

Chapter 13

Reproducible Master B

Parenting Tips for Aiding Secure Attachments

- Know your toddler's cues, including body movement and expressions, sound and word reactions, type of affection liked, and enjoyment or discomfort in certain environments.
- Be consistent in your response to cues.
- Provide some undivided attention.
- Listen, talk, sing, play, and laugh with your toddler.
- Show affection in ways comfortable to your toddler. For example, make eye contact or hold and cuddle.
- Maintain predictable routines.
- Offer broad, but not rotating, relationships for your toddler.
- Set limits and boundaries for your toddler. Be patient, stay positive, and remain calm.
- Do not attempt to distract a young toddler while distressed.
- Reconnect quickly with your toddler after conflict or distress.
- Remember no one is a "perfect" parent. Acknowledge mistakes and apologize.
- Recognize clues of insecure attachments in toddlers. The toddler may have insecure attachment if he or she avoids eye contact; does not smile; rejects parent efforts to calm or soothe; fails to interact during games, talking, or singing; tries to comfort self by rocking or other self-soothing behaviors; shows excessive disobedience as a way to maintain control; shows anger directly through tantrums or indirectly by hurting someone while hugging; seems withdrawn; seems emotionally detached; or prefers other people, including strangers, over parents.
- Know toddler challenges affecting secure attachments. The toddler may face challenges if she or he had perinatal problems, had severe physical health problems, stayed in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) for a long time, or was cared for by a series of adults.
- Know adult challenges affecting secure attachments. Challenges may occur if the adult is too tired to parent; has serious physical health problems; did not bond with baby during infancy; has depression or other mental health problems; is a substance abuser; was neglected, abused, or had a chaotic childhood history with mostly negative memories; has high levels of stress; or lives in an unsafe environment.
- Ask for help and find support at the first warning signs. Toddlers with insecure attachments often receive help through play therapy. Parents of insecurely attached toddlers may receive assistance through family therapy, psychological counseling, and parent education.