

Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD)



It is believed that kids are born with the ability to be naturally resilient. Even those who have been neglected, abused and/or have lived in and through very dire situations can have normal and healthy relationships with their parents/caregivers and others in their life. Yet, some infants and young kids develop reactive attachment disorder (RAD) while others don't.

Reactive attachment disorder (RAD) is rather uncommon, yet, a serious disorder where an infant or a very young kid doesn't develop healthy connections with parents/caregivers.

For infants and young kids to feel safe and build trust they need a secure and caring environment. Their needs (emotional and physical) must be met through constant, consistent and reliable interactions with their parents/caregivers. For example, when an infant cries because they are hungry and/or need their diaper changed, not only do they need to be fed and/or changed but they also need to have a shared emotional interaction with their caregiver such as eye contact, smiling and comforting talk and touch during those times.

All of these kinds of experiences help develop, strengthen and reinforce the relationship an infant or young kid has with their parents/caregivers and they learn to trust that their needs will be met.

However, when an infant or a young kid's needs are continually not met and there is very little or no positive emotional interaction between the parents/caregivers, then the infant or young kid may be at risk of developing reactive attachment disorder.

It should also be noted that the exact cause of reactive attachment disorder (RAD) is not known, nor is it known if reactive attachment disorder can truly be prevented.

Signs and symptoms of RAD in infants or young kids may include:

- Withdrawal
- Fearful
- Irritable
- Sad appearance
- Lethargic appearance
- Does not seek comfort/reassurance
- Does not respond or react positively to comforting reactions from others

- Does not smile
- Watches others closely interact but do not participate in the social activity
- Does not reach out to be picked up
- Does not show interest and/or interact in playing peekaboo or other interactive games

It should also be noted, that there's very little research on signs and symptoms of RAD beyond early childhood, as it is still unclear if RAD can develop in kids older than 5 years.

Yet we do know that RAD can negatively impact all parts of a kid or adolescent's life and as well as their development. And we also know that kids with RAD as they become older generally develop certain behavior patterns known as inhibited or disinhibited. Sometimes an adolescent may develop and show signs of both inhibited and disinhibited behavior patterns.

Signs and symptoms of Inhibited RAD in older kids and adolescents:

- Detached
- Unresponsive or resistant to offered/given comforting efforts
- Withdrawn and distant from others
- Avoids developing relationships with people in general

Signs and symptoms of Disinhibited RAD in older kids and adolescents:

- Will try to connect and socialize with anyone (good or bad)
- Seeks attention from anyone who might give it
- Displays inappropriate childish behavior
- Frequently asks for help doing things when help is not truly needed
- Lacks and constantly crosses social and personal boundaries

Fortunately, there is hope and help for those with RAD. Through therapeutic treatment and general continued support kids and adolescents with reactive attachment disorder are capable of developing stable and healthy relationships with parents/caregivers and other people in their life and can live and have a happy and healthy life.



https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and.../Attachment-Disorders-085.aspx
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/...attachment-disorder/.../syc-2035293>
<https://psychcentral.com/disorders/reactive-attachment-disorder-symptoms/>
<https://www.villagebh.com/disorders/reactive-attachment/symptoms-signs-effects>
www.pineyridge.net/behavioral-disorders/reactive-attachment/causes-effects-symptoms