

THE STAGES OF ATTACHMENT FORMATION

Developmentally - 'normal' age	Child's Behavior	Parent's Behavior
<p><u>FOG: First Month</u> Establishing Trust/Safety Infant's task is to establish physiological homeostasis, to adjust to the out of the womb world. Parents adjust to this new child, learn to read and respond to the child's signals. Safety, security and warmth are experienced in sensory connection with the parent(s). Parents 'make' the world, safe for the infant. Infant's body molds to the caregivers. The infant, in relaxed state, parallels the caregivers breathing.</p>	<p>Cries to signal needs Ceases crying and returns to relaxed state when need is met Good sucking response. Test: Accepts cuddling. Game: Rag doll practice to test for molding and cuddling</p>	<p>Responds to baby's signal and successfully identifies needs most of the time Child experiences care from one or two primary caregivers. Day care providers serve as tertiary caregivers who evoke the sensory memory of the two primary caregivers. (This is consistent with Nancy Thomas' teaching that all good things must come from parents, so that all respite and all child care providers turn the child toward parents. Test for parents: Returns to relaxation along with baby; feels good about self.</p>
<p><u>Symbiosis: 2-5 months</u> Positive interactions Child experiences a sense of oneness with the parent. Parent and child "fall in love" with each other. Representational OP is forming. Self comforting behaviors (e.g., finger or thumb sucking) begin to represent and recall, evoke, the sensory feeling of parents presence. Stories: You Are My I Love You</p>	<p>Smiles- makes eye contact; stares at mother's face for a few seconds at a time; makes happy sounds. Length of eye contact/loving exchanges with mother increases from seconds to minutes. If eye contact is interrupted by sudden noise or other distraction, child is increasingly able to return the gaze. Test: Child appears responsive and exhibits full range of emotions. Game-details about mo/fa with eyes closed (eye color? color of ear rings? watch or no watch? Smell? sound of voice?) Parent can change voice tone, etc.</p>	<p>Offers nurturing. Begins wooing child; initiates positive interactions: calls baby by name. Parent focuses much of her/his attention on the baby. Increasingly playful with the baby: chortles, grins, laughs, talks to, enjoys and engages the baby in one on one interactions. Test for parents: Continues to respond to the baby's signals and meet the baby's needs (not wants or demands-think of nap time for infants, for example)</p>
<p>5-7 months Representational OP developing. Child is experiencing safety as more tied to mo/fa and is beginning to experience self as separate from fa/mo. The need for transitional objects begins and grows to assist the baby to tolerate separation from the parents(s)</p>	<p>Differentiates between parents and strangers. Begins checking, looking back to parents for reassurance when strangers are present. Continues to pull, poke and grab at parents: discovering and exploring the boundary</p>	<p>Gives child visual, verbal, and tactile reassurance when transferring child to safe other (than mo/fa). Transitional objects-something that smells like you, belongs to you, looks like you (picture), sounds like you (cassette tape of your voice), stuffed animal</p>

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<p>5-7 months (cont.) Test: child requesting something of yours either directly or indirectly (stealing). Give them picture of you together (luggage tags)</p>	<p>between self and other. Exhibits anxiety, anger or flattened affect when parents leave or are not present Game: shadowing with increased length of checking time. Stories: the Kissing Hand, Runaway Bunny, Mama do you Love me?</p>	<p>to help them feel safe, something to put in their pocket, under their pillow, etc. Continues to meet the child’s needs, engage the child with play and comfort and begins to encourage safe exploration of the other than mo/fa world. Provides stimulation/exploration according to the child’s ability to tolerate input.</p>
<p>8-9 months Increasing stranger anxiety. Need for transitional objects increases.</p> <p>Practicing: Early, 9-12 months Crawls away</p> <p>Practicing: Late, 12-18 months Evocative OP. Child moves safely from the mothering function (inner safety) parent to the fathering function (safe exploration) parent, i.e., transferring all of the above, to the other parent!</p>	<p>Checking continues and is used to help the child feel safe when exploring. Shows glee at accomplishments. Returns to parents to refuel (get hug, kiss, high-five) during play. Game: Hide and Seek, You Need a...hug, mom kiss, dad pat, etc; or You Need to Refuel-start out by scheduling it every half hour or so and increase the length of time as tolerated. Stories: The Kissing Hand</p> <p>Easily turns to parents for comfort when tired, hurt or anxious. (this is the test) Accepts comfort most of the time. Ability to delay gratification increases slightly (test-I can wait until you’re off the phone to tell you something.) Self-comforting skills increase Test: able to come up with some of their own ideas for self soothing (transitional objects, Butterfly hug, safe place) Game: Hide and Seek, I Remember When</p> <p>Refuels more often as checking is not as secure for much of the exploration occurring. Joyous at accomplishments. Parent sets up checking by having child ask permission. (same as for</p>	<p>Encourages safe exploration and welcomes child back afterward</p> <p>Exhibits joy at child’s efforts and accomplishments. Provides reassurance; encourages return to play</p> <p>Responds to NEED and redirects; does not usually overreact. Firmly, gently corrects force. Supports individuation and connectedness. Continued responsiveness to child’s needs; encourages growing autonomy and praises</p>

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<p>12-18 months (cont.)</p>	<p>8-9,9-12 months) Stories: Ira Sleeps Over</p>	<p>accomplishments. Cheers effort. Game: Bulletin board of accomplishments, polaroid pics of accomplishments.</p>
<p><u>Rapprochement: 15-22 months</u> The child begins to experience anxiety from the experience of perceiving self as separate from the parent. The drive for individuation continues, peppered with moments of closeness and attempts to re-establish oneness.</p> <p><u>Rapprochement Crisis:</u> As the movement towards psychological individuation proceeds, enhanced by increasing physical and verbal skills, the child’s anxiety at separateness also increases. Attempts to return to oneness now include coercion. Negative behavior draws Mom’s focus back to the child.</p> <p><u>Consolidation of Individuation: 21-36 months</u> Dawning sense of separateness is almost complete. Child experiences self as separate from and yet safely connected to parents. OP in place. Representational OC usually in place. Evocative OC is just beginning to develop.</p>	<p>Attempt to woo the parent back into symbiosis. Shadowing and darting, child plays hide and seek, peek-a-boo and chase games, imitating the dance of closeness and separateness. Test: *Child/teen after hanging out with peers may come home and snuggle up to you as they did when they were younger. Often when mom is busy, focusing on the “other than infant” and other parts of herself and her life, child hits and kicks, getting attention from negative behavior. *may need “time-in” to ease anxiety Stories: The Pain and the Great One</p> <p>Previous behaviors continue: full range of emotions; able to handle increasingly longer periods of separation (in hours) without anxiety; increasingly longer periods of independent play. Imitates parents in play.</p>	<p>Responds to the child’s needs, provides connection and reassurance, *giving the message, “It’s ok to go away and to be connected..” Continues to stimulate child and encourage safe exploration. Offers comfort and warmth when child is anxious and/or over stimulated. Uses “parts” language</p> <p>Firmly and gently corrects child, containing the affective and behavioral aggression rather than escalating it.</p> <p>Continued responsiveness to child’s needs. Able to allow and encourage individuation and praise accomplishments.</p>

Adapted from REAL PARENTS, REAL CHILDREN; PARENTING THE ADOPTED CHILD, by Holly VanGulden and L. Bartels-Rabb, amplified by Linda Ikeda. Copyright 2004.