

## HOW TO NURTURE: Increasing Your Child's Social and Emotional Potential

### Nurture: WHY?

- Triggers the release of hormones that regulate pain, decreases stress, and increases bonding attachments
- Reduces impulsivity
- Strengthens bonds and the ability to create healthy relationships with others: a requirement in life
- Stimulates learning
- Combats trauma, stress, and neglect
- Develops the brain - actually increases size, weight, volume, and process
- Heals injury to the brain; both physical and neglect-based injury
- Decreases aggressive behavior
- Studies have shown that infants and toddlers who are held and touched frequently have higher scores on physical, emotional and interpersonal scales of intelligence testing.



### Nurture: HOW?

- Greet your child after every absence
- Modify your tone of voice to encourage a sense of calm in your child
  - Learn your child's cues: patterns of behavior before a certain action or response (*i.e.*, *whining before a meltdown*)
  - Make the effort to respond to their needs as often as possible: it confirms for them that they are safe and cared for
    - Teach them how to play independently by allowing lots of free play under your supervision
  - Review your family schedule and look for ways to improve consistency: children crave stability
- Recognize that *your* response to stress is mirrored in your child: when you break down or melt down, so will they, but with more umph! Model calmness whenever possible: if things are feeling overwhelming turn off the noise and "act" calmly: "*fake it 'till you make it!*" - it truly works!
  - Commit to giving your child at least 15 minutes of your undivided attention EVERY DAY: read a story, cuddle, bath time, or just talk.
    - Hold, touch, caress, and adore your child
- Believe that responding to your child's needs in the first few years of life actually guarantees independence: they have to develop a safety base before they can feel safe traveling on their own.
- Take risks: even if it is difficult for you to become a nurturer: do it in small doses anyway until it gets easier for you: your child needs it!

