



A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development

John Bowlby

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The world-famous psychiatrist and author of the classic works *Attachment, Separation, and Loss* offers important guidelines for child rearing based on the crucial role of early intimate relationships.

A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development Details

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Michael says

An easily digestible introduction to Attachment Theory by its principle originator.

Whilst Bowlby's background was in psychoanalysis, he eschewed the Freudian concepts of developmental stages and of the inner 'fantasy' life being more crucial in psychopathology than the effect of real-life events upon a person's 'developmental pathway'. His emphasis on the importance of the present experience over examination of past memories, and of the therapeutic effect of the quality of the client-therapist relationship, also distinguishes his work from that of traditional psychoanalysis. I found many of his precepts compatible with the client-centred therapy of Carl Rogers, which is the theoretical framework for counselling with which I am most familiar.

Bowlby's work fills in something of the blank in Rogerian therapy regarding child development. Whilst a counsellor working in the classical client-centred approach may not feel the need for this blank to be filled, it's something I've found fascinating and which I intend to read into further.

Sophia says

As goodreads suggests for two stars "it was ok". I was torn between 2 and 3.

On the one hand, it is a well written collection of essays on attachment theory. It is fairly well explained, there are a lot of studies cited, and some lectures were very interesting.

That said, others were not. Bowlby was a psychoanalyst who was just starting to break the mold that Freud had set, and had been stagnating for several years. His ideas contrast quite nicely with Freud's more absurd theories, but at the same time, often state the obvious. Psychoanalysts had, at the time, gone way off on a tangent, completely detaching themselves from reality, and Bowlby was trying to set them back on track. In the 21st century though, quite a bit of what he "revealed" is painfully obvious. He cited two articles to demonstrate that pregnant women seek support from their husbands and mothers. Understandably, science isn't supposed to take anything for granted, but when you're writing an intentionally short essay, it seem a bit unnecessary to include such research.

I am currently not entirely convinced by attachment theory, or at least not on the same scale he seems to see in the world, and this also influenced my opinion of the book. The basic idea is very convincing (in that it is based on quite obvious aspects of human nature), but then suddenly he arrives to conclusions that are not actually supported by the facts.

In sum: props to Bowlby for trying to fix psychoanalysis, but this book is not necessary for a 21st century recap of psychological research in the parent-child bond.

Carolyn says

A tough read, I think. But enough research to add credibility to his awesome theory. Just freaking love your kids- keep them close, and let them know they are secure.

Kevin says

The book is a series of lectures given by the father of attachment theory. Though a great deal more research had taken place in the last 20+ years, Bowlby's conclusions are still both correct and impressively prescient. A very readable look into the thinking of an important contributor to psychology and psychoanalysis.

Jeff says

This book should be required reading for expecting new parents! If everyone could only understand what the alternatives to stable attachment are, a lifetime of suffering, surely the world could be transformed!

Bookbliss says

Excellent and well written. Allows an understanding of pervasive psychological issues affecting everyone in one way or another. Recommended for anyone who was or plans to have a child.

Jan says

Found this a really good, accessible introduction to attachment theory (speaking as a lay person with little exposure to psychotherapy and its theoretical constructs).

Rika says

Bowlby presented his theory very convincingly in this book. This is the book that has opened my eyes about what makes a good theory and how to build a strong scientific argument. I've already heard and read about attachment theory written by others during my undergraduate study, but it was only after reading this book do I have a clear idea of what attachment really is. I think the way Bowlby approaches the whole issue of attachment and frames his theory can be regarded as the early form of what later I know as evolutionary psychology. Great read!

Spaghettitoes says

I was expecting a bit more of the actual theory of attachment instead of the history of it but it was helpful in understanding the theory and its development, interesting and well written.

Oh and if you want to talk about the content it's basically - parents screw you up but only because their parents screwed them over too. Everyone's responsible but no one's to blame.

Actually, there was one thing which I felt was important not from a psychiatric POV but just in general was that the emotional development is so under-valued (this was written a while ago so predates its own impact on the field where this is an important area. Even now people think first of physical and sexual neglect before emotional neglect (and the book points out how some relatively simple/innocuous can in fact be quite harmful in the long term). Bowlby put it so -

There are, in fact, no more important communications between one human being and another than those expressed emotionally. ... During the earliest years of our lives, indeed, emotional expression and its reception are the only means of communication we have..."

Una B?rzi?a says

2.5

Edd says

Whilst giving some good insight with examples backed by empirical studies. The overall repetitiveness of the same conclusions makes one think that this could've been literally 10x shorter.

J?nis Ekmanis says

Gari, ar atk?rtošanos (par to ir br?din?jums ievad? - š? gr?mata ir lekciju apkopojums), ta?u sniedz pietiekami daudz inform?cijas par piesaistes teorijas rašan?s v?sturi un pamatiem.

Carl says

Classic book by another famous name in psychology. Bowlby's theories in this book are some of the cornerstones of child psychology. Certainly a must read for a students of psychology.

Niamh Dempsey says

This is excellent. It is a series of essays that outlines Bowlby's theories of attachment styles and their determinants. He explains succinctly the shortcomings of Freud's theory of energy and developmental phases and outlines his own exploration of ethology and also animal attachment behaviour studies as an approach to understanding the complex problems that arise when early human attachment relationships go awry.

Bowlby acknowledges the role of such adverse events of childhood as a child being scapegoated, unwanted, controlled by guilt-inducing techniques, or being identified with a grandparent with whom the parent has had a difficult relationship. He makes some excellent observations on the cognitive dissonance experienced by children when they know what they 'shouldn't' know or have seen what the parent desires that they had never

witnessed and how these memories are suppressed and lead to personality disorders later in life.

There is a worthy section on the adverse effects of child sexual abuse. It was very interesting to learn of the lasting and unfortunate effects on the psychotherapeutic community of the dismissal by Freud of his patients memories in this area as being false and untrustworthy, and the effects of such 'seduction' as minimal and unworthy of attention.
