

ADHD Guidance Notes – Attachment (2)

The central theme of attachment theory is that primary caregivers who are available and responsive to an infant's needs allow the child to develop a sense of security. The infant knows that the caregiver is dependable, which creates a secure base for the child to then explore the world. Insecure attachment early in life may lead to attachment issues and difficulty forming relationships throughout life.

Attachment issues typically result from an early separation from parents, lengthy hospitalization, incidents of trauma, instances of neglect, or an otherwise troubled childhood. These issues may have an effect on a child's ability to form healthy, secure attachments later in life.

There are four types of attachment:

- **Secure:** The child will interact with others in the presence of the mother and will become upset when she leaves and avoid contact with strangers. This demonstrates a healthy attachment.
- **Anxious-Resistant Insecure:** The child will become anxious at the presence of strangers and will not interact with them. When the mother leaves, the child will become very upset and will be unreceptive to her attempts to interact when she returns. This may demonstrate that the parent does not consistently meet the child's needs.
- **Anxious-Avoidant Insecure:** The child shows ambivalence toward the mother and toward strangers, does not want to be held, and shows no preference toward caregivers. This attachment style typically means that a child has learned that efforts to have needs met will be ignored.
- **Disorganized/Disoriented:** Though a child with this attachment issue may become upset when the mother leaves and appear relieved when she returns, the child may refuse to be held, hit or rock repeatedly, and show anger toward the mother. Over half of the mothers of children with a disorganized or disoriented attachment were shown to have experienced trauma-induced depression shortly before giving birth.

Signs of insecure attachment may include:

- Avoidance of eye contact.
- Avoidance of physical contact.
- Rejection of touch or attempts at emotional connection.
- Frequent, inconsolable crying.
- A tendency to self-comfort.
- A lack of interest in toys or interactive play
- Poor impulse control.
- Abnormally social, though superficial, behaviours.
- Hostile, angry and/or defensive behaviour