

# Center for Family Development

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## Attachment and Bonding Phases of Child Development and Adoption Arthur Becker-Weidman, Ph.D.

AGE/STAGE	PARENT'S BEHAVIOR	CHILD'S BEHAVIOR	IF MOVED DURING STAGE	LATER CONSEQUENCES if stage does not go well
NORMAL AUTISM  First few weeks	Responds to infant's need signals.	Cries when in need, stops when satiated.	Usually, no adjustment problems.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Difficulty distinguishing internal from external (autism) and self-soothing.</li> <li>2. Poor personal hygiene and bladder/bowel control.</li> <li>3. Over/under response to injury.</li> </ol>

AGE/STAGE	PARENT'S BEHAVIOR	CHILD'S BEHAVIOR	IF MOVED DURING STAGE	LATER CONSEQUENCES if stage does not go well
<p>SYMBIOTIC</p> <p>2 - 5 months</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. if child shows signs of self-soothing, participate with child to associate you with satiation.</li> <li>2. cuddling, cooing.</li> <li>3. Eye contact.</li> </ol>	<p>Stares at faces, eye contact, smiles, coos.</p> <p>Returns to look at parent if distracted.</p>	<p>Usually, no adjustment problems.</p>	<p>Child exhibits an inability to experience a satiated state, which is required for bonding and trust to develop.</p>
<p>DIFFERENTIATION</p> <p>5 - 12 months</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Maintain child's routine.</li> <li>5. Initiate positive interactions: play games.</li> <li>6. Hold &amp; feed in "nursing" position; long gazing.</li> </ol>	<p>Peek-a-boo</p> <p>Stranger &amp; separation anxiety (8 months).</p> <p>Checks with parent when strangers present.</p>	<p>&lt; 6 months: usually no adjustment problems. May be some temporary regression or delay.</p> <p>&gt; 6 months and with stranger/separation anxiety: Grief reaction inhibits attachment to new parents.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Rocking, frantic sucking, and other self-soothing behaviors.</li> <li>2. Pseudo-independence.</li> <li>3. Lack of consistent identity.</li> <li>4. Grandiosity</li> </ol>
<p>PRACTICING</p> <p>12 - 18 months</p>	<p>Encourages toddler's emerging independence and exploratory behaviors.</p>	<p>If attached, child will move away and check back.</p> <p>Exhibits joy at accomplishments.</p> <p>Refueling behaviors.</p> <p>Use of transitional objects.</p>	<p>May not attach to new parents. May regress to earlier phase.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of joy in exploration and learning.</li> <li>2. Continued stranger and separation anxiety.</li> <li>3. Low tolerance for frustration and aggressive behaviors.</li> </ol>

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<p>RAPPROCHEMENT</p> <p>18 - 36 months</p>	<p>Responds to child's needs without over-reaction to wooing/coercion.</p> <p>Encourages independent accomplishments.</p>	<p>Wooing &amp; coercion, shadowing &amp; darting.</p> <p>Increased range of emotions.</p> <p>Increased use of language and symbolic play.</p> <p>Increased ability to tolerate frustration and delay gratification.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Significant Difficulty developing new attachments.</li> <li>2. Increase aggression.</li> <li>3. Increased clingy behavior.</li> <li>4. Basic mistrust.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Difficulty in school.</li> <li>2. Mistrust results in use of defenses: aggressiveness, hyperactivity, withdrawal.</li> <li>3. Continued wooing, coercing, and clinging. (differential diagnostic behavior ADHD v. RAD).</li> </ol>
<p>Preschool</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bonding &amp; attachment behaviors can help with the transition (wooing, cuddling, holding, gazing, feeding).</li> </ol>	<p>Magical thinking.</p>	<p>Belief that child caused the move by being bad.</p> <p>Regressive behaviors.</p> <p>Pervasive sense of guilt and shame.</p>	<p>Difficulty/inability to play.</p> <p>Learning problems in school.</p> <p>Shame based identity and magical thinking.</p>

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Elementary School	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify current and past positive relationships.</li> <li>2. Support child's achievements.</li> <li>3. Build on logical skills and use these to help child cognitively understand past and present.</li> </ol>	<p>Development of concrete operational thinking.</p> <p>Empathy develops.</p> <p>Peers become more important.</p> <p>Adaptive Grief Reaction experienced by most adopted children.</p>	<p>Except in the case of parental death, this situation is usually precipitated by neglect or abuse.</p> <p>Multiple foster home placements can cause difficulties with:</p> <p>Trust</p> <p>Identity formation</p> <p>Sense of self-value</p> <p>Safety of relationships and reliability of people.</p> <p>Anxiety and hyperactivity</p> <p>Depression</p> <p>Somatic symptoms</p>	<p>Social skills deficits.</p> <p>Poor peer relationships.</p> <p>Acting out during adolescence.</p> <p>Somatization</p> <p>Dysthymia and depression.</p> <p>Eating disorders.</p>

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Adolescence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creating a holding environment.</li> <li>2. Facilitating independence &amp; responsibility.</li> <li>3. Friend, coach, and mentor.</li> </ol>	<p>Developing an independent sense of identity.</p> <p>Separation &amp; individuation issues.</p> <p>Development of abstract thinking (formal operations).</p>	<p>Very difficult since the task of this phase is to separate from parents.</p> <p>Watch for usual signs of teen problems: drug use, physical abuse, self-mutilation, delinquency, truancy, poor choice of peers, suicidal ideation, depression, etc.</p>	<p>Anti-social behaviors.</p> <p>Poor relationships.</p> <p>Difficulty finding and keeping employment.</p> <p>Depression.</p>