

WEST VIRGINIA
EARLY CHILDHOOD
PROVIDER
QUARTERLY



**Nurturing children,
Nurturing ourselves**

Self-care for the body and mind

Being present and mindful

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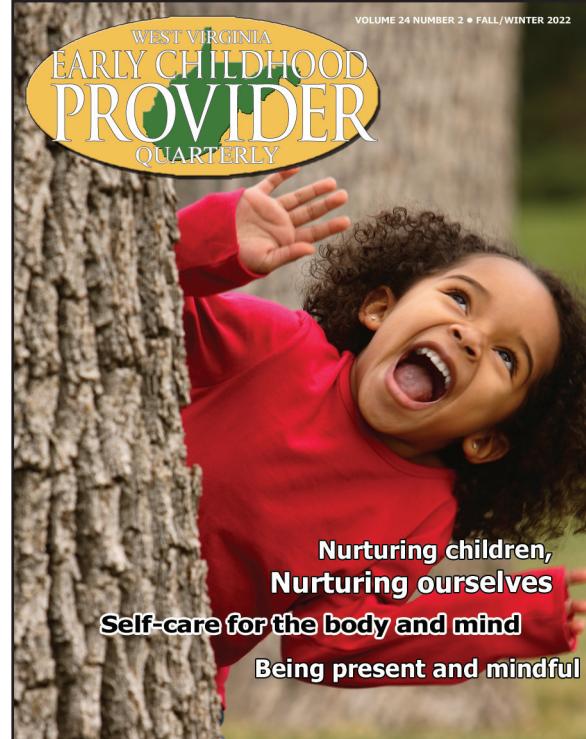
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The purpose of the ASQ:SE-2 and its role in IFSP development

Submitted by Kimberly Martin MA, Developmental Specialist, Hearing Specialist, ASQ:SE-2 Screening Specialist

Social/emotional skills are very important in the overall development of children. It is crucial that emotional well-being is monitored and developed in infants and toddlers. Emotional well-being is very important in social relationships. Children who are emotionally healthy build more positive relationships with others as they grow and develop. Social/emotional development is also important to a child's well-being and their relationships with others as infants and toddlers, and into adulthood. How they develop socially will give them a better understanding of the world around them.

There are four key social/emotional skills that are vital for a child's development:

- Turn taking and sharing
- Empathy
- Self-regulation
- Positive relationships with others

Infants and toddlers need to develop early relationships. These relationships are nurtured by loving and responsive adults and caregivers. They learn how to get their needs and wants met and how to regulate emotions. Behaviors crucial for social/emotional development are the



child's ability to navigate the world. This is crucial in developing positive interactions with the world around them. Infants and toddlers need to create an ability to build strong relationships with others and develop a strong sense of being.

Social/emotional milestones will focus on the child's ability to regulate their emotions, behavior, and their attention to others. These milestones help develop positive relationships, which are very important in all areas of development. Infants and toddlers need to create a strong

sense of well-being, as well as building relationships with those around them.

There are certain stages that infants and toddlers develop in their social/emotional skills. Caregivers need to be supportive and nurturing when helping children with their social/emotional development. With nurturing and trusting relationships, children begin to understand their world around them. The brain matures through daily interactions and how they will recognize, regulate, and experience their relationships.

Within the family dynamic, a child must secure relationships, explore, learn, experience, and regulate emotions.

The ASQ:SE-2 (Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social/Emotional 2) addresses an infant or toddler's emotional health. Early identification of social/emotional challenges can make a difference in the child's overall development. The purpose of the social/emotional screening tool is to address behavioral concerns early in the child's development. The earlier a behavioral issue is identified, the greater ability the child can meet their full potential in life.

The ASQ:SE-2 is a parent-completed, highly reliable system focused solely on social/emotional development in young children. The results can provide for possible further assessment, specialized intervention, or possible monitoring of the child.

Social/emotional skills can be overlooked in a child's development. Children have various emotional issues or concerns that can be missed. In today's society, children are exposed to risk factors such as poverty, toxic stress, depression and anxiety. This is where anti-social behaviors can develop. There is a great opportunity during the early years to identify and address possible social/emotional concerns. The ASQ:SE-2 is modeled to identify and screen so-

cial/emotional behaviors in a child. The screen is an easy-to-use tool to help identify possible behaviors in the early years. It is cost effective, parent-completed, able to be photocopied, and culturally sensitive. With the questionnaire, the results can be reviewed by the professional who can recognize any potential at risk behaviors.

The ASQ:SE-2 is a screening tool that identifies infants and young children whose social/emotional development requires further evaluation. This will determine if referral for intervention services is necessary. Eight questionnaires are available for different age groups: 6 months, 12 months, 18 months, 24 months, 30 months, 36 months, 40 months, and 60 months of age. Each screen for self-regulation, compliance, communication, adaptive behaviors, autonomy, affect, and interactions with people. The target population is children between ages 3 - 60 months. It takes approximately 10-15 minutes to complete and is completed by the parents or caregivers. It can be completed on paper or on line. The scoring information will help determine if further evaluation will be needed. It is important to explain to the parents the purpose of the screen and the importance of identifying at risk behaviors or concerns with the child's social/emotional development. It is crucial to make a good first impression, so

the parents feel at ease and fully understand the purpose of the screen. Parents also need to be calmed of any fears of the purpose of the tool. The evaluator needs to prepare parents to get started and explain response options.

The results of the ASQ:SE-2 are used in developing an IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan). During the IFSP, the results will be explained to the multidisciplinary team and each member will understand the results and how it will affect the child's overall development. The results will determine if further evaluation will be needed. If determined by the team, strategies and interventions or monitoring can be provided. The scoring will determine what will be completed at the IFSP meeting. The screen is primarily used for those children who exhibit or are at risk for issues with their social/emotional development.

It is very important that each child that may be at risk be evaluated. Children face many challenges in today's world and their ability to process and comprehend these issues may become difficult at times. If a child can be evaluated early, then they have the ability to develop healthy social/emotional skills that may have otherwise been overlooked. A child's social/emotional skills prepare them for a healthy and happy life.

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Being present and mindful

Submitted by Harmony R. Vance, West Virginia Child Care Health Educator, WVECTCR

It comes as no surprise that life moves pretty fast. Just about anywhere you go at least one person is recounting how “time flies.” This fast pace can seem overwhelming, and it can threaten your mental health by causing an increase in anxiety, stress, and depression as your focus is often dwelling on things out of your control like past or future events, instead of focusing on living life. This in turn can impact your physical health as prolonged bouts of these can cause heart, digestion, and hormone issues just to name a few. It can also impact others as you become overwhelmed and are unable to care for others or nourish healthy relationships.

One way to decrease the negative impact on your mental health and slow the race of life is to be more present and mindful. Being present is one’s ability to remain focused and mindful in that moment in time. This is a skill that requires practice. The good news is that it can be practiced anywhere. For instance, waiting at the stop light, in line at the grocery store, in the shower, or at mealtimes. You can use these moments to learn to focus and enjoy the piece of time you are currently living. Try using your senses to notice the sounds around you, or the colors, or the feeling of what you are touching. Focus on enjoying and living for that piece of time before the hustle and bustle of life takes over. Decrease your focus on things in the future or past events and instead focus on the moment you are currently residing. This is not an overnight fix as it requires practice, but soon you will be able to be present even in the busy moments and you might just find that it fills your life with more joy and decreases your stress.

The Impact WV Online Learning Portal recommends two apps that can be used by children and adults to practice mindfulness:

- CALM can be used as a rest and relaxation tool that guides you through meditation and mindfulness.
- SMILING MIND has daily practices for mindfulness.

The Impact WV website also has several other mental health resources for providers and families on their website. <https://wvimpact.org/>

Nurturing children, nurturing ourselves

Submitted by Dr. Ruthann Arneson, Associate Professor & Program Director, College of Education and Professional Development, Early Childhood Development, Marshall University

The last several years have been exhausting for teachers in the field of early childhood. They are seeing more and more children with behavioral issues and who are substance exposed, and dealing with the lasting impact of COVID. No wonder they are tired. In talking with teachers, I hear about the lack of independence and social skills young children have as they begin their school experience in pre-k classrooms. A recent study conducted by Teaching Strategies found almost half of the 2,300 early childhood teachers surveyed experienced high levels of stress and burnout, with 40 percent stating that mental health was a primary concern (Russell, 2022). What can be done to support teachers? They are a critical element in the education of young children. They have the responsibility of building relationships and educating our youngest students. The very nature of caring for young children can be stressful.

Building positive relationships with young children is the cornerstone of early childhood education. The quality of student-teacher relationships has a major impact on children's learning and development. It has a lasting impact as they enter into kindergarten and into the elementary school years (Hamre and Pianta, 2001). When young children have an increase of problem behaviors and conflict with their teachers, there is the potential for school failure in children that are at risk (Hamre and Pianta, 2001). A positive classroom climate can have a positive effect on child-teacher relationships. This includes the interactions between students and teachers, as well as the methods of organization and instruction that teachers use (Pianta, laParo, & Hamre, 2008). A study by O'Conner and McCartney (2007) found

that children who had high quality relationships with their teachers were more engaged, and more open to explore their environment. An emotionally supportive classroom atmosphere is illustrated by close relationships with little classroom conflict. The classroom is a space where children participate in positive and respectful relationships with teachers and peers, as well as having their needs and interests met (Pianta et al, 2008).

Knowing the importance of teachers building positive relationships with young children, what can be done to help teachers who feel stressed by meeting the needs of their students as well as themselves? First and foremost, encourage teachers to care for themselves. Be mindful of one's physical needs. Eating healthy, getting enough sleep, and being physically active is important to keep one physically fit. Caring for young children is a physical job. Engaging in mindfulness can reduce stress and improve mental health. Examples of mindfulness can include meditation, yoga, breathing exercises, and tai chi. Try to concentrate on the here and now (Davidson, 2021). Other problem-solving techniques can be effective in relieving the emotions of stressful situations. Take a break and practice positive self-talk. This can also help when the pressure starts to mount.

Establishing collaborative relationships with other teachers can help manage stress and build support systems (Beltman et al, 2020). Finding time to reflect and share ideas with other members of the early care team leads to a more positive outlook in the workplace. Engaging in reflective practice can influence our interactions with children and can be checks and balance on our own behavior. What went right in that situation? What could I have done differently? Check in with co-workers and see how they are doing. Find time to laugh and enjoy each other's company. Positive interactions and communication with parents can also build supportive relationships. Other sources of support can be family, friends, and community interac-

tions. Find time to connect and build a sense of community and support.

Another indicator of well-being for early childhood teachers is having opportunities for professional development (Russell, 2022). The survey conducted by Teaching Strategies showed a strong link to professional development opportunities. Of the teachers polled, 70 percent indicated that access to high-quality professional development made a difference in job satisfaction and retention. Early childhood professionals who have the opportunity to improve their skills find themselves in a place to improve their interactions and can better serve children and their families. The survey also found that the majority preferred on line learning. The flexibility of this method met the needs of professionals who are already leading busy lives.

Caring for young children is an important job. Nurturing and guiding behaviors takes understanding, patience, and time. Teachers of young children wear many hats. They provide love and comfort, and care for children when they are ill or sad. Forming relationships with children, families and colleagues is an on-going task. Being an early childhood professional is a rewarding job, but the pressures of ensuring they are meeting the needs of the whole child can lead to fatigue and burnout. If the needs of teachers are not met, then meeting the needs of children will be diminished. As a former teacher of young children and now the educator of future teachers, I recognize the importance of not only caring for our children, but caring for our teachers. Providing environments that give teachers the time to reflect, plan, and improve their professional practice will lead to better outcomes for children and their families. Reminding teachers to care for themselves will only enhance the care of young children. It is essential that the mental health of the adults that care for young children be a priority of staff, administrators, the community, and policy makers.

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Self-care for the body and mind

Submitted by Sarah Feick, MA, West Virginia Birth to Three, Skill Builders



Another season has passed. The weather is changing, leaves are turning colors, and there is crisp feeling in the air. As we enter the holiday season, it is natural to feel the desire to reflect, give thanks, and start to anticipate the upcoming year.

When reflecting on the past year, one can be thankful for life's journeys. I am very thankful for all the opportunities that I

have experienced in my life, both personally and professionally. On the other hand, I would be lying if I did not say that there are days that it is harder to be grateful. Life is tough. Life is challenging. Life brings struggles, disappointments, and exhaustion. We need to remember that life is a gift. This gift is one that we should cherish daily by having gratitude for even the smallest things in our lives.

November and December are two of the most celebrated months of being thankful and giving thanks. Gratitude is strongly and consistently associated with greater happiness. Gratitude brings a smile to our face and a feeling of love to our heart. Gratitude is contagious! Gratitude gives us an inward and outward joy that others can see and feel. Our hearts become full, and in turn we allow others to experience our

gratitude in our lives and workplace. As a child, I grew up hearing a song with a verse that says “I have joy, joy, joy down in my heart. Down in my heart to stay.” That joy is the gratitude that we give ourselves and others daily.

Gratitude is self-care, and our mind, body, and soul need self-care and appreciation. We feel better when we are thankful and know that life has a purpose. Self-care is something we must be consciously aware of in order to achieve. Self-care doesn’t happen like flipping the lights on at your house. We must find time for self-care. Our physical body needs self-care where we have time to recover and recharge. We need time to stop what we are doing, get up from our desk, out of the office, and take the time to breathe. We need to have time to focus on our physical well-being through taking walks, playing a sport, gardening, participating in a yoga session, and eating healthy.

Our mind needs self-care. We need time to

stop, turn off the devices, walk away from our desk, and take time for our mental health. We need to do more than just eat, work, sleep and try to keep up with all of the responsibilities of our family life. We should take time to be with friends, laugh, smile, take a trip, spend quality time with our families (technology free), and enjoy the beauty around us. Improving mental health is a great time to start the new hobby that you are wanting to try, read a book that may need dusted off from your bookshelf, or start journaling.

Our soul craves self-care also. We want to be loved, respected, and thought of in a positive way. We want to feel good about ourselves and our purpose in life. We want to be grateful for ourselves and our journey. In taking care of our soul, we are seeking inner peace, purpose, and direction in our lives both personally and professionally. We should want to be happy people. Self-care can bring balance to our lives. However, what if we are struggling with self-care and gratitude? What if we strug-

gle to take time for ourselves? What if the demands of life are weighing heavily on our shoulders? What do we do when we feel like we are being pulled in several directions? What if the phrase “a balanced life” doesn’t exist in our vocabulary? What if life has been hard and gratitude is a difficult word to express? Don’t worry.

Change does not have to be a major shift from your current situation. Change does not need to be drastic. Change can be the small things. Change can be waking up in the morning and being thankful for another breath. Change can be savoring the smell of fresh brewed coffee in the office in the morning. Change can begin by just saying the simple words “Thank you.” Today is a new day! Today is a day that you can start your journey of being grateful and spread the attitude of gratitude to others. It is my hope that you will find time for self-care and gratitude in all aspects of your life. And know that life is a journey, and you can make the most of your journey.



Understanding stress and how to manage it

Submitted by Tracey Adkins, MA, IMH-E®

Stress. A simple word yet, it has the power to make your body react in multiple ways. Stress, as taxing as it sometimes can be, is essential to healthy development and building resilience. Stress can be, but doesn't necessarily have to be, bad. Stress can activate the body's response to a perceived threat or danger, otherwise known as fight, flight, freeze, or fawn. Through this response, hormones like adrenaline and cortisol are distributed throughout the body. This event can allow for a higher heart rate, sending more blood to different muscle groups, and changing various other autonomic nervous functions, providing an explosion of energy and strength to the body. The brain can be altered in its wiring and how it responds to threats, both actual and perceived, meaning it can alter a person's perception of themselves, others, and the world around them. The reactions to stress, however, are normal responses to abnormal or extraordinary events. This sounds like it could be tough to deal with and sometimes is. However, everyone has some type of stress every day and how we cope with that stress is individualized to each person's need.

Currently, there are three categories when it comes to stress. Positive, tolerable, and toxic. Good or positive stress can help us feel alive and excited about life. Think of things such as going on a roller coaster, vying for a promotion, or going on a first date. Your pulse quickens, hormones change, but there is no real threat or fear. Tolerable stress, however, is more severe with how our body responds and can affect our brain architecture negatively. Examples of tolerable stress can be the loss of a loved one or a divorce. Yet, once the hardship or adversity is removed, the body can recover with the help of strong social and emotional supports and responsive relationships. Lastly, toxic stress is where sustained stress responses do not get much of a break, in addition to not having support or emotional attachments. Examples include but are not limited to, abuse, neglect, household dysfunction, and extreme poverty. Not having a support system causes our bodies to remain in a constant fight, flight, freeze, or fawn response and not get a chance to buffer stress. Stress can be exhausting and everyone's ability to respond to stressors vary due to their life experiences, resiliency, and support.





Throughout our lives, we encounter many different experiences and environments. These help to develop our brains, which means our relationships with our emotions start early. If we don't understand how we respond to things, it is hard to help things become better within ourselves. We have to look inward to understand our triggers and expectations, and possibly learn to reframe our thinking.

Resilience is what helps us to rebound when difficult things happen and overcome the negative effects stress can have. Resilience won't make your difficulties disappear, but it can give you the ability to better manage life's stressors. By trying to build safe, nurturing relationships, and understanding how to regulate emotions, in addition to other protective factors, we can help our brain to overcome. Giving ourselves the opportunity to live successful and fulfilling lives while lessening the long-term negative effects of previous and future adverse events. Research has shown that four things, in particular, can help you build and maintain your resilience.

Relationships. Having moments of connection with someone who cares is essential. When things like laughter and smiling are genuine, the brain releases the good, happy chemicals. Having a relationship with others is needed, but having a relationship with yourself is vital. Learn what you need as an individual, how you need to be loved, and how you love others. Understanding yourself on a deeper level will elevate the relationships in your life. Doing so will help you see what you need from a relationship, as well as what you can give to others in return. Building strong, positive relationships can provide needed support and acceptance in both bad times and good.

Internal Beliefs. A person has to hear something an average of eight times before it is believed. Accept and believe the praise and encouragement given. Do not minimize it. In addition, compliment yourself. This may cause positive, reframing thoughts. You can't change the past, but you can regard the future with hope and realistic optimism. Accepting and anticipating change can help make it easier to adapt and view new challenges with less stress.

Initiative. The messaging you tell yourself, your self-talk, should be hopeful. If something goes wrong, instead of saying "I failed" try, "I tried" and shift the message. Learn to grow your gratitude and look for the reminders of the good around you. Purposefully interrupt that negative self-talk. Be proactive and try not to ignore your problems. It can take time to recover

from bigger stressors, but know that your situation can improve with the right tools.

Self-Control. The difference between instant gratification versus what will be better for you in the long run can vary. Think of various ways you have coped with hardships in the past. Recognize positive and negative behavior patterns that influence your future actions. Help to find regulation of oneself. Look for possible different strategies like deep breathing techniques, meditation, or even acceptable destruction of bubble wrap. Each person has to find what works for them. There are many different strategies to make your own.

Stress is not easy. Even good stress affects your body. Stressed individuals also tend to be less sensitive to others' needs due to dealing with their own struggles. In the end, we're all just a rubber band trying not to break. We have to find what we need to make sure that our rubber band does not stretch to the limit. This is not easy work, but with the right people and strategies, you really can do anything.

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I'M SO STRESSED OUT!

From the NATIONAL INSTITUTE of MENTAL HEALTH

Feeling overwhelmed? Read this fact sheet to learn whether it's stress or anxiety, and what you can do to cope.

Is it stress or anxiety?

Life can be stressful—you may feel stressed about performance at school, traumatic events (such as a pandemic, a natural disaster, or an act of violence), or a life change. Everyone feels stress from time to time.

What is stress? Stress is the physical or mental response to an external cause, such as having a lot of homework or having an illness. A stressor may be a one-time or short-term occurrence, or it can happen repeatedly over a long time.

What is anxiety? Anxiety is your body's reaction to stress and can occur even if there is no current threat.

If that anxiety doesn't go away and begins to interfere with your life, it could affect your health. You could experience problems with sleeping, or with your immune, digestive, cardiovascular, and reproductive systems. You also may be at higher risk for developing a mental illness such as an anxiety disorder or depression. More information about anxiety disorders is available at www.nimh.nih.gov/anxietydisorders.

So, how do you know when to seek help?

Stress vs. Anxiety

Stress

- Generally is a response to an *external* cause, such as taking a big test or arguing with a friend.
- Goes away once the situation is resolved.
- Can be positive or negative. For example, it may inspire you to meet a deadline, or it may cause you to lose sleep.

Both Stress and Anxiety

Both stress and anxiety can affect your mind and body. You may experience symptoms such as:

- Excessive worry
- Uneasiness
- Tension
- Headaches or body pain
- High blood pressure
- Loss of sleep

Anxiety

- Generally is *internal*, meaning it's your reaction to stress.
- Usually involves a persistent feeling of apprehension or dread that doesn't go away, and that interferes with how you live your life.
- Is constant, even if there is no immediate threat.

It's important to manage your stress.



Everyone experiences stress, and sometimes that stress can feel overwhelming. You may be at risk for an anxiety disorder if it feels like you can't manage the stress and if the symptoms of your stress:

- Interfere with your everyday life.
- Cause you to avoid doing things.
- Seem to be always present.



Coping With Stress and Anxiety

Learning what causes or triggers your stress and what coping techniques work for you can help reduce your anxiety and improve your daily life. It may take trial and error to discover what works best for you. Here are some activities you can try when you start to feel overwhelmed:

- Keep a journal.
- Download an app that provides relaxation exercises (such as deep breathing or visualization) or tips for practicing mindfulness, which is a psychological process of actively paying attention to the present moment.
- Exercise, and make sure you are eating healthy, regular meals.
- Stick to a sleep routine, and make sure you are getting enough sleep.
- Avoid drinking excess caffeine such as soft drinks or coffee.
- Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts.
- Reach out to your friends or family members who help you cope in a positive way.

Recognize When You Need More Help

If you are struggling to cope, or the symptoms of your stress or anxiety won't go away, it may be time to talk to a professional. Psychotherapy (also called "talk therapy") and medication are the two main treatments for anxiety, and many people benefit from a combination of the two.

If you or someone you know has a mental illness, is struggling emotionally, or has concerns about their mental health, there are ways to get help. Find more information on the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) website at www.nimh.nih.gov/findhelp.

- If you are in immediate distress or are thinking about hurting yourself, call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** toll-free at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). You also can text the **Crisis Text Line** (HELLO to 741741) or use the Lifeline Chat on the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** website at <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org>.

More Resources

- NIMH: Anxiety Disorders (www.nimh.nih.gov/anxietydisorders)
- NIMH: Caring for Your Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov/mymentalhealth)
- NIMH: Child and Adolescent Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov/children)
- NIMH: Taking Control of Your Mental Health: Tips for Talking With Your Health Care Provider (www.nimh.nih.gov/talkingtips)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Anxiety and Depression in Children (www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/depression.html)



National Institute
of Mental Health

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Preventing falls in child care centers

Submitted by Renee Y. Stonebraker, RS, Child Care Health Educators, WVECTCR

According to the Center for Disease Control, falls are the number one reason for nonfatal, unintentional injuries for children ages 0 to 5 years old in the United States. Preventing falls in child care centers becomes very important to reduce the injuries for this age group. There are many ways to ensure a safe environment for children and prevent fall injuries at child care centers:

1. Keep stairwells safe with hand rails and proper lighting, and remove all clutter from the stairs. Install safety gates at the top and bottom of stairwells if children have access to them.
2. Windows should be locked, or guards used for openings more than 4 inches. Screens do not prevent children from falling out the window.
3. Keep electrical cords out of walkways and play areas.
4. Climbing equipment, inside and outside on the playground, should have approved surfacing material below it.
5. Remove ice and snow from walkways and stair wells outside.
6. Beware of heights. Decks, balconies, and porches higher than 3 feet should have childproof railings.
7. Have children wear proper protective equipment for sports. For example, knee pads, elbow pads, and a helmet for roller skating.
8. Clean up spills immediately.
9. Use nonskid rugs.
10. When using high chairs, swings, and other types of equipment, make sure the infant or child is strapped in properly.
11. Place car seats or infant seats on the floor when the child is in it, not on the top of a table or other piece of furniture.
12. Proper supervision helps to prevent injuries. Locate yourself so you can see the children at all times, without other equipment blocking your view.



Care for yourself one small way each day



Take breaks to relax and unwind through yoga, music, gardening, or new hobbies



Take care of your body and get moving to lessen fatigue, anxiety, or sadness

Treat yourself to healthy foods and get enough sleep



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Disaster Distress Hotline: call or text 1-800-985-5990

cdc.gov/coronavirus

Do you know a child who is not *moving *hearing *seeing * learning or *talking like others their age?

By **3** months,
Does your baby...

- grasp rattle or finger?
- hold up his/her head well?
- make cooing sounds?
- smile when talked to?

By **6** months,
Does your baby...

- play with own hands/feet?
- roll over?
- turn his/her head towards sound?
- holds head up/looks around without support?

By **9** months,
Does your baby...

- sit alone or with minimal support?
- pick up small objects with thumb and fingers?
- move toy from hand to hand?

By **12** months,
Does your baby...

- wave goodbye?
- play with toys in different ways?
- feed self with finger foods?
- begin to pull up and stand?
- begin to take steps?

By **18** months,
Does your baby...

- cling to caretaker in new situations?
- try to talk and repeat words?
- walk without support?

By **24** months,
Does your baby...

- point to body parts?
- walk, run, climb without help?
- get along with other children?
- use 2 or 3 word sentences?

If you are concerned about your child's development, get help early.
Every child deserves a great start.

WV Birth to Three supports families to help their children grow and learn.

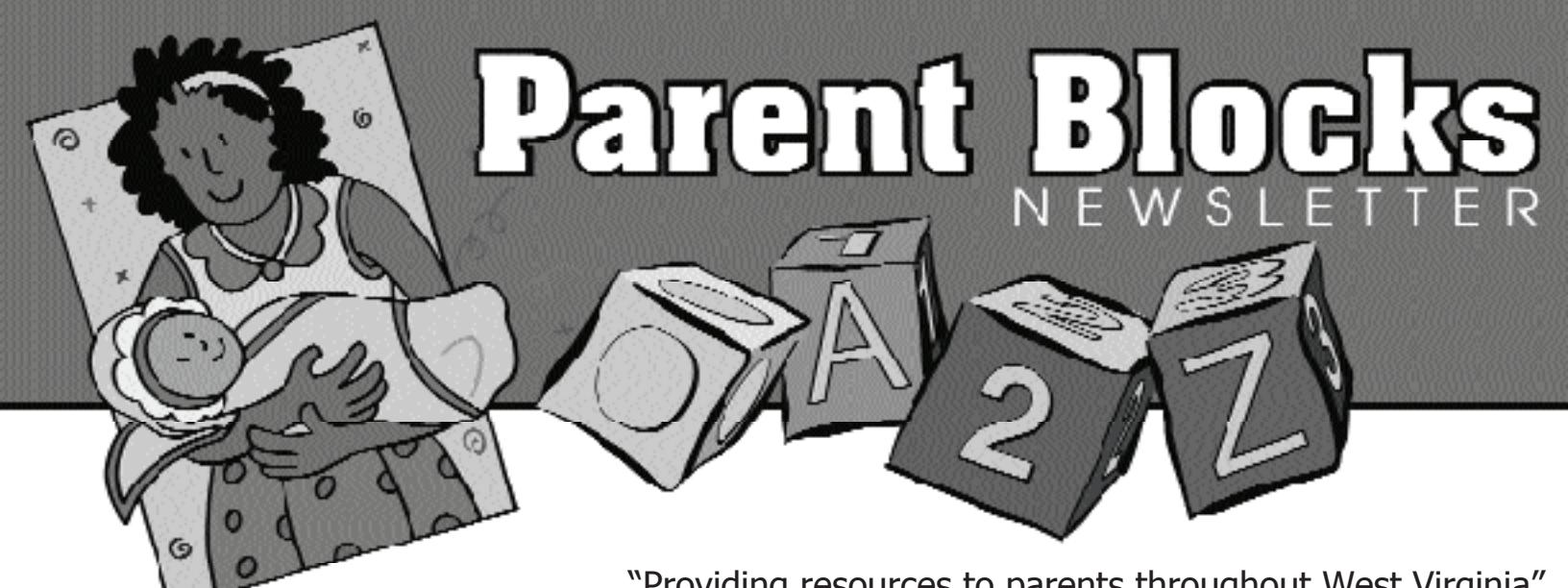
To learn more about the
WV Birth to Three services
in your area, please call:

1-866-321-4728

Or visit www.wvdhhr.org/birth23



WV Birth to Three services and supports are provided under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and administered through the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health.



Parent Blocks

NEWSLETTER

"Providing resources to parents throughout West Virginia"

Volume 18, Issue 4, Fall/Winter 2022

8 CDC Health Tips for a Safe and Healthy Holiday

The holidays are a great opportunity to enjoy time with family and friends, to celebrate life, to be grateful, and to reflect on what's important. They are also a time to appreciate – and safeguard – the gift of health. Here are some holiday tips to support your efforts for health and safety during the season.

WV Parent Blocks Newsletter is a project of West Virginia Early Childhood Training Connections and Resources, a collaborative project of West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources/Bureau for Children and Families/Division of Early Care and Education; WV Head Start State Collaboration Office; Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health/West Virginia Birth to Three; and West Virginia Home Visitation Program and is supported and administered by River Valley Child Development Services.

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Eat Healthy and Be Active

It can be challenging to eat healthy and stay active during the holidays. Healthy eating is all about balance and moderation. Holiday parties and big family meals may tempt us away from our healthy eating habits. Allow yourself to have your favorite foods but stick to smaller servings and balance them with healthier options. Choose fresh fruit as a festive and sweet substitute for candy. Limit fats, salt, and sugary foods and drinks.

Staying active can help you keep a healthy weight during the holiday season. Look for opportunities to work physical activities into your holiday. Go for a stroll after a family meal, take a walk at the mall, or dance to your favorite holiday music. Aim to get at least 150 minutes a week of physical activity. For example, that could be at least 20 minutes a day or 30 minutes five days a week. It's important to move more and sit less.

Get Your Flu Vaccination

Influenza (flu) is more than a cold, or even a “bad cold.” It can result in serious health complications like pneumonia, bacterial infections, hospitalization, or death. Few people get vaccinated against flu after the end of November even though flu activity peaks between December and February, and can last as late as May. If you haven’t yet gotten your flu vaccination this season, it’s not too late! CDC recommends that everyone age 6 months and older get vaccinated now if they have not already been vaccinated this season.

Flu vaccination can reduce your risk of getting sick with flu and can prevent serious flu complications. Flu vaccine has other benefits, too, including being life saving for children, protecting pregnant women and their babies, and reducing the

risk of heart attack in people with heart disease.

Food Safety

Food poisoning can ruin even the most festive celebrations. Each year, an estimated 1 in 6 Americans get sick from eating contaminated food.

Take simple steps to protect your family’s health when you prepare and serve holiday meals such as:

- Wash your hands and work surfaces before, during, and after preparing food, and before eating.
- Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs separated during preparation.
- Cook food at the right internal temperature to kill harmful germs. Use a food thermometer to check.
- Refrigerate perishable foods, including leftovers, within two hours of buying or cooking.

Handwashing

Handwashing is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of germs and to keep kids and adults healthy, especially during the winter months. Evidence shows handwashing can help prevent 1 in 5 respiratory illnesses like the cold or flu, so understanding how and when to wash

hands is critical for staying healthy.

If soap and water are not available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.

Cold Weather Safety and Home Heating

Outdoor activities during cold weather can expose you to several safety hazards, but you can take steps to be prepared while getting the exercise you need.

Start by wearing warm clothing, a wind-resistant coat or jacket, mittens, hats, scarves, and waterproof boots. To protect from hypothermia, don’t forget to dress in layers. Additional safety precautions when participating in outdoor recreation include: always carry a cell phone, work slowly when doing outside chores, sprinkle cat litter or sand on icy patches, and take along a buddy and an emergency kit.

Have your heating system, water heater, and any other gas, oil, or coal burning appliances serviced by a qualified technician every year to keep your family safe from carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning. Install a battery-operated or battery backup CO detector where it will awaken your family at night if the alarm is triggered. Each year, more than 400

Americans die from unintentional CO poisoning not linked to fires, more than 20,000 visit the emergency room, and more than 4,000 are hospitalized.

Cope with Stress

Everyone – adults, teens, and even children – experiences stress from time to time. Feeling emotional and nervous, or having trouble sleeping and eating, can all be normal reactions to stress. Learning healthy ways to cope with stress and getting the right care and support can help reduce stressful feelings and symptoms.

Travel Safety

Winter storms and cold temperatures can be dangerous. Stay safe and healthy this winter by planning ahead. Whether you're traveling across town or around the world, ensure that your trip is safe:

- Get your car ready for cold weather before winter arrives.
- Don't drink and drive – and don't let others drive when they've been drinking.
- Wear a helmet when riding a bicycle or skateboarding to help prevent head injuries.

- Wear a seat belt every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle, and always buckle your child in the car using a car seat, booster seat, or seat belt appropriate for their weight, height, and age.
- Use step stools instead of climbing on furniture when hanging decorations.
- Leave fireworks to the professionals.
- Wear a helmet when riding a bicycle or skateboard to help prevent the most serious types of head and brain injuries.
- Prevent chain saw injuries by wearing proper protective clothing and glasses. Always operate, adjust, and maintain chain saws according to manufacturer's instructions.

Anyone traveling more than four hours, whether by air, car, bus, or train, can be at risk for blood clots. Blood clots can form in your legs during travel because you are sitting still in a confined space for long periods of time. Protect yourself during the holiday travel season by moving your legs frequently, know the symptoms of blood clots and when to get help. If you are at risk for blood clots, talk to your doctor.

Prevent Injuries

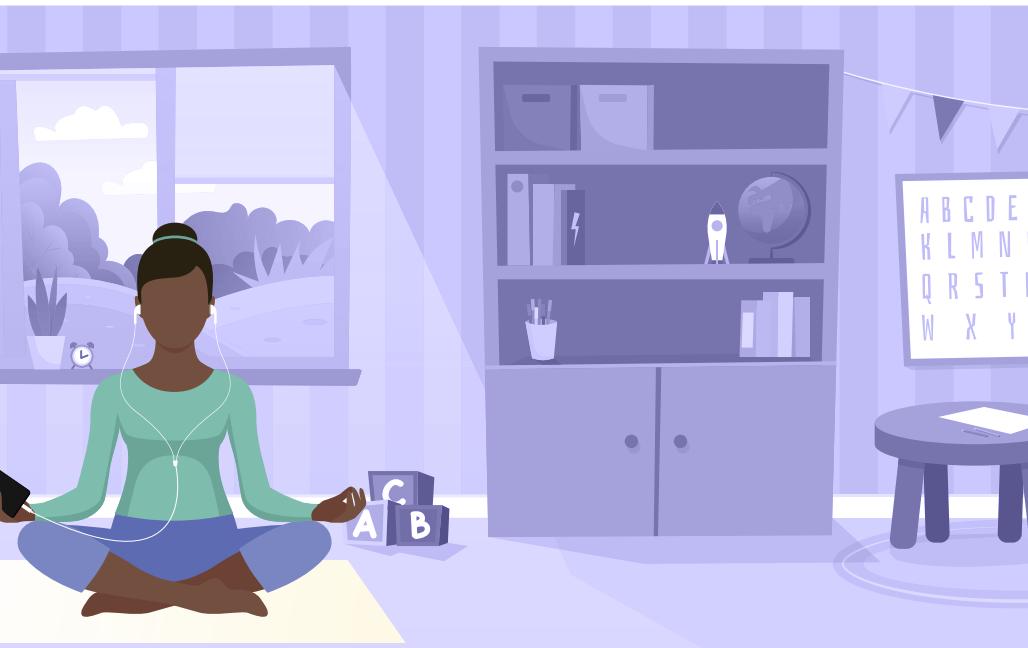
Injuries can happen anywhere, and many occur around holidays. Take these steps to avoid common injuries:

Most residential fires occur during the winter months. Keep candles away from children, pets, walkways, trees, and curtains. Never leave fireplaces, stoves, or candles unattended. Carbon monoxide poisoning is 100 percent preventable. Don't use generators, grills, or other gasoline or charcoal-burning devices inside your home or garage.

Brighten the holidays by making your health and safety a priority. These tips will help keep you and your loved ones safe and healthy—and ready to enjoy the holidays.

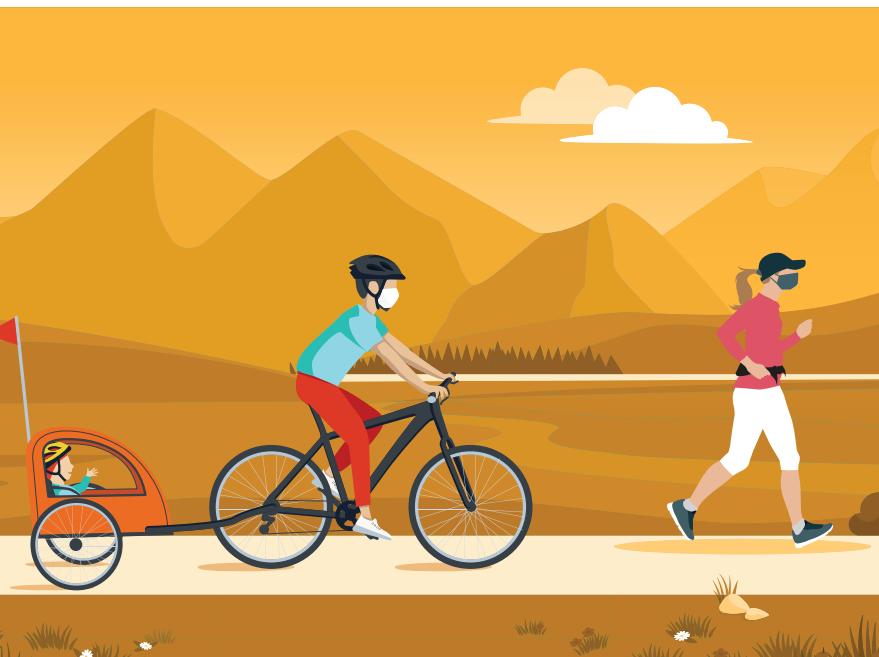
Retrieved from www.cdc.gov

Parents: Care for yourself one small way each day



Take breaks to relax and unwind through yoga, music, gardening, or new hobbies

Find new ways to safely connect with family and friends, get support, and share feelings



Take care of your body and get moving to lessen fatigue, anxiety, or sadness

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