

Emotional Development in Infancy

- Baby lies quietly in her crib, watching the light patterns on the wall and sucking lightly on her pacifier. What we don't see are the dynamic workings of her highly impressionable brain. She is experiencing the most profound emotional and behavioral development she will ever know.
- The foundation for all of her future relationships is determined by the quality of her moment to moment interactions with her caregivers and her environment. Specific neurochemical activities take place when she is held, cuddled, rocked, sung to, and played with. These activities lead to the normal organization of the brain systems that are responsible for emotional relationships and lead to healthy attachment.
- Attachment is based on infant-caregiver communication in which the signals of one are responded to by the other and vice versa, a mutual "tune in." Nurturing baby builds the brain circuitry responsible for empathy and emotional regulation. Nurturing not only calms and soothes baby but establishes a bond between caretaker and infant.

Ways to Nurture Baby's Emotional Wellness

- **Smile** often and warmly. Research shows this to be of primary importance in establishing a secure emotional attachment.
- Watch for baby's quiet alert state usually just after a nap, bath, or feeding; spend time **cuddling** and playing.
- Learn about infant massage and spend a few minutes after bath-time massaging baby. She will sleep better and love the special time with you.
- **Sing** with your baby everyday. Use music to **play** and calm. This facilitates vital brain activity.
- Always **hold** your infant to feed her and make frequent **eye contact** with smiles and verbal encouragement.

Source:

Siegel, D. J. (1999). The developing mind: Toward a neurobiology of interpersonal experience. New York: Guilford Press.

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