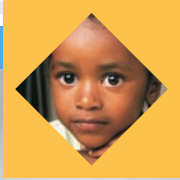




Quality

Attachment at Home and in Child Care



Attachment is a strong emotional bond between an infant and his parent and caregiver who plays an active part in the child's everyday life. Infants who are securely attached are more capable of developing and maintaining physical and emotional balance. Secure attachments help children become confident and independent learners with strong social skills.

Although parents know it in their hearts, it is only recently that we learned how essential secure attachments are to a child's social and emotional development. Some parents feel funny or jealous about their baby forming a close relationship with professional caregivers, asking themselves "If my child becomes too attached to the caregiver, will he still love and respond to me?" The fact is that a baby can and should be securely attached to all of the people who provide for his daily needs. He can form strong bonds with his parents and have special close relationships with those who care for him when he is away from home. Parents can rest assured that the best thing for their baby in child care is to have a caregiver who loves and attaches with their child.

Ways to support infant attachment:

- Respond promptly and appropriately to infant distress (hunger, discomfort)
- Snuggle time – Cuddle the infant securely in a blanket. While feeding the infant hold him close and securely in your arms.
- When the infant is hungry – feed her!
- When the infant is uncomfortable – change his diaper or pat him gently on the back to relieve gas pains.

- Softly sing, hum and talk to the infant.
- Stay engaged while feeding the infant by talking, singing, touching or rocking.
- Talk and play during caregiving routines such as diapering, bathing and dressing. Gently place some loving kisses on the tummy.
- Caress the infant's hair and gently smooth his cheek. Touch lightly and delicately, allowing the baby to touch you in response.
- Rock slowly, cuddle and read to the infant.
- Sing favorite lullabies to the infant.
- Maintain the same caregivers over time so that the infant can become familiar.
- Maintain consistency with caregiving routines such as bathing and napping.

When families and professional caregivers work together for the best interests of the child, everyone benefits. Caregivers can learn about the families' beliefs and child rearing values. They can incorporate important cultural practices in to daily routines. This provides consistency for the child and helps him to develop strong self-esteem rooted in his cultural context. Families can depend upon the caregiver to respect their wishes and to keep the needs of their child in mind. When there is an open and honest relationship, parents can share their concerns for their child and receive support with child development issues. The child benefits when his home and child care program are in sync and there are smooth daily transitions between settings.

Adapted from Attachment Tip Sheet by Jean Ahearn, IT Specialist in Region 4



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