

# Attachment, Child Development, and Mental Health



## WHY IS ATTACHMENT SO IMPORTANT?

**Attachment** is a close, enduring connection between two people that develops over time through interactions that satisfy needs and bring pleasure.

**Secure attachment** is the foundational building block for all healthy development in children and promotes:

- Felt safety
- Brain development
- Self-regulation
- Physical, cognitive & language development
- Positive sense of self-worth
- Development of empathy & a conscience

## When Children Do Not Have Healthy Attachments

Mental health problems and a range of developmental delays and deficits result from inadequate early nurture and maltreatment.



Review the Lesson 1 handout, **Attachment Styles in Infant-Caregiver Relationships**.

A child will typically develop one dominant attachment style by the age of 3:

**Secure / Ambivalent / Avoidant / Disorganized**

Each insecure type of attachment style is linked with a particular pattern of behavioral response in the child. The disorganized style, however, does not have a specific coping pattern and is associated with the highest risk of behavior and mental health challenges.

## Post Orphanage Behavior



Review the website on **Post Orphanage Behavior**. Have you worked with a child adopted from an institution?



If yes, decide which of the symptoms listed on this website were significant challenges for the child.



See page 2



## Assessing Attachment: Child Attachment Interview



Lesson 3 offers many aids to assist in assessing attachment. Review the questions in the **Child Attachment Interview Protocol**. If you have not used this measure, practice it with a child.



Then consult the handout, *The Child Attachment Interview: A Narrative Review* and use it to interpret the results.

## Other Tools for Assessing Attachment



Choose one of the tools below that were discussed in Lesson 3 and incorporate it in your work with a child.

- The Bird's Nest Drawing
- Mr. Nobody
- Whose Job Was It?
- Fahlberg's Observation Checklist

## Treatment Models to Promote Attachment

Harm to children in the context of early negative relationships needs to be healed in nurturing, caregiving relationships. A myriad of small acts of protection, nurturance, and kindness are needed to transform a child's negative beliefs and feelings into positive ones. Children who resist nurture and behave in defiant, hostile ways typically provoke parents to feel out of control and escalate their attempts to control the child.

A range of treatment models that help parents to develop healthy attachments to a child who resists this are covered in Lessons 4 and 5.

*There is no hope of healing without a nurturing, caring, attachment relationship.* Dr. Karyn Purvis

*Every child needs one person who is crazy about him.*

Dr. Urie Bronfenbrenner



Review the list of treatment models below and check those which you use in your practice. Choose one unfamiliar model and review the item(s) in the resources related to it.

- Attachment & Biobehavioral Catchup
- Attachment, Regulation & Competency
- Child-Parent Psychotherapy
- Circle of Security
- Collaborative Problem Solving
- Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy
- Parent-Child Interaction Therapy
- Theraplay
- Trust-Based Relational Intervention
- Video-based Intervention to Promote Positive Parenting



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Funded through the Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Children's Bureau, Grant #90CO1121. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the funder, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This information is in the public domain. Readers are encouraged to copy and share it, but please credit the National Adoption Competency Mental Health Training Initiative.