

Beginning at approximately 8 to 12 weeks old, they cry, smile, and vocalize more to the mother than to anyone else but continue to respond to others, whether familiar or not. At approximately 6 months old, infants show a distinct preference for the mother. They follow her more, cry when she leaves, enjoy playing with her more, and feel most secure in her arms. About 1 month after showing attachment to the mother, many infants begin attaching to other members of the family, most often the father.

Infants acquire other developmental behaviors that influence the attachment process. These include

- Differential crying, smiling, and vocalization (more to the mother than to anyone else)
- Visual-motor orientation (looking more at the mother, even if she is not close)
- Crying when the mother leaves the room
- Approaching through locomotion (crawling, creeping, or walking)
- Clinging (especially in the presence of a stranger)
- Exploring away from the mother while using her as a secure base

Severe attachment disorders are psychological and developmental problems that stems from maladaptive or absent attachment between the infant and parent ([Zeanah and Gleason, 2015](#)). There are two different patterns of attachment disorders: the emotionally withdrawn–inhibited pattern and an indiscriminate–disinhibited pattern ([Zeanah and Gleason, 2015](#)). These two subtypes have been classified into separate disorders: reactive attachment disorder (RAD) and disinhibited social engagement disorder (DSED) of infancy or early childhood. Infants at risk for severe attachment disorders include those who have been victims of physical or sexual abuse or neglect; infants exposed to parental alcoholism, mental illness, and substance abuse; and infants who have experienced the absence of a consistent primary caregiver as a result of foster care, institutionalization, parental abandonment, or parental incarceration ([Zeanah and Gleason, 2015](#)). Children with RAD may manifest behaviors such as not being cuddly with parents, failing to seek and respond to comfort when distressed, minimal social and emotional reciprocity, and emotional deregulation such as unexplained fearfulness or irritability ([Zeanah](#)