



FOR PARENTS

First 1000 Days

Why are the first 1000 days important to my baby's wellbeing?

As a parent (or primary caregiver), you are like a gardener. Just as plants need soil to grow, your baby needs emotional nourishment from you for their emotional and social development and long-term wellbeing.

The first 1000 days of life - between pregnancy and your child's 2nd birthday - is a time where the relationships you create with and around your baby becomes the soil your child grows in, nourishing their wellbeing.

What can I do to support my baby's wellbeing?

Just as a plant needs energy from the sun to grow, the climate that you provide around your baby lays the foundations for growth in your baby's higher brain, supporting their ability to stay calm, manage what they feel, and ultimately cope with stress and thrive as they grow. You can do this through simple actions such as responding affectionately to your baby, holding them and reassuring them when they cry.

Conflict, and why we know it's a problem for your baby's wellbeing

Babies are sensitive to the emotional climate of the house and pick up on dark clouds and tensions easily. Your baby does not have to hear or see conflict to be affected by it.

Being around conflict between parents (or primary caregivers) where there may be anger, distrust, threats, shouting, or the 'silent treatment' is like a toxin, or bad soil. You might not see the damage at first, but emotional toxins can have a negative impact on your baby's long-term wellbeing.

A plant can sense and cope with harsh conditions such as drought by slowing or stopping growth, redirecting energy resources to protect itself from stress-related damage. Similarly, your child may try to control their experience of parental or family conflict in various ways to regain a sense of emotional security, which can be a drain on their developmental energy to grow.

How can I help repair any harm to my baby's wellbeing from conflict?

As a parent (or primary caregiver), you are the best healer. It is never too late to learn how to do it differently - with the right support.

Relationships Australia South Australia provides a number of programs and services to help parents, primary caregivers, and other important people in a baby's life to work through difficult issues of conflict and become better gardeners of their baby's social and emotional growth.

You can find resources and information on our website: www.rasa.org.au. Call to talk to one of our Family Advisors: 1300 364 277 (cost of a local call) or 1800 182 325 (country callers). You can also email us: adelaideFRC@rasa.org.au to find out how best we can support you and your infant through our various programs.

- Children and Parenting Service
- Together4Kids
- Family Mental Health Support Service
- Family Dispute Resolution
- Family and Relationship Services

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