

Bonding With Your Baby



What's Happening

Attachment is a deep, lasting bond that develops between a caregiver and child during the baby's first few years of life. This attachment is critical to the growth of a baby's body and mind. Babies who have this bond and feel loved have a better chance to grow up to be adults who trust others and know how to return affection.

What You Can Do

No one knows your child like you do, so you are in the best position to recognize and fulfill your child's needs. Parents who give lots of loving care and attention to their babies help their babies develop a strong attachment. Affection energizes your child to grow, learn, connect with others, and enjoy life.

Here are some ways to promote bonding:

- Respond when your baby cries. Try to understand what he or she is saying to you. You can't "spoil" babies with too much attention—they need and benefit from a parent's loving care even when they seem inconsolable.
- Hold and touch your baby as much as possible. You can keep him close with baby slings, pouches, or backpacks (for older babies).
- Use feeding and diapering times to look into your baby's eyes, smile, and talk to your baby.
- Read, sing, and play peek-a-boo. Babies love to hear human voices and will try to imitate your voice and the sounds you make.
- As your baby gets a little older, try simple games and toys. Once your baby can sit up, plan on spending lots of time on the floor with toys, puzzles, and books.

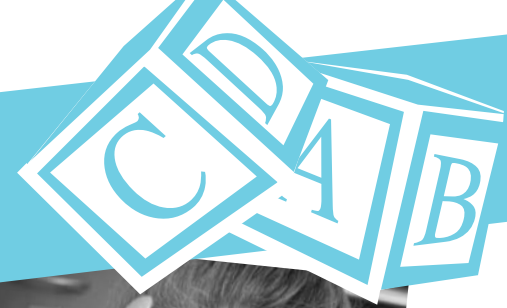
What You Might Be Seeing

Normal babies:

- Have brief periods of sleep, crying or fussing, and quiet alertness many times each day
- Often cry for long periods for no apparent reason
- Love to be held and cuddled
- Respond to and imitate facial expressions
- Love soothing voices and will respond with smiles and small noises
- Grow and develop every day; they learn new skills quickly and can outgrow difficult behaviors in a matter of weeks

The best gift you can give your baby is YOU. The love and attention you give your baby now will stay with him or her forever and will help your baby grow into a healthier and happier child and adult.

This tip sheet was created with input from experts in national organizations that work to protect children and strengthen families. To download this tip sheet or for more parenting tips, go to www.childwelfare.gov/preventing/promoting/parenting or call 800.394.3366.



Dealing With Temper Tantrums

What's Happening

Two- and three-year-olds have many skills, but controlling their tempers is not one of them. Tantrums are common at this age because toddlers are becoming independent and developing their own wants, needs, and ideas. However, they are not yet able to express their wants and feelings with words. Take comfort in the fact that most children outgrow tantrums by age 4.



What You Might Be Seeing

Normal toddlers:

- Love to say “no!” “mine!” and “do it myself!”
- Test rules over and over to see how parents will react
- Are not yet ready to share
- Need lots of fun activities, play times, and opportunities to explore the world
- Respond well to a routine for sleeping and eating (a regular schedule)
- Like to imitate grownups and to “help” mom and dad

What You Can Do

It is often easier to prevent tantrums than to deal with them once they get going. Try these tips:

- Direct your child’s attention to something else. (“Wow, look at that fire engine!”)
- Give your child a choice in small matters. (“Do you want to eat peas or carrots?”)
- Stick to a daily routine that balances fun activities with enough rest and healthy food.
- Anticipate when your child will be disappointed. (“We are going to buy groceries for dinner. We won’t be buying cookies, but you can help me pick out some fruit for later.”)
- Praise your child when he or she shows self-control and expresses feelings with words.

If you cannot prevent the tantrum, here are some tips for dealing with it:

- Say what you expect from your child and have confidence that your child will behave.
- Remain calm. You are a role model for your child.
- Holding your child during a tantrum may help a younger child feel more secure and calm down more quickly.
- Take your child to a quiet place where he or she can calm down safely. Speak softly or play soft music.
- Some children throw tantrums to seek attention. Try ignoring the tantrum, but pay attention to your child after he or she calms down.
- Resist overreacting to tantrums, and try to keep your sense of humor.

When your child is having a floor-thumping tantrum, the most important thing you can do is remain calm and wait it out. Do not let your child’s behavior cause you to lose control, too.

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Connecting With Your Teen



What's Happening

Many teens spend less time with their families than they did as younger children. As they become more independent and learn to think for themselves, relationships with friends become very important. Sometimes it may feel like your teen doesn't need you anymore. But teens still need their parents' love, support, and guidance.

What You Can Do

Simple, everyday activities can reinforce the connection between you and your teen. Make room in your schedule for special times when you can, but also take advantage of routine activities to show that you care.

Tips to keep in mind:

- **Have family meals.** If it's impossible to do every night, schedule a regular weekly family dinner night that accommodates your child's schedule.
- **Share "ordinary" time.** Look for everyday opportunities to bond with your teen. Even times spent driving or walking the dog together offer chances for your teen to talk about what's on his or her mind.
- **Get involved, be involved, and stay involved.** Go to games and practices when you can. Ask about homework and school projects. Look for chances to learn about your teen's latest hobby.
- **Be interested.** Make it clear that you care about your teen's ideas, feelings, and experiences. If you listen to what he or she is saying, you'll get a better sense of the guidance and support needed. Get to know your teen's friends and their parents, too, when possible.
- **Set clear limits.** Teens still need your guidance, but you can involve your teen in setting rules and consequences. Make sure consequences are related to the behavior, and **be consistent** in following through. Choose your battles. Try to provide choices in the matters that are less important.

Your words and actions help your teen feel secure. Don't forget to say and show how much you love your teen!

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Teen Parents... You're Not Alone!



What's Happening ??

Being a parent is a 24-hour-a-day job, and sometimes it can feel overwhelming. You may be juggling the demands of a baby, your family, school, and work. Chances are you're not able to do all of the things you enjoyed before your baby was born.

What Can I Do ??

Every parent needs support sometimes. If you think stress may be affecting how you treat your baby, it's time to find some help. Try the following:

- **Join a support group.** A group for young moms or dads could give you time with new friends who have lives similar to yours. Your children can play with other children, and you can talk about your problems with people who understand. Look on the Internet or call your local social services agency for information about support groups in your community.
- **Find ways to handle stress.** Take a break while someone reliable cares for your baby. Take a walk with the baby in a stroller, or rest while your baby naps. A social worker or nurse can help you learn other ways to manage stress.
- **Finish school.** Even though it may be difficult, finishing high school (or getting a GED) is one of the most important things you can do to help your baby and yourself. A diploma will help you get a better job or take the next step in your education (such as vocational training or college).
- **Improve your parenting skills.** Don't be afraid to ask for advice from experienced parents. Classes for parents can also help you build on what you already know about raising a happy, healthy child.
- **Call a help line.** Most States have help lines for parents. Childhelp® runs a national 24-hour hotline (1.800.4.A.CHILD) for parents who need help or parenting advice.

Stay in contact with friends and family who support you and make you feel good about yourself. Remember, help is just a phone call away!

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Many teen parents sometimes feel...

- Confused and uncertain—about their future or their skills as a parent
- Overwhelmed—they don't know where to begin or they feel like giving up
- Angry—at the baby's other parent, their friends, or even their baby
- Lonely—like they are the only person dealing with so many problems
- Depressed—sad and unable to face their problems

These feelings do not mean you are a bad parent!

Ten Ways to Be a Better Dad

What's Happening

Children need both parents. Involved fathers can help children lead lives that are happier, healthier, and more successful than children whose fathers are absent or uninvolved. Fathers who spend time with their children increase the chances that their children will succeed in school, have fewer behavior problems, and experience better self-esteem and well-being.



What You Can Do

- 1. Respect your children's mother**
When children see their parents respecting each other, they are more likely to feel that they are also accepted and respected.
- 2. Spend time with your children**
If you always seem too busy for your children, they will feel neglected no matter what you say. Set aside time to spend with your children.
- 3. Earn the right to be heard**
Begin talking with your kids when they are very young and talk to them about all kinds of things. Listen to their ideas and problems.
- 4. Discipline with love**
All children need guidance and discipline, not as punishment, but to set reasonable limits and help children learn from natural or logical consequences. Fathers who discipline in a calm, fair, and nonviolent manner show their love.
- 5. Be a role model**
Fathers are role models whether they realize it or not. A girl with a loving father grows up knowing she deserves to be treated with respect. Fathers can teach sons what is important in life by demonstrating honesty, humility, and responsibility.
- 6. Be a teacher**
A father who teaches his children about right and wrong and encourages them to do their best will see his children make good choices. Involved fathers use everyday examples to teach the basic lessons of life.
- 7. Eat together as a family**
Sharing a meal together can be an important part of healthy family life. It gives children the chance to talk about what they are doing, and it is a good time for fathers to listen and give advice.
- 8. Read to your children**
Begin reading to your children when they are very young. Instilling a love for reading is one of the best ways to ensure they will have a lifetime of personal and career growth.
- 9. Show affection**
Children need the security that comes from knowing they are wanted, accepted, and loved by their family. Showing affection every day is the best way to let your children know that you love them.
- 10. Realize that a father's job is never done**
Even after children are grown and leave home, they will still look to their fathers for wisdom and advice. Fatherhood lasts a lifetime.

Adapted from National Fatherhood Initiative. Find the full brochure at www.fatherhood.org/10ways.asp

Raising Your Grandchildren



What's Happening

No matter why or how they came to live with you, your grandchildren will benefit from being in your home. When children cannot be with their parents, living with a grandparent may provide:

- Fewer moves from place to place
- The comfort of a familiar language and culture
- A chance to stay with siblings
- More contact with their parents, depending on the situation

What You Can Do

It will take time for your grandchildren to feel safe and secure in their new home with you. You can encourage these good feelings in a number of ways:

- Set up a daily routine of mealtimes, bedtime, and other activities.
- Help your grandchildren feel “at home” by creating a space just for them.
- Talk to your grandchildren, and listen when they talk to you.
- Set up a few rules and explain your expectations. Then, enforce the rules consistently.
- Reward positive behavior. When children make mistakes, focus on teaching rather than punishing.
- Be as involved with their school as you can, and encourage your children to participate in school activities.

This is a big job, and you may need help from your community. Here are some suggestions:

- Help with housing or other bills, clothing, or school supplies may be available specifically for grandparents raising grandchildren in your community.
- Join a support group. Often there are local groups for grandparents raising grandchildren.
- Ask for help and referrals from a church leader, the counselor at your child’s school, or a social services agency.
- If necessary, get professional help to address your grandchild’s special needs, such as medical care, mental health care, or special education.

Parenting the second time around brings special challenges and special joys. Do not hesitate to ask for help or seek services in your community for yourself and your grandchildren.

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