



# Tips for Tots



## Tip #2: Building Attachment in Young Children

## Strategies

Did you know?

### Infant/Toddler:

At this age, Infants and toddlers are developing trust and building attachment. Their view of the world as a safe or not safe place is developing. Warm and gentle interactions and a relaxed atmosphere help infants and toddlers feel safe and secure. Learning and exploration are supported in a safe and loving environment. It is the caregiver who helps the child feel secure and worthy of love. Securely attached infants and children exhibit trust, resiliency, a sense of empowerment, confidence, and are more connected to others.

### Preschool:

In order for young children to feel safe, they need to form strong attachments and bonds to the adults who care for them. Knowing what to expect from adults who care for them helps young children to feel safe and secure. This in turn helps the young child be willing to explore, learn, and build healthy attachments with others. Preschool children who have a healthy attachment exhibit more positive social relationships with their peers and tend to be more emotionally stable. They are also able to manage and express their feelings in a healthy way.

### Infant/Toddler:

- Learn to read the child’s cues for attention, comfort, exploration in order to respond to and meet their needs (feeding, comforting, keeping them dry) in a loving manner.
- Being responsive to a young child’s needs promotes a greater sense of self confidence, reliance and independence.
- Use both verbal and nonverbal communication to bond with the child in order to convey love, warmth and acceptance: eye contact, touch, massage, kisses, smiles, rocking and swaying, reading and singing to them.
- Young children recognize and respond to the tone in your voice; therefore talking in a soothing voice can help a young child to feel loved and secure. Provide a toddler with freedom and space to safely explore new environments, while remaining close by so they are able to obtain reassurance.
- Establish and be consistent with routines and schedules in order to help a young child feel secure and have an internalized sense of being cared for.

### Preschool:

- A feeling of security can be maintained with predictability. When possible try to have the same adults around the child and introduce new people gradually. Routine and consistency can be supported by having a daily schedule & a posting of family rules.
- It is also important to give advanced notice when possible of any changes in the day. Transitions can be implemented with an individualized warning such as 5 minute before clean up.
- Validating the child’s feeling is important not only to develop a trusting relationship with the child but also to support their need to talk about their emotions. Also, provide a positive outlet to these feelings by having a safe place for the child to regulate their emotions such as a cozy corner or quiet space in the home.
- Use touch for comfort. Offer or allow a hug, gentle touch on the shoulders or hold the child’s hand when they are feeling uneasy. (Ask the child first if it is ok). Take opportunities to be close by reading a story or watching a movie.
- Help the child to build self-esteem with praise & encouragement. Adults can offer praise by describing the behavior or accomplishment to the child and highlighting their success. They can use encouragement to help children develop a new skill such as coaching them to enter play with peers.

### Resources:

Bonding & Attachment in Maltreated Children, Consequences of Emotional Neglect in Childhood Perry, B., M.D., PhD 2001  
The Child Trauma Academy [www.childtrauma.org](http://www.childtrauma.org)  
Keys to Building Attachment With Young Children [www.education.com](http://www.education.com)

Contact your area ECCP Consultant for free Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation services.

To learn of the consultant in your area visit [www.eccpct.com](http://www.eccpct.com) or call ECCP at (860) 704-6378

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