

The attention that babies receive impacts on their brain structures. If they are cared for by people who love them, and who are highly sensitive to their unique personalities, the pleasure of those relationships will help to trigger the development of the "social brain". the prefrontal cortex, in particular its orbitofrontal area, plays a major role in managing our emotional lives: it picks up on social cues, the non-verbal messages that other people transmit, it enables us to empathize, as well as playing an important part in restraining our primitive emotional impulses. Early care also establishes the way people deal with stress.

Babies rely on their carers to soothe distress and restore equilibrium. With responsive parents, the stress response, a complex chain of 15 biochemical reactions, remains an emergency response. It also makes sense in evolutionary terms to have newborn brains which are unfinished, because they can be adapted to fit the needs of the social group. Researchers have found clear links between harsh treatment in the first two years and later antisocial behavior. The research demonstrates the effects of such nurseries on babies. Babies can only cope with about 10 hours a week of daycare, before it may start to affect their emotional development, particularly if the care is of low quality. The strongest research findings are that full-time care during the first and second years is strongly linked to later behavior problems. These findings are not what working parents want to hear, nor what a government dedicated to getting single parents back to work wants to hear. Unfortunately, the most likely scenario for such single parents is the worst-case one: having to put their babies into poor quality, full-time nursery care before the age of six months. It is their children whose emotional and social development could be compromised – not those of better-off parents who can afford to work part-time or buy in the highest .quality care. This is not a solution that benefits society in the long-term