

# STRENGTHENING PARENT-CHILD EMOTIONAL CONNECTION

## FAMILY TIP SHEET



Beginning at birth, babies depend entirely on their caregivers to explore the world. A baby's need to form close connections and secure relationships is as critical as their need for food. Building a strong emotional connection with your baby supports your child's lifetime of learning.

### TUNE IN

Tuning in means being aware and responsive in the current moment with your child. Focus on taking turns. Practice following your child's focus as it shifts constantly. Be patient with yourself and remain flexible.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Always respond to baby's cues:**

Baby smiles. Parent smiles back. Baby coos. Parent coos back. Through warm and predictable back and forth interactions the baby learns that what they do impacts the world around them. These are the little interactions that give the baby a foundation of trust and confidence to build on for the rest of their life.<sup>2</sup>

#### **Exploring feelings:**

Sometimes children have difficulty managing their feelings on their own. When you respond sensitively to your child's cry, you are helping them process their emotions. Your child will learn that their needs will be met when they cry.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Eye contact:**

When you gaze into your baby's eyes you are allowing them to focus on you and understand what you are saying without the use of words. Eye contact gives children a sense of reassurance and security.<sup>3</sup>





## TALK MORE

Developing language is an important tool for creating a strong connection with your child.

### Read to your child:

We know it is difficult to find time during the day to read to your child. Try a consistent routine where you read to your child before bed-time or when they wake.

Remember that reading can happen anywhere.

### Narrate your day:

Children love to hear about what happened throughout your day, even when it is repetitive! Talk to your child about everything even what you had for lunch and see how they light up.

### Help them explore the world:

Encourage discovery, answer questions, and show interest in what interests them.

### Talk about and help provide meaning to feelings:

When your child expresses their feelings over the loss of a toy, shoe, or pencil, acknowledge their feelings and talk out loud about them. This helps your child label feelings and know they can be shared without judgment or fear.<sup>3</sup>

Remember – all feelings are acceptable.

## RESPOND



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No matter your child's age, you can take turns and have a conversation.<sup>4</sup>

### Repetition is great for brain building:

New skills are learned through practice and repetition within a safe and nurturing environment. The more you support children's practicing and mastering new skills, the stronger they grow.

## TOUCH

Physical closeness and a comforting touch from a caregiver helps facilitate emotional connection and can help calm a baby during moments of distress.<sup>3</sup> As a parent, don't you just have days when all you need is to be wrapped up in the arms of someone that you love to make you feel better?

Well, babies need that too!

### Play:

The best play occurs when the adult plays alongside the child with toys chosen by the child.

<sup>1</sup><https://tmwcenter.uchicago.edu/the-3ts/what-are-the-3ts/>

<sup>2</sup><https://babyday.us/resources/love-attachment/>

<sup>3</sup><https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com/>

<sup>4</sup><https://tmwcenter.uchicago.edu/the-3ts/what-are-the-3ts/>