

Eyes on



Parent-child attachment

A bond of trust



ABORIGINAL PARENTS



CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

Early Childhood Development



What do we know?

“Breastfeeding, along with so many other benefits, helps with attachment. Lots of parents are starting to forget this it seems...”

Salluit Maternity Staff, Nunavik,
January 2010.

- Attachment is the emotional connection that happens between you and your baby.
- Your baby wants to be comforted by you when he is sick, tired or worried, when he cries or feels afraid. These behaviours help to build a bond of trust.
- If your baby is comforted in these situations, he learns to trust you whenever he needs something and learns to have the confidence to explore his environment.
- Most children develop bonds with their parents that help to comfort them in stressful situations.
- This comforting bond is present when your child is happy around you and when he actively wants to be with you (e.g., smiles, active play, looking for loving contact).
- Your child feels more trusting and more secure with you if he believes you can protect him.
- Your child feels protected if you pay attention to his crying, to the sounds he makes, and to his movements, so that you can take action in a predictable and caring way when needed.
- If your child grows up trusting you, he learns to trust other people in different situations.
- Feelings of trust and security help your child to become independent, to face the challenges of childhood (such as starting day care or making new friends) and to face more difficult situations.
- Stresses parents go through (such as marital, health or financial problems), lack of support, or their own bonding experiences can reduce their ability to react to their children in predictable and caring ways.
- If such situations happen often or last a long time, the parent-child attachment may not be comforting for the child.

Paying attention to...

What can be done?

... your baby's crying, discomfort, worry or distress. These are your baby's way of communicating, of letting you know he is not doing well.

- 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, whenever possible, that is always the same. This helps the child to learn to expect these events and also helps the parents to keep the family organized.
- Take a few minutes to hold your baby in your arms to "talk" and interact with him. This is a great way for parents to get to know their babies.

... the games your child likes to play and to the requests your child makes for you to play with him.

- Be aware of your child's playing, and imitate what he does.
- Offer some new ideas that might be fun. Give advice to help out if there are problems and congratulate your child for his efforts.
- Plan time to play with your child without being in a hurry or thinking about other things that need to be done.
- Pay attention and respect any signs of fatigue, and don't insist that your child continue playing a game that he is no longer interested in.

... your own signs of fatigue and discouragement.

- Give yourself specific time to rest.
- Share your child's care with your partner whenever possible.
- Find resources available in your community that can offer a break (for example, babysitting networks, help with house-keeping, parents' support groups or counselling services).

"Healing from trauma takes place through connection, through developing and experiencing healthy attachments."

Excerpt from the Journal of Aboriginal Health, November 2009, Vol. 5, Issue 3, p. 89.





Information

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development identifies and summarizes the best scientific work on the social and emotional development of young children. It disseminates this knowledge to a variety of audiences in formats and languages adapted to their needs.

For a more in-depth understanding of parent-child attachment, consult our experts' articles in the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, available free of charge at: www.child-encyclopedia.com.

This information sheet is published by the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development, one of four Centres of Excellence for Children's Well-Being. Funding for the Centres of Excellence is provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors/researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

We are grateful to the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon for its financial contribution to produce this information sheet.

Coordinators:

Valérie Bell
Kristell Le Martret

Advisory Committee:

Julie Bernier (FNQLHSSC)
Mary Burgaretta (BCACCS)
Catherine Carry (NAHO)
Annie Nulukie (KRG)
Nadine Rousselot (FNQLHSSC)

Collaborators:

Isabelle Vinet (CPEQ)
George Tarabulsky

Copyeditors:

Sandra Braun
Lana Crossman
Kathe Lieber

Translation:

Donna Riley

Graphic design:

DesJardins Conception Graphique inc.

Photos:

Cover page: Heiko Wittenborn
Public Health Agency of Canada

Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development

GRIP-Université de Montréal
P.O. Box 6128, Succursale Centre-ville
Montreal (Quebec) H3C 3J7
Telephone: 514.343.6111, extension 2576
Fax: 514.343.6962

E-mail: cedje-ceecd@umontreal.ca

Website: www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca



In this document, the masculine form is used to simplify the text. No discrimination is intended.



CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

Early Childhood Development



Fondation Lucie
et André Chagnon



Encyclopedia
on Early Childhood
Development