

## Attachment

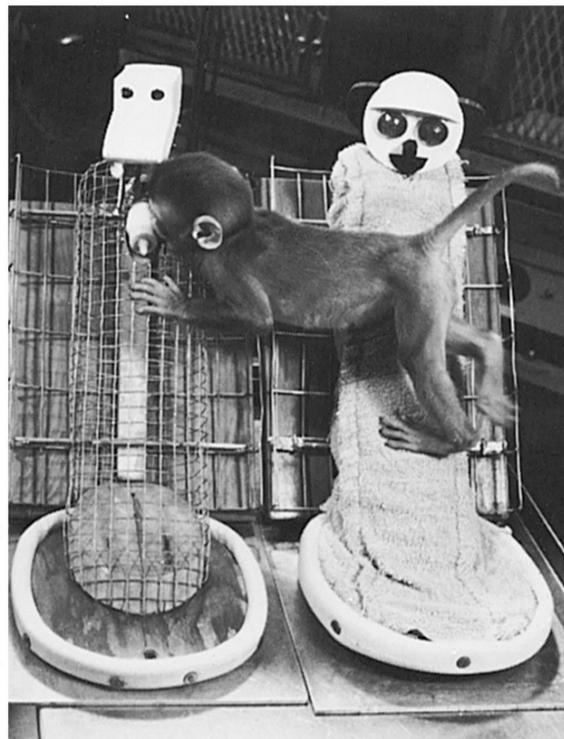
Attachment: A strong emotional connection that persists over time and across circumstances ([page 366](#)).

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, people assumed that the infant-caregiver bonding resulted primarily from the mother's role in satisfying the infant's needs for nourishment.

Harry Harlow tested this belief by separating infant rhesus monkeys from their biological mothers shortly after birth. Each infant was raised in a cage with two artificial "surrogate mothers".

One was a bare-wire cylinder with a feeding bottle attached to its "chest"

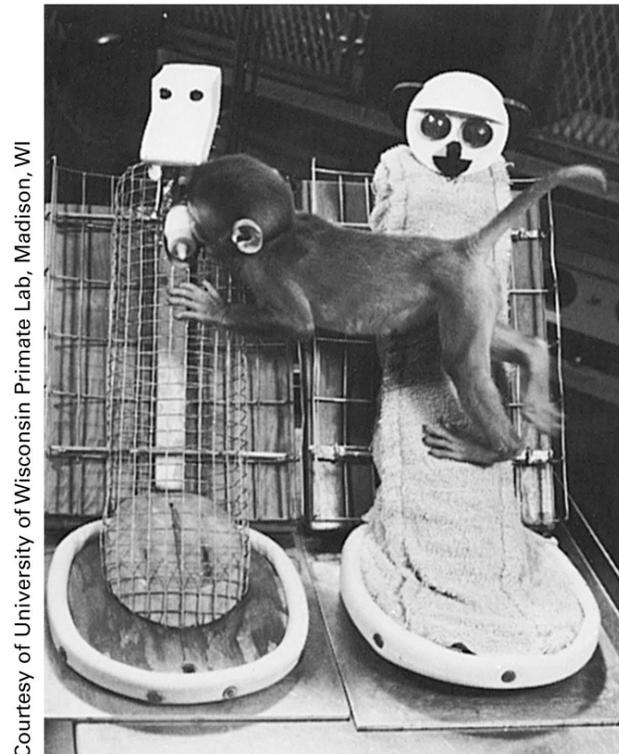
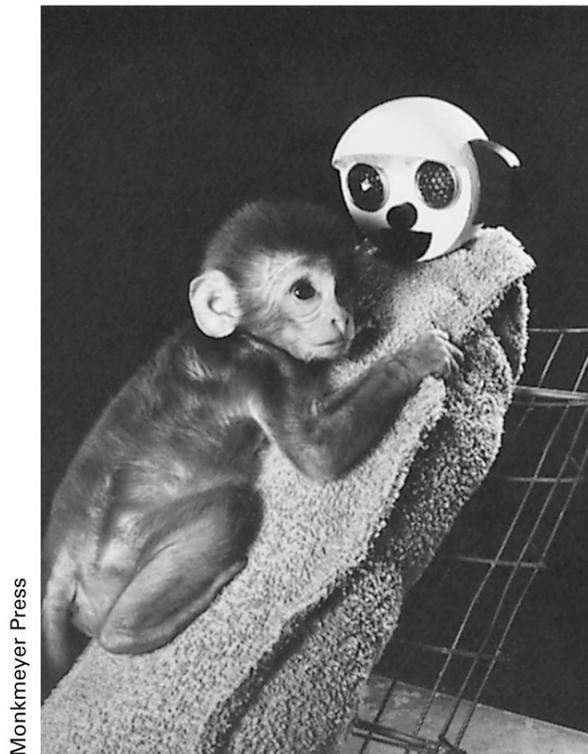
Courtesy of University of Wisconsin Primate Lab, Madison, WI



The other was a wire cylinder covered with a soft terry cloth without a feeding bottle.

## Attachment

When exposed to frightening situations, the infant monkeys ran to the terry cloth figure and clung to it tightly. They even maintained contact with the cloth mother while feeding from the wire mother's bottle.



Harlow concluded that the infant monkeys became attached to the cloth mother. Contact comfort—body contact with a comforting object is more important in fostering attachment than the provision of nourishment.

## Assessment of Attachment

In order to assess attachment, psychologists have developed a standardized procedure for examining infant attachment called the strange situation.

In the strange situation, an infant's (typically 12-18 months old) behavior is observed.

- First, the infant plays with the mother present.
- Then a stranger enters the room and interacts with the infant.
- Soon, the mother leaves the child with the stranger
- Later, the stranger leaves, and the child is alone
- Finally, the mother returns.



Psychologists are looking at the balance between the infant's need for attachment and exploration.

## Attachment

<p>Approx. 60% of all infants</p> 	<p>With “<u>securely attached</u>” infants,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The infant explores the playroom and reacts positively to strangers.</li><li>• The infant uses the mother as a “secure base” to explore and return</li><li>• They are often distressed when the mother leaves and happily greets her when she returns.</li><li>• If distressed during separation, seeks contact and comfort during reunion, and then settles down to continue play.</li><li>• Those that are not distressed acknowledge her return with a glance or greeting.</li></ul>
<p>Approx. 20% of all infants</p> 	<p>With “<u>avoidant attachment</u>” infants,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These infants show few signs of attachment</li><li>• Explores freely, seems uninterested in the caregiver’s presence or departure<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seldom cry when the mother leaves,</li><li>• And don’t seek contact when she returns</li></ul></li><li>• Upon reunion, ignores or actively avoids the caregiver</li></ul>
<p>Approx. 15% of all infants</p> 	<p>With “<u>ambivalent (resistant) attachment</u>” infants,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Infants are less likely to explore their surroundings</li><li>• Demand her attention, and</li><li>• Distressed when she leaves.</li><li>• They are not soothed when she returns and both resists and seeks contact showing anger, passivity or clinging</li><li>• does not easily return to play</li></ul> <p>image source: Gazzaniga and Halpern</p>

## Attachment Deprivation

Harry Harlow examined the effect of “attachment” deprivation under controlled conditions with the rhesus monkeys. After rearing “isolate” monkeys either alone or with artificial “surrogate mothers”, Harlow returned them to the monkey colony at 6 months of age.



- The isolates were indifferent, terrified or aggressive when exposed to other monkeys.
- The isolates avoided contact, fled from touch, curled up and rocked, or tried to attack the biggest, most dominant monkey in the group.
- When they became adults, these monkeys were sexually incompetent. When given an opportunity to mate with a normally reared monkey, they showed interest, but did not know how to proceed.
- Some female isolates were artificially inseminated, and as parents, they were highly abusive towards their firstborns.
- These mothers seldom petted or caressed their young and even neglected to nurse them.

## Attachment

The development of secure attachment occurs over a period of time, and is time sensitive—secure attachments are easier to form in infancy and early childhood.

Securely attached infants raised by their parents (regardless if they are adoptive or biological) tend to be better socially adjusted during adulthood.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Infants who are securely attached are less likely to have behavioral problems or seek attention in the classroom.</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Secure preschoolers were more prosocial, empathic, and socially competent when compared to insecure preschoolers (<a href="#">page 385, SGW</a>)</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In middle childhood, children with a history of secure attachment in infancy are better adjusted and have higher levels of social and cognitive development than do children who were insecurely attached in infancy (<a href="#">page 385, SGW</a>)</li></ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Adolescents who were securely attached in infancy have fewer problems, do better in school, and have more successful relationships with their peers when compared with adolescents who were not securely attached in infancy.</li></ul>

## Attachment Styles and Memory

In this experiment involving a puppet show, whether you had a secure attachment or insecure-avoidant attachment, the infants saw the same puppet show.

However, what you remember about the experiences is affected by attachment style. Attachment style affects what you remember. Secure attachments tend to remember positive events, whereas the insecure avoidant attachments tend to remember negative events.

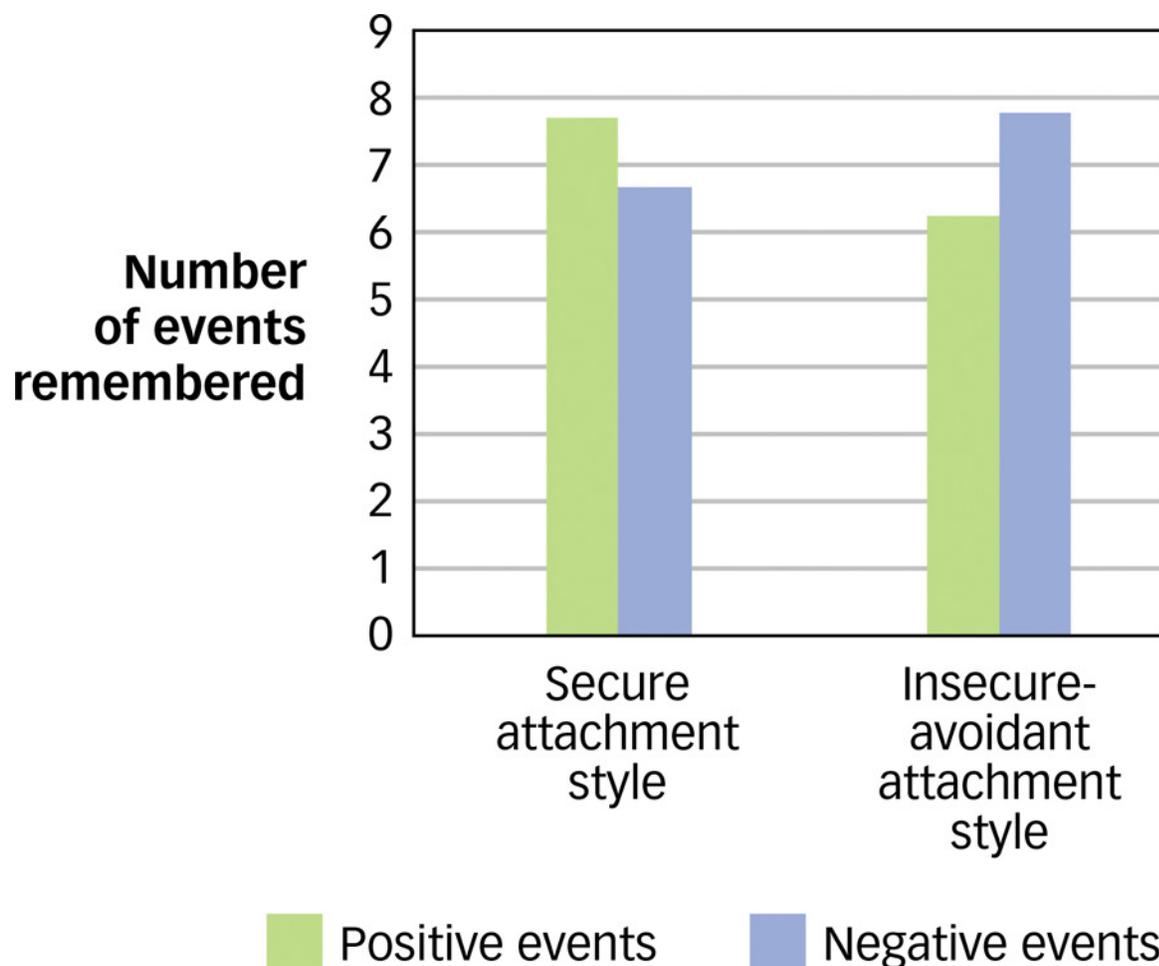


Image source: Schacter, Gilbert and Wegner, 2011, [Psychology](#)