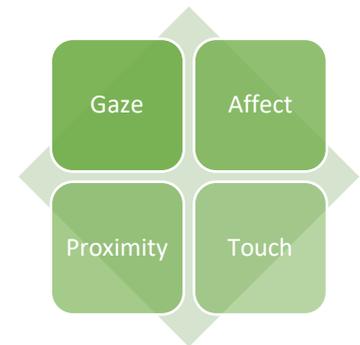


## Activities to Promote Gaze, Affect, Proximity, Touch

As family support professionals, regardless of home visiting model, a main goal of working with a family is to support the connection and bond between a caregiver and their child. By increasing moments of mutual delight, you support their healthy and secure attachment, which further promotes healthy child development.

Below are activities you can encourage caregivers to do with their child. Keep in mind how you can talk with the caregiver about the importance of gaze, affect, proximity and touch in their interactions.



**Patty-Cake:** Have the caregiver hold child's hands and lead her through the activity. "Patty-cake, patty-cake, Baker's man/Bake me a cake as fast as you can/ Roll it and pat it and mark it with a [child's initial]/ And toss it in the oven for [child's name] and me!" You can use feet also.

**Jump into My Arms:** Have child stand on pillows or sofa. The caregiver gives a signal for the child to jump into their arms.

**Mirroring:** Have the caregiver face the child, moving their arms, face, or other body parts and ask the child to move in the same way. For a very active child the caregiver can use slow motion or vary the tempo. They can take turns being the leader.

**Stack of Hands:** Have the caregiver put their hand palm down in front of child, have the child put their hand on top; alternate hands to make a stack. Take turns moving the hand on the bottom to the top. You can also move from top to bottom. This can be made more complicated by going fast or in slow motion. Putting lotion on hands first makes for a slippery stack and adds an element of nurture.

**Peek-a-Boo:** Have the caregiver hold child's hands (or feet) together in front of their face. Peek around or separate the hands (or feet) to "find" the child. A lovely variation is to use a sheer scarf to hide your face or the child's, then pull it off to discover each other.

**Pop Cheeks:** Have the caregiver inflate their cheeks with air and help child to pop them with his hands or feet. Child inflates cheeks and caregiver pop them in turn.

**Hand Clapping Games:** Children of all ages enjoy these games, and many have a good repertoire of rhymes and rhythms. Caregivers can have a few chants they and the child know well, such as, "Miss Mary Mack" or "A Sailor Went to Sea." They can vary the complexity of the rhythmic pattern and the chant depending on the skill of the child. Make sure caregivers first rehearse the clapping pattern slowly so they can easily get into a satisfying pattern once the rhyme is added.

**Face Painting:** Have the caregiver paint flowers and hearts or other shapes on child's cheeks. A variation is to use a soft dry brush and pretend to paint the child's face, describing their wonderful cheeks, lovely eyebrows, and so forth as caregivers gently brush each part. Have the child do this to the caregiver.

For more activities see [Theraplay Activities by Dimension](#)