

Connecting with Your Child

Five Key Elements



Eye Contact

establishes an emotional connection with your child. This connection can help calm children as well as build empathy and lead to mirror emotions. It's the most effective way to share our inner state with one another and release calming, loving hormones such as Oxytocin in both your child's and your brain.



Presence

in the moment means your mind and body are in the same place. Your mind is not thinking about the past or the future, but is focused on what is happening right in front of you with your child. When you are present with your child, you are able to fully share an experience and recognize the mutual fulfillment that it brings.



Touch

is the only sense out of the 5 senses we are born with, that we cannot survive without. The skin is considered to be the outside layer of the brain and as such, touch has been found to help physiological and neurological development, decrease stress, increase memory/learning and deepen bonding. Providing gentle, caring, nurturing touch can help children feel secure, resilient, and loved. Touch can give us a major boost in Oxytocin.




Playfulness

helps build bonds and sends messages to the brain to promote the production of Dopamine, a hormone that helps children stay focused, increase their attention span and boost their social and emotional development. Playful situations also create more opportunities for positive interactions between child and caregiver. Positive, playful interactions lead to children being motivated to be cooperative; feel secure with their caregivers and develop a positive self-image.

Parent-Child Connection

Activities

Synchronicity



The development of healthy, synchronic parent-child bonds is the cornerstone of adaptive social life. Early social experiences (mainly parent-child interactions) can shape future levels of Oxytocin, and therefore the ability to bond with others. We use synchronicity through rocking from the moment babies are born, through matching their voices and mirroring their movements. Being in synch with a child in playful and nurturing ways is a great way to increase the release of Oxytocin in their brains and ours, increasing a sense of connection and attachment.

Activities that create opportunities for connection

- Balloon bopping: presence and playfulness
- Follow the leader: synchronicity, playfulness, presence
- Singing and Dancing: synchronicity, touch
- Staring contest/ try not to laugh contest: eye contact, presence
- Hand stacking: synchronicity, touch, playfulness
- Simon says: synchronicity, touch
- Imaginary play: presence, playfulness
- Holding and rocking: touch, synchronicity

**A word about tickling: While families often love the laughter that tickling can bring, tickling can actually increase cortisol!*