

Don't Leave Me!

The four stages of attachment



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Learning Objectives

Participants will...

Define attachment and understand its significance to a child's future.

- Understand the four stages of attachment.
- Describe the behaviors they would expect to see from a child during each stage of attachment.
- Describe what they can do to support the child and family during each stage of attachment.
- Discuss the stage of attachment of one of the children in their own group or setting, specifically how do they know that child is in this stage & what they can do to support the child and family during this stage.

Attachment theory provides a framework for understanding interpersonal relationships between human beings. Attachment theorists consider the human infant to have a need for a secure relationship with adult caregivers, without which normal social and emotional development will not occur.

Attachment:

One of the most significant theoretical contributions to our understanding of the psychological development of children

- Bowlby- research (1957 to 1980), impact of “maternal deprivation,” attachment figure, attachment behavior, caregiving behavior, separation behaviors
- Ainsworth- attachment classification system, secure base
- Harlow's work on maternal deprivation amongst rhesus monkeys

Security:

Security comes from believing either that I can handle the situation I am in (self-trust) or that in some way the situation will be taken care of (trust in the environment). (Gerber, *Authentic Relationships*, 40)

Predictability:

Confidence in the caregiver's availability and responsiveness also play an important role in the ability to explore without becoming anxious or distressed (Waters et al., 1991)

Relationships:

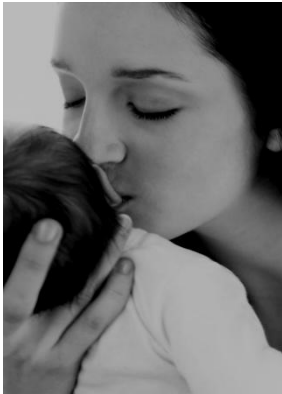
Loving relationships give young children a sense of comfort, safety, confidence, and encouragement. They teach young children how to form friendships, communicate emotions, and to deal with challenges. Strong, positive relationships help children develop trust, empathy, compassion, and a sense of right and wrong.

Behaviors Observed at Drop-Off Time:

Stage 1: Indiscriminate Attachment



Supporting Children and Families



Stage 2: Discriminate Attachment



Supporting Children and Families



Stage 3: Separation Anxiety



Supporting Children and Families



Stage 4: Stranger Anxiety



Supporting Children and Families



Why does Attachment matter?

Research has shown that children who have secure attachment relationships turn into self-reliant toddlers and develop a healthy self-esteem. This gives them an advantage that lasts throughout life! Research has also shown that children who were securely attached to their mothers as infants:

- are more independent as adolescents,
- have lower rates of mental illness, such as depression and anxiety,
- are more successful with friends, and
- do well in school.

Infant teachers must take time to develop relationships with infants and parents. Teachers play a crucial role in facilitating healthy attachment relationships between parents and children. The attachment relationship between the teacher and child can also have a lasting positive impact on the child and the family.