



Becoming Attached: First Relationships and How They Shape Our Capacity to Love

By Robert Karen

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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.

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Editorial Review

From Kirkus 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. -- *Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Review

"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*

About the Author

Robert Karen is a clinical psychologist in private practice and an award-winning author. In addition to two previous books, he has written articles for *The Atlantic*, *New York* magazine, *Mirabella*, *The Nation*, and *The Yale Review*. He is Assistant Clinical Professor at the Derner Institute of Advance Psychological Studies, Adelphi University.

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Daniel Rogers:

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