



ALLIANCE FOR TRANSFORMING THE LIVES OF CHILDREN

Essential Truths

- 1 A baby, nurtured in the womb of a healthy, happy, and peaceful mother, receives the best possible start in life.
- 2 The more aware caregivers are of their own birth-related trauma and unmet childhood needs, the better they are able to respond to the needs of children in their care.
- 3 What happens in the earliest stages of life—at conception, in the womb, at birth, and in the first days and months—establishes the foundation for life. A happy, low-stress pregnancy, natural birth, and an uninterrupted period of bonding through the early months greatly benefit *both* baby and parents.
 - 4 Breastfeeding, skin-to-skin contact, and being carried on the body—in-arms, slings, etc.—are critical for brain, nervous system, and immune system development and promote long-term health benefits for *both* baby and mother.
- 5 All babies are dependent on others to meet their physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs. When their needs are met with loving and consistent care, children are happier, healthier, and more cooperative.
 - 6 Every baby is born with the desire to communicate, to cooperate, and to explore the world. Children learn primarily by unstructured play and by imitating those around them.
- 7 Every child needs to be securely bonded with at least one human being who is a loving and consistent presence in the child's life.
 - 8 Every child develops at a unique rhythm and pace. A child's developmental processes are best supported when neither hurried nor forced.
 - 9 Children are dependent upon their parents and caregivers to protect them from emotional and physical neglect, violence, abuse, and other toxic experiences, including hazards in their food, air, water, toys, and environment.
- 10 Children express their needs through behaviors that are shaped by their individual temperament, life experiences, *and* by how others behave and treat them.
 - 11 The consistent, loving presence of a father or father-figure in a child's life adds immensely to a child's optimal development and wellbeing.
- 12 Children who have lost one or both of their biological parents, whether at birth or years later, naturally have feelings of abandonment and, therefore, have special needs. Foster, adoptive, and single parents face special challenges and benefit from extra support of family, friends, and community.
 - 13 Children learn to respect, empathize with, and respond to the needs of others when they feel seen, heard, *and* their opinions are valued.
 - 14 Effective parenting is an art that can be learned.
- 15 Families benefit from a supportive, nurturing community that values the art and science of parenting.

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For supportive research, see the **aTLC Blueprint for Transforming the Lives of Children**.

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