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**A Practical Guide for Caring for Children and Teenagers with Attachment Difficulties** by C. Taylor, Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London and Philadelphia, 2010. 224pp. ISBN 978 1 84905 081 4 (Pbk), £18.99

This volume is designed to provide carers with detailed guidance to help them to understand attachment theory, and to apply these principles more effectively and consciously when working with children who are experiencing significant attachment difficulties. Taylor offers a practical and accessible approach, bringing a wealth of experience to the task of helping carers to enable children with attachment disorders to achieve more positive, healthy and secure relationships with others.

Social workers, guardians, psychologists, psychiatrists and therapists will also benefit from Taylor's creativity and clarity in describing features of secure and insecure attachment. For example, the references to anxious/avoidant attachment as 'a container without emotions' and to anxious/ambivalent attachment as 'emotions without a container' provide both a succinct description and vivid illustration. Taylor does, however, note that there are adaptive features to such attachment styles while identifying the much more significant challenges associated with disorganised attachment. Explaining this, he observes that a child will naturally try to develop emotionally organised coping strategies, in response to attachment insecurities. Where parents are preoccupied or rejecting in their attitude to engagement with the child, this will lead to a tacitly structured approach employed by the child to gain the necessary attention and support. However, when the primary carer is highly dysregulated and unpredictable in his/her behaviour, then the child's attachment efforts become confused and disorganised in a rather chaotic effort to achieve the level of attachment he/she require with the parent.

Importantly, after providing the reader with a basic understanding of the difficulties facing children with attachment disorders, the book then focuses on establishing a framework for support and intervention. The development of a secure base through which the child or young person can re-examine his or her attachment style is a key aim, and the author identifies a wide range of exercises aimed at helping the child or young person to consider the emotional and cognitive underpinnings of the care giving that they receive (and through reflection, to consider the care he/she have experienced in the past).

The latter chapters of the book describe some of the most difficult issues to address in relation to attachment disorders, although Taylor's fundamental assertion that 'attachment is there to keep us safe' is a central tenet in working with such young people. The attention given to these specific areas helps the reader to understand their complexities and also provides carers with techniques that they can utilise to help overcome these problems. Taylor particularly focuses on working with conflict, anger and assisting carers in managing challenging behaviour. The final chapter focuses on changing problem behaviours. In all of these areas, a pragmatic approach is taken with a helpful underlying behavioural orientation to assist carers in monitoring their own intervention as well as the response of the child.

## Book Review

Edited by  
**Marjorie Keys**

**'Taylor offers a practical and accessible approach, bringing a wealth of experience to the task'**

**'A child will naturally try to develop emotionally organised coping strategies'**

**'Exercises aimed at helping the child or young person to consider the emotional and cognitive underpinnings of the care giving that they receive'**

**'Well constructed and successfully achieves its aim of being a very useful and practical tool for carers'**

This book is well constructed and successfully achieves its aim of being a very useful and practical tool for carers. Each chapter sets out learning outcomes, enabling carers and professionals to employ this text both as a readily accessible reference and a source of further ideas for care planning. *A Practical Guide for Caring for Children and Teenagers with Attachment Difficulties* fills a gap, offering guidance to carers and a more focal understanding of relevant issues for professionals involved in care and family work. We suspect that this book will acquire a well-worn look on the book shelf or desk of many individuals who are regularly asked to provide advice and support to carers working with vulnerable and traumatised children.

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