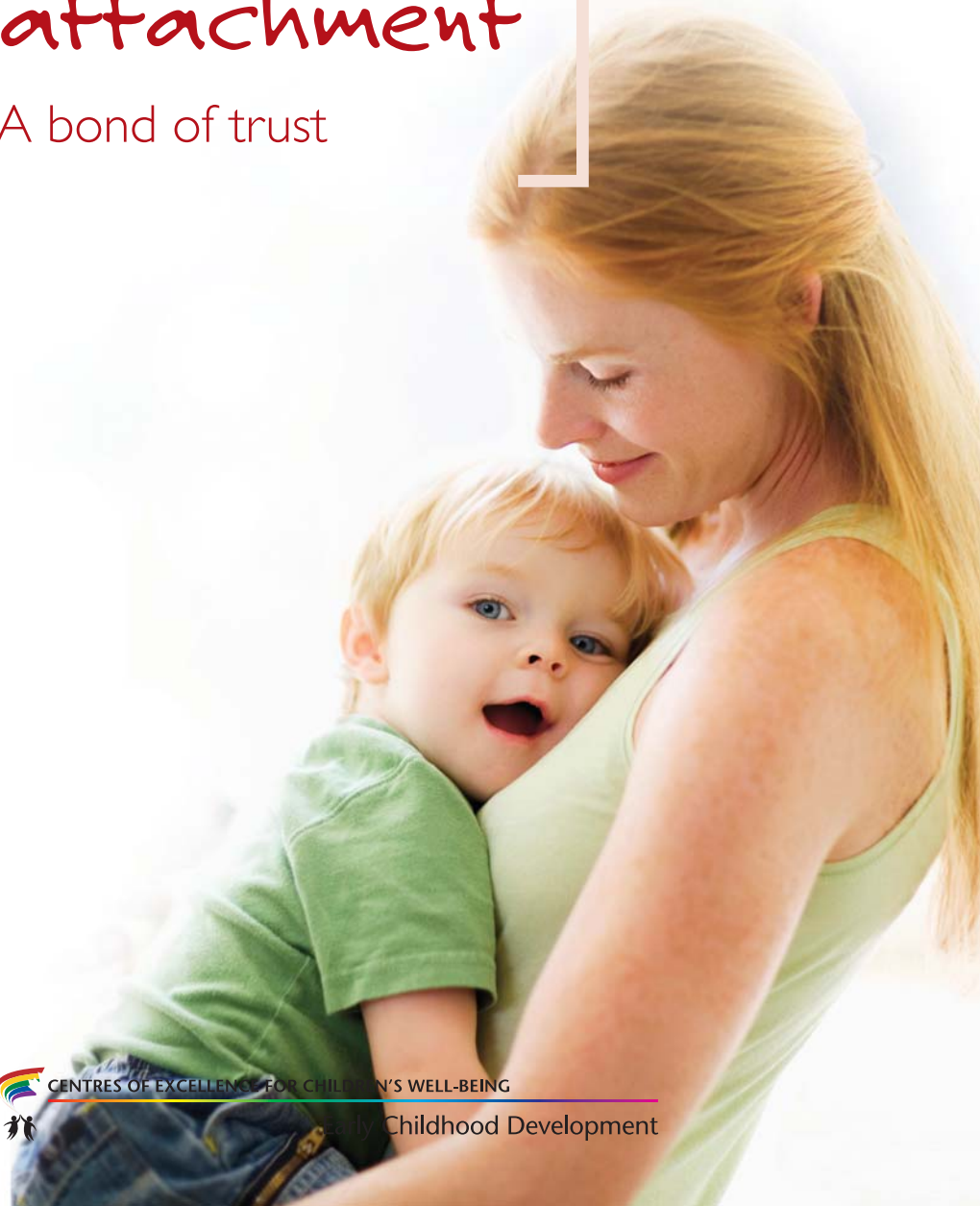


Eyes on



Parent-child attachment

A bond of trust



CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE FOR CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING

Family Childhood Development

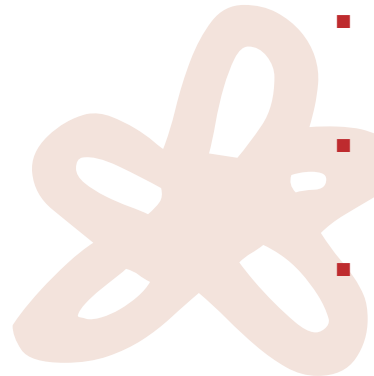
PARENTS



“Attachment is the emotional connection that happens between you and your baby.”

What do we know?

- Attachment is the emotional connection that happens between you and your baby.
- Your baby wants to be comforted by you when he is sick, tired or worried, when he cries or feels afraid. These behaviours help to build a bond of trust.
- If your baby is comforted in these situations, he learns to trust you whenever he needs something and learns to have the confidence to explore his environment.
- Most children develop bonds with their parents that help to comfort them in stressful situations.
- This comforting bond is present when your child is happy around you and when he actively wants to be with you (e.g., smiles, active play, looking for loving contact).
- Your child feels more trusting and more secure with you if he believes you can protect him.
- Your child feels protected if you pay attention to his crying, to the sounds he makes and to his movements, so that you can take action in a predictable and caring way when needed.
- If your child grows up trusting you, he learns to trust other people in different situations.
- Feelings of trust and security help your child to become independent, to face the challenges of childhood (such as starting day care or making new friends) and to face more difficult situations.
- Stresses parents go through (such as marital, health or financial problems), lack of support, or their own bonding experiences can reduce their ability to react to their children in predictable and caring ways.
- If such situations happen often or last a long time, the parent-child attachment may not be comforting for the child.



Paying attention to...

What can be done?

... your baby's crying, discomfort, worry or distress. These are a baby's way of communicating, of letting us know he is not doing well.

- Comfort your baby by responding quickly to any signs of discomfort or distress. For example, be loving and caring, speak softly, and hold your baby in your arms.
- Set up a care routine that is always the same (such as bath and meals at fixed times, bed-time routines). This helps the child to learn to expect these events and also helps the parents to keep the family organized.
- Take a few minutes to hold your baby in your arms to "talk" and interact with him. This is a great way for parents to get to know their babies.

... the game your child likes to play and to the request your child makes for you to play with him.

- Be aware of your child's playing, and imitate what he does.
- Offer some new ideas that might be fun. Give advice to help out if there are problems and congratulate your child for his efforts.
- Plan time to play with your child without being in a hurry or thinking about other things that need to be done.
- Pay attention and respect any signs of fatigue, and don't insist that your child continue playing a game that he is no longer interested in.

... your own signs of fatigue and discouragement.

- Give yourself specific time to rest.
- Share your child's care with your partner whenever possible.
- Find resources available in your community that can offer a break (for example, babysitting networks, help with housekeeping, parents' support groups or counselling services).



Information

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development identifies and summarizes the best scientific work on the social and emotional development of young children. It disseminates this knowledge to a variety of audiences in formats and languages adapted to their needs.

For a more in-depth understanding of parent-child attachment, consult our experts' articles in the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, available free of charge at: www.child-encyclopedia.com.

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Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development

GRIP-Université de Montréal
P.O. Box 6128, Succursale Centre-ville
Montreal (Quebec) H3C 3J7
Telephone: 514.343.6111, extension 2541
Fax: 514.343.6962
E-mail: cedje-ceecd@umontreal.ca
Website: www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca

Coordinator:
Kristell Le Martret
Collaborators:
Isabelle Vinet (CPEQ) & George Tarabulsy
Copy editor:
Sandra Braun
Translation:
Donna Riley
Graphic design:
DesJardins Conception Graphique inc.

In this document, the masculine form is used to simplify the text. No discrimination is intended.

