



EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH CONNECTION

MOVING LIVES FORWARD

HEALTHY ATTACHMENT AND CAREGIVER MENTAL HEALTH

Healthy attachment for young children is vital to all aspects of their lives as they develop and grow. Attachment is the emotional bond between the child and the parent or caregiver, and is a special emotional relationship that involves an exchange of comfort, care, and pleasure. To fully grasp the significance of this bond, it is important to understand how attachment develops, how attachment influences lifelong relationships, and how caregiver mental health has an impact on attachment for children.

Early attachment for children begins with a system of serve-and-return in infancy where the child expresses their need for something by crying or making noise. The caregiver is responsive and meets the need of the child, and a cycle forms where the infant learns that their needs will be met and learns to trust their caregiver. As children grow, they learn to read the cues and reactions from their caregivers in how to perceive the world around them. For example, if a caregiver responds positively to a child's needs on a consistent basis, the child learns to trust and learns their environment is safe and secure. Children watch how their caregivers respond to situations in their environment and how they interact with other people. Having a positive, secure attachment influences how children regulate their own emotions, how they respond in certain situations, how they develop healthy relationships into adulthood, and can help them feel safe, secure and have empathy for others. Secure attachment can often look like:

As Children	As Adults
Are able to separate from parents	Have trusting, lasting relationships
Seek comfort from parents when frightened	Tend to have good self-esteem
Greets return of parents with positive emotions	Are comfortable sharing feelings with partners and friends
Prefers parents to strangers	Seek out social support

(This is not an absolute list, and it does not mean your child does not have a secure attachment if they are not doing everything on this chart. These are general characteristics and will probably not happen all of the time.)

Caregiver mental health plays a very important role in a child's development and their ability to form a healthy, secure attachment. As stated before, children read cues and reactions from their caregivers and learn how to respond to situations in their environment from what is modeled from adults they are around. Caregivers can often feel overwhelmed, anxious, stressed, frustrated, and flat out exhausted. Did you know the average mom only gets 17 minutes of free time to herself each day? (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/joyful-parenting/201708/25-simple-self-care-tools-parents>)

These are all feelings that everyone feels from time-to-time, and sometimes it just takes some time to sit back, relax and breathe. When these feelings are a constant and it impacts the ability for someone to care for their child, it may be time to reach out for some help. Children are affected by the mood and emotional state their caregivers are going through. It's essential that caregivers care for themselves - first, for their own well-being, but also because any effort they put into self-care also has huge payoffs for their children. When parents "fill their own cups," they have more patience, energy, and passion to nurture healthy attachments with their children. Here are some ways to engage in caregiver self-care, while also building a positive relationship with children in your care.

- Journal for 20 minutes; write down 3 things you're thankful for
- Turn on uplifting music and dance with your child
- Color a picture from a coloring book with or beside your child
- Go for a walk/ play outside with your child
- Go on a social media kindness spree – use 20 minutes to post nice comments on people's social media or through messenger
- Make a cozy spot – make a blanket fort with your kids and climb in it with them (resting and hiding and giggling)
- Plan a special one-on-one date with your child – e.g. hiking, painting, playing outside, etc.
- Call a friend or loved one – say, "I'm having a hard time with this. Do you mind if I talk this out with you?"

Sources:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/joyful-parenting/201708/25-simple-self-care-tools-parents>
<http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/attachment/according-experts/attachment-early-age-0-5-and-its-impact-childrens-development>
<https://www.verywellmind.com/attachment-styles-2795344>
<https://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/importance-of-attachment-in-early-caregiving-041912/>

MEET CENTENNIAL'S EARLY CHILDHOOD CONSULTATION TEAM



LAUNCHING ZOOM SECURE TELEHEALTH SERVICES!

Our ECMH team is excited to announce that consultation services are now available using Zoom Secure Telehealth Services. These services are available to client families, schools, childcare centers and community partners with group and individual meetings available. All services will be provided using this private, secure video platform, and can be accessed using most electronic devices. For more information or to set up a consultation appointment, please contact our ECMH team or your local Centennial Mental Health Center office.



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Covers the following
counties:
Logan, Morgan

For additional support during
the COVID-19 Pandemic you
can call Centennial's
**COMMUNITY
SUPPORT LINE**

You can do this by calling your
nearest Centennial office:

Akron - 970.345.2254
Burlington - 719.346.8183
Cheyenne Wells - 719.346.8183
Elizabeth - 303.646.4519
Fort Morgan - 970.867.4924
Holyoke - 970.854.2114
Julesburg - 970.474.3769
Limon - 719.775.2313
Sterling - 970.522.4392
Wray - 970.332.3133
Yuma - 970.848.5412

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Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson,
Lincoln & Yuma

Contact your local Centennial Mental Health Center for assistance with any Early Childhood need.

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