

# The Attachment Puzzle

## Course Outline

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There are many approaches to making sense of our human drive for togetherness. This course distills the science of relationship to its essence and then explores the implications for working with children. The course is divided into eight sessions, each containing an hour of video course material. Because of the density of the material, the DVDs are not offered as stand-alones but only in the context of the continuing education course or supported by trained facilitators.

### Course Outline

The course is structured into eight sessions with one hour of instructional video per session.

#### **Session 1: The Construct of Attachment: *naming the elephant in the room***

Attachment impacts everyone yet is rarely put into words. In this session the various pieces of the attachment puzzle are identified, attachment defined, and the hierarchical nature of attachment discussed. The 'alpha complex' is also introduced.

#### **Session 2: Receptivity and Empowerment: *cultivating right relationship***

Ignorant of attachment, we have made false assumptions regarding children's receptivity to care and direction. Once understood it becomes obvious that children were meant to be dealt with in the context of their attachment to the adults responsible for them. The implications are discussed as well as the constructs of peer orientation and counterwill.

#### **Session 3: Becoming Attached: *six stages to full potential***

The human capacity for relationship is a potential that only fully develops when conditions are conducive. The first six years of life are where this basic human capacity begins to unfold. A flight from vulnerability will cripple a child's ability to attach and hold on when apart. The model of attachment that is presented can be applied to any age and any relationship. Also discussed is how to engage the attachment instincts and build relationship.

#### **Session 4: Attachment and Maturation: *bringing attachment to fruition***

Maturation is the outcome of fulfilling attachment. The greatest developmental sin is to prematurely push for results, such as independence and social integration, instead of nurturing the underlying attachment roots. Children must find rest from the work of attachment for healthy development to occur.

#### **Session 5: Shyness and Competing Attachments: *handling protective instincts***

One cannot make sense of a child without an understanding of the polarized nature of attachment. When not informed by attachment, shyness is either pathologized as social anxiety or misconstrued as lack of confidence or self-esteem. Shyness serves an important function in preserving existing attachments and should be honoured rather than countered. The

implications of shyness are discussed for dealing with children outside their primary working attachments.

**Session 6: The Separation Complex: *uncovering the roots of anxiety, aggression and bullying***

Nothing impacts mammals more than facing separation. Humans are doubly impacted because separation is much more than physical and the anticipation of separation can have the same effect as the actual experience. The 'separation complex' is introduced as the core of alarm problems, alpha problems, aggression problems, the bully instinct and much more.

**Session 7: Defensive Detachment: *bridging what could divide***

When the vulnerability is too much to bear, the brain's ultimate defense is to reverse the attachment instincts. This reaction can be situational and temporary or chronic and pervasive. Understanding this attachment reversal is essential to dealing with wounded children as it is often at the core of various and diverse symptoms and syndromes. Also discussed is how to deal with this challenging dynamic.

**Session 8: The Attachment Cure: *working with wounded children***

The closest we could come to a panacea for children's problems would be to reduce the separation they are facing. This session explores the ways we as adults can do this for the children in our care.