

Mental Minutes

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Reactive Attachment Disorder and its Signs and Symptoms

Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD) is a clinically recognized form of extreme insecure attachment. Common causes of RAD include severe child abuse and neglect. Children may have been removed from the home and placed in the foster care system. RAD also frequently occurs in internationally adopted children who were living in orphanages.

Children with RAD are so neurologically disrupted that they have extreme difficulty attaching to a primary caregiver, attaining normal developmental milestones or establishing normal relationships with other people. They show strong symptoms of attachment disruption. These children may be difficult or impossible to soothe, accepting comfort from no one, even the primary caregiver, and preferring to play alone. On the other hand, they may seem superficially friendly to everyone, inappro-

propriately approaching and interacting with strangers as if they were the primary caregiver.

What can be especially hard to bear for those who care for these children is that the child might not seem to be bonded to them at all, despite [the caretaker's] attempts to show love and affection. Many of these children may be incorrectly diagnosed with severe emotional and behavioral disturbances ranging from bipolar disorder to depression. Families caring for children with RAD will benefit from treatment and therapeutic parenting skills. In time and with patience, even severe attachment disorders can be repaired.

See full article at:
http://helpguide.org/mental/parenting_bonding_reactive_attachment_disorder.htm#



Did you know???

Secure v. Insecure Attachment

When infants and young children have a loving caregiver consistently responding to their needs, they build a *secure attachment*. This lifelong bond affects growth, development, trust and the ability to build relationships. However, severely confusing, frightening and isolating emotional experiences early in life disrupts this bond, creating insecure attachment. In extreme circumstances, this can result in attachment disorders. Problems with attachment limit a child's ability to be emotionally present, flexible and

able to communicate in ways that build satisfying and meaningful relationships. The earlier attachment disruptions are caught, the better. However, it is never too late to treat and repair attachment difficulties. With the right tools, and a healthy dose of time, patience and love, attachment repair can and does happen.

Source:
http://helpguide.org/mental/parenting_bonding_reactive_attachment_disorder.htm#

UPCOMING WORKSHOP

ATTACHMENT 101: THE BASICS AND BEYOND



On December 10th, 2009, ABC University will host Attachment 101: The Basics and Beyond, an intensive, interactive full day session delving into understanding "Attachment" - one of the fundamental biological processes necessary for survival.* This training will highlight the importance of attachment in the developmental process of a child and how it shapes the behavior and personality of an individual. Participants will gain a working knowledge of brain differences in children affected by early childhood trauma and its' linkage to the continuum of attachment difficulties that lead to Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD). Additionally, participants will acquire cutting edge techniques for responding to children and adolescents with attachment disorders as they are introduced to multiple treatment models used by different attachment-focused clinicians from around the world. Attachment 101 will be co-led by clinicians Jeffrey Atkinson, LPC NCC and Cassandra Johnson-Landry, LPC NCC. Jeff and Cassandra are specially trained to treat attachment resistant children and are the Lead Therapists and Founders of the Attachment and Bonding Center of Atlanta, LLC, also known as ABC. The Attachment and Bonding Center of Atlanta has used the latest interventions to treat thousands of children with attachment disorders and has contributed to research done by UCLA related to brain functions of children with early childhood trauma. This training is designed for clinicians, medical professionals, nurses, early childhood and child development specialists, child welfare professionals and caretakers.

*Log on to www.mentalhealthgeorgia.com for more information and registration form!!!



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How does a secure attachment develop and why is it important?



A secure attachment grows and develops over time, and is the product of the ongoing interactions between infant and caregiver. Quality of attachment is influenced by many variables, including child characteristics, parent characteristics, and external social and economic factors that support or hinder the parent-child relationship. But research has demonstrated that the major factor leading to a secure attachment is the caregiver's sensitivity and responsiveness to the child's cues and signals. The securely attached child has learned to trust that the caregiver will consistently meet his or her needs, and, equally important, the child has learned to trust in his or her own ability to solicit care. Experience tells the child that, "When I give a signal, it counts. I have the power to see that my needs are met."

As the child matures and ventures out into the larger social world, the basic trust in the caregiver and in self is carried forward, influencing the child's expectations and behavior in subsequent relationships with other adults and peers. While not an inoculation against later problems, secure attachments in infancy lay the foundation for healthy development and provide children with the beginning tools they need to reach their developmental potential. Secure attachment serves as a platform for the child to become an active, responsible member of society.

Specifically, attachment researchers, who have followed children longitudinally from birth, observe that in preschool and the early school years the securely attached child is likely to be: cooperative with teachers and peers; enthusiastic in approaching learning tasks and social situations; persistent in problem solving; socially competent and able to form relationships easily; and less aggressive and more empathic than children who have not had a secure attachment in infancy. In general, teachers rate securely attached children as having higher self-esteem and being more competent.

Not surprisingly, teachers and peers tend to respond positively to these children, and this reinforces the positive expectations of the securely attached children. In effect, we see a self-perpetuating cycle of interactions, increasing the likelihood that the securely attached child will carry these positive attitudes, expectations, and behaviors into adulthood.

See full article at: http://www.cyfc.umn.edu/policy/issues/child-adult_attachment8-98.html

Staff Star



Let's all celebrate Angela Lee, our staff star of the month! Angela is a therapist with Alliance for Change through Treatment and has been with the agency for over a year. Angela holds a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology and is currently pursuing her Doctor of Education in Counseling. Prior to joining the ABC/ACT family, Angela was a case manager for a private foster care agency for over 2 years. Due to legal changes within the Medicaid program affecting her position, Angela opted to transition into a new role and contends that "God never closes one door without opening another!"

When asked about the changes she has witnessed while working with ABC/ACT, Angela stated that she has "witnessed the complete transformation of the relationships and interactions of many children and parents that we have worked with because of the sincere dedication and prayer that we devote to the lives of the families." Further, Angela reports that structural changes within the organization have "been very beneficial in helping us to form alliances and camaraderie...I absolutely enjoy working with my team." In the future, she sees the agency expanding beyond its current singular location "to meet the needs of the children that we serve in other counties/cities, that do not have

Angela's colleagues have commented that she is "very sweet, never complains, always pleasant, and genuinely cares about the children and families she serves." Angela stated that she has a "dedication and desire to see others do well. I enjoy the people that I work with and love the kids that I work for."

There are challenges however, and Angela reports that "the increasingly stringent demands of the ever-changing Medicaid system" is the biggest one, however, "we seem to do well with rising to the occasion". Moreover, "other challenges include working against resistance when you know your help is not wanted or welcomed and being positive until the job is finished." What drives her however, is "knowing that you are making a difference...anytime you encourage someone to look up and experience hope, that is ministry. I have passion for what I do because I know that it is beyond me and I am just grateful that I would be chosen to be a vessel to carry the service that may help someone else. I pray for guidance to be effective [and] when I realize that I am not working alone, it helps to lighten the load." Angela declared that she avoids burnout by taking breaks, asking for help, and working as a team. "We do a lot for others all the time, but it is important to take care of ourselves as well."

Congratulations on a job well done Angela! You are an asset to our families and our agency!!!

"Mental-Minute"

What is the missing number?

4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9,

61, 52, 63, 94, 46, ?

Source: <http://brainden.com/forum/index.php?topic/10392-missing-number/>

Insecure Attachments and Attachment Disorders: Causes and Solutions

Causes of insecure attachments and attachment disorders:

The caregiver is unable to provide for the child. Sometimes, parents may love and intend the best for their children, but not know themselves how to provide the care the children need. They may have a history of abuse, depression, trauma or be overwhelmed by work and childcare responsibilities. A medical emergency may have occurred in the parent, making care very difficult. A death or trauma in the family can also have enormous impact.

Abuse and neglect. If the primary caregiver is a source of pain and terror, as in physical or emotional abuse, a secure attachment cannot form. Parents who abuse alcohol and drugs may have a lowered threshold for violence and are at increased risk for neglecting their children.

Constantly changing caregivers. Insecure attachment can also occur if the child has very little interaction with a primary caregiver, but instead has a succession of childcare providers that are not attuned to the child and do not stay in the child's life.

Children in institutional care. Children in institutional care have not only lost their primary caregiver but may have lived in conditions where they cannot form a secure bond. Children in a succession of foster or group homes, or children adopted from overseas who have lived in orphanages, are at risk.

Child illness or disability. Infants with long hospital stays, where they have been isolated and alone, are also at risk. Parents may also feel

overwhelmed with an infant's needs if the infant is constantly sick and in pain, withdrawing or lashing out at the child because they don't know what to do.

Repairing insecure attachments and attachment disorders:

Sadly, insecure attachment can be a vicious cycle. Due to problems with social relationships, insecurely attached children may become even more isolated and withdrawn from their primary caregivers, family and friends. They may be seen as "bratty" or "bullies", making it hard for them to form relationships that may mitigate the effects of insecure attachment. However, it is never too late to work on forming secure attachments. While the brain is most pliable in infancy and early childhood, it is responsive to changes all of our lives. Relationships with relatives, teachers and childcare providers can also supply an important source of connection and strength for a child's developing mind.

Here are some tips on repairing an insecure attachment:

Learn what creates a secure attachment. Attachment is an interactive process that requires both verbal and nonverbal skills. Emotional intelligence is critical to building a secure attachment, since even verbal children are sensing our moods and watching everything we do. Every child is unique and will have different ways to be soothed.

Provide support for the primary caregiver. The primary caregiver needs to be emotionally healthy, have adequate time, and the right skills to be attuned and responsive to the child's needs. In some cases, the caregiver may

simply be overwhelmed, and help with household or work responsibilities allows them to focus. Other caregivers may need more help, such as parenting classes, alcohol or drug treatment, or therapy for mental disorders such as emotional trauma or depression.

Help the child express his or her needs.

Children with attachment problems will need extra help in learning to express their needs. They may have learned not to cry if in pain or frightened, for example, or not associate touch with being soothed. They may revert to developmentally inappropriate behaviors if stressed or scared. It might take extra creativity and diligence on the caregiver's part to help the child express needs safely and appropriately.

Time, consistency and predictability is key.

Problems in attachment result from problems with trust. By this very definition, repairing an attachment disruption takes time, consistency and patience. It will take time for a child to realize that they can trust and rely on their primary caregiver and other important people in their lives. Children with attachment disruptions may be more sensitive to life changes and situations like travel, returning to school or holidays. Caregivers should be aware and as attuned to this as possible, helping to keep a normal schedule during unpredictable times.

See full article at:

http://helpguide.org/mental/parenting_bonding_reactive_attachment_disorder.htm#

Recipe Round-Up

Thanksgiving Won Tons

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 1/2 cups cooked turkey breast meat, shredded
- 2/3 cup dried cranberries
- 1/3 cup slivered almonds
- 1/2 cup cranberry sauce
- 1 (14 ounce) package wonton wrappers
- 1 quart vegetable oil for frying

DIRECTIONS:

1. Mix the turkey, cranberries, almonds, and cranberry sauce in a bowl.
2. Place about 1 teaspoon of the mixture in the center of each wonton wrapper.
3. Fold wrappers over filling, moisten edges, and press with a fork to seal.

Source: <http://www.momswhothink.com/thanksgiving-recipes/thanksgiving-appetizers/4.html>



Mental Health Georgia provides an extensive array of mental health services for both children and adults. “Our mission is to provide high-quality, easily accessible services for Georgians, focused on promoting mental and emotional well-being through personal and professional development, family preservation, resource coordination, and individualized treatment.

Resource Readiness

Here are some great resources for families in need of more information about attachment disorder, adoption, and foster care!

ATTACH, the Association for Treatment and Training in the Attachment of Children, is an international coalition of professionals and families dedicated to helping those with attachment difficulties by sharing their knowledge, talents and resources. They provide a quarterly newsletter, an annual conference, membership directory, and other benefits to their members and the public.

<http://attach.org/> for more information.

The Georgia Center for Resources and Support is a state wide project funded by the Georgia Department of Human Resources and presented by Families First and Bethany Christian Services. Their purpose is to increase resources and supportive services for adoptive and foster families and reduce the incidence of disruption in Georgia.

<http://www.gaadoptionresources.org/> for more information.

The Division of Family and Children Services, State Adoption Unit is committed to educating the public, private partners and DFCS field staff in regards to best practices in adoption and to facilitate and support the adoption of children in the permanent custody of the Department of Human Resources.

<http://www.dfcs.dhr.georgia.gov/portal/site/DHR-DFCS/menuitem.5d32235bb09bde9a50c8798dd03036a0/?vgnextoid=036a2b48d9a4ff00VgnVCM100000bf01010aRCRD> for more information.

The International Attachment Network’s objective is to disseminate and exchange information about attachment theory and attachment-related studies.

<http://www.attachmentnetwork.org/> for more information.

“Mental-Minute Solution”

What is the missing number?

4x4 = 16, backwards is 61

5x5 = 25, backwards is 52

and so on...

9x9 = 81, backwards is 18

Source: <http://brainden.com/forum/index.php?topic/10392-missing-number/>

Self-Care Corner

Life Time Fitness, a national Healthy Way of Life Company, offers the following tips for involving the whole family in a new fitness routine:



1. Seize the moment: Time, or the lack of it, is often cited as the biggest challenge to sustaining an exercise regimen. Your workout doesn't have to take a lot of time. Even a half hour walking your neighborhood pays off in increased energy and stamina. Most fitness center aerobics classes are just an hour long, yet offer big fitness dividends. Taking care of yourself is one of the best things you can do for your family.

2. Enjoy the year's most beautiful season: In many parts of the United States, autumn is a near-sacred season, with its warm, sunny days, cool evenings and postcard perfect colors. Get outside and enjoy the season by bicycling, walking, hiking, jogging, playing tennis, or any other outdoor activity. Explore parks in your area; find a new bike path through the woods, take a walk around a lake. The time spent out in nature will do as much good for your mind as for your body.

3. Return to your club or gym: It takes 30 days to make fitness a habit, and supplementing outdoor exercise with increasingly frequent visits to your health club will help diversify your exercise regimen and set the stage for regular workouts once autumn's leaves have fallen. A well-rounded fitness regimen is important. While aerobic activity such as running or bicycling is good for your heart, resistance training is also a critical component of a balanced program, so be sure to take advantage of your fitness center's weight lifting equipment.

4. Make it social: One of the great things about exercise is that it doesn't need to be done alone. By exercising together, family members can keep one another motivated, and it will be more fun.

Source: <http://www.mamashealth.com/exercise/famexercise.asp>



MENTAL HEALTH GEORGIA

Serving the Mental Health Needs of the Residents of Georgia

<p style="text-align: center;">Attachment and Bonding Center of Atlanta</p> <p style="text-align: center;">3547 Northlake at Habersham Building F Tucker, GA 30084 Phone: 678-406-9707 Fax: 678-406-9881 Email: nafiyasa@mentalhealthgeorgia.com</p>	<p>We're on the Web!</p> <p>www.mentalhealthgeorgia.com</p> <p>Serving the Mental Health Needs of the Residents of Georgia.</p>
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