

**Healthy and positive relationships are essential for your child to grow and learn.**



## **Why relationships matters**

Children will have a secure base when they form a secure attachment with a parent or other caregiver. Children who are connected and securely attached feel safe and will explore, play and discover new things about their environment. Children have a need to be close to someone, feel secure, to be loved, to be understood, and to be accepted. We are all “hard wired” to connect! It is in our genes. A relationship with an adult develops the cognitive, emotional and social parts of their brain. Children also learn best in a context of a relationship with someone. Research has shown that close relationships with parents have been associated with positive outcomes, such as better academic performance, developing skills, self-regulation, school adjustment, attention, motivation, problem solving, self-esteem and fewer problem behaviors.

How does a healthy relationship start? It starts when they are babies and you gaze into their eyes, touch, rock, sing and are fully “open” to the baby’s experience. You are structuring their brain and laying the foundation for fulfilling relationship patterns. This “openness” is called “resonant attuning” and is mediated by “mirror neurons”. When a baby is cooing joyfully or smiling happily, the resonantly attuned parent will respond likewise. As a result, baby’s mirror neurons tell him, “My parent feels me.” This experience of being felt, seen, and heard are the foundations for trust and love.

The strength of the parent-child relationship is important because it is our primary way of keeping our children safe, helping them navigate the world, developing their personal strengths, skills & competencies and making the right choices. Healthy and positive relationships are essential for your child to grow and learn.

### **Tips for good relationships**

- Spend time with them– all relationships are built on contact with caring, dependable, trusty, and empathetic adults. Separate your relationship time from discipline or a task.
- Keep up positive communication. Be a good listener and reflect your understanding of their words and feelings. Give lots of praise to build their self-esteem and self-worth. Avoid using cross words, scolding your child or finding fault too often.
- Observe and understand their behavior. Children communicate through their behavior. Be consistent in responding to their needs.
- Teach by example (mirror neurons!). Your children are bound to imitate what they see you do. The best way to get your children to do what you want is to show it.
- Let them experience independence so that they discover things through their own mistakes.
- Help develop your child's conscience. Explain the rules of behavior and why they're important.
- Read books that focus on close relationships.

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