

AFFA

American Foundation for Family Attachment

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PROMOTING POSITIVE ATTACHMENT

Incorporate any or all of the three basic attachment cues in activities whenever possible.

Eye contact Close proximity Movement

Note: Not all of the following activities are appropriate for every child, particularly if sensory integration problems are present. For instance, a child who has difficulty integrating vestibular input (activates sense of balance), a trust fall would likely not be an appropriate movement-oriented positive attachment activity.

Eye contact promoting activities

Cradling: cradling child in arms or having child lie on back with head in caregiver's lap

Reciprocal feeding of small bites of food (e.g., cracker, cookie)

Child sucking on lollipop which caregiver holds with reciprocal gazing

Caregiver stroking child's face/hair with reciprocal gazing while cradling

Face tracing while cradling: caregiver touches face part (e.g., mouth, nose, eyebrow) on child and child touches same place on caregiver's face; reverse so child touches place on caregiver's face and caregiver touches same place on child's face

Looking in mirror together: caregiver matches child's expression/s

Strolling: caregiver faces child while pushing stroller; talking a walk or run together

Movement promoting activities

Peek-a-Boo

Hide and Seek

Rocking

Patty Cake; High 5s

Special handshakes

Trust falls

Swinging in hammock together

Swinging into couch: one caregiver takes child's ankles, another caregiver takes child's wrists, caregivers swinging child three times counting out loud and toss child onto soft couch on the count of three

Tossing up in air and catching the child

Swinging: caregiver stands in front of child and makes eye contact with every push

Hanging upside down: child wraps legs around caregiver's waist and leans back and stretches arms downwards

Sit back to back with elbows intertwined. Push against one another to stand up together

Tossing or kicking a ball back and forth

Cooperative games: Seeing how long parent and child as a team can keep a balloon in the air, hitting it back and forth; counting how many baskets in a row parent and child can make as a team

Sit on couch next to each other to watch a show and have a snack

Birthday Surprise: Use a blanket to "wrap" the child. Then it's time to open the "gift." The child then uses movement and sound to act out what s/he is and the caregiver guesses (i.e. a kitten). Take turns being "wrapped" as the "gift" and being the guesser.

Simon Says game

Mother May I? game

Rolling or tossing ball back and forth, throw and catch

Clapping rhymes or singing songs with hand movements

Airplane: caregiver lies on back on floor and holds child at waist and child arches and “flies,” caregiver can support child’s legs by bending his/her legs and letting child’s legs rest on caregiver’s shins

Big ball (i.e., exercise ball): caregiver rolls ball over child lying on floor while making eye contact with child, caregiver helps child roll on top of ball with child’s tummy against ball and then child’s back against ball

What will the baby look like? Have child on mother’s tummy with a blanket covering the child. Parents have a discussion about what they think the child might look like. Child will frequently respond (i.e. “I wonder if the baby will be a boy or a girl?”) Then from under the blanket, “Girl.”). Repeat for several questions then uncover the child and delight in their presentation.

Roly Poly: Roll child in up in a blanket then caregiver unrolls the blanket quickly

Laughing together

Proximity promoting activities

Brushing or combing child’s hair

Applying lotion on child’s hands, back, face

Face painting

Sharing picture book together

Making *simple* food together: stirring cake mix, soup, mac&cheese, etc., putting preformed cookies on cookie sheet, spreading butter on bread/toast

Massage back, arms, legs

Thumb or arm wrestling

Tickling, wrestling

Breathing together: child puts head of caregiver’s chest or tummy, caregiver matches his/her breathing to the child’s breathing

Affection: caregiver initiates smiles, hugs, kisses

Holding hands: caregiver holds child hand when on outings

Draw on backs: Draw/write a letter, number or shape and have the child guess. Take turns.

Express empathy when child is in distress

Label feeling

Use soothing tone of voice

Increase eye contact, proximity and movement

Avoid power struggles

Practicing Attachment Cues and Preventing Negative Behaviors

For the Educational Setting

Promote eye contact

Place child closer to adult

Adult place body directly in front of child when giving directions

Identify adult (and a backup if s/he is not available) to whom child can go for comfort and encouragement when agitated or getting uncooperative

Give child constructive role/task in classroom

Explain to the school why the child needs warnings for planned absences of staff with whom they have the closest relationship

Avoid allowing the child to use negative behaviors to garner extra attention from adults (e.g. in-school suspension in the vice principal's office or stand-by support for handwriting)

Rather, encourage extra time with adults when the child makes their best effort, especially for finishing work at the top of their ability level and on time.