

# Bonding with your child



Attachment refers to the deep and enduring emotional bond that develops between an infant and their caregivers. For many, the process of developing an attachment starts before birth, whilst, for others, it starts when they adopt their child. Part of the attachment process is tuning into the child's needs and responding in a way that supports the child to feel safe and secure and that they will have their needs met. Attachment bonds support the child's physical and emotional wellbeing. However, if your autistic child has different sensory processing, then tuning in to their needs can be harder and, at times, may feel unachievable. Being able to nurture your autistic child in a way that supports them to feel safe and secure can be achieved by learning more about your child's sensory profile and their experience of the world.



Autistic babies and children may not respond in the same way as their non-autistic peers to being cuddled, being fed or having their nappy changed. An Autistic baby may pull away from their caregiver or take longer to be soothed. Autistic babies and children may gain comfort from self-soothing activities that are different to the perceived "norms" of infant behaviour.



An Autistic child may be in the same environment as their caregivers yet, on account of their sensory processing differences, experience that environment very differently. For example, the child may experience distress or even pain because of the light, smell, background noise or level of activity in the environment. Even when the caregivers are loving and doing their best to provide comfort, the child may not experience the nurturing benefits of these efforts as they may cause discomfort or pain. The child may feel alarmed by being rocked, terrified by lying on its back, overwhelmed by touch. When the child finds these things difficult to process, the caregiver may find it difficult to understand and so may feel rejected.



Finding ways to provide consistent, reliable comfort to your Autistic baby or child may require you to consider that your child experiences your shared sensory environment in ways different to your own. Being responsive to your child's sensory differences might involve you trying out ways of nurturing and connecting with your child that are different to those covered in mainstream parenting manuals.