



Erasmus + VET Strategic Partnership

IENE 8 - Empowering migrant and refugee families with parenting skills

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BITE SIZED LEARNING TOOL NO. 4.1. SECURE ATTACHMENT

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- The emotional connection between an infant and their parent formed by nonverbal communication (attachment bond) is crucial to the infant's mental, physical, social, and emotional development.
- The type of attachment babies develop depends on their daily interactions with their parents or primary caregiver and ranges from the secure attachment to the insecure.

THE BASIC NEEDS OF AN INFANT



Esteem

Achievement, learning, mastery and exploration.

Belongingness and Love

Family, affection, relationships.

Safety

Protection, security, predictability, boundaries, stability.

Biological and Physiological

Basic life needs - air, food, drink, shelter, warmth, sleep, touch and play.

Attachment styles

- **Secure Attachment:**

- It is characterized by a mutual sense of comfort, understanding, secure, care, and concern.
- Children who are securely attached may be comforted to some extent by other people in the absence of their parents, but they prefer their parents.
- They accept separation from their parents, knowing that they will be back soon.
- Such children seek comfort from their parents when frightened.

- **Ambivalent Attachment:**

- In this case, children are cautious with strangers. They're distressed when their parents leave, without feeling comfort upon their return

- **Avoidant Attachment:**

- Children don't show any preference for parents over strangers and they may even avoid them. They don't feel **comfort from their parents.**

- **Disordered Attachment:**

- Children show a mix of avoidant and resistant behaviours and they are usually dazed, apprehensive, or confused.

Why secure attachment is so important?

- Secure attachment makes children feel safe that leads to an eagerness to learn, healthy self-awareness, trust, and empathy.
- It also makes them less disruptive, less aggressive, and more mature than children with one of the rest 3 attachment styles.
- Children who are securely attached tend to become adults who have trusting, intimate and long-term relationships.
- They are also expected to have high self-esteem, to seek out social support, and to express their feelings.
- According to the American Psychology Association, the insecure attachment may also trigger health problems.

What parents could do and when?

- While secure attachment can easily be established during infancy, there is never too late to make a child feel understood and secure.
- In fact, by developing parents' wordless communication skills a nonverbal emotional exchange between parents and their children will start and consequently, the secure attachment process may occur.
- Parents should be encouraged to play more with their children and to react more quickly to their children's needs.



Cultural influences on attachment behaviors

- There is doubt whether the attachment theory is reflected consistently in all cultures, as there is no adequate research across all cultures.
 - Individualistic countries that support independence such as Germany have been found to have high levels of anxious avoidant attachment, whereas countries that are more culturally close (collectivist), such as Japan, had high levels of ambivalent resistant attachment.
- Additionally, there seem to be behavioral differences among groups of infants of different cultures who are securely attached and this may be due to cultural differences.
- The attachment theory itself suggests inter alia that the strange situation is not valid in every culture and that sensitive caregiving can differ in different contexts.
- Moreover, according to the attachment theory attachment relationships may not be a priority when circumstances do not allow caregivers to encourage and maintain secure infant attachment in some contexts.

