

What Does a Good Attachment Look Like Between Adults and Kids?

A strong and deep relationship between parents and kids is the secure base from which healthy development and growth occurs.

Attachment is a natural force based in human instincts and emotions that moves us to pursue and preserve contact and closeness with others.

Based on Gordon Neufeld's developmental approach, attachment unfolds in six sequential ways in the early years, though it is never too late to strengthen connection.

Neufeld's Six Sequential Phases of Attaching

Year 0–1: Senses

Babies connect through their senses—touch, sight, smell, hearing, and taste. Physical closeness and sensory experiences build early attachment.

Year 1–2: Sameness

Children seek to be like those they are attached to. They imitate behaviours, expressions, and actions of their caregivers.

Year 2–3: Belonging and Loyalty

Children show a strong desire to belong and be loyal. They may become possessive and want to stay close to their caregivers.

Year 3–4: Significance

Children seek to feel important and valued. They look for approval and want to matter to those they are attached to.

Year 4–5: Love

Children express deep affection and emotional connection. They begin to give their hearts to those they trust.

Year 5–6: Being Known

Children want to be truly seen and understood. They share thoughts and feelings and seek deep emotional connection.

How We Can Build Strong Relationships with Our Kids

- Convey warmth, delight, and enjoyment in your interactions
- Collect your child's attention and engage with full presence
- Use attachment-focused strategies to preserve connection
- Respond to your child's needs and take the lead in caring for them
- Limit competing distractions like excessive screen time

Attachment does not slow down growth—it fuels it. Strong relationships provide the foundation for resilience and lifelong well-being.

Source: Adapted from Preschool Personality Infographic
Dr. Deborah MacNamara - Excerpt from the book *Rest, Play, Grow: Making Sense of Preschoolers (or anyone who acts like one)*