

Early Childhood Attachment

When describing how young children have a predisposition to seek out touch from one or more trusted carers when they are scared, worried, or vulnerable and find that contact to be reassuring, Bowlby coined the term "attachment." To maximise survival and reproduction, Bowlby's theories make considerable use of evolutionary theory, ethology, and cybernetics. He therefore believed that these actions were the result of natural selection. (Fearon & Roisman, 2017).

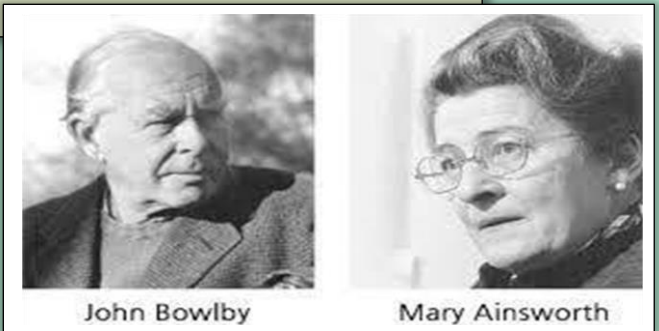


Bowlby's Biography...

- 1907-1990
- Psychoanalyst
- Believed that mental health and behavioural problems could be attributed to early childhood.
- Likes to study separation of Children, due to his own experiences.
- Mary Ainsworth student of Bowlby. Extended and tested his ideas and suggested that several attachments styles existed.



Families have a crucial role in children's lives and serve as an environment for their development, according to psychology and social sciences (Doinita & Maria, 2015).



John Bowlby

Mary Ainsworth

ATTACHMENT FORMATION ACCORDING TO JOHN BOWLBY'S (1988) ATTACHMENT THEORY, TAKES PLACE DURING THE FIRST FEW YEARS OF LIFE AS A RESULT OF AN INFANT'S INTERACTIONS WITH ITS CAREGIVER. ATTACHMENT FORMATION IS A CRUCIAL PART OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. DO YOU KNOW HOW ATTACHMENT FORM DURING DIFFERENT STAGES OF INFANCY?



The first two months of life are a baby's formative period for developing attachments with its primary carers. This stage is known as the pre-attachment stage, during which new-borns are still forming stable attachments with their carers but are also learning social skills and communication. Infants may recognise and favour familiar faces during this stage, as well as respond to touch, sound, and scent. They can also express themselves verbally and smile in social situations. They are unable to discern between their caretakers and other adults since their social communication skills are still developing. Based on the calibre and regularity of their interactions, the infant will start to develop a more solid attachment relationship with their primary carers as they move through this stage and into the following stages of attachment (Bowlby, 1977).

When a baby is between the ages of 2 and 6 months, they are in the second stage of their attachment development, when they start to create selective attachments to their primary carers. According to attachment theory, this stage is characterised by the birth of the social smile and the beginning of social referencing, in which infants watch their carers' reactions for indications on how to respond to a novel or unclear occurrence. In this stage, babies begin to develop a preference for dependable carers and exhibit sadness when separated from them. Babies exhibit symptoms of separation anxiety and aggressively seek closeness when they're upset. Babies also start to distinguish between their primary carers and other people, and they start to feel safe and secure with them. The child's socioemotional development may be significantly impacted by the type of bond they create with their primary carers at this point (Ainsworth, 1967).

Infants create a special attachment to their primary carers around the age of 7 months, at which point they have developed a close emotional tie with that person. The infant exhibits a distinct preference for their primary carers and can differentiate them from other adults during this attachment (Bowlby, 1969). Two significant emotional manifestations—separation anxiety and fear about strangers—appear together with the growth of a particular attachment. When in the presence of strangers, a baby who is experiencing stranger anxiety will act distressed, whereas a baby who is experiencing separation anxiety would act anxious when they are removed from their primary carer. The infant's facial expressions reveal how deeply attached they are to their primary carers (Rothbaum et al., 2000).

By the time they are 18 months old, new-borns often have several attachments—also known as multiple attachments—to various primary carers. These bonds are made with those who give the baby routine care, emotional support, and comfort, such as parents, grandparents, siblings, and other family members, as well as with carers who are not related to the baby's immediate family (Bowlby, 1979). Infants can explore their surroundings and learn about the outside world from a base of safety and security that comes with multiple attachment figures. Also, these attachments may give the child a variety of interesting social experiences that may aid in their social and emotional growth (Ainsworth & Bell, 1970).

ACCORDING TO BOWLBY'S ATTACHMENT THEORY, HAVING SECURE ATTACHMENT CONNECTIONS HELPS PEOPLE FEEL MORE SECURE AND SUPPORTED EMOTIONALLY, WHICH IMPROVES THEIR MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH. ACCORDING TO THE CONCEPT, PEOPLE WHO HAVE SOLID ATTACHMENTS TYPICALLY PERFORM MORE SOCIALLY AND EMOTIONALLY, HAVE A MORE POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT, AND ARE MORE RESILIENT. ALSO, THEY ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE BETTER INTERPERSONAL CONNECTIONS WITH LOVED ONES AND THE PUBLIC. BASED ON THEIR EARLY ATTACHMENT EXPERIENCES, PEOPLE CREATE AN INTERNAL WORKING MODEL OF THEMSELVES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS. THE MENTAL IMAGES THAT PEOPLE HAVE OF THEMSELVES, OTHER PEOPLE, AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEM ARE REPRESENTED BY THE INTERNAL WORKING MODEL. IT CONSISTS OF THE BEHAVIOURS, ATTITUDES, AND EXPECTATIONS THAT PEOPLE HAVE FOR OTHER PEOPLES (BOWLBY, 1988).



There are four main types of attachment styles, according to Bowlby, and they are as follows:



SECURE ATTACHMENT

BABIES THAT HAVE A STABLE ATTACHMENT TYPE SEE THEIR PARENTS OR OTHER CARERS AS A SAFE BASE FROM WHICH TO EXPLORE THE OUTSIDE WORLD. KIDS TURN TO THEIR CARER FOR COMFORT AND SECURITY WHEN THEY ARE UPSET OR DISTRESSED. ACCORDING TO RESEARCH, CHILDREN WITH A SECURE ATTACHMENT PATTERN HAVE A HIGHER CHANCE OF DEVELOPING INTO EMOTIONALLY STABLE ADULTS (BOWLBY, 1969).



INSECURE AVOIDENT

BABIES WHO EXHIBIT AN INSECURE AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT STYLE TEND TO AVOID OR REDUCE INTERACTIONS WITH THEIR CARER. WHEN THEY ARE DISTURBED OR DISTRESSED, THEY DO NOT LOOK FOR COMFORT OR ASSURANCE. THIS CAN BE AS A RESULT OF THEIR CAREGIVER'S FREQUENT LACK OF RESPONSIVENESS OR AFFECTION (AINSWORTH ET AL., 1978).



INSECURE RESISTANT

BABIES THAT HAVE AN INSECURE, RESISTANT ATTACHMENT STYLE FREQUENTLY DISPLAY SIGNS OF ANXIETY AND FOCUS ON THEIR CARER. THEY COULD WANT TO BE CLOSE TO THEIR CARER BUT NOT FEEL AT EASE IN THEIR COMPANY. THIS CAN BE AS A RESULT OF THEIR CAREGIVER'S UNEVEN OR UNPREDICTABLE ANSWERS (MAIN & SOLOMON, 1990).



DISORGANISED ATTACHMENT

BABIES WITH A DISORGANISED ATTACHMENT STYLE BEHAVE INCONSISTENTLY AND FREQUENTLY IN CONFLICT WITH THEIR CARERS. IN THEIR INTERACTIONS, THEY MAY COME ACROSS AS UNCERTAIN, SCARED, OR LOST. THIS COULD BE AS A RESULT OF THE CARER EXPERIENCING UNRESOLVED TRAUMA OR ABUSE (MAIN & HESSE, 1990).

Ainsworth: Strange Situation Test

Caregiver and baby (6-12 months) come to the lab and get comfortable



Caregiver would leave the room for a few minutes



Observe how the baby responds while caregiver is gone



To investigate how infants formed ties to their caretakers, Mary Ainsworth created the unusual circumstance process. Infants were observed during a series of eight brief experiences that differed in the social contexts in which they occurred. The experiences were created to elicit a variety of stress levels and demands, from brief separations from the mother to conflicts with strangers. Infants were divided into one of three attachment styles: secure, insecure avoidant, and insecure resistant during the procedure. Babies that had a secure attachment type were content to explore their surroundings when their carers were around, and they were easily consoled by them after a brief separation. Babies who had an uneasy, avoidant attachment were less likely to ask for comfort from their carers and would even avoid them. Babies with an unstable, refractory attachment style feared separation but resisted being cuddled by their carer when they re-joined. According to Ainsworth's research, these attachment types remained largely constant both over time and in various contexts. Additionally, she discovered that infants with secure attachments tended to have carers who were responsive to the infant's needs and sensitive to those needs, while infants with insecure attachments tended to have carers who were insensitive (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

SO, TO
PROMOTE
HEALTHY
EARLY
CHILDHOOD
ATTACHMENT,
PARENTS AND
CAREGIVERS
SHOULD TAKE
FOLLOWING
STEPS

Respond Promptly to the Child's Needs.



A child might feel secure and trusted if they receive prompt responses that let them know their needs are important. To encourage healthy growth and preserve a strong attachment bond, it is important for parents to properly respond to children's needs (Bowlby, 1989).

Foster nurturing and loving environment.



Children can grow and thrive in a secure atmosphere that is nurturing and loving. Parents and other adults who care for children can be kind and affectionate, communicate clearly and effectively, and give them a stable and predictable environment (Bowlby, 1969).

Provide physical comfort such as cuddling and hugging.



Physical comforts like holding, cuddling, and kisses can reduce a child's discomfort and develop emotions of protection and security. According to research, physical contact can cause the release of the hormone oxytocin, which encourages interpersonal attachment and bonding (Moberg, 2003).

Encourage play and exploration.



Play and exploration provide children with chances for learning and growth. By allowing kids to explore their surroundings, parents and other adults who look after them can promote their cognitive, social, and emotional development. (Bowlby, 1969).

Spend quality time and have fun with the child.



It can help to feel loved, cared for, and paid attention when you spend time with kids. Additionally, it can develop a sense of security and trust in kids and make them feel valued and important (Bowlby, 1969).

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EARLY ATTACHMENT HAS A CRITICAL ROLE IN FORMING A CHILD'S PERSONALITY, CONDUCT, AND INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS. THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ATTACHMENT HAS BEEN LARGELY UNDERSTOOD VIA THE LENS OF BOWLBY'S ATTACHMENT THEORY. BY ATTENDING TO A CHILD'S NEEDS RIGHT AWAY, CREATING A SUPPORTIVE AND LOVING ATMOSPHERE, OFFERING PHYSICAL COMFORT, PROMOTING PLAY AND DISCOVERY, AND SPENDING QUALITY TIME WITH THEIR KIDS, PARENTS AND OTHER CARERS CAN ENCOURAGE STRONG EARLY CHILDHOOD ATTACHMENT.

