



Promoting, supporting, and strengthening children's earliest relationships
prenatal to age six

*Infant mental health
is about early
relationships, their
origin and their
power.*

*Babies develop in
the context of
relationships.
Warm, sensitive and
predictable
relationships build
the rapidly
developing brain.*

*Promoting these
early powerful
relationships is the
work of
professionals from
many disciplines.*

Infants and Toddlers Needs in the Time of War and Evacuation from their Homeland

Suggestions for volunteers and staff working in
Resettlement/Refugee Organizations

**THANK YOU to the staff and volunteers for the work you are
doing to support and comfort families seeking refuge.**

What to Know About Babies:

War brings trauma to babies as well as to their families.

Babies' brains register both what is happening to them and what is
happening around them in their environments.

Babies' early experiences set the foundation for later learning and
relationships.

Babies need secure, warm, and consistent relationships from a
primary caring adult to buffer any distress that is happening to them.

Trauma experiences such as war and its effects, go unresolved with
the absence of warm and loving relationships.

Unresolved trauma can lead to disorders of great consequence.

Mothers and caregivers need to know they are doing the best they
can.

Babies cry to communicate, to say that they are experiencing
discomfort, and that they need food and/or that they need comforting
care.

Young children communicate through play. Play is an effective way
to promote responsive relationships, provide resilience to hardships,
and to reduce sources of stress.

What to Do:

Assure that caregivers (mothers, fathers, family members) have a place to care for their babies, a place to always be with their infants and toddlers.

Affirm mothers and caregivers when they give attention to their babies. Let mothers and caregivers know they are keeping their babies safe.

Affirm mothers and caregivers holding, feeding, and talking to their babies. *“Your baby is looking at you with such love.” “Your baby knows you are doing your best.”*

Offer needed items to mothers in the context of the mother/baby relationship: *“We found a place for you to stay (or food to eat or clothes to wear) that will be comfortable and safe for you and for your baby.”*

Suggest (not tell) ways of calming crying babies. *“Have you tried swaddling (or “sh-sh-sh-ing”, or singing, or swinging, or side-rocking) to calm your baby?”*

Offer a comforting response every time babies cry. Comforting will not spoil the baby. That is how babies learn to feel safe and secure, how they learn to count on adults to care for them, especially in a confusing world.

Be warm and responsive with mothers and their needs, exactly the way you want mothers to be with their babies.

Offer a place for mothers and babies to play together, a time to enjoy each other that builds brains and reduces stress.

For background supporting these suggestions:

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/>
<https://www.allianceaimh.org/>

For more information and to learn about opportunities for more learning please contact:

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