

ADULT ATTACHMENT CATEGORIES



Pathways to
Permanence 2

Parenting
Children
WHO HAVE
Experienced
Trauma
AND LOSS

Session 5

Creating
Positive
Attachments
Part 2

Parent's
Toolbox

SECURE/AUTONOMOUS

Adults who are securely/autonomously attached value relationships and are objective regarding their relationship experiences. Although not all of these adults report having trouble-free childhoods, they have been able to work through past issues, effectively communicate their experiences, and show forgiveness and even compassion. These parents are able to provide consistent and reliable caregiving, and are more likely to have children who are securely attached.

PREOCCUPIED

Adults in this category are preoccupied with unresolved issues in early childhood or in their present relationships with their parents. They are often angered by those experiences, and focus on them instead of addressing current relationship issues. Their caregiving changes repeatedly from attentive to preoccupied. These parents are more likely to have children who are ambivalently attached.

DISMISSING

Adults in this category dismiss attachment issues as unimportant or irrelevant, both for themselves as well as for their children. Their reporting is often inaccurate and/or defensive, and reflects an idealized version of events. They avoid discussing painful experiences or stressful emotions, and may be neglectful and dismissive of their children's needs. These parents are more likely to have children who are avoidantly attached.

UNRESOLVED

Adults with unresolved attachment experienced traumatic early childhoods and have not come to terms with their experiences. They might dissociate to avoid negative memories and emotions, and are not able to accurately relate their experiences. These adults may recreate their own childhood trauma (abuse, neglect, etc.) with their own children, and are more likely to have children with disorganized attachment.

References

Levy, T.M., & Orlans, M. (1998). *Attachment, trauma, and healing: Understanding and treating attachment disorder in children and families*. Washington, D.C.: CWLA Press.

Main, M. (2000). The organized categories of infant, child, and adult attachment: Flexible vs. inflexible attention under attachment-related stress. *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 48(4), 1055-1096.