

## Fathers & Attachment

Attachment is the emotional connection between you and your child. A secure attachment relationship provides a 'home base' as the child gets older and begins to try things on his own. An insecure attachment can lead to mental health problems.

### Ways To Build Strong Healthy Attachment:

- **Spend some unstructured, uninterrupted time** with your child each day.
- **Learn your child's cues and signals.** Listen to the sounds she makes, and observe the way she moves, her different facial expressions, and the way she makes eye contact.
- **Respond to your child quickly, consistently, and predictably.** Lots of attention does not spoil infants and toddlers. Their cries are their primary way to communicate. Listen for differences in cries and learn what they mean.
- **Show warmth and affection.** Touch stimulates the brain to release hormones necessary for growth. Hugs, holding hands, cuddling, etc.
- **Find ways to calm yourself when your child is upset,** so you are better able to help him to be calm.
- **Play with your child.** Simple games can be fun for both children and dads. Watch to see which games your child likes and when he is ready to stop playing (does he look away, begin to fuss.)
- **Talk, read, and sing with your child.** Babies begin to learn about language from your tone of voice and the sounds you are making even if they don't yet understand what the words mean.
- **Observe and encourage your child's interest in their environment** Delight in being with a curious, provide a safe space for exploration
- **Let your child know you're interested in her activities.** Show a sincere interest in your child—whatever she is doing. Your attention is what she desires and is thrilled to receive.
- **Encourage children to express their feelings in an age-appropriate way.** Teach children acceptable ways to vent anger, like drawing an angry picture or running in the yard. Label your own feelings, "I am happy because you helped me clean up."
- **Respect and recognize your child's feelings.** This teaches your child to trust her instincts. Accepting her feelings, without minimizing them or making fun, also increases the chances that she will share more with you as she grows.