

ATTUNEMENT

Your baby leads and you follow.

Through body language, facial expression and tone of voice, your own nervous system communicates directly with your child. This is how you truly connect with your child!

It's not your words that have the greatest impact, it's the nonverbal cues that create the feelings of safety and trust. Before you can attune to your child's sensations, rhythms and emotions, you must first learn to attune to your own. Then your calm can become their calm.

In order to help your child you have to get acquainted with your own inner landscape first. All it takes is time to pay attention to how your body feels. Sensations must be experienced. As you become more instinctual, you also become more fully human.

Get to know your own sensations. When you were too young to verbalize what you were feeling, you still knew what upset felt like. You just have to reconnect to that.

WHAT MISATTUNEMENT CAN LOOK LIKE

Your baby looks away and you continue to keep them engaged and looking at them and cooing. This turns into misattunement.

You have to pace yourself according to their needs. They need time to recover. If you continue to try to interact with them they can become distressed.

Misattunement will stop the flow of positive emotion and instead trigger negative ones. Escalating this attunement will trigger escalating distress because the baby doesn't have the ability to soothe themselves.

Why would the baby turn their attention away and stop the emotional flow?
Stress.

Connecting emotionally is stressful. It is an intense experience. Once they reach their capacity, they'll turn away.

After seeing or sensing this limit, any more emotion even if it is positive is distressing to them. Continuing to pressure them to interact increases their stress. You probably didn't realize you could stress out a baby!

EXAMPLE

Babies are all about the eyes. When they look away, that doesn't mean anything is wrong or you should force eye contact. When they get overstimulated, they'll look away briefly. It's important to let them do this, because it's an early form of self-regulation.

Wait there with them, maybe humming softly, while they calm themselves. This is how the nervous system works. In and out. Pendulation. All you need to do is follow their need.

Moment-to-moment, ok or not ok? They change emotional states more quickly than you might think. This is why babies aren't good or difficult, they're literally living in a moment-to-moment world all of the time. So you simply be with them in whatever emotion they're currently experiencing.

Instead of getting worked up everytime they seem upset and trying to bring them back to happy, let yourself experience some of what they're experiencing. Allow your face, breathing pattern, words, and gentle tone of voice to reflect that you share some of their experience.

Babies need opportunities to learn about emotional regulation with you, and your being with both positive and negative emotions without making one better is how this happens.