

How do I know if my child is attached to me as a parent?

Children fear one thing above all else, feeling like they are lost. Parents act as a compass point when they are in an attachment relationship with their children, and the children look to their parents to help them orient to the world. Children are utterly incapable of orienting by themselves. They need help. To fail to orient is to suffer disorientation, to be lost psychologically – a state our brains are programmed to do almost anything to avoid.

As long as a child can find himself in relation to the compass point, he will not feel lost. Instincts work to keep that compass point ever close. Attachment enables children to hitch a ride with adults who are, at least in the mind of a child, assumed to be more capable of orienting themselves and finding their way.

The Six Ways of Attaching



1. Through the senses. Being in close physical proximity, from cuddling to just hanging out together. Enjoying sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and activities together.



2. Through creation of sameness. Your child seeks to be like you in some way. That could be liking the same things, doing the same things, dressing in a similar manner, using the same phrases, eating the same food, using similar gestures, etc.



3. Belonging and loyalty. To be close to someone is to consider that person as one's own. For example: your child introduces you to playmates saying, "This is MY mom/dad". Attached children will also be faithful and obedient to you. They feel secure in being able to trust you in various ways. Letting them down will cause a rift in attachment if your child is mostly focused on this manner of attaching.

4. Seeking significance. Is your child secure in the knowledge that he or she is important to you? Children who attach through seeking significance need to know that they matter to you. To be dear to someone is to ensure closeness and connection. A sensitive child can be easily crushed when the eyes he is scanning for signs of warmth and pleasure do not light up in his presence.

5. Through feeling. This is the act of finding closeness through feeling: warm feelings, loving feelings, affectionate feelings. A child who experiences emotional intimacy with the parent can tolerate much more physical separation and yet hold the parent close.



6. Through being known. To feel close to someone is to be known by them. In the pursuit of closeness, a child will share his secrets. In fact, closeness will often be defined by the secrets shared. Parent-oriented children do not like to keep secrets from their parents because of the resulting loss of closeness.