

Attachment theory

Attachment is built through a positive, reciprocal relationship between humans. Attachment theory, at its simplest, helps us understand and appreciate why relationships and nurturing interactions are so important to human development, right from the beginning. This is because they not only support emotional wellbeing but because interactions are also crucial in developing brains. Children's attachment experiences do not need to be perfect, and not all children develop attachments in the same way, but without 'good enough' attachment, healthy all-round development, though possible, becomes more difficult to achieve. This can lead to long term physical and emotional consequences. The quality of attachments made in the early years are likely to have an impact on future relationships, well-being, aspirations and achievements. This is particularly relevant with regard to children who have experienced trauma and/or neglect even if they are now living safely within foster or adoptive families.

If there are concerns about a child's attachments, adults need to consider why this might be and take steps to offer the secure, emotional connections the child needs, as well as support for the family. With this in mind, forming attachments and friendships are not an appropriate target or 'learning' goal, because attachment and bonding involve a range of factors over which the child has no control and cannot be 'taught.'. Quality attachments are the responsibility of the adults in a child's life. Through our role as secondary attachment figures, adults can be part of the 'back up' team that supports and helps promote the child's primary attachments within their family. A key person shares with families in a child's journey of development and learning, always aware that they are not a replacement for the family. Parents may gain peace of mind and feel relieved that they can share the pleasures and stresses of being a parent with someone else who knows, understands and appreciates their child.