

Ways to Encourage Daily Interactions

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We all want the best for our children. You wouldn't be reading this right now if you didn't. Parenting is hard work and almost always comes with the stress and anxiety of heavy questions, like: "Am I doing enough?" "Am I doing it right?" "Is my child happy?" "Will my child have the skills to be successful?" We may feel as though we have very little to give and aren't doing enough for our children in a world that values money, toys and other things we sometimes can't afford. I'm here to tell you that feeling is far from the truth.

The most valuable thing we can give our children is daily nurturing interaction that will provide them with invaluable skills for the rest of their lives. The gift that keeps on giving is a bond or secure attachment to someone who loves them. It is the foundation to who they are and who they will become.

You, as a caregiver, focusing on providing daily nurturing interactions, can help shape your children into independent, loving, confident, and successful adults.

Here are some ways that can help encourage positive daily interactions with your child: (Handout- Circle of Security, Cooper, Hoffman, Marvin & Powell- 2000).

Start from day 1: Every baby needs to be held. Holding babies provides pleasure and reassurance and it is essential to help soothe and organize difficult feelings.

Gaze into baby's eyes: Pay close attention to when your child wants to look back. Lots of pleasurable eye contact will translate into a feeling of reassurance and connection.



Whenever possible, follow your child's lead: Security of attachment requires a caregiver who is sensitive and responsive to their child's needs. Your willingness to answer subtle requests for attention, comfort, holding, exploration, and discovery (with you nearby) will provide an increased sense of security for your child.

You can't spoil a baby: Contrary to those who may be saying that you will harm your child if you are "too responsive", it isn't possible to spoil a baby in the first 9-10 months of life. Often, the most responsive parents actually have children who are less demanding and more self-reliant as they grow older.

Give prompt basic care:

Change diapers, feed, bathe, soothe as quickly as needed throughout the day. Also provide the child with an appropriate sleep schedule that meets their needs and the needs of the family. Without these basic needs met, children will not be in a receptive state to engage with those around them.

Play with your child: Provide a safe environment to explore

and protect against hazards. Find things you both enjoy doing together. Play should be fun and motivating for both the child and the caregiver. Go slow, allow your child the time to problem solve or attempt something on their own before jumping in to save the day.

Stay with your child during difficult feelings: Young children often have upset feelings that are too difficult to handle on their own. When your child has an intense feeling, stay with them until the feeling has been worked through. Your child will be learning basic trust: "Someone is here with me when I am in difficulty and pain," and "I can count on a good outcome to follow a difficult experience."

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Talk out loud about feelings: From your child's earliest days, talking out loud about feelings (your child's and your own) will begin to help your child to eventually label feelings and realize that they can be shared, thus ending a need to act them out.

Mistakes happen: Perfection is impossible in parenting. In fact, it isn't even recommended. A child who knows that everyone in the family makes mistakes, and that they will eventually be worked out, will feel more secure than a child who thinks everything has to be right the first time.

Be bigger, stronger, wiser, and kind: At the heart of secure attachment is a child's recognition that they have a parent who can be counted on to lovingly provide tenderness, comfort, firm guidance, and protection during the inevitable difficulties of life. If you ever feel like you need a change of

provider or services, please reach out to your provider or service coordinator.

Our early intervention team members all have the same goal of wanting your family and child to succeed. We love to watch children grow and meet the goals that you have set for them. If you have questions or concerns about your child's development, talk to your pediatrician.

