

# Children who have difficult relationships with their moms are clingy towards teachers

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Children who experience "dependent" or clingy relationships with their preschool teachers tend to also have difficulties in their relationships with their mothers finds researchers at the NYU Steinhardt School of

Culture, Education, and Human Development. The research, published in peer-reviewed academic research journal *Attachment and Human Behavior*, went even further to find that later in elementary school, these children were prone to being anxious, withdrawn, and overly shy.

"Our research suggests that preschool teachers have the potential to play a pivotal role for [children](#) who are more dependent," said Robin Neuhaus, lead researcher and doctoral student in NYU Steinhardt's Department of Teacher and Learning. "By being warm and supportive, and by encouraging children to explore, preschool teachers may be able to reset the trajectories of children who may otherwise struggle with anxiety in [elementary school](#)."

Analyzing data from 769 children collected by the National Institute of Health's Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Neuhaus and her colleagues looked at assessments of mother-child attachment patterns from families across the United States. The sample looked at attachment at 36 months, 54 months, first, third and fifth grades, and examined dependency, closeness, conflict and other behaviors between children and their mothers, as well as children and their teachers.

"Results from multilevel models showed that clingy behavior with preschool teachers was associated with higher levels of anxious behaviors when children were in fifth grade. Clingy behavior also partially mediated the link between a difficult type of mother-child attachment and anxiety in fifth grade," continued Neuhaus.

**More information:** Robin Neuhaus et al, The mediating role of child-teacher dependency in the association between early mother-child attachment and behavior problems in middle childhood, *Attachment & Human Development* (2020). [DOI: 10.1080/14616734.2020.1751989](https://doi.org/10.1080/14616734.2020.1751989)

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