

Emotionally invested parents give children a leg up in life

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Credit: Frontiers

Children with emotionally invested parents are more likely to be successful, a study published in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* shows.

Looking at 27 [children](#) aged between four and six, the study examined the [quality](#) of the [emotional](#) bond to their parents, and their cognitive control including: resisting temptation, their ability to remember things, and whether they are shy or withdrawn.

Maximizing children's chances of success can seem daunting and an impossibly tall order. Future indicators of success seem driven, to a large extent, by factors beyond our immediate control: genes and the environment. This research, however, found a caring and emotionally attentive environment is liable to be a long-term game-changer.

The study involved a combination of questionnaires, behavioral tasks and electrophysiological measurements. The findings, according to Dr Schneider-Hassloff: "support developmental theories which propose that a high emotional quality in the mother-child interaction (attachment security) fosters the cognitive development of the child."

The researchers looked at the quality of the emotional bond - referred to as emotional availability (EA) - between mothers and children. Second, the children's executive functions were measured through a number of exercises.

Finally, the study measured the neural responses of children who were tasked to inhibit certain aspects of their behavior. This was achieved through EEG (Electroencephalography) by measuring small variations in voltage in certain key parts of the brain.

Dr Schneider-Hassloff noted: "this study investigated the association between emotional interaction quality and the electrophysiological correlates of executive functions in preschool children for the first time," thereby shedding new light on the long-term importance of emotional nurturing.

Parents who understand this, by encouraging independence in their kids while remaining emotionally available, give their young ones a better chance at future success. Even in hardship they can create an emotional space that will have long-lasting and powerful consequences for the child's future life-skills, the study asserts.

The researchers encourage further work into emotion-driven caretaker-child interactions, particularly for children at risk.

More information: Henriette Schneider-Hassloff et al, Emotional Availability Modulates Electrophysiological Correlates of Executive Functions in Preschool Children, *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* (2016). [DOI: 10.3389/fnhum.2016.00299](https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2016.00299)

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