



An OAASIS information Sheet

Office for Advice Assistance Support and Information on Special needs

Helpline 0800 902 0732

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Attachment disorder is a general term which describes disorders of mood, behaviour, and social interaction arising from a failure to form normal attachments to primary caregivers in early childhood.

It results from unusual early experiences of neglect, abuse or abrupt separation from caregivers between the ages of 6 months and about 3 years. Other factors might be frequent change excessive numbers of caregivers or excessive or lack of responsiveness to a child's attempts to communicate.

An infant whose primary requirements for food, water, love, comfort and security are poorly met or ignored will be anxious that future needs will not be satisfied and may become acutely mistrustful. 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 are only kept at bay by being in total control of everything around him.

There are three different kinds of insecure attachment:

Ambivalent – a parent has either been inconsistently or intrusively responsive to their child's needs. The child will either be too clingy and submissive or reject their carer. There is a longing for closeness but fear of rejection or being over-responded to.

Avoidant – not often abused or neglected but needs have been met by an insensitive or dismissive response. Children may show lack of interest in caregivers but remain in distant contact in case this leads to rejection. There's a desire for closeness but anger that 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 with the most **extreme consequences**. These disturbed children have often been severely abused or neglected and can end up feeling unloved, unloveable, rejected, unworthy, abandoned, bewildered, bad and evil. They will exhibit challenging behaviour from total apathy to outright aggression, both physical and verbal, against people and property. They may lack the emotional words to understand and express their feelings. They 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 an attachment disorder may be

- superficially charming (phoney)
- indiscriminately affectionate with strangers
- destructive to self and others
- cruel to animals
- unable to give or receive affection
- inappropriately demanding or clingy

may show signs of

- guilt
- depression
- pseudo-maturity
- passive aggression
- abnormal eating patterns
- repressed anger
- abnormal speech
- poor peer relationships
- erratic behaviour

may lack

- cause and effect thinking
- a conscience
- self-esteem
- impulse controls

may

- ask persistent nonsense questions
- chatter incessantly
- tell lies
- avoid eye contact
- exhibit extreme behaviour – stealing from family, solvent abuse etc.
- sabotage placements (foster-care, school etc.)

need support in order to

- be able to respond positively to a significant other and feel valued
- thrive in the dynamics of a family
- comply to the basic rules of society and to reasonable requests

- have a realistic sense of self and surroundings
- develop a non-confrontational attitude
- accept responsibility for own actions
- manage feelings appropriately

To meet their needs we must

- provide a positive role model
- create win/win situations
- give clear, consistent guidelines and boundaries; yet allow some flexibility
- be honest and truthful, with sensitivity to the young person's feelings
- give calm, measured responses in confrontational situations
- always endeavour to let them know it is their behaviour that isn't liked, not them
- tell them which behaviours annoy/irritate, and tell them why
- allow our emotions to be seen: parents/carers are people too
- support them in building positive relationships
- 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
- give them 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



USEFUL CONTACTS

Adoption UK

Helpline: 0844 848 7900

Provides support, information and training for parents & foster carers (before, during and after adoption), practitioners and teachers, a Buddy Support Scheme and their Parent Consultation Service offers parents long-term 1-1 support over the phone and attending meetings. Also run a training course 'It's a Piece of Cake?', a six module course providing a fresh approach to parenting children with attachment difficulties. They have a fact sheet on Attachment Disorder.

Email: helpdesk@adoptionuk.org.uk

Website: www.adoptionuk.org

British Association of Adopting and Fostering

Free advice to members of the public, professionals and affiliated SW's on all aspects of adoption, publications and training.

Website: www.baaf.org.uk

Southern England Tel: 020 7421 2670

Central England Tel: 0113 289 1141

Northern England Tel: 0113 289 1144

N Ireland Tel: 028 90315 494

Scotland Tel: 0131 226 9270

Wales Tel: 029 2076 1155

Chrysalis Associates Sheffield

Tel: 0114 2509455

A multi-disciplinary therapeutic team of professionals specialising in the assessment and treatment of developmental trauma and attachment difficulties, offering services to children and their carers/families. Referrals through Social Services, but carers/parents can call direct for information/advice.

Family Futures Consortium London

Tel: 0207 354 4161

An adoption agency and adoption support service. Offers an assessment and treatment service for children who have experienced early trauma and have Attachment Disorder. Accept self-referrals as well as referrals from local authorities, health professionals, etc:

Email: contact@familyfutures.co.uk

Website: www.familyfutures.co.uk

Keys Attachment Centre, Lancashire and N Ireland

Tel: 01706 227226

An agency, providing a wide range of specialist support services including therapy, education,

training, assessment and residential care. Will take initial enquiries, but referrals come through Health and Social Services.

Email: carolmcintosh@keyschildcare.co.uk

Website: www.keyschildcare.co.uk

Post Adoption Centre

Website: www.postadoptioncentre.org.uk

Advice Line: 020 7284 5879

Provides independent advice, counselling and support to anyone affected by adoption. Also offers therapeutic input to individuals, couples or families. Mostly covers London and SE England.

National & Specialist – Adoption and Fostering Clinic

Tel: 020 3228 2546

Michael Rutter Centre for Children & Adolescents, Maudsley Hospital, 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.

Website: <http://www.slam.nhs.uk/services/servicedetail.aspx?dir=2&id=361>

Action for Children

Tel: 0300 123 2112

They have many regional offices – details are on their website.

Website: www.actionforchildren.org.uk

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 (available on www.amazon.co.uk).

Books on Attachment Disorder can also be found at this link

<http://www.baaf.org.uk/res/pubs/index.shtml>.

Routledge Education

(member of the Taylor Francis Group)

Tel: 020 7017 6563 (Marketing)

Website: www.routledgeeducation.com

(academic and research based) or

www.routledge teachers.com for teachers/parents.

Jessica Kingsley Publishers

Website: www.jkp.com

Email: post@jkp.com

Tel: 020 7833 2307

Sage Publications

Previously Paul Chapman Publishing, for all professionals working in schools and educational settings (includes Lucky Duck classroom resources).

Web: www.sagepub.co.uk

Email: market@sagepub.co.uk

Also try the **internet bookshop**

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.

Tel: 01856 761334

Email: informationplus@compuserve.com

Website: www.information-plus.co.uk

INTERNET SITES

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

www.attachmentdisorder.net;

www.institute for attachment.org;

www.nancythomasparenting.com,

www.attachmentexperts.com and

www.attach.org.

OASIS produces a wide range of free Information Sheets, 8 publications entitled 'First Guide to...' and wallet sized cards explaining 9 learning disabilities. Please contact OASIS (see front of sheet for contact details) for the full list, or view and download them on the website at www.oasis.co.uk.

All sheets are checked and amended annually. Please ensure you have the current version.