



Behaviors That Express Secure Attachment

Look for the following in children's everyday behaviors. Remember, the age of children is important. How children think, express feelings, get along with others, and manage their behaviors to get their needs met and to meet the needs of others develops and changes with age. Discuss your observations with the caseworker.

- Accepts responsibility for personal actions
- Expresses guilt, sorrow, or regret when his actions hurt others
- Thinks logically
- Understands that actions have consequences
- Gives and receives positive expressions of caring
- Expresses pride, happiness, and enthusiasm in day-to-day accomplishments
- Generally sees herself as a "good person"
- Generally sees others as "good people"
- Respects the rights of others
- Expects good things from adults
- Has friends and shares good times with them
- Asks for help when needed
- Accepts help when needed
- Recognizes the feelings and needs of others
- Recognizes own feelings
- Expresses feelings in a way that does not harm himself or others
- Is able to "give and take" with others
- Manages own behaviors in a positive way





"Red Flag" Behaviors

If any of these behaviors are observed, discuss them with the child's caseworker and other members of the permanency team. It is important for caregivers to ensure child safety while working to identify possible unmet needs behind any particular behavior(s).

- Attempts to control everything and everyone
- Lacks guilt or anxiety after doing something wrong
- Refuses to accept responsibility for own actions
- Bullies or hurts smaller or younger children
- Hurts house pets or other small animals
- Starts fires
- Resists affection and comfort, even when hurt or ill
- Does not think logically
- Has difficulty in expressing or understanding personal feelings
- Has difficulty in expressing or understanding the feelings of others
- Has difficulty in experiencing fun, feelings of accomplishment, and/or pride in jobs well done
- Steals, lies, and "uses" other people



Parenting to Support Emotional Security and Attachment (1 of 4)

Although many of the parenting behaviors on this list may be already familiar to you from having used them with other children, you may be surprised by a particular child's negative response to them. When building security and attachment, it is important to know the child, to respond to the child's "cues and clues," and to work in partnership to select parenting behaviors that will meet the child's underlying needs. Allowing enough time and repeating these suggested parenting behaviors again and again can make a positive difference in a child's life.

1. Create a positive family life for children.

Feed them when they are hungry.

Take them to the doctor when they are sick.

Help them with their homework.

2. Nurture and show empathy through tone of voice.

Because children often "do not hear the words" that are said to them and only respond to the sound of a message, use a soothing, calming, and neutral tone of voice to connect with them.

3. Use the nonverbal helping skills to communicate interest.

Smile, wink, and nod to show warmth and interest.

Listen to children's words.

4. Provide nurturance through physical touch.

Cuddle children during feedings or while reading a story together.

Rock them in a rocker at bedtime or when they seem upset.

Play "tag" and other physical games.

Comb or arrange their hair.

Give a quick hug when they come home or just before they go to sleep.

(Caution: A number of children in care have been sexually abused, some without the knowledge of the caseworker or foster parents. Know the history of the child. Touch can be safe and brief, such as patting a child's hand. Pay attention to the child's nonverbal and verbal responses to touch, and act accordingly.)



Parenting to Support Emotional Security and Attachment (2 of 4)

- 5. Turn off the TV and play games with them.**
- 6. Include children in family routines at their own pace.**

Encourage participation in family chores by saying things like "In this family we take turns drying the dishes. Tonight it's your turn."
- 7. Begin or continue traditions that support belonging and family membership.**

Say things like "In this family, the birthday person gets to choose the dinner menu."
- 8. Regularly set aside "special time" for sharing good times between child and parent.**

Bake cookies together.
Take walks together.
Laugh, sing, and read together.
- 9. Use routines and rules in the home environment to give messages of control and safety.**

Set regular times for meals, play, homework, and bed.
- 10. Be concrete when communicating with children.**

Say things like "Please pick your clothes off the floor, put them in the laundry basket, and make your bed," rather than "Clean up your room."
- 11. Identify strengths and provide encouragement.**

Say things like "You did a good job of setting the table and helping me get ready for dinner."
- 12. Model "naming feelings" so that children can learn that it's "okay" to talk about feelings.**

Say things like "I feel sad you didn't make the team," and talk about feelings to tell the child that having feelings and talking about them is "okay."



Parenting to Support Emotional Security and Attachment (3 of 4)

13. Use reflecting responses to help children identify their own feelings.

Say things like “You seem kind of sad right now...” or “You feel happy.”

14. Help children to connect their body language with their inner feelings.

Use reflecting responses, and say things like “Your face is red and your fist is clenched—you look angry.”



15. Use reflecting responses to show empathy.

Say things like “It seems really hard for you to...” to show that you are aware of the child's feelings.

16. Provide consequences with genuine empathy.

Let children find out that behaviors have consequences, but do so by showing genuine empathy.

Say things such as “You hit Juan on the school bus and now you can't ride the bus for two weeks. You will have to miss soccer. I know how much you like it. You cannot hit people because you are angry. Let's talk about what you can do differently the next time.”

17. Use the “time in” technique to stop unacceptable behavior.

“Time in” is “time out”—only within the sight and hearing of the foster parent.

18. Provide supervision and structure that will fit children's needs as shown by their behaviors.

19. Provide choices to cut down on control battles between parent and child.

Say things like “You can either play in the pool without diving in or else come in and sit on the towel. The choice is yours.”



Parenting to Support Emotional Security and Attachment (4 of 4)

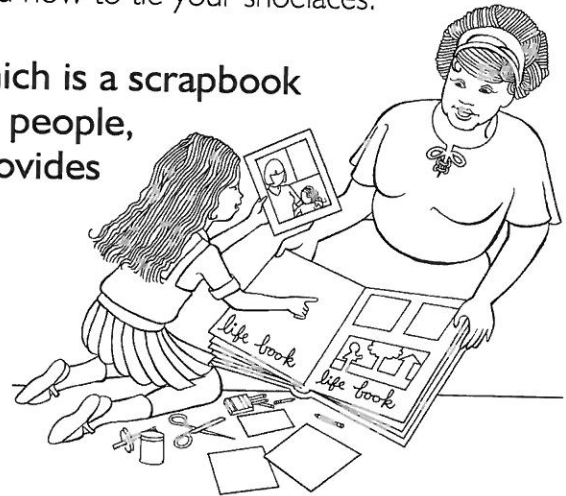
20. Identify the needs behind difficult and/or unacceptable behaviors and then find creative ways to meet those needs.

If a child hoards food, put some healthy snacks into a backpack and give it to him as a way of reassuring him that food will always be available.

21. Help children to connect with their parents in a positive way.

Say things like “It seems like you really enjoyed going shopping with your mom” or “Your dad really did a good job of showing you how to tie your shoelaces.”

22. Help the child to make a Life Book, which is a scrapbook containing important pictures of things, people, and events in a child's life and which provides important connections to others.



23. Invite the child's parents to visit in your home.

Use birthdays, holidays, and other types of events and celebrations as natural times for such visits between parents and children.

24. Provide activities or suggestions for positive visits with parents.

Say things like “Be sure to show your mom the picture you drew of the firehouse,” or “Maybe the two of you could organize your baseball card collection together.”

25. Provide children with positive information about their parent(s).

Say things like “Guess what? Your mom found an apartment last week.”