

Defining attachment

Attachment is the bond between a person who needs protection and the person(s) he or she turns to for protection and comfort (regardless of whether they provide these). It is also the reciprocal bond of the caregiver to the protected person. Each attachment is unique and person-specific. Children's attachment forms at 9-12 months of age. Before that age, their brain is organizing on the basis of information from interaction with the caregiver; after that age, disruption of attachment is always painful. New attachments are possible, but they take time to develop, with older children forming new attachments more slowly (for an over view of attachment see Karen, 1998 ; for the neuroscience see Gerhardt, 2004) .

Attachment addresses (a) children's safety, (b) the adaptiveness of their behaviour in promoting their safety and comfort and (c) the basis upon which they learn about how to stay safe and comfortable in their caregiving relationships. Attachment has profound influence throughout life because:

- (1) it promotes the survival (both physically and emotionally) of the child;
- (2) it shapes the child's developing brain.

References

- Gerhardt, S. (2004). *Why love matters: How affection shapes a baby's brain*. New York, NY: Brunner-Routledge.
- Karen, R. (1998). *Becoming attached: First relationships and how they shape our capacity to love*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.