



## Relationship-based care

Infants enter the world ready for relationships. They use sounds, facial expressions and movements to communicate their feelings and needs. But it is in the context of RELATIONSHIPS that a child is able to develop.

Infants and toddlers develop expectations about people's behavior and about themselves based on how adults treat them. Trust and emotional security develop when infants learn that their needs will be met predictably and consistently. Self-confidence develops as babies and toddlers learn to communicate their needs and master challenges in their world.

Babies thrive when they encounter challenges they can meet. They flourish when they are free to explore and when they feel that a caring adult will encourage and take pleasure in their emerging interests. Therefore, even though it is a short relationship, your care for each child you meet in the drop in center has meaning. In that short time the child will or won't feel safe, competent, trusting, ...

In the first three years of life, a child's ability to express, experience and regulate emotions develops rapidly. You can help or hinder that process. By age 3, a child has experienced joy, delight, frustration, rage, pride, guilt, shame, anger and wariness. How children understand all these emotions and how they learn to "regulate" them depends on YOU.

When you respond quickly to the infant's signal, he learns he can count on you and learns that he is worthy of your attention. Toddlers use you as a secure base from whom he can venture out and experience new challenges. It is through responsive interactions with his caregivers that infants develop a sense of a safe, interesting and orderly world where they are understood and their actions bring pleasure to themselves and others. The goal is to establish a relationship with each child that gives him the belief that he matters and is capable of impacting his environment.

How does one establish relationship-based care with children ages 3-5?

1. Speak to child ON HIS LEVEL (by crouching or sitting on the floor)
2. Be RESPONSIVE, listening to her attentively while maintaining eye contact
3. TALK with children frequently, asking open-ended questions and including them in conversations
4. Speak and INTERACT with EACH CHILD in the family.
5. Encourage a child's INDEPENDENCE and desire to do things "by myself."
6. ACKNOWLEDGE a child's feeling and help him deal with anger, sadness, and frustration.
7. PARTICIPATE in activities along with the child.

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