

ATTACHMENT (Module 5)

Lesson 4: Supporting attachment while sleep training

As stated in previous lessons, it's very important to us that the attachment between you and your child stays strong through the process of sleep training. Even though sleep training has not been linked to any form of attachment disorder, we want to encourage you to nurture a secure attachment in a proactive way as you are working on new sleep habits with your child.

Here are a few ways you can connect with your child and make sure they feel safe despite the changes you're making to their routine:

- 1) **Connect with your child often during awake times** - make sure you spend meaningful one-on-one time with your little one during the times that they are awake. Touch is a great way to connect, so offer hugs, kisses and cuddles throughout the day. If your little one is very active and always on the move, try stroking their hair, tickling or even a bit of rough and tumble play to create connection points. Do remember to always be respectful of their personal boundaries, so if your child doesn't want to be cuddled or touched, don't force it. Some children need more physical contact than others. For others your undivided attention and intentional presence is enough to fill their love-tank.
- 2) **Stay in the process with your child** - as hard as it is to hear your child cry, try to not tune out their cries, but to stay mentally with them when you are in the room (with an in-room method, this would be all the time, with an out-of-room method, this would be when you go in to comfort them). It's ok to lay on the floor and close your eyes, or to sit in silence (that's necessary to give your child space to settle), but stay connected to what your child is telling you, so you can do the next step.
 - **Reflect your child's emotions back to them when they are upset at bedtime** - if your child is crying or upset during the falling asleep process, make sure you are in attunement with their emotions and reflect those

back to them in a calm and empathetic way (even if they are still a baby) at the times you are comforting them (this depends on your chosen settling method). "I can see you are frustrated about mommy not holding you." With a toddler, add 2 further steps - "ok" the feeling and tell them when they can get what they want. "It's ok to feel upset. Mommy will hold you when you wake up from your nap." This will show your child that you see them, understand what they are feeling and "saying" to you with their cry, and that you are there for them.

- **Co-regulate your child's emotions** - One of the most powerful ways to help your child regulate their emotions is by regulating your own first! Research has shown that every emotion creates a vibration at a certain frequency. Whenever two different vibrations are in one room, they need to converge, meaning one person will change their emotion. This means that when your child is upset during sleep training, you will also get upset (change your emotion to match theirs) or they will calm down (matching their emotion to yours). Try taking deep breaths while you are holding your child to help them calm down or repeating some calming affirmations in your head to help yourself feel calm (you'll find a list of these in your workbook).

- 3) **Stay consistent in your approach** - one of the key aspects of a secure attachment is that your child gets a predictable, consistent reaction from you. This is exactly what the settling methods that we teach you in Module 7 are designed to do. Following your sleep plan consistently will in itself support a secure attachment between you and your child, because they will know exactly what they can expect from you.