

THE IMPORTANCE OF TOUCH

WHY IS NURTURING TOUCH IMPORTANT?

Brain Development:

Nurturing touch can help young children with stress. Research shows that it lowers cortisol, a stress hormone that can affect learning and memory. It also increases oxytocin, the hormone that helps build a bond between parents or other caregivers and their children. Through nurturing touch, children connect with their caregivers and learn skills to eventually calm their bodies and minds when upset.

Physical Benefits of Touch:

Did you know that touch helps babies feel better physically, too? Infant massage, for example, reduces colds, upset tummies, asthma, dermatitis, heart disease, pain, insomnia, and stress! Just a few minutes of massage a day can have wonderful health benefits while building closeness.



Emotional Benefits of Touch:

Through healthy, respectful touch, children feel safe and secure, and can explore, play, and learn! Without this secure bond and when the needs for nurturing touch go unmet, you might see symptoms such as lack of self-control, aggression, low self-worth, lack of empathy, neediness, and other difficult behaviors.

TIPS FOR TOUCH



Touch can be added to daily activities like sitting together to read a book, hand-over-hand contact while the child is helping in the kitchen, or in small ways like holding hands and giving high fives.

For soothing touch, use gentle pressure moving from the head down. For touch that is more energizing, use gentle motions from the feet up.

After bath time, slow down to be with your little one! While applying safe lotion or oil, use gentle massage strokes.

Many children seek out physical touch daily. Make the most of these child-directed touch times by pausing what you're doing and being fully present for these moments.



REFLECTION CORNER

Every child is unique....

- How does your child show/tell you they're ready for touch?
- What level of touch do they like - soft, medium, or firm?
- How can you add touch into your daily routine?
- What are some of your earliest positive memories of touch?
- What have you learned in your culture or family about touch?
- Sadly, nurturing touch during childhood was not experienced by everyone. What do you need to feel safe while bringing healthy touch to your child?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & SOURCES

[Black Infant Health](#)

[Circle of Security](#)

[Early Head Start](#)

[Exceptional Families Resource Center](#)

[First 5 of San Diego](#)

[2-1-1 San Diego](#)

[Access & Crisis Line](#)

888-724-7240

Information sourced from Carlson, F. M. (2005). Significance of Touch in Young Children's Lives. YC Young

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