

Understanding and Building Attachment

Note Taking Guide

At the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Identify your attachment style
- Identify the attachment styles of the children in your care
- Utilize strategies to strengthen the child's attachment to you and significant others

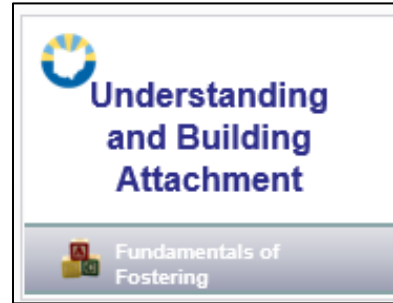
Pre-training Quiz

1. Which of the following is not an element of attachment?
 - a. Enduring emotional relationship
 - b. Can only be with one person
 - c. Brings safety
 - d. Threat of loss brings intense feelings
2. What is attunement?
 - a. When the child has balance of body, emotions, and states of mind
 - b. When the child feels internally regulated and connected to the caregiver
 - c. When the child and caregiver are aligned and understand each other's nonverbals
 - d. When the child and the caregiver are working towards the same goal
3. Which is not an attachment style?
 - a. Dissociative
 - b. Disorganized
 - c. Ambivalent
 - d. Avoidant
4. Match the adult attachment style characteristic with the corresponding parenting style.

a. Trusting	1. Inconsistent, enmeshed
b. Dismissing	2. Threatening, violent
c. Preoccupied	3. Consistent, nurturing
d. Chaotic	4. Rejecting, unavailable
5. Which is not a strategy to help the child build a secure attachment?
 - a. Gather information about the child
 - b. Create a sense of "we"
 - c. Teach empathy
 - d. Limit contact with previous caregivers

Introductions and Overview

- Caregivers are “the seed in a child’s mind.” They provide support and make the child feel heard and important.



Attachment Basics

- The three key elements in attachment are (Perry, 2013):
 - An enduring emotional relationship with a specific person
 - The relationship brings safety, comfort, soothing and pleasure
 - Loss or threat of loss of the person evokes intense distress
- Attachment is learned in infancy. When a caregiver is predictable, responsive, and nurturing, the infant learns to trust.



- Seigel (Seigel & Hartzell, 2003) calls this process the developmental sequence of attachment:

1.	- child and caregiver are aligned and understand each other’s nonverbals
2.	- attunement allows the child to have balance of body, emotions, and states of mind
3.	- balance allows the child to feel regulated and connected to the caregiver

- Factors that influence attachment (Perry, 2003):

- Caregiver factors:

- Child factors:

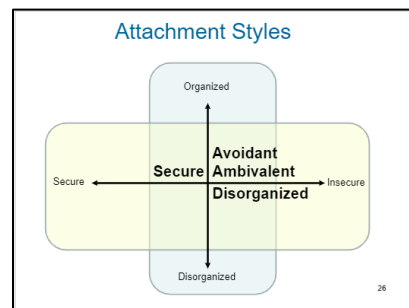
- Environmental factors:

- Fit:

- Impact of foster care on attachment:

Attachment Styles

- Attachment develops on two continuums:
 1. Secure/insecure
 2. Organized/disorganized
- Bowlby notes that people form mental models (worldviews) based on their attachment style.



	Infant	Child/Adolescent	Adult	Parenting
Secure	Trusting worldview			
Avoidant	Emotionally barren worldview			
Ambivalent	Emotionally unreliable worldview			
Disorganized	Dangerous and unpredictable worldview			

Attachment Scenarios

Deanna

Deanna, age 14, came into your care approximately three months ago. Her mother needed to return to her home country to care for her aging and ill parents and wanted Deanna to stay in the U.S. and finish her schooling. Deanna's father is in prison. She has no other family in the U.S. You attend the same church as Deanna and were friends with her mother. She knew you were a caregiver and asked you take Deanna in while she was gone.

Deanna is captain of her eighth-grade basketball team and volunteers as a tutor for ESL students. She maintains a high B average. She is quiet but thoughtful. She has a close group of friends that have known each other since kindergarten.

Since moving in, Deanna has kept to herself and doesn't really engage in family activities. Though she has a cell phone, she rarely uses it. Her friends came over frequently when she first came to your home, however they have not been over in several weeks and she has not asked to visit them. She keeps her room neat and does her own laundry.

The school has contacted you several times with concerns about Deanna. She seems chronically tired and distracted and has isolated herself from her peers. Her grades are dropping, and she has missed some of her tutoring sessions.

You have had several conversations with Deanna in which she has shared how much she misses her mother. She thinks about her a lot, especially at night, and it sometimes keeps her awake. She worries about her mother's safety as there is a war going on in her home country.

Matt

Matt, age 11, lived with his father. Matt's mother disappeared when he was three years old. Matt's teacher noticed bruises on his arms and around his mouth. The children's services' investigation substantiated abuse. No family could be located, and Matt was placed in your home.

Matt is a loner. He stays in his room most of the time and never has friends over or goes out. He is uninvolved in school activities and barely makes passing grades.

Once you straightened up his room for him while he was in school. When he arrived home, he became extremely upset and claimed you were spying on him. He was threatening and his behavior frightened you.

Matt always appears on high alert and never relaxed. He is suspicious if everything you do and continually rejects your efforts to become closer. You have had several meetings at the school because of Matt's fighting.

Donnie

Donnie, age 7, has lived with his grandmother and mother for most of his life. His mother would sometimes move out to live with a boyfriend, but she returned typically after a few months. These boyfriends were often violent and abusive. Donnie's grandmother had been threatened more than once by one of the boyfriends. Donnie's mother and grandmother had a tumultuous relationship, sometimes being the best of friends and sometimes being very cold towards one another.

A few months ago, Donnie's grandmother passed away. Donnie's aunt came in town for her funeral. She was alarmed by how small Donnie was for his age. She was also concerned when Donnie mentioned being home alone since his grandmother's passing. The aunt reported her concerns to children's services, and the agency substantiated neglect. Donnie was placed in your home. His aunt and the other relatives would not take Donnie because they feared his mother's boyfriends.

Most of the time, Donnie is overly good and very affectionate. He sometimes gets underfoot when you are doing housework as he likes to stay close by. He can be extremely whiny and anxious at times. Small changes bother him very much. He gets picked on a lot at school and doesn't seem to have any close friends. The school reports he is often restless and distracted.

Shavonne

Shavonne, age 22 months, lived with her parents up until two months ago when she was removed for neglect. Neighbors reported Shavonne playing by herself outside. Both parents tested positive for Opioids. Shavonne's parents are currently in in-patient treatment facilities. Neither had family members willing to take Shavonne so she was placed with you.

Shavonne plays by herself and seems to not know what to do when you try and play with her. Once she pinched her finger and you went to comfort her. She moved away from you and picked up one of her dolls instead. Shavonne likes to do things herself and becomes very frustrated when she can't. She pushes you away when you try to help.

At the church nursery, Shavonne does not play with the other children and often takes toys away from them. Shavonne never offers comfort to another child.

Attachment style in your assigned scenario:

Evidence:

Type of parenting they received:

- When children and parents have the same attachment style, the parent reinforces the style.
- People can change their attachment style. This is called earned secure. They need:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

Strategies for Building Secure Attachments

- The goal of the foster caregiver is to rework the child’s model of relationships and help them learn how to self-regulate so they can function in relationships.
- Strategies to build attachment with the child (immediately at placement and over time) include:



H - Hungry
A - Angry
L - Lonely
T - Tired

Parenting according to age:

- Infants – This is the critical window when we learn how to attach. Consistently meet infant’s needs
- School age children – This is the age when children begin to understand and feel the loss associated with placement in care. Accept the child’s grief and help them to live with it.
- Adolescents – This is the time when teens are forming their own identity and separating from their caregivers. Practice maintaining the relationship even while disagreeing.

Reflection:

1. What was your caregiver’s parenting style?
2. How has it impacted your attachment style?
3. What will be your greatest challenge in parenting a child with an insecure attachment style?
4. What will be your greatest strength in helping children with attachment?

- Strategies to help the child maintain past relationships (with the primary family as well as peers and others of significance) include:

- Caregivers can teach children skills that will help them develop and maintain relationships such as:

- Self-awareness
- Self-regulation
- Empathy

S - Sensations
I - Images
F - Feelings
T - Thoughts

- Specialized Intervention Strategies:

- For avoidant styles
- For ambivalent styles
- For disorganized styles

What is your group's plan to support this child's development of a secure attachment style?

Review and Action Planning

4. What attachment-building strategy do you think you will use most and why?



RESOURCES

A comprehensive look at attachment throughout the life cycle:

<https://www.attachmentproject.com/vision>

Bonding and Attachment in Maltreated Children:

https://childtrauma.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Bonding_13.pdf

Trust-Based Relational Intervention:

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3877861/pdf/wcys34_360.pdf

Circle of Security:

<https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com/for-parents>

Serve and Return Interactions with Infants:

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/serve-and-return/>

Connect and Redirect:

<https://www.drdansiegel.com/pdf/Refrigerator%20Sheet--NDD.pdf>