



*Emotional neglect is
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Child Abuse Prevention Fund
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Emotional neglect

Children need loving attention

Emotional neglect occurs when a parent deliberately or ignorantly overlooks the signs that a child needs comfort or attention and includes withholding love, rejecting a child and ignoring a child's emotional needs.

Parents who emotionally neglect their children fail to speak to their children or play with them. Neglectful parents also refuse to show affection and fail to encourage growth and learning.

Emotional neglect is a serious problem and has long term consequences. This form of abuse has been found to inhibit a child's emotional and physical growth.

While there are several causes for emotional neglect, it can be prevented by increasing parents understanding of their children's developmental and emotional needs.

What parents can do

- Encourage bonding with babies. Bonding occurs when parents and primary caregivers routinely and frequently hold, rock, and sing to a baby, gaze into a baby's eyes and feed a baby.
- Encourage sensory experiences with babies and children. Just as babies and children require food, shelter and clothing to grow, they also require positive physical touch, hugs, cuddles and eye-to-eye contact to thrive.
- It is destructive to a baby's emotional development and well being to fail to pick them up when they cry. Attending to a crying child will not spoil them. He needs to know that adults in his life will respond to his cries in a positive, nurturing way with gentle, soothing touches.
- Apologize to your child. As humans, we all lose our temper and say things in anger we didn't mean to say. By apologizing to your child, she knows that adults can make mistakes and admit when they are wrong.
- Provide praise and reinforcement to your child. Do not call your child names or attach labeling behavior. When a child says or does something displeasing to you, calmly point out the behavior and demonstrate or tell the child how he can do or say it differently. Praise him when he has demonstrated the kind of self-control and positive behavior you expect from him.
- Walk away from a situation in which you are losing control. Be sure your child is in a safe place or in the care of someone you trust, and isolate yourself in another room for a few minutes. Loss of self-control causes situations to escalate and leads to saying or doing things we never intended.