

Criteria for Classification
Patterns of Attachment, Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters & Wall, 1978

Group A:

Conspicuous avoidance of proximity to or interaction with the mother in the reunion episodes. (Either the baby ignores his mother on her return, greeting her casually if at all; if there is approach and/or a less casual greeting, the baby tends to mingle his welcome with avoidance responses—turning away, moving past, averting the gaze, and the like.)

Little or no tendency to seek proximity, interaction, or contact with the mother, even in the reunion episodes.

If picked up, little or no tendency to cling, or to resist being released.

On the other hand, little or no tendency toward active resistance to contact or interactions with the mother, except for probable squirming to get down, if indeed the baby is picked up.

Tendency to treat the stranger much as the mother is treated, although perhaps with less avoidance.

Either the baby is not distressed during separation, or the distress seems to be due to being left alone rather than to his mother's absence. For most, distress does not occur when the stranger is present, and any distress upon being left alone tends to be alleviated when the stranger returns.

Subgroup A₁:

Conspicuous avoidance of the mother in the reunion episodes, which is likely to consist of ignoring her altogether, although there may be some pointed looking away, turning away, or moving away.

If there is a greeting when the mother enters, it tends to be a mere look or smile.

The baby either does not approach his mother upon reunion, or the approach is "abortive" with the baby going past his mother, or it tends to occur only after much coaxing.

If picked up, the baby shows little or no contact-maintaining behavior. He tends not to cuddle in; he looks away; and he may squirm to get down.

Subgroup A₂:

The baby shows a mixed response to his mother on reunion, with some tendency to greet and to approach, intermingled with a marked tendency to turn or move away from her, move past her, avert the gaze from her, or ignore her. Thus there may be moderate proximity seeking combined with strong proximity avoiding.

If he is picked up, the baby may cling momentarily; if he is put down he may protest or resist momentarily; but there is also a tendency to squirm to be put down, to turn the face away then being held, and other signs of mixed feelings.

Group B:

The baby either wants proximity and contact with his mother, or he wants interactions with her, and he is active in seeking it, especially in the reunion episodes.

If he achieves contact, he seeks to maintain it, and either resists release or at least protests if he is put down.

The baby responds to his mother's return in the reunion episodes with more than a casual greeting—either with a smile or a cry or a tendency to approach.

Little or no tendency to resist contact or interactions with his mother.

Little or no tendency to avoid his mother in the reunion episodes.

He may or may not be friendly with the stranger, but he is clearly more interested in interaction and/or contact with his mother than with the stranger.

He may or may not be distressed during the separation episodes, but if he is distressed this is clearly related to his mother's absence and not merely to being alone. He may be somewhat comforted by the stranger but it is clear that he wants his mother.

Subgroup B₁:

The baby greets his mother, smiling upon her return, and shows strong initiative in interaction with her across a distance, although he does not especially seek proximity to her or physical contact with her.

If picked up, he does not especially seek to maintain contact.

He may mingle some avoiding behavior (turning away or looking away) with interactive behavior, but he shows little or no resistant behavior, and, in general, seems not to have feelings as mixed as does an A₂ baby.

Subgroup B₂:

The baby greets his mother upon reunion, tends to approach her, and seems to want contact with her, but to a lesser extent than does a B₃ baby. Some B₂ babies seek proximity in the pre-separation episodes, but not again until Episode #8, and then perhaps only after some delay.

The B₂ baby may show some proximity avoiding, especially in Episode #5, but this gives way to proximity seeking in Episode #8, thus distinguishing him from a A₂ baby.

Although he accepts contact if he is picked up, he does not cling especially; and he does not resist release conspicuously.

On the other hand, he shows little or no resistance to contact or to interactions, and in general shows less sign of mixed feelings than do A₂ babies.

He tends to show little distress during the separation episodes.

He resembles a B₁ infant except that he is more likely to seek proximity to his mother.

Subgroup B₃:

The baby actively seeks physical contact with his mother, and when he gains it he is conspicuous for attempting to maintain it, actively resisting her attempts to release him. Most B₃ babies show their strongest proximity-seeking and contact-maintaining behavior in Episode #8, but some do so in Episode #5, and are so distressed in the second separation that they cannot mobilize active proximity seeking and resort to signaling.

Occasionally, a baby who seems especially secure in his relationship with his mother will be content with more interaction with her and proximity to her, without seeking to be held.

At the same time, the B₃ baby may be distinguished from other groups and

subgroups by the fact that he shows little or no sign of either avoiding or resisting proximity, contact, or interaction with his mother.

He may or may not be distressed in the separation episodes, but if he shows little distress then, he clearly is more active in seeking contact and in resisting release than are B₁ or B₂ babies.

Although his attachment behavior is heightened in the reunion episodes, he does not seem wholly preoccupied with his mother in the pre-separation episodes.

Subgroup B₄:

The baby wants contact, especially in the reunion episodes, and seeks it approaching, clinging, and resisting release; he is, however, somewhat less active and competent in these behaviors than are most B₃ babies, especially in Episode #8.

He seems wholly preoccupied with his mother throughout the Strange Situation. He gives the impression of feeling anxious throughout, with much crying. In the second separation particularly he seems entirely distressed.

He may show some resistance to his mother. Since he also shows strong contact-seeking behavior the impression is of some ambivalence, although not as much as is shown by Group C infants.

Group C:

The baby displays conspicuous contact-and interaction- resisting behavior, perhaps especially in Episode #8.

He also shows moderate to strong seeking of proximity and contact and seeking to maintain contact once gained, so that he gives the impression of being ambivalent to his mother.

He shows little or no tendency to ignore his mother in the reunion episodes, or to turn or move away from her or to avert his gaze from her.

He may display generally "maladaptive" behavior in the Strange Situation. Either he tends to be more angry than infants in other groups, or he may be conspicuous for passivity.

Subgroup C₁:

Proximity seeking and contact maintaining is strong in the reunion episodes, and is more likely to occur also in the pre-separation episodes than in the case of Group B infants.

Resistant behavior is particularly conspicuous. The mixture of seeking and yet resisting contact and interactions has an unmistakably angry quality, and indeed an angry tone may characterize behavior even in the pre-separation episodes.

Angry, resistant behavior is likely to be shown toward the stranger as well as toward the mother.

The baby is very likely to be extremely distressed during the separation episodes.

Subgroup C₂:

Perhaps the most conspicuous characteristic of C₂ infants is their passivity. Their exploratory behavior is limited throughout the Strange Situation, and their interactive behaviors are relatively lacking in active initiative.

Nevertheless in the reunion episodes they obviously want proximity and contact with their mothers, even though they tend to use signaling behavior rather than active approach, and protest against being put down rather than actively resist release.

Resistant behavior tends to strong, particularly in Episode #8, but in general the C₂ baby is not as conspicuously angry as the C₁ baby.