



Attachment Theory and Law Enforcement

Sgt. Eric Skog

Saint Paul Police Department



When we may deal with those who suffer from Attachment Disorder:

- Suspects
- Victims
- Witnesses/Complainants
- Potentially a high percentage of everyone we deal with on a given day



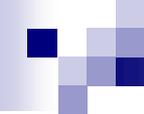
Under what Circumstances might we deal with them?

- Domestic violence
- Robberies
- Sexual assaults
- Deprivation of parental rights
- Narcotics
- Runaways
- Child Abuse
- Homicide
- Any number of situations



Does Law Enforcement Receive
Specific Training in AT?

No



How then do we deal with them?

- **Suspects:**
 - Attempt to gain trust
 - Attempt to gain cooperation and/or compliance
 - Force cooperation and/or compliance if necessary
 - Officer safety is paramount

How then do we deal with them?

- **Victims, Witnesses, others:**
 - Again, attempt to gain trust
 - Attempt to gain cooperation and/or compliance
 - Officer safety concerns still exist
 - Gathering the evidence (the truth) is the goal
 - Understanding the true issue(s) is often difficult

Challenges to Law Enforcement

- **Law Enforcement represents a commonly recognized authority figure**
 - For the person with an attachment disorder:
 - Why should I trust this person?
 - Can I trust this person?
 - Why does this person want to control me?
 - What happens if I let them control me?
 - Will this person hurt me?
 - Will this person tell lies to get me in trouble?
 - Should I tell lies to stay out of trouble?
 - Should I run away before they hurt me?
 - Should I hurt them before they hurt me?
 - **Are they trying to kill me?**

Challenges to Law Enforcement Con't

- **For the law enforcement officer:**
 - I need to stay safe
 - I need to control this situation
 - Is this person going to hurt me?
 - Is this person telling me the truth?
 - Why is this person acting this way?
 - Why do they look so scared?
 - Why don't they seem to understand me?
 - Why don't they seem to be listening to me?
 - Are they nervous or scared?
 - Should I be scared?
 - Can I figure out the truth?
 - Are they in crisis or under the influence?
 - What do I need to do with this person?:
 - Arrest
 - Detain
 - Document
 - Medical Transport
 - Release to parents

Summary

- **Attachment Theory (disorder) presents significant challenges to the LE community:**
 - **The issues are not easily addressed as they are complex**
 - **LE officers are not specifically trained to deal with AT sufferers**
 - **We don't care about the how's and why's of the past, but about the here and now**
 - **It is best for LE to remedy the situation as quickly as possible**
 - **Often, the more time spent with a party, the more likely they are to become more dangerous**
 - **Ambiguity is difficult for both LE and the persons we deal with**
 - **Violence is our biggest concern**



Contact Information

Sgt. Eric Skog
Saint Paul Police Department
Family and Sexual Violence Unit
367 Grove St.
Saint Paul, MN 55101
Eric.skog@ci.stpaul.mn.us

