

Babies & Infants are precious.

Everything babies and toddlers experience affects their brains forever.



The way we treat our children counts – and it counts long term.

Children are not 'tough'. They are not 'too young to notice'. They do not just 'get over it'.

Love, care and attention will help children to become happy and stable adults.

Shouting, hitting, violence, abuse and ignoring your child have a very bad effect on your baby's and young child's brain development. This can cause problems later - at school; as teenagers; as adults.

The first three years last forever.



1 Your unborn baby's brain can be affected by trauma

Your unborn baby's brain can be affected by your experiences. If you are the victim of violence or abuse during pregnancy stress hormones will affect the baby's developing brain. It is even more damaging if these stress hormones combine with alcohol or drugs.

2 Negative experiences include violence, trauma and neglect.

If a child is repeatedly hit, abused, put down, not encouraged or is exposed to family violence, their brain will be hardwired for these emotions and bad feelings. By the age of three the damage may be difficult to change. Children exposed to violence, family chaos and abuse form unhealthy pathways in their brain that become the foundation of their brain structure for life.

It doesn't have to be severe physical abuse to have a negative impact. In fact a child can be affected by seeing abuse of his/her mother or other family member being hit or yelled at.

3 While pregnant you need to completely avoid alcohol, drugs and smoking. They can harm your baby's brain.

There is strong evidence that shows that a violent and stressful home environment in these early years of a child's life can have a significant impact on brain development.

Neurons, or brain cells, 'talk' to each other via connections like a telephone line and our brain becomes 'wired'. Babies and infants who experience violence or trauma will not have the opportunity to develop healthy brains and may miss the potential to be healthy well adjusted adults.

Small amounts of alcohol, drugs and smoking can affect your baby's brain.

4 Parenting can be tough but one of the most important things you can do is provide a safe home, calm and free from violence for your children.



Your children have the right to live free of violence. Experiencing violence can affect them for the rest of their lives.

It is important to get help straight away.

If you get early help the risk of the children suffering long term effects will be less.

To get help talk to someone you trust:

- A support agency that helps families.

- **Family Violence Information Line**
0800 456 450

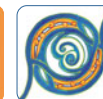
- **Child, Youth and Family**
0508 326 459

- Plunket. Your doctor or health worker

- Women's refuge. Citizens advice bureau. Police family violence officer

- A good friend

- A helpful family member.



Family Violence Can Harm Your Child For Life.

Most of your baby's brain develops in the first three years.

Children need lots of love from good non-violent people to grow into healthy, happy adults. If they see hitting, yelling and abuse in the first few years, it can have a severe impact on their brain development.

What environment do you want for your child?

Seeing love and a happy home will help the way your child's brain grows



What helps a baby's brain to grow?

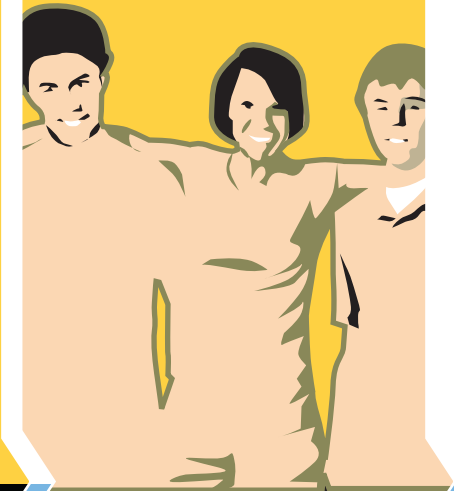
- having someone to trust
- safety and security
- comfort when hurt, sad or scared
- talking, reading and singing
- interesting things to do
- fun and play
- lots of eye contact and smiles

What kind of person do you want your baby to become?

When children grow up with love and understanding they will do well:

- at school
- in their relationships with others
- in making the right choices
- in their efforts to lead a happy, satisfying life
- confident and wise

What future do you want for your children and family?



My brain is still growing. Please hug me, protect me, praise me, read to me, sing to me, make me safe, love me and I'll grow up to be a happy person.



Seeing violence will change the way your baby's brain grows



Things that can harm your baby's brain in the first 3 years

If a child is repeatedly smacked, abused, exposed to family violence, that child's brain will be hardwired for bad feelings. Experiencing violence makes a child feel:

- scared
- anxious
- worried
- confused
- angry
- insecure

When children grow up with violence they can have...

- learning difficulties
- problems with controlling anger and emotions
- a tendency towards criminal activities
- mental health issues
- abusive relationships
- addiction to drugs and alcohol
- suicidal thoughts



It's never too late to change the life of a child.

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brainwave

Build a lifetime in the first three years.



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To get help talk to someone you trust:

- **Family Violence Information Line**
0800 456 450
- **Child, Youth and Family**
0508 326 459
- **Preventing Violence in the Home Helpline**
0508 384 357