

Sensitive parenting builds parent-child closeness



What is the practice?

Parents who use certain kinds of sensitive behaviors when they interact with their young children are able to strengthen their parent-child bonds.

Interactions with these important aspects of parental sensitivity involve:

- Parents responding to their children's efforts to interact;
- Parents and children equally enjoying and taking turns in the interaction;
- Parents warmly encouraging, assisting, and guiding their children's participation in the interaction.

As this mom pulls the blanket from her toddler's grinning face, she croons, "Peek-a-boo! I see you!" With this very simple game, the mother-son bond grows stronger.



This little fellow is totally engaged in learning to play pat-a-cake as his mom gently assists, guides, encourages, and supports him.

How do we do it?

Build closeness through a sensitive parent-child interaction style:

- Make interactions fun and rewarding for both yourself and baby by taking a playful approach and enjoying many early learning games together.
- Take turns during play by including back-and-forth games like pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo.
- Use guiding movements and positive words to gently help your child interact with you through play.

See it happen

As sensitive parenting builds a strong parent-child relationship, you'll see parent-child pairs who are clearly happy and comfortable about being together and doing things together. They make one another smile and laugh.

When a favorite song comes on the radio, Mom sweeps her toddler off his feet, dances him around the room, and makes him giggle as they try to sing the lyrics together.



Is it working?

You can tell parental sensitivity is at work and relationships are stronger when:

- The parent becomes more responsive to the child's efforts to interact or the child's need for comfort and encouragement.
- The child starts interactions with the parent.
- The child seeks out the parent for comfort.
- Interactions are fun for both the parent and child.

