

# [John bowlby](https://assignbuster.com/john-bowlby/)

In the introduction to one of his many books, John Bowlby quotes Graham Greene; ‘ Unhappiness in a child accumulates because he sees no end to the dark tunnel. The thirteen weeks of a term may just as well be thirteen years. ’ It is quite clear that John’schildhoodwas not a happy one. He experienced many years of separation fromfamilyand it can be connected as to why he developed the theory of attachment. Edward John Mostyn Bowlby, known as John Bowlby, was born in 1907 in London as the fourth of six children. His parents were Sir Anthony Bowlby and Lady May Bowlby.

John Bowlby was from an upper class wealthy family. They raised their children to be strong with strict discipline. Showing signs of affections or emotions were looked to be a sign of weakness. His father was a surgeon and was gone most of the time and only saw his children on Sundays. His father also served in WWI, so was absent for quite some time. Bowlby’s mother was not active in her son’s life. She, like most upper class woman, thought that spending time with the child or showing affection towards the child would spoil them.

Bowlby, therefore, only saw his mother for a short time each day. It seemed that the only time he was able to spend with her was after dinner during tea time (" John Bowlby- Child and Adolescent," 2006). She has been described as being cold and reacted to his needs in the very opposite way that one would expect a mother to. John and his siblings were raised by a nanny, which was common within the upper class. The nanny was there until he was 4 and then left. John was sent toboarding schoolwhen he was seven. He later went to the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth.

He decided at one point that military school was not for him and attended Trinity College in Cambridge. He studied medicine, which eventually lead him to studyingpsychologyand graduating in 1928. While studying his psychology at Trinity he took time off, spending six months in a school for maladjusted and delinquent children. He later referred to this as the most important six months of his life. While there, he noticed how many of the children had lost their mothers at a very young age. Bowlby was particularly interested in what happened around separation.

Rather than going straight into clinical school, he spent a year teaching in two boarding schools, including one for disturbed children. Their early disrupted childhoods intrigued Bowlby, and he decided to combine his medical training with psychoanalytic training. Through his training and studies he became interested in what happened around separation. He and his colleagues observed young children in a hospital and noted their intense and prolonged distress when their parents had not visited. They also did home visits with the children and noticed that the relationship between the mother and child was understressfor weeks or longer.

In 1950, Mary Ainsworth joined Bowlby and remained a close and influential colleague throughout his life. Bowlby introduced modern day psychology to the importance of mother-infant relationships and their dynamics (McLeod, 2007). Bowlby extensively reviewed then-current material on institutionalized children separated from parents and came to the conclusion that in order for a mentally healthy adulthood, the infant and child should be surrounded with a warm and intimate relationship with their mother.

This bond between the two then would give satisfaction and joy to both parent and child. With this information, Bowlby realized that the current explanation from Freud that infants love their mother because of oral gratification was wrong. His new theory stated that infants are social from a very young age, 6 months to less than two years old. The infants become focused on a particular individual or a few individuals. Bowlby's aim was to discover the consequences of difficulties in forming attachments in childhood, and the effects this would have on an infant's later development.

He came up with the idea that infants develop a close emotional bond with an attachment figure early in life, and that the success orfailureof this earliest of relationships lead the infant to form a mental representation that would have profound effects on their later relationships and their own success as a parent (" Attachment Theory," 2011). Although Bowlby was raised in a traditional way for upper class people one could come to the conclusion that the lack of relationships can be damaging. His theory emphasizes the importance of the mother and infant bond.

Bowlby’s relationship with his own mother seemed to be negative. When he did have an interaction with her, it was in short periods of time. The only relationship he had with his mother was, therefore, negative. He received no attention or affection from his mother. He also never received attention from his father, who I think could be a figure in infant’s life if the mother is not there. This relationship was also negative. The upper class did not view affection in a positive light. As an infant John was never able to form this attachment to his mother or father for the matter.

He did, however, form a deep bond with his nanny. His nanny is the person who raised him and his siblings. It was common for upper class children to form a deep bond with their nannies. They seemed to be the mother or replacement mother. Unfortunately, during a crucial the developmental age of four, John’s nanny left. John has been known to say that this event was tragic and it was like losing a mother (Holmes, 1993). Not having another mother attachment figure then after his nanny left was a negative.

Losing a mother figure at such a young age would leave a child not understanding what happened. One would feel lonely and have trouble coping with things later in life. His nanny was the only mother figure he had. To only have that attachment for such a short period of time I feel that it most likely left John wanting more, like most young children would. I feel that because John never had a long or lasting mother to form that attachment with it led him to find interest in this area when he was older.

In his studies it was obvious that he was always drawn to children who suffered the same feelings as he did. Many of the children John studied did not have the mother and infant attachment. John was able to recognize this. He always seemed to be intrigued by kids had the same upbringing as him. I feel that it was his connection with these children is what gave him the desire to examine them further. It showed me that he had those feelings as well. John had clearly suffered and most likely was always searching for a reason has to why he felt the way he did.

His theory of attachment, I feel, is a true result of his background. I feel that if John had formed an attachment with his mother he never would’ve had any interest in attachment. When someone feels that there is a lack of something in their lives they tend to either bury the feelings or dig deeper and come to the route of the problem. John came to the route of the problem and helped develop a theory for mothers and infants around the world, but also for him.