Nurturing and Attachment

A child’s early experience of being nurtured and developing a bond with a caring adult affects all aspects of behavior and development. When parents and children have strong, warm feelings for one another, children develop trust that their parents will provide what they need to thrive, including love, acceptance, positive guidance, and protection.

Sharing Strategies and Resources to Strengthen Nurturing and Attachment

You can share resources available from your agency and throughout the community on how parents can connect with their children, listen to them, and become more involved in their lives. It is important to note that bonding is a two-way street. As children grow and develop the ability to socialize, relate, and communicate, it is easier for parents to respond positively to them. When a child does not show a positive response to the parent (due to age, a disability, or other factors), the parent may need additional support.

Resources to promote nurturing may include information, examples, and opportunities to practice and receive feedback in the areas of:

Impact of nurturing on development

- Information about infant and toddler development, including brain development
- The importance of an early secure attachment between parents and young children
- Information on shaken baby syndrome and sudden infant death syndrome
- Examples of secure parent-child attachment at all ages
- Examples of how secure parent-child attachment supports positive child behavior

Parenting strategies that promote nurturing

- Infant care and strategies that promote bonding and attachment (e.g., breastfeeding, rocking, using a baby carrier, responding to crying, talking lovingly, consistency within and across caregivers, and stability of primary caregivers)
- Cultural differences in how parents and children show affection
- What to do when your child has an emotional or behavioral disability that limits his or her ability to respond to parental nurturing
- Ways to nurture children at every age
- How fathers nurture children
- Ways to engage other important adults as part of a child’s “nurturing network”
- Ways to create and sustain healthy marriages that better support a nurturing home environment for children
- Ways to create quality time to play with children in the context of daily activities
- Communicating effectively with older children and resolving conflicts
- Using positive discipline