



WHY ATTACHMENT MATTERS

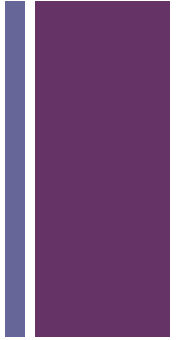
Supporting resilience through attachment

EARLY EDUCATION EYPP NEWCASTLE
ANNE O'CONNOR

+ TIMES ARE HARD...

**Building
resilience
is
important**

We learn resilience
through hard
knocks... right?



+ Resilience comes from...



- ✓ Having enough positive experiences to create a sense of security and trust in others as well as yourself
- ✓ Feelings of self worth and knowing that others believe in you ...that helps you know you can get through the hard times
- ✓ Having a safe place to build your resilience gradually ... to take risks and make mistakes
- ✓ Being well-supported through difficulty and challenge



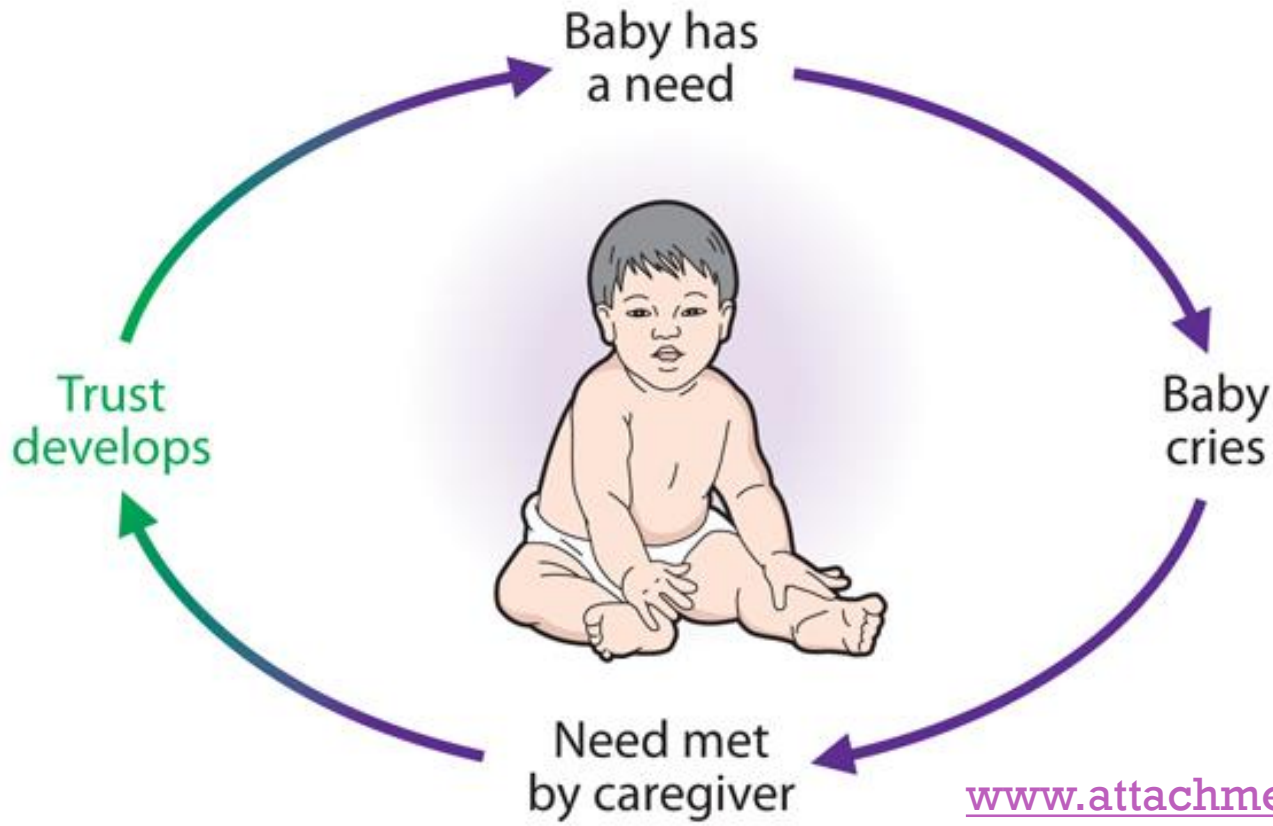
Resilience expert?

Early trauma and lack of secure attachments can lead to unhealthy forms of resilience.

This is one of the most important reasons why

**ATTACHMENT
REALLY MATTERS**

+ Infant attachment cycle



www.attachmenttraumanetwork.org



What can get in the way of attachment?



- Not about blame
- Generational cycles of insecure attachments
- Post-natal depression
- Lack of support
- Separation
- Illness
- Substance abuse
- Poverty?



Trauma?

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- Not always headline news
- Impact of not meeting a baby's needs
- Emotional neglect and abuse
- Lack of unconditional regard
- Impact on brain development



What does insecure attachment feel like?



Like an astronaut floating in space cut off from any lifeline?



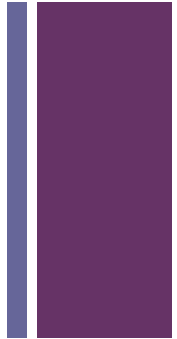
Disorganised ... all kinds of everything

Extreme

Frightened

Erratic

Frightening



Avoidant

Self soothing

Self reliant

Won't be taught

Ambivalent

Suspicious/distrustful

Clingy

Needs reassurance

**Secure
enough**

What does insecure attachment look like?



+ OH - THEY ALL DO THAT...

But children with attachment issues might do it ...

- more often
- more intensely
- and for a lot longer !



Early trauma and insecure attachments can be linked with:



- Poor self regulation
- Lack of executive functioning skills
- Poor physical development
- Developmental delay and learning difficulties

Symptoms can be confused with ADHD etc

- <http://acestoohigh.com/2014/07/07/how-childhood-trauma-could-be-mistaken-for-adhd>

Remember: Think Toddler ... and CAN'T not WON'T



- Behaviour
- Learning
- Emotional wellbeing
- Physical health

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Depression, anxiety disorders, alcohol and substance abuse, and eating and digestive disorders have all been linked with unrelieved stress in early life.

The impact of stress and cortisol

<http://www.versiondaily.com/the-health-impacts-of-stress-and-high-cortisol-levels-in-children/>

+ Transitions expert?

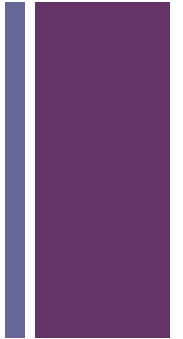
Experiencing lots of trauma and/or unsupported change doesn't make a child good at handling transitions.

+ *Impact of early transitions on a child*

Transitions and new people in our lives are not a bad thing in themselves – there are times we can all benefit from fresh relationships and new challenges, but for **babies** and **young children** this is **not desirable**.

If broken attachments and serial carers are to be the norm then we are disregarding all we know about the **importance of stable, healthy, secure relationships with just a few special people to nurture children's wellbeing, health and dispositions for learning.**

Dorothy Y. Selleck





Separation distress



‘We can never remind ourselves too often that a child, particularly a very young and almost totally dependant one, is the only person in the nursery who cannot understand why he is there.’

‘He can only explain it as abandonment, and unless he is helped in a positive and affectionate way...

...this will mean levels of anxiety greater than he can tolerate.’

Goldschmied and Jackson 1994

+ The vulnerable child

‘Toddlers who are *insecurely* attached to their primary attachment figure have a risk factor.

Toddlers who are *securely* attached may have a risk factor if they are in non-parental daycare without an attachment figure.

...if toddlers are both insecurely attached and have no access to an attachment figure during daycare, they experience two risk factors...’

R Bowlby 2007

+ Patchwork childcare and education

from birth to 5

- Cared for by parents
- Cared for in the family
- Nanny/au pair
- Child minder
- Toddler group
- Play group
- Day nursery
- Nursery school
- Nursery class
- Pre-school
- Emergency drop-in
- Kindergarten
- Creche
- Reception class
- Y1



+ Seamless transitions?



Where are the practitioners in this patchwork?

Perhaps we are the 'thread' that holds the whole thing together? But... this thread needs to be strongly stitched and of the highest quality if this patchwork is not to fray and come apart.

O'Connor (2012) Understanding Transitions in the Early Years: Supporting change through attachment and resilience



Secondary attachments

THE 'BACK UP' TEAM

YOU

+ Positive attachments help build resilience for change:

- Through intimacy and attunement – child feels ‘known’
- Through relationship – child doesn’t feel alone
- Through security – child feels safe enough to take risks and explore ... and learn
- Through unconditional regard – child feels loved no matter what

AN EFFECTIVE KEY PERSON APPROACH IS ESSENTIAL IN SUPPORTING ATTACHMENT AND HELPING TO BUILD RESILIENCE



Effective Key People ...

- ✓ Support the child's primary attachments
- ✓ Provide emotional containment and a secure base
- ✓ Discover that getting it right for children with attachment issues, helps them get it right for all children

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Why attachment matters in early years settings

What if you
forget me?

What if I
forget
you?

+ Feeling 'held in mind' is fundamental to
attachment, helps build resilience and
supports transition

How will you help me 'hold my parents in mind'
How will you reassure me they won't forget me?
How will you show me YOU won't forget me?



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Thank you for listening

And good luck with your hard work and efforts for all of our children.