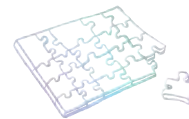


**Parents can develop a close relationship with their young children by interacting with them in ways that are mutually rewarding, involve taking turns, and include the parent offering guidance and encouragement to the child.**

The early childhood practice described in this brochure is based on findings from a practice-based research synthesis conducted at the Research and Training on Early Childhood Development by D. Z. Kassow and C. J. Dunst (2005). Characteristics of parental sensitivity related to secure infant attachment. *Bridges*, 3(2). Visit [www.researchtopractice.info](http://www.researchtopractice.info) to read or download the complete research synthesis, or order copies from Winterberry Press at the mailing address printed below or online at [www.wbpress.com](http://www.wbpress.com). All opinions expressed in the research synthesis, this practice guide, and related materials are those of the Research and Training Center on Early Childhood Development and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Research to Practice Division, funder of the work of the RTC (H324K010005).



#### **Evidence-Based Practice Guides**

Additional practice guides are available from the RTC for this and other important early childhood topics.

Related materials also are available as part of *Solutions* evidence-based tool kits.

Please see descriptions of these resources and information for ordering under “Products” at

[www.researchtopractice.info](http://www.researchtopractice.info)

Research and Training Center on Early Childhood Development  
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*Cornerpiece*

**Sensitive parenting builds parent-child closeness**

**An Evidence-Based Early Childhood Practice**

## Sensitive parenting leads to closeness between parent and child



As his mom pulls the blanket from her toddler's grinning face, she croons, "Peek-a-boo! I see you!" With this very simple game, the mother-son bond grows stronger.

### What is the practice?

Parents who use certain kinds of sensitive behaviors when they interact with their young children are able to strengthen their parent-child bonds.

Interactions with these important aspects of parental sensitivity involve:

- parents responding to their children's efforts to interact;
- parents and children equally enjoying and taking turns in the interaction;
- parents warmly encouraging, assisting, and guiding their children's participation in the interaction.

## How do we do it?

Build closeness through a sensitive parent-child interaction style:

Make interactions **fun and rewarding** for both yourself and baby by taking a playful approach and enjoying many early learning games together.

**Take turns** during play by including back-and-forth games like pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo.

Use guiding movements and positive words to **gently help** your child interact with you through play.



**This little fellow is totally engaged in learning to play Pat-a-cake as his mom gently assists, guides, encourages, and supports him.**

## Take a look!

As sensitive parenting builds a strong parent-child relationship, you'll see parent-child pairs who are clearly comfortable and happy about being together and doing things together. They make one another smile and laugh,

When a favorite song comes on the radio, Dad sweeps his toddler off her feet, dances her around the room, and makes her giggle as they try to sing the lyrics together.



## Is it working?

You can tell parental sensitivity is at work and relationships are stronger when:

- The parent becomes more responsive to the child's efforts to interact or the child's need for comfort and encouragement.
- The child starts interactions with the parent.
- The child seeks out the parent for comfort.
- Interactions are fun for both the parent and child.