

THE PARENT-CHILD CONNECTION

Tips For Parents & Caregivers



Tip Sheet

Your relationship with your child is the foundation for all the positive things you might hope to accomplish as a parent. This relationship not only affects your child's emotional, social and mental health, it enhances your ability to help them learn. Building the relationship with your child begins with reading your baby's cues and responding in nurturing and supportive ways.

Your baby's first language is non-verbal. They are born with the ability to respond to your loving touch and tune into your expressions and the rhythm of your voice. When your baby looks at you with adoring eyes, and you smile back, you let them know how wonderful they are - that's a conversation!

BE A MIRROR

Respond to your baby's feelings with both facial expressions and words. If they are excited, give them a big smile and say, "Oh you're so excited!". If they are upset, show them you understand with a sympathetic face and ask, "Did that noise scare you?".

BE A PLAY PARTNER

Respond to your baby's feelings with both facial expressions and words. If they are excited, give them a big smile and say, "Oh you're so excited!". If they are upset, show them you understand with a sympathetic face and ask, "Did that noise scare you?".

USE THE WAWA METHOD

It's important to talk to babies long before they can talk back. Once children do start talking, language becomes a huge part of how we interact with them. But the basic principle of being attentive and responsive is still a key way to communicate. The *Make the Connection* Program teaches the WAWA method as a way to remember how to take turns when having baby conversations.

- **WAIT** with undivided attention to hear what they have to say
- **ASK** a question to find out more about what they are thinking or feeling
- **WAIT** to see what they have to say next
- **ADD** ideas to keep the conversation going

TUNE INTO TEMPERMENT

Temperament refers to personality traits that we are born with. It can affect everything from how much comforting and support your child needs to their style of play. Understanding and adapting to your infant's temperament can help you connect. For example, is your child slow to warm up to new situations, or very outgoing? Sometimes it's easy to feel connected with our little ones. Other times it seems hard. What's important is to keep working at it to enjoy those wonderful, special moments of connection when they come.