

Children with attachment problems

Introduction

For many years now, the subject of attachment has received a lot of attention. The list of publications on this subject is long. These publications are often the result of research and are offering increasing clarity about the definition and meaning of the concept of 'attachment'. It is good and important that so much research is done on attachment, since it has a very large scope. Still more research on this subject is needed, however. Much is still unknown and this particularly affects the options for treatment. As long as it is unclear which phenomena are directly related to problematic attachment, it is difficult to develop appropriate treatment methods. Scientifically researched treatments do already exist for young children, however, and they are yielding positive results. Treatments have also been developed for older children and teenagers. One of these has already been studied, another one is currently being examined. Both of these treatments are favourably valued for their positive results.

In daily life, parents with a child who has been diagnosed with problematic attachment have a great need for clarity, an unequivocal diagnosis and - especially - adequate treatment. Their need for support is also great. For adoption and foster parents, life with a problematically attached child is not very easy. Through my experience as a care provider, I have come to feel immense respect for them; in particular for their commitment and perseverance. Children with this type of problem, and their parents, have been numerous in my practice for many years now. I have witnessed their fears, their concerns and their despair, and I know the practical implications of such problems for a child, a teenager and his/her parents. Both the child and his/her parents deserve proper treatment in order to overcome the problems and approach life in an 'attached' manner.

This book aims to help parents, teachers and care providers find their way in the profusion of information on attachment and attachment problems. After all, it is not always that easy to find the proper information necessary for daily life, for taking decisions, for choosing the best approach, among the abundance of available literature on this subject. This is true for parents as well as for care providers.

In chapter 1, I describe what exactly attachment is, what secure attachment is, and what parents can do to make sure their child is securely attached.

Subsequently, in chapter 2, I discuss what insecure attachment is and what possible reasons there may be for the development of insecure attachment. When is something considered an attachment problem and which types of problems can be distinguished? These first two chapters explain that attachment is very important in the lives of both children and adults.

The next question then is: what is to be expected when attachment becomes problematic? What are the effects? I will explore the answer to that question in chapter 3.

The child is not the only one affected by the effects of his/her problems; those in his/her environment suffer just as much. In chapter 4, I explain the implications of an attachment problem for daily functioning and I describe the areas in which the child and his/her environment will most experience their impact. One goal of this book is to offer advice on a possible recourse in case of these problems; in other words, to help parents and children who are experiencing the effects of these problems everyday find solutions.

In chapter 5, possible actions are suggested that could be taken within the private context of the parents' and child's living situation. These are illustrated by examples. Such actions are often taken under professional supervision, yet always bearing in mind that there will be everyday situations that

the parents must deal with themselves.

Chapter 6 offers an overview of treatment options and concludes with a detailed example of a treatment.

Chapter 7 includes the names of organisations, websites that provide information on attachment, foster care and adoption; studies related to attachment; and the literature available to anyone who would like to learn more.

It was with great pleasure that I accepted the publisher's invitation to write a book about attachment for parents, teachers and colleagues in need of a brief overview of this subject. I hope this book will have somewhat met the demand from the 'field'.

The help of my daughter has been very special to me as I wrote this book. Based on the knowledge she acquired during her language studies, she has made a valuable contribution to this book by ensuring that its content stay as clear and unambiguous as possible. For that reason, I dedicate this book to her. I also dedicate it to all of the children and teenagers suffering from attachment problems whom I have encountered over the years.

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