

## **Developing a Sense of Trust in Children**

Have you ever reflected upon the concept of trust in your relationship with your child...where your sense of trust came from and how it is established in your relationship with your child?

Parents often believe that their children need to earn their trust—but do their children know what trust is, and do they trust their parents?

Like many things in life, a sense of trust in relation to our children starts with us, the parents.

When exploring the ages and stages of development, we discover that the foundation for trust begins at birth and continues until about 18 months of age.

Thinking about it, this makes a lot of sense. Infants are completely dependent upon mom and dad to take care of them because they are not capable of taking care of their own needs. At this age, they learn to trust others to take care of them—feeding, bathing, comforting, responding to cries, and stopping them from moving toward danger.

Parents want to meet our children's needs so that they feel taken care of and nurtured, and so they will develop this trust.

As babies grow, they begin to trust themselves to take care of some of their own needs. They comfort themselves with a special toy or blanket, get what they want by crawling or grasping, and enjoy themselves by sucking on fingers and toes.

They also start to learn to trust the world around them: floors, walls and tables are hard, stuffed toys are soft; certain foods taste good; warm water feels good and grass is cool and soft.

These areas of trust are the bases upon which children grow to view the world.

Although the foundation for trust is established at the first stage of development, keep in mind that it is a lifelong journey. Remaining consistent and mindful about the continued growth of trust in our relationship with our children is vital throughout the ages and stages.

A sense of trust impacts children's feelings safety and security—that is, feeling safe and secure to grow up learning about life in front of their parents, and not being fearful of learning and being imperfect.

When children come to parents with a problem or with a mistake they have made, trust is an important part of them feeling safe to be honest about what has happened—trust in knowing that there is a solution to every problem, and that they will be treated with dignity and respect in the situation.

Something for parents to reflect upon: Does my child trust me? Have I created a home environment where she feels safe and secure to make mistakes and learn about life in front of me? If he has a problem, does he trust me enough to come to me, be honest with me, and feel supported?

If we cannot trust our parents who brought us into the world, who can we trust?

*written by Kolleen McIlveen, DPSN member and parent.*