



WHAT IS ATTACHMENT?

AS HUMANS, WE ARE HARD-WIRED TO FORM LOVING CONNECTIONS WITH SAFE OTHERS. OUR EARLIEST CARE-GIVING RELATIONSHIPS SHAPE OUR EXPECTATIONS OF CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS LATER IN LIFE.

AS ADULTS, THE CLOSE BONDS WE FORM WITH OTHERS (ESPECIALLY ROMANTIC BONDS) ARE PART OF THE SAME ATTACHMENT PROCESS AS WHEN WE WERE INFANTS. WE NEED SECURE ATTACHMENTS TO FLOURISH IN LIFE - FROM THE CRADLE TO THE GRAVE.



KEY POINTS OF ATTACHMENT THEORY

An attachment bond is a deep and enduring bond between people where they are Accessible, Responsive and Engaged with each other. Sue Johnson calls this the "ARE" of secure attachment.
(Dr Sue Johnson Founder of EFT, 2008)

- Our earliest attachment bonds in childhood teach us about what it means to be close to another and about our worthiness of love, comfort and support.
- If our earliest care-givers are responsive to our bids for contact and safe to come close to, we learn that turning to others is an effective way of regulating our emotions and that we are worthy of comfort (Bowlby, 1988).
- If our earliest caregivers are not responsive to our needs, we learn to turn up the heat of our emotional signals to ensure that they respond to us or to turn down our emotional signals and to cope alone.
- Both of these "attachment strategies" (also called attachment styles) help us to cope when turning to another is not available to us. These are called "secondary attachment strategies" because they use more energy than the "primary" attachment strategy of seeking comfort from a safe other.
- As humans, isolation is inherently traumatising. We are wired to form relationships - we are a bonding species.
- We are also wired to co-regulate - to turn to others to share the emotional load, this uses less energy and is the most efficient way to cope (Coan & Sbarra, 2015).
- Turning to safe others is not pathological or co-dependent. It is a biological imperative that Bowlby called "functional interdependence."
- When we know at least one special irreplaceable person in our life has our back and is there for us to turn to, far from making us dependent, it actually makes us braver. We can challenge ourselves to do difficult things when we know our person is there to turn to if things get hairy.

Safe haven

Secure attachment bonds in childhood and adulthood provide a "safe haven" of comfort to turn to when we feel upset, vulnerable, hurt, sick, or afraid. They are a place of solace where our nervous system can best regulate in another's steady and safe presence. When we are responded to with comfort and support, we can regulate our emotions, can be with our experience without being overwhelmed by it, and can move through it more readily.

Secure base

Secure attachment bonds in childhood and adulthood not only provide comfort, they also play a vital role in building our confidence and autonomy. When we know that someone special has our back, it actually makes us braver; better able to take on new challenges and to explore the world more confidently. Being able to turn to our attachment figure or call them to mind is part of how we stay strong in difficult situations and regulate our emotions.

"The propensity to make strong emotional bonds to particular individuals is a basic component of human nature"

John Bowlby



The Brisbane Centre for
Attachment & Relationships

Unit 2, 23 Breene Place
Morningside QLD 4170
Ph: 07 3899 8590

www.attachmentbrisbane.com.au