

# Mary ainsworth attachment theory

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Mary Ainsworth is a psychologist who provides the most detailed analysis of research on individual attachment, offering explanations. Like for instance, we as adults and teenagers know enough how we feel when the person leaves or apart from us and we are able to explain it in words. That does not go so well for young babies such as infants.

In doing so, Mary Ainsworth devised an experiment to discover and identify attachment styles. She called the technique used the Strange Situation Classification. She also stated that results may vary from between children. The result from the experiment, Strange Situation Classification, identified security attachment. In order to determine the attachment behavior in children 1 to 2 years of age and also attachment styles.

So Ainsworth's four categories of behaviors are measured and observed:

- separation anxiety: the unease the infant shows when left by the caregiver;
- the infant's willingness to explore;
- stranger anxiety: the infant's response to the presence of a stranger;
- reunion behavior: the way the caregiver was greeted on return.

The observer notes down the behavior displayed and scores the behavior for intensity on a scale 1 to 7. Her set of observational studies using the 'Strange Situation' paradigm (see above) revealed three distinct forms of attachment ('attachment styles'). One secure attachment style and two types of insecure attachments. Ainsworth (1970) identified three main attachment styles, secure, avoidant and resistant/ambivalent. She concluded that these attachment styles were the result of early interactions with the

mother. A fourth attachment style known as disorganized was later identified (Main, & Solomon, 1990).

Insecure Resistant attached infants are associated with inconsistent primary care. Insecure Avoidant infants are associated with unresponsive primary care. Avoidant children think themselves unworthy and unacceptable, caused by a rejecting primary caregiver (Larose & Bernier, 2001). Resistant children have negative self image and exaggerate their emotional responses as a way to gain attention (Kobak et al., 1993).

## Reference

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