

Building trust and delight



Try:

- Cuddling
- Smiling at each other
- Looking at leaves in the park together
- Looking at a picture book together
- Singing
- Rolling a ball together
- Blowing some bubbles

Above all, follow your child's lead!

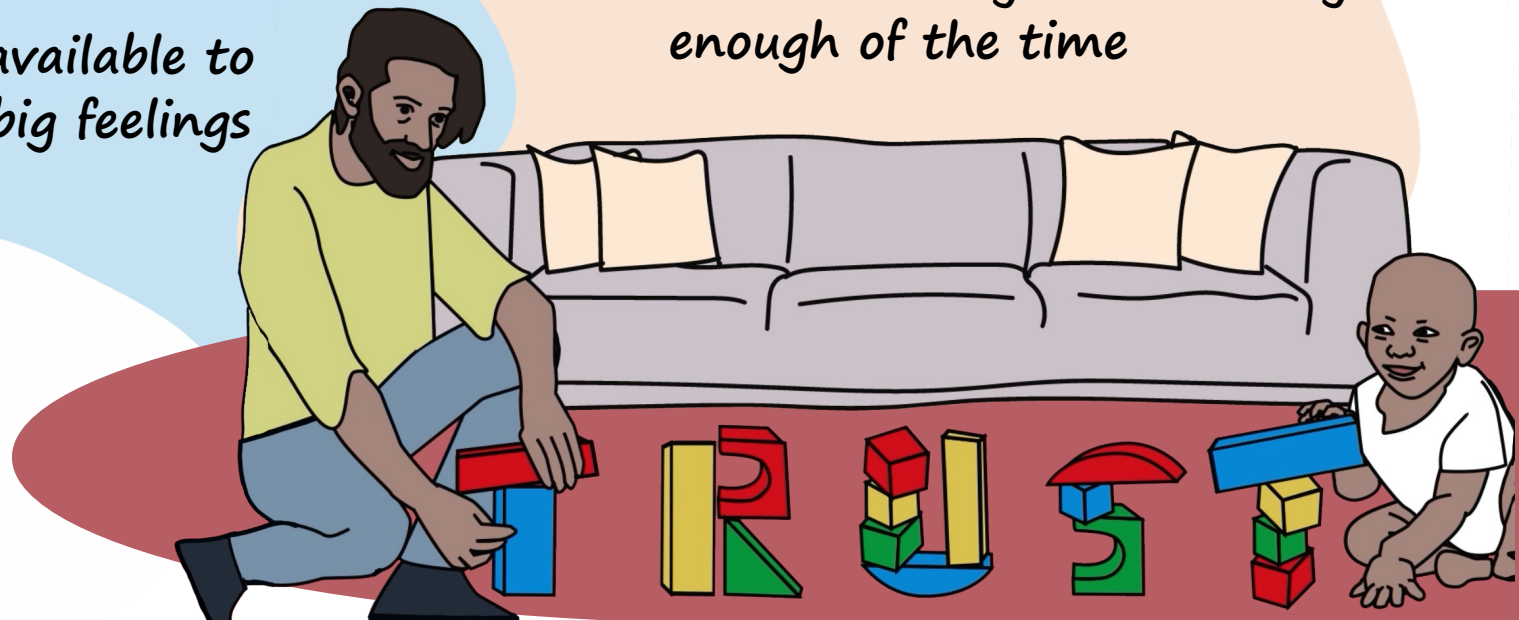
Why trust matters

In a relationship of trust, children learn about others and whether:

- Other people are curious and interested in me*
- Other people are able to notice my needs and respond to them*
- Other people are available to help me with my big feelings*

In a relationship of trust, children learn about themselves and whether:

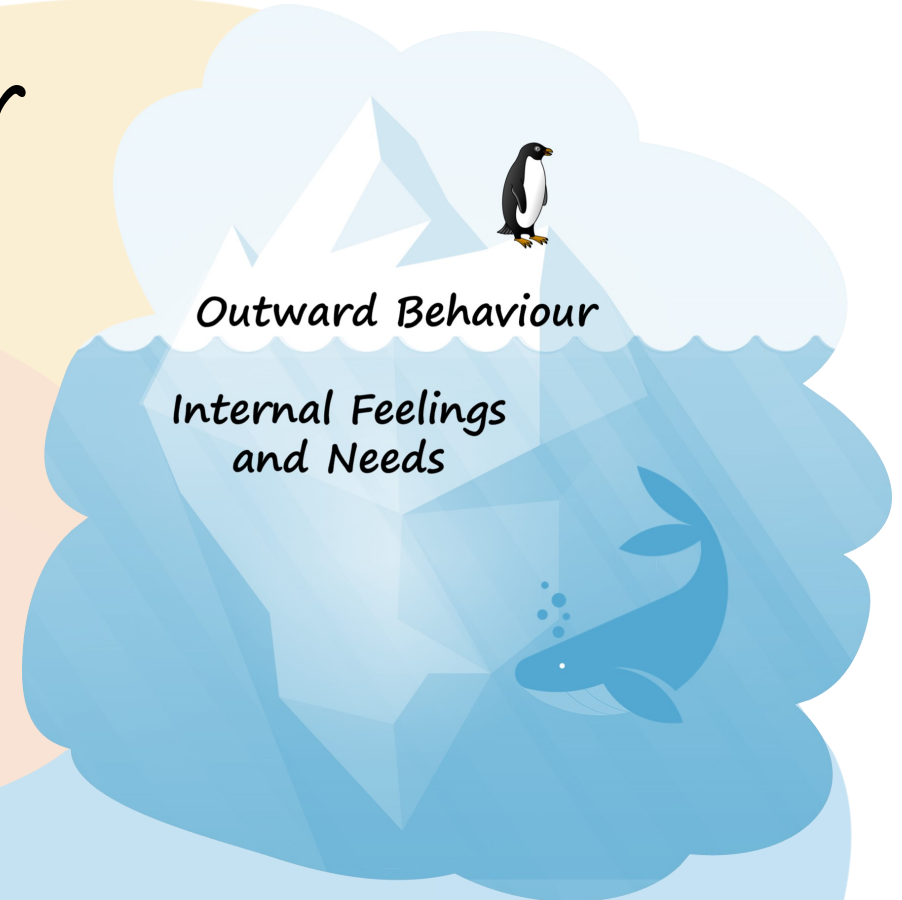
- It is safe to communicate my needs to others*
- It is safe to feel my feelings*
- I can show my needs clearly enough of the time*



*All behaviour
has meaning, & all behaviour
is a way of communicating*

Children's behaviour can be like an iceberg:

- *Above the surface we see their behaviour*
- *Below the surface are their feelings,
and needs*




*What's underwater can't be seen,
but parents know that important
feelings are always there*

The importance of the early years

In the early years, children learn how manage their emotions, trust others, and build a solid sense of who they are.

Foundations of future development: Early caregiving

Young children learn about life by watching us and being with us. By responding (or not) in a timely and sensitive way, you're teaching your child how relationships work.

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- Responding sensitively to emotions shows children that feeling are manageable
 - If we can show that we're not overwhelmed by their feelings, they can – over time – see their feelings as tolerable and begin to manage them with greater ease.
 - If we see children's feelings as worthy of interest and care, they will learn to meet their own feelings with a similar openness.

From these early caregiving interactions, children will learn answers to many questions, like:

- *Am I worthy of attention?*
- *Can I rely on those around me to help?*
- *Should my emotions be avoided and ignored?*
- *Can I safely share my big feelings with others? Will they understand?*

Babies who consistently have their emotional and social needs recognised and responded to, are better able to handle stress and challenges.

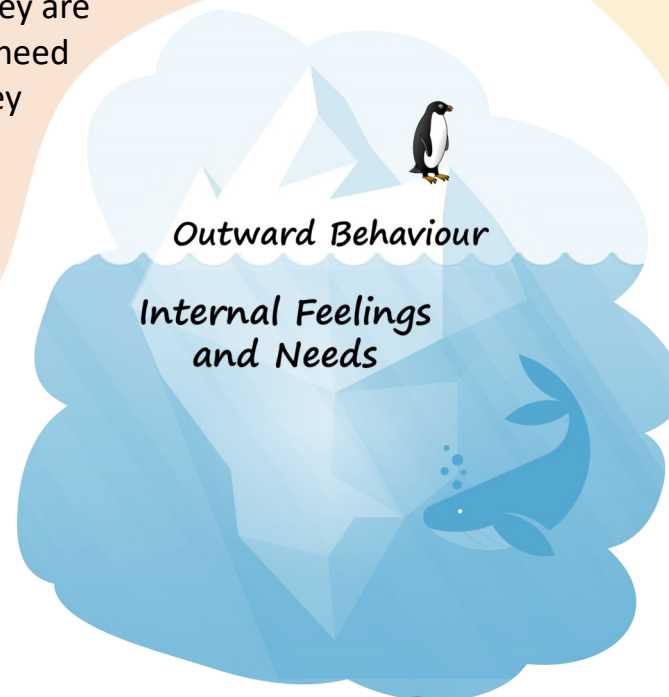
All behaviour is communication from your child

When a baby cries it could be because they are tired, hungry, unwell, worried... or many other reasons. Whether we are aware of it or not, we all express our internal feelings and needs through our outward behaviours.

If we approach these moments with curiosity and compassion, their behaviours may start to make more sense. Then the feelings underneath the behavior can be seen, understood and supported. Each time this happens well, children learn that difficult feelings can be soothed, and they don't have to feel big feelings alone.

No matter how challenging the behaviour feels, there is always a reason for it. Usually, they are sending us a loud message that something is not right, that a need is unmet, or they are not managing their feelings and need your help to do that. Perhaps they feel frustrated, sad, or angry.

We can think of children's behaviour as an iceberg, where the behaviour is what's outside, and their feelings, needs, and emotions are underwater and can't be seen.



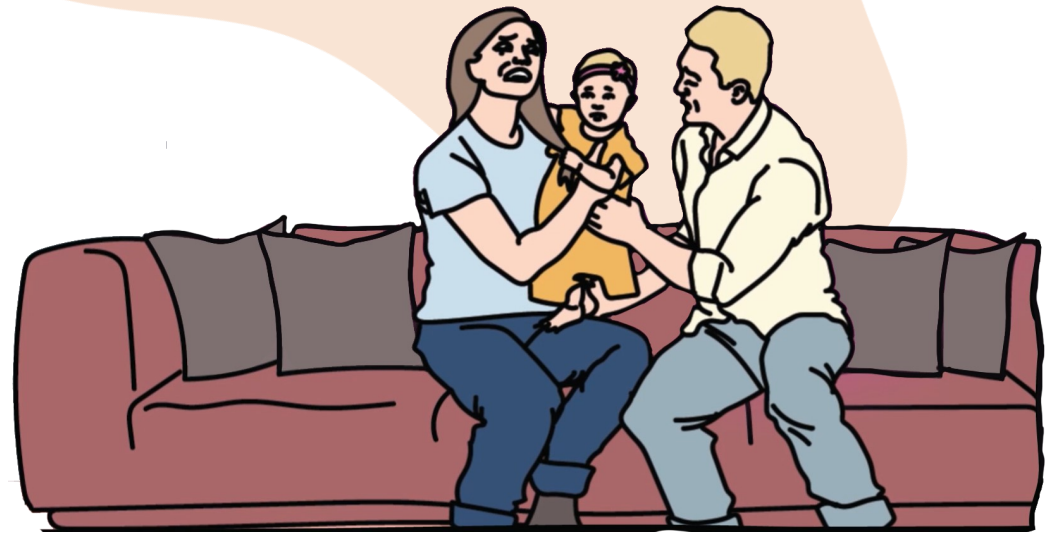
Knowing they have your support and understanding, children feel accepted, heard, and respected. They start to feel more confident, and able to cope with their big feelings.

The “good enough” parent

To build trust
with our baby,
we need to keep
them safe, always.

... but we don't need to
get everything else right
every time.

Good enough is
good enough



Getting curious

- Pause to think about how your child feels
- Try to be curious:
 - *What does my child's behaviour tell me?*
 - *What does it tell me about how they are feeling?*
- Every behaviour & action in our child tells us something about them & what they need

This can be helped by:

- Noting when your child seems overwhelmed and not able to manage their feelings
- Asking yourself:
 - *What feelings is my child expressing through their behaviour?*
 - *What happened before this emotional response from my child*
- Reminding yourself that our children are learning how to safely have and manage all of their feelings “the good, bad and ugly. And we are their teachers.



The good enough parent

Young children need a caregiver who is **sensitive and responsive**, but that's not possible 100% of the time. Parents are imperfect, we are busy people, and juggling lots of demands. This is normal! Plus, babies actually don't thrive on perfection. They need a little bit of challenge - including safe ruptures and repairs- to grow and develop well emotionally.

The 'good enough' parent is not perfect. They simply respond to their child's needs in a **sensitive** way, **consistently** and **predictably** enough to support healthy emotional development.



Consistent and predictable care allows children to develop trust in you.... And trust in themselves to confidently explore their world. Then, over time, they will learn to manage their own feelings and emotions.

Repair

What does repair feel like?

- Calm
- Warm
- Loving
- Supportive
- Empathic
- Accepting
- Curious
- Restorative
- Playful
- Child-led
- Unpressured
- Safe
- Connected

Here are some ways to repair:

1. **Do it now...** Respond as quickly as you can to your child's cue
2. **With warmth....** Respond in a warm and understanding way
3. **Softly....** Use a soft, gentle voice
4. **Wondering...** Wonder what your child might be trying to tell you about how they are feeling
5. **Following:** Follow their lead. What do they want you to do next with them?
6. **Connecting...** With your eyes, let your child know you are noticing and watching out for them
7. **Soothing:** Hug, cuddle and touch with caring contact
8. **Just being there:** Make time to simply be with your child without anything else to do.
9. **Smiling:** share your child's delight in small things, and show that they bring you joy too



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Rupture and repair

Parenting is tough, and we all get things wrong from time to time. This is normal!

Repairing these ruptures in your relationship shows your child that you can get through challenges together.

This teaches your child that even when the relationship gets wobbly, no problem is too big to break your connection.



Being present in the moment, with your child

Being in the here and now with your child allows you to be available to them. This will let you to simply be with your child, with a quiet mind

Here are a few exercises to try:

1. Enjoy the sound of their laughter, the smell of their hair or milky breath.
2. Laugh at the chaos of toys all over the floor....It's a beautiful sort of mess, and soon enough those toys will be gone!
3. Blow bubbles with your baby.... Chase falling leaves in the park...sing... read a book together.
4. Mindful breathing: focus on breathing in the positive and breathing out the negative. Some people view their positive "in" breathes as a green light and their negative out breaths as a red light.
5. If you hit a tough memory from your own childhood, focus on the parent you want to be now. See how your baby is inviting you to become that parent.
6. In your mind, wrap their challenging behaviour up in a bow and see it as an invitation from them to you, to grow.
7. Have mini-rests when you need to.... close your eyes, and just exhale deeply...
8. Delight in their little achievements – holding a spoon, or drinking from a cup
9. Know that you are the most important person in your child's life... and enjoy that amazing privilege.



Putting your child's experience into words

Young children don't have the words to say what is going on inside. Talking through your child's experiences helps them understand their experience. It shows them that big emotions are manageable and do not have to be experienced alone.

Example

Perhaps in response to a 2-yr-old screaming when they are lifted off the swings to go home, you might say something like:

"Oh it's hard to leave the park when you're having so much fun. No wonder you're so upset. We need to get home for lunch, but I get that you don't want to leave. Those are tough feelings, but we will be ok. And we will come back another day"

- This puts words to their experience and accepts their emotions.
- No matter our age, when someone listens and reflects back a good understanding of our feelings, it makes them easier to manage
- Often, children's behaviours will naturally settle when their underlying needs are seen and accepted by those they most rely on.



Challenging behaviour

Children's tough behaviour can leave us and them feeling exhausted, overwhelmed, and out of control.

Here are a couple of things you can do in the heat of the moment when things feel like they're just too much:

1

Stop, observe, and accept your own response to their behaviour. This presses the PAUSE button, giving you time to respond rather than react. Ask yourself:

- Is this behaviour pushing my buttons? If so, what's going on for me?
 - Is my heart beating faster? Are my muscles getting tense?
- Do I want to react in an unhelpful way?
 - If so, are my expectations of my child realistic?
- What could I do to slow myself down? Remind myself:
 - "My child is learning how to have big feelings, and I am their teacher".
 - "I need to be the bigger, stronger and wiser person right now"

This can help to ease the situation & allow you to respond in a calmer way.

2

Talk to and comfort your child:

- Acknowledge just how tough the situation is
- Let them know their feelings are big and hard to manage, but that they are ok and you will help
- Respectfully listen to and name the feelings they are trying to show you through their behaviour.

This will build trust within your relationship

3

Talk out loud to your young child about what you will do to help make things better.

4

After things have cooled down, it can be helpful to reflect on the situation by noticing how your baby responded to your efforts to help and sooth: what worked well?



The trust dance

Your child's part in the trust dance is to:

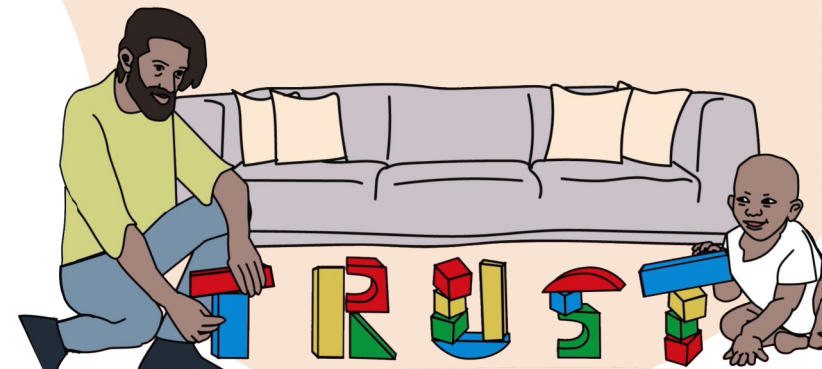
Observe you closely: watch your face and body, noticing your expressions and movements.
They'll listen to your voice and feel your touch.
They'll notice your timing in all of this.

Your baby will give you cues how to respond to them and how to pace that response well.

What they need will be hidden in plain sight: they will show you through their emotions, facial expressions, movements, and behaviours.

As a parent, your part in the trust dance is to

Look: Watch, Notice & Monitor what you baby is doing.
Get curious: How might my baby be feeling?
Reflect: Why might my baby be behaving or feeling this way? How might that feel for them?
Follow their lead: What did my baby just do, and how would they like me to add to that?
Reassure: Accept and support them when they're having a hard time
Keep trying: If you don't get the steps of the trust dance right, keep trying. When we are learning to dance its normal to step on each other's toes; it takes practice.



*I wonder, does my
baby need help to
manage what they
are feeling right
now?*

