

Discussion Guide

Discussion Guide for Module 7: Development of Attachment

Module run time: 25 min

Estimated time to complete the module with discussion guide: 45-60 min

Below are recommended stopping points and suggested questions to use in your group's discussion. Please feel free to follow your group's lead and discuss topics and questions that are of greatest value to them! If you're working with a larger group, you may find it useful to discuss these questions in smaller groups and then reunite to summarize.

Key points:

- Babies have a biological need for loving care. They begin forming an emotional bond with their caregivers at birth. Infants form an attachment to primary caregivers by the end of their first year.
- The quality of attachment relationships is different for each child. Child and family factors can affect attachment quality.
- Attachment relationships during infancy can have lasting effects on children's development. Yet, attachment quality can improve with proper support.

Module synopsis:

Page 1: Development of Attachment

Page 2: Acknowledgments

Page 3: Emotional Bonds

Page 4: Early Observations of Institutionalized Children

Page 5: Research with Monkeys

✦ Recommended stopping point

- Think about how foster or adoptive parents can help a child form new emotional bonds. What are some challenges these parents may face? What are some challenges a child may face?
- How did Harlow's research with monkeys change our understanding of early attachment?

Page 6: Attachment Theory

Page 7: Features of Attachment Bond

Page 8: Phases of Attachment Development

✦ Recommended stopping point

- Our attachment system can activate too much or not at all if we don't receive comfort in times of stress. This can affect children's attachment behavior if it happens often. How might a child's behavior change if she doesn't receive comfort from her caregiver?
- Separation anxiety is a child's normal reaction of fear or worry about her caregiver leaving.

Discussion Guide

Based on attachment theory, why would separation anxiety be common in infants? Discuss ways that caregivers can help reduce a child's separation anxiety.

Page 9: Child Factors

Page 10: Family Factors

Page 11: Stability of Attachment

🔄 Recommended stopping point

- Were you surprised by how child and family factors influence attachment quality? Why or why not?
- Some babies are fussier or harder to care for than others. How could you support or encourage a caretaker with a difficult baby?
- How does attachment stability affect children in daycare, foster care or at home? How can you better support infant's developing attachment relationships?

Page 12: Attachment and Later Development

Page 13: Attachment and Later Development (Video)

Page 14: Summary

🔄 Final discussion points

- Research shows that children with more secure attachments tend to experience better future outcomes. Do you think this is due only to attachment relationships? Or do you think there are other factors that relate to attachment and also contribute to future outcomes? If so, what might those factors be?

To learn more about attachment, take a look at these resources:

[Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning | Attachment](#)

[Ounce of Prevention | Coping with Separation Anxiety](#)

[Parenting Counts | Recognizing Baby Cues Video](#)

[PBS This Emotional Life | Attachment](#)

[ZERO TO THREE | Responsive Care: Nurturing a Strong Attachment](#)

We are constantly working to improve our materials. Do you have suggestions about topics to add to this guide? Did your group discuss something we didn't suggest? We'd love to hear from you! Please email your thoughts to us at ilabsout@uw.edu.

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