



Bonding and attachment

Bonding between a caregiver and a baby is the process of getting to know each other and feeling positive about this emerging relationship. Bonding behaviours typically include rocking, cuddling, touching, kissing, and making eye contact with your baby, along with singing to or talking to them.

Bonding behaviours promote a caring, protective, and loving relationship between main caregivers and their baby, and are a valuable precursor to building a positive attachment relationship.

Positive attachment relationships are built on communication between a caregiver and baby. For example, a baby yawning and then crying from tiredness is signalling their need for comfort and sleep. The baby will typically be picked up and cuddled, and soothed or rocked to sleep. The baby indicates a need or want, and the caregiver responds to soothe and alleviate discomfort, and meet the baby's needs.

Ideally a pattern is established where a main caregiver reliably and sensitively responds to their baby's cues. This learned pattern between significant carers and their baby helps build healthy neural pathways in the baby's brain. The baby begins to understand that they can typically rely on their main caregiver to protect and comfort them. Attachment behaviour is thought to be biologically inbuilt to ensure survival.

As they grow and develop, babies typically form a primary attachment with a main caregiver (often a parent), but they are capable of developing multiple attachments.