

## Strategies for Teaching & Learning

*Schools are in a position to offer 'second chance learning' in order to try to provide the security and consequent development in children's emotional regulation and ability to move on in their lives*

**HOW WE RELATE TO A CHILD:** Be aware that behaviour is fueled by anxiety and fear. Rewards and sanctions are unlikely to support pupils with attachment difficulties. Telling a child that they have a sanction for inappropriate behavior is likely to fuel increasingly negative behaviours. Supportive relationships with a key adult who can foster a sense of self belief and encouragement will encourage more successful outcomes.

### DIFFERENTIATION

**Engage Interest:** Use an area that already sparks some interest from the child, match learning activities to this.

**Simplify:** Break down tasks into achievable chunks in order to facilitate success.

**Problem Solve:** Avoid failure by supporting early, be 'around' for the child to get them use to accepting help.

**Enthusiasm:** Visually express pleasure, so children become used to this emotion in others and learn to feel this themselves, increasing feelings of self belief and self esteem.

**AVOID UNNECESSARY CONFRONTATION:** Focus on priority behaviours only. Recognise that any negative interaction will be mirrored.

- Adjust expectations
- Distraction
- Planned Ignorance
- Legitimising the behaviour
- Choice and alternatives.

**USE of LANGUAGE:** Phrases such as 'be kind' might not be understood, and are ambiguous to the child as to what 'kind' actually means, we need to be explicit and to explain these actions/feelings in a way that does not initiate a feeling of shame. Modelling, using role play and visual cues will also support.

**EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL SKILLS:** Try to establish the emotional age of the child in order to ascertain their working levels and the targets that they need to work towards from this in order to make them achievable, and build up their resilience to demands.

**ATTACHMENT FIGURE / KEY ADULT:** Children will need to develop secure relationships in order to understand that adults can be trusted and will look after them. This person will be able to support the child at their differentiated emotional level, working to support the key developmental milestones that they have missed. Without facilitating these missed learning opportunities, children will be unable to progress. Key adults will need to build on the ability of a child to understand permanency and being 'kept in mind'

**TRANSITIONS:** Change especially when unexpected can heighten anxiety and this will be evidenced by expressed behaviours, either becoming more introverted or expressed physically and/or verbally. Children are unlikely to have had positive experiences around flexibility and will cling to a routine as security. Beginning and the end of the day are often the most significant times of trauma, the key adult will need to play a significant role here. Transitional objects, clear timetabling and safe role play about transitions and change will support. A body of work will need to be in place for end of year transitions, change to staffing, waiting your turn and changes to the environment, before the events occur.

## Whole School Approach

'Schools are one of the main possible sources of emotional well-being and resilience for children who have experienced trauma and loss' (DFES 2004)

- ◆ All adults to have a clear understanding of the Safeguarding policy and processes of the school
- ◆ A culture of celebrating differences
- ◆ Listening to the voices of children and their parents/carers in order to plan in a meaningful way
- ◆ Communicate positively, react with support
- ◆ At times of confrontation use low tone, slow speed voice
- ◆ Commitment from all on how to minimize and manage presenting behaviours
- ◆ Understanding and empathic culture
- ◆ Flexibility to teach in an innovative style, and identify personalised strategies for pupils
- ◆ Adults to understand that behaviour is communication
- ◆ Supporting the requirement for a key adult to build relationships and take the lead in re learning key attachment skills.
- ◆ Promote Self-Awareness and Emotional Well-being by ensuring that this is an outcome detailed in a Personalised Plan
- ◆ Adjust Rewards and Sanctions, use supportive conversations. Children won't always make the link between their own actions and consequences. Talking through with visuals e.g. flow charts might support this.
- ◆ Adults to have a clear support and restorative package when working with high need pupils, recognising that this work can be high intensity and highly emotive, often requiring the need for restorative time.

*Remember that a child who is ignoring, withdrawn, physical or verbally aggressive is not targeting you personally and that these behaviours are sometimes their only learnt method of communication.*

### References:

- Bombér LM (2008) *Inside I'm Hurting*. London: Worth Publishing
- Cross M (2004) *Children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties and Communication Problems - There is always a reason*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers
- Smith P & Cowe H (1988) *Understanding Children's Development*. Oxford: Basil Blackwood Ltd.



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# Attachment



## Unlocking the Traumatised Child

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## What is Attachment?

'Securely attached' children have experienced their needs being taken care of and have felt satisfied on a consistent basis, consequently they have built up a tolerance of being separated from key adults. They are:

*"able to take the risks necessary to explore the world with increasing curiosity, and so move forward in both their emotional and social development and the capacity to lead in new things. Their internal world is solid."*

(Bombér 2008)

Children's whose early years needs both emotionally and physically are not met appropriately and do not receive 'good enough' care learn behaviours that allow them to get their primary needs supported in order to survive:

- ◆ *Withdraw - coping alone is safer than requesting help*
- ◆ *Watchful - carefully choosing time to safely request support*
- ◆ *Extrovert- making their presence known to ensure attention is provided be it negative or positive.*

Some children despite having experienced trauma might have received the support from other areas that will compensate, and they will not exhibit further difficulties in school.

Children who have a background of trauma and loss are at significant risk of adverse brain development. The latest neuro science research tells us that emotional and social development can be severely delayed resulting in further delays in learning, understanding interactions, emotional well being, understanding of self, and relationships with others.

### Some science...

'If children are brought up without sensitive care they will have abnormally high levels of stress hormones, including cortisol.' 'high levels are known to significantly impair the growth and development of the baby's brain and body' (Perry 1994; ven der Kolk 1996) Brain cell growth can be slowed down and brain cells can be killed off. High cortisol levels can affect a child's ability to think, to retrieve information and manage behaviour. (Gerhardt 2004) cited in Bombér L (2009)

## The 4 Types of Attachment\*

### Secure Attachment

Understands that adults will help them, they are ok to explore and investigate, and are secure in their ability to take risks.

**Avoidant Attachment** - *often experienced home life being out of control to them. Could be related to a depressed or abusive caregiver.*

The child presents as emotionally distant and shut down to interactions. They may appear to be self-sufficient, and socially isolated, assuming that expressing themselves will not have any predictable outcome.

**Issues:** Generally compliant children focussed on task completion rather than interaction and consequently easily overlooked. Reluctant to ask for help due to high anxiety, and try to keep control of situations, and can be at risk of developing compulsive type behaviours. Build up of stress and anxiety can lead to sudden and seemingly out of character outbursts.

**Ambivalent Attachment** - *Often due to inconsistent care for example mental health or domestic violence might mean that a caregiver was a times unable to respond to the child as needed.*

The hypervigilant child who is constantly trying to 'read' adults behaviour in order to pre-empt the response they will get. They are often highly focussed on getting adult attention but can be then demanding or rejecting, and are more concerned with getting their needs met than a having a meaningful relationship.

**Issues:** These children are unable to understand that they will not be forgotten by adults. Extremely anxious but often the centre of disruption and trying to get attention. May suffer from separation anxiety with any key adult, and might make themselves appear helpless in order to gain attention.

**Disorganised Attachment** - *Often the result of severe neglect, and an unsafe and abusive environment.*

An erratic child in responses to adults often demonstrating extreme behaviours that can be shocking. They can demand attention or reject you in apparent terror. Rather than behaviours being a result of anxiety, as previously discussed they are also fear and survival driven.

**Issues:** Very difficult to manage in the school setting due to the unpredictability. Always expecting the worst out of any situation, and believing that all adults will treat them in the same way, often being self destructive in order to get the negative response behaviours from adults that feels familiar.

**If a child is at current risk follow the [Safeguarding Policy](#): Remember all behaviour is communication and children are unlikely to be able to verbalise their experiences.**

## Implications for Teaching and Learning

- \* Difficulties in recognizing emotions: they are often unsuccessful and putting emotions in context and will view others as being aggressive and abusive
- \* Pupils will often be delayed in many areas as they have not experienced the additional emotional 'home learning' that securely attached pupils will have received. They will require this to be taught in order to offer some corrective experiences.
- \* They will be reluctant and scared to form supportive relationships with adults and peers and may reject any form of help and support.
- \* Behaviours might be disruptive, visually and physically distressing both for peers and adults, creating a stressful and chaotic atmosphere.
- \* Developmental delays in speech and language: often having been ignored or having very limited, negative language based interactions. Poor vocabulary and sentence structure. Response language is highly delayed and emotional literacy poor.
- \* Academic progress might be slow due to the overwhelming need for the pupils to monitor and maintain their personal safety in all environments. Their attention is dominated by these feelings and mental capacity for sustained learning is limited.
- \* Very limited independence and demanding on the adults in the class, however support might be rejected and lead to confrontations.
- \* Developmental ages in all areas will be delayed and pupils are unlikely to be at age expected levels and therefore require careful differentiation across all areas of the curriculum.

'We cannot fast-track children who have experienced trauma and loss into emotional and sensory literacy, without first giving them the opportunity to fully negotiate the developmental stage of dependency. Self and other awareness's grow in the context of a positive, sensitive and caring relationship, in which the children is initially dependent on an adult this relationship, in what we must provide in schools.

(Bombér L, 2008)