

SECURE ATTACHMENT: EXPLORING THE SCIENCE AND PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND ATTACHMENT THEORY

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Summary. Attachment theory, proposed by John Bowlby and further developed by Mary Ainsworth, explains the nature of emotional bonds between humans, particularly between parent and child. A secure and responsive attachment relationship promotes healthy development, while an insecure attachment can lead to negative effects on emotional development and mental health. There are three main types of attachment styles: secure, insecure-avoidant, and insecure-ambivalent. However, attachment theory is not deterministic, and individuals are capable of change and growth throughout their lives. Overall, attachment theory provides valuable insights into the complexities of human relationships

Keywords: secure, insecure-avoidant, mental health, emotions, family, relationship.

Introduction

Have you ever questioned why some people find it difficult to build meaningful relationships while others seem to do so with ease? The theory of attachment might hold the solution. This groundbreaking idea contends that our capacity to create and sustain attachments throughout life is influenced by the nature of our early relationships with caregivers. We'll go into the intriguing area of attachment theory and how it affects interactions with adults in this post.

What is the theory of attachment?

According to attachment theory, our early bonds with our caretakers influence our subsequent attachments and connections. It was first put forth by John Bowlby in the 1950s, and a plethora of research has subsequently been conducted to support it. There are four main ideas in attachment theory, according to the website Verywellmind [1] :

1. Attachment is an emotional bond that connects us to others.
2. This bond is important for our survival and wellbeing.
3. The quality of our attachments influences our later relationships.
4. Our earliest attachments are formed in infancy, and lay the foundation for all future attachments.

Because they are reliant on their caregivers for survival, infants form bonds to them. These early ties serve as a model for all subsequent connections, thus they are crucial. An infant will learn that relationships are trustworthy and safe if they have a secure bond. They will have self-assurance and a sense of interpersonal connection. In contrast, an unsteady attachment may cause unease, worry, and mistrust in subsequent connections [2].

The Several Attachment Style Types

Children who feel they can count on their caregiver to be available and attentive to their needs have a secure bond. When children are unsure of their caregiver's availability and responsiveness, they have an anxious-ambivalent attachment. Children who repress their urge for closeness because they don't think their caregiver will be available or attentive exhibit anxious-avoidant attachment. Children who have a mixture of all three attachment types have disorganized attachment. Attachment styles can be classified into four categories: secure, anxious-ambivalent, anxious-avoidant, and

disorganized. Every one of them is distinguished by distinctive child behaviors. Children who repress their urge for closeness because they don't think their caregiver will be available or attentive exhibit anxious-avoidant attachment. This frequently results in a later dread of intimacy and problems trusting people [3].

Stages of Attachment

Attachment theory is a framework that explains the development of emotional bonds between infants and their caregivers. According to this theory, infants go through four stages of attachment, which are pre-attachment, attachment-in-the-making, clear-cut attachment, and formation of reciprocal relationships. The pre-attachment stage, which lasts from birth to 6 weeks of age, is the period in which infants are not yet attached to their caregiver and show no preference for any particular person. During this stage, infants are able to distinguish between familiar and unfamiliar faces and voices, but they do not show any distress when separated from their caregiver [4]. The attachment-in-the-making stage occurs from 6 weeks to 6-8 months of age. During this stage, infants begin to form selective attachments with familiar people. They show a preference for familiar faces and voices and are able to differentiate between their caregiver and other people. Infants at this stage are beginning to develop trust in their caregiver. The clear-cut attachment stage starts at around 6-8 months and lasts until 18-24 months of age. During this stage, infants form strong attachments to their primary caregiver. They show separation anxiety when separated from their caregiver and seek proximity and comfort from them when distressed. This stage is a critical period for the development of attachment, and the quality of the attachment formed during this period can have a lasting impact on the child's emotional development. Finally, the formation of reciprocal relationships occurs after 18-24 months of age. Children become more independent and begin to form reciprocal relationships with their caregivers. The relationship becomes less one-sided and more balanced, with the child becoming more active in maintaining contact with the caregiver. At this stage, children have developed a secure base from which to explore the world and can rely on their caregiver for emotional support and guidance. It's important to note that these stages are not set in stone and can vary depending on the child and the quality of the caregiver-child relationship [5].

Early Connections' Significance in Developing Adult Relationships

It is commonly known that our early interactions with our caretakers affect how we interact with others as adults. Understanding how these early relationships affect our future social and emotional lives requires understanding attachment theory, which was first put forth by John Bowlby in the 1950s. According to attachment theory, there are several attachment styles that are determined by our early experiences [6]. In contrast to those who did not have such favorable experiences, those who experienced stable, loving relationships with their caretakers are more likely to form secure attachments themselves. The importance of attachment theory in forming adult relationships is backed by a ton of research. For instance, research has demonstrated that those with safe attachments are more likely to have happy marriages and intimate relationships. Although the evidence on attachment theory is strong, it's crucial to keep in mind that everyone is unique and that there is no one proper approach to develop attachments. While some people may form insecure attachments despite having had less than perfect childhood experiences, others may do so even if their parents were quite loving. The caliber of the relationships we have right now matters the most.

Understanding Relationships Through Attachment Theory

A framework for comprehending the significance of early interactions in influencing adult relationships is provided by attachment theory. According to the fundamental premise of attachment theory, our initial interactions with caregivers build the groundwork for our future social and emotional development. The four fundamental attachment patterns that we acquire as children, according to attachment theory, are secure, anxious-ambivalent, avoidant, and disordered. Relationships that seem safe and secure are signs of a secure attachment. Those who have a stable

attachment style are at ease seeking out close relationships and are assured of their capacity for emotional intimacy. Anxious-ambivalent attachment is defined by a worry about being rejected or abandoned by others as well as a dread of being abandoned. Those who have an anxious-ambivalent attachment style frequently struggle with trusting people and might do anything to avoid being by themselves. Focusing on independence and self-reliance is a hallmark of avoidant attachment. An attachment that is disorganized is one that exhibits erratic or conflicted feelings toward the caretakers. People with disordered attachments frequently struggle to control their emotions and may display signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Although when we think of adult relationships, we often think of our attachments to romantic partners, attachment theory may also be used to better understand our relationships with friends, coworkers, and even ourselves. By comprehending how our childhood experiences influence our present-day attachments [7].

The Impact of Attachment Theory on Human Life

The study of social attachment in humans is called attachment theory, and it aims to understand how these attachments affect how people develop and react to stress. According to the main tenet of attachment theory, primary caregivers who are attentive to an infant's needs encourage the youngster to feel secure, which paves the way for future emotional and social growth. A rising corpus of research indicates that early attachment experiences can have an impact on our lives that lasts a lifetime. On the other hand, people with an insecure attachment style typically experience greater anxiety and lower levels of relationship satisfaction. Although there are many various kinds of attachment styles, secure attachment and insecure attachment are the two that are most frequently examined. Insecure attachment is characterized by mistrust, anxiety, and avoidance, whereas secure attachment is defined by a trusting and supportive bond between parent and child. The fact that attachment types might vary over time based on our experiences is crucial to keep in mind. But, because early attachments are so crucial to our social and emotional growth, it's critical to be conscious of the impact they might have on our lives [8].

Conclusions

The key idea of attachment theory can aid in our understanding of the complexity of the connections in our lives. We can better identify our attachment types and take action to forge healthy ties with those around us by comprehending how early interactions influence adult relationships. Studying attachment theory might be helpful for you if you're seeking for strategies to strengthen your personal relationship or just want to know more about why people behave the way they do. Attachment theory provides a framework for understanding the development of emotional bonds between infants and their caregivers. By understanding the stages of attachment, caregivers can better support the emotional needs of their child and foster a healthy and secure attachment that can have a lasting impact on the child's emotional development.

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