

Sensitive Parenting: A Growth-Promoting Relationship With Your Child

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Sensitive parenting is the strongest predictor of children's healthy social-emotional and cognitive development.

- ***Sensitive caregiving is:***

- *Timely responses to the child's signals and behaviors in an appropriate and effective manner.*

- ***Two Markers of Insensitivity:***

1. ***Intrusiveness***

- Being too directive or controlling, without acknowledging the child's desires or level of understanding
- Overwhelming the child with stimulation
- Rejecting the child's signals and desires

2. ***Detachment***

- Being distant or emotionally disconnected
- Ignoring or missing the child's signals and needs
- Interacting in a mechanical fashion—"going through the motions"

Tips to enhance sensitive parenting:

1. Read the child's cues and signals by following her gaze, vocalizations, reaches, facial expressions, and movements, tuning in to her needs and subtle signals for support.
2. Respond to the child based on the likely meaning of his behaviors.
3. At times, it can be difficult to understand your child, particularly when he or she is upset.

It can take many tries to find the right response.

4. Acknowledge your child's perspective. Simple description of the child's experience or emotions ("I see you are trying very hard.") provides connections that strengthen your relationship.

"Getting to know your child's unique cues is an important way that you can show your child that you love and understand him or her." -- *Understanding Your Child's Behavior: Reading Your Child's Cues from Birth to Age 2*, Center on Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning, Vanderbilt University