

Dr Lisa O'Reilly

Attachment Play



Safety and Protection

At each stage of development the infant must
Experience a close attachment with a consistent
caregiver to ensure safety and protection when faced
with internal changes and environmental stimuli.

Attachment is essential to survival (Porter, 2013)

Functions of Attachment

- Primary function is to seek protection and to communicate at intuitive and automatic levels (Cortina, Mauricio, Liotti & Giovanni, 2010,p 410)
- Reach full potential
- Think logically & make sense of the world
- Help recognise feelings & develop a conscience
- Feel self-reliant & secure
- Deal with feelings of jealousy – no need to compete with others to be loved
- Develop complex vocabulary to express emotions
- Devise efficient response mechanisms (Fahlberg, 1994, cited in O'Reilly, 2013).

Primary Benefits of Attachment

(Howe et al, 1999, p.15)

1. Protection from Danger
2. Supply of Food
3. Social Interaction that promotes learning about people, relationships and the self.

‘In terms of biology and evolution, the most basic of these is protection from danger. If the child fails to survive, the other two benefits are redundant

Boosting Attachment Security ‘Play’

(Howe, 2011)

- Caregivers must recognise & enhance children’s positive states.
- Play gives powerful boosts to a child’s attachment security when both child and caregiver engage in this joyful and blissful activity.
- The positive emotions help the brain deal with stress and create robust neurological structures that promote children’s ability to think about their feelings and regulate affect (Schore, 2001)

Attachment Play (Rose, 2012)

AP is based on a particular view about human nature

AP is part of a new paradigm of human beings that has been re-emerging in our culture since the 1960's and the humanist movement.

In this new model, human beings are inherently loving, compassionate beings, who naturally want to help others.

Attachment Play (Rose, 2012)

- Three C'S
 - Connection
 - Cooperation
 - Contribution
- Babies have an inbuilt desire to connect and from six months approx. show an inbuilt desire to cooperate and contribute (often earlier when counting smiling)

Connection

- Taking time to connect with our bodies means staying self-connected: doing activities with movement help us engage better in physical play
- The more self-connected we are the more connection we can give to a child
- The more connected we are with our bodies the more likely we will be able to engage in physical play – hugging, rough and tumble, piggy back rides, wrestling

Attachment Play

What is going on when they do not co-operate?

They have an UNMET NEED- such as connection and autonomy

They need to LEARN something – such as we are happy for them to draw on paper and not the wall

They have pent-up PAINFUL FEELINGS – frustration, powerless, sadness and confusion

How to Illicit Cooperation

- To MEET THEIR NEEDS – especially connection and choice
 - To GIVE THEM INFORMATION
 - To HELP them Release the feelings

Model uses the same 3 reasons for regrettable adult responses

- **We have an UNMET NEED**
- **We need to LEARN Something**
- **We have pent-up PAINFUL FEELINGS**

Releasing Painful Feelings: 2 types released in different ways

- Feelings such as frustration, helplessness, fear, anxiety and powerlessness are released through laughter and play with connection.
- Feelings such as sadness, confusion, loss, overwhelm and disappointment are released through crying with connection.

Boosting Attachment Security ‘Play’

(Ryan, 2007)

Approach: Child-led play sessions with children.

Child-led play is the most powerful way to connect with any child (Solter, 2013)

Learn about their world, wishes and feelings.

Attachment Play

(Solter, 2013)

Promotes and strengthens attachment security between children and caregivers

Is interactive play that strengthens parents connection to their child. It aims to bring out the best in both parent and child.

Attachment Play involves laughter – Laughter reduces frustration, anxiety and anger.

Attachment Play Characteristics

- Play initiated by parent or child.
- Child-led play is preferable but parents can introduce activities to resolve issues or to help children through difficult times
- No special equipment is needed
- Can take place anytime or anywhere.
- Involves many familiar activities e.g. Hide and Seek
Peek-a-boo

9 Types of Attachment Play

- Non-directive child-centred play ‘it’s the best way to become acquainted with a child’ (Solter, 2013, p.14).
- 2. Symbolic play with specific props or themes: very effective for helping children to heal from trauma. Involves a more directive role offering a specific toy or play theme e.g. Play with toy dogs to overcome a fear of dogs. Very useful for behavioural issues such as toilet training, sibling rivalry or lack of co-operation

9 Types of Attachment Play

3. Contingency Play: any activity where the adults behaviour is predictably repeated and is contingent on the child's behaviour. This is a great way to establish a connection e.g. Child may throw doll on the ground – adult will then say 'ouch'.

4. Nonsense Play: child may act silly and make obvious mistakes or playfully exaggerate emotions or conflicts. This only qualifies as attachment play when it involves both child-parent interaction. The exaggeration play can resolve discipline issues by exaggerating conflicts to the point of becoming ridiculous e.g. Child will not take a bath – you can pretend your a bulldozer going to dig all the dirt off

9 Types of Attachment Play

5. Separation Games: short visual and spatial separation occurs between parent and child e.g. Peek-a-boo, hide-and-seek. Babies from 6 – 18 months love these game as the stress released through laughter are those resulting from separation anxiety.

6. Power-reversal Games: adult plays the role of being frightened or weak, clumsy or angry e.g. pillow fight where adult pretends that the child has knocked them over. The laughter during this play is therapeutic as it releases tension and anxiety resulting from feelings of powerlessness and can support healing from adult imposed trauma.

9 Types of Attachment Play

7. Regression Games: are important for both connection and healing. If child initiates regression games engage them in this manner – lullabies, wrapping in blanket, offer bottles, play with toes etc. Very important around birth of siblings. Recommended during periods of family stress if parents have little time available to children.

8. Activities with body contact: while respecting child's boundaries enhances connection. The mutual enjoyment of playing and touching is powerful in strengthening attachment and bonding. Play has the power to repair the damage of traumatic separations. Connecting physically through play creates feelings of self-worth, safety and belonging.

9 Types of Attachment Play

9. Co-operative games and activities: can help strengthen connection. Children often enjoy telling co-operative stories or building block towers with adults. Opportunities for connection without the threat of losing. Everyone works towards a common goal and no-one loses. An example of co-operative games include many children working together to keep balloons in air or sharing chairs in musical chairs.

AP Requires Practice

Think of Child and Their Needs

Write down games/play to do with the child

Thank you