

The question should not be, 'Are you mom enough?' The questions should be:

- Are you responsively parenting your child in a timely way?
- Are you attuned to his or her individual needs?
- Are you providing a safe, protected, and predictable environment?
- Do you understand and respond to the developmental differences between infants, toddlers, and older verbal children?
- Are you available and empathetic when your child needs you or is under stress?

**If the answer is 'yes' to these questions, you are practicing Attachment Parenting.** You can reasonably expect that your child will become emotionally secure, will be able to give and receive affection, and will lead a productive and successful life.

~ Isabelle Fox, PhD, author of *Growing Up: Attachment Parenting from Kindergarten to College*, in response to *Time* magazine's feature article "Are you Mom Enough?" on May 21, 2012

## Prepare for Pregnancy, Birth, and Parenting

Become emotionally and physically prepared for pregnancy and birth. Research available options for healthcare providers and birthing environments, and become informed about routine newborn care. Continuously educate yourself about developmental stages of childhood, setting realistic expectations and remaining flexible.

## Feed with Love and Respect

Breastfeeding is the optimal way to satisfy an infant's nutritional and emotional needs. "Bottle Nursing" adapts breastfeeding behaviors to bottle-feeding to help initiate a secure attachment. Follow the feeding cues for both infants and children, encouraging them to eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full. Offer healthy food choices and model healthy eating behavior.

## Respond with Sensitivity

Build the foundation of trust and empathy beginning in infancy. Tune in to what your child is communicating to you, then respond consistently and appropriately. Babies cannot be expected to self-soothe, they need calm, loving, empathetic parents to help them learn to regulate their emotions. Respond sensitively to a child who is hurting or expressing strong emotion, and share in their joy.

## **Use Nurturing Touch**

Touch meets a baby's needs for physical contact, affection, security, stimulation, and movement. Skin-to-skin contact is especially effective, such as during breastfeeding, bathing, or massage. Carrying or babywearing also meets this need while on the go. Hugs, snuggling, back rubs, massage, and physical play help meet this need in older children.

## **Ensure Safe Sleep, Physically and Emotionally**

Babies and children have needs at night just as they do during the day; from hunger, loneliness, and fear, to feeling too hot or too cold. They rely on parents to soothe them and help them regulate their intense emotions. Sleep training techniques can have detrimental physiological and psychological effects. Safe co-sleeping has benefits to both babies and parents.

## **Provide Consistent and Loving Care**

Babies and young children have an intense need for the physical presence of a consistent, loving, responsive caregiver: ideally a parent. If it becomes necessary, choose an alternate caregiver who has formed a bond with the child and who cares for him in a way that strengthens the attachment relationship. Keep schedules flexible, and minimize stress and fear during short separations.

## **Practice Positive Discipline**

Positive discipline helps a child develop a conscience guided by his own internal discipline and compassion for others. Discipline that is empathetic, loving, and respectful strengthens the connection between parent and child. Rather than reacting to behavior, discover the needs leading to the behavior. Communicate and craft solutions together while keeping everyone's dignity intact.

## **Strive for Balance in Personal and Family Life**

It is easier to be emotionally responsive when you feel in balance. Create a support network, set realistic goals, put people before things, and don't be afraid to say "no". Recognize individual needs within the family and meet them to the greatest extent possible without compromising your physical and emotional health. Be creative, have fun with parenting, and take time to care for yourself.

*Visit Attachment Parenting International at [www.attachmentparenting.org](http://www.attachmentparenting.org) to learn more!*