

**From:** Scott Corcoran [scott@afamilyforeverychild.org]  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 18, 2013 4:40 PM  
**To:** scott@afamilyforeverychild.org  
**Subject:** Helping Your Child Understand Attachment



Dear ,

The bond between a parent and their child is very special and unique. Infants bond with their parents from the moment they are born, but creating that bond with an older child can be a bit tricky. Children in foster care may experience difficulty in attaching to their caregivers right away, due to the fact that they have been removed from their biological home and sent to many different foster homes. They have not had the opportunity to form a lasting bond and feel a sense of security that comes with it. Children in foster care may need some extra help forming attachments.

For more information on helping your child attach, visit Deborah Gray's site [Nurturing Attachments](#) for resources, tips and more.

#### **What is attachment?**

Attachment is defined as a close, lifelong relationship between two people. Children form attachments with their caregivers when they feel safe and when all of their needs are being met. Children in foster care may have a hard time forming attachments because they have not had anybody in their life long enough to attach to. Their biological parents were unable to provide for their needs and guarantee their safety, and being sent to many different foster homes does not help this sense of security either. A child that is not able to form attachments will become anxious, and feel that they cannot trust anyone to provide for them. Close attachments give a child a sense of trust, and forms a healthy dependence between child and caregiver.

#### **Bonding with an older child (6+ years)**

Help your child learn to seek out parenting. Encourage them to ask you for help. You need to help the child learn that you are in charge, and that they can enjoy being a child. Help them understand that you are the parent and they are the child, and as such it is your responsibility to take care of them; they don't have to take care of themselves anymore. For younger children, explaining that "you are you" will confirm the child's belief that they are permanent, regardless of what changes. Tell the child that they are themselves whether they are in school or at home. In addition, teach the child that they are still permanent, regardless of your mood changes. In other words, when they misbehave, tell them that you are mad and you still love them; avoid the word "but", eliminating the sense that your love is conditional.

#### **How You Can Form a Bond**

You don't need to adopt an infant to form a bond with a child. It may be a little more challenging, but you can help your older child form an attachment with you. It will take time and patience; this is not something that will happen over night. Do not set a "goal" for when you want to have your child form an attachment to you. Every child is different, and their experiences are playing a role in this. Provide your child with consistency. Address their needs right away as they come up. This will establish a sense of trust, and let the child know that you keep true to your word. Take time out of your day to spend with your child, away from your phone, computer and TV. Giving your child your undivided attention will let them know that you care and want to be there for them.

#### **Other Ways to Bond**

- Keep a picture of you and your child next to the child's bed. That way they wake up and see it every morning, and it reaffirms that they are part of your family.
- Do activities together. Teach the child something you love, like cooking, drawing or fishing. They may end up enjoying the activity, creating a common interest between you. In addition, participate in an activity that they enjoy as well to show your interest in what they like.
- Plant a garden with your child. This will help teach the child to nurture and self-care.
- Leave your child surprise messages in their lunch, their room, or around the house. These messages will let the child know that you still love them and care about them, even when you're out of sight.



