



IASA Family Attachment Court Protocol: A case study

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Family Attachment Court Reports

Excerpts

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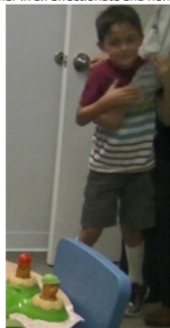
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Part 2 Assessment Reports

5 Frustration (1 minute): When the knock came, John's father turned the battery off and removed the Whack-a-Mole toy. John turned to the source of the knock (the mirror) and mimed his anger.



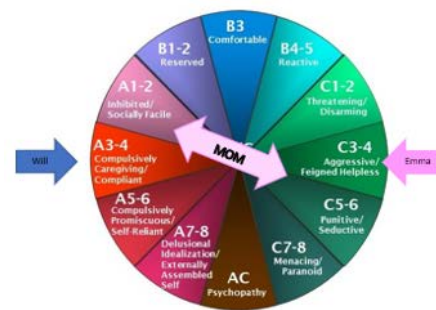
Then John returned to the toy cabinet and took out another toy. His father seemed uncertain what to do and didn't take it away. So the manager knocked again to say 'frustrate him by taking that toy away too.' Instead, John's father thought he should leave the room (as he had done in the Strange Situation with Emma.) John dashed after him and pulled him back in by wrapping his dad's arm around himself. The manager came in and ended the TCI. Although here was no formal repair, John's behavior at the door makes it clear that he wanted his father in an affectionate and non-contentious way.



Interpretation: John and his father played in a relaxed, reciprocal manner that permitted John to show excitement and both of them to show pleasure. Dad carried out the frustration, but he didn't maintain the rule when John found a different toy. Although there wasn't a repair episode, it is clear

Part 3 Family Functional Formulation

Mother & 2 children



Father & 2 children

Answers to Questions & Recommendations

Critical cause of the family's problems

Although we did not discuss their divorce directly, I was struck by (1) Ms. S's expectation that the fun times of dating would continue after the children were born, (2) Mr. P's expectation that he could be away from his family and still maintain his marriage and have an important role with his children, and (3) the absence of expressed awareness of the distress that breakup of the family would cause the children. Neither parent, in other words, was committed to the family.

Possible next steps

The most important next step, I think, is a pause in the process of seeking a divorce. Seeking mediation is, in my opinion, a very good choice for themselves and, especially, for their children.

I suggest a pause of roughly 6 months to reconsider the conditions of the divorce, explore their family relationships, and prepare for the future (as a divided family).

Both parents need to accomplish several tasks and changes in perspective before either will be ready for life as a single parent. I suggest the following:

1. Observe their children carefully to understand the children's needs better and recognize the different sorts of relationships that John and Jane have with each parent.
 - a. The competition between John and Jane is about their need for predictability and affection from their parents.
 - b. Ms. S and Mr. P need to recognize that John is anxious about keeping his mother happy and Jane is often angry with her mom.
2. Take a class in parenting and child development
 - a. Ms. S needs to learn how important what she does is to the development of her children, including especially being consistent and not teasing them.
 - b. Mr. P needs to understand the impact of his being away from his children; he knows the impact on him of his father's absence, but he hasn't connected that to his children.
3. Read each other's Adult Attachment Interviews together with a counsellor. I suspect that neither fully knows or appreciates the difficulties that each had in childhood and how those difficulties can explain their behavior now in their marriage and as parents.
4. Discuss Ms. S' earlier loss of her 3 sons and the ways in which her situation now is similar to or different from that in the past. I think this needs to be done with a counsellor.
5. During the summer, I suggest that the children live with Mr. P where he works for a month.
6. When these things have been done, Ms. S and Mr. P should reconsider who should have the primary responsibility for raising John and Jane. **The needs and preferences of the children should be given priority in making this decision.**
 - a. The children should not be asked their opinion. Their needs and preferences should be inferred from their behavior.
 - b. If desired, another set of TCI video-recordings could be made to provide information that can be viewed and discussed by everyone.
7. Most important, the needs of John and Jane should be placed front and foremost. **This is their childhood and they need the best opportunity to grow up safe and secure that their parents can provide.**