

BUILDING HEALTHY FAMILIES

CHEERS! Here's to a Cool Tool that Helps You Measure Your Baby's Attachment!

Each letter of **CHEERS** stands for a measurable aspect of the parent-child relationship.

Cues

Cues are behaviors your baby does to tell how he feels and what he needs. Responding sensitively and quickly to cues teaches your baby trust and helps strengthen your parent-child bond.



Holding

You may have heard that saying "holding a baby too much spoils them." However, there is no such thing as holding an infant "too much!" In fact, research shows that holding your baby builds brain connections and is an important part of your baby's overall health and development, so snuggle your baby as often as possible and soak up all the benefits it brings to both you and your baby.



Expression

Communicating with your baby through sounds, songs, reading and verbal expression helps your baby learn to talk and how to communicate with others. The more your baby is exposed to language, the better prepared he is for success in school!

Empathy

Babies are tuned in from birth to our feelings, paying attention to how we interact with them. They pay close attention to our tone of voice and facial expressions when we interact with them.

The more one on one interaction you have with your baby, fostering empathy and kindness, the more skills she will gain toward developing friendships and other healthy relationships.

Rhythm & Reciprocity

Rhythm and reciprocity between a child and parent looks like a "dance" between you and your baby. The pleasurable flow of taking turns interacting and responding to each other teaches your baby how to communicate, valuable social skills, and how to get along with others. It also builds your baby's confidence, so that she will be excited to try new things in her world.

Smiles

You've probably heard that "laughter is the best medicine." When you smile at your baby, you encourage him to smile and teach him that you delight in his company. You and your baby both feel pleasure when you smile and laugh together, because hormones that create happiness are released. Learning to enjoy life starts with a smile!



The more a child feels attached to a parent, the more securely he accepts himself and the world.

The more love a child feels, the more love he is capable of giving.

Attachment is as central to the developing child as eating and breathing.



See the next page to learn Myths vs Facts about secure attachments

Myths and Facts about Secure Attachment

Myth: “My baby is attached to me because I gave birth to her.”

Fact: Infants have independent nervous systems from yours. What makes you feel good may not be the same thing that makes your infant feel good. Unless you look and listen to your infant’s emotional cues, you won’t understand her individual needs.



Myth: “Secure attachment and love are the same thing.”

Fact: Bonding and attachment happen instinctively between mothers and babies, but, unfortunately, loving your baby doesn’t automatically result in secure attachment. Secure attachment develops from your ability to manage your stress, respond to your baby’s cues, and successfully soothe your infant.



Myth: “Always responding to an infant’s needs spoils a baby.”

Fact: As you respond to your infant’s needs, the more confident and competent your baby will be as she grows up. Bonding creates trust, and children with secure attachments tend to be *more* independent, not less .

Myth: “Secure attachment is a one-way process about accurately reading my baby’s cues.”

Fact: Attachment is a two–way, interactive process in which your baby reads your cues as you read hers.

You are My I Love You

By Maryann K. Cusimano

I am your *parent*. You are my *Child*.
I am your *quiet place*. You are my *wild*.
I am your *Calm face*. You are my *giggle*.
I am your *wait*. You are my *wiggle*.
I am your *dinner*. You are my *Chocolate cake*.
I am your *bedtime*. You are my *wide awake*.
I am your *lullaby*. You are my *Peek-A-Boo*.
I am your *goodnight kiss*. You are my *I Love You*.



“A Child May not know what direction he is going,
but when he is attached to you, he doesn't feel lost”

-Gordon Neufield.