

PHASES OF EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Phase 1 – Welcome, Precious! Or, No Place in This World for Me!

In Phase 1 the following occurs:

- Children begin to respond to a hostile world or a safe one.
- They develop social tendencies or avoid social interactions.
- They prepare for the work of the next phase, which includes forming an *exclusive* attachment to someone.
- Sleep patterns, eating patterns, interest levels, curiosity levels, frustration control, and anxiety regulation are all emerging during this first period of emotional development.
- Parents play a critical role in helping their children become comfortable in their bodies, in buffering them from over whelming feelings and in protecting them from frightening events.
- In institutional care, the world does not provide enough predictability or nurture for children to do this Phase 1 work, so they may remain emotionally 'stuck'.
- The attachment cannot be secure if children are without enough sensitive care or enough food, warmth, and stimulation.

The task of parents in Phase 1 is to help form **trust and regulation** by the following responses:

- To help the child form a healthy pattern for getting needs met consistently in a safe and nurturing environment eg changing nappies, timely feedings and comfort for body distress.
- Parents reward their children for their curiosity, smiles and new achievements.
- Parents respond sensitively helping children stretch out their positive moods.

Some techniques and cues that promote readiness for attachment in Phase 1:

- During bottle feedings, gently move the baby into eye-to-eye contact holding the baby on the left side.
- Maintain predictability in daily schedules with few excursions to regulate a 'high alert' brain'.
- Have skin-to-skin contact.
- Bathe with the baby and child (not if children have been sexually abused).
- Rock the baby and dance with the baby and child.
- Sing or talk to the baby or toddler giving pauses for the baby to respond.
- Feed a baby or child on demand to calm and instil that their needs are being met.
- Rouse the passive, dissociated baby/child who prefers to stare off alone.
- Stay with the yelling, inconsolable child and avoid leaving them alone for long so they don't feel out-of-control and alone.
- Limited to no child care and only in child's own home.

Indicators of Disruption in Phase 1 in babies:

- The baby does not settle into napping, eating and sleeping schedules after a six week period.
- The baby appears overly stimulated or too passive.
- The baby arches her back instead of snuggling into the parent.
- At three months or older the baby does not have the ability to socialize with the parents eg during feeding time does not make eye contact, doesn't smile babble or track the parents.
- The baby may overfeed or irritably underfeed.
- Baby loses their last developmental milestone if moved in the months after birth.

Indicators of Disruption in Phase 1 in children:

- Children show little or no ability to stay with the parent.
- They do not use the parents as a safe base of protection during new experiences.
- They try to take control of all food and eat without the parent's help.
- There is little or no eye contact.
- They use their own methods of calming to go to sleep eg head banging, rocking and self-stimulation.
- Children shut down emotionally and do not look for adults when distressed.
- They do not know how to initiate or maintain play with parents or other children.
- They do not mould to the parent when carried.
- May be adverse to the parent's touch – common in children from orphanages.
- They may be hyper-vigilant to their surroundings.
- They overreact to negative stimulation.
- They do not fall asleep or stay asleep easily.
- They show rapidly fluctuating mood changes eg crying and rage seems out of proportion.

Summary of Phase 1:

- Babies determine whether the world is safe or hostile to their social and physical needs.
- Their brains become 'wired' either for predictable, interesting and nurturing world or to attend to crises with quick, short-term responses and a period of dissociation.
- Children learn to be either curious and social or anxious and wary.

Checklist of Phase I mastery:

- Watches the parent as she moves around the room.
- Calms down with the parent's interventions most of the time.
- Prefers being with the parent to being alone.
- Smiles back to the parent.
- Seems to like the parent.
- Likes to play little games with the parent.
- Looks at parents when upset and expects the parent to help.
- Snuggles into a parent's embrace and is beginning to hang on when carried.

Phase II – The Sunshine of My Life

In Phase II the following occurs:

- Children form exclusive attachments with their caregivers.
- When there are no obstacles to attachment they tend to move into this phase around 6 to 9 months leaving it at 16 to 20 months.
- The baby may not want to be separated from the parent even when they leave the room. By the end of the phase the parent can be counted upon to return fostering the child's belief that he is worth returning to.
- Children have 'stranger or separation anxiety'.
- Strong sense of attunement in children and parents who are forming positive attachments in this phase – they feel 'in sync'.
- Children who are securely attached show an ability to regulate overwhelming emotions when using the parent as helper and comforter.

Tasks of parents during Phase II:

- Good, nurturing caregiving by a series of people will not substitute for one caregiver for at least a six month period.
- Meet the basic needs of the child
- Be emotionally available to the child
- Stay physically close to the child avoiding overnight trips and long day-care hours.

Children cared for in this way have a resulting optimism about relationships that can be traced to this phase. Even if later disruptions occur, completion of a positive, secure attachment in this phase yields emotional benefits that can help offset the damage.

Children who have already had a positive, secure attachment may be able to transfer this attachment to new parents. However, children who have experienced an insecure attachment (avoidant, ambivalent or disorganized) may be trying to transfer this type of bond. Children who have lived in orphanages their entire lives and not had an opportunity to form attachments with anyone will be entering Phase II for the first time.

Children's reaction to being moved in Phase II:

- May bat at the new parent's face, arch their bodies, avert their eyes or use full eye contact only while yelling.
- Seem to be searching for the lost special someone.
- Past developmental milestones may be lost and may look dazed.
- May sleep too much or too little.
- May lose their ability to predict the environment or how to signal their needs.
- May become ill giving a good opportunity for nurturing.
- Depressed and behaving irritably.
- Over or under eat.
- Look and act frantic and cannot calm down.

Techniques to promote attachment during Phase II:

- Use techniques for Phase I as children will typically regress.
- Hold the bottle maintaining eye contact and promote the bottle rather than a cup.
- Stroke the child's palms or soles of her feet while cuddling.
- Insist on more and more eye contact and that good things happen with this like smiles, play, snuggles.
- Take pictures of fun times and enlarge them for the walls.

- Stroke their cheeks.
- Carry the child a lot.
- Emphasise that parents always come back.
- Keep children with the parents using childcare minimally. Parents who must use childcare during this phase with children who have suffered neglect and abandonment do best with a constant person coming into the home for only short periods.

Summary of Phase II:

- Children who have completed Phase II have developed an enduring template of how to relate in a family.
- Fundamental beliefs about intimacy and self-acceptance have their roots formed in this phase.

Checklist for Phase II mastery:

- Prefers the parent to comfort her when she is hurt or sick.
- Does cute things in order to get attention from parent.
- Looks to parent for reassurance in strange situation.
- Likes to cuddle with the parent.
- Smiles and laughs with the parent with full eye contact.
- Spends a lot of time close to the parent.
- Often protests the parent's departure.

Phase III – I Did It My Way!

In this phase the following occurs:

- Developing the baby's own awareness of himself or his autonomy.
- Normally entered about half way through the second year of life and it extends for about one year.
- Children push away to establish themselves as autonomous but do not push far and still want relationship.
- Parents should not shame their children or overreact but must take an interest in their choices.
- Children learn rules and need rituals.
- They love to repeat the family members' names.
- They begin controlling their world through language.
- They know that some actions follow other actions.
- Children feel uncomfortable when the parent is disappointed.
- It resembles the identity work of the adolescent.
- If moved in this phase children can be locked in protest over the move and refusing to bond and can be mistaken for 'just being two' or a child may be afraid to say 'no' thinking they have lost a control battle and were moved as a result.

In this phase parents need to:

- Help children enjoy their own identity.

- Set consistent and safe limits.
- Enjoy spending time with their children.
- Teach about the world in a manner that builds curiosity.
- Continue their growth of attachment by building the relationship.
- Continue to help children to stretch their positive emotional states and calm down or move beyond their negative states.
- Teach children they are good and can get positive attention.

When a child has experienced neglect and maltreatment the parents' tasks are to:

- Find times and ways to nurture that he would not resist.
- Not giving up.
- Working as a team so that the mother can recoup.
- Teaching him that he could learn about positive relationships.
- Setting limits without getting caught in control battles.
- Helping him to re-regulate himself so that he is wired for a safe environment and relationship, not an unsafe one.
- Taking the power away from him when he is using it to sabotage his relationships.
- Working creatively with him and touching his heart.

And the child's tasks are to:

- Learn to tolerate and enjoy praise.
- Enjoying getting close to a reliable parent.
- Allowing himself to hope for his future.
- Changing his self-concept to a positive one.
- Allowing parents to care for him.

Techniques and words that help produce attachment in Phase III:

- Using ideas from Phase I and II eg bottle-feeding, rocking, foot-stroking, gazing, movement and play.
- Help children produce order through their choices.
- Praise – if the child sabotages praise point out how strong they are in mastering an activity rather than direct reference to them as a person.
- Make attempts to improve their self-image – internalised shame makes it difficult for children to attach.
- Tell the child that they are safe and fantastic parents.
- Do not make toilet training a battle.
- Establish rituals for bedtime, meals etc and keep ones from the past.
- Keep change to a minimum.
- Build a positive reinforcement cycle – give attention for positive behaviour and make non-compliance boring.
- Do not use consequences for misbehaviour that include pain or isolation from the parent. They may be 'getting what they want' with time-out in their room.
- Maintain the child's favourite food in the daily diet. For deprived children be clear that there is always food available.
- Spend time playing with the child especially games like hide-and-seek.
- Make a videotape of activities together and share these so they become desensitised through watching the activity.

Summary of Phase III:

- Children know that they have family that they can trust if the attachment is secure and are learning that compliance works well for them.
- If the attachment is insecure children are connected at some level and still find intermittent protection through their parents even if they are exposed to overwhelming events at times and some compromise is made with the children's autonomy and limits.

Checklist for emotional tasks of the child:

- Looks for the parent several times a day and stays within five feet of the parent for most of the day.
- Calms down after a temper tantrum and accepts the desired behaviour.
- Likes the parent's praise.
- Hugs the parent back even when they do not initiate the hug.
- Shows concern but does not disintegrate if the parent gets hurt.
- Uses the parent to help calm down.
- Does things that are cute or playful in order to get parental attention.
- Acts guilty when parents show disapproval.

Phase IV – Masters of the Universe

In this phase the following occurs:

- They are more outwardly focuses.
- Developing trust in others and confidence in themselves.
- They believe people will probably like them just as they like themselves.
- Phase begins at about age two and a half to four years.
- Conscience development moves rapidly occurring in the following sequence:
 - Children know the rules but cannot control their actions.
 - Children control their actions for short periods of time and obey the rules to please parents as well as to avoid consequences and feel appropriate but not overwhelming shame.
 - Know the rules even when parents are not present as they identify with the parent.
- Good candidate for toilet training as the opposition has ebbed.
- Continue growth in identity, trusting and sociability.
- Know their gender and have a sense of whether this is good or bad.
- See themselves as the centre of the world so will believe themselves to be the cause of things that occur in their lives.

Tasks of the parents in this phase:

- Rewarding children's initiative.
- Assisting children in increasing their mastery of the world by supplying them with facts, obtaining items and opportunities for play.
- Teaching respect for others and themselves by emphasising empathy and the interruption of negative acts.
- Responding playfully to children.
- Setting limits that are safe and consistent.

- Clearly differentially the roles of parents and children.
- Continuing to foster a positive self-image of children.
- Teaching children that rules are fair.
- Helping children to talk about their world.
- Helping children to express angry feelings without hurting others eg 'Use your words!'

When children have experienced an insecure attachment:

- Children who move after maltreatment feel shamefully small and are anxious around adults. This can be masked by bravado as they pretend that they are big and self-reliant or they may withdraw.
- Children who have not attached (eg been in an orphanage) do not feel distress over parents' disapproval or any pleasure in following the rules. They are motivated by behavioural consequences and restricts on conscience development.

Techniques that promote attachment in Phase IV:

- Use the tips from the former phases freely.
- Allow the child to regress into more infantile stages when they are needy.
- Get cuddly bedclothes and do not be afraid to rock the child to sleep.
- Encourage the child to come into the parents' room if afraid at night but do not encourage the 'family bed' for challenging children as parents should not sacrifice their own sleep and intimacy on a regular basis.
- Tell children the reasons for adoption or foster care that makes sense as children will make up their own reasons if they are not told.

When children are moved during Phase IV or have problems in this phase the following may be experienced:

- Children who have been severely neglected like those from institutions in Eastern Europe need drastically reduced stimulation until they adjust to a normal environment, for example not to have the run of the house or too many toys.
- Reassure the child that she is lovable as in this egocentric age they feel they are responsible for the move.
- Maintain as much of the children's identity as possible as this helps them feel connected with their lives before their move.
- If children throw tantrums hold them close. They will sometimes break into crying and grieve while parents hold and comfort them.
- Children will often claim they are quite hurt when their injury is minor giving them an opportunity to get a cycle of comfort developed with their parents.
- Children will often be in a state of shock when they move. Keep a predictable schedule full of nurture. Be prepared to explain the circumstances of the move over and over again.

Summary of Phase IV:

- Children leave this phase with an ability to function outside of the care of their parents for periods of time.
- They develop social skills so that they can either cooperate with others or defend themselves against others.
- Conscience development moves quickly.

- Children feel good or inadequate about what they master.
- Imagination begins.
- Feel increasing confidence or lack of confidence about their gender and identity.

Checklist for Phase IV emotional tasks:

- Wants cuddles and snuggles from parents although he may be coy.
- Wants parents for bedtime rituals.
- Wants parents to see his accomplishments.
- Checks parents' whereabouts when he is doing something against the rules.
- Competes for parents' positive attention and does not interrupt the attention when gets it.
- Gets parents' help in solving problems, preferring their help to a stranger's help.
- Gives eye contact and responsible smiling to parents.
- Imitates parents' activities and tries to stay physically close.
- Mimics mannerisms of the parents and states their rules.

Phase V – Magical Child, Great Romantic

In this phase the following occurs:

- Children enter Phase V at about three and a half or four years and complete the phase at six or seven years.
- Children in this phase are great romantics and tend to want to marry their opposite sex parent.
- Children are dogmatic and bossy and understand relationships only from their own point of view.
- They want group activities and friends.
- They often get carried away by their fantasies at times.
- Children are driven to learn more.
- They develop in their gender identity.
- They can now speak about their anger and not hitting when angry.
- Children want to know in this stage why they are not with their birthparent and explanations need to be concrete. Drawing simple pictures with verbal explanations helps them sequence events in their lives. An explanation at this stage needs to include:
 - Your birthmother/parents loved you.
 - She would have raised you if she could.
 - She could not raise you and made this choice for you.
- If children move in this phase the romanticism flavours the way in which the 'lost' parent is seen and can create strong loyalty to the former parent figure.
- In discipline, parents do best in avoiding punitive situations that reinforce that the child only has the choice of being a victim. The best way is where everyone gets treated with respect through trusting and cooperation.

Techniques that improve attachment in Phase V:

- Continue to use attachment suggestions from a previous stage but age appropriately eg reading instead of bottle feeding.
- Children may be assigned a goal of staying close to a parent and get rewarded for this.

- Children can romanticise their story and think that the birth parent is perpetually crying. They need to know that the birthparent did grieve but that she now may be living a happy life. Children then feel freer.
- Magical beliefs of this phase may lead children to believe that they were responsible for making their birthparents leave. Parents need to test this. Honest discussion helps children to sort out with whom they are angry.
- Children are often bothered by an issue without the ability to even bring up the topic as they do not even have the conceptual ability to phrase the question. It may be helpful to use an example of another child with similar issues.
- Children in this phase should avoid new stresses to attachment. Most cannot tolerate the parent's absence for longer than five days.

Checklist for Phase V Emotional Tasks:

- Seems generally interested in sharing her interests with the parent.
- Likes to play with the parent.
- Seems to like the parent.
- Looks at the parent and smiles.
- Hugs the parent and likes to be hugged.
- Accepts discipline as fair after initial protest.
- Tries to please the parent much of the time.
- Shows a full range of emotions.
- Wants the parent when he gets sick or overwhelmed.
- Shows empathy and distress when parents get hurt.
- Wants to grow up to be like the parent in some way.
- Making friends and enjoying playing with them.
- Continues to master new skills.

Phase VI – Joining In and Finding My Place

In this phase the following occurs:

- Enter this phase at age six or seven and continue through to age eleven or twelve.
- Children decided they would rather be like their peer than stand out.
- Become interested in joining with other children in clubs and school and teachers and coaches often outrank parents in their authority.
- Children who have been adopted or fostered will be unwilling to talk about this difference in public because of their desire to conform but explore some of their feelings of loss in their home. Children put the 'feeling component' of their life story together in this phase and can often become angry.
- By the end of this phase they understand losses and the different layers of feelings.
- Children who have learnt to be passive to survive often need a kick start in this phase.
- Children become more interested in facts and so this is a good time to give fact about birth parents.
- As children like to be the same as others it is helpful to meet with other children who share similarities eg adoption groups and culture camps or children who have had similar experiences.
- Children begin to develop abstract thought at the end of this phase and can understand some of the meaning of the fact they previously knew about their story.

- If girls cannot conform to the group due to delayed social skills they become ostracised and are at risk in the next phase for peer acceptance and without girl friends, they are at risk for premature sexual involvement.

Techniques to promote attachment in Phase VI:

- Spend time with children at this age. Look for activities to do with them.
- Maintain rituals that are comforting.
- Help children to find areas of interest and competence.
- Keep the home pace slow enough to allow for discussion and nurturance.
- Help children to form friendships.
- Make certain that parents remain associated with food.
- Get children to school early as this is when social groupings occur.
- Make valuing statements about children.
- When does the child feel closest to you? Do more of that.
- Do not discipline with a sense of optimism not futility.
- Get good therapy for children in this stage for children who have had maltreatment in their past and ask to be included in the therapy.
- Help children to find out facts about birth relatives, including positive hereditary facts.

Checklist for Phase VI emotional tasks:

- Uses the parent for comfort and help when emotionally upset.
- Says that he loves the parents even when he does not need something.
- Shares things about himself with parents rather than being secretive.
- When sick or hurt wants the parent close.
- Feels remorse if something special of the parent's is ruined.
- Is honest with the parent (Children often have a lying lapse at about eight years).
- Has a value system similar to the parents.
- Thinks of the parent as strong and effective.
- Uses the parent to calm down when distressed.
- Uses the parent's help in gaining knowledge about his world.
- Tries to find the parents in the house just to know their whereabouts.
- Feels secure in parent's limits.
- Has friends.
- Has capabilities of which he is proud.
- Shows appropriate grief over sad parts of his own life story.
- Shows empathy towards others.

Phase VII – Knowing Myself and Sharing Myself

In this phase the following occurs:

- Takes place between ages twelve or thirteen and nineteen years.
- Sexual development and the drive to be with other teens cause teens to enter into emotional tasks of this phase regardless of their success with the tasks in earlier phases. Often gaps in development are not made up until sometime in adult years, if then.
- Task of learning who they are including a sense of their own competency, their sexuality and acceptability to their peer group.

- The need for inclusion and the need to extend oneself to others in a peer relationship is a major task.
- Need tremendous emotional support to do this work but also need space to be with peers.
- Push away from their parents during the earliest part of this phase so they can be 'stand alone'.
- Developing and feeling comfortable with who they are – identity.
- Learning enough about themselves to select and work in a career.
- Becoming comfortable with one's own gender.
- Sorting through similarities and dissimilarities with parents and adoptive/foster parents.
- Integrating loss issues. Individualising value systems.
- Working through parental conflict in the early half of the phase and maintaining strong family relationships in the later half of the phase.
- Preparing to leave home without losing family connection.
- Developing romantic relationships by the end of the phase that are respectful of self and others.

Those who have experienced childhood moves and abuse feel:

- Conflict when trying to share themselves.
- They are concerned that others will mirror shame back at them.
- They can expose themselves recklessly to emotional and physical risk and incurring further emotional damage.
- Increased complexity of forming identity in the teen. The ability to speak openly with one's family about adoption issues has been linked with higher functioning in teens.
- Later placed adopted children often need several additional years on the timeline in order to complete their emotional educational tasks before leaving home and it is important to help children think in terms of a skill set that is required rather than age before leaving home.

Techniques to promote attachment in this phase:

- Parents can agree with the process when teens begin to separate.
- Parents can set limits while still sympathising with the request.
- Use eye and physical contact even if teens seem to shrug parents off.
- Respect the teen's tastes.
- Compromise.
- Parents should apologise when they have a temper problem or renege on a commitment.
- Continue to keep night rituals.
- When teens want to talk they want to talk right then.
- Find fun activities to do with teens.
- Keep all the birthday and holiday rituals.
- Buy thoughtful surprises.
- Do not try to be 'cool'. Be nurturing, kind, structured parents give teens confidence and a feeling of being anchored.
- Supply teens with identity information.

- Take the teen to a good therapist to sort through difficult identity issues and loss issues. Any teen with a history of maltreatment benefits coming into teen years with a relationship with therapist who feels comfortable and safe to the teen.

Checklist for Phase VII emotional development:

- Uses the parent for help when in an emergency.
- Says that they love the parents even when they do not need something.
- Shares things about themselves with parents rather than being secretive
- When sick or hurt still want the parent close.
- Feels remorseful if something special of the parent's is ruined.
- Is usually honest with the parent. They may decline topics but should not be dishonest. Intrusive parents may contribute to this problem.
- Value system is individualised from the parent's without being antisocial.
- Thinks of the parent as strong and effective.
- Uses the parents or trustworthy peers to calm down when they are distressed.
- Uses the parent's help in gaining knowledge about their world.
- Finds the parent in the house just to know their whereabouts.
- Feels secure within parent's limits.

Summary of Deborah D Gray 'Attaching in Adoption – Practical Tools for Today's Parents'