

DEVELOPING STRONG, POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

The relationships that children develop with both the adults and children in their lives are critical to their social and emotional well-being. In fact research tells us that healthy development depends on the quality and consistency of those relationships. Strong, positive relationships help children develop the self-confidence to solve problems and conflicts, the motivation to learn, the ability to know right from wrong, and the desire to make and sustain friendships.

When infants have adults they rely on to take care of their needs, they learn about other people's needs and feelings and they have the confidence to explore and discover their world. Preschoolers who have strong relationships with adults use those models to form friendships with other children and begin to understand appropriate ways to behave and interact. Kindergarteners and their teachers who share positive relationships develop students who are more eager to learn and who are more confident about learning new things.

HOW CAN YOU STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN IN YOUR CARE?

- Be positive. Be a good model. Use “can do” language, not “can’t do”.
- Show children you care. Hugs, pats, smiles, compliments or positive words of encouragement go a long way to making children feel good.
- Listen! Stop, take time, and really listen to what children are telling you. Help them to know they are special and what they are telling you is important.
- Respond quickly to young children’s needs. Help them build trust in you.
- Be consistent and predictable with routines and the environment.

Uri Bronfenbrenner: ‘Somebody’s got to be crazy about that kid. That’s number one. First, last, and always.’

Read the [**SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SECTIONS OF THE EARLY LEARNING FOUNDATIONS FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS**](#) to discover ways that you can create experiences for young children that will build or enhance their relationships with both other children and adults.