

Attachment and Development

0-2 months

- Importance of experiencing caregiver as responsive, predictable, meeting my needs
- This extends to approximately first 15 months of life

3-6 months

- Learning my cues are understood and met by my caregiver- developing trust

6-12 months

- When comfortable and feeling safe, I explore
- My primary caregiver becomes most important to me- discriminate between primary caregiver and others

Toddler

- Learning I can impact the world and make things happen
- Need support for early autonomy balanced with felt security and predictability
- Learning to tolerate minimal frustrations
- Begins to exhibit care/empathy for others

Red Flags as Toddler

- Showing indiscriminate affection for stranger
- When distressed, in need, running away from caregiver or exhibiting disorganized frozen behaviors
- Extreme fearfulness of caregiver

18-24 months

- Know I am separate, but still needing primary caregiver
- The world appears bigger, need to know caregiver is watching over me
- Need a balance between exploration and returning to available nurturing caregiver

Preschool

- Wanting to please caregiver- internalizing the rules
- Needing to walk around the circle of security- go out and explore and then return home for comfort- repeating the cycle often

Red Flags as Preschooler

- Children who do not actively try to explore their worlds
- Children who seemed frightened of their primary caregiver
- Extremely aggressive children

Middle Childhood

- Connecting with peers becomes important
- Attachment relationships become shared and reciprocal
- Respect for authority and wants to please
- Still need help with managing feelings and social relationships
- Development of empathy/altruism stems from being cared for and nurtured
- Growing at their own pace- the need to have successes celebrated and not always be measured against others
- Taking new risks to learn is related to exploring around the circle while being watched/delighted in
- Growing frustration tolerance- relates to trust/confidence will receive help
- Still needs to be a child, not caregiver of others

Red Flags in Middle Childhood

- Child appears depressed/withdrawn- Severe regressed behavior- selectively mute
- School failure or acting-out- Child bullies or is bullied
- Premature sexuality
- Obesity- health concerns

Adolescence or Young Adulthood

- Ability to individuate from caregivers related to security of attachment in childhood
- Developing healthy peer relationships with healthy sense of self identity related to early experiences of nurture and care
- May exhibit “imaged fable”- think others are watching or concerned for them
- Need to test “Who am I? Can I make it? Can I be different than my caregivers?”
- Need to still return to attachment figure for refueling- one moment acting all grown, self-sufficient, independent- next moment- acting like 2 year old once again
- Grown-ups may be seen as stupid-may temporarily ignore or dispute authority- test limits- break rules

Risk Factors for Adolescence

- Involvement with drugs or alcohol- more than experimentation
- Eating disorders and body image issues
- School truancy or drop-out
- School refusal or separation anxiety
- Gang involvement
- Suicidal or self-harm gestures
- Involvement in abusive or controlling heterosexual relationships
- School bullying (a problem for middle school children also)