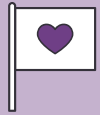


A quick guide to supporting a child with an insecure

AVOIDANT ATTACHMENT PATTERN



Child's Internal Working Model*

"I'm okay/You're NOT okay"

Main Aim



To avoid attention; to please;
to be self reliant



Caregiver Relationship**

Caregiver is distant, disengaged, unresponsive and/or rejecting. Child believes that their needs will not be met, and avoids reaching out for support. Child believes it is safer to be good, than to express needs

Child's Presentation

Avoids attention; compliant; self-reliant; false sense of positive affect; emotions pushed down; withdrawn; less socially competent; highly anxious; hidden needs; self-soothes; infrequent explosive anger

Supporting a child with disorganised attachment in your work

A child with an insecure avoidant attachment pattern seeks to meet their own needs and covers anxiety with self reliance. Corrections need to be made sensitively to avoid inducing feelings of shame in the child. Routine and flexible boundaries are needed, as is co-regulation to help decrease anxiety and arousal. Adults need to support play skills and peer relationships. Noticing and attending to small hurts sensitively will develop the child's capacity to seek comfort.

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE: Do you often feel incompetent, unwanted, rejected by, or rejecting of this child, or alternatively pleased that they don't appear to need anything from you? This may be a result of entering into an attachment dance that mimics the child's relationship with their primary caregiver or taps into their unexpressed needs. Engaging in reflective practice is essential when supporting children

* A child's internal working model is a complex interplay of mental representations of self, others and the world and therefore this description is simplistic, aiming only to provide practitioners with a sense of the child's overall attempt to maintain a cohesive narrative. For further reading, see seminal works of Bowlby, Ainsworth, Main, and contemporary research & theories of Crittenden, Schore, Hughes & Golding, amongst others.

Developments in neuroscience (Perry, Siegal) and polyvagal research (Porges) can further inform our understanding of children.

** It is important to maintain a non-blaming stance in recognition of the likelihood of caregivers own experiences of trauma, adversity and attachment difficulties. The nesting doll icon acknowledges the intergenerational patterns often present in relationships.

