

What is Attachment Parenting?

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Attachment is the strong bond of affection and connection that develops between children and their parents or primary caretakers. The quality of this bond influences the child's physical, emotional, and intellectual development. Research conducted throughout the world suggests that securely attached children grow up to trust others and to rely on themselves, developing secure, peaceful, and enduring relationships.

What is Attachment Parenting?

Attachment Parenting is the philosophy and practice of parenting methods that foster strong, healthy emotional bonds between parents and children. This approach values responsiveness to the infant or child's physical and emotional needs, nurturing their trust that those needs will be met. Although supported by current research, Attachment Parenting is rooted in the oldest human traditions of all cultures, and is anything but new.

The Eight Ideals of Attachment Parenting

To help families better understand secure attachment, API promotes The Eight Ideals of Attachment Parenting. Recognizing that every family is unique, with unique needs and resources, API considers the Ideals to be guidelines, not standards of perfection.

- 1. Preparation for Childbirth.** Connecting early with baby begins with prenatal preparation and alert, active participation in childbirth. Making informed decisions about the kind of birth you want will help create a positive experience for you and your baby.
- 2. Emotional Responsiveness.** Understanding and responding sensitively to your baby's emotional needs are the cornerstones of Attachment Parenting. Babies need lots of nurturing touch, eye contact, and smiles. Baby's cry means hunger, tiredness, loneliness, or some other discomfort, and needs a response adult to comfort them by holding, rocking, nursing, or whatever soothes your baby and communicates that you are reliably warm and dependable. You can't "spoil" a baby by responding to its cries.
- 3. Breastfeeding.** Breastfeeding meets baby's need for optimum nutrition and physical contact. Breastfeeding has many benefits to the baby, mother, and society and is the most natural way to meet many of your baby's physical and emotional needs.
- 4. Baby Wearing and Nurturing Touch.** "Wearing" baby, by holding or use of soft carriers that keep baby close, meets baby's need for physical contact, security, stimulation and movement, all of which promote optimal brain development (as does infant massage).
- 5. Sharing Sleep.** Responsiveness does not end at bedtime. API advocates keeping baby in close proximity in a safe sleeping environment. See our website (www.attachmentparenting.org) for information on safe co-sleeping.
- 6. Avoiding Frequent or Prolonged Separations.** Babies have an intense need for the physical presence of a loving, responsive parent. Through daily care and loving interactions, strong parent-child attachments are formed. Frequent or prolonged separations can interfere with the development of secure attachment. Avoid "caregiver roulette"; continuity of care, with a consistent, loving caregiver, is critical.
- 7. Positive Discipline.** Boundaries and limit-setting are necessary as children grow. Positive, non-violent methods of discipline and loving guidance promote the development of self-control and empathy towards others.
- 8. Maintaining Balance in Family Life.** Parents need to nurture themselves as well as their children, especially when meeting the intense, immediate needs of infants. Balance is the key to avoiding "parent burn-out." All family members need exercise, quiet time, and healthy eating. Adults, whether married or single, need a social support system and private time (depending on the needs of babies or children) with friends or partner.