

Tune in and respond!

What is the practice?

Research tells us that a responsive caregiver interaction style favorably influences a young child's development. Parents, caregivers, and early childhood educators can strengthen a child's developing mind, social skills, and motions when they are aware of the child's efforts to interact and consistently respond to the child in ways that are:

- SENSITIVE
- PROMPT
- APPROPRIATE



Parents find that active playtimes like a day at the beach offer great opportunities for responsive interactions their young children.



Mom watches for cues to help her respond to her baby's vocalizations.

How do we do it?

Let a child know that you welcome the chance to interact with him by responding in a way that is appealing to the child. The following three characteristics are part of an interactive style that encourages child learning and development:

- Pay attention to the many different ways a child tries to interact with people and objects in his environment. Notice glances, special expressions, gestures, vocalizations, and other signs of communication he might use in addition to or in place of words. Be sensitive to signs that a child has something to say.
- Respond quickly to let a child know his attempt to interact was a success. Be prompt in how you respond to a child.
- Let the intensity of your response match that of the child in terms of things like loudness or quietness and the level of expressiveness or emotion in your voice. This makes the interaction more comfortable for the child. Be appropriate, matching your response to the child's style.



See it happen

This father smiles, holds his daughter's tiny hands, and sings a verse of "Old McDonald" each time the baby reaches toward his face. The simple game charms the baby and is an example of positive responsiveness that is sensitive, prompt, and appropriate. Moments for this kind of playful interaction occur throughout the day.

Is it working?

Does the child enjoy and express contentment with your response?

Does the child repeat her behavior?

Does the child attempt to continue interacting with you or with objects?

