

Attachment Theory Fact Sheet

Attachment theory ...

✓ Through infancy and early childhood we need to **attach** to **primary carers** (attachment figures) who **meet our basic needs** and are **demonstrably loving**. We can only learn **empathy** with others through having empathy shown to us. **Severity** and **persistence over time** render attachment disorder **more serious**. Those affected present with a **complex range of emotions** and **cognitive difficulties** which adversely impact on **memory** and **learning**, besides the **ability to make and sustain relationships**.

✓ The **IWM concept** describes how children, through their early relationships, construct an IWM (inner working model) of what to expect from other people, and of their own level of "lovability". In summary, stable and loving relationships create an IWM that says "**other people are nice and I am lovable**", whereas troubled and fragmented relationships create an "**other people are unkind and I am not lovable.**"

When considering why children may not be progressing as expected, consider **emotional issues** alongside **cognitive issues**; these are **intricately intertwined**.

Before deciding upon an **intervention strategy** for someone with an attachment disorder of any age, consider whether or not s/he is currently in a **secure and loving environment**. They will be **unable to respond as expected** if in **temporary/ insecure circumstances**.

Attachment theory in the classroom: 3 Key Points

(Taken from <https://www.tes.com/news/4-things-teachers-need-know-about-attachment-theory>)

The IWM approach allows the **potential** for **positive change throughout life** where **emotionally supportive relationships** are **available**. Supportive adult-child relationships **outside the immediate family** can **blunt the impact** of insecure family relationships and **strengthen emotional resilience**.

Ways to help pupils with issues related Attachment

Above all else the **key** to helping pupils with issues related to Attachment is to offer a **liking** and a **positive regard** for them. **Consistency** is essential, even when met with rejection and negative testing behaviour in early stages of interaction. Remain **warm** at all times, **especially** when there is a need to be firm. Say something like, 'I see you can't trust me yet but I know that one day you will be able to do that.'

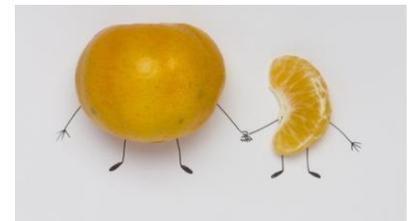
An **Education Psychologist** can offer an assessment, support and advice.

Classroom accommodations such as the teacher '**checking in**' at the start of a lesson to send a strong message of **personal care**. Develop strategies that support them with **organisation, sustaining concentration, improving their memory**, and, above all, **nurturing self esteem** and **self awareness**, while **minimising stress**.

Additional support from the school's Mental Health Team can be potent, as well as support from outside agencies such as **Forward Thinking Birmingham**.

Attachment deficiencies will not ...

- ✘ inevitably hold children and young people back from living fulfilled lives with positive relationships and academic success. Schools **can** make a difference
- ✘ be restricted to socioeconomically deprived environments



Other Information ...

<https://www.tes.com/news/4-things-teachers-need-know-about-attachment-theory>

<https://www.therapeuticcommunities.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Dr-George-Harris-Attachment-classroom-strategies-workshop.pdf>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C-ZlUtJr8nE>

