ATTACHMENT THEORY



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John Bowlby, a British psychologist, originally developed the theory of attachment in 1958 which disagreed with the common believed idea of the time that child attachment to their primary caregiver was a learned behavior and was only the result of the feeding relationship between child and caregiver.

Bowlby, after observations, postulated that instead, attachment was characterized by clear behavioral and motivational patterns, and attentive primary caregivers fostered a sense of security in children.

Bowlby also maintained that attachment styles affect how people think, feel, and behave in close relationships "from the cradle to the grave".

Bowlby's colleague, Mary Ainsworth, later studied infant-parent separations based on Bowlby's theory and identified three main attachment styles: secure, insecure avoidant and insecure ambivalent/anxious/pre-occupied.

Researchers, Main and Solomon, added a fourth attachment style called disorganized-insecure/fearful based on their own research.

in childhood

Anxious



- Suspicious of strangers
- ♦ Distressed when separated from caregiver but not easily consoled when they return.
- ♦ 7-15% of infants
- * As they grow older, can be somewhat clingy and over-dependent
- Wary of strangers

Avoidant



- Avoid parents and caregivers
- May not reject parental attention but do not seek out comfort or contact.
- Show no preference between a parent and a complete stranger.

Fearful



- Show lack of clear attachment behavior.
- Responses to caregivers are a mix of behaviors.
- Dazed, confused or apprehensive around caregivers.
- ♦ As they grow old, may take on a parental role
- Due to feeling both comforted and frightened by the parent.

Secure



- Secure, explorative and happy
- Parents attentive to their needs
- Are visibly upset when caregiver leaves and happy when they return.
- Prefer parents to strangers.
- ♦ Tend to be more empathetic during later stages of childhood.
- Generally described as less disruptive, less aggressive, and more mature than children with other attachment styles.

in adulthood



secure

positive model of others

low avoidance

anxious

- ♦ Comfortable with intimacy and autonomy
- ♦ Self-confident
- ♦ Resolves conflict constructively
- Can depend on their partners and be depended on
- ♦ These individuals thrive in a relationship but can also thrive independently
- Heavily invested in their relationships
- Yearn to get closer to their partners emotionally to feel more secure
- ⇒ Typically have negative self-views
- ♦ Tend to question their worth
- Worry about being abandoned by their partners
- Are hypervigilant to any signs that their partner may be distancing from them emotionally and/or physically.
- ♦ Sometimes drive away their partners due to 'clinginess' or 'smothering'.

positive model of self

low anxiety

- ♦ Often have negative views of romantic partners
- ♦ Usually positive, but sometimes brittle, selfviews
- ♦ Seek independence, control and autonomy
- ♦ Find emotional proximity to romantic partners to be either impossible or undesirable.
- ♦ Downplay the importance of intimate relationships
- ♦ Self-reliant and distant in relationships
- ♦ Conflict avoidant

negative model of self

high anxiety

- Unstable and ambiguous behavior with relationships
- Desires and fears relationships and intimacy
- Want intimacy but have difficulty trusting and depending on others
- Avoid emotional attachments because they struggle with emotion regulation
- ♦ Low self-esteem and fear of rejection

avoidant

negative model of others
high avoidance

fearful



Take The Attachment Project Quiz

https://quiz.attachmentproject.com

How Attachment Styles Affect Adult Relationships

https://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships-communication/attachment-and-adult-relationships.htm

The Different Types of Attachment Styles

https://www.verywellmind.com/attachment-styles-2795344

Adult Attachment Theory and Research

http://labs.psychology.illinois.edu/~rcfraley/attachment.htm

The Different Styles of Attachment

https://www.simplypsychology.org/attachment-styles.html

To schedule an appointment with Peaceful Mind Mental Health, call 218.731.8896 or visit https://peacefulmindmentalhealth.com/