

Developing a Strong Relationship *with your child*

birth to
6 months



In a nutshell

- When you meet your baby's needs, he is learning to trust you.
- Your baby is getting to know your voice, your face, and your scent.
- Learning your baby's cues are important.
- It is important to show your baby you love him.

About Developing a Strong Relationship with Your Child

Trust is the foundation of all relationships. The relationship with your child is no exception. If you have consistently met your baby's needs, she will begin to stop crying when she sees you coming. She has learned to count on you. She has learned that when she has a need, it will be met. This is how trust is built.

Your relationship with your baby is important. He is learning your voice, your face and even your scent. All these will become very important to your baby. He will feel safe when he knows you are near. Spend time holding your baby. Look into his eyes. Take advantage of everyday routines, such as feeding and diapering, to get to know your baby by gently describing his world to him. This will help your child feel safer.

Cues are signals your baby uses when she has a need. She will tell you with her body language and sounds when she is tired or unhappy. Getting to know your baby involves learning to read her cues and understand what she needs. This is not always easy. Relax and focus on your child. The time to build a trusting relationship with your child begins now, when she is a baby.

There are many ways to show your baby that you love him. Gentle touch and a soft voice work best. Babies need and like to be nurtured including being held and cuddled. Never hit or shake your baby. Your baby can be seriously injured when adults in his world are out of control.





Developing a Strong Relationship with Your Child

How-to's: Birth to 6 Months

- Go to your baby quickly when he cries. Be there always when your baby needs you. You can't spoil a baby less than 6 months of age.
- Cuddle and rock your baby. Enjoy your time together. She is learning about you when you talk to her and interact with her. Look into her eyes and talk to her softly. Tell your baby you love her.
- Notice how your baby cries when he is hungry. What does he do when he is tired? When you are able to figure out his cues, it is easy to respond appropriately. Meet your baby's needs quickly and consistently. This will help him to be calm and satisfied.
- Show your love for your baby. She needs to hear her parent's voice, be touched, cuddled and fed, and have her diapers changed. It is never too early to read to your baby. Start a simple routine by showing your baby the pictures in a book. Read out loud. Your baby will love hearing your voice.

Developing a Strong Relationship *with your child*

6 to 12 months



In a nutshell

- Your baby is developing a strong attachment to you. He may cry sometimes when you leave him.
- Unfamiliar faces may frighten your baby during this age.
- Through you, your child learns about himself, about the important people in his life, and his world. You are an important part of that world.
- Your baby can develop an attachment with more than one primary care provider, but not too many.

About Developing a Strong Relationship with Your Child

You are the most important person in your baby's life. Building strong, secure relationships with adults is a prime goal for him. During this time, your child has learned your voice, your face and even your scent. When you leave, he is able to remember you and wants to be with you. Because of this, he may cry when you leave him. This is a normal stage of development.

Your baby is also learning differences. This is why unfamiliar faces might frighten her. This too is a common stage of development. It can be frustrating to you or to others in your family. Share with family members that your baby needs time to get used to "new" people and places.

When a baby is shown love and when he is shown that he is valued and important, he incorporates these attitudes into his image of who he is. Trust is the first mutual connection that a child feels. Everyday routines such as diapering and feeding can promote a strong relationship with your baby. It is important to pay attention to your baby during these times. These everyday routines are very important parts of the day for your baby.

Children can form strong relationships to more than one adult. It takes time to form healthy relationships. Young children can't form healthy attachments if the adults in their lives move in and out. It can also be damaging to the relationship process if there are too many people in the child's care giving world.





Developing a Strong Relationship with Your Child

How-to's: 6 to 12 Months

- Talk to your baby in a gentle reassuring way. She may not understand the words you say, but she can understand the tone. Hold your baby tenderly. Let her know when you are leaving. She may cry when she is apart from you, and that is a good sign of healthy development! It means she is remembering you.
- Your baby will respond differently to a familiar person than someone else. Hold him close when he feels insecure. Give him time to get used to new people and places.
- Use everyday routines such as diapering and feeding to show and tell your baby you love her. Focus on your baby. Talk about her eyes, her voice, or describe what you are doing. Talk in a gentle, reassuring and calm way. You are modeling what relationships are like for your baby.
- Your baby can form a relationship with other adults in his world. It can be difficult to see that your baby is happy with another person. It is good for your baby to have more than one healthy relationship in his life. But remember, his relationship with you is most important.

Developing a **Strong Relationship** *with your child*

12 - 24 months



In a nutshell

- A strong relationship develops when adults love and care for children.
- Your baby learns who he is through his relationship within the family.
- Your baby can love more than one adult.
- Children develop best when the important adults in their lives share the same values and expectations.

About Developing a Strong Relationship with Your Child

Babies are born relying on the adults in their world to meet their needs. They are also born with behaviors that can get adults to fall in love with them. How an adult responds effects how babies view themselves. When you respond to your child's cues, he learns that he is important and lovable. His early relationships are very important to his development of self-concept. They are also models for his relationships with other people throughout his life.

Your baby learns about her world by watching others. She can learn about warm and respectful interactions. She can also learn behaviors that are distant and angry.

Your child is comforted when the adults in his world work towards common goals. It is not healthy for young children to have a conflict of loyalty between the adults they love. Know that your baby can develop caring, loving relationships with adults other than you, his parents. This love will not replace his love for you.

It is important that routines, rules and actions are the same between your child's home and her other care settings. When others who care for your baby respect your culture and home environment, it promotes healthy relationships. It is important that other care providers support the value system you have for your child. The relationship between you and other care providers should be one that is respectful and understanding.





Developing a Strong Relationship with Your Child

How-to's: 12 to 24 Months

- Spend time with your growing toddler. She still needs you to meet her needs. This is how she learns to trust her world and the people in it. The relationships she has now are the foundation for all her future relationships.
- Your toddler may act in ways that are frustrating. He is learning that he is a separate person from you. He needs your gentle direction now more than ever. Show respect for your child by talking to him in a calm and reassuring way. Don't take your child's behavior personally. Discipline in a loving, consistent manner.
- Be consistent in your rules and routines. Your toddler may protest, but rules and routines that are the same, time after time, help her to feel safe and secure.
- Talk to your child's other care providers about the values and expectations you want for your child. Children develop best when all the adults in their lives agree and work towards a common goal.
- Encourage your toddler to form relationships with other important people in his life. This love will never replace his love for you, his parent.

Developing a Strong Relationship *with your child*

24 - 36 months



In a nutshell

- Even though your child is becoming more independent, you are still the most important person in his life.
- Your child may develop fears during this stage of development. She needs your gentle reassurance that the world is a safe place.
- Making the most of everyday routines can help keep your relationship with your child strong.
- Making sense of their strong emotions is a task for the two-year-old. Your child needs your love and understanding when he becomes overwhelmed.

About Developing a Strong Relationship with Your Child

This stage of development is a time of change. Your child is able to do more things for himself, such as feeding and simple dressing. He still needs you to be his role model. Routines and rules that are the same from day to day help him feel safe. Your child feels safe when he knows what is going to happen. You are still the most important person to your two-year-old. Talk with and play with him often. This will strengthen your relationship.

It is common for two-year-olds to develop fears. These fears may seem silly to a grown up, but they are real for a small child. She may be afraid of things like loud noises, animals and new places. She may suddenly be afraid of familiar things like the vacuum cleaner, the bath tub, or be afraid of the dark. Your child needs you to assure her that the world is safe. Don't make fun of her fears or brush them aside. When you support your child through

this stage of development, it will build the trust she has in you.

Even though your child is doing more things on his own, he still needs to be with the people he loves. Everyday routines such as meal-times and bedtimes are times when you can strengthen your relationship with your child. Create rituals around these routines such as a story before bed and all sitting together for mealtime. You and your child will start to look forward to these special times together.

Learning how to control and appropriately show their strong emotions is an important job for a two-year-old. Your child may have difficult behaviors such as whining and being aggressive. She may want to do things her own way. These strong feelings can be scary for your child. She needs you to show her how to manage her emotions. She needs you to be gentle and reassuring.



Developing a Strong Relationship with Your Child

How-to's: 24 to 36 Months

- Keep routines and rules the same from day to day. Try to have mealtime, playtime, naptime and bedtime at the same time each day.
- Talk to your child about what he is afraid of. Don't make fun of him when he is afraid. Find out what he is afraid of and keep him protected from these, if possible, until he is older.
- Be a model for your child. She learns from watching you. Make the most of the time you spend doing everyday things such as brushing teeth, eating or bedtime. Create simple rituals you do every time, such as reading a book or singing the same song.
- Give your child the words that go with the emotions he is demonstrating. Use a mirror and together make different faces: happy, scared, angry, proud and surprised. Set limits that are the same from day to day. React to your child's difficult behaviors in a firm, yet calm and reassuring way.

Developing a **Strong Relationship** *with your child*

young preschooler



In a nutshell

- As your child grows, it is still important to be attentive to his needs and warm in your interactions. This tells him that he is valuable and loved.
- Your child will learn values and morals through her relationship with you.
- Friendships with other children begin during the preschool years. Remember though, you are still the most important person in your child's life.
- Your child will react to others who are hurt, upset or angry the way you react to her. You are an important role model for your child.

About Developing a Strong Relationship with Your Child

Your relationship with your child is a very important one. It is the model for all his future relationships. Your child learns that he is valued, loved and important through his interactions with you. As your child grows, it is still important to be attentive to his needs. It's easy to think your child doesn't need as much attention now that he is doing things on his own. That's not true!

All parents want their children to grow up to be kind, honest and respect others. These values are beneficial for individuals and for society as a whole. Children do not develop these traits automatically. The most powerful teacher of your child is you! You have a strong influence on the development of your child's values and character through modeling and teaching. Children learn best in the context of strong and healthy relationships.

Friendships with other children begin to develop during the preschool years. Friends can change quickly at this age though. Your child is able to separate from you more easily now. She can spend time with other adults such as grandparents. She may also want to spend more time playing with her friends. Your child can develop strong relationships with others. Remember, you are still the most important person in your child's life.

You are the most important teacher in your child's life. Your child watches and observes your reactions and interactions with others. You are a strong model for your child. When you respond in a gentle and respectful manner to your child, you are modeling appropriate behavior. Actions speak much louder than words.





Developing a Strong Relationship with Your Child

How-to's: Young Preschooler

- Plan to spend at least 10 minutes every day when you give your child all of your attention. Follow your child's lead in play and do just what your child wants to do. Show your pleasure in spending time together. Play games. Share funny riddles and jokes.
- Talk specifically about your values with your child and explain why they are important. Use words like 'responsibility', 'caring', 'sharing' and 'respect.' Your child will soon begin to understand their meanings and importance. Treat your child and others with respect and consideration.
- Let your child make short visits alone, such as to a friend's or a grandparent's house. Let him play on a playground while you watch. Watch your child play with his friends. If they disagree or need help, help them solve the difficulty. Ask him to tell you about his friends: their names, what he likes about them, and what they like to do together.
- Let your child work beside you, in and around the house. Let her try some things by herself. Give her help when she asks.
- Talk about your concern when someone is hurt or upset. Let him see how you help others feel better. Help him feel better when he is upset, hurt or angry. Speak in a calm and gentle voice.
- Be respectful when asking your child to do something for you. Remember to be a positive role model for behaviors you expect your child to have.

Developing a Strong Relationship *with your child*

older preschooler



In a nutshell

- It is important for your child to feel good about herself. She gains her self-worth through her interactions with you.
- A healthy, strong relationship with your child will give her a solid foundation as she gets ready to go to kindergarten.
- Healthy social-emotional development is important to learning in all other areas.
- Your child's experiences of love, trust and encouragement during the early years will become a permanent part of the brain's structure and function.

About Developing a Strong Relationship with Your Child

Your child learns about her world and about herself through her interactions with you. It is important for your child to feel good about herself. This is called self-concept. Children with a positive self-concept are more curious and talkative, show more leadership, and have lower anxiety levels. It is important to support your child with loving and respectful interactions.

Sensitive and responsive interactions are characteristics of healthy relationships. Children who have positive interactions with their parents get less frustrated. They have longer attention spans and are better prepared for elementary school.

Social-emotional development impacts all areas of development. It is important for preschoolers to learn how to control their emotions, get along with others, and control their impulses. Children learn these skills through positive and responsive interactions with the adults in their lives. Children who experience chaotic and inconsistent parenting do not have the confidence that their needs will be met. They have difficulty controlling their emotions. Parents are very important models for these very important skills.

Children who have secure loving relationships with their parents will often have these types of relationships with their peers. They have more positive emotions and are supportive of other children.





Developing a Strong Relationship with Your Child

How-to's: Older Preschooler

- Help your child gain a positive self-concept. Make her part of family talks and plans. Listen to her ideas. Give her a job or responsibility to help the family.
- Be responsive to your child's needs. Give him the words for his emotions. Explain to him why there are limits for his behaviors. Be sensitive to his feelings.
- Self-control is the ability to think before you react. It is a very important skill preschoolers must learn. Setting limits and consistently reinforcing these limits are important. Keep a regular routine and schedule. Be sure your child is eating a healthy diet and is getting enough sleep at night. These are important in your child's social-emotional development. Some children will lose the ability to control their emotions when they are under stress. Give your child opportunities to talk about her fears. Take care of you and your mental health, too. Your child can sense when you are under stress.