Secure and Insecure Attachments
MODULE OBJECTIVES

- Understanding attachments
- How and why we develop attachment relationships
- Understanding the types of attachments
What was *Your* first attachment relationship?
The first special relationship we experience develops between parent and child. It is believed that this relationship will influence the development of our future relationships.
What is Attachment?

- **Attachment** is a strong, long-lasting emotional connection

- A close emotional bond that is “person-specific” and is enduring across time.
How do you know a child is attached to someone?
Why do infants form attachments?

- Bowlby (1977) argued that the infant’s emotional tie with its mother (*principal caregiver*) evolved because it promotes *survival*.
- Children who form an attachment to an adult develop a deeper parent-child relationship and are more likely to survive.
- He also believed that an infant’s early interactions with a parent were crucial to “normal development”
Do we all need attachment and physical contact?

- Yes, according the theories of John Bowlby (1969, 1991), that children who form an attachment to an adult are more likely to survive.

- **Attachment** not only deepens the parent-child relationship, but may have contributed to human survival.
The Quality of Attachment

Based on how the infant reacts to separation from the caregiver and the reunion by using a procedure known as the *Strange Situation*. 
1. Observer shows the experimental room to mother and infant, then leaves the room.
2. Infant is allowed to explore the playroom for 3 minutes; mother watches but does not participate.
3. A stranger enters the room and remains silent for 1 minute, then talks to the baby for a minute, and then approaches the baby. Mother leaves unobtrusively.
4. The stranger does not play with the baby but attempts to comfort it if necessary.
5. After 3 minutes, the mother returns, greets, and consoles the baby.
6. When the baby has returned to play, the mother leaves again, this time saying “bye-bye” as she leaves.
7. Stranger attempts to calm and play with the baby.
8. After 3 minutes, the mother returns and the stranger leaves.
Ainsworth (1993) and others have identified 4 basic types of attachment relationships:

1. Secure Attachment
2. Insecure/Resistant
3. Insecure/Avoidant
4. Insecure/Disorganized
Types of Attachment

- **Secure attachment** is a relationship of trust and confidence.

- During infancy this relationship provides a **secure base** for exploration of the environment.

- This group seems to say “I missed you terribly, but now that you’re back, I’m okay.”
3 Types of Insecure Attachment

- Insecure-Avoidant attachment:
  - Infants or young children seem somewhat indifferent toward their caregivers and may even avoid their caregivers.
If they do get upset when left alone, they are as easily comforted by a stranger as by a parent.

As if to say, “you left me again, I always have to take care of myself!”
Resistant/Insecure Attachment

- Infants or young children are clingy and stay close to their caregivers rather than exploring their environment.

- The baby is upset when the mother leaves and remains upset or even angry when she returns, and is difficult to console.
Disorganized attachment

- Infants or young children have no consistent way to coping with the stress of the “Strange Situation”

- The baby seems confused when the mother leaves and when she returns.

- This leads to problems with emotional regulation, social function and severe emotional problems.
Name that Attachment Relationship!

- A baby in this group might say “I missed you terribly, but now that you’re back, I’m okay.”

- A baby in this group might say “You left me again. I always have to take care of myself.”
Name that Attachment Relationship!
- A baby in this group might say “I missed you terribly, but now that you’re back, I’m okay.”  
  Secure

- A baby in this group might say “You left me again. I always have to take care of myself.”  
  Insecure/Avoidant
Name that Attachment Relationship!

- A baby in this group might say “Why do you do this? I get so angry when you’re like this.”

  Resistant

- A baby in this group might say “What’s going on here? I want you to be here, but you left and now you’re back. I don’t know whether to laugh or cry.”

  Disorganized
Create Secure Attachments

• Observe to better understand a child’s unique preferences. Through observation you can learn how sensitive a child is to touch or how he responds to new experiences.

• Be consistent and responsive. This helps the baby know you are a trusted person. Even if you can’t respond right away, let the baby know you hear him and you are on your way.
Build Secure Attachments

• Encourage laughter. Laughter helps people connect with each other and signals that the environment is safe and fun.
• Care for yourself. If you are tired or stressed, you are less likely to respond sensitively and consistently to the many demands babies make. Be sure you find ways to recharge.