

## Community of Practice - Peer Support 7/10/2020

Notes from Discussion - 12 participants

Topic for discussion - Attachment and Parenting

Brief overview of Attachment theory

**\*\*Caveat\*\*** Attachment theory can often be used to place blame on mothers. The original theory has been around for a number of years and is not really in line with contemporary family life.

### Attachment Theory

- **Ambivalent attachment:** These children become very distressed when a parent leaves. Ambivalent attachment style is considered uncommon, affecting an estimated 7–15% of U.S. children. As a result of poor parental availability, these children cannot depend on their primary caregiver to be there when they need them.
- **Avoidant attachment:** Children with an avoidant attachment tend to avoid parents or caregivers, showing no preference between a caregiver and a complete stranger. This attachment style might be a result of abusive or neglectful caregivers. Children who are punished for relying on a caregiver will learn to avoid seeking help in the future.
- **Disorganized attachment:** These children display a confusing mix of behavior, seeming disoriented, dazed, or confused. They may avoid or resist the parent. Lack of a clear attachment pattern is likely linked to inconsistent caregiver behavior. In such cases, parents may serve as both a source of comfort and fear, leading to disorganized behavior.
- **Secure attachment:** Children who can depend on their caregivers show distress when separated and joy when reunited. Although the child may be upset, they feel assured that the caregiver will return. When frightened, securely attached children are comfortable seeking reassurance from caregivers.

Then a discussion was had around how IPV interferes with attachment.

### How Abusive Men Parent

- **Authoritarian:** Rigid and intolerant, children as possessions.
- **Irresponsible, Neglectful and/or Under Involved:** Expect rewards of parenting without challenges and sacrifices.
- **Self Centered:** Lack empathy.
- **Manipulative:** Blame others for their behaviour or Disneyland Dad.
- **Undermining the Mother and Using Children against Her:** Children used as spies or accomplices.
- **Ability to Perform Well under Observation**

Need better reference but it is [The Batterer as Parent](#), Lundy Bancroft and Jay Silverman

OCDFVR

Discussion around how this occurs: Perp's authoritarian behaviour could push mum to be more permissive, Perp's permissive parenting can push mum to be more authoritarian.

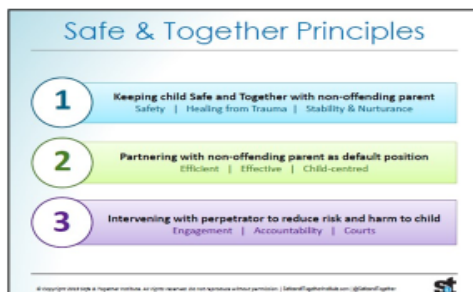
Question posed to the group - Is it possible for the child to have a secure attachment when living in a home with IPV?

- It is limited
- It may not be consistent. But children in order to survive in this situation adapt to not having a secure attachment.
- Children are able to get secure attachment from other attachment figures (teachers, extended family).
- A stable and consistent mother can build a secure attachment
- Depends on context and supports available.

How do we talk about attachment and parenting in our work? Are parenting groups pushed to families that we work with?

- We can often approach our work as an attachment figure.
- All learning is good learning
- A change has been noticed by some in Child Protection space towards holding high parenting standards for fathers. (Safe and Together Model impact)
- Covid 19 had impact on availability of parenting groups.
- Still seeing discrepancy in responsibility of children towards mothers - lag of distribution of emotional labour.
- Concerns about referrals to parenting programs being another entity focusing on mother as 'the problem'.

## Safe and Together Model



- Acknowledges Attachment as a Primary tool for healing.
- How do we move into a non-judgmental position talking about attachment with non-abusive parent?



The impact of Safe and Together:

- Some reports that Child protection are focusing on strengths of non-offending parent.
- Other sectors (e.g. schools, health etc) need training to partner with mum.
- Still significant barriers to engaging with fathers.
- Perpetrators Mapping tool has been helpful in reflecting his behaviours and how it impacts on the children and her parenting.
- More focus on mums strengths.

- Still some Child Protection workers not identifying manipulation and colluding with perpetrators.

### **Trends**

Increase in people moving to QLD from Southern states - concerns about what impact this has on service delivery in the future.

Increase in referrals from police, requiring assistance in parenting. Real struggles in delivering support.

With Child Safety being overwhelmed with Referrals (due to Covid 19), FACC and IFS are not working well to reduce numbers for Child Safety - unprecedented situation.

Talking Families website was discussed as a support for parents: <https://www.talkingfamilies.qld.gov.au/>