

Research Review

Attachment psychology: A child development perspective (2009)

Free booklet produced by The Psychological Service, South Lanarkshire Council

In residential child care, practitioners lead busy lives. Sometimes, we may be so busy that we have very little time to look at the research and theory that informs our practice. Hence, the existence of readable and relevant résumés is invaluable.

Zeta Anich, who works with the South Lanarkshire Psychological Service, has performed a minor miracle with this eight-page booklet on attachment. She has taken theories and research in the field of attachment psychology and written a clear and user-friendly guide. The booklet is illustrated with photographs of child-caregiver interaction, as well as a sobering image comparing the brains of neglected children with those of children who have been reared in a healthy way. The booklet succeeds in pulling out the key points of attachment theory while backing it up with research evidence.

Reading the booklet reinforces everything we know about the importance of attachment. It also helps us to understand that the often chaotic and neglectful backgrounds of the children and young people for whom we care will have devastating effects on them and will have consequences for their later behaviour.

By reading and understanding this little booklet, practitioners can begin immediately to understand some of the behaviour that faces them every day. They can also begin to see the importance of close nurturing relationships, which can help the child or young person. On an initial reading, it may seem that the booklet is not relevant because it focuses on what happens in infancy. The booklet was written for general use and not specifically for residential child care practitioners. As such, it may have benefitted from some practical pointers as to how to intervene in the lives of older children and adolescents. I would, however urge any reader to look beyond this and use the information as a guide to understanding the roots of some of the behaviour, and as a justification for providing warm and nurturing care, that includes hugs and real engagement.

This leaflet is excellent for those embarking on SVQ at level three. It should also be required reading for any new practitioner. It will take you ten minutes to read it but may change your practice forever. South Lanarkshire Council Psychological Service will provide you with a free copy by contacting them on enquiries@slcpsych.org.uk.

Irene Stevens Lecturer SIRCC