



He encouraged the parents to have the child bring a favorite blanket or toy to the center. He asked if there were snapshots of family members or of pets that they could share so he could make a little photo book for each child. Durrell also suggested to parents that children stay for a shorter time for a few days rather than a full day if the parents’ work schedules allowed it.

On the first day, Sasha’s mom whispered to Durrell that she was going to sneak out so her 2-year-old son wouldn’t get upset at seeing her go. Durrell told her that it would help Sasha if she said goodbye and told him when she would be back.

Parents sometimes want to leave without saying goodbye, and that’s understandable. They think the child will be less upset, and that this may be less stressful for teachers. However, sneaking away actually creates mistrust in children; it sends the message that the child cannot rely on the parent. One- and 2-year-olds fare better when a parent tells them, “I’m leaving now and I’ll be back after you eat lunch.” Durrell tries to reassure the parents and tell them not to worry or feel guilty if their children are crying and having difficulty with the separation for a while. It means their children feel a bond and are learning to cope with strong emotions. During the day, he also tries to call or text parents to ease their anxiety.

From 10 months to about 2 years of age, the typically developing child learns that separations from parents are not permanent, and begins to cope with short periods of time apart. The child’s increasing representational abilities—remembering people and situations—help this understanding develop. Thus, bringing a favorite toy or photo from home often provides comfort and reminds the child that home is still a part of his day. Transitioning to the program with a shorter day also allows children to hold on to the idea that a parent is coming back and then gradually extend that to a longer period of time.

Insecure Attachment By contrast, some children grow up in families that, for a variety of reasons, are unable or unwilling to provide reasonably consistent, sensitive, responsive care. Mothers or other caregivers may be depressed, ill, or stressed by economic or other conditions that lead them to be neglectful, punitive, or hostile to their young children. Some children grow up in very difficult circumstances in which they may have been abused, neglected, or exposed to drugs and violence. Children growing up in such an environment may be unable to trust caregivers to keep them safe, and as a result, develop poor social skills. Such *insecurely attached* children may often have difficulty developing positive social relationships, and may exhibit disruptive behavior in child care centers or schools (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Various patterns of insecure attachment exist, depending on children’s experiences, which are related to different patterns of behavior (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969/2000). Children who have experienced rejection and insensitivity from adult caregivers may demonstrate **insecure–avoidant attachment**. These children tend to turn away from or avoid adults and do not seek their comfort; in fact, they may become hostile in order to avoid rejection before it occurs.

Other insecurely attached children who have experienced confusing and inconsistent nurturing from adults are said to be experiencing **insecure–ambivalent/resistant attachment**. Because they are unsure whether adults will be there for them, these children may appear to seek comfort but then reject it when it is offered. They may be irritable and fussy, easily frustrated, and difficult to manage in a group.

In more extreme circumstances, when children have experienced neglect, abuse, or violence in the home, they may exhibit **disorganized/disoriented attachment** (Main & Solomon, 1990). Because their past experiences with adults have left them without secure attachments, they have not developed useful strategies for seeking comfort or attention or for handling difficulties. Their behavior can be very unpredictable and confusing to teachers, and can negatively affect the children’s ability to learn.

Attachment to Teachers Although earlier attachment studies focused on mother–child attachment, current research also applies the theory to teacher–child relationships

insecure–avoidant attachment Rejection and insensitivity from adult caregivers that causes children to turn away from or avoid adults and not seek their comfort.

insecure–ambivalent/resistant attachment Children’s inability to trust adults to keep them safe due to neglect, abuse, or other difficult circumstances that results in a lack of social competence.

disorganized/disoriented attachment Seen in children who lack secure attachments with adults due to having experienced neglect, abuse, or violence in the home and who have not developed useful strategies for seeking comfort or attention or handling difficulties.

