

## **Attachment Disruptions**

Attachment is believed to be genetically encoded at birth. However, what happens when an attachment is disrupted despite having loving and caring parents? It is hard to imagine that attachments can become disrupted when two loving parents are involved in a child's life, but it can. A common factor that can impact an attachment cycle occurs when a baby is born sick and requires extensive medical attention such as being on a ventilator, hooked up to IVs, and placed in an incubator which prohibits mom and dad from holding, nurturing, caressing, and feeding their child for extended periods of time. Often, this situation results in numerous medical personnel "providing the basic care of" the child and very limited physical contact and auditory stimulation. For some children, this beginning can drastically change the neurological functioning of the brain which may lead to attachment disruptions. For example, at discharge, joyful and loving parents bring baby home after a 4-6 month hospital stay excited about holding, caressing, and cuddling their precious bundle of joy. Mom wraps up baby in a blanket and the baby begins to squirm. Mom attempts to hold baby, caressing him/her gently and s/he begins to arch away and cry. Mom becomes alarmed and calls dad to assist, whereby he receives the same response from baby. Despite the loving connection Mom and Dad are trying to make with the baby, the baby continues to cry, withdraw from tactile stimulate, and self sooth through rocking. The parents experience what they perceive to be rejection and begin to believe that they don't know how to parent; eventually believing they are failures and "unintentionally" withdrawing. Understanding this cycle, often allows parents to not blame themselves and commit to a deeper understanding of developmental and personal needs. Therapy can help this process.

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