

## Attachment Disorder

Children who fail to develop secure attachments during their early infancy (0-3 years) to protective and loving parents or other caregivers may develop Attachment Disorder.

An infant whose primary requirements for food, water, love, comfort and security are poorly met or ignored will be anxious (that future needs are not satisfied) and mistrustful (will he? won't she?). The anxieties that surround his own essential life-preserving needs gradually force the child to focus exclusively and aggressively on himself: his acquired insecurities and feelings of rejection and not being loved only kept at bay by being in total control of everything around him.

### There are three different kinds of insecure attachment:

**Ambivalent** – where a parent has been either inconsistently or intrusively responsive to their child's needs. The child will either be over clingy and submissive or reject their carer, avoid eye contact etc. They long for closeness but fear rejection or being over-responded to.

**Avoidant** – not often abused or neglected but their needs have been met by an insensitive or dismissive response. Child may show lack of interest in their parent/s but remains in distant contact in case their need leads to rejection. They long for closeness but feel angry their needs have not been met. With other children they are emotionally defensive or use passive aggressive behaviour to manipulate.

**Disorganised** – the most recently recognised and often has the most extreme consequences. They tend to have been severely abused or neglected. These disturbed children can end up feeling unloved, unloveable, rejected, unworthy, abandoned, bewildered, bad and evil. They will exhibit challenging behaviour from total apathy to outright aggression. They may lack the emotional words to understand and express their feelings. The behaviours associated with this may include aggression, both physical and verbal, against people and property. These young people may be oppositional, refusing to do as requested, no matter what the request. They will manipulate situations. In their teens they may seek consolation in alcohol, drugs or precocious, promiscuous sex. They may not see the truth as others see it. They will not respond to reason or logic.

### Children with Attachment Disorder may:

- be superficially engaging, charming (phoney)
- avoid eye contact
- be indiscriminately affectionate with strangers
- lack the ability to give or receive affection
- exhibit extreme control problems - (eg stealing from family; secret solvent abuse, etc)
- be destructive to self and others
- lack kindness to animals
- display erratic behaviour, tell lies
- have no impulse controls
- lack cause-and-effect thinking
- lack a conscience
- have abnormal eating patterns

- show poor peer relationships
- ask persistent nonsense questions and incessantly chatter
- be inappropriately demanding and clingy
- have abnormal speech patterns
- display passive aggression (provoking anger in others)
- be unable to trust others
- show signs of depression
- exhibit pseudo-maturity
- have low self esteem
- show signs of a guilt complex
- show signs of repressed anger
- sabotage placements such as school, foster family, etc

### Not ALL of these will be exhibited!

### A young person with Attachment problems needs:

- to be able to respond positively to a significant other person
- to comply to the basic rules of society
- to comply to reasonable requests
- to have a realistic sense of self
- to learn to be non-confrontational with others
- to accept responsibility for own actions
- to feel valued
- to fit into and accept the family dynamics
- to manage temper / anger appropriately
- to understand the world around him
- to understand his own wants, needs and feelings
- to have a sense of his own identity.

### Meeting the needs:

- provide a positive role model
- create win / win situations
- give clear, consistent guidelines and boundaries; allow some flexibility
- be honest and truthful, with sensitivity to the young person's feelings
- give calm, measured responses in confrontational situations
- listen to them: hear what they have to say. But remember, they communicate in more ways than just verbally
- remember that the adult is responsible for helping young people make appropriate, positive attachments

- always endeavour to let them know it is their behaviour that isn't liked, not them
- tell them what behaviours annoy / irritate, and tell them why
- allow your emotions to be seen: parents / carers are people too
- confront feelings in an open, honest way and help to build positive relationships
- give the young person a safe, secure environment to express their innermost feelings, fears, hurt, etc.
- plan with them for their adult life; help them to understand the attachment process and how they can be positive as an adult

## Other Useful Contacts

### Adoption UK

Provides support, information and training for parents, foster carers, practitioners & teachers, a Buddy Support Scheme and their Parent Consultation Service offers parents long-term 1-1 support over the phone and attending meetings.

**Web:** [www.adoptionuk.org](http://www.adoptionuk.org)

**Email:** [helpdesk@adoptionuk.org.uk](mailto:helpdesk@adoptionuk.org.uk)

**Fax:** 01295 752241

**Helpline:** 0844 848 7900

### British Association of Adopting and Fostering

free advice to members of the public, professionals and affiliated SW's, publications and training.

**Web:** [www.baaf.org.uk](http://www.baaf.org.uk)

**Sth England Tel:** 020 7421 2670,

**Central & N England Tel:** 0870 241 0663,

**N Ireland Tel:** 90315 494,

**Scotland Tel:** 0131 220 4749,

**Wales Tel:** 029 2076 1155

### Family Futures Consortium London

An adoption agency and adoption support service. Offers an assessment and treatment service for children who have experienced early trauma and have Attachment Disorder.

**Web:** [www.familyfutures.co.uk](http://www.familyfutures.co.uk)

**Email:** [contact@familyfutures.co.uk](mailto:contact@familyfutures.co.uk)

**Tel:** 0207 354 4161

**Keys Attachment Centre**, Lancashire. An agency, providing a specialised service for children and families including information, assessment, therapies, residential care and education.

**Web:** [www.keyschildcare.co.uk](http://www.keyschildcare.co.uk)

**Email:** [carolmcintosh@keyschildcare.co.uk](mailto:carolmcintosh@keyschildcare.co.uk)

**Tel:** 01706 227226

### National & Specialist – Adoption and Fostering Clinic

Michael Rutter Centre for Children & Adolescents, Maudsley Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 8AZ

A multi-disciplinary team providing a specialist service for assessment, consultation and treatment in relation to fostering and adoption issues. Operate an open access referral policy.

**Web:** [www.slam.nhs.uk/services](http://www.slam.nhs.uk/services)

**Tel:** 020 3228 2546

### NCH Action for Children

The NCH have many regional offices, addresses and phone numbers are on their website

**Web:** [www.nch.org.uk](http://www.nch.org.uk)

**Tel:** 020 7704 7000

### Post Adoption Centre

Provides independent advice, counselling and support to anyone affected by adoption.

**Web:** [www.postadoptioncentre.org.uk](http://www.postadoptioncentre.org.uk)

**Advice Line:** 020 7284 5879

### Reading

OASIS publishes **A First Guide to Attachment Disorder** in its First Guide series (£4.00 plus p&p or you can download it free from our website). Publications list/order form available on our website, or email/telephone for one to be sent to you.

**First Steps in Parenting the Child who Hurts** - Tiddlers and Toddlers. £14.99

**Next Steps in Parenting the Child who Hurts** - Tykes and Teens. £15.95 Both by Caroline Archer, Adoption UK. 1999. Published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers (see below).

**Inside I'm Hurting: Practical Strategies for supporting children with attachment difficulties in school** by Louise Michelle Bomber, 2007 ISBN 1-903269-11-3

Books on Attachment Disorder can also be found at this link <http://www.baaf.org.uk/res/pubs/cat/pubscat08.pdf>

**Routledge Education** (member of the Taylor Francis Group)

Tel: 020 7017 6563 (Marketing)

**Web:** [www.routledgeeducation.com](http://www.routledgeeducation.com) (academic and research based) or [www.routledgegeteachers.com](http://www.routledgegeteachers.com) for teachers.

### Jessica Kingsley Publishers:

**Web:** [www.jkp.com](http://www.jkp.com)

**Email:** [post@jkp.com](mailto:post@jkp.com)

**Tel:** 020 7833 2307

**Sage Publications:** For all professionals working in schools and educational settings (includes Paul Chapman Publishing and Lucky Duck books).

**Web:** [www.sagepub.co.uk](http://www.sagepub.co.uk)

**Email:** [market@sagepub.co.uk](mailto:market@sagepub.co.uk)

Also try the internet bookshop [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk) which has many books available on Attachment Disorder.

### CDs

**Information Plus Ltd** has produced 18 Social Learning Software CDs on fostering and adoption issues aimed at children, parents and professionals. The interactive CDs include My Life Story and SpeakEasy, and animated storybooks Bruce's Multimedia Story, Bridget's Taking a Long Time and Billy Breaks the Rules covering topics including separation from family, uncertain futures, restoring relationships in substitute families.

**Web:** [www.information-plus.co.uk](http://www.information-plus.co.uk)

**Tel:** 01856 761334

**Email:** [informationplus@compuserve.com](mailto:informationplus@compuserve.com)

### Internet sites

As well as those mentioned above in Useful Contacts, try the US sites:

[www.attachmentdisorder.net](http://www.attachmentdisorder.net)

[www.instituteforattachment.org](http://www.instituteforattachment.org)

[www.nancythomasparenting.com](http://www.nancythomasparenting.com) and

[www.attachmentexperts.com](http://www.attachmentexperts.com).



[www.cambianeducation.com](http://www.cambianeducation.com)

Cambian is the largest provider of specialist residential education and care for young people with Autism, Asperger Syndrome and other associated complex needs in the United Kingdom. Cambian is trusted by hundreds of parents and over 70 Local Education Authorities

### OASIS publications

- SEN Information Sheets
- First Guide to ...
- Cards explaining 9 learning disabilities
- Legal advice Information Sheets
- SEN 'How to' guides

All OASIS publications can be downloaded from [www.oasis.co.uk](http://www.oasis.co.uk)