

Attachment and Bonding Observation Checklists

To support assessment of the parent/carer–child relationship across different age groups

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Birth to One Year	
Observe the child. Does the child...	Observe the parent/carer. Does the parent/carer...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• turn towards or reach for their parent/carer when distressed?• calm down when comforted by their parent/carer?• show distress when separated from their main caregiver?• smile, make eye contact or babble when interacting with their parent/carer?• show a clear preference for familiar adults over strangers?• show interest in people's faces and voices?• explore their surroundings when their caregiver is nearby?• cry less or recover more quickly in unfamiliar situations when their parent/carer is present?• show joy or excitement when reunited with their parent/carer?• react differently to their parent/carer than to unfamiliar adults?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• respond promptly and sensitively to the baby's cries or signals?• soothe the baby when they are upset?• show enjoyment when interacting with the baby?• talk to the baby and respond to their sounds or facial expressions?• hold and cuddle the baby with warmth and care?• recognise the baby's needs (e.g. hunger, tiredness, discomfort) and meet them consistently?• stay close by and attentive when the baby is exploring?• use a calm, soothing voice during care routines?• adjust their behaviour if the baby becomes overstimulated or distressed?• mirror the baby's expressions or sounds (e.g. smiling when the baby smiles)?

One to Five Years	
Observe the child. Does the child...	Observe the parent/carer. Does the parent/carer...
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• seek comfort or reassurance from their parent/carer when upset, tired or frightened?• calm quickly when comforted by their parent/carer?• use their parent/carer as a secure base when exploring or playing?• show sadness or protest when their parent leaves, and happiness when they return?• play independently but check back with their parent/carer?• show interest in trying new things but return for support if needed?• express their emotions in a way others can understand?• invite the parent/carer to join in their play or share what they are doing?• show signs of empathy (e.g. comfort someone who is upset)?• seek approval or attention from their parent/carer during activities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• stay calm and supportive when the child is upset or having a tantrum?• respond to the child's emotional and physical needs in a caring way?• set clear and kind boundaries suitable for the child's age?• encourage the child's independence while staying available for help?• talk about and name emotions with the child?• spend quality time playing or reading with the child?• notice and respond to the child's efforts and achievements?• support the child in calming down during emotional outbursts?• notice early signs of distress and act before the child becomes very upset?• give the child choices and involve them in small decisions?

This tool is designed to support observations of attachment and bonding behaviours between children and their parents or carers. It can be used by social workers and other professionals during home visits, assessments, or direct work.

The checklist is organised by age group and highlights behaviours commonly seen in securely attached children and the caregiving responses that help support secure relationships.

Use this tool alongside professional judgement and consider each child's individual circumstances, development, and needs.

Birth to One Year

Observe the child. Does the child...

- turn towards or reach for their parent/carer when distressed?
- calm down when comforted by their parent/carer?
- show distress when separated from their main caregiver?
- smile, make eye contact or babble when interacting with their parent/carer?
- show a clear preference for familiar adults over strangers?
- show interest in people's faces and voices?
- explore their surroundings when their caregiver is nearby?
- cry less or recover more quickly in unfamiliar situations when their parent/carer is present?
- show joy or excitement when reunited with their parent/carer?
- react differently to their parent/carer than to unfamiliar adults?

Observe the parent/carer. Does the parent/carer...

- respond promptly and sensitively to the baby's cries or signals?
- soothe the baby when they are upset?
- show enjoyment when interacting with the baby?
- talk to the baby and respond to their sounds or facial expressions?
- hold and cuddle the baby with warmth and care?
- recognise the baby's needs (e.g. hunger, tiredness, discomfort) and meet them consistently?
- stay close by and attentive when the baby is exploring?
- use a calm, soothing voice during care routines?
- adjust their behaviour if the baby becomes overstimulated or distressed?
- mirror the baby's expressions or sounds (e.g. smiling when the baby smiles)?

One to Five Years

Observe the child. Does the child...

- seek comfort or reassurance from their parent/carer when upset, tired or frightened?
- calm quickly when comforted by their parent/carer?
- use their parent/carer as a secure base when exploring or playing?
- show sadness or protest when their parent leaves, and happiness when they return?
- play independently but check back with their parent/carer?
- show interest in trying new things but return for support if needed?
- express their emotions in a way others can understand?
- invite the parent/carer to join in their play or share what they are doing?
- show signs of empathy (e.g. comfort someone who is upset)?
- seek approval or attention from their parent/carer during activities?

Observe the parent/carer. Does the parent/carer...

- stay calm and supportive when the child is upset or having a tantrum?
- respond to the child's emotional and physical needs in a caring way?
- set clear and kind boundaries suitable for the child's age?
- encourage the child's independence while staying available for help?
- talk about and name emotions with the child?
- spend quality time playing or reading with the child?
- notice and respond to the child's efforts and achievements?
- support the child in calming down during emotional outbursts?
- notice early signs of distress and act before the child becomes very upset?
- give the child choices and involve them in small decisions?

Six to Eleven Years (Primary School Age)

Observe the child. Does the child...

- talk openly with their parent/carer about their day, feelings or worries?
- accept adult guidance and rules with general ease?
- show pride in their efforts and achievements?
- ask for help or support when they are struggling?
- cope with small challenges or disappointments, but still turn to the parent for support when needed?
- maintain friendships and show care for others?
- show signs of growing independence while still enjoying time with their parent/carer?
- check in with the parent/carer in new or social situations (e.g. glancing over, returning briefly)?
- show affection and respond positively to affection from their parent/carer?
- manage changes (e.g. new routines, events) better with support from their parent/carer?

Observe the parent/carer. Does the parent/carer...

- listen to the child's thoughts and feelings without judgement?
- encourage independence but stay emotionally available?
- praise the child's efforts and problem-solving, not just results?
- respond with support when the child is upset or anxious?
- help the child think through problems or decisions?
- model respectful behaviour and emotional control?
- keep consistent but fair boundaries that the child can understand?
- adjust expectations as the child matures and gains skills?
- help the child understand and make sense of difficult experiences?

Twelve to Eighteen Years (Adolescents)

Observe the adolescent. Does the adolescent...

- share concerns or important information with their parent/carer when it matters?
- express their own views confidently, even if they disagree with their parent/carer?
- seem emotionally connected to their parent/carer, even if they want more independence?
- turn to their parent/carer for advice, support or reassurance during difficult times?
- show self-control and decision-making appropriate for their age?
- maintain friendships and possibly romantic relationships with care and respect?
- show signs of self-worth and motivation?
- return to the parent/carer for guidance after first trying on their own?
- communicate (face-to-face or by message) with the parent/carer when apart (e.g. checking in)?
- manage increasing responsibilities (e.g. homework, chores) with some adult guidance?

Observe the parent/carer. Does the parent/carer...

- stay emotionally available, even when the teen seeks more space?
- listen with respect to the teen's views and experiences?
- show interest in the teen's life, friends and future plans?
- remain supportive during times of conflict or stress?
- respect the teen's growing independence while maintaining safety and guidance?
- express warmth and acceptance, even when the teen makes mistakes?
- respond calmly and supportively in times of crisis?
- provide advice when asked, but allow the teen to lead in decision-making when appropriate?
- stay involved without intruding – checking in while respecting privacy?
- keep boundaries in place, but adapt them as the teen matures?

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2 WWW.ANXIETYHELPBOX.COM



3 WWW.FEELINGSHELPBOX.COM



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