



My Child and I Attachment for Life

**best start
meilleur départ**

by/par health **nexus** santé



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The Role of Parent

The arrival of a new baby is a happy event, but it can also be a cause of stress:

- Will I be a good parent?
- Will I be able to form an attachment with my child?
- Will I be able to give him what he needs?
- Will he be able to grow into a happy, independent adult?

Most babies have some in-born behaviours that keep adults who care for them close by. Through these behaviours, the first bonds of attachment develop, as parents or other caregivers respond to the infant cues and to their own instincts.

Parent-child attachment develops primarily during the first year of a child's life but it continues to develop throughout his life. This booklet is for parents of children aged 0 to 3 years and for anyone who is taking care of a young child.



The Primary Attachment Figure

Babies can form attachments with several people (father, mother, grandparents, educator) but they develop a stronger attachment with at least one person. This person is usually the baby's main caregiver and the one with whom she spends the most time.

You will develop a secure attachment through all the little things you do:

- Comforting your baby when she needs it.
- Providing care such as food, clothing and baths.
- Talking and singing songs to her.
- Staying calm at difficult times.
- Responding to her cues such as smiles, tears and cooing.

All of this will provide your baby with the basic security to develop good relationships with others in her life. This will help her develop enough self-confidence to become competent and independent.

Your baby depends on you! It is important to respond affectionately every time your baby needs you, 24 hours a day. Night time can be particularly frightening for babies! Comforting her when she is crying, even when you want her to go to sleep, lets her know she is loved and safe. If your baby cries, it is because she needs something, even if it is just for you to hold her for a few minutes.



*Breastfeeding your baby is nature's way to promote attachment.
Breast milk is the best food for your baby.*

It is very important to pay attention to your baby:

- 1) When he is sick.*
- 2) When he is hurt.*
- 3) When he is upset: sad, frightened or lonely.*

Of course, sometimes you won't be able to comfort your baby. That is normal. The important thing is that you try to comfort him most of the time so that he learns to depend on you. This will help him to trust others in various situations.

Are you afraid of "spoiling" your baby? You won't spoil him if he needs you. Instead, he will learn to feel safe. You will have created an attachment bond.

Attachment also affects the baby's brain development. This will influence the child's thinking, learning, feeling and behaviour throughout life.

When your toddler starts exploring, he will want to get to know his surroundings, knowing his parents are not far away if he needs them. If a child does not feel safe, he will be less likely to explore and will not develop his social skills and his self-esteem in the same way as children who feel safe. It is important for the baby to feel secure to foster his future independence.



Here are some guidelines for promoting attachment:

- During the pregnancy, rub your belly and talk to your future baby about the feeling you are developing for her.
- After the baby is born, respond to the baby's needs affectionately and as needed.
- Have clear expectations of the baby that are appropriate for her age.
- Talk to the baby in an affectionate and positive way, giving her a chance to respond and to initiate interaction and play.
- Accept the baby as a unique individual with her own personality and identity.
- Consider the baby's presence in every aspect of your daily life.

Secure attachment has been associated with better outcomes in areas such as independence, self-image, empathy and relationships with others in toddlerhood, school-age and adolescence.

Adapted from the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development



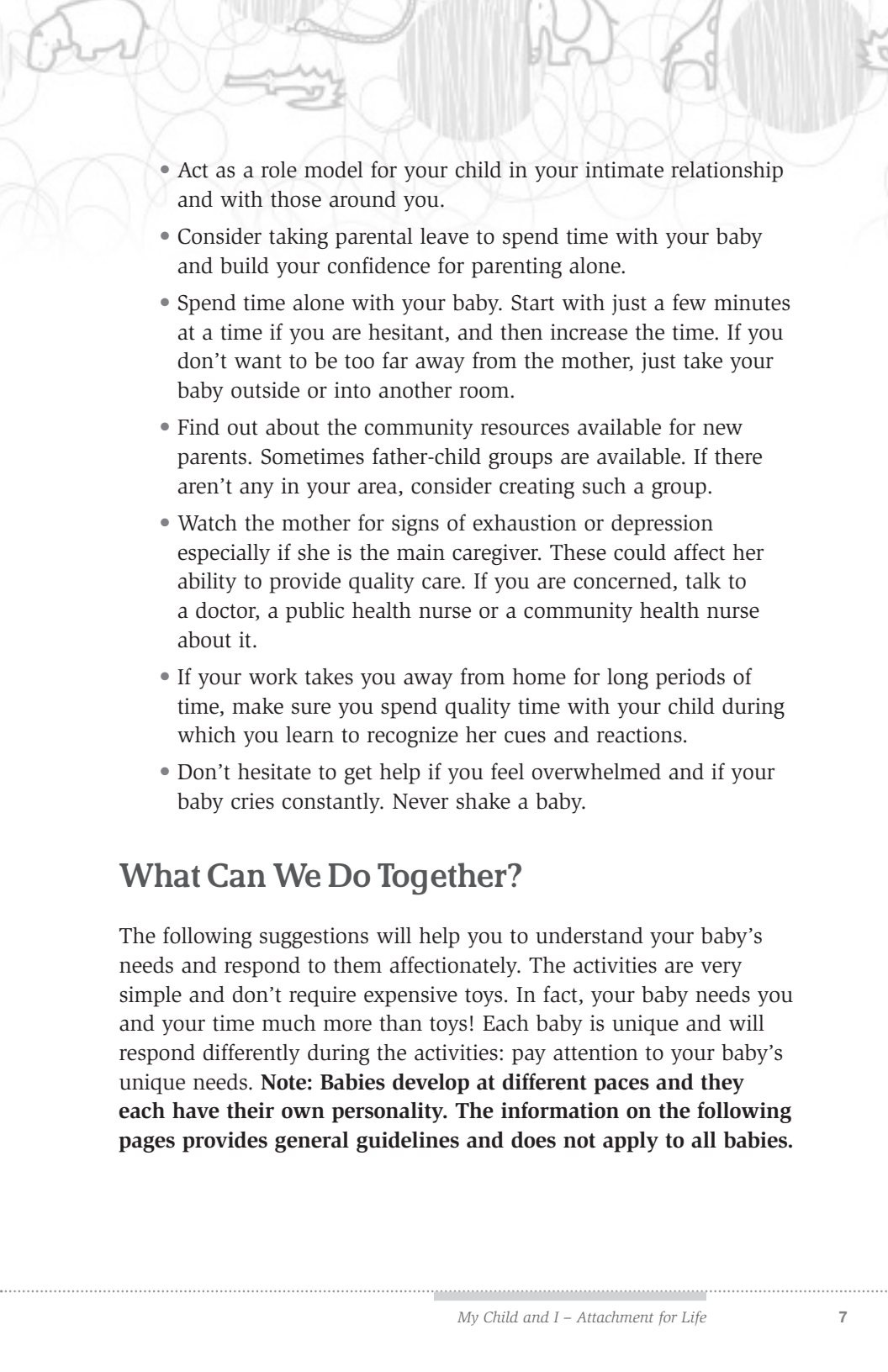
The Father's Role

Even if the attachment with the mother is already comforting, the attachment with the father contributes to a child's development. Some studies have shown that a high quality father-child relationship allows a child to take his explorations a little further.

Fathers can do the activities described in the following pages with their baby to promote attachment, whether or not they are the main caregiver. Here are some additional suggestions:

- Use a baby carrier as much as possible. Men's physique usually allows them to carry an older, heavier baby than a woman can.
- Lie down with your newborn on your chest. Your heartbeat will help your baby develop trust.
- Take your bath with your baby. Physical contact is important. If another person is present, he or she can take the baby to dress him when he comes out of the bath.
- Provide the same affectionate responses, routines and positive discipline as the other parent, so the child feels safe, no matter which parent is looking after him.
- Don't hesitate to show affection to your baby or toddler.
- Support a breastfeeding mother because breastfeeding is ideal for the baby. Look for other opportunities to spend quality time with your baby, by bringing the baby to the mother or burping him afterwards.
- Encourage your toddler to challenge himself by developing his physical skills (climbing, jumping, etc.). Supervise him carefully but, most importantly, make him feel good for his efforts.



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- Act as a role model for your child in your intimate relationship and with those around you.
 - Consider taking parental leave to spend time with your baby and build your confidence for parenting alone.
 - Spend time alone with your baby. Start with just a few minutes at a time if you are hesitant, and then increase the time. If you don't want to be too far away from the mother, just take your baby outside or into another room.
 - Find out about the community resources available for new parents. Sometimes father-child groups are available. If there aren't any in your area, consider creating such a group.
 - Watch the mother for signs of exhaustion or depression especially if she is the main caregiver. These could affect her ability to provide quality care. If you are concerned, talk to a doctor, a public health nurse or a community health nurse about it.
 - If your work takes you away from home for long periods of time, make sure you spend quality time with your child during which you learn to recognize her cues and reactions.
 - Don't hesitate to get help if you feel overwhelmed and if your baby cries constantly. Never shake a baby.

What Can We Do Together?

The following suggestions will help you to understand your baby's needs and respond to them affectionately. The activities are very simple and don't require expensive toys. In fact, your baby needs you and your time much more than toys! Each baby is unique and will respond differently during the activities: pay attention to your baby's unique needs. **Note: Babies develop at different paces and they each have their own personality. The information on the following pages provides general guidelines and does not apply to all babies.**

0-3 Months

What Your Baby Can Do

- She likes looking at faces and is starting to smile and coo.
- She likes listening to voices and recognizes the voices of familiar people.
- She cries to express her needs.
- She likes being held and having physical contact with people.
- Being picked up usually soothes her.
- She can clearly see things about 30 cm (12 inches) away or closer.
- She tries to touch your face.

What You Can Do

- Breastfeed your baby.
- Don't be afraid of spoiling your baby by paying attention to her.
- If you have met all her basic needs and your baby is still crying, pick her up.
- When the baby shows signs of being tired, provide her with a quiet place.
- Smile at, talk to, sing songs to, rock and pick up your baby gently.
- Give your baby a gentle massage.
- Look directly at your baby to help her become used to your face.
- As often as possible, use a baby carrier worn on the stomach (like a mother kangaroo). Do not carry the baby while you are handling hot food or beverages.
- Put your baby in a crib close to your bed, as recommended by the Canadian Paediatric Society (www.caringforkids.cps.ca).
- Use the language of communication you are most familiar with when you are talking with your baby, even if it is different from your partner's.

ACTIVITIES

Change the direction of your baby's gaze. Move your face about 30 cm (12 inches) away from your baby's face, while he is awake. Slowly move your face to the right and then to the left. Observe his response.

Explanation – The baby is getting used to recognizing your face and wants to keep looking at you.

Change the sound of your voice and use different tones. Move close to your baby. Say sentences to him using different intonations: normal voice, high voice, low voice, whispering, nasal voice, etc. Observe whether the baby tries to produce sounds as well.

Explanation – The baby is developing an interest in hearing your voice and is discovering the sounds associated with language.

Speak for your baby. Whenever you are doing something with your baby (changing a diaper, breastfeeding, etc.), imagine you are the baby and speak for him: "I'm a bit cold now," "I want to keep on holding Mummy's sweater," etc.

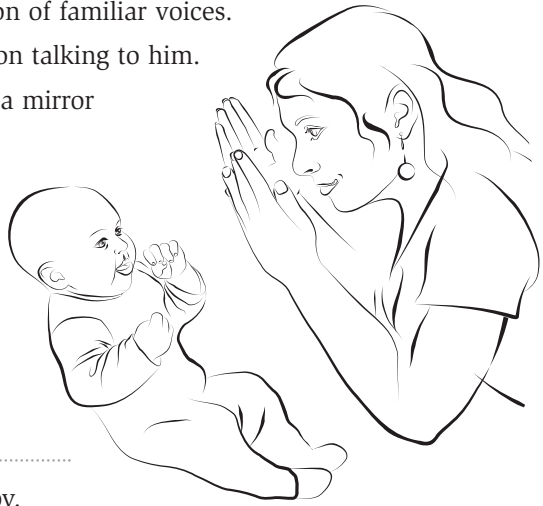
Explanation – You are learning to understand your baby's cues and to be more sensitive to his reactions.



4-6 Months

What Your Baby Can Do

- He smiles and laughs more often.
- He responds to his name.
- He moves his arms and legs when he is excited.
- He shows he is tired in different ways: frowning, looking away, grimacing, kicking, arching his back, crying, etc.
- He likes seeing and being with his favourite people.
- He turns his head in the direction of familiar voices.
- He gazes at the face of the person talking to him.
- He responds to his reflection in a mirror and smiles.
- He can play with objects on his own for a few minutes.
- He cries whenever he is frustrated.
- He can usually stop crying if he is comforted.



What You Can Do

- Continue to breastfeed your baby.
- Respond to your baby's gazes and smiles.
- Look directly at your baby when you are playing with and talking to him.
- Talk to and read with your baby.
- Pick up your baby when he cries.
- If your baby coos when you talk to him, he is trying to communicate. Reply to him.
- If your baby turns away, he wants to do something other than what you are suggesting or else he is tired. Follow his lead: slow down or stop.
- Pick up your baby right away if he is hurt, sick or frightened.
- Sing little songs you know.

ACTIVITIES

Give your baby a massage. Place him on the ground on a comfortable surface. He can be lying on his back or on his stomach, or even sitting up while you support his back. Do this when the baby is awake, between feedings. Massage him firmly so you don't tickle or irritate him. Use a vegetable or plant-based oil. Gently massage the various parts of his body and observe his reactions: What does he like? What doesn't he like? Tell your baby softly what you are doing.

Explanation – Your baby has comforting physical contact with you and you become more familiar with what he likes and how he communicates this.

Play airplane with your baby. Hold him by his waist and lift him up gently while looking in his face and smiling. Perform various manoeuvres and explain them to your baby: going up, going down, flying. Watch carefully for the signs your baby gives you to indicate whether or not he wants to continue (crying, pushing the parent away, wriggling, etc.) and follow his lead.

Explanation – You are becoming familiar with your baby's cues and how to respond to them, as well as developing his muscle tone.

Explore shapes and textures with your baby. Gather a variety of safe objects for your baby that have different shapes and textures (soft, hard, rough, etc.). Give them to him one at a time, explaining what the objects are and observing his responses. You can have him touch the objects with his hands, his mouth, his feet, his cheeks, etc. Give him the time to thoroughly examine each object and stop the activity whenever the baby shows signs of fatigue.

Explanation – You are learning to understand your baby's cues for whether or not he likes something. He is also having fun discovering new objects.

7-9 Months

What Your Baby Can Do

- She enjoys looking at other babies. She tries to attract another baby's attention by cooing and smiling.
- She is starting to make different sounds: "ba, ta, da, ma".
- Your baby is starting to move around and can explore around her.
- She reaches up her arms to be picked up.
- Your baby prefers you to strangers and may react when you leave.
- She likes to have a routine.
- She uses sounds to express her needs.
- Your baby can recognize some words for things she likes: Mummy, Daddy, teddy, etc.
- Your baby can be soothed by holding a blanket or favourite toy.
- She can be soothed by hearing a familiar voice or seeing a familiar person.

What You Can Do

- Observe your baby so you can understand her cues. Play with her whenever she seems ready and interested. Follow her lead.
- Pay attention to your baby's non-verbal behaviour (reaching up her arms, smiling, kicking, stiffening her arms and legs, etc.).
- Pick up your baby whenever she reaches up her arms.
- Sing songs, read books and talk to her softly.
- Organize your family life to provide your baby with a predictable routine: meals, games, bath, naps, etc.
- When you have to leave your baby, hug her when you leave and when you come back. Stay calm and help her to control her emotions and to understand that you will come back.
- Let your child comfort herself whenever she can (sucking her thumb, holding her favourite blanket, etc.)
- Continue to breastfeed your baby.

ACTIVITIES

Play simple games where you copy your baby's actions. For example, if he claps his hands or makes a noise with his mouth or with a rattle, do the same thing. Let him initiate the game but you can also try to initiate it.

Explanation – Your baby is learning that he can control his environment through his actions. He sees that you respond to his efforts to communicate. He is learning about communicating.

Play peek-a-boo with your baby. You can just position yourself in front of him and hide your face in your hands and then reveal it again. You can also hide your face in a facecloth. You can then move away a little and reappear. You can do this with one of his favourite toys.

Explanation – Your baby is beginning to understand that things and people continue to exist even when he cannot see them. He is also developing the pleasure of seeing your face and his favourite toys which can comfort him. The baby is learning that you will always come back.

Place a mirror in front of your baby. Let him look at himself first and try to understand what is happening. Use his name to identify the baby in the mirror. You can then show him the parts of his body, such as his hands, his nose, his eyes, in the mirror.

Explanation – Your baby is beginning to become aware of his body. He is learning that the parts of his body that he can see in the mirror belong to him.



10-12 Months

What Your Baby Can Do

- He imitates others.
- He is curious about new toys and can point at what he wants.
- He can express several emotions: pleasure, anxiety, sadness, etc.
- He can trigger an action that affects others, such as making them laugh.
- He can show signs of distress when he is separated from his favourite people.
- He seeks visual or physical contact with his parents when he is unsure about a situation.
- He reacts when someone takes one of his toys.
- He shows affection with kisses, hugs and smiles.

What You Can Do

- Provide him with a safe environment.
- Play with your baby, read his books and sing his songs.
- Try to understand what your baby wants when he cries, smiles, babbles, points his finger or turns away.
- Help your baby identify his feelings in words: happy, sad, angry, etc.
- Make routines more enjoyable by tickling, laughing and playing games.
- Encourage your baby's efforts to move, stand up and hold onto furniture.
- Tell your baby about what you're going to do together: eat dinner, go for a walk outside, take a bath, etc. This will help him to feel safe in his daily routine.
- Set clear limits for your baby when necessary by distracting his attention from prohibited things, organizing the space around him to remove dangerous objects and showing your baby the behaviour you want (see the section on positive discipline).
- Continue to breastfeed your baby.

ACTIVITIES

Read a book about animals with your baby. It may be hard for your baby to say words at this age, but he can mimic sounds. Look at pictures of animals and make the animals' sounds. Encourage every effort your baby makes to repeat them. You can also do this activity using stuffed or plastic animals.

Explanation – Your baby is learning to communicate with you by babbling, which becomes language later on.

Practice separating from your baby. Tell your baby that you are going to leave and come back. Explain who is going to look after him during this time. Leave him a favourite object while you are away. Give him a hug and kiss before you leave. Leave your baby for a few minutes and come back. Repeat this activity, gradually increasing the period of time but keeping the same departure routine.

Explanation – The baby is learning that you will come back every time you leave. The baby may be comforted by the person who looks after him while the parents are away. He is also learning to comfort himself when necessary.



Arrange a visit with another baby. Position the babies to look at one another and encourage any form of communication: smiles, sounds, cooing. Observe the babies' responses to the addition of different stimuli: music, toys, people, etc.

Explanation – Your baby is learning to communicate with others and not to depend only on you for his social needs.

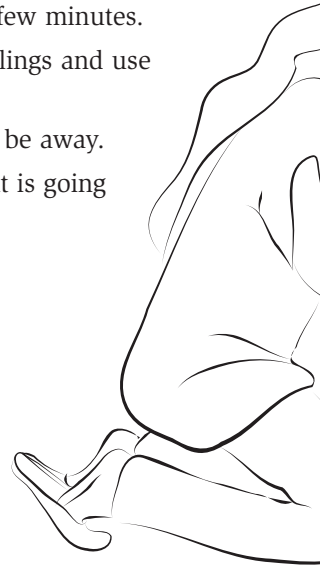
13-18 Months

What Your Toddler Can Do

- Your toddler enjoys exploring her surroundings.
- She is starting to say a few words, such as “hi” and “no”.
- She is curious about and intrigued by new people.
- She is developing self-confidence.
- Your toddler can play on her own.
- She dislikes changes in routine.

What You Can Do

- Allow your toddler to explore safely.
- Be there when she needs comforting and show your affection.
- Show your interest in what your toddler discovers while letting her direct the game of discovery.
- Talk, listen and respond to your toddler.
- Encourage your toddler to play on her own for a few minutes.
- Show her photos of people expressing various feelings and use words to explain the feelings.
- Follow a departure routine whenever you have to be away.
- If the daily routine changes, tell your toddler what is going to happen so it is not a surprise.



ACTIVITIES

Play hide and seek. Explain the game to your toddler and then hide under the sofa or bed, somewhere quite close to him in the beginning. When he finds you, show how pleased you are and give him a big hug.

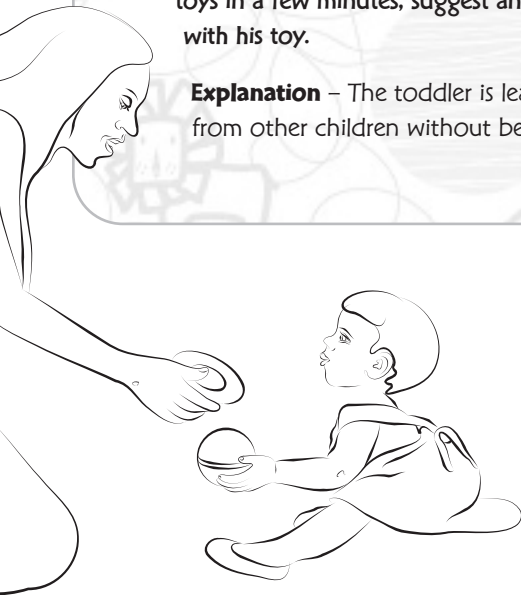
Explanation – This activity supports his need for safe exploration. Your toddler is getting used to your leaving and feels happy to see you again.

Let your child explore somewhere new. Show him a kitchen cupboard, a closet or a big box full of new objects that are safe for a young child.

Explanation – Your toddler can explore new things at his own pace, knowing you are nearby if he needs you.

Show him how to share a toy. Let your child choose a toy and choose one yourself. Play right beside him. After a few minutes, offer to exchange toys. If the child refuses, suggest a choice: exchange toys in a few minutes, suggest another toy or suggest playing together with his toy.

Explanation – The toddler is learning ways to get what he wants from other children without being aggressive.



19-24 Months

What Your Toddler Can Do

- Your toddler continues exploring and getting to know his environment and the people around him.
- He shows a wide range of feelings and behaviour towards others: aggression, tantrums, biting, hugs, laughs, etc.
- Your toddler asserts himself by saying “no”.
- He plays side by side with other children.
- He is sometimes hesitant with new adults.
- He is starting to imitate adult behaviour.
- He is learning and using many new words which helps him understand you and express his needs.

What You Can Do

- Even though your toddler seems to want to do everything himself, she still needs you to comfort him.
- Share the pleasure of discovery with your toddler and continue to read, sing and talk with him.
- Tell him about alternatives for expressing his feelings: “If you’re angry with someone, come and tell me about it.”
- Encourage his curiosity but set safe limits for his exploration. Apply consistent rules for his behaviour that are fair.
- Use simple images illustrating emotions to help the child identify them.

ACTIVITIES

Understand how others feel. Find a book with characters who have a variety of feelings: angry, happy, sad, etc. Read the book with your toddler, explaining carefully why the characters feel that way. Ask him if he would feel the same way.

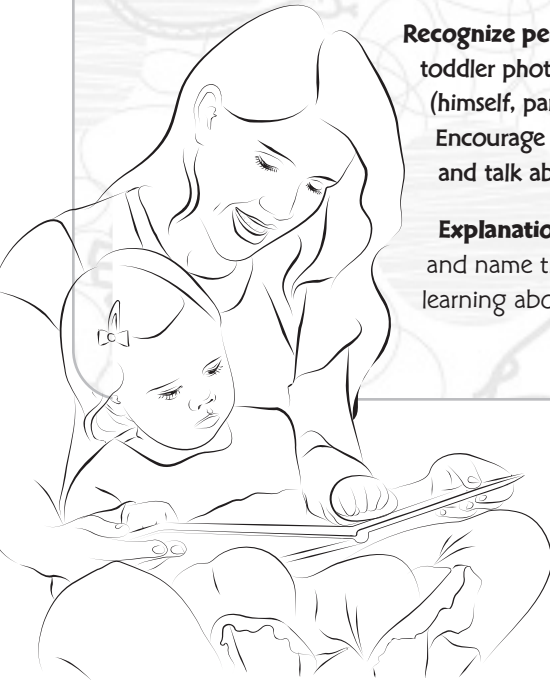
Explanation – The toddler is beginning to understand what can make others happy, sad, etc.

Imitate Mummy and Daddy. Do household activities and encourage your toddler to imitate you using child-sized tools: shovelling snow, sweeping the floor, carrying things, etc.

Explanation – He is developing his self-esteem because you are showing confidence in him by letting him do what you are doing..

Recognize people he knows. Show your toddler photos of people he knows well (himself, parents, friends, neighbours). Encourage him to identify the people and talk about them with you.

Explanation – He is learning to recognize and name the people he knows and is learning about his relationship with them.



25-30 Months

What Your Toddler Can Do

- Your toddler is using many words to communicate.
- She smiles and laughs.
- She is sometimes shy in new surroundings.
- She is starting to play imagination games and simple games.
- She likes playing with others but still has difficulty sharing toys.

What You Can Do

- Encourage games that allow her to use her imagination and other games she enjoys.
- Play games in which everyone has a turn, to help your child wait her turn.
- Encourage and praise your toddler for trying and for succeeding.
- Help your toddler to feel comfortable by explaining what is going to happen and what is happening.
- Show her ways of sharing a toy.



ACTIVITIES

Play the mirror game. Position yourselves facing one another. Your child has to imitate your gestures and facial expressions. Take turns so that the child then initiates the facial expression.

Explanation – He is learning to decode the actions, expressions and emotions of others. Taking turns also teaches him that communication is an exchange.

Play make-believe. Encourage your child to set up situations in which he has to play make-believe, such as having tea, talking on the phone, looking after a doll, cooking, repairing a car or doing woodworking.

Explanation – He is developing his imagination and his own way of doing things. With your help, he is also learning to describe in words what he is doing and the enjoyment he gets from this.

Dance to music. Find pieces of music that express a variety of feelings: joy, sadness, surprise. They may be sung, played on a CD player or played with an instrument. Explain to your toddler the various emotions conveyed by the music and dance with him to the music. Let him interpret the kind of dancing that goes with the music.

Explanation – The toddler is learning to associate emotions with behaviour.

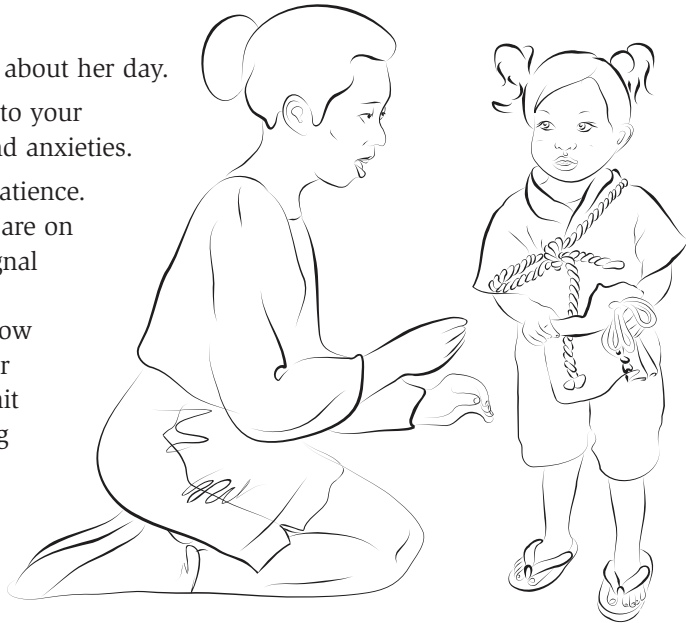
31-36 Months

What Your Toddler Can Do

- Your toddler can play independently.
- She can separate from her favourite people in familiar surroundings.
- She is starting to share with others.
- She is showing her emotions towards others.
- She can express and understand a number of emotions: happy, sad, angry, frightened, worried.

What You Can Do

- Encourage her to play independently.
- Encourage her to play games that allow her to use her imagination.
- Make separations easier by explaining your absences and telling her who will be looking after her. Tell her when you will be back using specific reference points (“after your nap,” “when it’s dark outside”).
- Help her to tell you about her day.
- Listen and respond to your toddler’s feelings and anxieties.
- Teach her to have patience. For example, if you are on the phone, use a signal (such as an index finger) to let her know you are aware of her but she needs to wait a little before having your attention.



ACTIVITIES

Imagine emotional situations. Create little scenarios using stuffed animals and dolls that illustrate different situations and emotions (arguments, surprise from a friend, separation from the parent, going to a party, minor injuries). Let him have a role and talk about the emotions and behaviour of those involved.

Explanation – The toddler can express various emotions through play and can learn behaviour to cope with these emotions. This will help him with problem-solving.

The story of his day. Give your toddler opportunities to talk about the things that interest him or that he did during the day. Demonstrate your interest in his stories by asking questions.

Explanation – He can see that you are interested in what he has to say and will want to talk to you more and more.

Make up stories together. Tell a little imaginary story using your toddler's favourite people and stuffed animals. "Once upon a time." Then let him tell a short imaginary story.

Explanation – This encourages imagination and communication.



Disciplining Your Toddler in a Positive Way

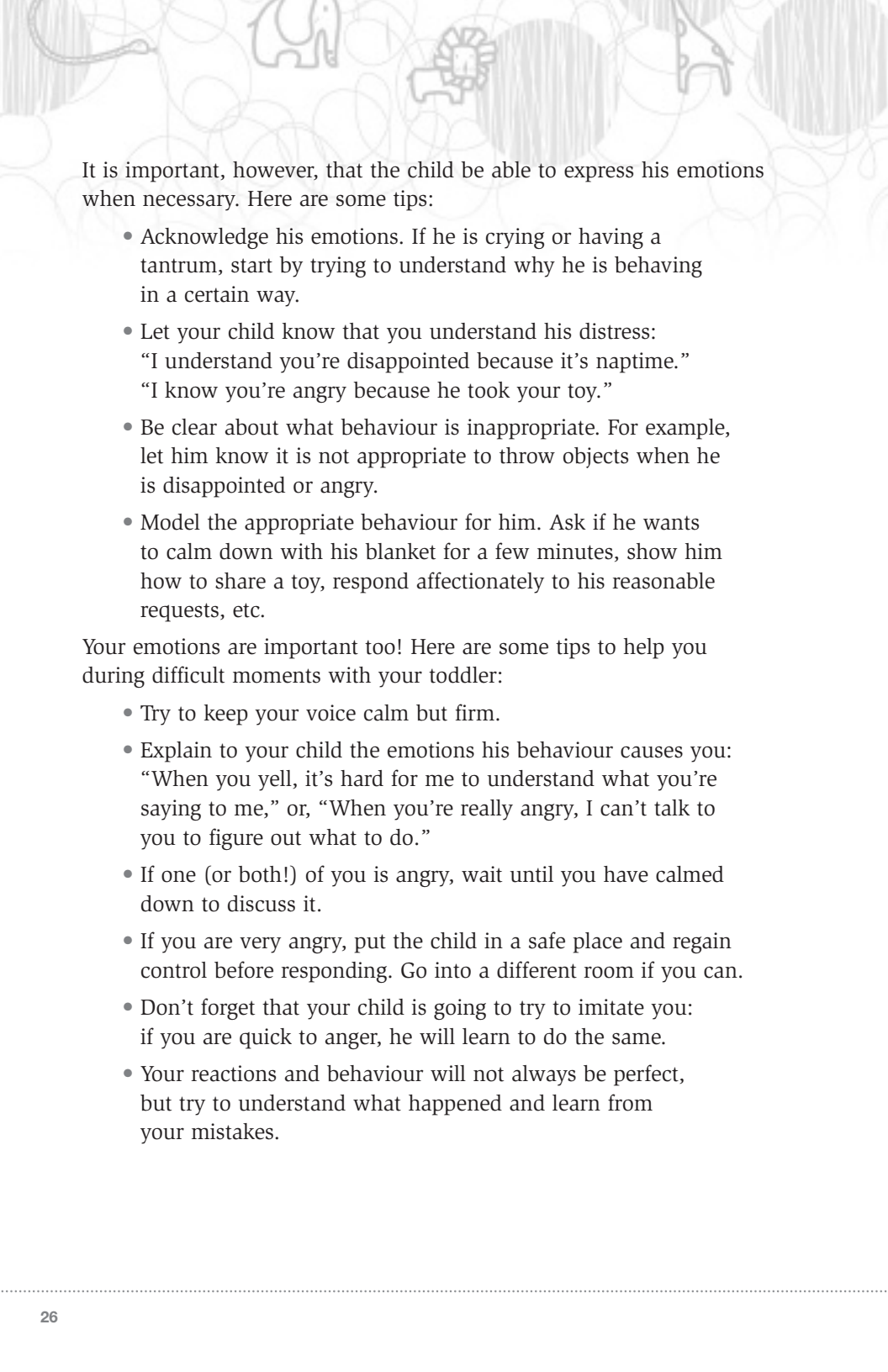
Young children need to learn the rules for living in a group and exploring safely. As a parent, you sometimes need to control the space they live in and show them which behaviour is the most appropriate.

Young children do not have bad intentions and are simply doing what comes to them naturally: putting things in their mouth, exploring around them and crying when they are upset.

To avoid problems, start by controlling the young child's environment:

- Organize the physical space. Take away dangerous objects, close the doors to places where she should not go, use barriers, etc.
- Distract your toddler's attention from prohibited things. For example, offer her a safe toy or change activities if she is heading towards something inappropriate.
- Be consistent: the rules should always be the same, no matter which parent is looking after the child. If possible, be in agreement beforehand.
- Have a routine. Transitions will be easier if the child knows what is going to happen beforehand.
- Encourage good behaviour instead of forbidding bad behaviour: "Come and help me with the laundry," instead of "Don't do that"; "Talk softly," instead of "Don't shout."
- Let her use materials that can be handled (plastic dishes, lids, saucepans, washcloths, etc.). Make sure these objects are safe.





It is important, however, that the child be able to express his emotions when necessary. Here are some tips:

- Acknowledge his emotions. If he is crying or having a tantrum, start by trying to understand why he is behaving in a certain way.
- Let your child know that you understand his distress:
“I understand you’re disappointed because it’s naptime.”
“I know you’re angry because he took your toy.”
- Be clear about what behaviour is inappropriate. For example, let him know it is not appropriate to throw objects when he is disappointed or angry.
- Model the appropriate behaviour for him. Ask if he wants to calm down with his blanket for a few minutes, show him how to share a toy, respond affectionately to his reasonable requests, etc.

Your emotions are important too! Here are some tips to help you during difficult moments with your toddler:


- Try to keep your voice calm but firm.
- Explain to your child the emotions his behaviour causes you:
“When you yell, it’s hard for me to understand what you’re saying to me,” or, “When you’re really angry, I can’t talk to you to figure out what to do.”
- If one (or both!) of you is angry, wait until you have calmed down to discuss it.
- If you are very angry, put the child in a safe place and regain control before responding. Go into a different room if you can.
- Don’t forget that your child is going to try to imitate you: if you are quick to anger, he will learn to do the same.
- Your reactions and behaviour will not always be perfect, but try to understand what happened and learn from your mistakes.

Adoption

You will probably “fall in love” quite quickly with your adopted child, especially if the child is a baby. But the term “attachment” is something different, because it implies that the child develops her trust in her adoptive parents. Will her parents always be there for her when she needs them?

The first months in a baby’s life are very important in creating attachment. In an adoption, parents do not always know about the quality of the baby’s care before the adoption. Babies may have been neglected and will need special care to develop their trust. In some cases, toddlers reject one of their parents’ affection in response to rejection they themselves have experienced.



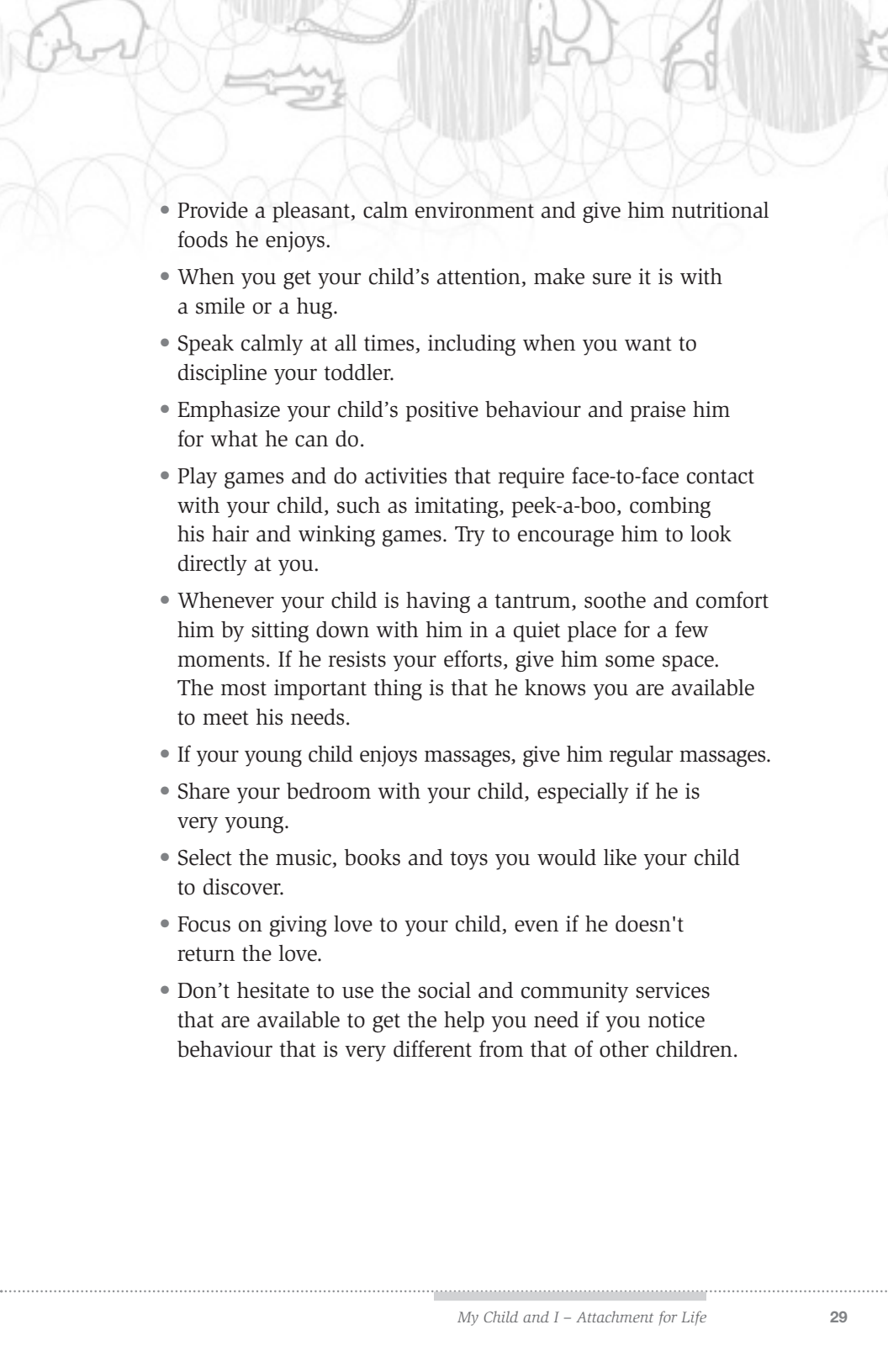


Some adopted babies may have disabilities, behavioural disorders or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), and will need very special care. In such cases, be sure to obtain appropriate professional advice.

But children have a natural need for attachment and will seek to fulfill this need.

Here are some suggestions. As you will see, some of them apply to all babies, whether adopted or not:

- Try to get as much information as possible about your child's past so you can be more aware of her needs.
- Hold your child often. She needs to feel safe. If she is a baby, use a baby carrier as much as possible.
- Take the time to get to know your child and her needs and responses.
- Provide your child with a very clear routine so she does not worry about what is going to happen. Tell her what is going to happen next.
- Respond to your child's needs promptly and always in the same way.
- It is a good idea for the parents to be the main caregivers and the ones to hold the child, especially in the first few months. Encourage relatives and friends to help you with other tasks related to the baby's care and explain why.
- Whenever you are feeding the baby from a bottle, hold her very close to your body, as though you were breastfeeding.

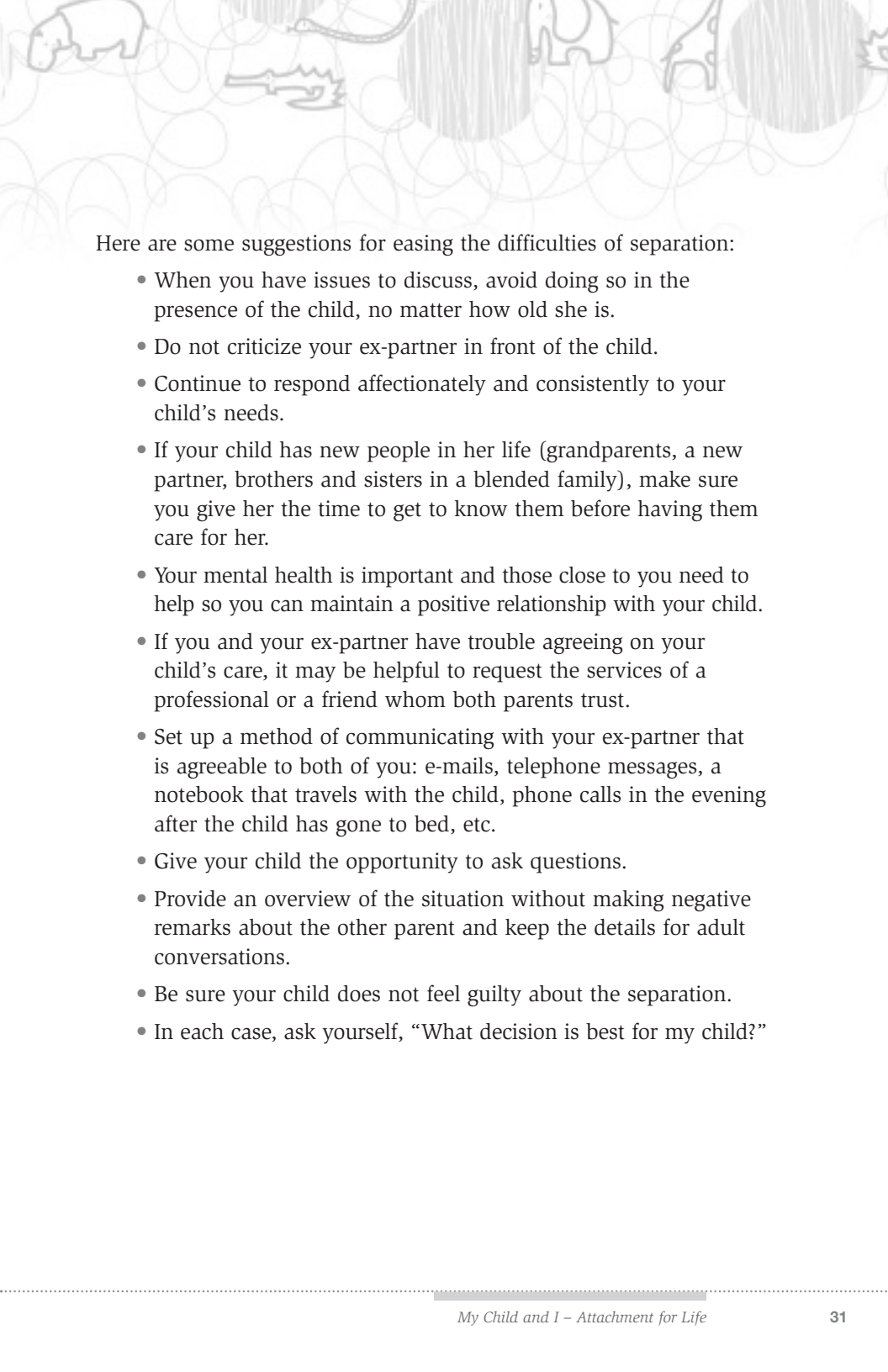
- 
- Provide a pleasant, calm environment and give him nutritional foods he enjoys.
 - When you get your child's attention, make sure it is with a smile or a hug.
 - Speak calmly at all times, including when you want to discipline your toddler.
 - Emphasize your child's positive behaviour and praise him for what he can do.
 - Play games and do activities that require face-to-face contact with your child, such as imitating, peek-a-boo, combing his hair and winking games. Try to encourage him to look directly at you.
 - Whenever your child is having a tantrum, soothe and comfort him by sitting down with him in a quiet place for a few moments. If he resists your efforts, give him some space. The most important thing is that he knows you are available to meet his needs.
 - If your young child enjoys massages, give him regular massages.
 - Share your bedroom with your child, especially if he is very young.
 - Select the music, books and toys you would like your child to discover.
 - Focus on giving love to your child, even if he doesn't return the love.
 - Don't hesitate to use the social and community services that are available to get the help you need if you notice behaviour that is very different from that of other children.

Separation and Divorce

When children are young, a couple's separation may make the family situation difficult. Expert opinions differ with respect to separation and divorce. Some feel that attachment will be affected while others do not believe this is necessarily the case.

The quality of the parenting and the quality of the environment play a crucial role in the long-term effects of separation and divorce. Ideally, the child will be able to have enough time with each parent on a regular basis.





Here are some suggestions for easing the difficulties of separation:

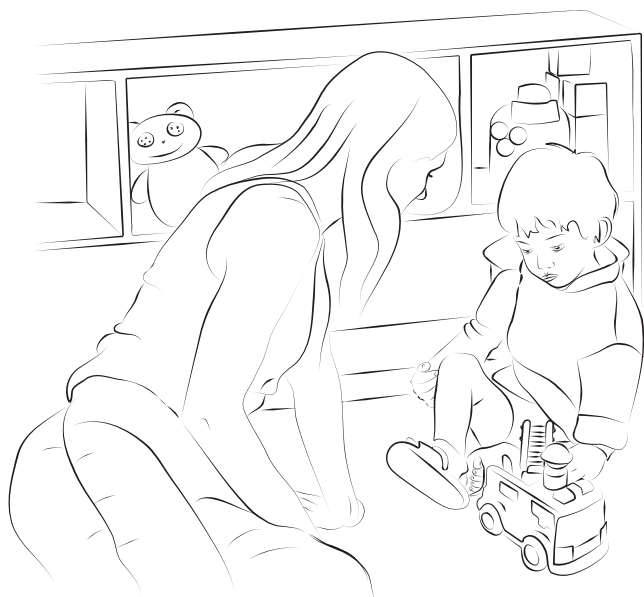
- When you have issues to discuss, avoid doing so in the presence of the child, no matter how old she is.
- Do not criticize your ex-partner in front of the child.
- Continue to respond affectionately and consistently to your child's needs.
- If your child has new people in her life (grandparents, a new partner, brothers and sisters in a blended family), make sure you give her the time to get to know them before having them care for her.
- Your mental health is important and those close to you need to help so you can maintain a positive relationship with your child.
- If you and your ex-partner have trouble agreeing on your child's care, it may be helpful to request the services of a professional or a friend whom both parents trust.
- Set up a method of communicating with your ex-partner that is agreeable to both of you: e-mails, telephone messages, a notebook that travels with the child, phone calls in the evening after the child has gone to bed, etc.
- Give your child the opportunity to ask questions.
- Provide an overview of the situation without making negative remarks about the other parent and keep the details for adult conversations.
- Be sure your child does not feel guilty about the separation.
- In each case, ask yourself, "What decision is best for my child?"


How Childcare Affects Attachment

At some time or another, your child will probably use childcare services, either home or centre-based.

A number of studies have tried to determine the impact of childcare on parent-child attachment. It is difficult to reach specific conclusions on this topic, but here are some points the evidence agrees on:

- It is normal for your child to prefer staying with you rather than going to childcare. Your role is to make the experience a positive one and to give your toddler the assurance you will come back.
- You need to have confidence in the childcare providers where you leave your baby. If you are worried about it, your baby may sense your anxiety and that will add to his insecurity.
- Childcare can play a positive role in the child's development. The quality of the care is the key factor.





What is quality childcare? Here are some important things to check to help you select the best childcare for your child’s social and emotional development:

- The educators have training in early childhood education or, at least, considerable experience in the supervision, development and care of young children.
- The educators demonstrate patience and sensitivity and communicate with the children in a positive manner.
- The space is safe, clean, stimulating and welcoming, is large enough and has a quiet place for naps.
- The children seem happy and interested in what they are doing.
- If a child “acts up” or has a tantrum, the educators use positive disciplinary methods.
- The educators and the administration follow the guidelines for the educator-child ratios.
- There is a routine, supervision and well-established activities.

For more information about choosing childcare in Ontario, and to obtain a directory of childcare centres in your city, go to: www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/childcare/index.aspx

When Things Aren't Right

If you are feeling overwhelmed by your baby's needs, don't hesitate to get help. For instance:

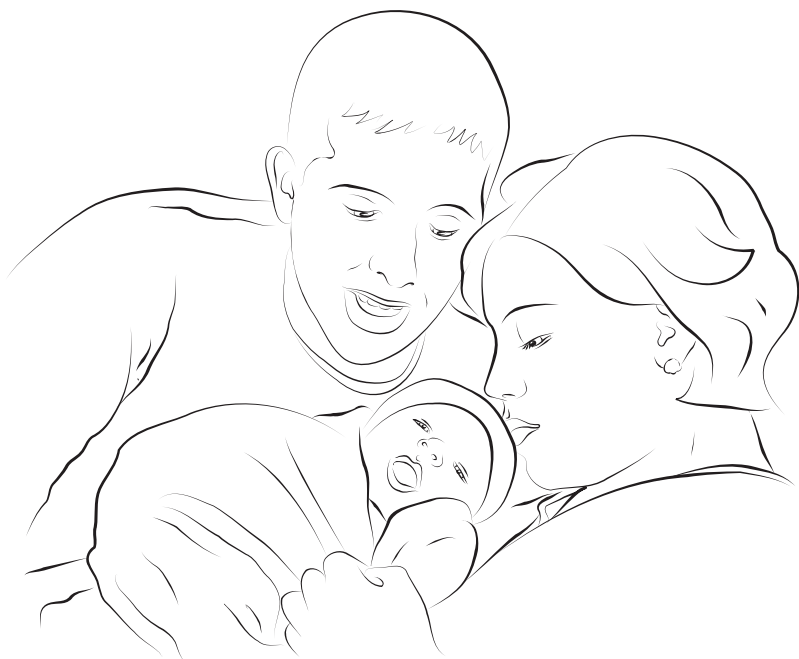
- If you are feeling depressed or extremely tired.
- If you are unable to enjoy your baby.
- If you are getting more angry and irritable.

These feelings may prevent you from developing comforting attachment with your baby. Try to get support first from your family and friends but don't hesitate to discuss the issue with your doctor, a nurse or another community service professional. You can telephone Telehealth Ontario at any time (1 866 797-0000).

The organization Attachment Parenting Canada offers a good website on the topic at www.attachmentparenting.ca.

Your own experiences as a child may also affect your relationship with your baby. If you have concerns about your childhood, talk to your health care professional about it.







Where to Get Additional Help

This booklet contains general information. If you have specific concerns about your child, talk to your doctor or to a public health nurse about them.

For more information:

Attachment Parenting Canada

Provides parenting information and links to attachment support groups in Canadian cities.

www.attachmentparenting.ca

Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development

Provides detailed information on a range of topics related to children from conception to the age of six, including attachment.

www.child-encyclopedia.com

Healthy Babies Healthy Children Program

A prevention and intervention program offered by all of the public health units in Ontario.

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/health/index.aspx>

Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) – Toronto

Offers a videotape entitled “A Simple Gift: Comforting your Baby” and a companion booklet, “Guide for Parents and Other Caregivers”, about the importance of the infant’s attachment relationship with parents.

www.sickkids.ca/imp



Invest in Kids

Offers suggestions to help parents support their children’s social, emotional and intellectual development through its positive approach to parenting, entitled “Comfort, Play & Teach.”

www.investinkids.ca

Ontario Early Years Centres

Places throughout Ontario where parents and caregivers can take part with their children in a range of programs and activities.

www.ontarioearlyyears.ca

Public Health Agency of Canada

First Connections... make all the difference. Information sheets on attachment for parents and caregivers.

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/mh-sm/mhp-psm/pub/fc-pc/index-eng.php

Telehealth Ontario

A free, confidential telephone service you can call to get health advice or general health information from a Registered Nurse.

1 866 797-0000

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