

Reactive Attachment Disorder

What is Reactive Attachment Disorder? What causes Reactive Attachment Disorder? What are the symptoms of Reactive Attachment Disorder? What types of treatment or therapy will my child need to learn how to manage his/her feelings and behaviors? These are typical questions asked by concerned parents of newly adopted children with Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD). It is important that we educate ourselves on this matter so that we can be in a better position to help our children on their road to healing and to gain knowledge about RAD so that we can be more understanding about why our children with RAD think and feel the way they do.

What is Reactive Attachment Disorder?

Attachment disorder is a broad term intended to describe disorders of mood, behavior, and social relationships resulting usually from neglect, abuse or other traumatic events or even sometimes the most subtle events in a very young child's life.

When a baby is born, it is very important to make sure that their needs are being met in a timely manner and that they are being handled properly. If a caregiver is practicing a healthy attachment cycle with the baby, the baby will learn to trust and feel that they can rely on adults to meet their needs. The first year healthy attachment cycle goes like this: baby has need>baby cries>needs met by caregiver>trust develops>cycle continues back at the start. The second year secure attachment cycle is very similar to the first, and looks like this: child wants>caregiver sets limits "NO">child will accept limit, test or defy limit>caregiver responds appropriately>cycle continues back at the start. Both of those cycles are very important for a young infant or toddler. They help children to develop a conscience, self-esteem, empathy, the foundations for logical thinking, trust, etc., etc.

If a baby's needs are not being met, or if they are being met inappropriately (not in a timely manner, they are being hit or screamed at), that child will learn that the world is an unsafe place, that he must care for himself to survive, that he can't trust anyone to meet his needs, and that he can't depend on adults to meet his needs. Rage develops instead of trust. That child feels that he needs to be in control of his own life in order to survive.

If a healthy attachment cycle is not being practiced at the age of six months or by the time the child is three years old, that child is susceptible to developing attachment disorders.

Causes And Symptoms Of RAD

Here is a list of potential causes of Reactive Attachment Disorder:

- Neglect
- Abuse
- Separation from primary caregiver
- Changes in the primary caregiver
- Frequent moves and/or placements
- Traumatic experiences
- Maternal depression
- Maternal addiction-drugs or alcohol

- Undiagnosed painful illness such as colic, ear infections, etc.
- Lack of attunement between mother and child
- Young or inexperienced mother with poor parenting skills

Here is a list of symptoms of Reactive Attachment Disorder:

- Intense control battles, very bossy, argumentative; defiance and anger
- Resists affection on parental terms
- Lack of eye contact, especially with parents-will look into your eyes when lying.
- Manipulative-superficially charming and engaging
- Indiscriminately affectionate with strangers
- Poor peer relationships
- Steals
- Lies about the obvious
- Lack of conscience-shows no remorse
- Destructive to property, self, and/or others
- Lack of impulse control
- Hypervigilant/Hyperactive
- Learning lags/delays
- Speech and language problems
- Incessant chatter and or questions
- Inappropriately demanding and/or clingy
- Food issues-hordes, gorges, refuses to eat, eats strange things, hides food
- Fascinated with fire, blood, gore, weapons, evil
- Very concerned about tiny hurts but brushes off big hurts
- Parents appear hostile and angry
- The child was neglected and/or physically abused in the first three years of life

Research and Diagnosis

[DSMIV](#)
[Diagnostic criteria for 313.89](#)
[Reactive Attachment Disorder](#)
[of Infancy or Early Childhood](#)
 Behavenet Clinical Capsule

[Center for Family Development](#)

Robin Myeroff, PhD
[Does Attachment Therapy Work?trfge](#)

[Randolph Attachment Disorder Questionnaire Information](#)
 The Institute for Attachment and Child Development

[Preliminary Outcome Data](#)
 Family Attachment and Counseling Center of Minnesota

References:

<http://www.attachmentdisorder.net/>

http://www.attachmentdisorder.net/Symptoms_Causes_Research.htm

http://www.attachmentdisorder.net/Negative_Belief_System.htm

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attachment_disorder