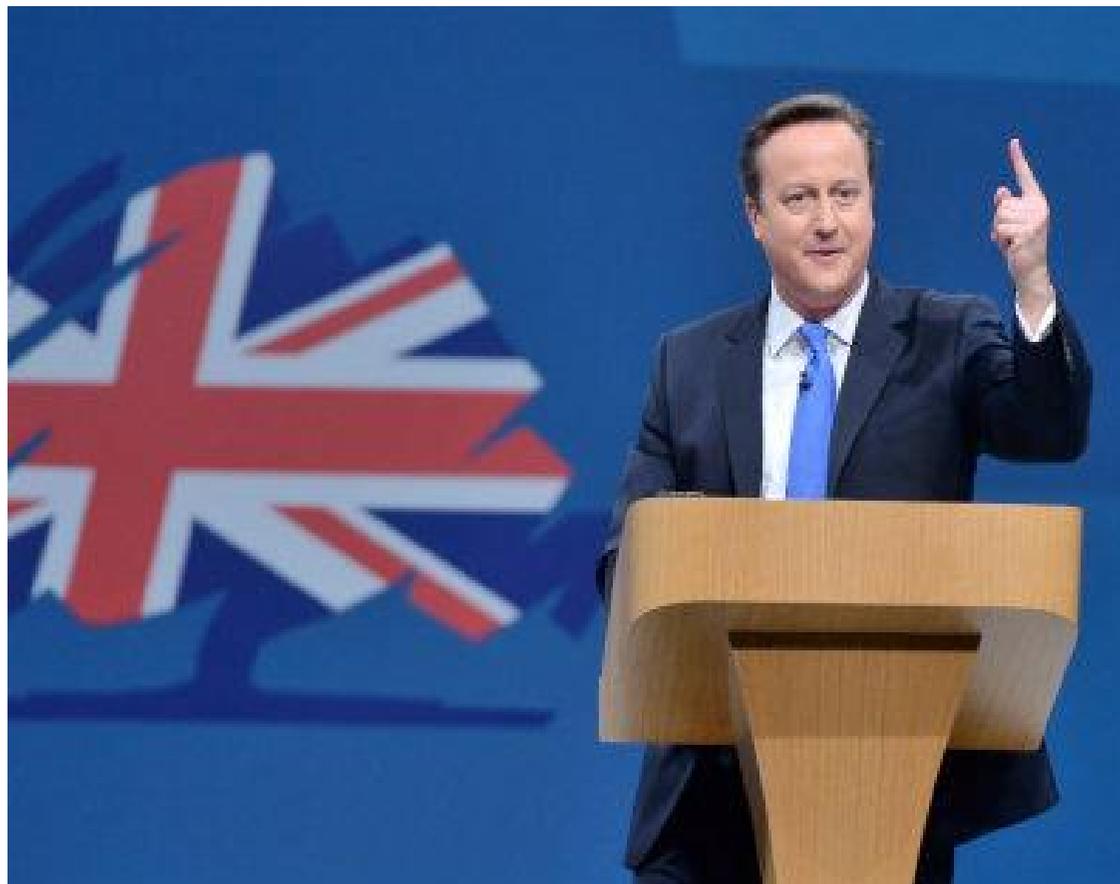


How have we got here?

Austerity, anxiety and adversity



Social workers to face five years in prison for failing to protect children from sexual abuse, warns Cameron



Community Care

‘The proposals also fail to address the incredibly important safeguarding issues that recent serious case reviews have raised. We must address the severe lack of investment in child protection services, which has put organisations and systems under incredible strain and reduced their capacity for in depth work with children and their families.’

Austerity, Anxiety and Emotion

- So not just financial austerity but **emotional** austerity
- Dysfunction and distress - anxiety - defensive practice – ‘turning a blind eye’
- Compounded by contemporary trends (Cain, 2012; Sandel, 2012; Turkle, 2010)







Emotional austerity



Front door and wellbeing



- WELLBEING: the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy.
- synonyms: [welfare](#), [health](#), good health, [happiness](#), [comfort](#), [security](#), [safety](#), [protection](#), [prosperity](#), [profit](#), [good](#), [success](#), [fortune](#), good fortune, [advantage](#), [interest](#), prosperousness, successfulness

Characteristics of Contemporary Practice

- Certain
- Simple
- Risk-free and averse
- Doing
- Cognitive/Rational
- Objective
- Outcome-driven
- Techno-bureaucratic compet.
- Uncertain
- Complex
- Risk-ridden and tolerant
- Being
- Affective/Irrational
- Subjective
- Relationship-based
- Emotional intelligence

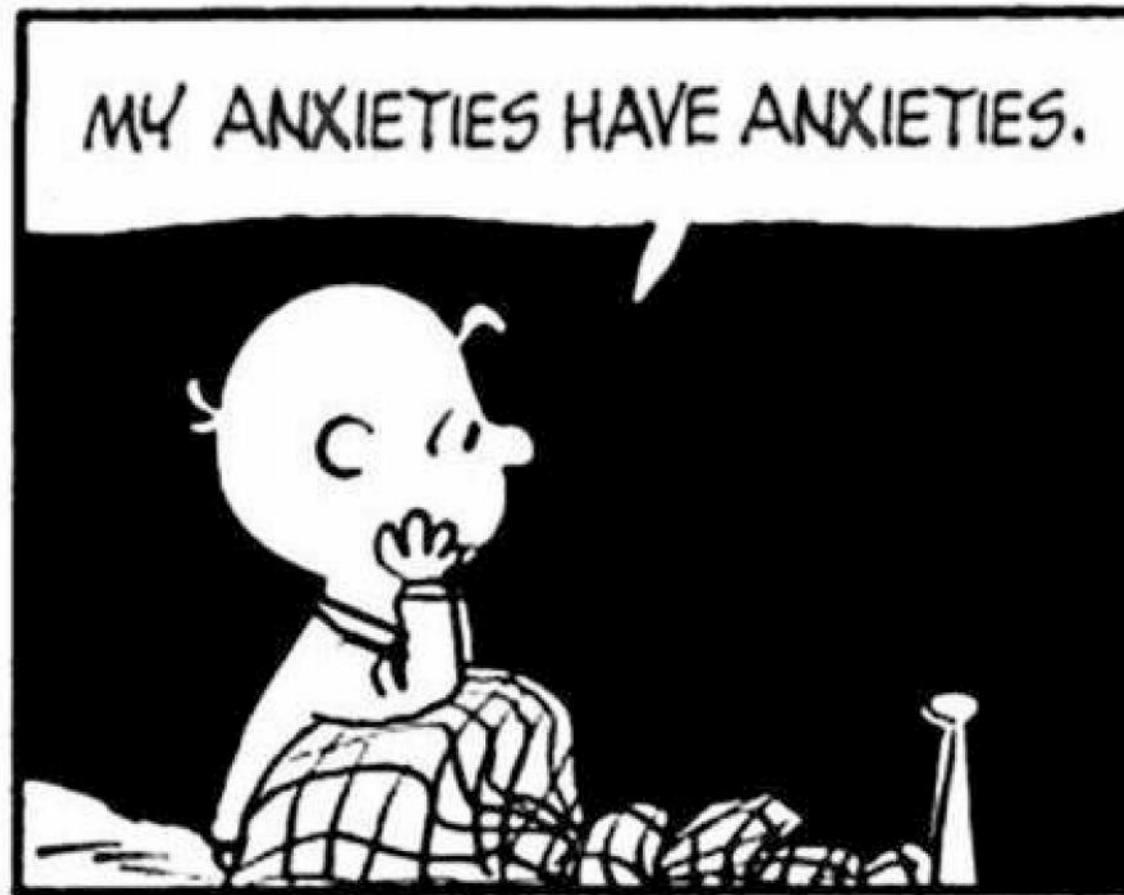
What get in the way of relationships?



Social systems as defences against anxiety

- Profit over people
- Performance indicators and audit, proliferation of policies and procedures - bureaucratisation of practice
- IT systems - 'from the relational to the informational' (Parton, 2008)
- Case management supervision
- Diminished professional responsibility and delegated decision-making

Menzies-Lyth (1988) - seminal work; Armstrong and Rustin, 2014; Lees *et al*, 2012; Taylor et al, 2008; Whittaker, 2011 - contemporary versions



US

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Turning a blind eye

What is it, at root, that is being avoided?... Of particular relevance are frequent examples of “turning a blind eye” – that is failing to see what is before one’s eyes because to do so would cause too much psychic disturbance – and of various forms of “attacks on linking” – that is systematic disconnection between things which logically belong together, again a defence which is employed because to make the link would be a source of painful anxiety (Rustin, 2005:12).

Sustaining integrated relationship-based practice

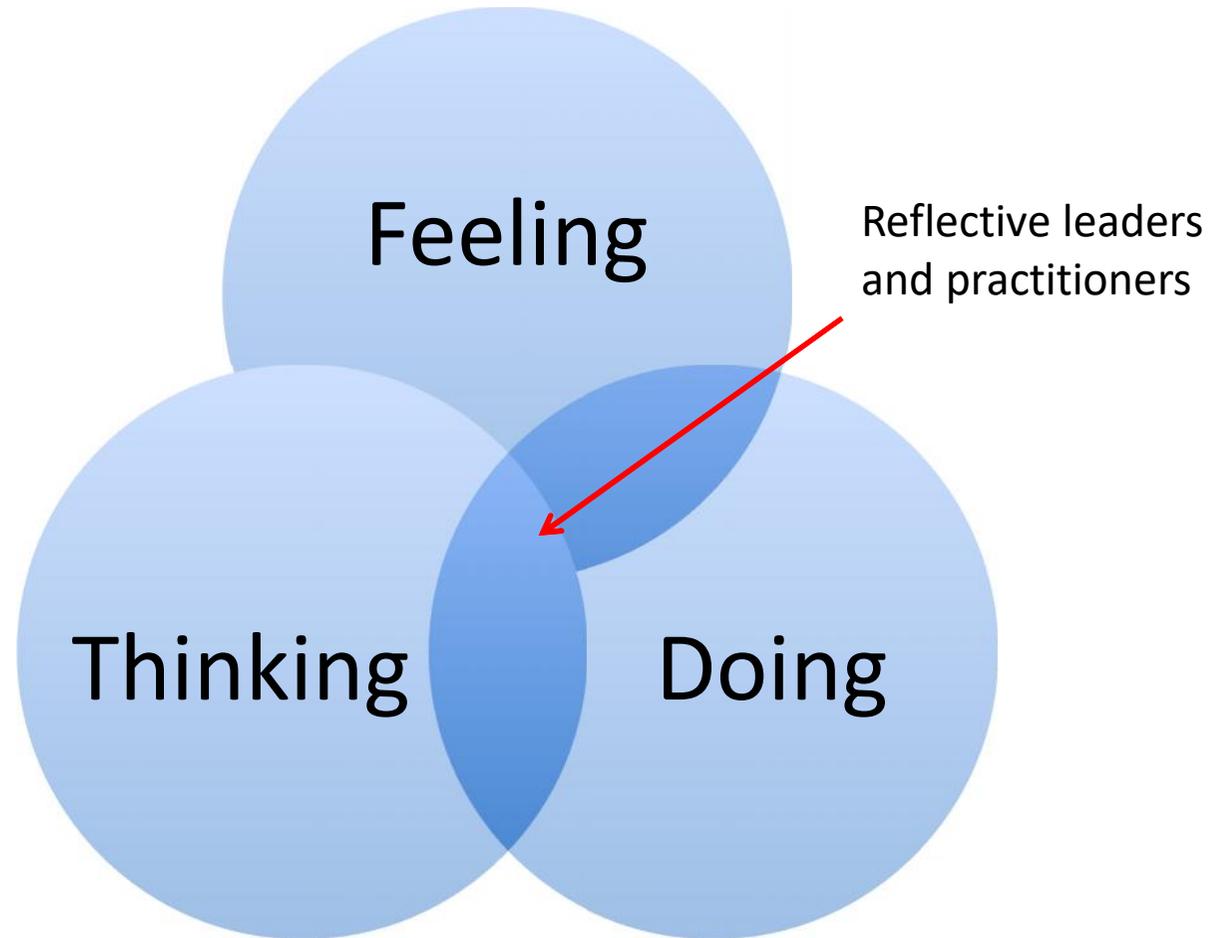


**Sustaining relationships in
contemporary practice**



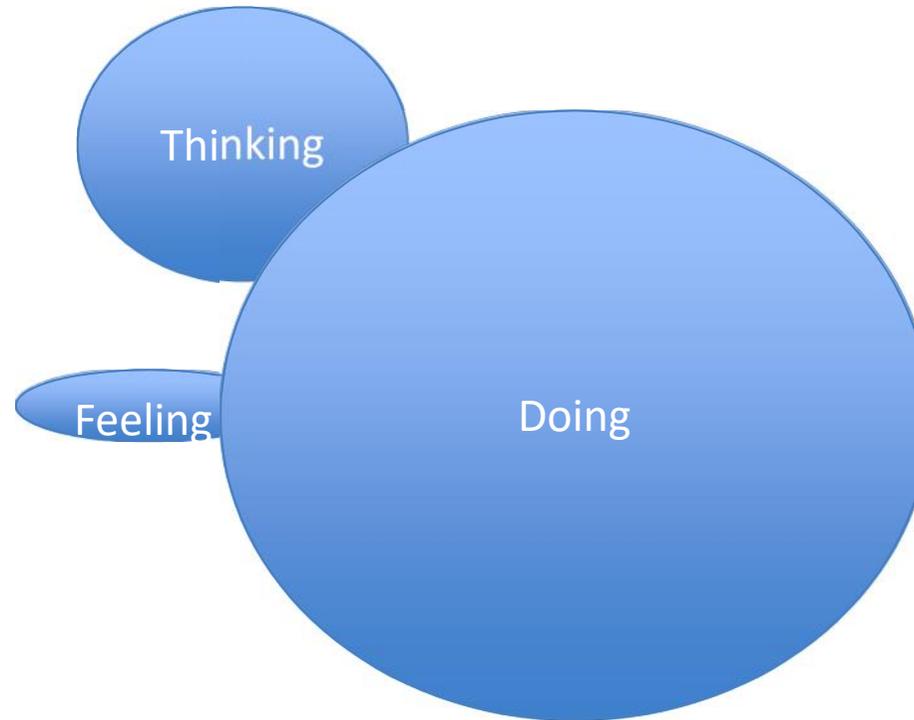
The inter-dependent characteristics of containing practice

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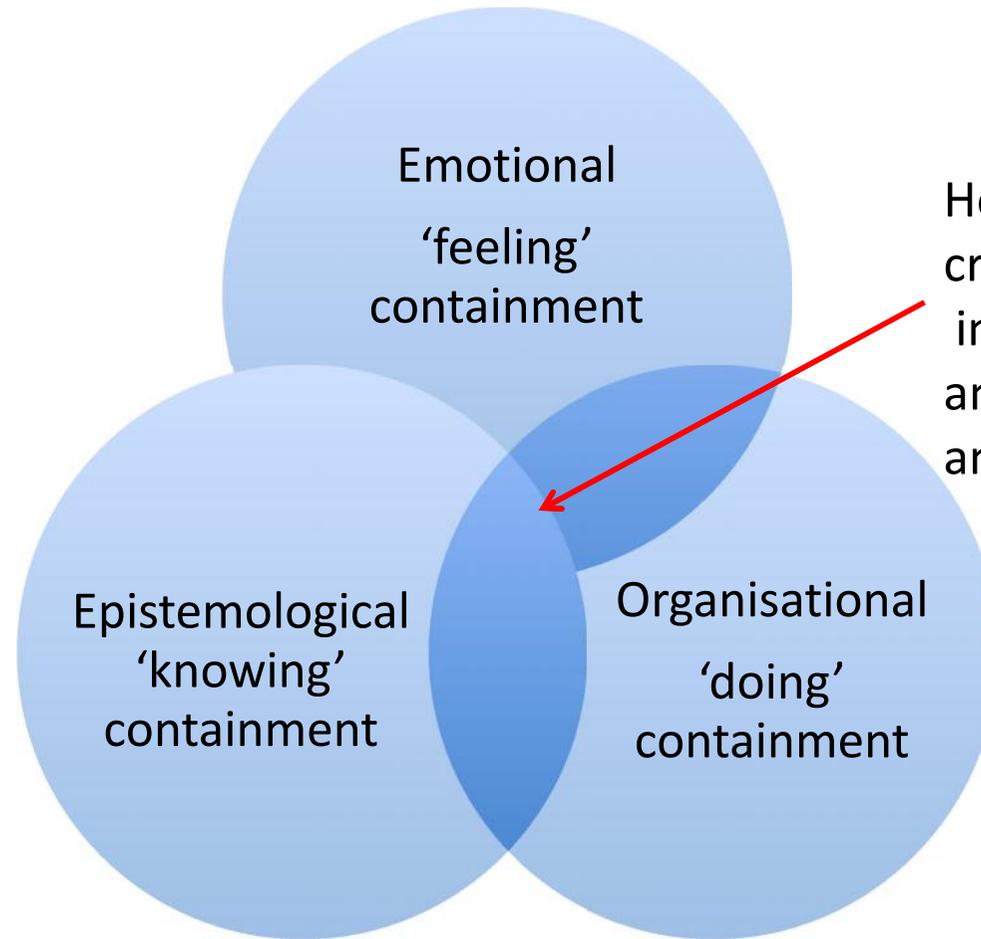
*The inter-dependent characteristics of
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Sustaining relationship-based practice

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Holistic containment
creates emotionally
intelligent, relational
and reflective leaders
and practitioners



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Resources

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