
LEARNING GUIDE

JOHN BOWLBY

ATTACHMENT THEORY ACROSS
GENERATIONS

(40 Minutes)



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Introduction

Lifetime importance of attachment relationships
Wide range of applications of Bowlby's work

Influences on Bowlby's work

Born 1907 in London

Three underlying components of his theory:

Psychoanalysis

Reliance on scientific research (his own scientific education)

Reliance on real life experiences (his own and those of troubled children)

Synthesis of viewpoints that contributed to attachment theory:

Ethnology: Study of behavior based on evolutionary theory

Darwin/Lorenz)

Psychoanalysis: Importance of early relationships (Freuds, Klein and Erikson)

Cognitive psychology: Study of thought processes (Piaget and Inhelder)

Field research of Mary Ainsworth- *Strange Situation* assessment

Elements of Attachment Theory

Safe Haven: Attachment figure as a resource in stressful situations

Secure Base: Attachment figure as a base from which to explore

Internal working model: An organized view of how human relationships work

Developed from thousands of interactions, most importantly those in early childhood

Tends to persist but can be changed later in life

Adult Attachment Interview assesses the internal working model in adults (Mary Main)

Types of attachment patterns

Secure-Autonomous (55% of adults)

Avoidant-Dismissing- Avoidance of negative feelings (20%)

Resistant-Preoccupied-Overemphasis on negative feelings (10%)

Disordered-Unresolved-Lack of organized response to stress (5%)

Psychotherapy from an Attachment Perspective

Bowlby's five point model for psychotherapy:

1. Provide a secure base.
2. Examine internal working models of current relationships.
3. Examine internal working models of past relationships.
4. Examine influences of past upon present.
5. Revise and update internal working models.

Power of family/couple therapy

Importance of collaboration/supervision

Attachment Across the Life Cycle

Prevention more powerful than treatment

Mothers' internal working model impact child's understanding of emotions

Fathers' internal working models impact child's understanding of social skills

Need for secure attachments continues across full life span
Bowlby died in 1990 after finishing a biography of Darwin
“A society that values its children, must cherish their parents”

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