



Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in Adopted Children: Difficulties in Attention or Attachment?

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Types & Features of ADHD

Type	Features
Inattentive	slow processing speed, difficulties with information retrieval, fails to give close attention to details, makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, work or other activities, often forgetful in daily activities
Hyperactive/Impulsive	Fidgets with hands/feet, squirms in seat, subjective feelings of restlessness, difficulty waiting turn, interrupts or intrudes on others
Combined Type	Combination of the above



Prevalence

- worldwide prevalence of ADHD is between 5% and 7% .
- In Hong Kong, its prevalence in Chinese schoolboys was estimated to be 8.9%
(Lee et al 2009)



Causes of ADHD

- Genetic Basis
 - *Polygenic disorder, no single gene*
 - *Mutations in genes that regulate the use of dopamine*
- Maternal Tobacco Use
- Maternal Substance Abuse
 - *Fetal Alcohol Syndrome*
- High Levels of Lead
- Premature Birth
 - *very low birth weight [$<1500\text{g}$, 3 lb 5 oz]*
- Maternal-Infant Attachment
 - *Failure to bond with: the child they were expecting*



Bonding and Attachment

- “It is a learned ability, the result of ongoing reciprocal interactions characterized by protection, need fulfillment, limits, love, and trust” (Bowlby, 1969, 1970)
- **Attachment:** the deep and enduring connection established between child and caregiver (s) in the first 3 yrs of life
- **Bonding:** a significant relationship that occurs without knowledge or conscious intent, not as a result of learning
- A complex mixture of heredity and experience
- Attachment trauma in early childhood results in developmental deficits which, in the absence of remedial parenting, are likely to be manifested as the symptoms of ADHD



Attachment

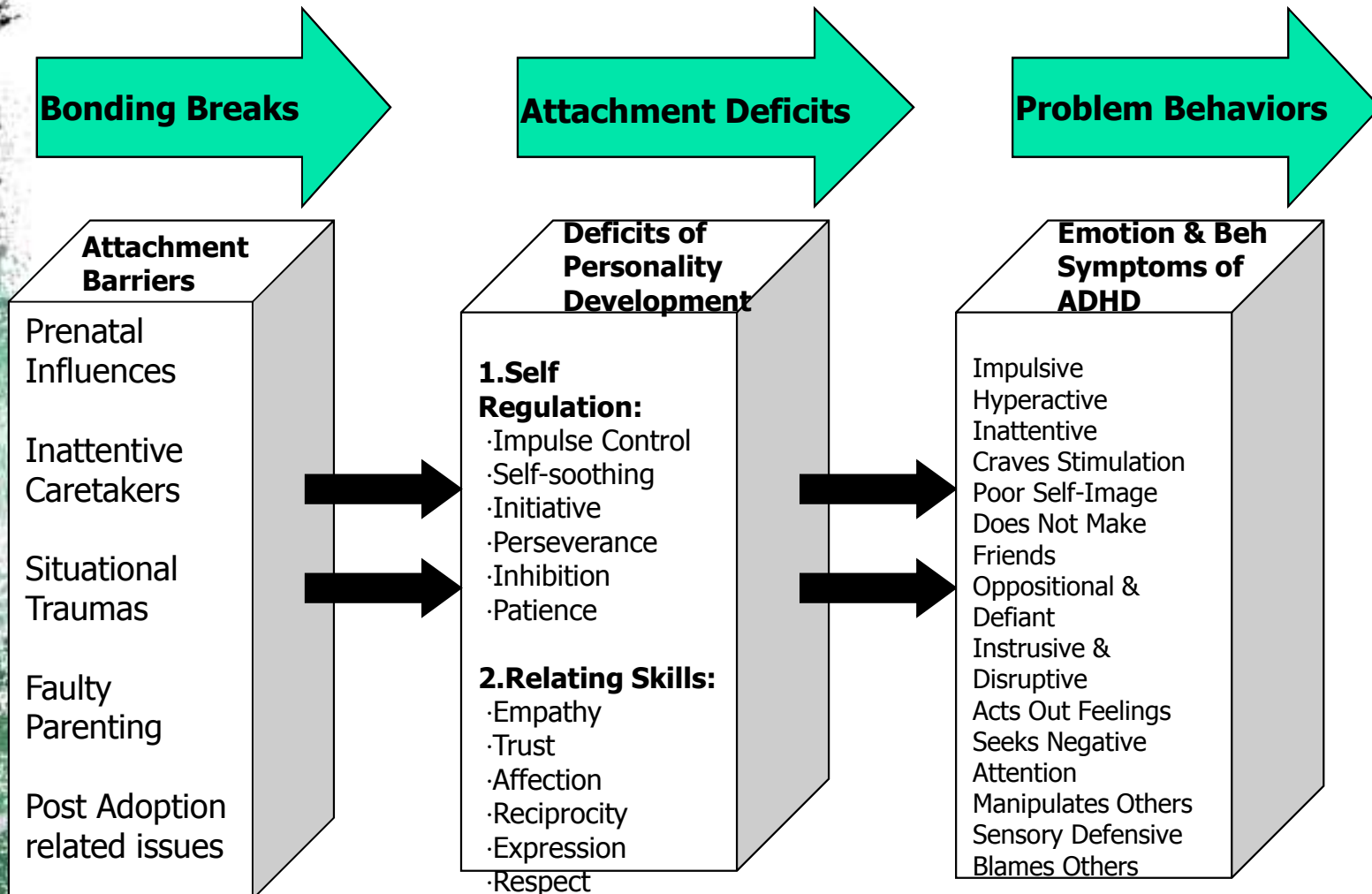
- Secure attachment, an inborn system, enables the child to (1) *seek proximity* to the parents/caregivers (2) go to the parent at times of distress for comforting as a source of a *safe haven*; and (3) internalize the relationship with the parents/caregivers as an internal model of a *secure base*.
- Children with insecure attachment may be at high risk for pathological development in the areas of social relationships, emotional development, behavioral control, and cognitive capacity (Hughes, 1997)

Types of Insecure Attachment

INSECURE ATTACHMENT	PATTERN OF BEHAVIOR
Avoidant	Independent and self-sufficient, explore unfamiliar environment with less concerns the availability of caregiver, unaffected by separation, rejected or avoided caregiver after reunion
Anxious/ambivalent	Cling to caregiver in unfamiliar environment, less willing to explore alone, anxious, agitated and tearful
Disorganized	Lack of consistent strategy for comfort-seeking behaviours, apprehension, helplessness, depression, prolonged motor freezing, agitation in unpredictable ways

Bonding breaks → Attachment deficits → Symptoms of ADHD

(Ladnier & Massanari, 2000)





Bonding Breaks

- Prenatal Influences
- In utero experience
 - ⌘ the dawn of attachment: by the 5th mth, fetus can recognize mother's voice and shows different types of music preference, decodes maternal emotions through a neurohormonal dialogue, maternal stress is associated with prematurity, low birth weight and infants are hyperaroused
 - ⌘ drugs, alcohol, and tobacco exposure results in low birth weight, agitation and various developmental impairments.



Post Adoption Related Issues

- Unresolved loss regarding prior attachment
- Loyalty conflicts
- Adoptees' negative belief systems vs parental reactions of anger and emotional distancing
- Quality of parenting
- Parents with unresolved emotional issues
- Parents with histories of attachment-related problems
- Parents with history of significant marital conflict

Attachment Deficits

Areas Deficits	Sources of Gain	Consequences of loss
Self-Regulation	Human qualities that would ordinarily flow from a healthy individual's ability to regulate own thought, feelings, and behaviors when a child receives sufficient, consistent and appropriate limits, guidance, protection and discipline from adult caregiver (s).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Perceived as hyperactive, hyperarousal, incompetent, and helpless; -Perceived as being fearless due to unable to anticipate or avoid injury; -Lack of a permanent sense of self and unable to activate internal motivation; -Will be at high risk for a diagnosis of ADHD
Regulating Skills	Healthy human qualities enable individuals to form safe, secure, and satisfying relationships with others based on intimacy, equality, and commitment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Will have a difficult time getting along with others at home and at school; -Will be at high risk for a diagnosis of ADHD

Interventions For Family with ADHD

Aims	Interventions
<p>-Provision of a healthy safety, security, and structure environment for repairing attachment deficits</p>	<p>A Secure Family Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Eliminating all hitting, yelling, criticism, and sarcasm from family interactions-Creating a warm family climate characterized by empathy, affection, and respect-Establishing clear and consistent rules, roles, and routines for every member of the family-Maintaining effective patterns of communication between family members-Modeling self-care as a personal responsibility
<p>-Use physical contact to promote affection and trust</p>	<p>Holding with Intimacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Being held on a parent's lap, breathing in synchrony with parent, listening to lullabies, or just gazing into parent's eyes can offer experience of soothing & helps to imagine how it might feel to soothe oneself

Interventions For Family with ADHD

Aims	Interventions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Consistent application of remedial strategies and techniques to constrain their aversive behaviors and emotions and help them to internalize healthy ones	Remedial Parenting <ul style="list-style-type: none">-Teaching discipline without punishment-Requiring obedience responsibility, and respect-Establishing structure, limits, and boundaries-Proactive parenting, not reactive-contracting for cooperation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Promote self-control and the internalization of rules and structure, and learn to modulate his own behavior-Increase capacity to enjoy closeness with others, thereby decreasing the need for negative attention	Theraplay <ul style="list-style-type: none">-A combination of experiential component that fosters pleasure, trust in others and helps to develop a coherent and emotionally integrated attachment history-Theraplay accesses the right brain structures by providing high levels of non-verbal, face to face emotional communications involving, rhythm, eye contact, attuned responses of pacing and intensity that lead to developing positive right brain structures

Sharing & Discussion

• Thank You