

# Mother and child attachment in frankenstein



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BUSTER**

“ With the cutting of the umbilical cord, physical attachment to our mothers ends and emotional and psychological attachment begins” (Azar). From the very beginning, infants need someone to comfort them when they are scared, feed them when they are hungry, and take care of them when they are sick. Without this attachment, many developmental problems occur and those children have problems coping with everyday issues. Throughout the story Frankenstein and through much more research, it can be seen that mothers play an important role in the psychological and social development of children.

From conception to about 3 years of age, not only is the infant’s brain and nervous system developing, but also the psychological formation of their bodies. At this point in their lives, they begin to learn about their relationships with others and whom they can trust. The one relationship that needs the most strengthening during this time is the one between mother and child. Ever since that child was in the mother’s womb, he or she has had a strong connection with his or her mother. The child can recognize his or her mother’s voice and even sense her emotions.

Once the infant is born and the nasal passages are cleaned out, they can even recognize their mother’s smell. From this point on, the process of creating ties between mother and infant has begun (Feinberg). Whenever that child has a need and the mother responds to it, that attachment between her and her child is strengthened dramatically. If a mother doesn’t ignore any of the child’s situations and always comes to comfort her child, they will be able to trust their mother to help them in almost any

circumstance. This mutual bond is extremely important to the child because it helps to insure protection and safety for them through their mother.

This in turn gives the child confidence in earthly situations. Through this relationship, the child learns empathy and compassion which helps in developing relationships with other family members and peers. “ Secure attachment also makes the child more resistant to stress and trauma, and contributes to optimal brain and neurological development” (Feinberg). Since children usually do not begin playing with their peers until they are about two years old, the years from conception until then are the most important in developing the basis for relationships with others.

During these early years, babies need their mother’s love and affection in order to develop properly. As Connie Marshner sums this up, “ The quality of love and care that a child receives in the first three to five years of life is the main factor in whether that child will be able to think, to learn, to love, to care, to cooperate with other people—in short, whether that child will merely exist or will thrive and flourish and add to human society” (Muehlenberg).

This development begins ultimately with the mother. Many researchers have found the secure mother-infant attachment results in later psychological and social development.

The child can gain assurance from the mother’s presence and use her as a source of comfort in distressing situations. Psychologists’ research shows that the quality of care infants receive affects how they later get along with friends, how well they do in school and how they react to new, and possibly stressful situations (Azar). This social development is very important in order

for that child to learn how to cope with peers in school and also outside of the classroom. It is found that attachments beyond the mother are also very important in the development of a child.

In a series of studies, Howes found that the attachment children form with their primary caregivers is remarkably similar to the attachments they form with their mothers. Children who have secure attachments with their teachers are known to be more outgoing and likely to engage in play with their peers. However, children with insecure teacher attachments were more hostile, aggressive, antisocial and withdrawn (Azar). When the mother and child do not have a very secure relationship, many consequences can occur. Maternal abandonment can cause children to deal with significant emotional, mental and psychological aftereffects.

In order to abandon the child, the mother does not need to leave the child. But, she can abandon a child both psychologically and emotionally instead. The first and most prominent form of abandonment is physical abandonment. This is when a mother physically leaves her child behind unexpectedly. Children will then experience guilt over what the mother has done and they begin believing that they did something so terrible that the mother didn't want to be around them anymore. Psychological abandonment is when the mother treats her child with apathy or disinterest.

Sometimes this is an unintentional form of abandonment caused by a mother's emotional illness, depression, etc. ; but the child is still extremely affected by it. If a child is abandoned, they may have trouble forming relationships with other people like teachers or caregivers. They always have

the fear that if they begin to love that new person, that person will also abandon them just like their mother did. They decide that they should just protect themselves from all hurt in the world and discontinue all relationships they have with others.

Another disorder that can derive from a poor attachment between mother and child is Reactive Attachment Disorder, or RAD. RAD can result from severe early experiences of neglect, abuse, or abrupt separation from a caregiver (Santrock 252). This makes it very hard for that child to form attachments in early childhood. In summary, “ Children deprived of parental care in early childhood are likely to be withdrawn, disruptive, insecure, or even intellectually stunted” (Muehlenberg). The story, Frankenstein, is a great example of how children are affected by abandonment.

First of all, Frankenstein starts out his life with his mother, and greatly depends on her for a lot of help in life. However, when she passes away, it seems like he doesn't have anyone to depend on anymore. While he is still grieving, he takes off and goes to school in Ingolstadt. This lack of a maternal figure is the reason why Frankenstein creates his creature. He attempts to fill the void in his mother's death by creating life. Yet, just like research has shown, it is very hard for Victor to have a relationship with his creature since he didn't have that motherly attachment when he was younger.

Because of this, he realizes that he wants to do the abandoning instead of being the one abandoned again. Once Victor discontinues his relationship with his creature, the creature begins showing signs of what abandonment

can do to someone. He doesn't know how to act toward other people, and ultimately he has a very murderous attitude. Research in Norway has shown that children experiencing less maternal care than others had higher levels of behavior problems (Muehlenberg). So, ultimately this behavior can be expected of the creature.

Because Frankenstein obliterated their relationship, the creature gets jealous of the other relationships his master has with others, resulting in violent actions. He didn't have anyone teaching him what was right and what was wrong in certain situations; and the creature had no one to trust in. The creature's life is summed up in this point of research, " There is a basic lack of trust in others which leads them to sabotage their parent's efforts to parent them and be intimate with them. They believe that nobody can care for them but themselves and their own attempts to do so are bizarre.

Their lack of empathy for the feelings of others is based in the own inability to feel their own feelings" (Feinberg). Since Victor neglected his creature, the creature started to do everything he could to make Victor's life miserable.

Since the creature was lonely, he thought that he should get rid of everything and everyone in Victor's life so that he would feel the same way—deserted and abandoned. The creature also says something very interesting in the last chapter of the book, " I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on" (Shelley 231).

This abandonment made the creature feel worthless, which in turn leads him to want to die and get out of all the sufferings in the world. Maternal abandonment and neglect can have many negative consequences on a child.

They ultimately lose someone in their lives who can serve as their comforter in certain situations; and their emotional, social, and psychological development can be impaired. Babies need a mother's love and affection in order to have healthy development.