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Building a Strong Relationship!

Bonding between parents and children begins early! Before your baby is born, she hears the people talking around her; and she depends on you and your body to nourish her, shelter her, and to help her grow.

After your baby is born, the close relationship that you build with her continues to develop as your child grows. The **attachment** between you and your child shapes your child's overall development.

Early parent-child relationships are important because:

- They teach a child about the **basic ability to trust**
- They are a **model for future relationships**
- They influence **how a child responds to stress**
- They provide a child with a **sense of self-worth and identity**
- They help a child to **learn about empathy and compassion**

Healthy and Unhealthy Parent-Child Attachments

In a healthy, **secure attachment**:

- A child sees their caregiver as supportive
- A child feels free to explore the world
- A caregiver sets boundaries and guides the child

This can lead to:

- Strong relationships with others
- Learning how to trust others
- Increased self-confidence and self-worth

In an **unhealthy attachment**:

- A child may see the caregiver as unpredictable
- A child may feel rejected by the caregiver
- The child may learn that his needs are not important

This can lead to:

- Poor future relationships
- Excessive tantrums
- Defiance or Depression

Did you know?

Your relationship with your child will be a model for your child for future relationships in her life!

A strong relationship helps to build your child's social emotional skills, helping them to grow up to be a confident individual, able to relate to others.

Ways to Bond with your Baby

Other Fun Activities:

• Have your toddler practice throwing skills with objects that are safe for your home—a soft sponge, rolled up socks, or a brown bag stuffed with newspaper.

• Work on language and motor skills by adding body movement when you say words like “bye-bye” (wave), “no - no” (shake head), or “up” (arms up).

Proper supervision at all times is most important for your child's safety.

- **Hold your baby and use gentle touch.** Positive touch is necessary for survival. Touch helps your child to understand what a caregiver is feeling.
- **Make eye contact and smile.** Smiling promotes love and happiness. Pleasant facial expressions are calming to a child. When babies smile back, that is called *mimicking*.
- **Talk to your child.** Babies will recognize your voice. Talking about colors and shapes around you, or about the things that you see, also helps your child's language skills grow.
- **Play with your child.** Engaging with your child in play helps your child learn about the world around her, and sparks creativity.
- **Have appropriate expectations.** Know your child's abilities and skills. Setting your child up for success helps to build their self worth and their confidence.

Activities for Building a Strong Parent-Child Attachment

Activities with your Infant

Babies love to play. Try these activities to build a strong attachment with your child, and also exercise all areas of your baby's development.

- **Tracking Games:** With your baby in his carrier in the middle of the room, move around as you talk or sing. Encourage him to follow your voice.
- **Movement:** Lay your baby on his back. Hold his hands and gently pull him toward you, then gently lay him back down. This strengthens his neck, back, and core. *Be very gentle in movements.*
- **Imitation:** Hold your baby up to a mirror and point to both of your reflections. Babies love to gaze into mirrors. Touch and name parts of his face.
- **Language:** Read, read, and read more simple stories to your baby. Show him books with shapes and colors.
- **Discovery:** Babies love filling, dumping, and pouring. Give him cups, bowls and spoons; and pourable items, like sand or water, to play with.

Activities with your Toddler

Toddlers love to explore. By this age, they are often more mobile and independent. These activities will help build a strong attachment and will keep your explorer busy and entertained!

- **Song and Play:** Combine words, music, body movements, and finger play for a fun time.

1-2-3

1-2-3, there's a fly on me. (*creep fingers up opposite arm, then pretend to brush it off*)
Where did it go? (*Look around*)
I don't know! (*Hands out, shrug shoulders*)

- **Sensory and Discovery:** “Paint” with water! Give her a sponge and a bucket with a little water and let her “paint” the sidewalk, a large rock, or the porch.
- **Motor skills:** Sit on the floor facing your toddler with your legs spread into “V”s and touching. Gently roll a ball toward your child and encourage her to roll it back. This also teaches sharing!

Information here was provided by Family Development Resources, Inc. For more information on these and other topics, please visit:	NAEYC.org KidsHealth.org BabyCenter.com Nurturing Parenting.com
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