



Positive Caring Relationships

Positive, caring relationships in the early years are the ‘building blocks’ for a child’s social-emotional development.

In the early years, responsive adult relationships affect brain architecture through reciprocal serve and return interactions. Warm and responsive caregiving leads to greater social competence, fewer behavioural problems and enhanced thinking and reasoning in a young child.



Take it Further...

Learn about it... Positive caring relationships (p.19 EYMH Common Message Paper)

All children are born into families with certain beliefs, values and expectations related to child behaviour and development. Early childhood caregiving practices differ across cultures and influence how children are raised. Despite some differences there are key common themes across all cultures.

Positive caring relationships in the early years are the building blocks for children’s social and emotional development. They guide how children learn about the world and set the stage for all other relationships in a child’s life. Children can never have too many positive caring adults in their lives.

Strong, supportive and responsive adult relationships are linked to a number of positive outcomes in children including:

- Resilience
- Self-confidence
- Mental well-being
- Impulse control
- Motivation to learn
- Problem solving
- Develop empathy
- Ability to develop and sustain friendships.

Take a deeper dive. Watch the following video.
[Serve & Return Interaction Shapes Brain Circuitry](#)

Talk about it... Tell caregivers and colleagues about positive caring relationships

Children’s social and emotional health starts to develop during the prenatal period and is dependent on having close relationships with caring adults.

When children feel safe and secure they are better positioned to learn. Warm and supportive caregiving leads to children with greater social competence, fewer behavioural problems and enhanced thinking and reasoning skills.

A child’s healthy social-emotional development influences how a child:

- thinks and feels about himself and others,
- learns how to manage their emotions in positive ways.

Everyone has a role to play in helping infants/young children to feel safe, secure and thrive.

Take a deeper dive. Watch the following video.
[Family Relationships Matter: The First Six Years](#)

Try it... Move from knowledge to practise

Encourage caregivers to:

- Respond to their child's needs (e.g. comfort them when they are tired, hungry, sick, upset or just need to be close).
- Provide a safe place for their child to explore and develop their skills.
- Follow their child's lead, interact with them, guide their behaviour and share in their fun!
- Use positive discipline to deal with challenging behaviour and teach children how to behave instead.
- Take time for themselves.

Share the following resources with caregivers and discuss how these resources can help them to build a healthy relationship with their child:

- [Family Assets](#)
- [Developmental Relationships](#)
- [Interactive Temperament Tool](#)
- [My Child and I Attachment for Life](#)
- [Healthy Babies Healthy Brain](#)
- [A Simple Gift](#)
- [The First Years Last Forever](#)



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 and 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.