

Foster children attachment styles

[Family](#), [Children](#)



As implied by many physiologists a child's attachment style is the building blocks to his or her mental development. A child like a structure is sure to crumble if there is a crack in their foundation. Foster children have the potential to stand tall or crumble due to neglect. Attachment styles tend to vary in foster children since they bounce from home to home.

In this paper I will discuss the attachment styles foster children share with both their biological and foster parents, as well as the foster child's potential outcome due to these styles. In order for children to develop both socially and emotionally normal there must be at least one primary caregiver and this is what tends to be the problem with children in foster care. Julia T. Woods author of *Interpersonal Communication Everyday Encounters* describes attachment styles as "patterns of caregiving that teach us who we and others are, and how to approach relationships". (Woods, 2007) She also goes on to explain that "the first bond is especially important because it forms the child's expectations for later relationships." Considering the fact that the top reasons for children being placed in foster care are physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, medical neglect, parental incarceration, and abandonment it is obvious why many foster children lash out. Children who were placed into foster care for these following reasons were more than likely brought up with a fearful attachment style and if not may develop this style if placed in an abusive foster home.

Fearful attachment style is defined as being "cultivated when the caregiver in the first bond is unavailable or communicates in negative rejecting, or even abusive ways to the children". (Woods, 2007) Children who have undergone forms of rejection from their biological parents and have

suffered from physical and or sexual abuse do not always come to terms or learn to cope with their abuse. The foster children then being to act out due to feeling unworthy of love and fearful of relationships.

Although the desire to build a meaningful relationship with others may be there, some foster children have learned the dangers these relationships hold and how easily they are destroyed. If the proper guidance is never found or provided foster children with this type of attachment style may grow up to become quite tormented individuals. These children as adults may act out and grow have issues with drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and even self-injurious behaviors.

In an article Attachment and Adaptation of Orphans the author Pei-Yung Lane studies foster children and gives an example of an orphan's outcome who bounces around from home to home. Pei-Yung Laning calls this child orphan B and states that his issues grew the longer he was in the hands of others besides his parents, ' His bad everything include poor school performances, poor interpersonal relations in school. And in his cousin or aunt's families he was very shy and timid, always leave everybody alone. Besides, he stole in his cousin's home. (Liang, 2007) Children who come from fearful attachment styles still have the potential to develop mentally healthy if introduced into a foster home where the primary caregiver is loving and uplifting and is later adopted by a family who provides the same nurturing and loving environment. In other words foster children who are introduced secure attachment styles have the potential to prosper more so than those who never receive this type of positive affection. " A secure attachment style is the caregiver responds in a consistently attentive and loving way to the

child. (Woods, 2007) Pei-Young lanes study states that if a child introduced to a secure attachment style before the age of 8years old they have the potential to turn around for the best. As shown in the example with Orphan B. " The most interesting thing was the original interaction patterns between orphan B and his aunt was aunt and nephew, but from that time on, their interaction patterns became a mother and son. Orphan B changed from bad to well because of a new attachment relations reconstructed..

We propose that a new attachment relations may be reconstructed at least before age 8, in the condition of steady major caregiver who may become a new attachment figure, and when orphan formed a new attachment relations, this attachment relation can help orphan overcome their adaptive problems. " (Laing , 2007) In a situation as tragic as childhood abandonment one can only hope that a child finds this positive guidance. Children who are brought up with this attachment styles grow up to be adults with healthy relationships and do not fear interactions with others and do not block others out emotionally.

Adults who were raised with secure attachment styles feel comfortable standing on their own and not depend on relationships to determine their self-worth. Last but not least Foster Children run the risk of being exposed to anxious or ambivalent attachment styles due to the constant change and instability in their life. A child who is coming from an abusive home into a loving foster home may not know how to mentally cope with this change in environment although positive.

Then you have those cases where children are orphaned due to the deaths of their caregivers and then introduced into a foster home filled with

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dismissiveness, abuse, and neglect. It is the inconsistency of this attachment style that causes confusion within the child. Foster children with this attachment style tend to be untrusting of strangers and reject comfort as well as project anger towards their primary care giver. “ Children with avoidant attachment styles tend to avoid parents and caregivers. This avoidance often becomes especially pronounced after a period of absence.

These children might not reject attention from a parent, but neither do they seek our comfort or contact. Children with an avoidant attachment show no preference between a parent and a complete stranger. ” (Cherry, 2010) As these children grow up they become adults who are in a sense detached due to their inconsistent upbringing. A foster child having love in one home and abuse in another can cause them to grow up to be an adults who are untrusting as well as unsupportive to both friend and partners dealing with their issues.

The inconsistency as a foster child causes them to be unable to express their feelings, emotions, and thoughts with others in adulthood. They do not invest much of themselves emotion into relationships and eventually get to the point where they become somewhat unphased when their relationships crumble. As you have read or may have already known attachment styles profoundly influence and greatly affect the way children both view themselves and the world around them.

Foster children being no exceptions to the rule have had to endure so many mental battles placed upon them at a such a young and influential age. From either losing a parent or dealing with abandonment and abuse, everything these children go through affects their perception of the world.

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From being abused in one home and loved in other adults have the power to determine what kind of adults these children will grow up to be. “ While many experts derided the importance of parental love and affection, Harlow’s experiments offered irrefutable proof that love is vital for normal childhood development.

Additional experiments by Harlow revealed the long-term devastation caused by deprivation, leading to profound psychological and emotional distress and even death. This helped influence key changes in how orphanages, adoption agencies, social services groups and child care providers approached the care of children. ” (Cherry, 2010) Although there are many attachment styles it seems to be these three that foster children are more commonly presented with and as long as foster systems continue to improve hopefully these children will be able to all have a secure attachment style.

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