

## **KNOWING WHAT TO LOOK FOR**

The following behaviors in parents and children are indicative of healthy attachment. These behaviors will help guide your assessments of attachment.

### **Birth to Age One**

#### *The Child:*

- ✓ Appears alert (vocalizes, responds to stimuli, lifts head);
- ✓ Responds to the human voice;
- ✓ Appears quieted by soft sounds;
- ✓ Appears startled by loud noises;
- ✓ Responds to the human face — shows interest in the face, responds to facial expression, reaches out to the face;
- ✓ Tracks objects with the eyes;
- ✓ Vocalizes often with expression;
- ✓ Demonstrates expected motor development;
- ✓ Enjoys physical contact;
- ✓ Shows physical discomfort;
- ✓ Appears to be comforted easily;
- ✓ Appears to be outgoing;
- ✓ Has good muscle tone;
- ✓ Explores the environment;
- ✓ React to stimuli in the environment;
- ✓ Shows preference for care by parents.

#### *The Parents:*

- ✓ Demonstrate interest in holding the baby;
- ✓ Show interest to face to face contact;
- ✓ Respond to the baby's cries or need to be comforted;
- ✓ Respond to the infant's vocalization, verbal expression;
- ✓ Change voice tone when talking to or about the baby;
- ✓ Use a quiet, soothing voice to claim the baby;
- ✓ Enjoy close physical contact with the child — are relaxed during contact and seek contact;
- ✓ Seek and initiate positive interaction with the child
- ✓ Demonstrate interest in and encourage age-appropriate development in the child;
- ✓ Identify qualities in the child that remind the parent of themselves or other family members.

*Bayless, L., Love, L (Eds) (1990). A Guide For Foster and Adoptive Practice. Assessing, Attachment, Separation and Loss. Atlanta, GA: Child Welfare Institute.*

## Ages One to Five

### *The Child:*

- ✓ Responds to parental efforts to help or assist;
- ✓ Responds to parental directions;
- ✓ Explores the environment in a way that meets expectation for the child's age;
- ✓ Can play independently and keep occupied in a positive way;
- ✓ Appears relaxed and happy;
- ✓ Is able to express emotions;
- ✓ Reacts to pain and pleasure;
- ✓ Responds in an age-appropriate way to stimuli in the environment;
- ✓ Uses speech appropriate to developmental level;
- ✓ Expresses frustration, especially regarding ability and desire to accomplish new tasks;
- ✓ Responds to the limits set by parents;
- ✓ Exhibits observable fears that are age-appropriate;
- ✓ Reacts positively to physical closeness;
- ✓ Responds to separation from parents;
- ✓ Responds to parents' return;
- ✓ Seeks interaction from parents;
- ✓ Seeks positive approval from parents.

### *The Parents:*

- ✓ Demonstrate interest in the child's activities;
- ✓ Show awareness and interest in the child's development;
- ✓ Demonstrate expectations that match the child's developmental level;
- ✓ Employ disciplinary measures that match the child's age and development;
- ✓ Respond positively to the child's efforts to gain attention;
- ✓ Initiate positive activities with the child;
- ✓ Encourage physical closeness with the child;
- ✓ Respond to the child's expressed needs;
- ✓ Comfort the child in the positive way;
- ✓ Accept expressions of autonomy and encourage age-appropriate independence;
- ✓ See the child as being like or "taking after" someone in the family;
- ✓ Identify and reinforce the child's strengths;
- ✓ Praise, affirm, and reinforce the child's efforts and accomplishments;
- ✓ View the child as a separate and independent person rather than as a resource for meeting parents' need.

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## Grade-School-Aged Children

### *The Child:*

- ✓ Is inquisitive about the world and explores the environment in an age-appropriate way;
- ✓ Acts in a way that demonstrates that she/he likes herself/himself;
- ✓ Shows accomplishments and appears proud of them;
- ✓ Performs academically according to ability;
- ✓ Shares and plays with others;
- ✓ Tests limits in a way that is age-appropriate;
- ✓ Tries new tasks;
- ✓ React realistically to making a mistake;
- ✓ Is able to identify own strengths;
- ✓ Expresses emotions appropriate to age;
- ✓ Demonstrates a range of emotions — affection, caring, fear, anger, and acceptance in ways that are normal for developmental level;
- ✓ Exhibits confidence in abilities and does not frequently express lack of confidence by saying "I don't know" or "I can't";
- ✓ Does not exhibit overly dependent behavior by excessive clinging or whining;
- ✓ Reacts positively to parents being in close physical proximity;
- ✓ Feels comfortable in speaking to adults;
- ✓ Smiles easily;
- ✓ Moves in an open, relaxed way — is not rigid;
- ✓ Has positive interaction with siblings and/or peers;
- ✓ Appears comfortable with own sexual identification;
- ✓ Initiates positive interaction with adults.

### *The Parents:*

- ✓ Demonstrate interest in the child's accomplishments;
- ✓ Show interest in the child's school performance;
- ✓ Initiate affectionate overtures;
- ✓ Accept expressions of child's negative overtures;
- ✓ Give support to the child in developing positive peer relationships;
- ✓ Work out problems between siblings effectively;
- ✓ Use disciplinary measures appropriate to the child's age and development;
- ✓ Give the child age-appropriate responsibilities;
- ✓ State in a positive way that the child is like other family members;
- ✓ Support the child in activities that develop independence;
- ✓ Initiate positive activities with the child;
- ✓ Can identify and speak positively about the child's strengths and needs.

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## Adolescents

### *The Adolescent:*

- ✓ Is aware of their strengths and needs;
- ✓ Is developing an identity that is separate from the family;
- ✓ Is comfortable with self-image;
- ✓ Is comfortable with personal sexuality;
- ✓ Engages in positive peer interactions;
- ✓ Performs satisfactorily in school;
- ✓ Exhibits signs of conscience development;
- ✓ Does not have serious problems with the law;
- ✓ Has the ability to keep self occupied in non-harmful ways;
- ✓ Can accept reasonable limits – does not always need to be involved in control battles;
- ✓ Develops interests beyond home and ability and family;
- ✓ Is able to express desires for independence;
- ✓ Expresses feelings and emotions in a comfortable way;
- ✓ Is able to express values and beliefs.

### *The Parents:*

- ✓ Give attention to adolescent's abilities and interests;
- ✓ Display interest in the adolescent's school performance;
- ✓ Set limits that match the adolescent's needs and abilities;
- ✓ Use authority and discipline in positive and non-harmful ways;
- ✓ Trust the adolescent;
- ✓ Have reasonable expectations of chores and adolescent's outside activities;
- ✓ Stand by the adolescent if the adolescent gets in trouble;
- ✓ Demonstrate affection;
- ✓ Identify and affirm the adolescent's strengths;
- ✓ Show interest and demonstrate acceptance of adolescent's friends;
- ✓ Believe the adolescent will turn out okay.

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