

"Trust Bandits"

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Can you imagine that Theodore Bundy, Muammar Gadhafi, Charles Manson, Ken Bianchi, Joe Flynn and many other infamous people were darling infants? What factors influenced them to become notorious criminals? If we could trace back to their first two years of life we may find family instability and minimal care-giving. Their environment helped to trigger a genetic predisposition for a bonding break with a parent or care-giver. Families are experiencing absent working parents, teenage pregnancy, inadequate child care, adoption, foster care, child abuse, drugs and divorce. Out of these unsettling situations are coming children of a very special kind; children who cannot trust, children who cannot love, children who will not be loved. These children will someday become adults without a conscience unless we learn to nurture them as infants. Close attention must be given them when they are young if they are to grow up as healthy, happy, loving adults. "If these needs for bonding are not met, an incomprehensible pain will be forever locked in their souls." (High Risk, Magid, McKelvey) Working mothers with children under 1 year old increased by 70% in the past decade. These children are virtually being raised by strangers. To add to this, mothers are being required to

work for economic survival. These mothers are also building an inner defense. This defense prevents them from getting too close to their children. It won't hurt as much when they must leave the child for work. How deep can their nurturing be? Dr. Ken Magid and Carole A. McKelvey in High Risk - Children Without a Conscience detailed this national bonding crises which states not only is the baby in peril but we all are at high risk. Agencies are becoming more aware of the growing unattached child syndrome. Legislation is being enacted under the Bush administration to address the needs of our infants and children.

Each day we read about people who have manipulated others - conned them or even killed. These people may have been unbonded or unattached children. Giovanni Vigliotti married (but didn't divorce) 105 wives. He lovingly persuaded them to give him all their money and possessions. Another "trust bandit" was Theodore Bundy the swave, charming, intelligent killer of nearly 100 women. Muammar Gadhafi also came from an unsettled fragmented family lifestyle to become the ruthless charismatic leader of the East. Headlines across America read - Florida Police try to determine if 5 year old Knew Consequences when he Threw 3 year old off 5th Floor Stairwell, Eleven year old from Affluent St. Louis neighborhood orders 10 year old out of her Yard, When She Doesn't Leave She Shoots Him with parent's gun. Girl 4, kills twin baby brothers by

throwing them to the floor after one of the 3 week-old infants accidentally scratches her during play." (High Risk) These are extreme cases of the detached syndrome.

The slightly afflicted may be people we know or have known of who have manipulated others into believing they were the epitome of honesty. These people exude charm and an uncanny sense of dealing with other's vulnerabilities. "The fake poet who really feels little, the painter who, despite his loftiness had his eye on the lucrative fad of his day, the fashionable clergyman who despite his burning eloquence of his lively castigation of the devil is primarily concerned with his own advancement, the flirt who can readily awaken love but cannot feel love or recognize it's absence, parent's who despite smooth conviction that they have only the child's welfare at heart actually reject him or abuse him, except as it suits their own petty selfish gain." (High Risk, Magid, McKelvey) These people are the great deceivers - the Trust Bandits - that were once children without a conscience who place others at high risk for trusting them.

Psychologists, teachers, law enforcement professionals are seeing a rising tide of unattached children or otherwise named character-disturbed, anti-social personality disordered, trust bandits, or psychopaths. Why are we seeing more of these people today? "The problem starts at the beginning of

life, when the scales are tipped toward a future of trust and love or one of mistrust and deep seated rage." (High Risk) Bonding is a critical factor. Professionals are now believing the infancy period has a tremendous impact on the child's ability to love and receive love - to trust and be trusted.

Dean Inge stated in High Risk that, "The proper time to influence the character of a child is about a hundred years before he is born." Effective parenting skills are learned. If new parents and child care institutions are unaware of the child's bonding needs it will be perpetuated through further generations. Parenting must be responsible and seek to achieve an attachment bond. John Kennell (1976) defines attachment as "an affectionate bond between two individuals that endures through space and time and serves to join them emotionally." Pediatrician and director of the world renowned Forest Heights Lodge (a treatment center for emotionally disturbed children) Vera Falberg, says that, "the bond that a child develops to the person who cares for him in the early years is the foundation for his future psychological development and future relationships with others." Proper attachment is critical for the child's emotional and physical survival. Attachment helps the child to "attain his full intellectual potential, sort out perceptions, think logically, develop a conscience, be-

come self reliant, cope with stress and frustration, handle fear and worry, develop future relationships and reduce jealousy." (Falberg 1979)

The attachment process should occur during the first and second year of life. Some infants seem to be high risk candidates for unattachment. They may fall into the following categories: genetic history of antisocial personality disorder in family members, prebirth trauma, an emotionally disturbed parent, premature birth and low birth weight, complications during birth, separation at birth from care giver, and other interruptions of consistency of care. Examples of these interruptions are divorce, day care, child abuse, or a neglectful family setting. (McKelvey, Magid, p. 248) When a child experiences repeated long separations from his mother or care giver he learns he cannot trust others and will not care for them. Consequently, he fails to learn to care for others and fails to develop a conscience.

High Risk described Danny the unattached child. His parents adopted him at age 5 from a Vietnamese orphanage. His adoptive father said, "He climbed right on my lap and cuddled and acted like he wanted to go home with me. It was very flattering. He was a real charmer!"

The adoptive parents soon found Danny wore a mask of deceit. Danny soon murdered three family cats, vandalized neighbors homes with \$6,000 in damages, tried to drown a

visiting 12 year old girl, set many neighborhood fires, drew devilish pictures in church, stole from, lied to, bullied, beat down and terrified his family. He later threatened to kill his family by setting the house on fire. Danny is a chilling example of what may happen when attachment is not formed. Interruption in the bonding cycle may be broken in any home. We need to be aware of the warning signs in infancy and early childhood. Dr. Foster Cline, a leading authority has treated unattached children for twenty years and described the character disturbed child.

"The unattached child will not allow you to touch or cuddle him. One mother described holding the child was like holding a board - stiff and constantly pulling away. This may be shown in the first few months of life. The child could not stand to be held and loved - he kept others at a distance so as not to be hurt psychologically or physically.

The unattached child may also have self-destructive behavior and may believe they themselves are above pain.

Perhaps one of the worst characteristics of the unattached, character disturbed child is their cruelty to others and animals. Parents and teachers report blatant hurting of others.

These children do not have an "internalized model of behavior," (Magid) therefore they do not know how to respond to other human beings. They try to fool others with

phony love. They are so good at playing the part that their victims (family, teachers and acquaintances) don't realize that they are being manipulated. They cannot relate in an honest way. They are manipulators who are cute, helpless, smart or beguiling based on their needs at the time.

Another symptom is stealing, hoarding and gorging - possibly a way of filling their empty hearts. Speech pathology is used for manipulation to get their way.

In addition unattached children cannot tolerate other peoples limits or discipline. They push others to their limit. "Outwardly they appear to need to be in control, inside they feel insecure. Children who have been abused felt they had little control over their lives."

Due to the unattached child's superficial, manipulative, self-destructive and sometimes cruel behavior he is unable to have long term childhood friends.

Another warning sign is the childs abnormal eye contact, - they will not look you in the eye except when they are being manipulative. A proverb says, "The eyes are the windows of the soul." Terry Storwick, a childhood acquaintance of Ted Bundy remarked, "It was really easy to see when Ted got mad. His eyes turned black - his eyes were normally blue. When he got hot or angry his eyes seemed to get less blue and more dark." Dorothy, one of Bundy's victims,

described his eyes as "the look of the devil."

These children also have a preoccupation with blood, fire and gore. The child's internalized rage blames everyone else for his problems, but never blames himself. By analyzing their art work therapists can help them to bring their rage or bad feelings to the surface.

As mentioned, like psychopathic adults, these children display a superficial attractiveness and friendliness to strangers. As the great manipulator they can appear as poor, helpless babies or as sweet, bright children. They can appear in whatever roll suits their purpose. These children also lie constantly and lie even when caught. Cline says, "It's almost as if the child confuses the way he wishes life were with the way it actually is."

The above mentioned symptom may be a result of bonding breaks which happen the first year of life. The extent of these breaks are based on several factors. They are: age, ego strengths, the child's genetic strength and how much time has lapsed since the bonding cycle has begun. Proper development is based on proper care in the first year of life and continues into childhood. As a word of caution, it would be a mistake to blame all human ills on the failure of early nurturing. Not all unattached children become psychopaths but they do become trust bandits, taking love and returning heartache.

Rosenthal in High Risk indicated that 6 studies estimated 15% of this country's population suffers from Anti-social Personality Disorder. The United States population is 260 million, only 5% would mean 13 million psychopaths. This segment will cost everyone and create High Risks for individuals and our world. These "trust bandits" perpetuate child abuse and neglect, broken homes and hearts, cheating, stealing and criminal acts. Although crime and antisocial personality disorders are not synonymous there is no question that there is a vast amount of criminal behavior by those personalities. Time, effort, and thousands of dollars will be spent attempting to correct their behavior. We need to deal effectively with these "trust bandits." The time to teach loving obedience is in the playpen and not in the State Pen. This is no easy task, especially when most therapy is based on mutual trust and empathy. No treatment has been found to be an absolute solution to this disorder. The antisocial personality has many tricks up his sleeve to fool even the wisest therapist. In the fear game the patient insinuates or threatens to have uncontrollable urges to harm others. The guilt or gotcha game patient finds a therapist's weaknesses and tries to place guilt on the therapist for not being a better role model. The therapist is made to feel that he must rescue the "poor soul." Another game the trust bandits play is "The mad glad ploy."

He makes the therapist mad at him. The patient is in control and in turn the patient feels glad.

The mad hatter game is played when the patient attempts to overwhelm the therapist with diversionary stories. These stories are a smoke screen to prevent the therapist from seeing the patient's real emotional problems.

Another game the therapist may encounter is the "join me game." An anonymous therapist recalled such a patient's game.

"Beside being a knockout, she dressed to kill. She wore see-through blouses, short skirts and had a seductive line. She started off by telling me that she had been to several doctors before me, but none seemed to know how to help her. She felt especially lucky to be seeing me now. Before I knew it we were talking about how she was having trouble with her car and she wondered if I could give her a lift home after the session. Fortunately for me, I had other patients to see and this spell was broken. For a moment there, I was willing to follow her anywhere." As you can see, many therapists are no match for experienced TRUST BANDITS!

Many therapy techniques have been tried with some success. In 1966, Dr. Foster Cline met with Dr. Robert Zaslow and together they sought to treat disturbed children. They felt that non-organic disorders could be traced to the attachment cycle. The treatment sought to bring about a "rebonding process." Zaslow's early work dealt with

autistic children who became enraged when held or confronted by others. Zaslow felt these children had barriers built which needed to be broken with peace and resolution waiting on the other side. This attachment cycle therapy was called rage reduction or "Z" therapy. Several highly trained therapists were needed to restrain the child in a fair and sensitive manner. A rage reduction session lasts several hours. One parent of a detached child described the experience, "If I didn't see it with my own eyes, I wouldn't have believed it. First, there was this ungodly rage when his whole body tensed up and he screamed that he hated me and admitted that he prayed to the devil. I was scared but after he got it out, he said he really hated himself and he started crying uncontrollably. That was when I held him. I really held him for the first time in my life. It was like he could trust me to hold him." After many hours of lie-down therapy, the severely unattached child was ready to begin the reattachment process with a loving parent or caregiver. Many hours of caring followup work are needed. A parent, if this process is successful, will usually for the first time hear their formerly unattached child say, "I want you to love me. Please love me."

It should be understood there are varying degrees of detachment and consequently therapy should fit these degrees.

The work of Allan and Zaslow evolved from rage reduction

therapy. This new technique is called modified holding. It is "a mild confrontive interviewing, balanced with verbal support and face to face intervention." The therapist acts like a healthy parent figure and communicates to the child, "your life is not going well and you are upset and I'm going to hold you until things are worked out." (Magid and Mc Kelvey) An atmosphere of fun and spontaneity is encouraged. The child is allowed to feel safe and unthreatened. The child's art work is also used to help the therapist study the child's behavior problems. This modified holding process helps the child identify, understand and express his deeply held feelings. If begun in childhood, reattachment treatments tend to have a 50% success rate.

Family therapy involves family members in strategies which require the unattached child to make choices within situations. These situation strategies are means of getting love and affection for the unattached child. The family works toward forming new patterns of behavior in achieving a loving relationship.

Therapeutic changes requires care by and for the patient. Nowhere is this more evident than in Spiritual Therapy. As it has been mentioned, psychopaths or "trust bandits" know how to use kindness of others for their own personal gain. Authorities agree it seems impossible to talk a psychopath out of his evil ways. But on the other hand, a true religious experience has been known to go beyond

words or reason. "The spiritual message of love and redemption is emotionally charged and unforgettable. The psychopath can feel "attached" to God." (Magid, McKelvey)

The Japanese call spiritual attachment NAIKON which is based on time, love, and self-discipline for achieving personal enlightenment. The patient answers introspective questions which help him understand his feelings such as "What was received from others? What was returned to them? What troubles were caused to them?" (Magid, McKelvey)

Another controlled environment therapy technique used was experimental or Wilderness therapy. The experiences are designed so each youth is challenged to learn self-discipline, commitment to action, trust, responsibility and caring for others. A youth finds he cannot con "Mother Nature." One youth in Dr. William Reid's book Unmasking the Psychopath described wilderness training in the Sante Fe Mountains as, "When the trips start you despise everything around you . . . You will resent your very existence and you will suffer every aching pain in your body. You will think back about these things and you will feel this incredible surge of power over yourself and all those add up to the most fantastic and cherished adventurous memory."

"You will find the people you did not trust, the same people you wanted to destroy, crush and mangle, are just the same as you are, flesh and bone vulnerable human beings.

Just people . . . it is not happening to you alone; just like when the group watched your back and protected you as you went down that cliff, so shall the groups be in harmony on thought . . . This is the meaning of the wilderness experience." (Kimball, 1986)

As discussed these "Trust Bandits" can be helped if treated in early childhood. Perspective parents, therapists, social welfare agencies, and day care people need to understand the crucial stages of attachment or bonding. Claire Safran in the Reader's Digest article Kids Who Beat the Odds discussed the importance of providing loving care and attention if the child is going to succeed in our world. Parents provide the child's inherited traits and his environment which influence his perception of the world.

Unbonded children can create complex problems which run through the entire society. When parents can not create a balance in the family they feel inadequate to deal with the "detached child." Teachers, police or social workers are asked to fill the role and deal with the child's problems.

The people and agencies need to work with the family to create a positive attitude about themselves and the child. Family teaching centers are needed to teach child management, discipline and self-concept skills. It is the responsibility of everyone involved with child care to stop the bonding crisis in America.

Whitney Houston's song is a reminder, "I believe that

children are our future, teach them well and let them lead the way. Show them all the beauty they possess inside. Give them a sense of pride, and make it easier. Let the children's laughter remind us how it used to be."

It is possible to reach the special children with the cooperation of parents, schools, churches, health and social agencies, federal and local legislatures and government agencies. Change in child care is needed now or our Nation will be at high risk from children with out a conscience.

Magid, Ken and McKelvey, Carole A., High Risk Children
Without a Conscience.

Safran, Claire, Reader's Digest, "Kids Who Beat the Odds"
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