

OVERVIEW OF ATTACHMENT SYSTEMS
and
THEIR CONNECTION TO OBJECT RELATIONS AND MENTAL REPRESENTATIONS
by
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ATTACHMENT = Early attachment bonds have lasting effects across the lifespan and are one of the major determinants in how the personality is organized and how psychological disturbances occur.

SECURE ATTACHMENT = *Secure attachment* involves both a capacity to establish affective bonds and to tolerate and benefit from separation. Secure attachment represents an integration and coordination of two fundamental and interdependent developmental lines: establishing a positive and realistic sense of self and establishing mature levels of interpersonal relatedness.

INSECURE ATTACHMENT = Distorted or exaggerated emphasis of either developmental line, self-definition or relatedness, or the defensive avoidance of the other, leads to impaired attachment bonds, impaired sense of self, and maladaptive functioning. *Ambivalent-resistant attachment* plays out in disorders concerned with bonding and relatedness: borderline, histrionic, and dependent individuals. *Fearful avoidant attachment* plays out in disorders concerned with preservation of the sense of self: obsessive-compulsive, avoidant, and schizoid. *Dismissing avoidant attachment* plays out in disorders concerned with an excessive sense of self: narcissistic, antisocial, and paranoid. *Disorganized/Disoriented attachment* is the consequence of the parents' unresolved fear, transmitted through parental behavior that is frightened or frightening to the infant. Such fear results in five kinds of disruption of parental regulation: parental withdrawal, negative intrusion, role confusion, disoriented responses, and failure to respond to infant's affective signals. The parents' difficulty in regulating the infant's fearful arousal is as significant as the parents' own dysregulated fear, thus creating a paradox for the child because the parent who should be the source of a secure base as establishing safety, comfort, and protection, creates fear and unsafety.

THEORIST	ATTACHMENT SYSTEMS						
S. Freud (1930)	Urge toward happiness (egoistic)	Urge toward union with others (altruistic)					
K. Horney (1945, 1950)	Moving away	Moving toward	Moving against				
E. Erikson (1950)	Self-definition	Interpersonal relatedness					
A. Adler (1951)	Self-perfection	Social interest					
M. Balint (1959)	Self-sufficiency (philobatic tendency)	Clinging or connectedness (ocnophilic tendency)					
J. Bowlby (1969)				SECURE BASE proximity seeking of infant results in comfort and protection from caregiver	INSECURE Anxious ambivalent = tendency to make excessive demands upon others and to be anxious and clingy when not met	INSECURE Avoidant = tendency toward a blockage in capacity to make deep relationships (results from being rebuffed in efforts for comfort or protection)	

M. Ainsworth (1978)				SECURE Uses caregiver as a secure base, may or may not be distressed upon separation, seeks contact and comfort upon reunion, re-engages in exploration	INSECURE Ambivalent (or Resistant) = Preoccupied with caregiver, distress continues upon separation, little or no exploration, angry, passive, or distressed at reunion	INSECURE Avoidant = Minimally or not interested in caregiver, minimal or no distress at separation, busily explores, ignores or avoids caregiver at reunion		
M. Main, et al (2000)				SECURE Missing parent upon separation, able to be soothed by another, re-engaging upon reunion, followed by ability to explore environment	INSECURE Resistant-Ambivalent = Preoccupied with parent, distressed, angry, protesting. Difficult to soothe upon reunion, but preoccupied with parent, and unable to engage with environment	INSECURE Avoidant = No distress upon separation. Attends only to environment. Avoids or ignores parent upon reunion. Anger or distress continue to be absent.	INSECURE Disorganized = Disorganized or disoriented behavior when in caregiver's presence (gaze or head aversion, freezing, frantic, unable to explore, unable to be comforted or re-connected at reunion)	
K. Lyons-Ruth, et al (2001)							Sub-Type #1 Disorganized Approach (D-Approach) = seeks contact, but display conflict, apprehension, uncertainty, helplessness, dysphoria, freezing, huddling	Sub-Type # 2 Disorganized Avoidant (D-Avoid) = avoids contact, exhibits hostile, aggressive response to intrusions, or rejection or attention-seeking from other
In Adulthood				Autonomous Coherent and collaborative. Coherent dialogue, with appropriate affect. Values attachment, while having mature perspective concerning self and other in experience or relationship.	Preoccupied Confused and preoccupied, no objective perspective. May be passive or hostile and angry, conflicted and blaming.	Dismissing Attachment of no concern. Lack of memory, cut off from feelings or dismiss their significance	Disorganized Serious lapses in reflecting or being aware of events or relationships concerning attachment loss or trauma	
Cycle of Attachments				Adult/Autonomous. > Infant/Secure	Adult/Preoccupied > Infant/Resistant-Ambivalent	Adult/Dismissing > Infant/Avoidant	Adult/Unresolved-Disorganized > Infant/Disorganized-Disoriented	

Recommended Research:

- 1) **Attachment Theory: Social, Developmental, and Clinical Perspectives.** Edited by Susan Goldberg, Roy Muir, John Kerr. Analytic Press, 1995.
- 2) "Attachment Theory, Psychoanalysis, Personality Development, and Psychopathology." Sidney J. Blatt, Kenneth N. Levy. *Psychoanalytic Inquiry*, Jan-Mar 2003, Vol. 23(1).
- 3) "The Organized Categories of Infant, Child, and Adult Attachment: Flexible vs. Inflexible Attention Under Attachment-Related Stress." Mary Main. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 2000, Vol 48(4).