

# ATTACHMENT

## Building your child's emotional health



Positive early experiences help your child learn, think and grow into a healthy adult. As a parent or caregiver you can have an active role in helping your child be more resilient.

### What is attachment?

- A strong emotional connection that develops between you and your child
- A healthy relationship develops when you respond regularly in a warm and sensitive way to your child's feelings when angry, scared, upset, hurt and sick
- Attachment positively affects your child's ability to learn and explore, express and manage their feelings, develop close relationships and adjust to different environments

#### **PUBLIC HEALTH**

1-800-361-5653

TTY: 1-866-512-6228

[york.ca/parenting](http://york.ca/parenting)

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The logo for York Region, featuring a stylized white bird or wing shape above the text "York Region" in a white serif font, all set against a green and teal background.

# Tips for building your child's emotional health

## Be warm, loving and responsive

- Cuddle your child
- Use a soft and calm voice to help your child feel safe

## Respond to your child's cues

- Observe what helps your child feel better
- Pick up your child when crying to show that you care
- Children enjoy your attention and cannot be spoiled

## Talk, read and sing to your child

- Children learn language long before they speak
- Children need to hear your voice to learn
- Sing songs, read rhymes, play music and laugh together
- Look into your child's eyes and smile
- Talk to your child when playing, bathing, diapering and feeding
- Cuddle with a story to show words and good feelings go together

## Develop routines to help your child learn what to expect

- Eat at the table with your child and enjoy meals together
- Spend time with your child, play games like peekaboo
- Massage your child with gentle hands
- Read and sing to your child before bed

## Take care of yourself

- Time for yourself helps you have more energy and patience to be warm, loving and responsive
- Reach out for support
- Include family and friends to build a relationship with your child
- Do things you enjoy with your child

## Promote safe play and exploration

- Put your child down to roll, crawl, walk and explore
- Play face-to-face at your child's level
- Follow your child's interests in play
- Provide your full attention without distractions to enjoy playtime with your child
- Point out nice things to see or smell
- Attend community programs for babies and children

## Encourage and support your child

- Try to see things from your child's point of view
- Role model simple, kind words and a gentle voice
- Use deep breathing to cope in stressful moments
- Listen when your child talks and pause before responding
- Encourage your child to try to do things for themselves before helping them
- Help your child explore their interests

Your child needs to know that someone is available for them. A healthy attachment with at least one adult increases brain development and helps your child cope with stress, anxiety and new life experiences.

For more information and support on building a healthy relationship with your child, contact York Region Public Health at 1-800-361-5653, TTY 1-866-512-6228 or visit [york.ca/parenting](https://york.ca/parenting)