

Attachment

Consistent and responsive caregiving fosters secure attachment in a infants/young children and sets the stage for healthy child development.

An infant/young child who is securely attached to their caregiver(s) feels safe, secure, and confident, promoting their exploration of the environment and ability to take on new challenges and experiences necessary for healthy development.



Take it Further...

Learn about it... Attachment (p.21 EYMH Common Message Paper)

Attachment is the emotional bond between a caregiver and their infant/young child.

Secure attachment is formed when the caregiver consistently responds to the infant/child's needs (e.g. when infant is tired, hungry, frightened, sick or hurt).

Responsive and consistent caregiving teaches infants/young children that their needs will be met, leading to a sense of overall trust and security.

Secure attachment sets the stage for a child's learning and development by helping them to feel confident to explore their environment.

Talk about it... Tell caregivers and colleagues about attachment

You can't spoil a infant/child by attending to their needs e.g. picking them up when they cry, comforting them when they get hurt, soothing them when they are scared or sick.

Ways of communicating an unmet need can include: seeking physical closeness, crying, temper tantrum.

Responding to those needs builds trust and can lead to secure attachment with their child.

Children who are securely attached are:

- Confident.
- Better able to learn.
- Able to cope with stress more effectively.
- Likely to have less behaviour problems.
- More likely to have stronger social skills.

Culture & attachment:

The need for attachment is universal however, the way in which it is fostered by caregivers, families and children varies across cultures. Culture cannot be altered to be 'optimal' for development, but it is important to understand that culture provides the context for children's social and emotional development.

Culture affects a caregiver's decisions such as when and how children are fed, where they sleep, acceptable childcare arrangements, response to stressful situations, rules for discipline, and role expectations for the child and themselves. Understanding the beliefs and values on which different attachment practices are based, is fundamental in providing culturally relevant support to caregivers and their children.

Try it... Move from knowledge to practise

Engage in '[serve and return](#)'. Being responsive to a young child's cues (babbling, gestures, cries) and needs helps to build neural connections in their child's brain, strengthening their relationship.

Create a '[circle of security](#)' by allowing their child to explore the world, encouraging independence but welcoming them back when they need to be comforted.

Follow the child's lead, interact with them consistently and guide their behaviour.

When working with infants/young children adopt a 'family perspective' taking into account each caregiver's contribution to the attachment relationship.

Learn about different cultures and caregiving practices (e.g. attachment, feeding, sleep, toilet learning, child development and play) while understanding that families are unique and differ within cultures.

Share these resources with caregivers to promote healthy attachment.

[Comfort Play & Teach Parenting Moments](#)

Tipsheets with activities and experiences that are practical, easy-to-understand.

[My Child and I. Attachment for Life](#)

Helps caregivers to understand the principles of attachment and learn ways to promote attachment.



For more detailed information go to [Social-Emotional Development in the Early Years: A Common Message Paper \(2nd. Ed.\)](#), published by the Halton Early Years Mental Health Committee (EYMHC) to provide professionals with common messages on early social-emotional development.

EYMH Committee members:

Halton Region Health Department
Halton Region Social and Community Services
Reach Out Centre for Kids (ROCK)
Halton Children's Aid Society

ErinoakKids Centre for Treatment and Development
EarlyON Child & Family Centres
Community Living Burlington

Our Kids Network (OKN) and EYMHC work in partnership to manage the [Early Years Mental Health Toolkit](#) on the OKN website.