

EFFECTS OF TYPE OF ATTACHMENT ON CHILD AND ADOLESCENT BEHAVIOR

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Attachment theory underscores the importance of early intimate relationships and holds that through primary relationships children develop expectations about their capability to acquire and maintain secure relationships, as well as beliefs regarding others' trustworthiness in relationships.

Preschool kindergarten and first graders who have experienced insecure infant maternal attachments also demonstrate insecure teacher attachments. Teachers are likely to have difficulty building a relationship with students who have had insecure maternal attachments because these children harbor negative views of adults that impede the relationship process. It is difficult therefore for teachers to learn about these children's needs and to respond to them in a manner that helps their learning and adjustment. As a result, insecure children are more likely to struggle academically than are secure children. Secure children are able successfully to establish secure attachments with their teacher, view their teacher favorably, have the confidence necessary to succeed, and use the teacher as a secure base from which to explore and engage in academic tasks and challenges (O'Conner & McCartney, 2006).

Children who have experienced a secure maternal attachment have been found later to manifest high self-esteem and were confident in their ability academically to excel. These children prefer to be academically challenged and are more motivated to learn for the sake of mastering the course content than are their insecure counterparts. These insecure peers do not achieve at as high a level (Wong, Wiest, & Cusick, 2002). Attachment insecurity has also been associated with student's inability to focus or pay attention. This is often called Attention Deficit Disorder, or Attention Deficit-Hyper Activity Disorder. This manifests early in life and throughout schooling (Jacobsen & Hofmann, 1997).

Elementary school children who view their relationship with their mothers as secure are significantly more accepted by their peers and have more friendships and are less lonely than children who rate their relationship with their mother as less secure (Kerns, Klepac, & Cole, 1996). Numerous studies have concluded a positive relationship exists between the development of a secure maternal child attachment in the early years of life and later social competence in children (Coleman, 2003; Lieberman, Doyle, & Markiewicz, 1999; Wartner, Grossmann, Fremmer-Bombik, & Suess, 1994).

Children who have a secure attachment to their primary maternal caregiver at one year are better able to explore on their own than are insecurely attached infants (Waters, Whippman, & Sroufe, 1979). Securely attached toddlers are more independent than are their insecure peers, and as a result, more curious and interested in exploring the world around them. Secure infants and toddlers develop a sense of agency: the sense that "I am a person" and "I can do" (Kagan, 1981). Infants who have experienced a secure primary attachment relationship learn about the world as they find out about it through their exploration. Insecurely attached infants and toddlers are far less curious. Insecure infants and toddlers are far more inhibited and withdrawn (Suess, Grossman, & Sroufe, 1992). As a result, children who have had a secure maternal attachment during their infancy are better able than are children who were insecurely attached as infants to master the environment using their senses. They are also better able to perform related motor actions than insecurely attached infants and toddlers (Matas, Arend, & Sroufe, 1978).

The acquisition of speech is greatly facilitated when the primary maternal attachment figure holds, smiles at, and talks to her infant (Bus & van Ijzendoorn, 1988). These interpersonal acts elicit

cooing, gurgling, and other pre-linguistic utterances. These child-rearing acts are also key elements in the bonding repertoire of the primary caregiver-mother, who develops a securely attached child. As the youngster matures, the primary caregiver who developed this secure child-rearing environment creates conversations on topics in which the child has demonstrated an interest (Tomasello & Farrar, 1986).

Preschool children who had experienced a more secure attachment with their primary caregiver parent demonstrated better social skills and school adjustment than did peers who had experienced insecure attachments (Sroufe, Carlson, & Schulman, 1993). Children who had a history of secure attachment with a primary caregiver-mother demonstrated better peer relations and relations with their teachers in the early school years than did children with an insecure attachment history (Henry, 1993). Studies of the relationship adolescents create with their peers and teachers show results similar to those of young children with secure and insecure primary attachment histories (Heide & Solomon, 2006; Levy & Orlans, 2000).

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