



How can I help at home?



Top strategies for helping any child with Attachment Difficulties.

Children, like other living beings, are born with a drive to survive. Infants do this by staying close to parents to get safety and be comforted when they are distressed. When parents are protective and responsive children feel secure and develop a secure “attachment style.” Parents become a “secure base” from which children can explore their environment and learn to handle separation without serious distress.

Children are believed to develop “working models” for relationships from these early experiences that influence how they think about themselves and about other people. For example, children whose parents are protective and responsive learn that they are worthy (positive self) and that other people can be counted on (positive other).

Sometimes children may have early experiences with parents that lead them to develop an insecure attachment style - maybe there has been an illness, mental -health need or depression, financial pressures, separation or bereavement and sometimes this can impact on an adults ability to parent effectively.

Children may develop an attachment style that isn't secure:

Anxious style

Children who have an anxious style need extra reassurance. Giving constant reinforcement even when it doesn't seem like it should be necessary can help.

Telling them many times every day that they are loved or cared for, and giving lots of praise whenever they are being 'good' will build up a sense of security over time.



Avoidant style

Children who are avoidant may be standoffish or not be very responsive at first. Being respectful of why they have learned to be this way by not pushing them into emotional closeness or being too physically affectionate is a good way to start. A more gradual approach to getting close and not taking it as a personal rejection gives children a chance to learn that other people can be counted on.

Unfortunately, in some cases parents may have to adjust their own expectations or desires to accept the level of connection that these children can give.

Disorganised style

Children with this relationship style are tough to handle because they may behave in ways that are very upsetting or even a little bit scary. Sometimes it seems like they are trying to provoke parents on purpose or that they don't really care about hurting other people.

It is important to be firm and clear about expectations and follow through on consequences when they misbehave. The children may act like they don't care and this can lead parents to increase the consequences to get a reaction.

This won't help and it can make things worse. It is especially important not to get forceful because the children will only get more distressed or angry.

At the same time it may be especially helpful to let these children feel like they can have some control over their lives. Giving them choices after spelling out the options and consequences lets them know that they can make a difference in what happens. These children may respond best to seeing what



the benefits are for them in behaving well, as opposed to doing it because it is the right thing to do.



Dealing with Your Own Feelings

Don't take it personally if things get tricky; keep reminding yourself that sometimes children have learned how to survive in a bad situation or lived through something that may have caused them trauma.

Keep to the basic principles of being responsive and consistent.

All children respond best to responsive consistent parenting. Being praised for good behaviour even if it is just doing what they have been asked to do makes children more likely to keep on being 'good'. Children really like positive attention from parents or other caregivers.

Don't be too harsh or forceful.

Be patient. The attachment style was learned over time and will take time to change. Try to focus on what you are offering the children and celebrate the "little successes."

Check out this link too for some more information about how to best support children who may struggle with attachment needs or who have experienced trauma.

<https://beaconhouse.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/What-Survival-Looks-Like-At-Home.pdf>