

Live Fast, Die Young:

An evolved response to hostile environments

James S. Chisholm and Daniela F. Sieff

In: Sieff, D.F. (2015) *Understanding and Healing Emotional Trauma: Conversations with Pioneering Clinicians and Researchers*. Routledge, UK

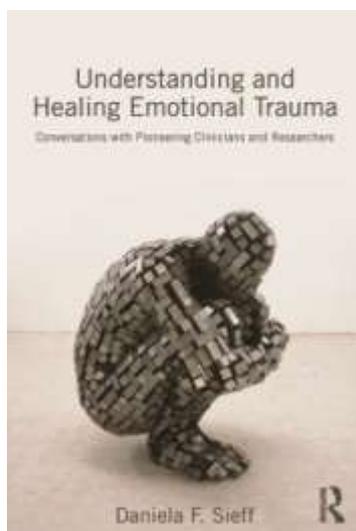
Chapter Summary

Early attachment relationships have long-lasting effects on developing minds and bodies. They influence our fear system and sexual development. They shape our attitudes to romantic relationships, our parenting style and how we see both ourselves and others. Typically, the trajectory that develops from being sensitively nurtured and securely attached is seen as normal and healthy, whereas the trajectory that follows from being inadequately nurtured and insecurely attached is seen as abnormal and unhealthy.

Modern evolutionary theory has a different perspective. No single trajectory is best for all individuals of a species; what is optimal in one environment is rarely optimal in a different one. In particular, it is now thought that the pathways described by secure attachment offered advantages to ancestral humans who were living in benign environments, whereas the pathways described by insecure attachment offered our ancestors more chance of surviving and reproducing in harsh physical environments or when social support was lacking.

For ancestral infants to develop along the pathway that would be most adaptive for them as individuals, they needed information about the environment into which they had been born. The quality of parental nurturance provided that information in an implicit and embodied form. Parents are more attuned to their infants when living in benign environments and when they have plentiful social support, than when they are struggling. Thus, the quality of parental nurturance became the crucial, albeit unwitting, cue which influenced development.

The adaptive value of insecure attachment does not mean that it has no costs. It does. It creates profound suffering at both emotional and physical levels. However, for those of our ancestors who were born into harsh physical or social environments, that suffering was the price of surviving and bearing descendents.



Cover Image: Antony Gormley, *Apert VII*, 2002, Variable mild steel blocks, 79x51x59cm, 213kg

To read full chapter please click below to buy book:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Amazon UK | Amazon USA | Amazon Canada |
| Amazon Germany | Amazon Italy | Amazon France |
| Amazon Spain | Amazon Brazil | Amazon Mexico |
| Amazon Australia | Amazon Japan | Amazon China |