



Secure Attachments

Nurturing your child's intelligence, creativity, and healthy emotions

In 1969 psychologist John Bowlby reported that the earliest bonds formed by children with their caregivers had a tremendous impact that continues throughout life. Subsequent research has confirmed that the attachment bond is a key factor in an infant's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development. The strong emotional bond a baby develops with mom and dad, and others in their daily life, benefits a child beyond measure.

Ways to bond with baby

Touch. Babies respond to the warmth of your touch. Skin-to-skin contact helps them feel secure. Massaging babies is a natural way to improve their physical and emotional health.

Eye contact. Newborns can typically see you best when your face is about a foot away. Making faces, smiling, and looking into baby's eyes promotes bonding.

Sounds. Babies love the sound of the human voice, so sing and talk to them. The familiar sound of your heartbeat will also help them relax.

Responding to their needs. Picking up babies when they cry or feeding them when they are hungry promotes trust and bonding. As they develop you'll notice that different cries mean different things so you can respond more quickly.

Repetition. Doing something repeatedly helps babies process information and learn about the world. It also instills a sense of safety and security.

Routine. Babies like predictability. Routines can help them feel safe and secure, and helps strengthen bonds of trust.

Eating. Many of your baby's earliest signals centre around their needs for food and rest. Increasing the frequency of feedings (if appropriate) or adding extra time can make a big difference in your baby's ability to engage and interact.

Sleep. Babies will often sleep 16 to 18 hours a day in their first few months and their sleep signals may come more often than you might expect. If babies are over-tired, they may be hyper-alert and move frenetically. You might mistake this energy as an invitation to play, but it could be their way of saying "naptime should have been 30 minutes ago."



This month we look at how caregivers can nurture strong, secure attachments with a newborn, and then continue to nurture that bond as the child grows older. If you are not a parent of young children, pass this newsletter on to someone who may benefit from it.



The bottom line

The bond between a baby and his or her primary caregiver is unique and special. As you come to appreciate and understand your baby you may need to watch out for pressure from well-meaning family and friends. What worked for their babies may not work for yours.

A secure bond between baby and caregiver provides a baby with an optimal foundation for life: an eagerness to learn, healthy self-awareness, trust, and consideration for others. If an infant's need for safety and understanding are not met, it can lead to confusion and difficulties in learning and relating to others. You don't have to be a perfect parent all of the time in order to bond with your baby. Do your best and don't worry if you don't always know what your baby wants. It will become clearer as you continue to bond with your little one.

The importance of play

- Ongoing research has shown that for normal social, emotional, and cognitive development to occur in children, you must allow them the opportunity for free and imaginative play. It is through play that a child develops social skills, problem solving skills, and interpersonal skills.
- As babies get older it is important to have fun, play, laugh, and share happiness together. Toys, books, and music can provide a helpful starting point for play.
- Playing with children of their own age group helps them learn lessons in sharing, give-and-take, and negotiation skills.
- When children learn new skills through repetition it contributes to the development of coordinated motor skills needed for later game playing.
- When children use their imagination and skills to create something or put on a performance it develops problem-solving skills, imagination, fine motor skills, and self-esteem.
- Play presents many opportunities for oral communication that strengthens a child's language development.



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