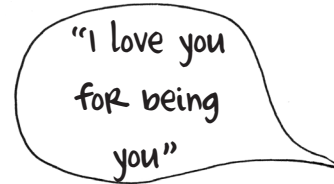




## TOPIC ONE Creating a Loving Connection



### A loving connection is the best gift parents can give their child

- Psychologists call this loving connection a “secure attachment” - an emotional bond between the parent and child in which the child is unconditionally loved and protected.
- It happens when the primary caregiver responds calmly, warmly and consistently to the baby’s signals.
- It’s not the instant bonding some people talk about when babies are placed in their mother’s arms at birth, but happens over time (and can take longer when a child has special needs or is adopted).
- It’s especially important during the first three years as it primes the brain for healthy development
- It helps build coping skills and reduces risks for mental health problems in adolescence and adult life.

### Parents show their love when they...

- Talk affectionately to their child
- Touch their child in a gentle way
- Give their child undivided attention
- Laugh and play together
- Respond with sensitivity and comfort especially when their child is sick, hurt or upset

### It isn’t always easy, parents need ...

- To feel good about themselves so they can be there for their child
- Help and support - from a caring partner/relatives/community
- To know they are not perfect, and that’s okay

### Children need to hear...

“I’m glad you’re in our family”

“I love being your Mom/Dad”

“You are a joy to be with”

“Children who begin their lives with secure attachment fare better in all aspects of functioning as their development unfolds.”

Terry M. Levy

## What to expect from birth to three

**0 - 3 months:** (Pre-attachment) Babies are born ready to begin the attachment process. They recognize their mother's voice, look for her face, search for the breast and cry when they need comfort. At this stage babies rely completely on the mother (or main caregivers) to provide closeness and protection. As the mother learns to read cues and respond more consistently, babies settle into familiar routines and are calmed more easily.

**3 - 7 months:** (Falling in Love) Babies take a more active role in getting their parents' attention to be cared for and played with. Babies may seek out Mom/caregivers with their face and draw them in with a smile. This can be a real stage of "falling in love" for parent and child!

**7 - 12 months:** (Beginnings of Attachment) Now babies really get into exploring their parents' faces, hands, and everything about them. They prefer being comforted by their parents and may react with "stranger anxiety" when unfamiliar people pick them up. They remember who their parents are and are excited when they return.

**1-2 years** (Balance of Exploration and Attachment) Young toddlers get into exploring the world and need their parents beside them to delight in their discoveries as well as provide comfort and protection when they seek reassurance. Separation anxiety peaks at around 18 months. Toddlers are more anxious about separations during this period and need lots of reassurance and playtime with parents. At this stage toddlers show a preference for one attachment figure over another (e.g. Mom or Dad or child minder) whenever they are hurt, sick or upset.

**2 -3 years** (Beginnings of relationships with peers) Older toddlers begin to transfer some of their social needs to young friends. They need their parents as much as ever as attachment figures for emotional support and protection, but enjoy more of their time playing with other children as they try out what they've learned from their parents about connecting with other people. A toddler with a new baby coming into the family needs lots of reassurance that his attachment needs will still be responded to when parents' attention turns towards the new baby.

### Other Resources

[www.child-encyclopedia.com/attachment](http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/attachment) See Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Information Sheets under "Resources."

[www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org) See "Early Childhood A-Z" for research on Attachment and many other topics.

[www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca](http://www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca) See Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Information Sheets under "Resources."

[www.nccah-ccnsa.ca](http://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca) See "Caregiver-Infant Attachment for Aboriginal Families" under "Publications" link.



## TOPIC TWO Being a Secure Base



Children need a “secure base” to help them ...

- Feel secure inside themselves
- Seek comfort when needed
- Handle the ups and downs of life
- Feel curious and confident to explore their world

Parents provide a “secure base” when they...

- Respond consistently to their child’s requests for attention, comfort and exploration
- Watch over their child while he explores
- Welcome their child back when she wants to be close again
- Provide predictable daily routines and special family rituals

Parents also keep their child *physically* safe with child-proofing and physical guidance according to the child’s developmental stage.

It isn't always easy - but it's important for parents to...

- Comfort their crying baby – this helps him calm down more easily
- Say “good bye” to their child without sneaking off
- Avoid stepping in too quickly to prevent their child from getting hurt or messy - children need freedom to explore

Children need to hear...

I’ll be close by [while you play, sleep]

I’ll comfort you when you’re upset

I love you and I’ll be back soon [when leaving for a while]

“Comforting your baby when she cries does not spoil her, it makes her trust you.”

Drs. D. Benoit and S. Goldberg

## What to expect from birth to three

**Birth to One:** At first, babies smile at everyone and can be comforted by unfamiliar people. By around 6 months, babies know who their “secure base” is and prefer to be held by Mom or Dad rather than strangers.

Babies who are picked up and soothed more consistently in the first few months, cry less and are better at calming themselves at one year.

Crawling babies look to their “secure base” parent for reassurance as they move away and can explore by themselves for short periods with the parent close by.

**One to Two:** One-year olds are discovering their independence and gain a strong drive to explore. They can be “into everything!” They need their secure base parent more than ever to

- let them know what’s safe and what isn’t
- provide calm and consistent limits
- welcome them back for comfort and reassurance.

Separation anxiety peaks at around 18 months when a child’s number one fear is losing the parent. A toddler needs one on one playtime and cuddling to maintain a loving connection.

**Two to Three:** Two year olds want to be in charge. They may start to resist routines such as refusing to nap, eat certain foods or wear certain clothes. At this stage their protests can quickly turn to tantrums (melt-downs) because they aren’t yet able to regulate their intense emotions.

Separations can still be difficult when being left with a sitter or dropped off at child care. The arrival of a new baby can temporarily unhinge a toddler’s sense of security as she feels the loss of her parent’s undivided attention.

Secure base parents ...

- show lots of pleasure in being with their two-year old
- set consistent and reasonable limits
- keep their child safe from hurting herself or others during tantrums
- avoid punishing their child for getting angry
- offer choices between two options when appropriate

### Other Resources

<http://circleofsecurity.org> for See “The Circle of Security” under “Resources/Handouts.”

[www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org) See “A Child Becomes Strong: Journeying through each stage of the life cycle” under “Resources.”

[www.child-encyclopedia.com](http://www.child-encyclopedia.com) See “Crying Behaviour” under “Information Sheets” for facts and tips about infant crying.



## TOPIC THREE Accepting Feelings



Children need their feelings accepted  
in order to...

- Develop a positive sense of themselves
- Express how they feel rather than act out in inappropriate ways
- In time, learn how to cope with their own feelings and understand those of others

Parents show they accept their child's feelings when they...

- Treat all feelings seriously – happy, sad, excited, angry, etc.
- Respond sensitively and promptly
- Give their child the words for how they are feeling
- Mirror their child's feelings

It isn't always easy - parents may...

- Have grown up in a family where they were shamed or made fun of for their feelings
- Find it hard to talk about their own feelings
- Have difficulty handling their child's negative emotions

children need to hear...

"I love you when you're happy, sad, excited or mad."

"I'll still love you, even when you're mad at me."

"It's okay to cry."

"How young children feel about themselves is largely driven by relationships with important adults in their lives. It is vital for children to feel valued, loved, and that they matter to you."

The Bounce Back Book, Alberta Mental Health

## What to expect from birth to three

The most critical period for a child's healthy emotional development is in the first three years.

During this time, the central region of the brain where emotion is organized is growing very rapidly. By the end of this period, children's brains are imprinted with what to expect in all future relationships.

Children who have had their feelings responded to in a positive way will already feel positive about relating to new people – such as new caregivers, teachers and peers. Children who have been responded to negatively, will already feel anxious, devalued and rejected.

**Birth to One:** Right from birth babies are primed to connect emotionally. They can signal hunger, pleasure, pain, curiosity and the need for loving attention. They can also process other people's emotions, such as smiling faces or being handled too roughly.

By 12 months, other emotions have emerged including excitement, boredom, anger, sadness and fear.

**One to Two:** In the second year temperament explains why a child feels certain things and behaves in certain ways. One child doesn't stop moving all day while another is happy playing in one spot. One child goes boldly into a group of new people while another watches from the edge with his parent. When parents adapt to a child rather than try to change who he is, this is known as "goodness of fit."

Shame is a new emotion that arises in toddlers around being disciplined. Parents must take care to minimize their child's shame by repairing the break in their loving connection.

**Two to Three:** This is typically the year of the tantrum. "Mine!" "No!" and "Me do it!" can lead to intense negative emotion if the child doesn't get his way. This is an important time for parents to name and mirror their child's feelings while their child is calm so they can use their growing language to express how they feel and what they need. Toddlers need help to regulate their intense feelings and "use their words" instead of aggression when playing with other children. Parents need to take charge when their toddler is out of control.

### Other Resources

Butterfield, PA; Martin, CA & Prairie AP. (2003). *Emotional Connections: How Relationships Guide Early Learning*. Washington, CD: ZERO TO THREE Press.

Lieberman, AF. (1993). *The Emotional Life of the Toddler*. New York: The Free Press.

<http://www.youtube.com> "Tronick's Still Face Paradigm." (6 mins).

Responding to babies' feelings is critical to helping them regulate their emotions. In the "Still Face Experiment" a baby quickly becomes distressed when their parent stops responding emotionally.

<http://www.youtube.com> "The Emotional Life of a Baby." (19 mins). Documentary of two mothers and their babies learning how to bond under difficult circumstances.



## TOPIC FOUR Setting Limits With Love



Children need limits to help them ...

- Develop self-control – also known as “self- regulation”
- Avoid hurting themselves or others
- Learn what’s expected within their family and community
- Feel Safe and emotionally secure

Parents help their child learn limits when they ...

- Establish routines in the home when their baby is young
- Approach limit-setting as an opportunity to “teach” not punish
- Find ways to say “yes” more often than “no”
- Say “no” in a calm, respectful way

These ABCs help parents with saying “no” ...

**A**cknowledge the child’s feelings

**B**riefly explain why the behaviour is not okay

**C**almly redirect the child

e.g. I know you don’t like your socks but it’s cold, you can hold your toy while I put them on.

It isn’t always easy, parents may ...

- Have grown up with harsh, inconsistent or very little discipline
- Be tempted to get angry or blame their child for his behaviour
- Have difficulty handling their own emotions when their child’s feelings are out of control
- Not realize that when parents take charge, their child feels more secure

Children need to hear...

“I love you even though your behaviour is sometimes not okay.”

“I’m here to help you learn self-control.”

“I’m sorry for being so harsh, I’ll do better next time.”

There is no such thing as bad behaviour, simply baby behaviour!

## What to expect from birth to three

For the first three years parent and child are in a process of “co-regulation.” Babies need their parents’ physical and verbal guidance to help them get to sleep, calm down, learn what’s expected and curb actions that would lead to hurting themselves or others.

### Birth to one

Before babies start to crawl there is not much limit-setting to do. Predictable routines and gentle redirection lay the foundation for a child’s self-control. By the end of the first year, babies look towards their parents for guidance. When babies hesitate and look to Mom/Dad before trying to climb on something, they have started to control themselves.

### One to Two

Toddlers have a strong motivation to explore and master new skills which leads to more limits around safety and cooperation. Toddlers hear “no” a lot and may begin to doubt they are loved no matter what. Parents can keep the attachment relationship secure by finding ways to say “yes,” baby proofing and using the ABCs to set limits.

When toddlers test the limits, they’re not being defiant. Toddlers may need a lot of repetition before completely understanding and internalizing the limit being taught.

### Two to Three

It helps a toddler accept limits when she is given choices whenever appropriate. This affirms her growing independence and encourages responsibility.

Between 18 – 36 months, toddlers start to experience shame – feeling bad and unworthy as a result of being disciplined. To make sure that children do not feel excessive shame or fear, parents must find a way to “repair” the relationship with their child after an episode of conflict. This may mean telling the child he’s still loved, hugging him and letting him know you’ll be there to help him try again next time.

## Other Resources

[www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org) See Claire Lerner & Amy Laura Dombro (2005). Bringing up Baby: Three steps to making good decisions in your child’s first years.

[www.childencyclopedia.com](http://www.childencyclopedia.com) See “Discipline: How much is enough?” under “Information Sheets/ Parenting Skills

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) “Mindful Discipline.” 1-hour talk by Shauna Shapiro on a loving approach to setting limits and raising an emotionally intelligent child.





## TOPIC FIVE PROMOTING LANGUAGE



Children need to hear language spoken to them and around them in order to...

- Absorb the sounds and rhythms of their mother tongue
- Connect the wiring in their brain that's responsible for language
- Learn words to express and control emotions
- Learn words to help remember their early thoughts and experiences

### Parents promote language learning when they

- Communicate often with their child during the give and take of daily life
- Talk about things their baby reacts to
- Name things their child shows an interest in
- Add to whatever their child talks about with more ideas

e.g. "Yeh, that's the garbage truck. It makes a big noise. Did that scare you?"

### It isn't always easy, parents may

- Feel unsure about using "baby talk," not realizing how necessary it is for babies! Babies need the simplicity of "That's a doggy" rather than the adult version "That's our neighbour's frisky white poodle." That's what's meant by "baby talk."
- Believe that their child can learn to talk from TV or educational apps. In fact, babies can only become fluent during the back and forth of human conversations.
- Try to speak to their baby in the language of the majority culture even if they can't speak it fluently. In fact, it's much better to speak in your native language - your language of love. Children will easily learn the dominant language from friends, school and media. Being bilingual is a great advantage.

### Children need to hear...

"I like talking to you"

"I'll teach you words for things that interest you"

"Be proud of your heritage language"

"Human connection is the strongest force in promoting early language development."  
Butterfield, Martin & Prairie

The references to "language" and "words" are intended to include both spoken and signed forms.

## Typically developing babies from birth to three...

**0-3 months:** recognize parents' voices, differentiate friendly and unfriendly facial expressions and voices

**3-6 months:** distinguish voice tones such as joy, annoyance or indifference; enjoy making sounds

**6-9 months:** react to hearing their own name; react to gestures for "Up" "Look" or "Bye- bye;" understand familiar rituals like "peek-a-boo;" babble using sounds of their native language

**9-12 months:** respond to a few dozen common words for people, food, toys, body parts and phrases like "Say bye-bye," "Where's Daddy," "Don't touch that;" use a few gestures along with part words like reaching and saying "uh" for "up."

**12-15 months:** use their first "real" words – e.g. "dada" for "Daddy," "mama" for "Mommy", "bah" for "want ball" or "that's a ball," "aga" for "all gone;" practice talking while lying in their crib

**15-18 months:** learn 10 to 50 words; communicate with a series of single words/gestures – e.g. bring her shoes, say "walk" then go find her stroller

**18-24 months:** learn from 50 to 200 words; start talking in short phrases – e.g. "Want draw," "That's mine;" use single words to refer to something that happened earlier in the day or week – e.g. "Nana" if grandma visited, or "Birthday" if he attended a party; follow directions to do two things; fill in single words in familiar rhymes and stories

**24-36 months:** progress from single words to full sentences – e.g. "Park" to "Go park" to "I wanna go to the park;" talk about past events, use language to pretend, problem-solve, negotiate and talk about their feelings;

By age 3, children with no delays, raised in a good language environment understand hundreds of words, communicate in sentences and are fairly understandable to most people. A large vocabulary at age 3 is a strong predictor of success in school.

## Other Resources

*Butterfield, PM; Martin, CA & Prairie, AP (2004). Emotional Connections: How relationships guide early learning.* Washington: Zero to Three.

<http://www.zerotothree.org> See : "Communication and Language: 0-12, 12-24 and 24-36 months.

[www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/when-You-Are-Concerned/Warning-Signs.aspx](http://www.hanen.org/Helpful-Info/when-You-Are-Concerned/Warning-Signs.aspx) Video and written information for parents who have concerns about their child's language.

[www.tpsls.on.ca/psl/checklist.htm](http://www.tpsls.on.ca/psl/checklist.htm) A language development checklist from birth to 4 years.



## TOPIC SIX Having "Baby Conversations"



Children need to take part in  
"baby conversations" to...

- Feel connected to the people who love them
- Learn the language of their community
- Practice the sounds, words and gestures they know and learn new ones
- Keep advancing to higher levels of language
- Develop the social skills they need to get along with peers

Parents are good conversation partners when they use "WAWA"...

WAIT with interest to hear what their child has to say

ASK questions that encourage their child to say more

WAIT with anticipation for their child to respond

ADD words and gestures related to their child's topic

- Enjoyable conversations between two adults follow much the same pattern. The difference with children is it's the parent's job to keep the conversations going.

It isn't always easy talking with a child, but it's important for parents to...

- Think of conversations as way to strengthen the connection with their child
- Appreciate the importance of back and forth exchanges whether it's simple sounds, peek-a-boo or asking and answering questions
- Realize that their baby needs these conversations to learn how to talk

Children need to hear ...

"What you have to say is important to me"

"I'll give you all the time you need to take turns in our conversations"

Having "baby conversations" strengthens the parent-child relationship and promotes language.

## “Baby conversations” from birth to three

**0-3 months:** “Baby conversations” begin right from birth when babies yawn, smile, frown or coo and parents instinctively do the same right back. Parents talk about what the baby might be feeling or interested in and wait for baby to make any movement or sound in response.

**4-6 months:** Babies realize the effect their sounds have and start making more sounds for parents to copy or interpret. Babies react to conversation games like “peek-a-boo” by smiling or squealing when parents appear from behind their hands.

**6-9 months:** Babies start playful conversations by looking, smiling or babbling at their parents. Babies string together the sounds of the language spoken around them – e.g. “da ada ada aba ba ba” is common in English. Babbling “conversations” can go back and forth for many turns!

**9-12 months:** Babies start meaningful conversations by giving, pointing, waving or showing parents something. Since babies know only a few gestures or sounds, these conversations are short – e.g. Baby points to the door, Mom says “Do you wanna go OUT?” Baby smiles and crawls towards the door.

**12-18 months:** Toddlers practice saying single words in conversations. “Dat” could mean “Look at that” “I want that” or “What is that?” Parents keep conversations going when they **Wait** and listen, **Ask** about what their child said, e.g. “What’s that?” **Wait** for another response. **Add** the word they think their child is trying to say – e.g. “That’s a plane.”

**18-24 months:** Using single words, gestures and some short phrases toddlers express more complex feelings, pretend and refer to the past. Parents lead their child to the next level by using the **WAWA** approach. Conversations go on for longer when parents avoid correcting their child’s speech.

**24-36 months:** By age three, children talk in full sentences and use hundreds of words. Parents and other caregivers facilitate this language spurt by having frequent conversations throughout the day. Older toddlers talk about the past and future, pretend, tell stories, negotiate and problem-solve.

**Tip:** Babies or toddlers who don’t respond to conversations, babble or make eye contact are at risk of language delay and the need for assessment should be discussed with parents.

### Other Resources

[www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy\\_chld\\_dev/BSRC\\_When\\_Families\\_Speak\\_fnl.pdf](http://www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy_chld_dev/BSRC_When_Families_Speak_fnl.pdf) See “When Children Speak More Than One Language” – a guide for parents.

[www.janetlansbury.com/2012/06/ten-best-ways-to-encourage-toddlers-to-talk/](http://www.janetlansbury.com/2012/06/ten-best-ways-to-encourage-toddlers-to-talk/) This list of 10 Best Ways to Encourage Toddlers to Talk is also applicable to babies and consistent with “Make the Connection’s” views on how children learn best from sensitive, responsive caregivers.

[www.bookcentre.ca/resources\\_parents](http://www.bookcentre.ca/resources_parents) See links “Choosing Books for Babies and Toddlers” and Choosing Books for Children Two to Six,” for kinds of books that encourage language and literacy.



## TOPIC SEVEN Being a Play Partner

"I'll be your  
play partner"



While they play, children are learning how to...

- Socialize – communicate, take turns, negotiate and eventually share
- Problem-solve- figure out how things work
- Think symbolically - pretend that one object can be something else
- Work out their real life anxieties
- Stretch their imagination and creativity

Parents help children play when they...

- Provide a secure base and a safe environment in which to explore
- Join in with what their child is interested in doing
- Follow their child's lead
- Suggest new ideas without insisting
- Offer help without taking over
- Delight in their child's discoveries

It isn't always easy, but it's important for parents to...

- Respect that their child's way of learning may be different from their own
- Avoid teaching – babies' brains develop best from touching and experimenting
- Avoid directing – babies want to learn about things they are interested in
- Wait until their child is at least two to expose them to TV or video games.

Children need to hear...

"You are fun to play with."

"You can do it."

"I'm here to help whenever you need me."

"For a small child there is no division between playing and learning; between the things he or she does 'just for fun' and things that are 'educational.' The child learns while living and any part of living that is enjoyable is also play."

Penelope Leach

## Typically developing babies...

**0-4 months:** Actively explore with all their senses – look at, listen, smell, taste, touch, swat at objects and expect a reaction, begin to imitate

**4-8 months:** Develop more eye-hand coordination – e.g. reach for and grasp, shake and drop, put things in their mouth, turn things around and move them from one hand to the other, imitate simple actions

**8-12 months:** Begin to figure out what objects are for –e.g. roll balls, bang blocks, put things in and out of containers, get help from adults to wind up or open things, still love to put some things in their mouth! Learn from watching adults.

**12-18 months:** Figure out mechanical things –e.g. pop up toys, TV remotes, cupboard doors, toy instruments, etc. Do the same thing over and over until they “master” it. Pretend to do things they’ve experienced in real life – e.g. hug a doll, push a toy stroller, brush their hair with the remote!

**18-24 months:** Construct things with blocks, put shapes into holes, do simple wooden puzzles, blow bubbles. Imitate things that parents do– e.g. wipe the table, walk around in Daddy’s shoes, carry Mommy’s purse. Create things out of playdoh and scribble on paper. When toddlers get frustrated, and parents offer a little help without taking over, children feel good about completing the task.

**24-36 months:** Socialize with other toddlers, build things or pretend side by side, copy what their peers do, and with caregiver help, take turns in an activity. Dress up and pretend to be characters, such as dinosaurs. Work out stressful experiences in pretend play, such as going to the doctor or going to sleep at night. As their imagination takes off, toddlers enjoy playing with craft supplies, miniature figures, dress up clothes and so on to expand their creativity.

## Other Resources

[www.zerotothree.org/child-development/play/tips-and-tools-play.html](http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/play/tips-and-tools-play.html) See: “Power of Play: Learning through play from 0-3.”

[www.child-encyclopedia.com](http://www.child-encyclopedia.com) See “Play” under “Information Sheets” for many articles and research on play.

