

Developmental psychology: overview

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Introduction

When having any sort of relationship people that are important to you, caring is the foundation of it. When individual are less able to take care of themselves and are dependent on a certain individual is given the name caregiver, as there care for people that have physical or psychological disability. The way a caregiver delivers care by showing concern and empathy states how tough their bonds are. A strong bond in a relationship can, not only bring healthy psychological development in an individual who is being cared for, but also attachment with the caregiver.

Individuals can have an emotional bond to humans around them that there care for this is call attachment; John Bowlby one of the first attachment theorist, unfolding attachment as a “ lasting psychological connectedness between human beings” (Bowlby, 1969, p. 194). The attachment theory states that caregivers feel some sort of safety with the child when obtaining and openness to the child’s desires. Once the child feels the caregiver is reliable this gives the child a chance to discover humanity.

Bowlbys four characteristics

Proximity Maintenance; The desire to be near the people we are attached to.

Safe Haven; Returning to the attachment figure for comfort and safety in the face of a fear or threat.

Secure Base; the attachment figure acts as a base of security from which the child can explore the surrounding environment.

Separation Distress; Anxiety that occurs in the absence of the attachment figure. The earliest strong bonds formed by a child with their caregiver impact on their healthy psychological development, but what happens to children who do not form secure attachments and strong bonds with their caregivers?

Physical abuse can affect children bonds in relationship which can and bring unhealthy psychological development to the child. Abuse from prima

Abuse by a primary caregiver damages the most fundamental relationship as a child—that it will safely, reliably get its physical and emotional needs met by the person who is responsible for its care.

Darlene Barriere, victim and writer of her memoir titled “Victim to Victory”, tells her story of child abuse and her struggle through childhood and adolescence. The physical abuse she suffered at the hands of both her mother and father lead her to not only hate her caregivers but drove her to attempt suicide to escape her pain. She started smoking at an early age and to fit in. She quit school and ran away from home to start sexual relations with older men. She was then later diagnosed with morbid obesity.

Compulsive overeating made food her drug of choice. Then she made food her enemy and suffered from the eating disorders of anorexia nervosa and bulimia. In the end it was psychotherapy that saved Darlene and helped her live a healthy lifestyle. Darlene displayed none of Bowlby's characteristics of attachment to her caregivers. By not forming a secure attachment to her caregivers in the early stages of her life, it had a negative impact on her behaviour later on in her life. Her story clearly shows how unhealthy her

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psychological development as a child and adolescent was and how important a strong bond with a caregiver is for healthy psychological development.

Child sexual abuse is a particularly complicated form of abuse because of the torment of shame and guilt involved. What is even more terrifying is that sexual abuse typically occurs at the hands of someone the child knows and should be able to trust—most often a caregiver such as a parent or teacher. Contrary to what many believe, it's not just girls who are sexually abused. Boys and girls both suffer from sexual abuse. In fact, sexual abuse among boys often goes unreported due to the shame and stigma involved. The emotional trauma is so powerful that it leads to an unhealthy psychological development in a child. This can not only leave deep, long lasting scars, but also bring self-hatred and sexual problems as they grow older—often either excessive promiscuity or an inability to have intimate relations. Thousands of cases go unreported and some find the courage to write about their stories on Internet forums, such as a story posted by an anonymous girl. In her case, she was sexually abused between the ages of 5 to 16 by her father. She would never feel safe around her father and developed a strong hate towards him. She became anti-social from a young age. Throughout this ordeal she was confused and did not know whom she could trust. She knew it would tear her family apart. After finding the courage to tell her family and report her father to the authorities it did just that. Guilt and shame lead her to run away from home and to drop out of school. She blamed herself and developed a self-hatred, which led to depression. She found heroin as a way to escape her reality and her problems. Quickly became addicted, she started working as a prostitution to support her drug addiction. It was a

decade later after spending time in rehabilitation and counseling that she cleaned up her act and overcome her hate for herself. By applying Bowlbys four distinguishing characteristics of attachment to this example, it is clearly visible that she had not formed secure attachment to her caregivers. She was not provided with a secure base to explore the world, which resulted in her developing anti-social behavior and falling into depression. She did not want to maintain proximity to her father and did not feel a safe haven around him. She felt more comfortable to be separated to her caregivers, which lead her into leaving her home at a young age. This all resulted in her unhealthy psychological development and because of this unhealthy development it had a negative impact on her life. Her story shows how important it is to for a child to develop a strong bond and secure attachment to its caregivers for healthy psychological development.

It is noticeable that failure to form strong bonds and secure attachments with a caregiver by a child early in life can have a negative impact on behavior in later childhood and throughout their life. Research suggests that children diagnosed with oppositional-defiant disorder, conduct disorder, or post-traumatic stress disorder, commonly display attachment problems. Often due to early abuse, neglect, or trauma. In examples of physical and sexual child abuse by a caregiver, it is evident that it leads to detachment and weak bonds with the caregiver. The outcome is unhealthy psychological development in the child. For a child to have a healthy psychological development it is crucial that a caregiver is available and responsive to a child's needs. By doing so they establish a sense of security in the child. This sense of security develops a strong bond with the caregiver. The child knows

that the caregiver is dependable, which creates a secure base for the child to explore the world and results in healthy psychological development.

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