

WHAT CAN ANIMAL RESEARCH TEACH US ABOUT FAMILY BONDS?

- Family structures have evolved significantly over the past few decades. Approximately 50% of children are raised by both biological parents and 27% grow up in single-parent homes. More than 2 million children are raised with two same-sex parents.
- Family experiences have important lifelong impacts. They can influence a person's level of success and their overall health.
- Animal studies demonstrate the impacts of childhood experiences on both mental and physical development.



THE IMPACTS OF HORMONES IN MAINTAINING FAMILY BONDS

Titi monkeys are socially monogamous. They are known to form strong family bonds. They also take lifelong mates.

The hormone oxytocin has been shown to play a critical role maintaining strong bonds between animals and their offspring.

Research is currently underway to determine how oxytocin regulates social interactions. It is hoped these studies will assist in the development of new therapies for disorders that cause impaired social interaction skills, such as autism.



FATHERS PLAY A CRITICAL ROLE IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Mouse studies have demonstrated how paternal separation impacts brain development and behavior in offspring.



Photo Credit: Erica Glasper, Ph.D.

Mice that have experienced paternal separation exhibit unique stress coping behaviors. Stress hormone levels also vary in these animals.

Research is currently taking place to reveal additional information about the role of paternal care in the healthy development of animals.

BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH IS HIGHLY REGULATED

- ✓ All research involving animals must first be approved by an ethics committee called an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.
- ✓ Animals involved in research are cared for by veterinarians and other well-trained specialists.
- ✓ Laws, regulations and institutional policies are in place to safeguard the welfare of research animals.



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