

John Bowlby

Early Experiences

- John Bowlby was born in London to an upper-middle-class family in 1907.
- He was the fourth of six children and was raised by a nanny in traditional British fashion of his class.
- His father, Sir Anthony Bowlby, was surgeon to the King's Household and was killed while serving as a war correspondent in the Anglo-Chinese Opium War.
- John only saw his mother one hour a day after teatime, though during the summer she was more available.
- At age seven, he was shipped off to boarding school, where he would spend the majority of his childhood.

Bowlby's Career

- Attended Dartmouth Royal Naval College and Trinity College, Cambridge
- Majored in natural sciences and psychology and worked directly with maladjusted and delinquent children.
- At 26, he attended the University College Medical School in London.
- During World War II, he served in the British army as a psychiatrist.
- served as a mental health consultant to the World Health Organization where he wrote an influential report, titled *Maternal Care and Mental Health*, on the mental health of homeless children in post-war Europe.
- Staffed at the Tavistock Clinic and the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations where he conducted most of his research for the remainder of his career.
- He was director of the department of child psychiatry until 1968, and remained a senior research fellow and teacher even after retirement in 1972.

Influential Publications

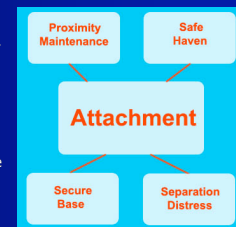
- *1951 Maternal Care and Mental Health*
- *1952 A Two-Year Old Goes to Hospital*: This documentary illustrated the impact of loss and suffering experienced by young children separated from their primary caretakers. It was instrumental in a campaign to alter hospital restrictions on visiting by parents.
- *1969 Attachment*
- *1972 Separation: Anxiety and Anger*
- *1980 Loss: Sadness and Depression*

Attachment Theory

- John Bowlby described attachment as a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings. He believed that the earliest bonds formed by children with their caregivers have a tremendous impact that continues throughout life.

Characteristics of Attachment

- **Safe Haven:** When the child feel threatened or afraid, he or she can return to the caregiver for comfort and soothing.
- **Secure Base:** The caregiver provides a secure and dependable base for the child to explore the world.
- **Proximity Maintenance:** The child strives to stay near the caregiver, thus keeping the child safe.
- **Separation Distress:** When separated from the caregiver, the child will become upset and distressed



Contribution to Attachment Theory

children between 6 and about 30 months are very likely to form emotional attachments to familiar caregivers, especially if the adults are sensitive and responsive to child communications.

Contribution to Attachment Theory

- The emotional attachments of young children are shown behaviorally in their preferences for particular familiar people, their tendency to seek proximity to those people, especially in times of distress, and their ability to use the familiar adults as a secure base from which to explore the environment.

Contribution to Attachment Theory

- The formation of emotional attachments contributes to the foundation of later emotional and personality development, and the type of behavior toward familiar adults shown by toddlers has some continuity with the social behaviors they will show later in life.

Contribution to Attachment Theory

- Events that interfere with attachment, such as abrupt separation of the toddler from familiar people or the significant inability of caregivers to be sensitive, responsive or consistent in their interactions, have short-term and possible long-term negative impacts on the child's emotional and cognitive life.

Contribution to Cognitive science

- He challenged psychoanalytic theory, the prevailing theory of his day.
- He used direct observations of mothers and children instead of adult recollection.
- He also used animal studies and incorporated theories about communication in formulating his ideas about the mother-infant bond.
- His work has become the prevailing theory of today on the mother child bond.