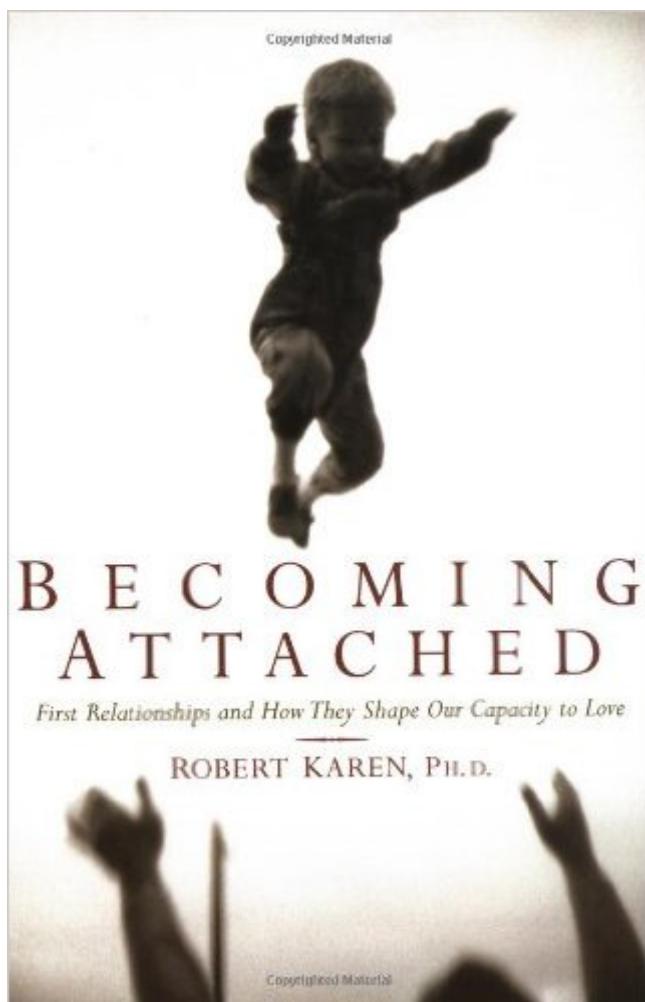


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# Becoming Attached: First Relationships And How They Shape Our Capacity To Love



## **Synopsis**

The struggle to understand the infant-parent bond ranks as one of the great quests of modern psychology, one that touches us deeply because it holds so many clues to how we become who we are. How are our personalities formed? How do our early struggles with our parents reappear in the way we relate to others as adults? Why do we repeat with our own children--seemingly against our will--the very behaviors we most disliked about our parents? In *Becoming Attached*, psychologist and noted journalist Robert Karen offers fresh insight into some of the most fundamental and fascinating questions of emotional life. Karen begins by tracing the history of attachment theory through the controversial work of John Bowlby, a British psychoanalyst, and Mary Ainsworth, an American developmental psychologist, who together launched a revolution in child psychology. Karen tells about their personal and professional struggles, their groundbreaking discoveries, and the recent flowering of attachment theory research in universities all over the world, making it one of the century's most enduring ideas in developmental psychology. In a world of working parents and makeshift day care, the need to assess the impact of parenting styles and the bond between child and caregiver is more urgent than ever. Karen addresses such issues as: What do children need to feel that the world is a positive place and that they have value? Is day care harmful for children under one year? What experiences in infancy will enable a person to develop healthy relationships as an adult?, and he demonstrates how different approaches to mothering are associated with specific infant behaviors, such as clinginess, avoidance, or secure exploration. He shows how these patterns become ingrained and how they reveal themselves at age two, in the preschool years, in middle childhood, and in adulthood. And, with thought-provoking insights, he gives us a new understanding of how negative patterns and insecure attachment can be changed and resolved throughout a person's life. The infant is in many ways a great mystery to us. Every one of us has been one; many of us have lived with or raised them. *Becoming Attached* is not just a voyage of discovery in child emotional development and its pertinence to adult life but a voyage of personal discovery as well, for it is impossible to read this book without reflecting on one's own life as a child, a parent, and an intimate partner in love or marriage.

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

The complex topic of attachment theory is opened up to parents, as well as other interested adults, by putting issues of child development, usually couched in antiseptic academic parlance, in lay terms. Ranging through historical developments in the field, Karen, formerly a psychotherapist in the pediatric unit of Bellevue Hospital, attempts to demystify ``mother love,’’ or the bond babies have with their primary caregiver (Karen is also concerned with what happens to babies when that bond is disrupted). The author introduces and defends the English researcher John Bowlby, whose intuitions in the late 1930’s about ``maternal attachment’’ would be borne out not by his research but by that of Mary Ainsworth decades later. It may be historians and would-be child psychologists to whom this book matters most, for the delineation of who contributed what to the field, and when, puts both attachment theory and psychoanalytic theory into a context of early speculations, later advances, due championing, and (some) tarnishment. Amid occasionally florid prose, and with a tendency to characterize figures as either brilliant or great, Karen delves into what theorists have believed to be children’s earliest feelings of rage and helplessness, love and security. Wittily titled chapters with effective cliffhanger endings will carry readers along on the tide of discovery and naysaying, furious debate, and placid acceptance of what these days is considered universally scandalous treatment of children (from abandonment of orphans to the analysis by her father of Anna Freud). Karen’s work makes clear that, regardless of the path of scientific thought, there are newly minted, common-sense reasons for giving offspring all the love and respect we can. --

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"Robert Karen has a rare capacity for presenting complex psychological ideas in language that is accessible to nonspecialists....Karen's book makes fascinating reading and constitutes a

considerable achievement."--Contemporary Psychology"Robert Karen...is one of our smartest and most accessible guides to the arcane world of psychoanalytic theory and research."--Elle

If you are just interested in learning the nuts and bolts of attachment quickly, this book isn't for you. This book is partially a biography and history book. It discusses the lives of the people responsible for creating and evolving the attachment discipline, and it discusses the history of major developments in the ever-evolving theoretical framework. What it doesn't do, however, is go deep into the actual substance of the body of accepted attachment theory. You will get a pretty good sense of the existing theory, but mostly you will understand more about how the theories came about more than what the theories actually are. The second half of the book is better regarding explaining attachment theory's actual tenets, especially the appendix, and there is a bibliography that has a lot of suggested books and studies for learning more. However if one's quest is to develop a full, working knowledge of attachment theory you may want to get supplementing books.

I agree with everyone's positive reviews, I just want to give people who are going to purchase it a HEADS UP regarding an error in mine. My book went from page 324, back to page 301, then had all its pages up to page 324, then jumped to page 349. So there was a HUGE GLITCH on someone's part and I'm missing a section of this comprehensive, comprehendible, and really enjoyable overview of attachment theory. It took me years to finally get to reading it so I assume it's too late to return for a proper version but it's still so good I have to give it 5/5 stars.

This book is deep and chock full of so much vital information in the key and critical aspect for becoming a parent who "knows" what their baby wants in all situations. I have heard many times from different parents, "If I could just figure out what's wrong with this baby, I'd do something to keep her from crying." Parents and babies who are ATTACHED have learned "what the baby wants or needs" by being consistent and available and allow that instinct to kick in, as it were. There is much communication coming from extremely young infants, and if a parent is willing to listen and learn what is going on, the parent/child bond becomes very deeply entwined . . . the relationship is off to a rousing good start! These early months are critical for esteem-building and personality-forming structures, and this type of read could help all parents immensely in the manner in which the child views themselves and how they fit into the world.

My favorite book. After reading it, I am a radical proponent of Attachment Theory. The first

psychological theory with statistical and experimental proof. The book is a fascinating history of the emergence of a psychological theory, full of sensational anecdotes and stories of vindication. The book also works as a heartfelt explanation of the science behind how and how much children are bonded with their guardians. This book is about our first experience with love which informs our lives and identities.

Extremely well-written book in that it is easily understood by the lay person, yet gracefully expresses complex ideas and processes, and is such a complete overview of attachment theory as to be of as much use to the professional as the lay person. Attachment theory addresses child development in terms of whether or not there is a loving attachment to a parental figure. Through following the history of the development of attachment theory the author explains the theory, the evidence supporting it, and the effects upon the individual. While supportive of attachment theory, Karen is careful to explain the views of its critics, and to show how those criticisms often improved the theory. I am not a psychologist, but someone with Borderline Personality Disorder trying to make sense of my life in order to improve it. Karen's work helped me enormously. His scientific orientation to provide good theory grounded in research and evidence is fused with his warm humanity and concern for individuals and society. Therefore I recommend the book to professional psychologists, teachers, makers of public policy, and others who deal with children. But also I recommend it highly to those on the quest for self-understanding.

I purchased this book for my developmental childhood psychology class. I am not a big reader as most books don't hold my interest; however this book was really interesting. It gave great insights in how a child should be raised and the consequences of what might happen if a parent is not equipped to handle it. The chapters aren't that big, about 20 pages per chapter. Easy to read, no crazy big words. Great book if you need one for a psych. Childhood class.

The struggle to understand the parent-child bond touches us deeply because we intuitively sense that our first relationships hold many clues to how we've become who we are (Karen, 1994). I chose to do a report on this book because of the keen interest I have in children, their development, well-being and emotional life. Dr. Karen's book is a goldmine of insight, posing the age-old question ; How do we become who we are? Central to the answer is attachment theory, which, in the words of Dr. Karen, 'encompasses both the quality and strength of the parent-child bond, the ways in which it forms and develops, how it can be damaged and repaired, and the long-term impact of separations,

losses, wounds, and deprivations. Beyond that, it is a theory of love and its central place in human life' ...I feel that I came across this book serendipitously as Dr. Karen's work has further added to my knowledge base, and my understanding by confirming opinions I have developed by watching people interact with children. After reading this book you will find yourself noticing certain behaviors on display that may have previously escaped your gaze. I can't stress how much this book as helped me as a special ed. teacher, parent, and as a counseling practitioner-to-be.I earnestly hope that I have the opportunity to share these insights with teachers, administrators, parents, and especially children as my career progresses.

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