



Inclusion and Engagement Support Team GEMs- Good Engagement Methods

GEM's has been put together to demonstrate good engagement methods and practise to support CYP with SEND.

As specialist teachers, we wanted to produce a package to address and support some of the core challenges that professionals will encounter within their classrooms from CYP with SEND.

Within this document, you will find advice and information that has been designed to increase your knowledge of Attachment difficulties and how you can support CYP who experience difficulties in the school environment as a result of their life experiences.

Attachment is a vast subject and this GEM is a snapshot to introduce attachment theories and how difficulties can impact CYP in education settings. It is highly recommended that settings priorities staff CPD in this area. Courses are available from Lancashire Traded teachers and Lancashire emotional health in schools and colleges team.

Organisations such as **Healthy Young Minds**, **NSPCC** and **UK Trauma Council** can support schools and families further in this area.

Reading recommendations:

Inside I'm Hurting: Louise Michelle Bomber (ISBN 9781903269114)

Know me to teach me: Louise Michelle Bomber (ISBN 9781903269404)

A Therapeutic Treasure box for working with children and adolescents with developmental trauma: Dr Karen Treisman (ISBN 978-1-78592-263-3)

Bouncing back and coping with change: Tina Rae (ISBN 9781906531683)

Attachment difficulties

What do we mean by Attachment difficulties?

Attachment is described by Bowlby (Attachment and loss V1. 1997) as '**a lasting psychological connectedness between human beings**'

Attachment theory places importance of a CYP's emotional bond with primary caregivers. Attachments are formed throughout the different phases of a child's early development. Connections are formed and strengthened by patterns in experiences.

A child naturally seeks their needs to be met, safety and security from their caregiver. When caregivers respond sensitively and are in-tune with the child's needs, secure attachments are formed. However, when a child consistently does not have their needs met or receive comfort or security from the caregiver, development and functioning are negatively affected.

CYP who have experienced trauma, abuse and neglect in their early lives are often said to have attachment difficulties.

Attachment types:

Ainsworth et al 1978 identified three types of **Insecure attachment: Avoidant, Ambivalent and Disorganised.**

CYP who are Avoidant may appear:

- Self-sufficient/ meet their own needs
- emotionally distant, shut down or dissociated
- difficult to connect with
- task orientated
- over compliant and anxious to keep others happy

CYP who are Ambivalent may appear:

- clingy and insecure
- attention seeking
- unable to trust adults
- high level of anxiety/ on the edge
- hostile, angry, and resentful
- unable to focus without support

CYP who are Disorganised may:

- appear erratic
- display risk taking and extreme behaviours
- display conflicting behaviours e.g. wanting support then rejecting it
- be fearful of appearing vulnerable
- perceive themselves as unworthy of care, help and love/ depressed
- be sensitive to criticism

What you might see in the education setting:

CYP with attachment difficulties are often coping with:

- fear of rejection or abandonment
- a sense of helplessness
- repeated losses
- frequent overwhelming emotions
- focussing on checking for danger and the need to feel safe

Behaviour observed	Behind the behaviour
Poor concentration	Scanning for danger Pre-occupied with worries Lost in a flashback
Disruptive/ chaotic behaviour	Need for control Acting out fear/ feelings Hiding struggling with learning Rejection before rejected/ Trying to get sent home Feeling of familiarity and even safety in a chaotic atmosphere Anxiety about events outside school
Sudden rages/ running away	Feeling overwhelmed Running is coping strategy 'FLIGHT, FIGHT, FREEZE' response
Constantly asking questions/ desire for perfection	Fear of rejection Frightened to make mistakes
Struggle with change	Strong urge to control Suspicious change is aimed at/caused by them
Ignoring instructions	Ability to process and recall words is limited especially if anxious or hypervigilant.
Struggle at unstructured times	Lack of adult guidance may cause anxiety to rise. Crowded environment
Refusal to accept help	Impacts sense of worth Mistrust of adults Need for control
Disrespect staff/ authority	Behaviours are fuelled by poor self-image CYP will react with defiance if they feel disrespected or criticised to 'save face' however actual feelings are likely to be panic, fear and rejection.

'Thinking of a CYP as behaving badly disposes you to think of punishment. Thinking of the CYP as struggling to manage something they find difficult encourages you to help them through their distress'

Remember- " Be Curious NOT furious" (Dr Karen Treisman)

Support:

There are things that education setting can implement at low cost but that if consistent and genuine will have a positive impact on CYP with attachment difficulties.

- Use the PACE Approach (Daniel Hughes) to build a connection with a CYP, create a safe space and open communication.
- Respond to incidents respectfully.
- Provide space/activity to 'calm down'
- Show that you are listening and validate CYP feelings
- Consider seating plan to help re-assure about danger- discuss with CYP
- Ensure any unplanned changes are supported and any planned changes are explained and discussed with CYP.
- Creative arts can give a voice for expression.
- Short term consequences not communicated at threats.
- Discipline with Empathy
- See every interaction with CYP as an intervention! Think about body language and choice and tone of words.
- Mindfulness and growth mindset language.
- Provide resources to reduce arousal but increase soothing.
- Whole school approach

With the right support CYP with attachment difficulties can build positive relationships however this requires a commitment from the adult who is to become the 'key adult.' A key adult in education settings becomes the additional attachment figure for a CYP.

Research shows just 1 emotionally available adult before the age of 18 interrupts the progression from childhood adversity to learning problems, psychological difficulties, and physical ill health.

Feeling understood activates brain regions associated with reward and brings down stress.

Key Adult top tips:

- Choose someone who is experienced and wants the role.
- They need to be empathetic, resourceful, and resilient with a sense of humour and a team player.
- Meet and greet the CYP both at the start and end of the day to support transition.
- At the meet and greet evaluate support needed to enable regulation to support learning.
- Provide emotional support and 'check ins' throughout the day- be available to CYP ensure they know where they can find you.
- Use of 'keep in mind' scripts... 'I am looking forward to catching up with you after lunch to hear what you and your friend played...'
- Provide verbal and non-verbal commentaries
- Communicate empathy (not sympathy!) Video on empathy:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw&t=7s>

- Support growth mindset/ deliver intervention programme. Create new opportunities
- Support and model regulation- better when 'in the moment'
- Provide safety and containment by showing them all their feelings can be tolerated, managed, and understood.
- Use commentary... 'it looks like you are cross right now because you wanted to continue on...'
- Mirror behaviour by saying what you see... 'I wonder if you're feeling Because.....'
- Coaching