

**CONNECTING WITH CHILDREN:  
HELPING TEACHERS REDUCE BULLYING BEHAVIOURS  
THROUGH ATTACHMENT THEORY**

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## Dedication

This final project is dedicated to all teachers who value the importance of positive relationships and the promotion of developmental success among students.

## Abstract

This final project explores the concept of parent-child attachment in relation to social adjustment. Secure parent-child attachment promotes pro-social interactions, increased self-knowledge and self-esteem, reduced maladaptive behaviours, and overall healthy development, while insecure attachments have been linked to bullying behaviours, such as aggression and hostility. Parents are encouraged to provide sensitive care, be dependable, and increase their child's emotional awareness, but it is also important for schoolteachers to promote secure attachment in students. The teacher manual includes suggested activities to improve student relations that teachers can incorporate in the classroom. This project provides teachers with strategies to facilitate positive attachments, improve interpersonal relationships, and reduce bullying behaviours in schools. Some guidelines for making therapeutic referrals are also presented.

## Acknowledgements

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My experience as a teacher, working collaboratively with other professionals and interacting with various students, has emphasized the value and importance of attachment, which influenced my direction and the focus of this final project. The continued effort of teachers in building a secure attachment base with students can be valuable for many children.

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## Chapter I

### *Introduction*

“The patterning of the early attachment relationship is the foundation on which later representational models of self and attachment figures are constructed. Such models strongly influence the ways in which a child relates to others, approaches the environment, and resolves critical issues in later stages of development” (Erickson, Sroufe, & Egeland, 1985, p. 147). In society, many children have difficulty establishing a secure attachment with their caregivers, which can negatively affect healthy development (Jernberg & Booth, 2001a). It is important to extend this information to schoolteachers, in addition to caregivers, because the social development of students is encouraged at school as children spend a lot of their time interacting and building relationships with peers. Through encouragement and relationship building, schoolteachers have the opportunity to obtain a deeper understanding of the link between children’s attachment development and social adjustment. By developing a deeper understanding of the impact that parent-child attachment relationships can have on children’s behavioural patterns, teachers can become more knowledgeable and effective in promoting appropriate behaviours. This is done by helping children improve their attachment security through direct observations of and interactions with children and working collaboratively with their caregivers.

It is important for all children to develop a secure attachment bond with parents in order to feel safe, get to know themselves, experience less stress, and create positive relationships with others (Kemp, Jaffe, Segal & Hutman, 2004). Children need parents to be dependable, caring, sensitive, warm, loving and protect them in order to have

emotional awareness (Easterbrooks, Biesecker & Lyons-Ruth, 2000; Jernberg, 1984). When parents provide a sense of security through warm, sensitive, and responsive care, their children tend to develop empathy and respond appropriately to others in distress, thereby leading to positive interrelations (Bowlby, 1988). With this approach, parents should establish a secure internal working model of attachment in their children, which also leads to positive future relationships (Greenberg, Speltz & DeKlyen, 1993). Thus, children with a secure attachment base and positive internal working model should cooperate and get along well with others throughout life.

### *Rationale*

Schoolteachers are likely to witness aggressive behaviours in some children at one time or another. The information contained within this final project aims to provide teachers with an explanation of the importance of attachment development, the link attachment styles have to appropriate social interactions and information on some of the attachment characteristics that are predictive of bullying behaviours. Those interested will glean information on the theoretical background of attachment patterns and develop some practical strategies to help children establish or maintain a secure attachment base. Strategies that can be used with children who exhibit bullying behaviours, possibly resulting from an insecure attachment base, are also provided. When teachers develop an understanding of attachment theory as described in the literature review, they may also gain an understanding of why some children tend to engage in bullying behaviours. This should help teachers to implement effective strategies to prevent bullying in the educational environment. This final project strives to inform teachers about attachment theory and to encourage positive social and emotional development in children.



Specifically, this final project explored the development of parent-child attachment relationships and described some of the links between attachment and bullying behaviours among children. A teacher's manual of intervention strategies was developed from the literature reviewed in order to help teachers effectively deal with the behaviours that are associated with insecure attachments (see Appendix). This project is organized into two parts. The first section is a literature review on the development of attachment, including a complete definition of attachment, an explanation of the benefits of attachment and its relation to social interactions. The second section is a teacher manual explaining the interaction strategies for attachment quality, including strategy information for teachers to help promote secure attachment bonds in children. The manual also includes a description of therapy interventions available from professionally trained therapists and an explanation of effective strategies teachers can use when dealing with various bullying behaviours that may arise from an insecure attachment base. The literature review provides pertinent knowledge about security and attachment and related research findings on attachment. In particular, it examines the development of attachment, describes different attachment styles, reviews the benefits of secure attachment bonds and explores behavioural issues as well as social interactions that may result. The focus throughout this project is on research literature with elementary school children between the ages of four and twelve years of age. Practical strategies for teachers to implement with children to build or maintain secure attachments are described in the teacher's manual, in addition to attachment therapy interventions that are available. Signs, symptoms and behaviours for teachers to consider when recommending students for therapy interventions are described in the manual as well, since some students may

benefit from therapeutic techniques provided by a therapist. Several strategies for teachers to effectively deal with children who display bullying behaviours that may be linked to attachment difficulties are also described in the manual.

## Chapter II

### *Methodology*

The development of this final project began with a general internet search of parent-child attachment. These cursory findings were discussed with a registered psychologist, who then suggested several potential areas to explore. Numerous research articles, service agencies and resources were discovered via the internet. The University of Lethbridge library, PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, ERIC, OVID, EBSCOhost, MEDLINE and Academic Search Premier were also used to search and review appropriate research articles, which presented a variety of quality literature. Key search words included attachment, parent-child attachment, parenting practices, child development, promoting attachment, trauma and attachment, bullying and attachment, bullying interventions, teachers and attachment, as well as teaching children with insecure attachment bonds. This preliminary search provided the basis of a secondary literature review. The next step was to search for primary resources through internet sites, interlibrary loans and book orders. The literature review provides an overview of these research findings. Human subjects were not directly involved in the final project as the methodology is based on collection and review of previous research only; therefore, a formal ethics review was not required.

After completing the literature review, the next step was to explore and describe strategies that could be used by schoolteachers to promote secure attachment in students. In doing so, attachment therapy interventions were also reviewed to promote an understanding of when professional referrals may be necessary. Certain types of attachment styles linked to bullying behaviours, as indicated by the literature review

findings, were also examined. Behavioural issues and intervention strategies related to bullying issues among children were then identified. Finally, the last step was to organize the information collected and create a teacher's manual for working with children who exhibit bullying behaviours or present with signs of attachment issues. Throughout the stages of this project, the supervisor was regularly consulted to provide feedback on changes needed, as well as support and guidance.

## Chapter III

### *Literature Review*

The primary research investigation for this final project was to determine how attachment may be connected to the development of children's social interactions and aggressive behaviours, and what influences, if any, schoolteachers can have on fostering positive peer relations. Teacher support for children who have developed an insecure attachment history, which may have resulted in bullying behaviours and victimization, was then addressed. However, possible causes for children developing early attachment difficulties are beyond the scope of this literature review. The primary focus was to examine attachment styles between children and their biological parent(s) and to determine how these styles may affect social behaviours.

#### *The Importance of Attachment*

Children require a lot of time and attention from their parents, which tends to influence attachment behaviour patterns that develop (Bowlby, 1988). In the past, childcare was commonly provided by both parents, whereas in today's society, some parents may not have a partner, leaving a child with insufficient care when the single parent becomes too exhausted (Bowlby). In cases of abuse or insufficient parental care, children may have difficulty establishing a positive relationship with their parents and/or other children. These children often display a lack of concern and are unsympathetic towards others in distress (Bowlby). However, when children receive sensitive and affectionate care they can develop secure attachment and gain confidence that others will respond in a similar fashion, which can result in the children conveying cooperative, sympathetic and helpful behaviours towards others (Bowlby).

Humans are social creatures, born to relate to one another, and expand their brain function through relationship experiences and communication (Kemp et al., 2004). The interpersonal relationships and communication practices that children experience from caregivers tend to influence their mental processing development (Kemp et al.). Attachment styles form the basis upon which children form interpersonal relationships. Insecure attachments usually result in children experiencing insufficient emotional communication from parents (Kemp et al.). Children with insecure attachments have been found to exhibit anger problems, low sociability, poor peer relations and poor self-control during early school years (Greenberg et al., 1993). Conversely, children who develop secure attachments, especially during their first two years of life, have been found to develop positive behavioural adjustment in school (Greenberg et al.).

The ability to form and maintain relationships is an important quality in humans as it promotes survival, education, love and procreation (Perry, 2001). Early experiences in life shape an individual's ability to form emotionally healthy relationships. Shields and Cicchetti (2001), for example, found that parental maltreatment is a possible cause for a child's bullying of others or becoming victim to his or her peers. Attachment capabilities, which tend to be formed in the early years, are related to empathy, caring, love and inhibition of aggression (Perry). Sroufe (1983) outlined two major hypotheses from Bowlby's attachment theory: "Individual differences in the quality of attachment are the result of the quality of early care ... [and] the quality of the attachment relationship lays the foundation for the sense of self" (p. 47). Secure attachment is predicted with sensitivity and respect for autonomy (Sroufe). Thus, the quality of care in early life has significant effects on personal and interpersonal competence in later life.

Parental feelings and behaviours towards their children are deeply influenced by early personal experiences with caregivers (Bowlby, 1988). For instance, parental descriptions of the relationship they had with their parents are often very similar to the attachment patterns their children have developed (Bowlby). There is the possibility of a genetic link to attachment styles; however, insecure attachment styles also seem to result in behaviour problems to specific childhood experiences, such as abuse (Bowlby; Greenberg et al., 1993). Parents tend to pass their attachment styles on to their offspring through their parenting approach, which relates to the cycle of violence found between generations of some families (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998). Parental practices, family stress and observed reactions to life events can also influence behaviour problems in children (Greenberg et al.). Greenberg et al. found several links between attachment to parents and aggressive behaviour. It has also been suggested that a critical period exists within the first two years of life; if a child develops insecure attachment within this period, he or she will likely have low sociability, display anger outbursts, have poor peer relations and lack self-control over behaviour in school (Greenberg et al.). Factors such as stressful family environments, lack of social support, prenatal trauma, harsh discipline and parent-child miscommunication have also been found to promote disruptive behaviour problems in children at school (Greenberg et al.).

It may be necessary for parents to resolve their own personal issues before helping their children (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998). Dozier, Stovall, Albus and Bates (2001) found that parents' state of mind (e.g., thought processes and feelings, reflective of their personal attachment) influences attachment development in children. In some ways, this challenges those who proposed a genetic transmission of attachment theory. Gervai et al.

(2005) confirmed a link between disorganized attachment and the dopamine D4 receptor (DRD4) gene. The prefrontal cortex (PFC) is where the DRD4 gene becomes evident. The PFC is rich in dopamine, which plays a role in attention span, working memory, reward learning, negative emotionality, withdrawal and stress sensitivity (Gervai et al.). Transmission of the DRD4 gene appears to be associated with infant attachment development, as it has been linked to disorganized attachment (Gervai et al.). The early environment created for children also influences the expression of genes and nervous system development. It appears that children develop attachment behaviours based on a combination of parental influences, experiences and biological impact. Thus, parenting is complicated by genetic and environmental influences, which likely impact the behaviour choices of parents as well as their children (Gervai et al.).

Initially, infants develop attachment relationships that lead them to develop prototypes of relationships later in life, thereby influencing their attitude and expectations in other contexts. “All infants become attached ... [and] all children learn to control and express impulses” (Sroufe, 1983, p. 46); it is the quality of adaptation that is of interest to researchers. Attachment quality is carried forward in effective problem solving and in developing healthy peer relations (Sroufe). Learned expectations shape a person’s behaviour patterns, which can change over time and according to varied situations (Sroufe). Thus, behaviour may be predictable in some cases based on previous learning, but its predictability is not necessarily stable. “Each child faces the issues involved in solving problems on its own, learning to control impulses and developing relations with peers” (Sroufe, p. 46). The quality of parent-child attachment seems to be determined by the availability, sensitivity, responsiveness and type of infant care.



Individual differences of attachment style are related to the unique internal working model within each person (Main, Kaplan & Cassidy, 1985). “Internal working models are complex schemas that include feelings of self-worth and self-acceptance (model of self) and beliefs about the availability and responsiveness of attachment figures” (Luke, Maio & Carnelley, 2004, pp. 281-282). A positive internal working model provides security in young children for them to pursue endeavours in life while viewing others and their inner self in a positive manner. Some positive working models can promote friendly non-verbal behaviours, as well as positive language and thinking patterns. The internal working model guides behaviours and perspectives on the world, self and others based on previous personal experiences (Main et al.). “The attachment models of self and others mediate the relationship between early attachment experiences and evaluations of the self and others” (Luke et al., p. 293). Children tend to react with aggression when they expect hostility from others (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998). Thus, generalized schemata of past experiences and events organize reactions to respond to future events. Relationships are organized into schemata in which specific outcomes from past interactions with certain individuals are expected. These constructs are often developed through observations during childhood, are out of conscious awareness and can be restructured with some resistance (Main et al.).

As previously mentioned, creating secure parent-child attachments early in life contributes to many aspects of a child’s development (Vacca, 2001). A secure attachment bond tends to continue throughout life and can create needed protection in times of distress (D’Elia, 2001). Trauma, culture shock or drastic changes often negatively affect attachment bonds and relationships. For example, when parents of migrating cultures put

too much energy into establishing a better future for their children and neglect focusing on the present parent-child relationships, the attachment is usually negatively affected (Attachment Across Cultures, n.d.). It is extremely important for children to establish secure attachments early in life in order to cope during troubled times when they need protection and comfort. Without a secure attachment bond, children may not perceive a secure base for protection (Weinfield, Sroufe, Egeland & Carlson, 1999). The next section provides an in-depth description of attachment, a review of how it develops and some of the different attachment styles that can result depending on the experiences, influences and perceptions during early development.

#### *What is Attachment*

Attachment is an emotional bond with parents initially formed during infancy and carried throughout life (Perry, 2001; Yassenik & Gardner, n.d.). A person receives soothing comfort and lowered distress with perceived security and safety (Perry). Attachment can also be described as “the primacy of the human inclination for emotional bonds with others” (Moretti, DaSilva & Holland, 2004, p. 42). Attachment plays a key role in human survival and well-being throughout life, especially during times of distress when attachment figures tend to provide comfort. Infants depend on their parents initially and develop secure attachments through quality care and safety. The characteristics involved in secure attachments are “any form of behaviour that results in a person attaining or maintaining proximity to some other clearly identified individual who is conceived as better able to cope with the world” (Bowlby, 1988, pp. 26-27). Children require parents to be attuned to their needs and respond with sensitivity (Kemp et al., 2004).

As long as children have someone with whom they can interact repeatedly, some form of an attachment bond will likely form between them. The security of the attachment bond is determined by the child's perception and interaction experiences (Weinfield et al., 1999). Attachment behaviour promotes proximity to an attachment figure, which may include smiling, vocalizing, crying, approaching and following to maintain contact (Belsky & Cassidy, 1994; Weinfield et al.). A secure attachment figure gives the individual a strong sense of security that encourages the relationship to continue (Bowlby, 1988). Attachment behaviour is most evident in childhood, but it can be seen in all ages when frightened, tired or sick and less able to cope. The function behind attachment is that of protection (Bowlby).

Positive physical contact, such as hugging or rocking, plays an important role in attachment since it causes specific neurochemical brain activation (Perry, 2001). Most children express attachment behaviours toward a few familiar attachment figures, usually parents or regular caregivers, before the age of one year (Belsky & Cassidy, 1994). Bonds may develop later with several other attachment figures, such as grandparents, older siblings, or aunts and uncles; however, a small hierarchy tends to exist in which children will first turn to their principal attachment figure in times of distress (Belsky & Cassidy; Cassidy, 1999).

“The most important relationship in a child's life is the attachment to his or her primary caregiver” (Perry, 2001, p. 4). This initial relationship creates a biological and emotional template for future relationships throughout life. “Infants with secure attachment relationships are confident in the sensitive and responsive availability of their caregivers and consequently these infants are confident in their own interactions with the

world” (Weinfield et al., 1999, p. 69). Since the quality of attachment is associated with parental sensitivity during the first few years of life, it has been suggested that there may be a critical period for the development of parent-child attachment (O’Connor, Croft & Steele, 2000; Perry). If this critical attachment period is impaired, it tends to be difficult for children to form positive, meaningful relationships later in life (Perry). The internal working models that are developed in early life guide general behaviours, thoughts and feelings (Belsky & Cassidy, 1994).

In general, internal working models “develop through experiences in care-giving relationships and guide future interpersonal expectations, behaviors and responses” (Moretti et al., 2004, p. 42). The working models provide mental representations of past experiences and acquired knowledge to guide future behaviours for meeting attachment needs in a variety of contexts. People can develop different behavioural strategies and still be relatively competent depending on the adaptation to their environment (Moretti et al.). Attachment quality reflects behavioural strategies, based on the internal working model, that are used when interacting with an attachment figure, (Moretti et al.). The internal working models of parents are often predictive of the attachment quality promoted with their own children (O’Connor et al., 2000).

Every child is unique and has various individual preferences. The child’s uniqueness leads to different experiences, challenges, opportunities and adaptations in life (Elicker, Englund & Sroufe, 1992). Uniqueness poses a challenge for parents of children with a difficult temperament (Kemp et al., 2004; O’Connor et al., 2000). Parents need to be creative and discover ways to establish a connection and communicate with their child, letting them know that there is mutual understanding (Kemp et al.). “Secure

parents will be sensitive and responsive based on the needs of a given child” (O’Connor et al., p. 110), meaning all parties should attune themselves to one another. Through this interaction, children learn to balance their emotional states and find comfort in their environment (Kemp et al.). Parents and children develop multiple communication techniques for successful adaptation (Elicker et al., p. 83). Siblings within the same family develop similar attachment relationship qualities; however, it is unclear how much attachment similarity is related to genetics and how much is related to environment. Different parenting approaches may be evoked by different children’s needs, which supports a genetic influence on the resulting attachment quality (O’Connor et al.). The temperament and needs of a child may change over time as a response to parental sensitivity as well as social and personality developments (O’Connor et al.). Thus, both environment and genetics seem to play a role in the attachment quality developed within children.

A healthy, secure attachment bond in early life is associated with healthy relationships in later life, while an insecure attachment bond is associated with behavioural and emotional problems (Perry, 2001). More specifically, emotional understanding and mutually attuned interactions characterize secure attachment, which promote safety and balance in the person’s body, emotions and states of mind (Kemp et al., 2004). Insecure attachment is characterized by insufficient emotional communication and inconsistent care, which promotes rejection, fear or anxiety resulting in social and emotional problems (Kemp et al.). Attachment problems in children can result from a variety of circumstances in life, such as separation from parents, trauma, abuse,

inconsistent living arrangements, biomedical conditions or parenting styles (VanFleet, 2005).

Regulation of a child's emotions within the parent-child interaction is important to promote secure attachment (Booth, 2005; Yassenik & Gardner, n.d.). Emotional adjustment and behaviour choices are strongly influenced by attachment (Moretti et al., 2004). Children with secure attachment tend to show more pro-social behaviour, empathy and compliance while displaying higher positive affect. Children with insecure attachment tend to "show poor emotional regulation; are defiant, hostile and aggressive" (Moretti et al., p. 44). The connection between insecure attachment and aggression is widely supported; however, the type of insecure attachment associated with aggressive behaviour has not been clearly determined (Moretti et al.).

In support of secure attachment and pro-social behaviour, securely attached children develop positive qualities, such as confidence and high self-esteem, both of which promote positive social adaptation. Positive experiences in social interactions and confident expectations "promote successful peer relations" (Erickson et al., 1985, p. 148). Weinfield et al. (1999) found that children with a secure attachment base will likely expect others to respond in a similar way, which creates a feeling of worthiness and positive reactions. However, children with an insecure attachment base will likely expect to be rejected and treated inconsistently (Weinfield et al.). Thus, the beliefs that children hold from the parent-child attachment patterns developed early on tends to influence their social competence as well as their expectations when interacting with others. When parents respond with sensitivity to their children's needs, children will likely develop secure attachment; however, if children are met with insensitive parents, they will likely

develop insecure attachment patterns (Attachment Across Cultures, n.d.). With feelings of security, children can learn that their attachment figures will always be available and respond when needed. On the other hand, when children do not develop this understanding and view attachment figures as unavailable or unsupportive, they will likely develop insecure attachment patterns (Cassidy, 1999).

In a secure attachment bond, parents serve as a protector and security figure for children during stressful times (Cassidy, 1999). Attachment theorists have suggested that a secure parent–child attachment relationship may also protect against children’s aggressive behaviours and promote optimal functioning (Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1988; VanFleet, 2005). Parents who respond to their children with sensitivity, responsiveness, acceptance and cooperation tend to have children who trust their parents and enjoy spending time with them (Bowlby). Children who are able to count on their parents to be there can develop a secure base from which to explore their surroundings (Weinfield et al., 1999). Children with secure attachment are also comforted by the presence of their parents, but these children can get distressed when their parents are absent. Fortunately, however, secure children can be somewhat comforted by other adults such as a teacher or day-care worker (Weinfield et al.). When parents return, children with secure attachment bonds will often greet parents with a smile, seek physical touch for as long as it takes for them to feel comfortable again and then return to exploring their surroundings (Perry, 2001; Weinfield et al.).

The parent role can take on different forms across and within cultures (Belsky & Cassidy, 1994). There is relatively limited information concerning attachment differences across cultures. However, play can be used when working with children to explore their

cultural world (VanFleet, 2005). Different behaviours can run from one extreme to the other. For example, some parents are very structured, responsive and caring, but may rarely engage in play with their children; while other parents make great playmates, but are often unavailable when their children are in distress (Belsky & Cassidy). The comfortable role that a parent has taken on may need to be altered in order to improve the attachment bond. Therapists who tend to work collaboratively with parents of child clients, especially those from a different culture, can avoid misinterpretations and make adjustments that may be necessary to accommodate cultural beliefs (VanFleet).

Children need to feel safe, have predictability, acceptance and receive sensitivity from their caregivers. In general, a secure parent-child attachment bond appears to help children feel a sense of safety, trust and security, improves their self-esteem, reduces stress and tends to help future relationship building (Booth & Lindaman, 2000; Kemp et al., 2004). Children's quality of life is usually improved when they have parents to protect them, who are caring, loving, dependable and respond to their emotional needs with sensitivity (Easterbrooks et al., 2000; Jernberg, 1984). A child's healthy social and emotional development can also arise when secure attachment bonds are formed and maintained (Jernberg & Booth, 2001a; Vacca, 2001). Children with secure attachment can use their parents as a secure base to explore the environment and to seek comfort from when distressed or reunited (Elicker et al., 1992). The internal working model of children with a secure attachment often considers others as competent and caring, which allows them to view themselves as worthy of their care and attention (Moretti et al., 2004). Secure parent-child attachment relationships can promote children to approach peers with expectations of positive responses, to have higher social competence, to be



more behaviourally and emotionally empathic (i.e., respond to the emotional needs of others) and they are usually more popular with other children (Mitchell-Copeland, Denham & DeMulder, 1997).

Children with insecure attachment relationships, on the other hand, have not had the comforting experience of their parents being readily available to alleviate their fears (Weinfield et al., 1999). These children often live in fear that their parents will not respond appropriately or be unavailable when they need them. If children cannot depend on their parents for protection, they will often become less susceptible to fear (Cassidy, 1999). Kemp et al. (2004) explain that children tend to develop insecure attachments with their parents when they do not feel supported. Some children may become angry toward their parents for a lack of responsiveness. Due to this lack of responsiveness from parents, children with insecure attachment patterns may become unable to respond to positive attachment behaviours demonstrated by parents when deemed appropriate (Weinfield et al.). “Individual differences in attachment arise from differential experiences and consequently differential expectations regarding the availability of caregivers” (Weinfield et al., p. 71).

Insecure attachment patterns usually result from repeated failed attempts to communicate emotions, depending on past experiences and interactions with attachment figures (Kemp et al.). Moreover, children who experience emotional neglect will often exhibit developmental delays in motor abilities, language comprehension, social interactions and cognitive development (Perry, 2001). Aggressive behaviours in children with insecure attachment often relate to a lack of empathy and poor impulse control (Perry). It is difficult for insecure children to understand the impact of their actions on

others (Perry). Children with insecure attachment patterns may show intellectual remorse, but no emotion (Perry). Insecure parent-child attachment patterns often lead children to approach their peers expecting negative interactions (Mitchell-Copeland et al., 1997).

### *Attachment Styles*

There are several different types of attachment patterns, which tend to persist throughout development (Bowlby, 1988). The ideal secure attachment pattern includes confidence in the caregiver that they will be available to respond in a sensitive, helpful manner (Bowlby). Anxious resistant attachment stems from inconsistent caregiver responses, which often result in clinging behaviour and anxiety during explorations. Parents tend to threaten abandonment as a means of gaining control (Bowlby). Anxious avoidant attachment pattern stems from constant rejection, which results in the child attempting to become emotionally self-sufficient and could later be diagnosed as narcissistic or possessing a false sense of self (Bowlby). “A secure child is a happier and more rewarding child to care for, and also is less demanding than an anxious one. An anxious ambivalent child is apt to be whiny and clinging, whilst an anxious avoidant child keeps his distance, is bad-tempered and prone to bully other children” (Bowlby, p. 169). Secure children show self-confidence in their success, whereas insecure children tend to show signs of helplessness and defeat (Bowlby). Disorganized attachment pattern results from parents who ignore their child’s emotional needs and engage in actions that frighten their child (Kemp et al., 2004). The next sections provide a description of each insecure attachment type in more detail.

*Avoidant.* If parents reject their child, are not around to respond to needs, or treat their child as a nuisance, the child will likely adapt by avoiding emotional closeness with

others, withdraw from parents and develop avoidant attachment (Bowlby, 1988; Kemp et al., 2004). Since the parents do not provide reassurance, the child often loses confidence in parents' availability and develops alternative coping strategies to deal with distress, such as turning away (Dozier et al., 2001). These children often do not receive much emotional responsiveness from parents (Easterbrooks et al., 2000). Their internal working model expects others to reject their attachment needs, while viewing themselves as unworthy and repulsive. These children learn to disguise their need for attachment and suppress it by focusing on environmental distractions (Moretti et al., 2004). They are not overly distressed when separated from parents and will actively avoid parents upon reunion (Weinfield et al., 1999; Perry, 2001). These children will often seek comfort from strangers (Elicker et al., 1992).

Children with avoidant attachment also tend to feel uncomfortable if someone gets too close and have difficulty trusting or depending on others (Attachment Across Cultures, n.d.). Early development of avoidant attachment seems to predict later aggressive behaviour patterns (Lyons-Ruth, 1996). "Anxiety and anger go hand in hand" (Bowlby, 1988, p. 79). Children who express an anxious resistant patterned behaviour are "likely to be described as unduly seeking of attention and either as tense, impulsive and easily frustrated or else as passive and helpless" (Bowlby, p. 168). Resistant children are often less confident, have poor social skills and are more dependent on teachers (Erickson et al., 1985). Strangers are usually treated the same or better than caregivers by children with avoidant attachment (Weinfield et al., 1999). This type of attachment predicts behaviours involving "negativity, noncompliance and hyperactivity at 3.5 years of age, and higher ratings of problem behavior in grades one to three" (Moretti et al., 2004, p.

45). As adults, these individuals tend to minimize attachment relationships and avoid expressing their interpersonal needs (Moretti et al.).

Children with avoidant attachment at six years of age tend to be defensive and unable to recognize personal faults. The representation of self is connected with attachment quality (Cassidy, 1988). The avoidant attachment pattern puts children at a high risk for peer relation problems and will likely lead to more difficulties in the classroom with peers than children with secure attachment (Cohn, 1990). Sroufe, Fox and Pancake (1983) found that children classified in the avoidant attachment classification were very dependent in preschool, frequently asked for help with social issues and strove for negative attention. Children with secure attachment, on the other hand, tend to find positive ways to seek attention.

*Ambivalence.* If parents are inconsistent or intrusive when communicating with their child, an ambivalent attachment pattern will likely develop in which the child becomes anxious. Children with ambivalent attachment think that they cannot depend on their parents to be attuned or connect with them (Kemp et al., 2004). These children are often left starving for attention. Their internal working model views others as unreliable and sometimes unresponsive, while viewing themselves as inadequate, lacking qualities to obtain care from others (Moretti et al., 2004). Children with ambivalent attachment may also show hostility in the direction of the parent (Attachment Across Cultures, n.d.). In addition, these children may lack self-reliance, become unenthusiastic and easily frustrated (Jernberg & Booth, 2001b). When separated from their parents, these children often become highly distressed and are not easily calmed down by another adult (Weinfield et al., 1999). They tend to be angry upon separation from parents and resist

physical contact when parents return (Perry, 2001). Aggression is also common among these children, in that they tend to exaggerate needs and limit their exploration of the environment (Moretti et al.). These children may seek contact, but that does not usually calm them. Children with ambivalent attachment usually have poor peer relations (Weinfield et al.). When children are unable to predict attachment figure availability, they may cope by showing heightened expressions of need through anger, aggressive acts, violence or threats (Moretti et al.). Targets are usually attachment figures, parents or loved ones.

As adults, individuals with ambivalent attachment tend to worry that their partner does not love them enough to stay with them, which makes the person want to merge with their partner. This desire often drives potentially committed partners away (Attachment Across Cultures, n.d.). If the parent rejects the child, the child will actively avoid them, but still feel a need for care and proximity, which usually results in anger (Bowlby, 1988). Thus, taking note of parental behaviour can provide clues to the child's attachment type.

*Disorganized.* If the parent ignores their child's emotional needs and behaves in a way that frightens them, the child will develop disorganized attachment and become chaotic. These children often have difficulty regulating their emotions, communicating with others and will sometimes develop further emotional problems (Kemp et al., 2004). Establishing disorganized attachment during infancy appears to be a precursor for later disorganized behaviour patterns. Aggression is highly associated with this type of attachment, more so than with avoidant attachment (Lyons-Ruth, 1996). Most are distressed when separated from parents and then act confused when parents return (Perry,

2001). These children will often display tense mannerisms, such as rocking or ear pulling and avoid eye contact (Jernberg & Booth, 2001b). Disorganized attachment has been linked to an increased risk of externalizing behaviour problems (van Ijzendoorn, Schuengel & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1999). “When the expectation of being hurt, disappointed, and afraid is carried forward to new relationships, the anxious infant becomes an angry, aggressive child” (Weinfield et al., 1999, p. 78). Children who are chronically rejected or faced with frightening caregivers are most likely to develop angry and aggressive responses later in life (Weinfield et al.). When children live in fear, they may not feel comfortable expressing anger, due to fear of rejection. Since the child’s needs cannot be expressed with an attachment figure, the child may engage in self-harming behaviours (Moretti et al., 2004).

Children with avoidant attachment are expected to show hostility, social and emotional withdrawal, or disconnection; whereas children with resistant attachment are expected to be impulsive, easily stimulated, adult oriented, infantile and have low frustration tolerance (Sroufe, 1983). All children with these insecure attachment types tend to show aggression, but for different reasons there is “an expression of anxiety and tension (undercontrol) vs. a re-direction of underlying hostility” (Sroufe, p. 52).

In general, when the parent-child relationship does not include emotional confidence or a feeling of security the child’s ability to regulate their emotions diminishes (Easterbrooks et al., 2000). Factors that may interfere with attachment development are the child’s temperament, pre-maturity, illness, the caregiver’s behaviours, a hazardous environment or the caregiver’s coping strategies when feeling stressed (Perry, 2001). It is important for parents to be attuned to their child so they are

able to fulfill needs. Easterbrooks et al. found that secure attachments include open emotional communication between parents and their children in ways that respond to their children's stress level and give them comfort. Thus, parents need to find ways to obtain an emotional bond with their children through maintaining soothing, sensitive responses to their needs (Kemp et al., 2004). The next section provides a review on further attachment quality influences.

### *Attachment Influences*

There are a number of influences on children that lead to insecure parent-child attachment patterns, including neglect, abuse, abandonment, trauma, drugs, illness, marital issues and lack of attunement between parent and child (Kemp et al., 2004). The following influences were most commonly found in attachment studies examined in this review.

*Parenting.* Parental sensitivity and response to children's needs appears to have the most potential in building or sustaining a secure attachment pattern as children grow and experience changes (Easterbrooks et al., 2000; Thompson, 2000). Easterbrooks et al. conducted a longitudinal study on attachment with 45 mothers and their children from infancy to age seven. Assessments were completed during infancy to determine attachment styles (e.g., secure, avoidant, ambivalent, or disorganized). Then, at seven years of age, an observation was completed in a playroom to determine the behavioural patterns of mother and child. Attachment security was found to be related to sensitivity and structuring interactions from the mother. Thus, sensitivity and structure appear to be crucial in building a secure parent-child attachment bond. Structuring is a major dimension of Theraplay (Jernberg & Booth, 2001a), which is an intervention used by

therapists that is explained in the teacher's manual (see Appendix). Easterbrooks et al. also found that attachment security is related to children's involvement and responses to their parents' actions. As described earlier, children respond differently according to their attachment styles.

Children with ambivalent attachment do not always have behaviour problems. Those without behaviour problems usually have mothers who respected their autonomy; specifically, the mothers "were more supportive; provided clearer structure and firm, consistent limits; were less hostile; provided clear, well-timed instruction; and seemed confident that they could work with the child" (Erickson et al., 1985, p. 157). These children were also from homes with a more stimulating, supportive environment. Some ambivalent children functioned well during preschool because "their mothers were sensitive and responsive to the special needs of their children at later stages" (Erickson et al., p. 165). The mother's insensitivity and lack of emotional support was found to play a major role in predicting development of behaviour problems later on, along with hectic living conditions and high stress (Erickson et al.).

*Environment.* Thompson (2000) described several hypotheses for exploring attachment development further. One hypothesis is that establishing stability in living conditions should result in continuity of attachment security. A number of things including a new baby, marital harmony, unemployment, parental illness or death can influence the stability of living conditions. Any one of these factors has the potential to change the parent-child attachment bond (Thompson). Therefore, parents have the power to maintain this relationship with their children through continuity of quality care. Another hypothesis is that parent-child discourse influences how children interpret life



experiences (Thompson). As children gain language competency, they are better able to elaborate and understand others as well as themselves in various situations. Parents are able to promote understanding of self, emotions, morality and co-construct relationships with their children (Thompson). Cooperation and respectful negotiation concerning different goals or intentions promotes secure parent-child attachment as well. Parents may need to work to repair various disruptions peacefully and gain harmony as their child changes and grows (Thompson).

The promotion of secure attachment takes a little more focus when living conditions change (Booth, 2005). However, attachment security can be improved with positive changes in a child's life circumstances (Main et al., 1985). Main et al. provided evidence for attachment style stability between infancy and six years of age; however, even with environmental stability, studies using the Adult Attachment Interview assessment indicate the possibility of change during formal operation cognitive development (Main et al.). Secure attachment does not require things to be perfect all the time because there are some circumstances that children need to accept, whether they like it or not, such as having to brush their teeth (Kemp et al., 2004). Setting rules and limits may cause disruption in the attachment but reconnection can quickly be obtained when the child shows a desire to re-establish their attachment (Kemp et al.).

O'Connor and Croft (2001) assessed the attachment security of 110 pairs of pre-school aged twins and found an equally high attachment similarity in both monozygotic (identical) and dizygotic (fraternal) twins. These findings suggest that parent-child attachment stems from environmental influences rather than genetics (O'Connor & Croft). Further longitudinal studies assessing attachment across lifespan would be helpful

and more conclusive on environmental and genetic influences in parent-child attachment (O'Connor & Croft).

Cultural differences influence human development, just as environmental factors affect individuals (Kopp, 2000). Cultural environment, beliefs and values have a substantial impact on the outcome of healthy attachment bonding. Children learn quickly which behaviours will give them the responses that they need from parents and parents should learn to behave in ways that adequately respond to their children's needs (Attachment Across Cultures, n.d.).

Thus, influences of both environment and important individuals in children's lives play a role in early attachment development. "Early relationship experience with the primary caregiver leads eventually to generalized expectations about the self, others and the world" (Waters, Hamilton & Weinfield, 2000, p. 678). Waters et al. described three long-term longitudinal studies, two of which found significantly stable security in the comparison of the Strange Situation assessment during infancy with the Adult Attachment Interview assessment during early adulthood. Several life events lead to an expected decrease in attachment security, which included "death of a parent, foster care, parental divorce, chronic and severe illness of parent or child, single parent, parental psychiatric disorder, drug and alcohol abuse, and child experience of physical or sexual abuse" (Waters et al., p. 681).

*History.* Weinfield et al. (1999) found that attachment history tends to predict the presence of anxiety, anger, social competence and empathy, which usually appears during childhood. When children have a secure attachment, they will expect others to respond to them and be worthy of positive reactions. When children have an insecure attachment,

they will expect to be rejected and treated inconsistently by others (Weinfield et al.). A negative internal working model “may lead the child to insecure and anxious behaviour in school” (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998, p. 412). It is currently believed that as children develop the ability to think abstractly about themselves and relationships, parent-child attachment is often affected (Thompson, 2000). However, more studies are needed to clarify the connection between children’s internal development and their attachment bond. Nonetheless, children’s attachment history seems to influence their behaviour and social competence.

The nature of the parent-child attachment will certainly change as children grow older, which can be seen as they form peer relations and spend more time away from their parent(s) (Cassidy, 1999). Nevertheless, the security of the attachment relationship does not have to change while its nature does (Thompson, 2000). “Infancy may have direct or indirect influences on later general mental representations that are applied to challenges in peer relations” (Elicker et al., 1992, p. 90). Longitudinal data are needed to determine specific effects of early experiences on development later in life (Grossman & Grossman, 1991). The course of development and experiences can prompt changes in how children are treated, which can shift the pathway and adjust attachment security in a positive or negative direction (Bowlby, 1988). Parents are encouraged to make eye contact, be empathetic and engage with their child, making them feel special, beautiful, smart, strong, worthy and loveable to enhance attachment (Jernberg, 1984).

“Change in quality of adaptation from one period to the next is seen as influenced by environmental context” (Sroufe, Egeland & Kreutzer, 1990, p. 1363). A child who has had inadequate care in early life may gain adequate development when given consistent

supportive care; however, the child may still be more vulnerable during stressful experiences. Both developmental history and current circumstances have an important influence on a child's development. Sroufe et al. (1990) conducted a longitudinal study with 267 at-risk families. Behaviour patterns and other specific measurements were taken, such as attachment classification, autonomy, competence and self-regulation. The results suggest that there is a need for further research on individual development since adaptation tends to be a product of both a person's developmental history and environmental circumstances (Sroufe et al., 1990).

Research indicates that it can never be too late to change a child's life in a positive way (Kemp et al., 2004). Positive changes for children can result from new experiences, which create new neural brain connections. Since our brains are designed to connect to one another, other adults such as teachers, day-care workers, neighbours and extended family can provide understanding and engage in positive interactions with children. Providing care and non-verbal communication includes things like eye contact, facial expressions, voice tone and rhythm, posture, body movement and timing (Kemp et al.).

*Family generations.* Attachment behaviour strategies are usually passed on across generations from parents to children (Kemp et al., 2004). Different attachment styles can exist for each parent. In a study by Grossman and Grossman (1991), an attachment assessment after one year showed that an individual's attachment communication style is dependent on the attachment quality to the attachment figure. Thus, parents can each influence different attachment qualities.

*Gender.* Gender differences in children were not found in most attachment behaviour studies (Easterbrooks et al., 2000). However, in one study boys were found to

be more likely than girls to use aggression to gain control (Moretti et al., 2004).

Likewise, in most cases, the connection between externalizing behaviour problems and early parent-child attachment relationships tend to be stronger for boys than for girls (Greenberg et al., 1993). Further studies are needed in the area of gender differences.

*Communication.* Insecure attachments tend to be related to ineffective communication and quality of emotional responsiveness (Easterbrooks et al., 2000). Kemp et al. (2004) explain that parents can find various ways to effectively communicate with their children, in order to send messages that they understand. This approach, which involves responding to their cries and interacting in a positive manner, creates an attachment bond between parents and children through which children learn to regulate their emotional state and find comfort in their environment (Kemp et al.). The individuality of attachment bonding stems from differing early childhood experiences and expectations of parent availability (Weinfield et al., 1999).

*Temperament.* Parents with compliant, affectionate and well-adjusted children tend to be more supportive, highly involved, provide warmth and set up appropriate limits and expectations to follow (Greenberg et al., 1993). This positive treatment leads to secure attachment in most cases and “secure attachment operates as a protective factor in high-risk environments” (Greenberg et al., p. 199). Parents of insecure infants were less supportive and more interfering, fostering their insecurity; parents of secure infants showed continued support (Grossman & Grossman, 1991).

Strayer, Trudel and Jacques (1987) conducted a study to explore the influences of temperament traits and attachment quality on social adaptation with peers. This study found that children with secure attachment were less involved in conflicts and

coordinated with more maturity than children with insecure attachment, who were less successful interacting with peers. Negative temperament reflected negative peer relations as well; however, attachment and temperament cannot account for all the behaviour variation among toddler peer relations (Strayer et al.). Attachment and temperament are only part of various other factors influencing early social adaptation. Aggressive acts tend to be directed towards those who initiate conflict. When comparing attachment and temperament influences, social conflict related to insecure attachment scores more than do negative temperament characteristics (Strayer et al.).

*Quality care.* Peisner-Feinberg et al. (2001) conducted a longitudinal study with 733 children between four and eight years of age. They found that the quality of childcare has long-term effects on children's cognitive and socio-emotional development through kindergarten and for some children, through second grade. Quality childcare environments contributed to stronger cognitive and social skills in children through their elementary school years. Since most children today experience centre-based childcare before school age due to parental work requirements, the quality of care is of interest for investigation, as well as its relation to children's success and adjustment in school. Influences that tend to alter the nature of the attachment bond are related to how children see their experiences and internalize them (Thompson, 2000).

Pettit and Bates (1989) assessed families with four-year-old children who had been previously assessed at six months of age. Positive maternal involvement and proactive educational activities predicted less behaviour problems, whereas early family distress, temperamental difficulties or lack of positive interactions seemed to predict increased behaviour problems. Positive parental involvement seems to better predict early

social development than the amount of conflict with parents (Pettit & Bates). Withdrawn behaviour, on the other hand, was found to be a result of low positive parental involvement and high rates of negative interactions. When parents perceive early temperamental difficulties, it may predict later aggression and behaviour problems due to low rates of positive involvement in which children perceive aggressive behaviour from parents (Pettit & Bates). Having positive early involvement promotes secure attachment and is extremely important for children's social development. Several benefits of establishing a secure attachment are described in the next section.

#### *Benefits of Developing a Secure Attachment*

Attachment relationships exist in life mainly for protection, which is important for survival and is “a basic component of human nature” (Bowlby, 1988, p. 162). It is important for children to develop proper attachment with their parents so they can feel safe and secure, get to know themselves, have reduced stress and create significant relationships with others (Kemp et al., 2004). This section describes several benefits that can result from establishing a secure parent-child attachment. In most cases, “a secure attachment leads to a strong sense of self and self-confidence, the ability to deal with stress, the ability to trust, and the capacity to form relationships throughout life” (Booth & Lindaman, 2000, p. 194).

*Sense of self.* Many important life skills and developments for daily living have been linked to parent-child attachment, such as self-esteem, self-concept, personality, cooperation, independence and interacting with others (Thompson, 2000). As children grow from infants to toddlers, they usually learn to negotiate conflicts. Children develop a sense of self around age three; if they also have a secure attachment, they often develop

self-esteem and self-concept at the same time (Thompson). In addition to their parents, children can learn to cooperate with others as they develop social skills along with a sense of self, which tends to originate in the parent-child relationship (Thompson).

Luke et al. (2004) found that attachment quality established with parents early in life predicted children's self-esteem as well as their perception of others. A co-relational statistical design was used to explore the relation between attachment type, self-esteem and view of others. High self-esteem correlated with a positive view of others, low attachment avoidance and low attachment anxiety (Luke et al.). The children's perception of parental treatment influenced their self-esteem and beliefs about others. However, this study included a co-relational statistical procedure; that is, it does not prove causality, but the results are consistent with attachment theory regarding how early attachment experiences influence later development (Luke et al.).

*Exploration and development.* Attachment has a protective role as well as one of exploration (Pierrehumbert, Iannotti, Cummings & Zahn-Waxler, 1989). There seems to be a balance between exploration and proximity seeking behaviours. The attachment styles relate to social responsiveness. Pierrehumbert et al. found that security of attachment positively correlated with socialization. Consistent responsiveness seems to promote individual patterns of socialization. Children with secure attachment were consistently responsive to parents and peers. However, consistency between ages two to five years was insignificant (Pierrehumbert et al.). These findings suggest that there is likely a difference between social activity and responsiveness. Some children were found to be highly responsive, but have low social activity. Thus, with others initiating social



relations, some insecure (e.g., avoidant, passive, withdrawn, anxious, etc.) children may become more competent through high responsiveness.

Within a secure attachment, parents tend to provide their children with a secure base that they can use for protection and return to when frightened by or upset about something while exploring the world (Bowlby, 1988). Establishing a secure attachment early is extremely beneficial and helps children to feel secure about examining their world, to gain a sense of self and to develop meaningful relationships when interacting with others (Kemp et al., 2004). Children tend to use their attachment figure (parents) as a secure base that they can launch from when exploring the world (Cassidy, 1999). As parents establish this essential attachment bond and respond in an effort to regulate their child's needs, it helps their child learn to self-regulate, control his or her emotions, develop language skills, as well as relate to others and form positive relationships (Yasenik & Gardner, n.d.).

*Peer relations.* Wood, Emmerson and Cowan (2004) examined the relationship between attachment strength and peer acceptance. The mothers of 37 preschool students between the ages of three and five rated their level of attachment security and the sociometric rate for each participant was obtained via picture interviews with peers. Wood et al. found that early secure attachment was significantly related to peer acceptance and relations in preschool, which suggests that early secure attachment carries forward a relational style that helps preschoolers interact with others in an appropriate way, resulting in less peer rejection. However, the cause of this connection still remains unclear.

In support of this study, attachment theory predicts that there is a link between the early parent-child attachment relationship and the child's later self-image and relations with others (Mills & Allan, 1992). By contrast, behaviour problems have been linked to insecure parent-child attachment. "Children who are maltreated, insecurely attached, or come from chaotic homes are significantly more likely to show behaviour patterns of aggression or withdrawal both in preschool and into the early school years" (Mills & Allan, p. 5). Thus, interventions should be in place early for children who exhibit behaviour problems.

"There is now considerable research providing evidence for developmental continuity between quality of infant-caregiver attachment relationships and outcomes in early childhood" (Elicker et al., 1992, p. 83). Elicker et al. describe three reasons why a secure attachment relationship tends to promote peer competence. First, in consideration of past experiences, children with a secure attachment tend to develop an internal working model, which guides them to expect positive interactions with others and maintain relationship formation beyond the parent-child dyad. Second, with the experience of empathetic, responsive care, these children learn how to respond empathetically towards others and engage in balanced give and take interactions with peers. Third, with sensitive care and support for autonomy, these children develop self-efficacy and a sense of self-worth. "A child's appraisal of self is likely intertwined with early experiences in primary relationships" (Elicker et al., p. 90). In addition, many children who have a secure attachment with their parents are self-confident, enthusiastic, curious and optimistic, which tends to attract positive friendships (Elicker et al.).

“Children with secure histories are more likely to form friendships” (Elicker et al., p. 98). Thus, children with insecure attachment styles likely have difficulty forming friendships.

Elicker et al. (1992) studied the association between attachment history and social adjustment of 11-year-old children through observations during summer day camp over three consecutive years. Each year’s sample of children was taken from the Mother-Child Project, which was a 12-year study with children who were at risk for abuse, stress, adjustment and development problems. All children in this study who were classified as securely attached during infancy were ranked higher in various measures of competence than those classified as insecurely attached (Elicker et al.). The securely attached children were seen to be more self-assured and emotionally healthy by camp counsellors. These children were also found to be more socially involved with their peers and spent less time with adults or in isolation than insecurely attached children.

In summary, there are many benefits to forming a secure parent-child attachment relationship early in life, including stress reduction, establishing a sense of security for exploration, gaining self-knowledge, relationship building and institute trust in others (Booth & Lindaman, 2000; Kemp et al., 2004). Without this secure base, children are not likely to have as much confidence to explore the world and interact with others (Cassidy, 1999). Children need their parents to protect them, be dependable, caring, sensitive, loving and have emotional awareness (Easterbrooks et al., 2000; Jernberg, 1984). Secure parent-child attachment promotes healthy emotional and social development in children (Jernberg & Booth, 2001a; Vacca, 2001). Various practices are available to assist with the development of secure attachment, which are described later in the teacher’s manual.

Several findings have linked insecure attachment to aggression and bullying behaviours in school. This connection is explored in the next section.

### *The Bullying Connection*

Bullying can become a major problem in schools and society. Bullying behaviour tends to originate in the home environment, modelled by parents, and in the school environment, modelled by teachers and peers (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998). The consideration of these two environments emphasizes the need for staff at school to work with parents at home in order to develop a plan to eradicate this type of behaviour in children. It is important for school staff and parents to be educated on the kinds of behaviours, such as harsh discipline, that may promote bullying in children. The family tends to be a key context in which children learn inappropriate behaviour patterns (Smith & Myron-Wilson). Parent-child attachment, family circumstances and environmental experiences play a role in predicting childhood behaviour problems. Pettit and Bates (1989) found that parents who use positive verbal communication and physical proximity tend to nurture positive behaviours from children with less aggression and withdrawal.

“Attachment theory has the potential of informing intervention at this highly differentiated level and thus is an important framework for organizing interventions targeted at problems of aggression” (Moretti et al., 2004, p. 52). Attachment type can be an organizational construct in understanding behavioural strategies. Attachment patterns developed between infant and parents depend on the infants’ expression of needs and parental responses, which lead to individual differences in the quality of attachment (Grossman & Grossman, 1991). Children establish relationships with others based on

their attachment style, exploration security, stress resilience, emotional regulation and life organization (Kemp et al., 2004).

Bullying has several defined characteristics, which include: intimidation, power over another, causing fear or harm, unprovoked and repetitive. It can be physical, verbal, or indirect (relational) in nature and is aggressive (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998).

Bullying occurs when a more powerful person hurts or scares another person intentionally and repeatedly (Beane, 1999). Through repeated interactions, the victim develops a relationship with the bully. "Victimization is a relationship, not an individual characteristic" (Elicker et al., 1992, p. 79).

It has been suggested that social and behavioural difficulties among children are connected to disruptions in their emotional development, which includes children's attachment with their parents (Vacca, 2001; Wood et al., 2004). There is growing concern about the number of children with social and behavioural issues. The attachment security has been identified as a significant predictor of behaviour problems in schools (Moss, Rousseau, Parent, St-Laurent & Saintonge, 1998). Helping parents establish a secure attachment bond should decrease behavioural issues among children (Vacca). Thus, when teachers are able to educate parents, they are playing an important role in helping develop secure parent-child attachment.

Sroufe (1983) observed 40 children with known attachment histories in hopes of finding individual patterns of adaptation within children who were considered competent and those who were considered incompetent. The findings provided some evidence on how attachment relationships are continued from infancy into preschool. Children were observed throughout the day and teachers were asked to provide data on each child's

behavioural organization, coping strategies, impulsiveness, expressions and management of emotions without awareness of attachment histories or hypothesis of the study. It was concluded from these findings “that the various patterns of adaptation shown by avoidant infants represent meaningful developmental outcomes” (Sroufe, p. 51).

Erickson et al. (1985) conducted a study as an extension of Sroufe (1983) to include 56 additional participants from a variety of preschool settings. This study tested the hypothesis that anxiously attached children are more likely to develop behaviour problems in school than securely attached children. There were 96 children observed in school between four and five years of age (Erickson et al.). Insecurely attached children were found to be withdrawn from peers and gave up more easily than others in the classroom. These children were also less compliant with rules, instructions from adults and were highly impulsive and more hostile than other children. In the classroom, insecurely attached children were found to show more negative emotions, such as tantrums, anger and whining (Erickson et al.). Acting out, withdrawn and attention problems were the three most common behaviour problems found (Erickson et al.). Acting out behaviours included being “disobedient, inconsiderate, easily irritated, verbally aggressive with peers and/or adults and fighting with or bullying other children” (Erickson et al., p. 155). This study also found that children with anxious attachment patterns were more likely to exhibit behaviour problems during preschool (Erickson et al.).

Attachment theory provides an explanation for “how and why particular behavioral strategies develop, the function that they serve, and to whom behavior is targeted” (Moretti et al., 2004, p. 53). These explanations allow development of effective

interventions to address the unique behaviour of each child. Sroufe's (1983) project provided an opportunity to look at how secure and insecure attachment relationships are extended into preschool. Securely attached children were found to have more flexibility in feelings and impulse control, positive ego-resilience, high self-esteem and fewer problem behaviours. These children were also found to be more positive, emotionally responsive in relationships and showed less anger, fewer tantrums and less aggression than insecurely attached children. All insecurely attached children were found to be highly dependent and tried to obtain negative attention (Sroufe). Teachers ranked securely attached children significantly higher in social competence and compliance. Securely attached children also created fewer management problems in the classroom, accepted limits and obtained attention from adults in a positive manner. The securely attached children also ranked higher in popularity than insecurely attached children (Sroufe).

The attachment connection to bullying behaviour in children is beginning to emerge. Researchers have noted that "the link between insecure attachment with parents and bully/victim involvement with peers seems a promising avenue for exploration" (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998, p. 412). Moretti et al. (2004) explained how many acts of aggression are linked to attachment history. For instance, aggressive behaviour that is related to attachment can be understood as an attempt to stimulate others to engage, a reaction to rejection from a relationship, or an act to obtain control (Moretti et al.). Parent-child relationships and discipline strategies are often addressed in treatments for non-compliance as well as aggression (Greenberg et al., 1993).

Children's ability to interact with others is originated in the strength of the parent-child relationship (Thompson, 2000). Troy and Sroufe (1987) found that children with avoidant and ambivalent attachment histories were linked to victimization among schoolchildren. A later study concluded that children with lower attachment security are likely to experience peer rejection and engage in externalizing, perpetrating behaviours such as breaking rules, as well as internalizing behaviours such as frequently choosing to play or work alone (Wood et al., 2004). Wood et al. also found that early secure attachment bonds were significantly related to the acceptance and peer relations, which suggests that early secure attachment carries forward a relational style that helps preschoolers interact with others in an appropriate way, resulting in less peer conflict. Although not all insecurely attached children develop behaviour problems, children with a history of avoidant attachment are more likely to show extreme behaviour problems (Sroufe, 1983). By contrast, securely attached children were found to show empathetic responses towards others, whereas children with avoidant attachment did not show empathetic capacity (Sroufe).

“Children who greet the mother actively and positively on reunion in the Ainsworth Strange Situation are found more socially competent, more empathic, and happier than insecure-avoidant and insecure-ambivalent children when observed several years later” (Main et al, 1985, p. 72). Main et al. observed 40 mothers and fathers with their six-year-old children who had previously been assessed using the strange situation. A strong relationship between the assessment (family photograph response) at six years of age and early attachment assessment was found. For example, most six-year-olds who had avoidant attachment during infancy showed an avoidant response pattern in this



study. Thus, the hypothesis of attachment contingency as well as internal working model stability was supported. Once internal working models are established for individuals, the working models were found to be relatively stable (Main et al.). Attachment security was also stable and related to the child's emotional openness throughout assessment (Main et al.).

Adapted behaviour patterns of each maladaptive attachment appear to be relatively significant. For example, children with avoidant attachment styles tend to have low social competence and an inability to cope with stress (Sroufe, 1983). Some children are more resilient than others when faced with stress. "Each individual child is making an ongoing adaptation to the unique circumstances in which he or she lives" (Sroufe, p. 72). Different parenting styles and environmental changes influence uniqueness in each child's pattern of adaptation.

Bullies are likely to rate family relationships as distant, especially with parents. "The quality of caregiver-infant relationships is an important predictor of peer relationships and peer competence throughout childhood" (Elicker et al., 1992, p. 99). A lack of warmth, frequent neglect and inconsistent discipline practices are often found among children who bully others (Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998). In support of the hypothesis that parent-child attachment is connected to peer social competence, Cohn (1990) found that both peers and teachers of insecurely attached boys saw them as less socially competent than securely attached boys. There was also more aggression towards peers and behaviour problems in school. "Peer and teacher reports provided convergent evidence that quality of attachment at 6 years of age was associated with social competence in the classroom" (Cohn, p. 159). Further studies are needed to assess the

gender difference that this study found as peer social competence related to attachment quality for boys and not girls (Cohn). Girls and boys with insecure attachment in high-risk environments have been found to have behaviour problems; this suggests girls with insecure attachment are more likely to have behaviour problems when at high risk than in middle class. The quality of parent-child attachment was found associated with the behaviour patterns of all children (Cohn).

“Aggression is dependent upon a lack of empathy or emotional identification with others” (Weinfield et al., 1999, p. 78). Thus, being nurtured with consistent empathetic care should lead to an empathetic and secure child in future relationships. Children develop adaptive as well as maladaptive behaviour patterns depending on their attachment and autonomy experiences. Maladaptive behaviours include aggression, lack of impulse control, emotional dependency and various antisocial behaviours, such as withdrawal. It has been shown that children who engage in these behaviours have extreme difficulty relating to their peers due to their early relational experiences (Erickson et al., 1985). This final project aims to help teachers promote adaptive behaviour patterns in children through attachment-based strategies, which are described in the teacher manual (see Appendix).

## Chapter IV

### *Summary and Conclusion*

Establishing a healthy parent-child attachment bond results is much more than just a better relationship. It helps the child feel a sense of safety, builds trust and security, improves their self-esteem, reduces stress and helps future relationship building (Booth & Lindaman, 2000; Kemp et al., 2004). The quality of life for children is improved when they have parents and teachers who protect them, are caring, loving, dependable and respond to their emotional needs with sensitivity (Easterbrooks et al., 2000; Jernberg, 1984).

Teachers can make a difference and are an important part of children's lives throughout school years. They can provide support and security to students by setting clear expectations and consistent limits (Greenberg et al., 1993). Attending to specific behaviours may provide clues to attachment styles and prompt specific strategies to implement. In addition to the strategies for each attachment style, some basic teacher qualities that can help foster secure attachment include patience, nurturing, understanding and modelling. For the teacher to work collaboratively with parents and other teachers is encouraged as well.

This project is slightly limited as it does not include an experiment involving human participants. However, this project does explore various studies done previously in an effort to promote further exploration on this topic. For future studies, it would be beneficial to investigate various attachment interventions and compare their efficacy. Although parents lead very busy lives, they need to take time to build this essential attachment relationship for their children's healthy development. Teachers can help by

implementing several techniques in their classroom and explaining appropriate strategies for parents to try at home. “If we understand what happened to the child as well as what might have prevented the parents from understanding their child, we can work together to help the child grow” (Jernberg & Booth, 2001c, p. 22) and develop with successful interpersonal relationships throughout life.

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## Appendix

Teacher Manual:

Using Attachment Theory to Reduce Bullying Behaviours

## Introduction

When children reach school age, teachers become a big part of their lives and can significantly influence their emotional stability and behaviour choices. Children will often start school with certain attachments to their parent(s), but tend to develop peer and teacher relationships within a short time. The purpose of this manual is to help teachers nurture positive relationships with students and parents, become knowledgeable about attachment styles and the connection between attachment security, emotional well-being and behaviour choice. Through observations and interactions with students, teachers are encouraged to obtain a general understanding of student attachment styles with parents and peers in order to deal with issues that students may encounter more effectively. For example, insecure attachment has been found to promote aggression, defiance, poor emotional regulation and hostility (Moretti et al., 2004). Promoting secure attachment should reduce some of these character traits. Children with insecure attachments with their parents can benefit from secure attachment with a teacher since “one secure attachment relationship may at least partially compensate for an insecure attachment” (Mitchell-Copeland et al., 1997, p. 29). Thus, teachers have the power to create a safe and caring environment in which students can learn and prosper.

Concerns about social, emotional and behavioural issues that some students have at school and the negative implications that can result are not new. Teachers do not have to become therapists to deal with these problems, “but teachers can work therapeutically with greater insight” (Geddes, 2006a, p. 2). Certain behaviours can indicate a particular attachment pattern developed by students. Understanding the meaning behind various behaviours can help teachers work through difficulties with students to promote positive

achievement and learning. In addition, understanding how attachment is linked to problem behaviours at school can create a non-threatening way to address issues without damaging the positive relationship built between the student and teacher (Geddes). Effective strategies for developing teacher-child attachment in the classroom are explored in this manual, in addition to strategies for dealing with bullying behaviours. The next section describes four different attachment styles that children may develop and classroom strategies for which teachers can incorporate.



## Attachment Styles

In general, effective teachers have been known to provide support and security to students in their classes by setting clear expectations and consistent limits with consequences (Greenberg et al., 1993). However, the specific attachment styles developed by students may require further strategies. Insecurely attached children who exhibit quiet and withdrawn behaviours are often overlooked and ignored; whereas disruptive and overt behaviours are often readily identified and punished (Geddes, 2006a). Each attachment style is explored below along with a description of recommended strategies for teachers to use when dealing with common behaviour patterns associated with each. These descriptions aim to help teachers respond to students expressing different attachment styles and behaviours effectively. The lists are by no means exhaustive and teachers are encouraged to research other techniques related to each attachment style.

### *Secure*

Children with secure attachment commonly receive sensitive and responsive care from parents based on their needs, allowing the parent and child to be attuned to each other (O'Connor et al., 2000). Through this interaction, children learn to balance their emotional states and find comfort in their environment (Kemp et al., 2004). As most teachers would guess, these students are able to regulate emotions in different environments and practice pro-social behaviour, compliance and show empathy (Moretti et al., 2004). Secure parent-child attachment often leads children to approach peers with positive expectations (Mitchell-Copeland et al., 1997). Thus, students with secure attachment come into the classroom with a positive schema and interact relatively well

with peers and other adults. Secure students also typically do well academically since secure attachment promotes increased competence and high self-esteem (Greenberg et al., 1993). Secure attachment also protects against aggressive behaviour (Ainsworth, 1989), which suggests that these students will not need a lot of extra support building peer relationships or adjusting to the classroom.

Recommended strategies for teaching securely attached children include: (a) maintain a safe environment, (b) establish a clear and consistent routine, (c) create opportunities to nurture friendships, (d) have children model appropriate behaviours for others and (e) respond to children's needs as they arise. Children with secure attachment may not require extensive attention from teachers. However, it is helpful to establish a positive relationship with these children so there is a comfortable connection and feeling of security while in the classroom.

### *Avoidant*

Children with avoidant attachment usually deny closeness with others, express anxiety, hostility and engage in angry outbursts (Geddes, 2006b). Since these children have not received consistent reassurance and availability from their parents, they often cope through withdrawal (Dozier et al, 2000). In the classroom, these children may not ask for help when needed and seek independence. They are usually underachieving, use limited language and react emotionally to tasks (Geddes). Students with avoidant attachment require support and proximity, but they will usually deny both. Instead, their needs are disguised through focusing on environmental distractions (Moretti et al., 2004).

The following strategies suggested for teaching children with avoidant attachment may take some time to develop, but are highly recommended. Basic strategies include:

(a) establish clear rules and expectations, (b) foster increased proximity and comfort, (c) give tasks that are within their independent capability, (d) establish a safe and trusting relationship, while giving opportunities to engage in new peer relationships and (e) respecting their emotional needs throughout the day. Teachers should set out tasks that have clear rules and expected outcomes so these children are able to invite closer proximity without triggering the need to deny support from the teacher (Geddes, 2006b). It is often difficult for children with avoidant attachment to build trust or be able to depend on others (Attachment Across Cultures, n.d.).

While building trusting relationships in the classroom, these students may benefit from being seated next to students who have lower academic abilities. Sitting these students close to other classmates will allow the teacher to remain in close proximity with them while helping others, which should decrease the instant rejection of proximity (Geddes, 2006b). Tasks should be the main focus for strategy as it can be challenging for teachers to create clear, achievable, structured activities, with all materials readily available, that these students will not require much help with and feel a sense of control and support. Structured games and activities with clear defined procedures can provide safety and are appealing for students with avoidant attachment (Geddes). The use of metaphors and expressing sensitivity are powerful strategies in helping these students integrate thoughts and feelings to facilitate learning as well (Geddes). Thus, tasks are generally used by the teacher as a bridge to help build a close, positive relationship with these students.

*Ambivalence*

Being able to separate from the secure base and explore the world is a critical step in children's development (Geddes, 2006c). Students with ambivalent attachment often display clinging behaviour and hold a parent close, resisting separation. They will sometimes direct anger towards the parent, out of frustration as well. These students "can be either impulsive and tense, or helpless and fearful" (Geddes, p. 89). Often left starving for attention by their parents, children with ambivalent attachment view others as unreliable or unresponsive and view themselves as inadequate, lacking qualities that deserve care (Moretti et al., 2004). Geddes described these children as anxiously controlling, resulting from fear that they may lose the adult's attention and presence. Teachers tend to find these students as highly dependent, who express some anger and hostility when frustrated. These students often have good language skills, but are underachieving and have difficulty focusing on tasks without adult support (Geddes). Students with ambivalent attachment lack self-reliance, are unenthusiastic and are easily frustrated (Jernberg & Booth, 2001b). These students often have poor peer relations as well (Weinfield et al., 1999). There is such preoccupation with trying to build a relationship with the teacher that tasks become irrelevant for these students. It is extremely helpful for teachers to recognize the separation anxiety within these students and implement strategies for comfort.

Strategies recommended for teaching children with ambivalent attachment may involve more than the teacher, but collaboration can be very beneficial. Useful strategies for teachers include: (a) work with parents to validate feelings, (b) promote emotional awareness, (c) establish morning routines and consistent transitions throughout the day, (d) respond to students with support and sensitivity and (e) teach students the value of

cooperation, friendship and working together to solve problems. These strategies are described in more detail below.

Teachers should focus on the children's separation from parents to validate their feelings on that stressful part of their day if this is an issue for them. Creating an attractive distraction during the separation experience, such as puppets or toys, can help decrease the emotional charge that accompanies the formation of new relationships in the classroom (Mardell, 1994). In addition, teachers can use the curriculum in many ways to promote emotional development and thinking about separation, identity and independent issues (Geddes, 2006c). Separation from parents in the morning sets the tone for the day and affects the child's time in the classroom. Therefore, it is important for teachers to establish routines with students to help them transition into the classroom each day (Mardell). Keeping concrete routines throughout the school day and plans with specific beginnings, separations, as well as endings are helpful for these students during transitions (Geddes).

Sensitive responses help teachers start to build a positive relationship and lets students know that their teacher can meet their needs (Mardell, 1994). Creating and maintaining procedures and routines helps children feel a sense of security, establishes predictability and fosters the development of the secondary attachment to the teacher. Security is also felt when one is included as part of the class and is reinforced with cooperative activities (Mardell).

Modelling turn taking to emphasize separateness can also be helpful for these students. In addition, playing board games can provide structure and create a safe way to express hostility towards adults (Geddes, 2006c). Tasks can be broken down into small

independent steps along with a timer to moderate anxiety during individual work time. Giving these students special objects to keep for a while can be used to take the teacher's place on a short-term basis (Geddes). Making comments about their presence may also reassure these students that they matter.

A reliable and consistent support is needed, which may start with the teacher depending on home support (Geddes, 2006c). Mentors may be particularly helpful in schools with different classes to be that reliable person to meet these students and help them deal with class changes and adjusting to daily routines and school environment. When interacting with peers, students with ambivalent attachment may attempt to control others; however, teachers can discourage this behaviour by putting these students in charge of special tasks and endorse responsibility. Group work promotes development of peer relationships and exploration of experiences through imaginary journeys within activities. These group activities provide a safe outlet to express experiences of anxiety (Geddes). Contacts in community networks can be helpful as well in making adjustments to new expectations.

### *Disorganized*

Students with disorganized attachment “are likely to have experienced absence of responsiveness and care as well as threat from the source of their security” (Geddes, 2006d, p. 106). With the absence of sensitivity and impaired relatedness there is often reduced self-awareness, lack of empathy, reactivity to stress, anger, aggression, difficulty regulating emotions and problems communicating with others (Geddes; Kemp et al., 2004). These students are also very anxious, easily distracted, extremely sensitive to criticism, lack trust in adults, insensitive to the feelings of others, fear failure, reject tasks,

rate objects over relationships and appear to lack enjoyment in anything (Geddes). The traits of students with disorganized attachment suggest a high risk for externalizing behaviour problems and stress management difficulties (Bakermans-Kranenburg et al., 2005).

In normal development, most infants will learn organized ways of dealing with various stressful events. However, when parents are a source of protection as well as the source of fear, the infant is left disorganized and under stress without a solution. Parental risk factors include poverty, lack of education, instability, lack of social support and single status (Bakermans-Kranenburg et al., 2005). Disorganized attachment patterns are often misdiagnosed as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Geddes, 2006d). However, these children usually have good attendance, which allows this pattern of behaviour to be recognized early, prompting early and appropriate intervention (Geddes).

Due to the finding that students with disorganized attachment are at high risk of developmental delays, as well as social and academic disadvantages, therapy resources are recommended and suspected cases should have an assessment for attachment issues as soon as possible (Geddes, 2006d). Some basic strategies recommended by Geddes for teachers, in addition to the need to refer for possible further therapy intervention, include: (a) work with parents and establish consistent strategies to implement at home and at school, (b) respond to child's needs with sensitivity, (c) establish regular rules, routines and transitions, (d) create a secure base within the classroom and (e) promote basic understanding of emotions throughout various experiences. These strategies are described in more detail below.

One initial focus in dealing with a disorganized attachment pattern is to enhance positive parental actions. When a child's negative behaviour is reinforced at home, it is unlikely to change at school (Sroufe, 1983). Effective interventions in reducing disorganized attachment behaviours tend to focus on sensitivity as well as parental support and stability (Bakermans-Kranenburg et al., 2005; Geddes, 2006d). Thus, teachers are encouraged to use sensitivity in their approach with these students and to educate parents on the importance of attachment and strategies to implement at home. Since everyone is unique, parents may need to be taught how to follow their child's lead and respond effectively (Bakermans-Kranenburg et al.). Teachers may need to work with parents to discover specific needs of the child. Teachers should also establish reliable routines, consistent rules and predictable activities to reduce anxiety and promote adaptation to the classroom. A small physical containment, such as a tent or cupboard space, may be necessary for some children with disorganized attachment to experience a symbolic secure base from which to explore the world (classroom) and develop an interest in learning (Geddes).

In general, when intervening with students, teachers need to consider the meaning behind behaviours, be non-reactive and try to communicate understanding. A reflective response to anger is more effective than a reactive response (Geddes, 2006b). Positive feedback about the child's achievements can promote development of more positive responses (Geddes, 2006d). To avoid reactivity from the child, other school staff should also support teachers. Concrete rhythmic activities such as counting, sorting, colouring, sequencing, building, or rhythmic exercises can regulate brain rhythms and re-direct aggressive acts. Finding symbolic containment and discovered security bases can be used



as a metaphor in exploration activities (Geddes, 2006d). In addition, the curriculum creates various opportunities to explore feelings without personalizing situations, which can be beneficial for all students. The next section describes some general strategies for teachers to promote secure attachment in the classroom.

### Attachment Building in the Classroom

“As a system of conceptualizing children’s emotional and social development, attachment theory can greatly enrich practice in early childhood classrooms, and inform the decisions of administrators and policy makers” (Mardell, 1994, p. 39). Through promotion of a secure attachment, teachers can create a more successful classroom environment. Attachment theory also helps teachers conceptualize and understand various behaviours, which can be incorporated in classroom interventions (Mardell). As students develop secure bonds in the classroom it can help foster appropriate behaviours and compensate for insecure attachment bonds between students and their parents (Mardell).

There are benefits for children to keep the same teacher over several years once a positive relationship is formed, as it would eliminate the need for children to form attachments with teachers at the beginning of each new school year. “Yearly changes are especially counter productive for children with insecure attachment histories” (Mardell, 1994, p. 45). Class sizes should be reduced as well since a low teacher-student ratio enables teachers to spend more time with each child. Smaller class sizes also allow teachers to be more responsive and sensitive to student needs (Mardell). Muennig and Woolf (2007) concluded that reduced class sizes tend to be more cost-effective than most health interventions that may be needed to help insecurely attached students within large classes in which teachers are not able to provide consistent, reliable support. Student academic achievement does not seem to differ in smaller classes, however (Milesi & Gamoran, 2006).

Peisner-Feinberg et al. (2001) found that over time a teacher-child relationship was related to the child's behavioural skills and social interactions at school. Closer teacher-child relationships predicted better social skills, higher cognitive abilities and lower problem behaviours. The quality of children's experience in preschool predicts their readiness for school (Peisner-Feinberg et al.). Thus, past experiences and influences tend to have lasting effects and predictable outcomes. Pettit and Bates (1989) suggest that proactive positive parental involvement may prevent behaviour problems from developing, which would decrease the need for reactive interventions. Teachers are encouraged to involve and educate parents whenever possible on the importance of attachment care. The remainder of this section describes how teachers can build attachment relationships with students as an additional support next to parental bonds.

#### *Teacher-Child Attachment*

During the second six months of life, attachment bonds begin to develop between children and their parents. The attachment style that is developed depends on the sensitivity and predictability of care that is provided (Mardell, 1994). Children need to feel secure in their environment before they can engage in full exploration (Mardell). The protective bonds children form after parental attachment are described as secondary attachments. The quality of these secondary bonds also depends on sensitivity and response. Secondary attachments are important for children's development of empathy, independence, self-esteem and purposefulness to promote socially acceptable behaviour in toddlers with secure as well as insecure attachments with their parents (Mardell).

Teacher relationships can become a secondary attachment for most children (Mardell, 1994). "A secure attachment relationship with a teacher can provide the child

with an alternative model of relationships” (Mitchell-Copeland et al., 1997, p. 29). Thus, even if children have an insecure attachment with parents, their relations with a teacher can provide the security needed to develop positive social relations with peers. When children are distressed over leaving their primary attachment figure, teachers can reassure these children through hugs or words of encouragement to make them feel safe and secure in the classroom (Mardell). With this approach the teacher is fostering a new attachment relationship, rather than replacing the parental bond, in order to become the secure base within the classroom from which the child can explore new surroundings (Mardell). Some believe that attending to the crying and resistant behaviour during parental separation is reinforcing poor behaviour; however, attachment theory posits otherwise in that children are simply asking for security once they feel safe will not be a need to cry or resist anymore (Mardell). “Security provides a foundation upon which subsequent harmonious relations with adults and peers are built” (Belsky & Cassidy, 1994, p. 394).

Teachers form positive relationships with students, which are expected to influence children’s social competence. However, very little research has been done in this area. Mitchell-Copeland et al. (1997) examined the quality of attachment between 62 preschool children and their teachers who had known each other for approximately six months. They found that the child-teacher attachment security was related to pro-social behaviour. This study also suggests that when parent-child attachment is insecure, a secure child-teacher attachment relationship can partially compensate, promoting pro-social behaviour and emotional regulation in preschool children (Mitchell-Copeland et al.).

Since children can form multiple attachment relationships, forming secure attachment relations with various important adults in their lives should serve the same purposes as their parent, such as providing a secure base to explore the world, sharing emotions and relieving stress. Expectations from attachment security tend to be carried forward; guiding behaviour in peer relationships and having at least a secure child-teacher attachment in the classroom can promote pro-social behaviour (Mitchell-Copeland et al., 1997). Therefore, in promotion of positive peer relations, teachers should build a positive student-teacher attachment.

All children need responsive care to develop secure attachment and promote positive peer relationships. A variety of things can influence a child's behaviour and relationship problems, such as early parenting, on-going parent-child relationship, stress level, quality of support and limit setting. Teachers are in the ideal position to recognize children in need of help in this area (Mills & Allan, 1992). The following elements should be implemented with insecure children in order to promote improved attachment security and appropriate social interactions.

*Nurturing.* A huge part of any intervention that children with insecure attachment receive should include nurturing. Insecure children often benefit from being held and cuddled (Perry, 2001). Children with attachment problems need to be loved and cared for through touch; however, teachers should be attuned to children's reactions since touch is often associated with pain from their past experiences. Physical touch, such as hugging or holding, is known to be an effective responsive action to help build a secure secondary attachment with children throughout preschool years (Mardell, 1994). Children with insecure attachment often do not understand appropriate physical contact. A few things

that teachers need to teach these children are “when to hug, how close to stand, when to establish or break eye contact” (Perry, p. 10) and how to give a handshake. With nurturing, teachers can enrich children’s social and emotional experiences (Perry). Teachers may want to help students make up various friendship actions, such as high fives or head nods, for the class to model daily throughout the year.

*Patience.* It can take time for children to develop secure attachment and show pro-social behaviours. Teachers should try not to get discouraged. “Many loving, skilled and competent parents have been swamped by the needs of a neglected and abused child that they have taken in” (Perry, 2001, p. 11). However small it may seem sometimes, continuing with love, time and effort does have a profound effect on these children (Perry). Self-care is also important because teachers should acknowledge their own feelings of frustration and exhaustion. Resources in the community can be a huge help in developing plans and obtaining assistance with several students (Perry). When teachers feel like they need help, they should seek school administrators and ask the community to get more involved. The earlier these children receive needed help, the better their chances are of establishing pro-social behaviour skills (Perry).

*Teach feelings.* It would be highly beneficial for all children to learn about different feelings in themselves as well as in others. In particular, children should know that feelings are normal, learn healthy ways of dealing with them (especially anger), recognize feelings in others and explore various feelings as they become evident throughout the school day (Perry, 2001). Taking advantage of teachable moments can help children understand the relevance of feelings. Children usually develop the ability to

consider the thoughts and feelings of others in relation to themselves between three and five years of age (Thompson, 2000).

Everyone is unique and has different preferences in what they find calming and comforting. Thus, teachers should try to communicate an alignment of internal states non-verbally so that everyone in the class can feel understood, validated and respected. Through this type of experience, children should learn to balance their own internal emotions and states of mind promoting safety within and lead to positive interpersonal connections with others (Kemp et al., 2004). Teachers may have to communicate with parents to try to determine what techniques work best for soothing each individual student. Some students may be able to identify what they find soothing when working through problems at school since sharing experiences helps children learn to problem solve and regulate emotions on their own (Kemp et al.).

*Establish understanding.* Children benefit from having adults listen and interact with them. Insecure children will often open up and tell their inner thoughts and feelings when they begin to establish a positive relationship with a teacher or caregiver (Perry, 2001). Determining the meaning behind behaviours, as described above, is important in gaining an understanding of children and their motives within certain contexts (Sroufe, 1983). In addition, developing patterns of adaptation for some children may indicate how those insecure children approach the world in different situations. These patterns may help teachers understand the child's expectations, fears, beliefs, hopes, preferred ways of interaction and ways of coping with stressful or emotional events (Sroufe).

Teachers tend to rate children with secure attachment higher in self-esteem, social competence and positive affect than children with insecure attachment (Elicker et al.,

1992). The more teachers learn and understand about attachment problems and developmental issues, the better social and behavioural interventions they will likely apply (Perry, 2001). In general, there are usually social and emotional developmental delays with children who display insecure attachment patterns (Perry). Punishments or consequences may not be the best option for misbehaviours since those reactions could increase the child's sense of insecurity (Perry). Thus, when a child is acting like a two-year-old, when he or she is eight years of age, the exhibited behaviours may be where the child is emotionally and he or she may need to be treated like a two-year-old when responded to (Perry). Consistency, regularity and predictability are important when responding to insecure children. As mentioned above, teachers can help children with attachment issues by staying on schedule, avoiding surprises and ensuring the class is aware of upcoming transitions (Perry). Having consistent, repetitive and predictable environment helps students feel safe and secure, which allows them to benefit from the teacher's nurturing and understanding, leading to learning.

*Modelling.* All children should benefit from positive modelling that they can copy and enhance social interactions. A great way to teach social skills is to narrate behaviours while modelling and explaining the reasons for acting that way (Perry, 2001). Teacher's can coach children when they are playing with peers by narrating their behaviours, externalizing and taking an outsider's view. Self-esteem and confidence will grow with increased positive interactions. As time goes by, social successes will make children more confident and less aggressive (Perry). "Individuals evolve and organize (hierarchically) strategies for dealing with crises and opportunities in the environment,



and they carry forward earlier strategies to subsequent periods of development” (Sroufe, 1983, p. 44). Thus, children will learn and engage in behaviours that work.

“There are different reasons for aggression and social isolation, and, as teachers and therapists know, within these reasons are the clues for effective intervention” (Sroufe, 1983, p. 74). Children tend to elicit reactions from others related to their maladaptive history. Thus, children make unique adaptations to their world depending on their perception and previous experiences (Sroufe). Intervention may focus on opposing maladaptive histories, modelling, or creating adaptive behaviour patterns through observation learning, experience and practice.

*Family relations.* Parent-child relationships have significant influences on subsequent relationships since children with secure attachment are more likely to engage in reciprocal friendships and maintain a higher number of friends than children with insecure attachment. It is also typical of children with insecure attachment to report higher incidents of exclusion and/or ridicule from peers (Grossman & Grossman, 1991). It is not the child, but rather the relationship between the child and parent that should be the focus since “early relationship history is seen as the context for the emergence of the social self” (Elicker et al., p. 99). Having a warm, positive relationship with parents can help teachers communicate more openly, establish mutual behaviour expectations for children and respond to children’s needs in a mutual effort (Powell et al., 2006). Teachers are encouraged to spend some time getting to know parents and to consult with them on their child’s abilities and difficulties, frequently share information about their child, discuss parental concerns and to invite them to participate in various programs throughout the year (Powell et al.). Parents may need to be taught how to interact with

their child and communicate understanding. Thus, building partnerships with parents helps them feel comfortable with their child's teacher, as this tends to be communicated to the child during interactions (Mardell, 1994).

Harsh discipline practices are associated with behaviour problems among children as well (Powell et al., 2006). Parents who practice harsh punishments should be educated on ways to develop positive interactions with their child, promoting healthy social and emotional development. Teachers can give parents a referral for their child when needed. Positive traits that should be developed in children include empathy towards others, positive emotional expression and regulation, friendship behaviours and problem solving skills (Powell et al.). Teachers can discuss these traits with parents and establish an agreement on promotion within their child.

Overall, effective teachers are supportive and establish clear expectations and consistent limits (Greenberg et al., 1993). Classrooms should be set up with schedules that include creative activities with a combination of individual and group work, teacher-directed, unstructured and whole class participation that is balanced throughout the day. The schedule should also have predictable transitions (Powell et al., 2006). Rules for classroom behaviour are clear with consistent consequences to promote self-regulation among students. Class meetings are useful to promote discussions on hurtful experiences and class participation in establishing limits, guidelines and consequences for inappropriate behaviour (Mills & Allan, 1992).

Basic social skills can be taught through role play, modelling, or life practices (Powell et al., 2006). Aggression is a problem in many children with insecure attachment as they often lack empathy and have poor impulse control (Perry, 2001). The impact of

their behaviour on others is usually not understood and is dealt with in a negative fashion. Since children with secure attachment tend to have a positive perspective of relationships, they see others as supportive and are more likely to be cooperative, empathetic and have appropriate social engagements. Securely attached students can help model appropriate behaviours for children with insecure attachment behaviour patterns (Sroufe, 1983).

When modelling or using other teacher methods described above are not enough, a referral to see a therapist may be necessary. The next section describes several therapy interventions that may be required for some children with insecure attachment patterns. The following information is simply an overview of various interventions that a therapist may consider using with a client. Teachers are welcome to read further and become more aware of opportunities for children in therapy; however, teachers should not, in any way, attempt therapy interventions with their students as specialized training is required.

## Therapeutic Assistance

When a child's behaviour is confusing, dangerous, or disturbing, mental health professionals may need to be contacted to help develop practical approaches to deal with the problem (Perry, 2001). This section describes several therapy options available from professionals focused on treating attachment difficulties in children.

### *Theraplay*

Generally, children who fail to develop a secure attachment relationship with their parents early in life tend to act out and distance themselves from others (Myrow, 1999). They may also reject loved ones who try to get close to them emotionally. While rejecting their parent's love and authority, these children will often relate well to strangers or extended family members (Myrow). Temper tantrums are common among these children when they feel frustrated or are being made to go through the consequences of their actions (Myrow). It can be very difficult and frustrating for parents to deal with children who have these issues and behaviours, not to mention their teachers. Theraplay comes to the rescue for cases in which the parent-child relationship develops rapidly and parents (and teachers) can actually start enjoying their kids (Myrow).

Theraplay is a short-term intervention that uses attachment related active play to improve parent-child relationships (Booth & Lindaman, 2000). Parents begin as observers and are integrated in as co-therapists. This intervention incorporates the four major elements needed to establish secure attachment and develop a healthy self-image. The elements within various activities are: structure, challenge, engagement and nurture (Booth & Lindaman). There are also group activities that could be implemented by teachers designed to promote each of these elements (see Chapter VII). Attachment takes

time to develop, begins with parents and continues on in future relationships throughout life (Booth & Lindaman). Through modelling, Theraplay can help parents provide structure, promote safety and security and help children regulate and express emotions. However, Theraplay does not address issues resulting from abuse, abandonment, or trauma (Booth & Lindaman). Further alternative treatments are needed for these and other severe issues resulting in behaviour problems.

The therapist acknowledges and validates the child's feelings during session, helping them become more accepting of feelings. Using more nurturing activities leads to improved concentration, controlled impulses and feeling recognition; whereas altering the pace of fun games can help children learn how to modulate their excitement (Booth & Lindaman, 2000). Overall, through replication of playful interactions that includes all four elements (structure, challenge, engagement and nurture), Theraplay helps "children and their parents develop better relationships and more secure attachments" (Booth & Lindaman, p. 224). It is a short, efficient intervention designed to start the process of building attachment by providing tools, intervention and activities for parents to continue at home, as secure attachment continues to develop.

### *Filial Therapy*

Since the parent-child relationship dynamics tend to affect child development, the primary objective in filial therapy is to improve the parent-child relationship through teaching parents the skills to become more therapeutic in their children's lives (Landreth & Lobaugh, 1998). In filial therapy, parents learn more effective ways to interact with and help their children through play since play is considered the most effective way of gaining further understanding of children (VanFleet, 2005). Filial therapy is typically a

support-group intervention, lead by a therapist, in which parents are taught several child-centered play techniques to use with their child to strengthen the relationship (Landreth & Lobaugh). Parents become the agents of change as they learn various parenting skills and engage in regular play sessions with their child at home (VanFleet). The parent-child relationship is the primary focus rather than the therapeutic relationship between the therapist and child. Parents initially view play sessions and then they participate in group training to learn how to express acceptance, empathy, encouragement and set appropriate limits (Landreth & Lobaugh).

Children can master new skills, express feelings, develop social skills, integrate an understanding of new experiences of the world and problem solve through play (VanFleet, 2005). Filial therapists strongly believe children benefit therapeutically from play as this approach helps increase self-confidence and self-esteem, improve trust and confidence in parents, reduce maladaptive behaviours, improve pro-social behaviours and promote a healthy, balanced development within a cohesive family environment (VanFleet). This intervention promotes prevention of future problems as well. Parents have the potential to be more effective when they are taught to take on the therapist's role with their child (Landreth & Lobaugh, 1998).

Landreth and Lobaugh (1998) found that incarcerated fathers were able to significantly improve the relationship with their children through filial therapy training. Quality time between parents and children was significantly improved and children experienced increases in their self-concepts as fathers accepted their child's unique make-up and recognized their child's needs for autonomy and independence. There was an emotional closeness, attachment and sense of competence found within these fathers that

they indicated had not been there before (Landreth & Lobaugh). Filial therapy can be effective with parents of various levels of education. Fathers with filial training reported having more accepting attitudes with their children and decreased parenting stress (Landreth & Lobaugh). Moreover, their children had fewer behavioural problems than the children of incarcerated fathers without filial training (Landreth & Lobaugh).

#### *Other Play Therapies*

Various play therapy techniques are used by some therapists to help children build more positive models of self and develop intimate relationships and to allow them to participate and adapt within the classroom and engage in peer relationships more constructively (Mills & Allan, 1992). In general, play therapy helps to build self-confidence, social skills and the ability “to learn and function intellectually in the classroom environment” (Mills & Allan, p. 7). Aggressive or avoidant behaviours with peers are decreased with changes made to enable them to make friends. “The dimensions and process of play within an accepting, caring, and empathic relationship enable children to express themselves in ways that increase their self-esteem” (Landreth & Lobaugh, 1998, p. 164). The next section provides several guidelines for teachers to consider when making a referral.

## Guidelines for Referral

With the awareness of various therapeutic interventions for students, teachers may want to make a referral to professional services for those experiencing difficulties. Concerns should be discussed with parents initially to establish collaboration with them in meeting the needs of their child. Parents are included in both Theraplay and Filial therapy sessions, which emphasizes the importance of their involvement in helping to improve their child's behaviours. Teachers should book a time to meet with parents and discuss their concerns. Parents will be able to provide further insight and describe experiences at home. During this meeting, teachers can explore the possibility of professional services for the child and provide parents with information on services in the community. Some interventions, such as Theraplay, may not be available in certain areas due to lack of trained professionals. Teachers can obtain information on available services through their local mental health services agencies. Parental consent is needed for all assessments that may be considered.

Teachers should not attempt to diagnose or make formal assessments of their students. Only trained professionals can conduct formal assessments. In addition, school administration should be informed when teachers have concerns about students. Schools often have specific referral forms or policies, which are usually provided to teachers during orientation. Teachers are encouraged to follow the school protocol when making referrals for students to seek therapeutic services. The next chapter of this manual describes several strategies that may help teachers to deal with aggression or bullying behaviours among students in school.



### Strategies for Bullying and Aggressive Behaviours

Aggressive behaviours in the classroom must be addressed as they threaten safety, effective learning and socialization (Mills & Allan, 1992). Common factors that lead to aggressive behaviour problems among children include an insecure attachment history, poor adjustment, inadequate parental care and stressful or chaotic home life (Mills & Allan). Creating safety, emotional stability and mutual meaning are important factors to consider when attempting to develop and maintain secure attachment (Perry, 2001).

When teachers witness bullying behaviours, they need to consider other possible causes before deciding on an appropriate intervention. Attachment theory linked with peer relationship understanding can offer effective strategies for dealing with bullying behaviours. In this manual, teachers should have learned and will likely benefit from knowing the connection between parent-child attachment and bullying or aggression, which leads to further understanding of student behaviour and integrations of attachment strategies. Armed with this understanding, teachers should be better equipped to handle bullying behaviours that arise.

Moreover, it would be very effective to have teachers work with parents, thereby connecting schools and families together to deal with bullying problems (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2004). When parents need assistance in finding ways to develop a secure attachment with their child, teachers can help parents by introducing a few techniques described in this manual applicable to their child or by referring them to a qualified therapist. Several strategies described in this manual are to assist teachers in their ability to implement strategies for the benefit of children who exhibit insecure attachment

behaviours at school. Extending these practices at home should create some consistency in these children's lives when interacting with parents at home and teachers at school.

It is important to involve parents when attempting to improve a child's behaviour through improving attachment security. Changes in family circumstances that affect the parent-child daily interactions influence attachment quality (Belsky & Cassidy, 1994). Thus, even the adjustment to attending school can affect attachment quality. Parental behaviour and psychological well-being, child temperament, environment and alternative care influence attachment quality as well. "A foundation of a secure attachment history appears to be an asset that a child brings into the classroom" (Belsky & Cassidy, p. 393).

When dealing with an aggressive student, it is essential for teachers not to label children as bad or reject them personally when limiting the behaviour (Mills & Allan, 1992). In emergency situations, talking or confrontation is usually not helpful and will likely escalate children's the fight or flight behaviour patterns, since these aggressive eruptions are often triggered by underlying fears (Geddes, 2006d). Thus, confrontation often makes children more afraid and escalates the incident. The first step for teachers is to take a step back since fear usually fuels aggression and decreasing fear can often change the reactive stance. Teachers can then engage in a safety routine, such as having the child removed to a safe, non-stimulating place, or allowing the student to remove themselves to a safe, cool-down place without confrontation (Geddes, 2006d). After the student is calm, teachers can talk about the incident and prepare the student to return to class. This procedure helps protect the teacher and other students from harm and it allows the child to de-escalate thereby reducing any perceived dangers.

For children who are victimized by aggressive peers, it may be helpful for them to build confidence through role-plays and practice standing up for themselves. Some students can attend training and be taught to apply assertive statements towards those who victimize them (Mills & Allan, 1992; Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998). Consistency and positive modelling is important as every school staff member should be intervening when inappropriate behaviour is witnessed using a calm, firm voice, labelling the behaviour (not the person) and suggesting more appropriate behaviours for children to practice (Mills & Allan). Adults are encouraged to use 'I messages' and bend down to the child's level in a calm manner. Having school staff work together promotes consistency for students and it may also result in multiple attachment relationships between staff and students, such as teacher and teachers' aide for students in one classroom (Mills & Allan).

The next chapter describes a list of classroom activities that teachers can choose from to incorporate in daily routines. These group activities may help foster positive relations among students and between students and staff. These activities can also help establish a sense of belonging, acceptance and safety within the classroom.

## Classroom Activities

Theraplay incorporates four major elements within interventions to promote secure attachment and the development of a healthy self-image. Group activities that can be used by teachers are listed and described below. The activities are divided into four categories: structure, challenge, engagement and nurture (Booth & Lindaman, 2000). Teachers can implement several of these activities to promote each major element with students in their classroom. Teachers are encouraged to demonstrate each activity before asking students to participate. Some of these activities may be familiar, but likely have slight alterations, such as never sitting anyone out.

### Structure

Structuring activities allow teachers to set limits, define boundaries of personal space, promote safety, establish sequencing of activities and relieve any burden children may have in maintaining control (Jernberg & Booth, 2001d).

#### *Bean Bag Game*

The teacher divides the class in half and has students make two lines. The lines are arranged so that each student is sitting face to face with a partner. One line of students places a bean bag on their heads and when the teacher gives a signal (e.g., a bell or hand clap) those students tilt heads toward their partners and drop the bean bag into his or her partner's hands. The exercise is then repeated by having the other line of students put a bean bag on their heads.

### *Follow the Leader*

While standing in a line, the teacher makes an action for students to imitate. This action can be done while walking down the hall or gathered as a class at the back of the classroom. The teacher may allow students to take turns choosing an action for classmates to imitate, which can be done while standing in a circle or lined up with rotating leader deciding the action.

### *Hokey Pokey*

The whole class stands in a circle with personal space while singing and following actions: “You put your right foot in/You put your right foot out/You put your right foot in/And you shake it all about/You do the Hokey Pokey/And you turn yourself around/That’s what it’s all about/Hokey Pokey!” (Jernberg & Booth, 2001d, p. 396). Students then repeat the song using their different body parts, such as arms, legs, head, or even their whole bodies. The Hokey Pokey part is an energetic free dance in which students can make up different movements when that part is sung.

### *Mother, May I?*

This familiar game starts with the teacher standing at one end of the room and the students lined up at the other end. When the teacher gives students an instruction (e.g., take three steps forward), the students must ask: “Mother, may I?” and wait until an answer is given before following the instruction. If a student forgets to ask, he or she has to go back to the starting point. The goal is to reach the other side of the room and get a high five from the teacher.

*Motor-Boat*

The teacher and students stand in a circle holding hands and walk around in one direction while singing “Motor boat, motor boat, go so slow/Motor boat, motor boat, step on the gas/ Motor boat, motor boat, go so fast!” (Jernberg & Booth, 2001d, p. 396). The teacher can alter the speed by repeating the song with increased speed or suddenly slow down and start over. The activity ends when the boat is out of gas, after which everyone sits on the floor.

*Peanut Butter and Jelly*

The teacher says “peanut butter” and then the students say “jelly” in the same way. The teacher repeats the phrase varying the tone, length and volume while students try to match the variations using their phrase. The phrases may be changed for older students, such as “Rock” (teacher) and “Roll” (students) or other sayings that may come to mind to try tone matching.

*Red Light, Green Light*

The teacher stands at the front of the class and students line up across the back of the room (or stand behind a chair). To start the game, the teacher describes an action (e.g., move arms, run in place, jump and so on.) to do when he or she says “green light”. When the teacher says “red light,” students stop the action. In a large space, such as a gymnasium, it can be played differently. For example, the teacher can say “green light” and turn around, as the students creep up towards teacher. When the teacher turns back around and says “red light,” the students freeze. If the students are caught moving, they have to go back to the starting point or help identify other movers up with the teacher. The goal is to get to the front and tap the teacher on the shoulder.

## Challenge

Students are challenged and encouraged to take risks in these activities to build competence and confidence in their abilities. Some activities may start with some adult help or include peer assistance.

### *Balancing Activities*

Students lie on the floor and extend their feet flat up in the air. A pencil case is placed on their feet for them to balance. Then various other objects are placed on top until they are unable to balance it and objects fall off. This activity can be done as a group with partners placing objects on top and then switch roles. Another variation of this game is to have students balance book(s) on their heads while walking across a room. Those students who lose their balance must return to the starting point and try again. If this is too easy for the students, the teacher can add more objects.

### *Balloon Between*

With a partner, students place a balloon between them and walk across the floor without dropping it. The teacher instructs students on which body part to attach the balloon to (e.g., head, shoulders, elbows, etc.). The teacher examines which students are successful throughout activity. If the balloon is dropped, the pair must return to the starting point.

### *Cotton Ball Race*

Students get on their hands and knees lined up at one end of the room ready to blow the cotton ball. The teacher indicates when to start after placing a cotton ball in front of each student. The students blow cotton balls along the floor and race to the other side of the room.

### *Feather Blow*

Each student is assigned a partner and each pair is given one feather. While holding a book, the partner with the feather places it on his or her book. The student must blow the feather off the book towards his or her partner, who catches it on another book. Then this partner blows the feather back in the opposite direction. The teacher instructs students when to start each round and examines dyads who are successful in not letting the feather drop on the floor.

### *Musical Chairs*

Each student starts out sitting on a mat (or a chair) in a circle. When the music starts, the students stand up and walk around as one mat (or chair) is taken away. When the music stops, students need to find a mat (or chair) to sit on. As the number of mats (or chairs) decrease, students can squish together in order to make room.

### *Partner Pull-Up*

Students sit on the floor facing a partner with their toes together, knees bent and hands gripped tight. When the teacher gives a signal, dyads help pull each other up by pushing their feet together and pulling on hands. The objective of this game is to see who can stand up with his or her partner the fastest.

### *Tangle*

Standing in a circle, everyone crosses his or her arms in front and then takes the hand of two other students in the circle to create a large human tangle. The class must work as a team to untangle themselves without breaking handgrips. The handgrips can be turned around for comfort, but not to untangle. Students may also turn to face in the other direction once they become untangled so they are facing inside the circle.



## Engagement

The purpose of these activities is for teachers to establish and maintain a positive connection with students. Student's attention is focused on various things as they are surprised, enticed and prompted to enjoy new experiences.

### *Check-Ups*

The teacher checks various body parts on students each morning, such as ears, chin, nose, eyes, cheeks, knees and so on to see their qualities (e.g., warm, soft, wiggly, hard, quiet, etc.). The teacher can count freckles, knuckles, or other visible parts as well, depending on time and class size. Teachers should try to find something positive or special and unique about each student and to make such comments regularly.

### *Free-Throw*

The teacher divides class into two teams. Students are given an equal amount of marshmallows, cotton balls, or newspaper balls to throw over to the other team. The goal of this activity is for students to get rid of more items on their side within a certain time frame. The teacher can also allow students to set up small shields, with pillows or mats, for this activity.

### *Hand-Clapping Games*

This is a game that older students tend to enjoy. The teacher divides students into partners and teaches the class various clapping patterns. The clapping patterns can be simplified for younger children. Then students are taught to clap while singing a song or chant learned previously. Since students can engage in rhythmic clapping patterns while singing a variety of chants, teachers can even use the alphabet song. After teaching this

activity, teachers may witness students engaging in the activity during recess time with friends.

### *Hide and Seek*

The teacher chooses one child per day to hide and then the teacher looks for him or her after recess to establish a routine of the game. Classmates can give the teacher clues when searching the room for the identified student. When the teacher finds the student, he or she may choose to give the teacher a hug or high five. This game tends to be extremely popular with students in younger grades.

### *Mirroring*

The teacher divides students into dyads and has them stand face to face. The teacher assigns one partner to be the leader and the other to follow. The student leader will move arms and/or legs slowly while the follower tries to mirror him or her. Speed can be increased if the follower wants to try a faster pace. The teacher has the students switch roles after some time.

### *Special Handshake*

The teacher creates a special, unique handshake and has students practice it with a partner. The complexity of the handshake can be reflective of the students' ages. Teachers who use this technique may want to give each student the handshake before leaving the classroom or as a greeting each day.

### *Progressive Pass Around*

While sitting in a circle, the teacher starts by giving a gentle touch (e.g., a pat on the back, or handshake) to a student who passes it along to the person beside him or her. The next student then passes the touch to the person beside him or her until it is passed all

the way around the circle. This game can be modified by individual actions copied from the teacher and passed on around the circle. Then the teacher can start another round by changing the action.

### Nurture

Teachers can send and reinforce a message to students to suggest they are worthy of care, and that care will be provided by adults at the school without them having to ask.

#### *Caring For Hurts*

When students come into the classroom after recess, the teacher can have the students sit in a circle and examine their hands, feet, arms, face and so on for hurts (e.g., scratches or bruises). The students can put lotion, powder, or touch a cotton ball on any of the hurts they find. The teacher can then have the students check for healing in these places the following day.

#### *Face Painting*

This activity can be done for special occasions throughout the school year. The teacher instructs older students to paint flowers or hearts on cheeks of younger students to make them feel special; boys often enjoy moustaches or beards painted on their faces. A variation of this activity is to use a dry paintbrush to describe the wonderful and lovely parts of the face.

#### *Fanning*

After gym class or a strenuous activity in which students are tired and hot, the teacher can have the students sit in a circle and he or she can fan them individually using a large paper, fan, or mat. The teacher can verbalize some of the student's features

throughout. For example, noticing how their hair is blowing in the wind or how their eyes may be closed during the fanning activity.

### *Feeding*

Before the students eat lunch, the teacher may want to feed each student a small snack. The teacher can comment about hearing crunching, for example and the students' enjoyment or sing a song while encouraging students to make eye contact. However, it is important that teachers address individual allergies to ensure the snacks are safe for everyone.

### *Lotion Pass*

While sitting in a circle, the teacher passes a dab of lotion around to each child. For older children, the lotion bottle can be passed around so each student gives a peer a dab of lotion. Another variation of this activity can involve a special student (identified daily) that gives classmates a dab of lotion at a certain time each day.

### *Powder Prints*

The teacher can make hand and/or foot prints with students by applying powder (or lotion) to their hands or feet and have them make prints on dark paper, a special mat, or a mirror. To enhance powder prints, the teacher can blow or shake the paper after print is first made.

### *Soft and Floppy*

To help students relax, teachers can instruct students to spread out around the classroom, lie on the floor and become stiff as a board for a few seconds. Then teachers can continue by instructing students to let all muscles relax. In order to help students become more relaxed, teachers can instruct the class to tense one body part at a time (e.g.,

stomach, tongue, big toe, etc.) and note special features (e.g., eyebrows wrinkling, white knuckles, etc.) throughout.

*Activities adapted from Jernberg & Booth (2001d)*

## Conclusion

This manual provides teachers with a general overview of attachment theory and how it relates to bullying behaviours. Various strategies are described throughout to help teachers deal with students demonstrating behaviours that are identified within the four attachment styles more effectively. Further strategies are adapted from research findings and other resources. With this knowledge, teachers are encouraged to work as a team with other teachers and parents to promote success for all students. Teachers are in a position to make a huge difference and are an important part of student's lives throughout school years and beyond.