

EARLY ATTACHMENT IS CRUCIAL FOR EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF YOUR CHILD

A strong, enduring, affectionate bond that an infant shares with a significant individual (Gillibrand et al., 2016)

WHAT IS EARLY ATTACHMENT?

Originating from the work of John Bowlby, Attachment refers to a bond between a child and their primary caregiver. [MHS, 2020]. Created from birth throughout their early years and has a long-term impact on a child's sense of self, development, growth and future relationships with others.[MHS,2020]. This early attachment can determine your child's development in many ways, such as their self-esteem, what they expect from other people and even their emotional toughness (Tempest, 2016). Another important note is that it is believed to be a 'critical period' between ages 6-30 months, in which the early attachment should be formed with your child, if not formed after 2 and a half years, there is a risk of not being able to create one at all (Bowlby, 1953-1980).

4 TYPES OF ATTACHMENT

There are four main attachment styles showcased within children, which are **secure, avoidant, ambivalent and disorganised**.

The most dominant being 'secure' but during developmental stages, different types may emerge, but this is all a part of development and is completely normal.

Secure –

Children with a secure attachment generally are happy and trusting, enjoy being with their caregiver and are secure enough to explore the world and test limits of their independence.

Ambivalent –

Characterised by a high level of anxiety and insecurity, may seem clingy and more frequently want attention of their caregiver yet reject it when its given, also wary of strangers.

Avoidant –

may be emotionally distant, often preferring to play with objects rather than with people, may be wary of physical contact such as hugging and often displays early signs of independence and the want to do things themselves without assistance.

Disorganised –

Struggle with managing their emotions and may display anger and erratic behaviour but are just as likely to seem depressed or withdrawn.

ATTACHMENT THEORIES

BOWLBY'S EVOLUTIONARY THEORY

According to Bowlby who was a child psychiatrist and psychoanalyst in the 1950s, he studied the negative impact of maternal deprivation on young children. Bowlby observed that early attachments could significantly affect a child's emotional development and adult relationships in later life, he believed that actions such as sucking, clinging, crying smiling and so on were a consequence of natural selection. The child knows their caregiver is the key to survival and protection through these behaviours. Bowlby's theory was later refined by

Ainsworth (Li, 2023)
CUPBOARD LOVE

Sigmund Freud had a theory that an infant's needs for things such as food, oral sexual gratification and security are all satisfied by their mother. Throughout this process of gratification, the infant begins to desire the mother. This form of attachment is now referred to as cupboard love.



YOUR ROLE IN ATTACHMENT **WITH YOUR CHILD**

Nearly all children are attached to their caregiver, but not always. It depends a lot on the caregivers' responsiveness and sensitivity to the infant (Cassidy, Jones & Shaver, 2013). The list below will showcase the influences that you could have on your child and what to avoid and focus on.

SECURE ATTACHMENT

The parent with this style of attachment is fast in reacting to their child's needs (Ludlow and Gutierrez, 2014) make play an essential and reassures the child by picking them up and interacting with them when needed. (Lewis, 2020).

AMBIVILANT ATTACHMENT TYPE

A review into this attachment style found that mothers that had lowered maternal ability tend to have children with this style. However, it is not very common with less than 15% of infants showcasing this (Cassidy & Berrlin, 1994). Parents are found to be inconsistent and are not as responsive as those with secure attachments (Ludlow and Gutierrez, 2014).

AVOIDENT ATTACHMENT

Parents with this type of attachment type are found to be rejecting towards their child. They do not help with difficult tasks and don't maximise their child's feelings. (Lewis, 2020).

DISORGANISED ATTACHMENT TYPE

This style of attachment is developed when the child's only source of safety (their parent) becomes a source of fear, often seen in people who have been verbally, sexually or physically abused in their childhood. In adulthood, people with this attachment type find it difficult trusting others and can develop mental health issues such as substance-abuse, Depression and BPD. (Ainsworth, 1970).

Four in ten infants lack strong parental attachments*
(B. Rose Huber et al, 2014)

70% of infants have a secure attachment

10% of infants have an ambivalent attachment

20% of infants have an avoidant attachment
(Hammonds, 2012)



WHY SEPERATION CAN OCCUR

Separation from a child can happen for several reasons which may be something that you can't control. Hammonds(2012) suggested a few reasons as to why separation may occur-

- **Premature birth (baby in ICU)**
- **Mother suffering from post-natal depression**
- **Illness in mother or baby**
- **Mother on medication making her less present from child**
- **Place of work does not offer maternity leave, making things harder**
- **Having twins/triplets and feeling guilt for not being with another child/prioritising all of them the same.**

Early separation has been highly linked to disorganised attachment among children as well as mental health issues. In a study of French-Canadian preschool children, the ones who shifted from secure attachment to disorganised were most likely to have had the loss of a parent or guardian (Moss et al, 2005). Extended separations of a month or more prior to 5 years old are linked to an increase in BPD in adulthood (Crawford et al, 2009) as well as this, Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn (2000) found that separation lasting more than a week was associated with children's reading achievement by age 8, even within the first year of life normative separations has been shown to be stressful for children, such as a day in day-care (Luecken & Lemery, 2004).

SECURE ATTACHMENT BEGINS WITH YOU!

First things first which is the most vital step, is taking care of yourself to be able to create a secure attachment with your child (Robinson et al., 2020). Robinson et al explained that this involves **asking for support from others** from family and friends, especially within the new born stages, **getting enough sleep** is another crucial aspect as sleep deprivation can make people irritable and cranky and **having time for yourself** and taking time away can help you parent more effectively. An hour in a coffee shop, a walk or doing something that gives you that renewed energy. If you're looking after yourself correctly then a secure attachment will be formed a lot easier.

How do I make sure
that my child is
securely attached?

What if my child
has experienced
early separation?

Your infant may have experienced early separation that was out of your control (as we have previously mentioned this can happen), try not to worry! it is believed that attachment types are not set stages in an infant's life and that they change dependent on how the infant is treated (Hammonds, 2012).

Hammonds showcased with the right care and environment an insecurely attached child can become securely attached. Therefore, with all this in mind it is important that you give your child the correct care, as if you were that child, how would you like to be treated?

GROWING

OLD

"These adults are just waiting for rejection and disappointment; in their view it is inevitable."

Showcased from the attachment project, as individuals grow older, those who didn't receive a secure attachment may struggle with a lot of things later on in life. On one hand they want to belong and feel loved however on the other hand, they are scared to let anyone in and have a fear that people closest to them will cause harm. They do not reject emotional intimacy, they are just simply afraid of it, they also have trouble believing that their partner will love and support them for who they are which can lead to self-sabotage causing an end to a relationship early. They also tend to have a bad image of themselves. To shape this later in life the need to learn how to trust is paramount to build future relationships.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ALL THIS

Now that you have developed some knowledge upon what attachment is, the different types of attachment and theories. As well as your role in your child's attachment type and why separation can occur. Attachment has been proven to be a very crucial time within your child's development and we hope this information has given an insight into how important that statement is.

The long-term benefits of a secure bond (Robinson et al., 2020):

- Develop healthy relationships
- Can seek support
- Enjoy others' company
- Maintain emotional balance
- Open with their emotions



The long-term effects of insecure bond:

- Emotional detachment
- No trust
- Relationship problems
- Low self-esteem and self-worth
- Panic attacks

REFERENCES

Ainsworth, MD, Bell, SM.(1970). Attachment, exploration, and separation: Illustrated by the behaviour of one-year-olds a strange situation. *Child Development*, 41(1), 49-67.

Britannica (n/a). [photograph of mother and baby].
<https://www.britannica.com/science/attachment-theory>

Gillibrand, R., Lam, V., O'Donnell, V., Gillibrand, R., Lam, V., O'Donnell, V., Gillibrand, R., Lam, V., O'Donnell, V., & Gillibrand, R. (2016). *Developmental psychology*. Pearson Education, Limited.
<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/trinity/detail.action?docID=5175099>.

Hammonds, M. (2012). Linking early health attachment with long-term mental health. *Kai Tiaki : Nursing New Zealand*, 18(2), 12-4. <https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.uwtsd.ac.uk/docview/1017877209/fulltext/70FDED8BDAE245C1PQ/1?accountid=130472>

IMGBIN (n/a) [photograph of holding hands family silhouette].
<https://imgbin.com/png/iPmc3KZ3/holding-hands-family-silhouette-png>

Lewis, R. (2020). *Types of attachment styles and what they mean*. <https://www.healthline.com/health/parenting/types-of-attachment#secure-attachment>

Li, P (2023). Bowlby & Ainsworth Attachment theory- How does it work.
<https://www.parentingforbrain.com/attachment-theory/>

Ludlow, A., & Gutierrez, R. (2014). *Developmental psychology*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Mentally Healthy Schools. (n/a). *Attachment and Child Development*.
<https://mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/mental-health-needs/attachment-and-child-development/>

Robinson, L., Saisan, J., Smith, M., & Segal, J. (2020). *Building a secure attachment bond with your baby*.
<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/parenting-family/building-a-secure-attachment-bond-with-your-baby.htm>

Tempest, M. (2016). *Secure attachment: The importance of responsive relationships in childcare*.
<https://www.pacey.org.uk/news-and-views/pacey-blog/2016/march-2016/secure-attachment-the-importance-of-responsive/>

Tizard, B. (2009). Looking back: The making and breaking of attachment theory. *The Psychologist*, 22(10), 902-903.
<https://www.bps.org.uk/psychologist/looking-back-making-and-breaking-attachment-theory>

Vecteezy (n/a). [photograph line drawing parents kissing their little boy on his cheeks].
<https://www.vecteezy.com/vector-art/4483409-continuous-one-line-drawing-parents-kissing-adorable-child-with-an-innocent-expression-national-children-s-day-single-line-draw-design>

VectorSTock (n/a). [photograph of drawing-mom holding baby].
<https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vectors/drawing-mom-holding-baby-loving-vector>

<https://positivepsychology.com/attachment-styles-childhood/>

