2.2 Session One

**Materials.** Using the H.S. Waters and Rodrigues (2001) word prompt outline technique, we developed six different outlines that included scenarios appropriate for the age groups involved (Table 1). Two of the outlines included an interaction between the participant and the participant's mother, two included an interaction between the participant and the participant's father, and two included an interaction between the participant's mother and father. The themes of these stories centered around mildly stressful situations (e.g., an acne problem, studying for a difficult upcoming exam) where an interaction between the characters can potentially alleviate the stress and bring things back to "situation normal." Participants were asked to tell the story as if these situations were really happening to them, or to their parents. These outlines were designed to tap attachment representations on a personal level.

**Procedure.** Participants were seated in a room with a female experimenter and an audio-tape recorder. The experimenter first provided an example word prompt outline, and explained the procedure as follows: "For this study, we are interested in seeing how different people tell stories. In front of you is what we call a word prompt outline. This particular outline is about a trip to the beach. If you read down the columns and from left to right, you can see that the words follow a basic storyline. What we will be asking you to do during this study is to tell stories using outlines that are set up just like this one. The title of each story is at the top of the page. The outline will remain in front of you the entire time that you are telling your story. The outline is just a guide, so you do not have to use all the words if you don't want to, you can change the order of the words around, or you can change the words themselves. You should try to tell your story so it comes out to be about a page in length double-spaced if you were going to write it down, which just means that you should put in as much information and as many details as you
can. The main thing is that you make up the best story you think you can tell. What I'd like you to do, just for practice, is take a minute or two to read over this outline. When you are ready, go ahead and tell your story." After the participants finished the practice story, and they felt comfortable with the procedure, the experimenter relayed the following information: "Now we'll begin with the other outlines. We'll use the same format that we just used for the practice story, except that I will now be tape recording your stories. For all the stories that you tell today, I'd like you to imagine that the people involved in the stories are you, your mom, and/or your dad, depending on the type of story I give you, and you should tell them as if these situations were really happening to you or your parents. So you should tell them in the first person. I'll remind you of this before you begin each story." The outlines were presented in blocks of two, with each story type always in the same block. The order of the Mom and I and Dad and I blocks was counterbalanced across participants, but the Mom and Dad block was always the third set of stories, since the mind frame for these stories needed to be shifted slightly.
Appendix E Mom/Dad Attachment Narratives

Trouble at Work

Dad  talk  dinner
worried  lay-offs  converse
call  options  smile
Mom  uncertain  decision

The secure base script in this narrative is one in which Mom and Dad have open lines of communication and work together to find a solution. Dad usually calls Mom and then comes home to continue the discussion about the problems at work. There is a great deal of back and forth, Mom and Dad may have different angles on a solution, but arrive at a conclusion after working through the options together. Often the children are brought into the discussion (they are older), but Mom and Dad may also want to keep them calm until a solution is agreed upon. Mom is supportive, she may even provide some concrete assistance. The tone of the story is that "things will work out," "we're a good team (family)."

Of the six sample narratives that follow: 1) the first two present elaborate and detailed versions of this basic secure base script, 2) the third story has the basic script, but is not as elaborate, 3) the fourth is an event-focused narrative that concentrates strictly on the prompt words, 4) the fifth story is brief and disjointed, with no resolution, and finally 5) the sixth story is extremely odd in that mom is not supportive when the father calls, and when the father returns home, the story turns into a spat about dinner.
Trouble at Work - score: 7

11th grader

It was Monday evening when my dad came home, slammed the car door, and walked in the house. He seemed upset and worried. Something had happened. My mom came down the stairs and gave him a huge hug as they both started to cry. I was wondering what was going on, but I didn't know. All I could hear was them in the background. They talked for awhile and then I overheard that my dad had been laid off. They both seemed uncertain, but I knew that they would get through it together. There were many options. They were both honest and loving with each other and were not ashamed of what had happened. Mom was very supportive of Dad and Dad of Mom. They helped each other get through it although things were uncertain. At dinner the next night, they conversed and smiled, and looked happy even given the horrible situation. They had made a decision to help each other. Mom was going to help Dad find a new job, and Mom was going to start a job of her own to help raise more income. Although it was a hard time, they both went about it honestly and kept their sense of humor, and got through it together. It ended up not turning out as bad as it seemed.
Trouble at Work - score: 6.5

11th grader

My dad has just been laid off from his job and he comes home very distraught, very worried. He comes home and tells my mom. They talk about this. At the dinner table we can see that they're very annoyed at this, very, very stressing thing. They know a friend who has offered my father a job at his business, so after dinner they call this man up and ask him what the options may be- what's open, what's available. He offers many different positions my father can take, of course nothing certain, he would have to talk to his manager about it and there's nothing positive. But they are feeling better, their hopes are high and they at least have done something about this problem, so they're glad that this has worked out. They smile at each other because they're happy that they've been able to talk about this and got it out in the open, and have come to a decision together. And in the end they know that while nothing is guaranteed, they'll be able to make decisions like this in the future together and they're looking forward to it.
Trouble at Work - score: 5.75

11 th grader

My dad, on Tuesday, he called my mom at her office and he sounded really worried because his company, the stock wasn't doing really well, and they came a little short in earnings that month, so he was telling her that there was rumors that there was going to be a lot of lay-offs at his company. So he was worried that he might be one of those people who would get the cut, and the thing is, my parents really need both of their salaries to continue for college, and to pay the house, so it was necessary that he keep his job. So he came home early that day, and my mom came home early too. And during dinner, they discussed their options. My dad was a little uncertain of what he should do. Should he ask his employer for any special, to not lay him off, because he had special problems at home, like we needed both of their salaries. But my mom told him to not worry too much. He probably wouldn't be the one who would get... because he had worked there for a very long time. So she thought that he would be relatively safe. And after their conversation, my dad was a little less worried. But he came to the decision that he would wait for a couple of more days before taking any action. And he just hoped that he wouldn't be out of a job by the end of the week.
Trouble at Work - score: 3

8th grader

My dad was worried so he called my mom from work and they began to talk. They were talking about laying off his best friend at work, and he was the one who would have to do it. He was discussing different options because he didn't want to layoff his best friend. He wasn't certain about if his best friend would be mad at him if he laid him off. At dinner they talked about it again and he decided there was a different option he could do instead of laying the guy off, so he smiled cause that was his decision.
Trouble at Work - score: 2

8th grader

Dad called mom and she sounded very worried. They were talking and I heard the word lay-off. "Options" came up and "uncertain." They had conversations at dinner. They smiled and had discussions about what they were going to do.
Trouble at Work - score: 1

8th grader

My dad was at work and he called home way after we had eaten dinner. And my mom said, "What was the matter?" He said that he's not going to be home for another hour, and that he's been really pissed because his day hadn't gone good. My mom said that, "Try and get home as fast as you can." And then my dad came home and said, "What are we having for dinner?" And my mom told him, and my dad got so mad, because that's not what he wanted, and he was so mad. And then my mom said, "Well, I'm tired, and I don't wanna cook or anything, so I just went out and got you pizza." And, my dad goes, "You always get pizza. And you never make dinner." And so my mom told me to just smile, just eat it, and tomorrow will be a better day, and I'll cook.
The secure base script in this narrative begins with a special plan that mom and dad have come up with to enjoy their anniversary. Mom becomes ill during the trip, Dad shows some sensitivity. He pulls over, comforts mom, maybe gives her some water, holds her hand, etc. The trip continues and Mom and Dad end up enjoying their trip. The story can end with some type of affirmation about how much they love each other, or describes some fun things they managed to do after mom got better. Of the six sample narratives that follow: 1) the first two present elaborate and detailed versions of this basic secure base script, 2) the third story has the basic script, but Dad doesn't go as out of his way as in the other two stories, 3) the fourth is an event-focused narrative, 4) the fifth story is brief and disjointed, and finally 5) the sixth story is unusual in that dad is much more concerned about reaching their destination than he is about the fact that mom is about to vomit and needs him to pull over.
Weekend Getaway - score: 7

11th grader

It was Mom and Dad's 25th wedding anniversary, and they decided as a reward they would go away on a vacation. They booked reservations at a Bed and Breakfast and looked forward to it the whole summer. Finally the day came. They took the ferry over and traveled to Block Island where they decided to stay. In the car my mom got sick, as she often does in car rides. My dad being the understanding guy he was pulled over to the nearest rest stop and let her help relax. He told her it didn't matter whether they got there or not as long as they were together. He held her hand all the way there and finally they arrived at their destination. Although Mom was sick the whole next day, they still had lots of fun. The next day they went to the beach and went swimming, and it ended up being a great anniversary. They realized how much they loved each other and how wonderful the past 25 years had been. As they went to sleep that night, they both smiled at each other, thinking of the past and the wonderful future they had in front of them.
Weekend Getaway - score: 6.75

8th grader

It's mom and dad's anniversary. Their twentieth. It's been a long time. My dad decides it would be great to surprise my mom, take her to a bed and breakfast. They travel all the way up to Maine where it's all clean and nice. During the car ride mom gets sick. They pull over and stop at a hotel to let her relax. Dad holds her as they get through the day, through the night. Takes care of her. They drive and they get to the bed and breakfast but they only have a night to stay there. But that helps her get better. He gave her soup. He gave her a blanket and they watched the sunset. They smiled happily as they both know that that was their best anniversary ever.
Weekend Getaway - score: 4.5

8th grader

It was my mom and dad's anniversary on August 17th. For their anniversary this year, they decided to go to a Bed and Breakfast. They were going to travel by car. They started their journey, and Mom got sick. They pulled over. They decided that they would try to relax and see if Mom felt any better. Dad hugged Mom to see if it helped. After awhile, she began to feel a little better, so they continued on their drive. Finally they reached the Bed and Breakfast and were at their destination. They smiled. Once they got there, they had a fun-filled day and they were able to relax and finally have some time away from the hectic normal life. At night, they slept and they were happy knowing that they had had a relaxed day.
Weekend Getaway - score: 3

8th grader

It was my mom and dad's anniversary, so they decided to do something special and go on a short vacation. So they drove to a Bed and Breakfast for a night, and the next day they went in the car and started to travel to their destination. But then my mom started to get sick, so my dad pulled over and told her to relax. And she did, and then they drove again and they reached their destination. And they smiled and they went to sleep.
Weekend Getaway - score: 2

11th grader

It was Mom and Dad's big anniversary and they had decided to travel to a Bed and Breakfast. On the way, Mom got sick and they had to pull over. When she got better, they drove on to the destination and went to sleep.
Weekend Getaway - score: 1

11th grader

My mom and dad were going to a Bed and Breakfast for their anniversary, so they traveled in a car to another state for some reason. And there were the usual map troubles where Dad always gets lost. And then my mom got sick, and she asked my dad to pull over so she could relax. She held her stomach and was about to throw up, but my dad said that they had to keep driving because their destination was far away. So my mom didn't smile and went to sleep instead.