

APPLYING BOWLBY'S ATTACHMENT THEORY TO ISAAC'S EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

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Module code: LCHS 4010

Module: Psychology in Health and Social Care

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Isaac's Case

Isaac is 4 years old and is attending a London Children's Centre.

Withdrawn, distressed on separation, and socially challenged.

His mother suffers from post-natal depression, and has limited support (Slomian et al., 2019).

The change in childcare might impact on Isaac's emotional security (Macagno and Molina, 2024).



Bowlby's Attachment Theory

Bowlby's theory accounts for child-caregiver emotional relationships (Duschinsky, 2020).



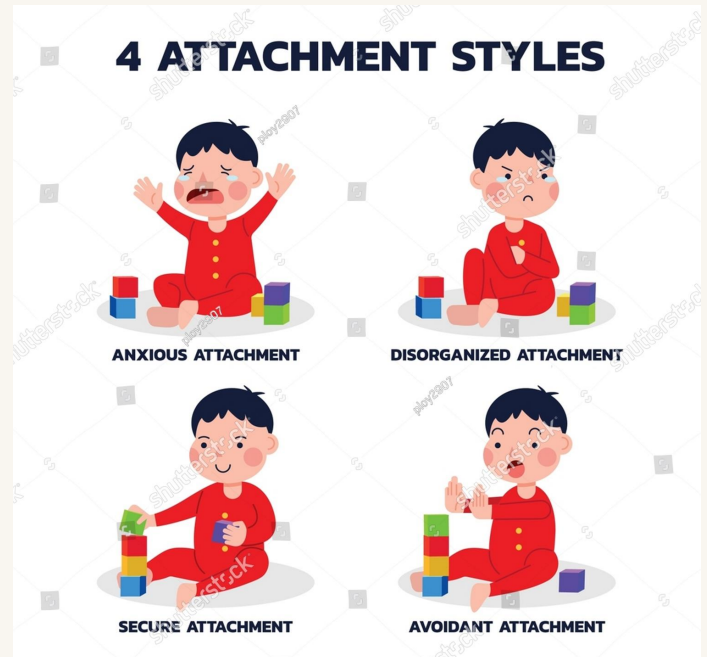
Responsive and consistent care-giving is the pathway for development of secure attachment (Fernandes et al., 2021).



Children who have a secure base are able to explore, learn and develop confidence (Macagno and Molina, 2024).



Anxiety, clinginess, and separation distress may be a consequence of insecure attachment (Agbaria et al., 2021).



Why Bowlby Fits Isaac

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Emotional, Social and Language Development

It is possible that Isaac's pulling away is an indication of low emotional security (Duschinsky, 2020).

Insecure attachment can diminish social confidence and interactions with peers (Agbaria et al., 2021).

Language delay could be a connection to fewer communication opportunities (Finders et al., 2023).

Play-based interaction helps to build confidence, language, social inclusion (Bubikova-Moan et al., 2019).



Nature and Nurture



Isaac might be by nature a cautious and a sensitive person (Agbaria et al., 2021).



The early stress may impact sleep and emotional regulation (Netsi et al., 2018).



Environmental influences are maternal depression, isolation and disrupted child care (Slomian et al., 2019).



The development of Isaac is a consideration on both biological and environmental factors (DfE, 2025).

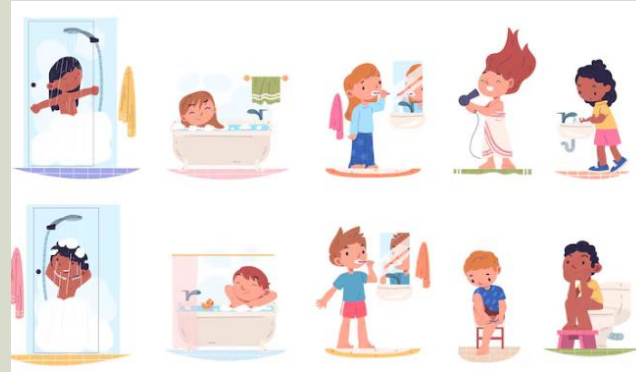
Theory-Informed Support Plan

Identify a trusted key worker to develop trust (Macagno and Molina, 2024).

Introduce routines to minimise anxiety and improve security (DfE, 2025).

Implement gradual separation supports with reassurance and visual routines (Duschinsky, 2020).

Exposing children to language rich play by engaging in stories, songs and modelling (Finders et al., 2023).



Multi-Agency Support

It is important for early years staff to offer daily emotional and social support (DfE, 2025).

Isaac's health visitor can help to support his and his mother's wellbeing.

Communication delay can be met with speech and language referral (Finders et al., 2023).

Multi-agency early help should aim to alleviate family pressures and isolation (Slomian et al., 2019).



Critical Evaluation and Conclusion



Isaac's clinginess and separation distress can be well understood using Bowlby's theory (Duschinsky, 2020).

It is a helpful tool for attachment informed early years support (Macagno and Molina, 2024).

But, it could over-emphasize the mother-child bond.

The quality of childcare and the broader family environment and culture also play a role (DfE, 2025).



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THANK YOU

TOGETHER, WE CAN BUILD A HEALTHIER MIND AND A
BETTER TOMORROW



Be Kind



Be Aware



Be Supportive