

Eyes on



Parent-child attachment

A bond of trust



Centre of Excellence
for Early Childhood
Development

PARENTS



“Attachment is the emotional bond between you and your baby.”

What do we know?

- Attachment is the emotional bond between you and your baby.
- Even though babies can't speak, they have ways of letting you know how they're feeling. If you pay attention to these signs and act on them to comfort your baby, you will form a bond of trust.
- For example, your baby may cry when sick, tired or afraid. This is your baby's way of letting you know they want to be comforted.
- When you pay attention to your baby's crying and offer comfort in these situations, they learn that you can protect them. Your baby comes to know that you will act in a predictable and caring way when they need you. This makes them feel more trusting and more secure with you.
- You can see that your child has a strong bond of trust with you when they are happy around you and actively want to be with you (for example, they smile at you, want to play and cuddle with you).
- If your child grows up trusting you, they learn to trust other people in different situations.
- When your child feels trusting and secure, they are more likely to become independent. They are able to face the regular challenges of childhood (such as starting day care or making new friends) and other difficult situations.
- If your child is trusting and secure, they are better able to control the way they react in situations that seem scary or stressful. Being able to control their feelings is an important part of emotional and cognitive development.
- Parents can be stressed due to problems with their couple, health or finances. When they are stressed and also don't have much support or good bonding experiences of their own, they can find it hard to respond to their children in predictable and caring ways.
- If parents find themselves in this situation often or for long periods of time, they may not be able to form a strong bond of trust with their child. This can lead to problems for the child, such as negative social behaviours (e.g., aggression) or psychological difficulties.

Paying attention to...

What can be done?

... your baby's crying or other signs of discomfort, worry or distress. These are your baby's ways of letting you know they are not doing well and that they need your comfort.

- Comfort your baby by responding quickly to any signs of discomfort or distress. For example, be loving and caring, speak softly, and hold your baby in your arms.
- Set up a care routine that is always the same (for example, baths and meals at fixed times, bedtime routines). This helps your child to learn to expect these events. It also helps you to keep the family organized.
- Take a few minutes to hold your baby in your arms to "talk" and interact with them. This is a great way for you to get to know your baby.

... the games your child likes to play and signs that your child wants to play with you.

- Be aware of your child's play. Imitate what they do. Let your child lead the way.
- Offer some new ideas that might be fun. If your child starts to get frustrated, suggest solutions and congratulate them for their efforts.
- Plan time to play with your child without being in a hurry. Try not to think about other things that need to be done.
- Pay attention to signs that your child is getting tired of the game. Let them stop the game if they're getting tired or bored.

... your own signs of fatigue, stress and discouragement.

- Give yourself specific time to rest.
- Share your child's care with your partner whenever possible. Get help from friends and family when you need it.
- Find services in your community that can help (for example, babysitting networks, help with housekeeping, parent support groups or counselling services).



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Coordinators:

Valérie Bell
Claire Gascon Giard
Kristell Le Martret

Collaborators:

Mélanie Joly
George Tarabulsky
Isabelle Vinet (CPEQ)

Copy editor:

Lana Crossman

Graphic design:

Desjardins design Inc.

Information

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For a more in-depth understanding of ATTACHMENT, consult our synthesis and experts' articles on this topic in the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, available free of charge at www.child-encyclopedia.com.

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Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development

Université de Montréal
3050, Édouard-Montpetit Blvd., GRIP
P.O. Box 6128, Succursale Centre-ville
Montréal, Quebec H3C 3J7

Telephone: 514.343.6111, extension 2541

E-mail: cedje-ceed@umontreal.ca



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