

Title: *How to Build a Secure Relationship with Each Child*

Author: James Elicker, Ph.D.

Date: Unknown

- Each child in your care is unique, so it takes special care to build secure attachments with each one. Here are some ways caregivers can “tune in” to each child.
- Spend some "special time" with each child, each day. ("Special time" can be a conversation, play, a story, feeding, changing, or getting ready for a nap. The important thing is that the child has your full and undivided attention, and that you are completely accepting of the child and his/her feelings.)
- Observe each child carefully over time. Try to learn his or her unique "signals."
- Share and discuss your observations with co-workers and parents about how each child is feeling and about the child's relationships with others.
- Be a good listener for each child (not just the words he or she uses, but also the feelings underneath the words). Reflect your understanding of the child's words and feelings, and check with the child to see if you are right. (You may not always be right, but your effort will be appreciated!)
- Plan your daily routine so that there are some opportunities for adults and children to have relaxed, unhurried, unstructured time together every day.
- Limit the number of adults and children each child has to get to know and interact with every day. Keeping group sizes as small as possible will let adults get to know and develop a secure relationship with each child. (This is sometimes called a "Primary Care" system.)
- Read books with children that focus on close human relationships. Discuss the stories with children in terms of your and their own feelings and experiences.
- Make it an important goal to develop an open, positive, collaborative relationship with each child's parent(s). Help them understand that [children can become attached to both parents and caregivers](#).
- When you are not feeling positive about your relationship with a child, or when the child seems insecure, talk about your feelings and your observations with someone else. Try to understand the behavior of the child that makes you uncomfortable, including the feelings underneath the behavior.