

Attachment Awareness

How Attachment Styles Affect Classroom Behavior

All children have their own unique way of interacting with the world around them. And while much of this is contributed by their temperaments, the degree of emotional nurturing plays a significant role. This essential piece is how attachment is formed. The emotional bond between a child and their parent lays the foundation for how the child will relate to other people and environments they encounter throughout their lives. When we know how the type of **attachment** contributes to **behaviors** observed, we can then serve children in the classroom in a more effective way.

Dr. John Bowlby, along with Dr. Mary Ainsworth, developed the Attachment Theory. They created the "attachment behavior system," which is the guiding system for our patterns of developing relationships. The level of love and **security** felt by a child is the basis for how each of the four types of attachment is formed.

- 1) Secure Attachment: These children see their parents as a firm base of support in times of need or difficulty. In new situations, they may show some distress when separated from their parent but are better once the parent returns. Because they have developed trust that their parents always meet their needs, they trust others more and are confident to explore things around them. These positive feelings lead to more success in the classroom.
- 2) Anxious-Resistant Attachment: These children have tremendous amounts of separation anxiety and display strong emotional reactions to this. In new situations, they lack the **confidence** to explore new things, even when the parent is present or has returned. These behaviors are generally developed from an unpredictable parenting style, where the parent alternates between caring, angry, and even insensitive approaches. These children may have more difficulty in the classroom with relationship development and may isolate themselves.

- 3) Anxious-Avoidant Attachment: These children are very independent of their parents and have minimal stress when separated. Even after the parent returns, these children often don't acknowledge them and prefer emotional distance from others. Typically, their parents have cared for the child's physical needs but have been emotionally unresponsive. In the classroom, these children are likely to resist help and show more aggression or other behaviors such as lying and bullying.

- 4) Disorganized-Disoriented Attachment: These children are typically the victims of abuse or neglect by their parents, and there is no specific pattern of behavior. They look to their parent for basic needs to be met but with fear that they may be hurt. They often avoid their parent and fear others as well. Because they struggle with developing relationships, they may switch between being withdrawn to being disruptive and aggressive.

Awareness of these types of attachment can assist teachers, counselors, coaches, and other adults who work with children in recognizing individual needs to help fill the gaps. The SKILLZ Child Development Program utilizes this knowledge to strengthen each child's individualized approach and needs. This method encourages an appreciation for a child's emotional deficiencies, so the Certified Pediatric Ninjas Specialists in the class can address these things with a supportive social environment and classroom management. Also, the program offers parents ways to improve connection leading to a more secure attachment.

As a child grows, they develop attachments to others that they interact with frequently. Using an approach that incorporates attachment awareness when working with children, adults can create an environment that is a secure base for them. This insight provides valuable information into each child's world to influence their relationships positively, which will lead to improved learning.