

Bonding is Important

Bonding is when we form a close *connection* and attachment with someone. Experts believe that secure bonds are deeply important for your child's emotional health, confidence, and development of *social skills*. A strong bond enables your child to have higher self-esteem, perform better in school, have healthier relationships, and better manage the stresses of life.

The Three-Minute Rule

Giving your child quality time is a good way to reinforce their attachment with you. Give your child the first *three* minutes when your child wakes up, the first *three* minutes when you come home from work or your child comes home from daycare, and the last *three* minutes before your child falls asleep. Giving them your focused attention with lots of hugs and snuggling will have the most impact.

Four Ways to Bond with Your Toddler

- **Be their safe haven.** They need to know they can run to you, feel your arms around them, and know they are safe. Be ready to *hug* and reassure when they need your comfort.
- **Be available.** A toddler needs you to be available to them to help *guide* them through all those big new things they are experiencing. To show your child how important they are to you, *put down your devices* and be ready to interact and play with them.
- **Be consistent.** Our children rely on consistency and routines to make sense of their world. The predictable patterns you establish help them feel secure. When you establish consistent naptime, mealtime, and *playtime* routines, your child knows what to expect and feels secure in that.
- **Be empathetic.** Seeing things through the eyes of your child helps them to feel understood, cared for, and *loved*. The needs of your two or three-year-old are going to be different from the needs of an older child or different from your own needs.

Fun Ideas for Drawing Close to Your Toddler

- Be a team. Enlist your child's help with cleanup and some age-appropriate chores.
- Be a playmate.
- Sing with your child.
- Read to your child.
- Create an activity drawer.
- Eat family meals.

Bonding with your toddler is extremely important. They need a strong attachment to you in order to feel secure and confident. The quality time you spend with them deepens the bond you have, even if your time is limited as a working parent! You do this by being their safe haven, by being approachable and attentive to them, by being consistent and establishing routines, and by being empathetic to their struggles and challenges. You also do it with lots of loving touch and hugs. It's an incredible thing to have a close and loving bond with your child, and it's something that can last well into their lifetime!

Resources include:

1. Meyers, R., Phd. Child Development Institute. How You Can Help Your Baby Develop a Secure Attachment. Found at <https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/development/can-help-baby-develop-secure-attachment/#.XH7E2tFIDzg>, accessed 5/23/2019.
2. Williams, Glenda, MD – Pediatrician. Interview.
3. Foley, M., MEd. Child Development Institute. Every Day Practices to Make Your Child Feel Loved. Found at <https://childdevelopmentinfo.com/family-building/everyday-practices-to-make-your-child-feel-loved/#.XH6909FIDzh>, accessed 5/23/2019.
4. Zero to Three. Activities for Bonding and Learning from 12 to 24 Months. Washington, DC. Found at <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1078-activities-for-bonding-and-learning-from-12-to-24-months>, accessed 5/23/2019.