

'Attachment Disorder' explains boy's attack

OUR OPINION: Child may suffer from a tragic life-changing disorder

"He's just like most other 6-year-old boys. He has his arguments and scrapes in school. He can be hyper," said the boy's grandmother recently.

Just like most other 6-year-old boys — except that this smiling little Richmond, Calif., kindergartner allegedly broke into an apartment with the help of two 8-year-old boys last week, took a sleeping 1-month-old baby out of its bassinet, and proceeded to kick, punch and beat the infant with a stick.

As the baby lies in critical condition in a children's hospital in Oakland, Calif., the reasons for the attack only add to the bizarre nature of the incident: the 6-year-old believed the baby's family had harassed him and looked at him the wrong way, so he decided he had to kill the baby.

As California corrections officials try to figure out just what to do with the boy, it appears a convincing explanation for the boy's actions is being overlooked.

From the reports we have seen, the boy has all the tell-tale signs of a child who suffers from Attachment Disorder. Before Attachment Disorder is defined, we should quickly explain what "attachment" is.

Attachment, and the behaviors that go with it, is merely the seeking and maintaining of closeness to another human in an aggressive manner. In this context, attachment behavior is the necessary physical and psychological interaction

between an infant and its primary caregiver — usually the mother.

If a child does not successfully complete the stages of the Attachment Life Cycle (one that includes a baby having its basic needs met) in its first two years of life, the child can suffer neurological damage (due to lack of stimuli) to the mid-brain. When this happens, huge areas of the brain fail to develop adequate skills for taking in information about the child's surroundings, for processing and comprehending that information and for planning appropriate responses to that information.

In essence, if an infant fails to attach to its mother or some other person, the child will most likely suffer from severe biological, chemical and psychological problems.

Some of the information now coming out on this boy reads like a case file on a child with Attachment Disorder.

"This young man is very angry [and] he should not be released," a deputy district attorney in Martinez, Calif., said. At the hearing, the boy hugged his grandparents but ignored his mother.

He's in the middle of being raised in a chaotic family setting by a sometimes-there mother and a grandmother convicted of possessing cocaine two years ago.

This 6-year-old is not like most others. But instead of getting locked up, he should be given a second chance at life through professional counseling and love.



Everybody get naked — it's springtime

A hhhh, springtime in Eugene. The mercury should reach 70 today with a slight breeze and a few lazy clouds hanging around.

It just doesn't get much better than this. If you can, try and spend the next few minutes enjoying it all.

Stop what you're doing. Whatever it is — reading, taking notes, personal hygiene — anything. Take a break and get outside.

Pull up some grass, have a seat (don't worry about your shorts; the ground is dry) and take a deep breath. Really. Suck up as much oxygen as you can, and let your mind wander through every thought that forms. Think about what makes this time of year so damn nice for you.

Make it personal; you deserve it. Remember, you've been trudging around in boots and slickers through a proverbial sheath of rain for the last nine months.

Take a moment to reflect on the sunshine that awaits you.

For me, springtime is about regeneration. Finding a newborn litter of kittens. Watching them suckle on their mother's teat as she licks their ears, brushes their coats, and guards their safety. She's weary of strangers and joyous of the new life that has sprung from her womb. That's springtime.

It's about the miracle of life. Going to a grocery store, finding a pregnant woman and rubbing her stomach. Asking her how long she's been with child. Has she had an ultrasound? Will it be a boy or a girl? That's springtime.

It's about light. A trade has been made. The cold has switched to warmth; the short days have turned to endlessly lit nights. That's springtime.

It's about apparel. Replacing yet another pair of sunglasses you lost during winter. Dusting off the shorts that were stored away. It's about legs that have been mummified in jeans and thermals. Don't worry, everyone else's appendages look as sun-deprived as yours. That's springtime.

It's about dresses. Watching a flowing springtime skirt pass before you. This is the kind of cotton that breathes better than wine. That's springtime.

It's about the sky. Like a snake, it has shed a gray layer, only to reveal its beautiful blue skin beneath. That's springtime.

It's about correspondence. Hugging your parents when they come to visit. Telling your dad you love him because you haven't said so for a while. Writing your friend a letter instead of sending e-mail. That's springtime.

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It's about spontaneity. Picking a flower and putting it behind your ear. Going to class and forgetting that the blossom is still there. Making a comment in front of everyone and wondering why all eyes are staring at your head. That's springtime.

It's about nakedness. Not wearing anything underneath your graduation gown. Jumping into bed without boxers. Striking down thirteenth wearing only your backpack. Wondering where to hang your keys. Swimming in a stream that was only meant for you. Off with the towel! Off with the shirt! Off with the shorts! Being proud of every finger, toe and orifice that is yours. That's springtime.

It's about going to the park. Watching the kids seesaw back and forth. It's about walking your dog. The park goes gather around to talk. Your dog always seems to bring people together. Sure he poops a lot, but who cares? That's springtime.

It's about sports. Oiling your softball mitt as you prepare for intramural intensity. Getting your tennis racquet restrung. Tagging a golf ball like you never have before. That's springtime.

It's about the union of friends and beer. Meeting your buddies on the sun-bathed veranda of a bar. Drinking the ales and lagers that have replaced stouts and porters. Knowing your limit and being content to stay below it. That's springtime.

It's about fishing. Listening to the rush of the stream as it deafens the surrounding environment. Your first cast brings the kind of peace that can never be described, only experienced. The water's tranquility silences the thoughts within. The voices are calmed. That's springtime.

Springtime is about surreal moments. Hiking Spencer's Butte in the evening with the one you love. Getting to the top and watching brilliant shades of red, orange, pink and scarlet intermingle. Staring at the colored light as it dances across her face. Giving passionate thanks that every day is a day spent with her.

That's springtime.

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