

History. He was the second of two boys, the elder being a cheerful, normal lad who had never got into trouble. He lived with his mother and father, whose marriage was happy and who appeared to treat the children sensibly and kindly and without discriminating between them. On enquiry into his early history it was found that he was a wanted child and had been breast-fed for three months, after which he thrived on the bottle. Indeed he was said to be a happy normal child until the age of 18 months, when he got diphtheria. Because of this he was away in [the] hospital for nine months, during the whole of which he remained unvisited by his parents. In [the] hospital he was said to have been adored by everyone, but when he returned home he was a "little stranger." He refused all food and finally was left to starve for a while. His mother described how "it seemed like looking after someone else's baby. He did not know us, he called me 'nurse' and seemed to have no affection for us at all." She said it was fully 18 months before he settled down, although to an external eye it appeared that in fact he had never done so yet.

Personality. He seemed not to care for anyone except possibly his elder brother, but even with him there were spells of unreasonable temper. Usually he was happiest when playing alone. He was markedly undemonstrative and his schoolteacher commented that emotionally he was "very controlled for a young boy." The mother also remarked on this, saying that he was quite unmoved by either affection or punishment, and she had come to regard him as hard-boiled. On the other hand he was always fighting and was at times destructive of both his own and his brother's toys. The teacher complained particularly of his untruthfulness, "wanton destructiveness" and habits of annoying other children.

Stealing and Truancy. He began school at 4 1/2 and liked it at first. But later he disliked the teacher and wanted his brother's teacher. This led to truancy on and off for about a month. The pilfering was noticed soon after his beginning school. It seems to have been quite indiscriminating, for he was said to pilfer from children's pockets, the teacher's desk, from shops and from his mother. Any money he obtained he spent on sweets which he would share with his brother and other children, but not with his parents. He had been repeatedly beaten both by school authorities and at home for stealing, but the beating had no effect on him beyond making him cry for a few moments.

Examination. On tests he was found to have an [IQ] of 125 and to be slow, careful and deliberate in his work. To the psychiatrist he gave the impression of being an engaging, sociable kid. But in his play there was much violent destructiveness. On many occasions he pilfered toys from the Clinic.

Diagnosis. His superficial geniality was misleading at first. As time went on it was clear that his mother's and school-teacher's accounts of his detachment represented the truth. In view of this, his destructiveness, his hard-boiledness, and his unresponsiveness, he seemed to be a typical case of Affectionless Character. This was clearly related to his prolonged hospitalization.⁵⁴

THINK ABOUT IT:

1. Applying Bowlby's attachment theory, what are some essential features that resulted in Derek being "affectionless"?
2. What are some possible treatments that could help Derek?