

Nurturing and Attachment

Parents today have a lot on their plates. Juggling the demands of work, home, and other responsibilities leaves many parents feeling like they do not have enough time with their children. But even small acts of kindness, protection, and caring -- a hug, a kiss, or a smile -- make a big difference to children. Research shows that babies who receive affection and nurturing from their parents have the best chance of developing into children, teens, and adults who are happy, healthy, and competent. Research also shows that a relationship with a consistent, caring adult in the early years is associated in later life with better academic grades, healthier behaviors, more positive peer interactions, and an increased ability to cope with stress.

Brain development in infants is positively affected when parents work to understand and meet their basic needs for love and affection or provide comfort when they are hungry, bored, tired, wet, or cold. Conversely, neglectful and abusive parenting can have a negative effect on brain development. Research shows that a lack of contact or interaction with a caregiver can change an infant's body chemistry, resulting in a reduction in the growth hormones essential for brain and heart development. Furthermore, the ability to feel remorse and empathy is built on experience. Children who lack early emotional attachments or who grow up fearful and expecting to be hurt will have a difficult time relating to peers.

As children grow, nurturing by parents and other caregivers remains important for healthy physical and emotional development. While physical contact becomes less important, listening and talking become more vital to the relationship. Parents nurture their older children by being involved and interested in the child's school and other activities, aware of the child or teen's interests and friends, and willing to advocate for the child when necessary.

When parents spend time and energy discovering and paying attention to their children's needs, they are rewarded with positive, open, and trusting relationships with their children. Parents who develop the ability to respond sensitively to the needs of their child, no matter what age, will find parenting easier and more enjoyable.

Exploring Strengths and Needs

Regardless of the child's age, parents can take advantage of opportunities in their sometimes hectic lives to listen and respond to their child in a nurturing way. Even a few minutes of quality time in the car, at the store, or while cooking dinner mean so much to a child.

**ChildHelp Pee Dee
24 Hour Toll-Free Helpline
1-866-867-9857**

Parenting is tough. Asking for help doesn't have to be.



Information brought to you by:
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