

# Attachment Disorder

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## What is it?

Attachment disorder is a mental and emotional condition predominantly found within young children, occasionally in school children and if allowed to develop can even be found in adults. Attachment is the deep and lasting bond established between a child and caregiver in the first few years of life, if the connection is lacking the following disorder could be caused.

Early experiences of neglect or abuse in babies causes attachment disorder in which the child will lose trust of others and will shy away from making a serious connection with acquaintances or family, sometimes even causing excessive friendliness and inappropriate approaches to strangers in older children.

Understanding the types, causes and warnings signs of attachment disorders, as well as how they are diagnosed and treated, should help parents and other adults care for children suffering from such a condition.

## How to identify?

The warning signs of attachment disorders can be specific to the young children, but there are also warning signs that may be apparent from their parents or other primary caregivers. Very often children who suffer from attachment disorders have:

- A lack of eye contact with others.
- No desire to gaze at others when they move around rooms.
- Poor impulse control.
- A sad or listless appearance with infrequent smiles or laughter.
- No interest in interactive games.
- Consistent self-soothing behaviours, often used instead of seeking soothing from others.
- Abnormally social, though superficial, behaviours.
- Hostile, angry, defensive and/or neglectful parents or primary caregivers.

## Effective strategies to help?

Make some rewards absolute and not contingent on anything. This effectively subverts AD children's strong tendency to sabotage them and thereby prove to the adults that they can't "make them succeed". (Example: AD child participates in a "fun Friday" activity regardless of their behaviour, barring any safety concerns). This approach puts the child's succeeding under the complete control of the teacher.

Drilling in the concept of "choice". Choice is an idea that is often absent in AD children's thinking. It is not simply that they refuse to accept responsibility- the ideas of people making choices and having responsibility literally makes no sense to AD children. They need to have it pointed out to them, matter-of-factly, over and over, that they are making choices all the time. Then discussion can begin to move towards making better vs. worse choices.

Approach AD children with a matter-of-fact, firm, no nonsense, not hostile, tone of voice. Directions should be phrased as directions, not questions (Example: "Do." vs. "Would you...").

Four questions never to ask AD children:

Did you...?

Why did you...?

Do you remember...?

What did you say?

#### Useful link

<http://www.attachmenttraumanetwork.org/understanding-attachment/attachment-disorders/> - Attachment and Trauma Network

<http://www.kidsbehaviour.co.uk/attachment-disorders-children.html> - Kids Behaviour

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/feb/14/children-attachment-disorder-struggle-control> - Article in the Guardian