Attachment Theory

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Attachment is a tie that binds an individual with an intimate companion and is characterized by love and wishes for proximity. Attachment theory is the best know theory in the modern developmental psychology. The theory was developed for the first time by John Bowlby by presenting his perspective of human relationship. The main emphasis of this theory is on identifying parent and child relationship and most of the time this relationship is considered as an emotional bond (Van Rosmalen, Van der Veer, & Van der Horst, 2015).

**The ideas of John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, the attachment theorists**

According to Bowlby attachment develops in four stages. It develops from a fondness to an attachment with the specific person who is the center of care for the infant.

**Stage 1:**

Stage one is the pre-attachment stage which is the period when the infant understands the difference between things and people and start responding more to people than things. It is mostly the first two months of the infant’s life when he or she enters the pre-attachment stage.

**Stage 2:**

This stage is called “Attachment in the making” in which the infant is able to distinguish between strangers and primary caregivers. This is the time when the infant becomes 2-8 months old. They show more enthusiasm and affection towards caregiver and become excited when they interact with the caregiver. They become upset when the caregivers depart from them.

**Stage 3:**

It is called the “True Attachment” stage and the infant search out for the care givers. The infant crawls to reach the care giver or show affection by eye contact or by a smile. The infant feels true attachment in when he or she is between 8-18 months of age.

**Stage four:**

A reciprocal relationship starts at 18 months of age and the infants will show their affection by asking for attention, love and physical contact.

Mary Ainsworth is another attachment theorist and she had done an experiment to understand the mechanism of attachment. The procedure she used is called “Strange situation” and that was conducted by joining the mother and infant in various ways. Her main contribution to this theory is that she used laboratory arrangements to understand the relationship between a child and her mother (Van Rosmalen et al., 2015). The attachment styles that she used was based on the reactive behaviors of mother and a baby. The reunion episode of mother and baby were shown with four interactive behaviors like contact seeking and proximity, contact maintain, Avoidance of contact and proximity and in the end resistance to comforting and contact is shown (Shemmings, 2016).

The result of the experiment showed three attachment styles and those are secure, insecure ambivalent and insure avoidant attachment styles. The securely attached infants feel confident that the source of attachment will be there to meet their needs. They explored the environment after coming into contact with their attachment figure. The insecure avoidant does not feel the need to orient with their attachment figure while exploring the environment. They were independent of their source of attachment both emotionally and physically. Such children have been living with caregivers who do not meet their emotional needs so they did not show any interest in their attachment figure during the experiment. Insecure Ambivalent children show ambivalent behaviors towards their mothers. They fail to build any relationship of security with their mothers and this behavior is due to the inconsistent response from their caregivers (Shemmings, 2016)

Ainsworth had used the strange situational procedure to explain disorganized attachment. She explained the consequences of disorganized attachments and says that whatever is the cause of not receiving comfort then children will be having a development problem later in life (Shemmings, 2016).

**The relevance of attachment theory for parenting in contemporary time**

As attachment theory talks about the relationship between mother and her baby so it is important to understand the ways to have secure attachment of parents with their children. Today the parents rely more on caregivers as they do not have the time to be around their children all the timer. However, Parents do not understand that they are developing a disorganized attachment with their children and the children are going to be emotionally deprived in future as well.

As raising children based on secure attachment demand great attention and time. Today’s parents are trying their best to understand the emotional and physical needs of their children in order to build secure attachment. Most of the time they are unable to be there when the baby needs them. Therefore, babies select different attachment figures for themselves and later own they are unable to adjust with their families.

Most of the parents in today’s era try to focus on the developmental competencies of their children. They give support and extra care to children who are more sensitive. They work on developing appropriate competencies of their children and they have to manage the balance between work and parenting in order to have a secure attachment with their children (Bowlby, 2008).

In the current era, people are going through many psychological issues as a result of poor parenting. Children whose father or mother had not been provided a secure environment when he or she was young then they will not be able to build a secure relationship with their children as well. This insecure relationship is the main cause of insecure attachment between children and parents.

**Significance of the Attachment Theory**

Attachment is considered as a heave of comfort and safety when required. The feeling that the attachment figures will always be there to support or be available for help and such confidence is the result of Attachment Security. While Attachment Insecurity is lacking this confidence that the support person will be there for help.

The video demonstrates the crucial relationship between mother and child and it shows how secure this relation is. If the child has attachment security then he or she will show more interest in the mother and if the child is insecure he or she will not have an effective reunion with mother. (April Mayhem, n.d.).

Many parents and children relationship are built on the bases of disorganized attachment. Many parents have a rough childhood and they have a terrifying experience with their support person in the pasts. A feel of terror, abandonment, and humiliation became part of their implicit memory, which is the perceptual emotional bodily memory and sometimes called behavioral memory. It does the priming of the brain for readiness to act. If the brain has unresolved trauma of past experience then the implicit memory will become active.

For instance, if a father has experienced disorganized attachment with his parents then he has stored that trauma in his brain. If he encounters any humiliation from his children then this will activate his implicit memory. Then the present humiliation will resonate with his past humiliation and he will react. The mirror neuron of the father will also be activated by the humiliation of his own child and the reractio9n could be enormous. He will become emotional and will physically abuse the child (PsychAlive, n.d.).

Poor attachment can have a huge impact on the psychological, physical and emotional well-being of an individual. The State care centers and Orphanages like that in Romania are not always successful in giving enough care to abandoned children. Children are not emotionally supported and their wellbeing cannot be ensured in such places. (The Economist, n.d.).

Attachment theory is important for parenting in the current time because it guides to develop a secure relationship between children and parents and this relationship is useful for the overall development of the children. If it is followed properly by the parents then the future generation will not have any psychological or emotional problems and will be able to have a prosperous life.

References

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