

ATTACHMENT THEORY

The study of attachment theory will change your understanding of babies forever.

The first 3 years are the most delicate and most formative.

A baby has no idea what it's like to be a baby. Everything they experience is a first experience. Usually the first experiences of anything form the deepest impression.

Attachment theory is a psychological framework developed by British Psychologist John Bowlby that describes the "lasting psychological connectedness between human beings."

Attachment theory is the most researched theory in psychology over the last 60 years. It suggests that the nature and quality of our early attachment bonds has a profound effect on our emotional, social and cognitive development.

When caregivers provide consistent, responsive and emotionally attuned care a child is more likely to develop a secure attachment.

HOW ATTACHMENT WORKS

Babies are born with the innate instinct to attach. Their superpower, from the moment they enter the world, is to draw us in. Their smiles, their cries, their smell are all part of nature's plan to encourage responsiveness from you, which gives them the attachment they need.

You feel this attachment and pull as well. In how you want to eat them up or how we're able to be sleep deprived, but still feel all the love towards them. Or when you so badly want a break, but the minute you leave them, you miss them terribly!

EMOTIONAL SECURITY

Your baby in your womb feels what you feel. Emotion is carried biochemically in the blood. The hormones are its messengers. On some level your baby is directly at the mercy of your stress, alarm, tranquility, and love. How the world treats and holds you, has a major influence on how your baby feels.

The first year is almost exclusively about developing an inner core of emotional security. Understanding this as the baby's main developmental concern helps you to orient everything you do towards this goal.

Baby's crying is never nothing. Babies need more than their physical needs met. They have emotional needs. They need to be held, touched, talked to and seen.

Emotional security comes from whenever they reach out, someone will be there. They need to feel connected to those they love. If they could speak they would say, help me to feel safe, see and hear me and please don't leave me alone.

UNDERSTANDING A BABY'S BRAIN AND BODY

Babies are pure feeling.

They feel everything...pain, pleasure, joy and sadness far more intensely than adults. Their feelings are a total body experience, every muscle tenses and vibrates with emotion.

They cannot lie or pretend like toddlers. What you see is what you get. Complete emotional honesty.

They cannot think or plan ahead. All they can do is react. They cannot make choices.

They are incapable of influencing or manipulating anyone. All they do is show their feelings because they can't help it.

They can't understand time. When they are made to wait for something they need, like feeding or being picked up, to them it feels as if it will never come.

If you walk away from a baby, they don't know you're coming back.

They have no way to soothe themselves. They are completely dependent on you.

If you comfort them consistently, they will be better independently later. The more their dependency is supported as a baby, the stronger and more independent they will be as they grow.

They have no strong defenses against pain or sorrow. They cannot fight or flee. When stress is overwhelming, all they have is the freeze response. That means

they shutdown, give up and go numb. If this happens a lot, the response becomes habitual. The neural pathways that facilitate the collapse are trained to activate this more easily and more instantly, which can make them prone to numbing out feelings later in life. It is called learned helplessness.

If babies learn that reaching out is rewarding, they will become strong communicators, able to connect with people effectively.

When you view your baby with judgment, they appear unpleasant to you and this makes it harder to give them the affection they need. They sense it and become insecure and more fussy. Perception shapes outcomes and so your projections about them become self fulfilling prophecies. When you judge them for being needy, they are more likely to become even more so.

WHY IT MATTERS

Something extraordinary happens in the most ordinary moments between parent and child. As these moments accumulate nothing short of profound accrues.

Every time you answer your child's need for comfort or confidence, you're building a bond of trust. Every time you show that you understand how they feel, and what your child wants, you're demonstrating the power of a primal connection that all of us are born seeking. Every time you help your baby manage the discomfort and frustration of being a newcomer to the human condition, you're teaching your child acceptance of emotions, of themselves, and of others.

When your baby experiences repeated times of being responded to in a dependable way, their sense of security is built and they develop an internal sense of well-being that enables them to go out and explore the world with confidence.

Our early attachment provides these internal working models which are our life-long templates. It is the blueprint for all relationships going forward.

Decades of research show that having a secure attachment with a primary caregiver leaves children healthier and happier in every way, we measure such things, competence and self-confidence, empathy and compassion, resilience and endurance, and the ability to regulate emotions, intellectual capacity and preserve physical health in pursuing our life's work, and having a fulfilling personal life.

Secure attachment in a child's first relationship leaves the foundation for good relationships throughout life. Without a doubt, relationships are the framework for satisfaction and success in all domains of life.