

Attachment



Attachment

- Every time we have a need or express a need and someone meets that need, we feel a connection to that individual. Over time these connections of caring and love form an attachment
- Attachment is the basis for all human development
- Babies depend on adults for physical survival and development
- Babies are attached to adult caregivers because adults take care of their physical and emotional needs
- It is a fact that babies who receive physical care, but receive no emotional care, get sick and can die
- Receiving food, shelter, and clothing is not enough because humans need love and attention

Here are some ways foster parents can nurture attachment

- Spend time with the child
- Take time to enjoy the child
- Help the child learn good behavior
- Use effective and appropriate discipline
- Consistent understanding- meeting needs
- Help the child express their feelings
- Help the child to relax and have fun
- Help the child feel good about themselves
- Under no circumstance should you let the child feel rejected

Effects on Attachment

- Children will find dramatic ways to express a need. For instance, crying gets louder, louder crying becomes tantrums, tantrums become destructive behavior
- Many “acting out” behaviors are actually an expression of a need not being met
- Abused and neglected teenagers eventually feel that adults are not to be trusted and no one will fill their needs. They may become withdrawn and/or depressed or may exhibit difficult behaviors

Seperation, Loss, and Grieving



5 Stages of Grief

1. Shock, denial and protest
2. Anger
3. Bargaining
4. Depression
5. Acceptance, understanding and coping

Shock and Denial

- Toddlers may walk around the house looking for their mother
- Children will deny that they have been physically or sexually abused
- Children will deny that they have been removed by not reacting to the separation and acting carefree
- Children will continually ask to go home
- Children will deny there is anything wrong in their family



Anger

- Realization that the loss has in fact occurred and cannot be undone
- Display hostile behavior: destroying objects
- Gang activity: to be part of a group
- Can be hurtful to themselves or others
- Express anger directly and verbally



Bargaining

- The child feels there must be some atonement, something they can do to stall the threat of what is happening. This is expressed by endless offers that start with "If I had been better, it wouldn't have happened." There are often many feelings of guilt and "I'm no good," connected with the bargaining stage.



Depression



- Anger turned inward
- Less visible than angry behavior
- Excessive fear
- Lack of interest or ability to engage in normally expected activities of a child at that stage of development
- Clingy behaviors/fearfulness
- Lack of expected affect from happy or sad experiences
- Anxious behaviors and nightmares
- Withdrawal from relating to peers and adults
- Suicidal gestures which may include running into the street, jumping from high places, or anything that puts the child at risk of hurting themselves
- Substance abuse and sexual promiscuity
- Poor school performance
- Poor hygiene and physical appearance

Acceptance

- Have ability to understand what happened to them and why
- Children “let go” of ‘I’m no good’ feelings
- Children start to express more hope for the future
- Children have successes in their tasks of learning and managing behaviors and feelings
- Children are learning to cope with painful feelings
- Children are learning it’s “okay” to have bad, sad, or mad feelings and learn appropriate ways to express them



The effects of grief and loss on children in foster care

Even when the plan is reunification, and there is a good possibility that they will be returned home, children experience profound loss while they are separated from their caregivers. How a child experiences loss depends on many factors, including:

- The child's developmental level
- The significance of the people separated
- Whether the separation is temporary or permanent
- The degree of familiarity of the new surroundings

Infancy

- A child's major developmental task during infancy is establishing trust. When an infant experiences the profound loss of a parent or primary caregiver, the infant is at risk of losing his or her basic sense of trust in adults, and the world at large.
- Specific grief and loss related behaviors include crying loudly, withdrawal, apathy, and mournful crying.
- Foster parents can help reduce an infant's experience of loss by maintaining the infant's routines (as best as possible). Infants also find comfort in familiar smells—although sometimes it goes against our instincts not to wash all of the infant's belongings, it gives the infant a sense of security to keep something that smells of the infant's home.

Preschool: Two Years to Five Years of Age

- During this period, children are developing their ability to understand cause, effect, and time. They are beginning to form concrete and logical thoughts.
- Grief will show itself in school or learning problems, and with the thought of the loss of caregivers and or related worries.
- Foster parents should be available, sympathetic listeners and help teachers and other significant adults understand that the child's behavior and performance is related to his or her overwhelming sadness.

Adolescence: Twelve Years to Nineteen Years of Age

- Complicating the grief process is the adolescent's primary developmental task: forming his or her own identity. Issues of independence, resistance, and separation are already occurring—profound loss adds a tremendous amount of stress to his or her maturation process.
- When faced with loss, adolescents can turn to destructive behaviors such as substance abuse, eating disorders, depression, etc.
- Foster parents can help adolescents deal with their conflicting emotions by helping them maintain their sense of identity, allowing them to make choices (that are not harmful), and by encouraging safe expressions and experiences of freedom and independence.

Myths about Grief

Myth: People who experience ambiguous loss do not need support or ceremony

Truth:

- Need to acknowledge what has been lost and receive support
- Need for knowledge
- Need for ceremony – very important with ambiguous loss!

Myths about Grief

Myth: There is a Predictable and Orderly Stage – like Progression to Experience Mourning

Truth:

- ❖ There are NO stages. There are **dimensions** of response that a person may or may not experience
- ❖ Stages can include:
 - Reconciliation, Healing
 - Shock, Numbness, Disbelief
 - Lack of Feeling
 - Relief, Release
 - Disorganization, Confusion, Searching
 - Loss, Emptiness, Sadness
 - Anxiety, Panic, Fear
 - Guilt, Regret, Self-Blame
 - Acting-Out Behaviors
 - Explosive Emotions
 - Physiological Changes

Myths about Grief

Myth: Infants and toddlers are too young to grieve and mourn.

Truth:

- ❖ A person old enough to love is old enough to grieve and mourn.

Myths about Grief

Myth: The trauma of childhood bereavement always leads to a maladaptive life.

Truth:

- There is a risk, but not a direct correlation
- If a child is able to mourn well, she/he will go on to live well and love well
- A helpful thing for adults do to is to assist the child in having hope – ‘the good that is yet to come

Myths about Grief

Myth: Children are better off if they don't attend funerals or other "leave taking" ceremonies.

Truth:

- It can be healing for a child to attend a ceremony or funeral
- "Anticipatory Guidance" is helpful – let the child know what he/she will see and do (for example, at a funeral – what the dead person will look like, and what others may be doing)

Myths about Grief

Myth: Tears expressing grief are only a sign of weakness

Truth:

- Tears are normal, helpful and need to be appreciated and affirmed, not denied or shamed
- Support tears, but don't force

Ways to help children deal with grief

1. It is critical that children talk about their grief and sadness
2. Make sure children know the truth and that their information is accurate
3. Share your own sadness and grief, but remember- your children need stability and strength that adults can provide
4. Reassure your children that they're safe
5. Give children outlets to let go of anger
6. Watch for difficulties such as nightmares, separation anxieties, reversion to babyish behavior, withdrawal, and intense anger

Intergenerational Grief

Definition:

Grief is passed on from the generation experiencing the trauma to their children (the next generation) even though they may not be aware of or have direct experience of the actual traumatic event. Unsolved grief can be passed on from parents to children to grandchildren and so on.

Historical Trauma

Cumulative trauma-collective and compounding emotional and psychological wounding both over the life span and across generations

In other words, it is trauma upon trauma that occurs in history to a specific group of people causing emotional and mental wounding both during their lives and the generations that follow

Death Imprint

- A powerful image of horrible death or separation

Examples of Death Imprint

1. “Trail of Tears” experienced by tribes in the southeast U.S. One fourth Cherokees died, approximately three thousand on the way to Oklahoma
2. Boarding Schools: sending four and five year olds to a foreign area and separating them from their families. At this age, it was like death to them
3. Hitler patterned his concentration camps after Indian Reservations. When Cherokees were put in stockades, they only had the clothes on their backs. Three thousand people died from exposure and disease

False Caring

- The pretense of caring but there are ulterior motives

US policies imposed on Indian were often passed through Congress in the pretense that they were a benefit to the Indians and that the government really “cared” for the Indians

Colonialism

- Victimized persons take on the thinking and behavior of those having power over them

For example, some Native people believe that non-Natives are more intelligent and can do things better than Native people. They may emulate non-Native thoughts and discard the goodness of their own ways

Healing the Generations

- Awareness- each family needs to look back at least three generations and remember where they came from
- Creating a Balance- Look at the traumatic part of your life, do not deny it, but don't get "stuck" there. Use those experiences to grow by learning to feel, talk, and trust
- Mental Awakening- We must know what has happened to Native American people historically, and use it to understand the effects on us

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