

ATTACHMENT DIFFICULTIES

What is the skill?

Attachment is the process through which children develop trust that caregivers will provide comfort, protection, and support during times of need. Secure attachment becomes the foundation for healthy relationships throughout life.

What does normal development look like?

Securely attached children seek comfort from trusted caregivers when distressed and gradually return to exploration once they feel safe. Over time, they develop confidence that important adults will be available when needed.

How does neglect interfere?

When caregivers are unavailable, inconsistent, or emotionally unresponsive, children may struggle to develop trust in relationships. Some become emotionally distant and highly independent, while others become overly controlling or seek attention from unfamiliar adults because they have not learned to distinguish safe relationships from unsafe ones.

What might this look like?

Children may resist comfort, avoid emotional closeness, appear unusually self-reliant, become controlling, or seek affection indiscriminately from unfamiliar adults. Others may become intensely clingy because they fear losing important relationships.

Parenting implications

Building secure attachment takes time and consistency. Caregivers cannot force trust, but they can create the conditions in which trust gradually develops through repeated experiences of sensitivity, predictability, and emotional availability.

From Understanding to Attunement

Attachment difficulties are usually not about rejecting relationships—they are about uncertainty regarding whether relationships can truly be trusted.