


WEST VIRGINIA  
EARLY CHILDHOOD  
**PROVIDER**  
QUARTERLY



**We Are in This Together**  
**Building Relationships**  
**for Lifelong Success**

**Relationships Matter**

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# Relationships Matter

## Reflective Practice and the Parallel Process Within Programs and Working with Families

Submitted by Lisa Galford, MSN, RN, Child Care Nurse Health Consultant

Leaving children in the care of someone you trust is essential. Peace of mind for parents and children can make or break the entire experience of child care. I once had a frightening experience while traveling from Washington state to West Virginia by Amtrak. Accompanying me was my three-year-old daughter. The seats were first come-first serve, and by the time we got on board there were no double seats available. I asked if anyone would be willing to trade seats so my daughter and I could sit together, but no one offered. One man even refused because he wanted a window seat. My child sat one seat in front of me and on the opposite side of the aisle with a total stranger overnight until another seat became available. She didn't mind because of her outgoing personality that had no fear of strangers. But for me, that was one of the worst feelings I have ever felt in my life. It was a very long night for an already exhausted mother. No parent should ever have to feel that way about leaving their children in the care of another. This is why relationships matter.

The parallel process may look a little different depending on what type of child care provider you are but, for everyone, the result should be that all parties involved should reflectively have the same values, the same goals, same commitments, and have good problem-solving skills. It is a trickle-down effect from supervisor to the child care worker, to the parent, and even down to the child. If done correctly, you will end up with a positive outcome. The parallel process calls for self-awareness regarding thoughts, feelings, and reactions to evolving relationships between the child, parent, care giver, and supervisor. In addition to the supervisor creating a safe and trusting environment for child care, the supervisor is also responsible for modeling professional boundaries while maintaining an interest in the supervisee's personal well-being. Mutual respect should also be a factor ("We're All in This Together", n.d.).

As you strive to strengthen relationships and support parents, it should be done with a genuine and caring attitude. Get to know the parent and build a trusting relationship. This can be done at the time of enrollment, by casually talking with them at daily drop-off or pick-up, or during field trips or other activities where the parent may be present. As the relationship begins to grow, trust is increased, and you will be more successful in helping the parent reach their goals (“Taking Steps to Strengthen Relationships and Support Parents”, n.d.).

When working with families, remember family dynamics vary with each family. Some parents may need your support more than others. A first-time parent may depend on you for advice, so being competent is a must. Professional development training is a great way for you to increase your knowledge to further support families. Building and nurturing relationships with parents will help them be successful. Your actions should parallel the parents as you partner with them to meet their goals for raising their children. Get to know the family. Don't be a stranger to the families of the children in your care.

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Taking Steps to Strengthen Relationships and Support Parents. Retrieved May 30, 2023, from <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/staff-parent-relationships-honor-support-parenting/taking-steps-strengthen-relationships-support-parents>

We're All in This Together. Retrieved May 30, 2023, from <https://www.greatkidsinc.org/237/>.

# Great Beginnings



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CONFERENCE

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**Keynote Speaker:**  
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**Sessions for directors, caregivers and seasoned providers.**

**Topics include diversity, screen time, mental health,  
self care, using the ERS, challenging behaviors,  
outdoor play, music, literacy, FAS**

**And**

***The Unsession***

# We Are in This Together

Submitted by Sheila Zickefoose, MA, SpEd, C/I, IMHE



Working with infants, toddlers, and their families is an incredibly rewarding experience, but it can also be emotionally taxing and stressful. These partnerships with families require professionals to take multiple perspectives “holding” the experiences of others on top of their own. So, what is included in those multiple perspectives? Culture, expectations, values, beliefs, relationships, and trauma to name a few. As professionals, we are required to slow down and carefully examine what we bring to the table in our interactions with others and explore how to

“hold space.” This space allows us to have emotional breathing space, to explore our accomplishments, insecurities, mistakes, questions, and different approaches to working with colleagues and families.

Relationship-based practices are aimed at supporting parent-child relationships. This involves professionals having skills to

- 1) listen carefully;
- 2) demonstrate concern & empathy;
- 3) promote reflection;
- 4) observe and highlight the parent-child relationship;

- 5) respect role boundaries;
- 6) respond thoughtfully in emotionally intense interactions; and,
- 7) understand, regulate and use one’s own feelings (Edelman, 2004).

Using these skills, we can recognize and nurture the many interrelated relationships associated with our work in early childhood. However, to make the most of those opportunities in relationships we need a process to examine the layers of our work and a system of understanding the impacts of our experiences alongside families.

## What is reflective practice?

Reflection is a tool to help professionals use wonder in daily interactions. It is natural to feel deeply about your work and sometimes you need support to manage the thoughts and feelings that arise. We know that our work can pose major challenges and easy solutions are rare. This can lead to missed opportunities for meaningful and effective interactions, and we may fail to notice important cues with families and colleagues or the underlying meaning in those interactions. Let's face it, our work is too important and complex to do it alone!!

“Reflective practice is a tool that enhances a professional’s capacity to recognize the mental states in themselves and others and link those states to behaviors” (WAIMH, n.d.). It can help you to be aware of the multiple influences on our work. Reflection occurs quietly to yourself and in your relationship with trusted colleagues and supervisors. It allows you the opportunity to express feelings and concerns, having a space, non-judgmental space to share and explore your experiences. Your partner in that space can help to provide you an opportunity to plan how to best approach the situation from a genuine and strengths-based perspective.

An important component of reflec-

tive practice is the concept of reflective supervision or reflective consultation. These are relationship-based forms of supervision that allow professionals to grow and learn through collaborative reflection. Professionals share their thoughts, feelings and experiences working with families and colleagues in a safe and trusting relationship. The “supervisor” facilitating these interactions ensures the professional had an opportunity “to be aware of, curious about, reflect upon, and regulate their own internal experience while considering the experiences of others – whether a child, a parent, a family, a professional or even an organization” (Flowers & Burgeson, 2015).

Reflective supervision assists us in being aware of the thoughts and feelings beneath our behaviors so we can better understand and grow professionally as we practice partnerships with families, who are ultimately promoting healthy relationships and child development.

## What is the parallel process?

Reflective practice helps us to recognize that working with families is all about relationships! We know children develop most effectively in the context of healthy relationships. Well, as adults, we do our best work in the context of healthy relationships too. This way of being with others contributes to positive child and family outcomes, and a reduction in burnout and compassion fatigue (Budd, 2021).

The parallel process “describes the interlocking network of relationships between supervisors, supervisees, (colleagues), families and children” (Heffron & Murch, 2010). Attention to all these relationships is important as each affects the others. This means the experiences we have with supervisors and colleagues can affect our interactions with families. The way we interact with children, families, or colleagues can spill over

**“A little reflection will show us that every belief, even the simplest and most fundamental, goes beyond experience when regarded as a guide to our actions.”**

**- William Kingdon Clifford**

and influence parents interacting with their child. Be sure to make those opportunities positive ones!

As professionals we must be self-aware of thoughts, feelings, and reactions to relationships with others. We should be questioning how we think and do with families, as well as questioning what we have not thought about or done. All relationships matter and have a profound impact, either directly or indirectly. This means that our interactions can also lead to misunderstandings and disruptions in relationships. Reflective practice can be the first step to understanding missteps and restoring relationships. A deep understanding of the parallel process increases our ability to respond to the family with empathy, attunement, and support. It influences both the choices and timing of interventions, allowing us to be better prepared to assist families in slowing down, taking time to identify and fully understand their challenges, the effectiveness of their approaches, and consider other possible solutions or responses (ILCMHC, 2020).

### **How does reflective practice and the parallel process help families?**

Feelings matter and being willing and able to deal with conflict, and discuss topics and hold sometimes



intense feelings, help us to uncover and recognize potential. As we explore our own thoughts, vision, and experiences, we can support families to explore mistakes, ineffective choices, and misconceptions leading to self-forgiveness and acceptance. As professionals, when we have an emotionally secure space to process our experiences, we are also learning how to provide that same opportunity for families. The integration of being present then continues to pos-

itively impact the families we partner with, having great power in building nurturing, healthy, social emotional relationships through respectful, trusting, and responsive interactions that build secure attachment. It is through the practice of reflection that professionals become fully responsive in their interactions, so that the parallel process shares this promotional approach to healthy relational wellness with families and their children (Budd, n.d.).



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# Why Should WV Child Care Professionals Consider Infant Mental Health Endorsement?



**Myth: Endorsement is only for those who have lots of degrees and experience.**

**FACT:** Neuroscience tells us that the first three years of life are critical to lifelong health and well-being, making the role and responsibilities of home visiting professionals incredibly important to family and community success. The IMH Endorsement® recognizes professionals who work with or on behalf of infants, toddlers, and their families. It's the largest and most recognized IMH credentialing system in the United States, and it's available to you here in West Virginia! Anyone in the early childhood field can work toward earning Endorsement, including directors, supervisors, child care professionals, and service coordinators.

## Why should I pursue Endorsement?

**Good for You:** Earning IMH-E® enhances your credibility and confidence in working with or on behalf of infants, toddlers, and their families. You'll gain recognition and belong to a cross-systems, multi-disciplinary network of Endorsed professionals in WV.

**Good for Babies and Families:** Infants, toddlers, and families receive culturally sensitive, relationship-based early childhood services provided by a workforce that demonstrates a common set of core competencies.

**Good for Communities:** IMH-E® provides assurance to families that early childhood professionals meet high standards of care and are prepared to support optimal development of infants, young children, and their families.

**Good for Programs:** IMH-E® professionalizes the early childhood field and ensures consistency of professional standards across programs, no matter the curriculum, location, or services.

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## The IMH Competencies® naturally align with Early Childhood work

**IMH-Endorsement® supports the belief that positive social-emotional development is foundational** to other learning, and that healthy development happens within the context of nurturing relationships and environments.

**IMH competencies® provide a professional development "road map"** for acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to attend to the often complex nature of early social and emotional development and parent-child relationships.

**Financial assistance is available for Endorsement.** Local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies have funds available to provide financial assistance for those seeking Endorsement within the Early Childhood field.

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**For more information, please contact the West Virginia Infant/Toddler Mental Health Association or visit [www.nurturingwvbabies.org](http://www.nurturingwvbabies.org)**

Special thanks to the Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health for sharing information

# Building Relationships for Lifelong Success

Submitted by Brooklyn Conley, Quality Improvement Specialist, MountainHeart Community Services, Inc.

Quality early childhood education plays an essential role in the development of young children that equips them for success throughout the lifespan. In fact, 90 percent of brain growth occurs within the first five years of life, creating the need for positive, enriching experiences (Olson, 2022). Early education providers play an intricate role in a child's development. Child care providers, whether they work from home, in a facility, or at a child care center, can improve the quality of their programs by building and fostering positive relationships with parents and families. It is vital that child care providers establish strong, healthy relationships with families as it aids in bridging the gap between home and school life. These relationships provide children with a sense of belonging and allow teachers to understand the unique developmental needs of the children within their care on a more personal and intimate level.

## Implementing Effective Communication

One of the most influential aspects of a high-quality child care program is effective communication. Effective communication requires a com-

bination of speaking, listening, and responding during all interactions. Of the numerous benefits to practicing effective communication, one that is particularly significant is that it helps child care providers develop strong, positive relationships with the families who utilize their program. According to an article, "effective communication can also help you to better understand others, build relationships, and create a positive environment" (Lynch, 2023). Constructive communication with parents can be a challenging task as disagreements are subject to arise. However, potential conflict should not be a reason to avoid important conversations aimed at the betterment of the child. When child care providers use effective communication when conversing with parents and families, they minimize the likelihood of confusion and conflict.

## Bridging the Gap

Children undergo a plethora of transitions during their first few years of life, especially if they are enrolled in early childhood education programs. The process of switching from their home environment to a child care setting can often be a challenging experience. Child care providers can



aid children through this specific transition by promoting parent involvement in their programs. Parent involvement acts as a binding agent between the two environments because it provides consistent, inclusive support to children. According to an article, "strong and effective family-school partnerships are absolutely essential to keeping kids engaged in learning and healthy in body and mind" (Green, 2022). Providers can encourage parent participation by inviting parents to school functions, sending home daily letters, talking one-on-one with parents, and creating a parent bulletin board. Technology is also a wonderful resource for teachers to keep in con-

tact with parents and families. There are several options providers can use to communicate with parents, such as instant messaging, emailing, or simply calling.

### **Providing a Sense of Belonging**

As young children enter child care environments, they can sometimes experience feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, or unfamiliarity. However, child care providers can assist in making children feel welcomed within their programs by establishing a positive relationship with their parents and families. When children observe child care providers and their parents conversing with one another, they are more inclined to feel comfortable within the child care setting. Children thrive on positive experiences where they can feel confident, accepted, and encouraged to be themselves. In the absence of these positive encounters, young children frequently experience detrimental effects. According to the Mayo Clinic, “studies have shown that children who have not achieved a healthy attachment in their young life have lower self-esteem, a more negative worldview, are mistrustful and can have a perception of rejection” (Theison, 2022). Nevertheless, creating an environment in which children feel a sense of belonging is a necessary component of a high-quality child care program.

### **Understanding Children’s Developmental Needs**

Early education professionals are responsible for creating an enriching atmosphere where children can develop social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills. Parents are an excellent resource that providers should utilize when trying to learn about the children in their program. Dr. Donna Kirkwood explains “as their children’s first teachers, parents have an amazing opportunity to nurture their children’s growth and development and to advocate for their education” (Kirkwood, 2016). Children embody a unique set of needs that go beyond the basic requisites for adequate physiologic development. Discovering and meeting these needs on a more personalized basis ensures that no child has unaddressed barriers that hinder their development.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In conclusion, familial engagement is a crucial factor in the early education field. Providers should encourage families to participate in their children’s educational environment as it promotes optimal development for young children. Parents are their children’s first teachers, making them an intricate part of children’s developmental success. The experiences children encounter during the

first few years of life can drastically impact their development across the lifespan. When child care providers collaborate with families, they are giving children the opportunity to reach their full potential.

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West Virginia Infant/Toddler  
Mental Health Association

*Supporting the social and emotional well-being of children*



# A NEW RESOURCE... WV PREPAREDNESS FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE TOOLKIT

A Social-Emotional Relational Approach

## What is this new resource?

This comprehensive toolkit offers a framework in thinking through emergency preparedness plans in a developmentally appropriate and trauma informed manner to further the social emotional development of infants and young children.

## What is covered?

This toolkit is divided into three sections: emergency preparedness, emergency response, and emergency recovery. Each section focuses on the social and emotional needs of infants, young children, and their families. Resources by disaster type are provided at the end of the toolkit.

## Key considerations for emotional regulation during emergency situations

- Both children and adults experience intense feelings such as fear or helplessness during emergencies.
- Children and adults who have been exposed to adverse experiences early in their lives might have increased difficulty managing and coping after an emergency.
- All children, because of their developmental immaturity, will require extra support with emotional regulation during times of stress.



Access the full  
document here



THE WEST VIRGINIA INFANT/TODDLER MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

[nurturingwvbabies.org](http://nurturingwvbabies.org)

# Starting With the Face in the Mirror

Submitted by Jessie M. Knoll, Mental Health Program Specialist, North Central West Virginia  
Community Action Association HS/EHS

In order to reflect on what we're practicing and teaching we must first look at and reflect on ourselves. Have you ever heard the phrase "you can't pour

from an empty cup?" That's what we need our daily reminder to be because the families that we work with and service really need us with our cups full. Do you think you can provide everything they need when you're not filling up your own cup first? You are the key part of the equation here because, without you, there is no equation to have. There is no one there to answer the phone, no one there to offer a shoulder to cry on, or a listening ear. But WITH you and with your cup being filled first, then and only then, can we move forward successfully.

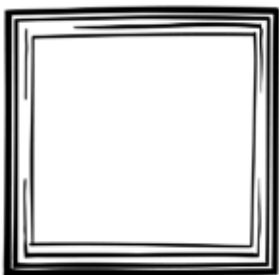
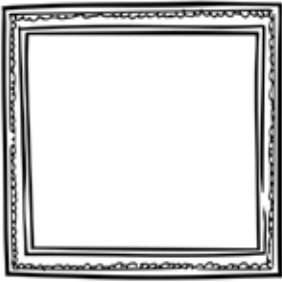
Starting with ourselves is a way of reflecting on what needs to be done. Try adding it to your morning routine. When you're getting the kids dressed for school or when you're brushing your teeth, as you gaze at yourself in the mirror, really look past your reflection. "Look" at what needs to be done for YOU in order for you to give your loved ones the best care and nurturing relationship. What's lying under the surface? Once we've reflected on ourselves, then we can have time, space, and energy to reflect on the parallel of what we're here to do and that is to work with families.

"You're exactly where you're meant to be," Jim Strawn says.

You were placed here because you're equipped for this meaningful purpose.



You've got family trees in your classroom, don't you? Let's use these family trees as our focused analogy. Who in your Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner) is your trunk? The biggest part of the tree that holds it all together. Who's at that base of your foundation for focus, nutrients, and survival? Is it you? Move on up that bark. Who branches out from you? Who is all intertwined, yet stemming from you, the hub, or otherwise known as "the mother tree?" Keep moving out, who grows from those branches? Who are the little leaves in your life that may come and go in seasons? Now who are the birds in your life that stop by for a visit? Who are the birds and squirrels in your life that maybe try to make a home in you? Lastly, who waters you and puts you in the right amount of sunlight?

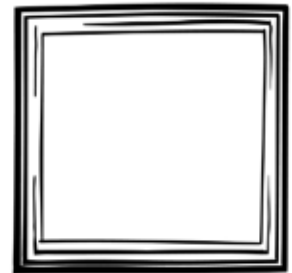
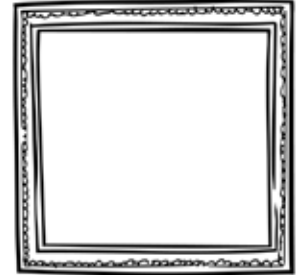


Now that you've formed your tree and you know who all the components are, imagine with me for a moment that those birds and squirrels trying to make homes within you are the families you work with and provide for. They're not directly attached to you. They didn't come from the same root path, but they find peace and comfort in you. They find a place where they can build a home and maybe move it somewhere else one day once you've helped them find their footing. Maybe they'll spend a lot of time building a home in you and then never show back up again. The home that these birds and squirrels (the families that you serve), have within your "tree" are your relationships with them.

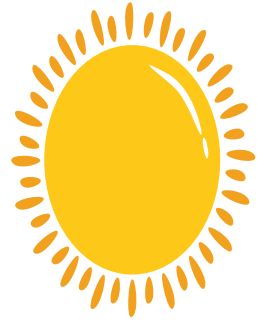
ECPBIS (Early Childhood Positive Behavior Interventions and Support) uses a Pyramid Model that talks about the importance of building and nurturing relationships with the families you work with and provide for. I imagine each person has a different reason as to why they think this is important, but I think it's most important for the whole reason you were put in this position--the children. They are the foundational reason for what

we do and the purpose of our jobs. Children absolutely thrive when they're surrounded by nurturing and supportive relationships. Kind of like when a tree is planted in good soil and is surrounded by the proper nutrients. This helps to make the child feel safe and welcomed. When a child feels safe and welcomed, then they're in the perfect environment to learn and grow.

Reflect back to when you were a young child. Could you focus very well if you came to school after having a fight with your parents or siblings, or after hearing your parents/caregivers fighting? Could you focus very well if your teacher wasn't the nicest to you, and maybe you felt like you were always getting into trouble? My guess is probably not. But what about the days when, going back to the tree analogy, you were properly watered, fed, nurtured, had enough light (whether it be direct sunlight or spiritual/emotional light), and everyone around you was getting along? Did you have a good day then? Did you learn something? Did you retain it? The parallel that I think we need to reflect on when it comes to working with families is compassion and humanization. If we treat ourselves like humans, then we'll be readily equipped to treat others as humans. Breathe in, breathe out. Nurture in, nurture out.







## Activity Ideas

- Attend a Concert in the Park
- Create with Sidewalk Chalk
- Go on a Nature Walk
- Plant Flowers
- Wash the Car
- Build a Sand Castle
- Make Fresh Lemonade
- Run Through Sprinklers
- Make Homemade Ice Cream
- Watch the Sunset
- Have a Picnic
- Blow Bubbles
- Eat Breakfast for Dinner
- Finger Paint
- Go to the Library
- Toss Water Balloons
- Visit a Farmers Market
- Make a Blanket Fort
- Dance in the Rain
- Play at the Park with Friends

[www.earlycaresharewv.org](http://www.earlycaresharewv.org)



WEST VIRGINIA EARLY CHILDHOOD

**Training**  
CONNECTIONS  
AND RESOURCES

# Financial Support For Training Opportunities



## We have funds available to:

- Bring Early Childhood Training to Your Community
- Assist with State Early Childhood Conferences

If you are involved in an early childhood collaborative team, we have funds available, per county, to assist your team with costs associated with early childhood trainings.

We also have grants available to assist with early childhood conferences statewide.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

(304) 529-7603  
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## APPLICATION INFORMATION



[www.wvearlychildhood.org](http://www.wvearlychildhood.org)



This program is being presented with financial assistance as a grant from the WV Department for Health and Human Resources and is administered by WV Early Childhood Training Connections and Resources, a program of River Valley Child Development Services.



NATIONAL CENTER ON

Parent, Family and Community Engagement

Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness  
for Early Childhood Professionals



## Supporting Professionals Who Support Families: The Parallel Process

Working with families is a rewarding and challenging experience. Early childhood and school-age child care professionals benefit from support to stay motivated, avoid job-related stress, and be at their best for families. Professionals may benefit from support from peers, supervisors, technical assistance specialists, and others to remain effective in supporting families experiencing homelessness.

It can be helpful for all early childhood and school-age child care professionals to remember the following:

- It is typical to feel deeply for children and families and need support to manage the emotions that surface when a child or family is in crisis or experiencing chronic stress.
- Professionals, who listen to parents, share the major challenges they endure, knowing that swift and easy solutions are rare.
- Practicing self-care such as rest, healthy eating, meditation or mindfulness, and exercise is an important part of being effective in your work.
- Staff may need to talk confidentially with peers, supervisors, or others to express their feelings and concerns. It is important to have a safe and non-judgmental space to reflect and share feelings about families, both positive and negative. Honest and careful reflection provides an opportunity for staff to plan how best to approach families from a genuine and strengths-based perspective.
- Professionals may have had similar experiences to those being shared by families and this may trigger uncomfortable emotions and the need for specific kinds of support.

### The Parallel Process

Programs can provide support to professionals in ways that mirror the supports that professionals provide to parents. This process, referred to as the parallel process, occurs when similar practices are reflected in different parts of an organization, community, or system, and in the services provided to families.

This document was developed with funds from Grant #90HC0014 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, and Office of Child Care, by the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. This resource may be duplicated for noncommercial uses without permission.

- Participating in formal or informal professional development through staff meetings, in-service training, and contacts with specialists in areas such as mental health, child development, substance abuse, domestic violence, working with children with disabilities or learning challenges, trauma, and homelessness can increase understanding of these challenging issues and awareness of information and resources that are available.

Early childhood and school-age professionals benefit when leadership and supervisors:

- Create opportunities for regular reflective practice and supervision
- Organize times for individuals to share experiences in a safe and non-judgmental environment with supervisors or peers
- Provide reassurance that honesty and self-awareness are important to successful work
- Organize occasions for ongoing professional growth
- Model self-care behaviors that encourage self-care

These efforts can inspire individual professionals to model similar behaviors and create opportunities for families to grow. Professionals who feel well supported can better support families and children. And, families who feel well supported can better support their children.

## References

Moore, T. (2006, August). Parallel processes: Common features of effective parenting, human services, management and government. In Invited address to 7th National Conference of Early Childhood Intervention Australia, Adelaide.

For more information about this resource,  
please contact us: [PFCE@ecetta.info](mailto:PFCE@ecetta.info) | 1-866-763-6481



ADMINISTRATION FOR  
**CHILDREN & FAMILIES**



NATIONAL CENTER ON  
Parent, Family and Community Engagement



## Concerned about your CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT?

**Help Me Grow**, a free developmental referral service, provides vital support for children from birth to age five including:

- Information and community resources to aid development
- Free developmental screening questionnaire
- Coordination with your child's doctor

Talk to a care coordinator and schedule a developmental screening for your child today.

**Help Me Grow: 1-800-642-8522**  
**[www.dhhr.wv.gov/helpmegrow](http://www.dhhr.wv.gov/helpmegrow)**



**Help Me Grow**  
West Virginia



# Fun in the Sun

Submitted by Lisa Galford, MSN, RN, Child Care Nurse Health Consultant

After being cooped up all winter and a good bit of spring, children and adults love to get outside and breathe the fresh air. The warm sun not only brightens the days but brightens your mood as well. You don't have to be laying on the beach to get into trouble with dangerous UV rays. Sun burns can cause both short-term and long-term damage. There are many things we can do to protect the skin while you're out having fun in the sun.

Staying in the shade is one way of protecting skin from harmful rays. Wearing a wide brim hat and sunglasses will help if there's no shade in sight. Long sleeve shirts and pants made of light material can protect your skin and keep you cool. Stay out of the direct sun between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. That is when

the sun's rays are most potent and damaging (Sunscreen FAQs, n.d.).

When choosing a sunscreen, make sure it is a broad spectrum (covers both UVA and UVB rays). The SPF should be at least 15. You will also need to check for an expiration date. Get familiar with reading the sunscreen label. The label gives you important information just like a food label does. Included will be a list of ingredients, directions for how often to apply, warnings, and any special directions. Keep in mind that no sunscreen is waterproof, but you can purchase water resistant sunscreens. Discard your sunscreen if you notice a change in color or smell. You'll also want to keep the container out of direct sunlight for the best results (Korioth, 2013).

Children love to have fun in the sun. Outdoor activities allow their bodies to get needed exercise and gives them a chance to use their "outside voices." Having fun in the sun should always include protecting their skin from damage that causes burns, aging, and skin cancer. Skin was meant to last a lifetime. Let's do all we can to protect it.

Korioth, T. (2013). Sunscreen 101: What to look for in sun protection for kids. *American Academy of Pediatrics*, 34(5). Retrieved from <https://publications.aap.org/aap-news/article/34/5/31/10874/Sunscreen-101-What-to-look-for-in-sun-protection>

Sunscreen FAQs. Retrieved June 8, 2022, from <https://www.aad.org/media/stats-sunscreen>

# Healthy Snack Ideas

Submitted by Renee Y. Stonebraker, RS

During the last remaining hot summer days, children are busy being physically active and spending time outdoors. They need plenty of water and healthy snacks to keep their energy high. Healthy snacks between meals provide many benefits: improves concentration, improves their mood, and helps to curb hunger so children do not overeat at mealtimes. Healthy snacks add nutrients and energy to a child's day, unlike unhealthy snacks that only provide empty calories. Try to avoid foods that are high in sugar, fat, and salt and offer foods like fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, and protein.

Here are some healthy snack options and recipes:

- Milk and carrot sticks
- Yogurt with strawberries and granola
- Cucumbers with whole wheat crackers
- Watermelon with string cheese
- Whole wheat bagel, cream cheese, and apple slices
- Hard-boiled egg and oranges
- Homemade yogurt pops



## Homemade Yogurt Pops

### Vanilla Yogurt

Cut up fruit of your choice.

1. Layer yogurt and fruit in a paper cup.
2. Put stick in for handle and freeze until solid.
3. Enjoy!

Reference:

Lua, Jaren, Nancy, Peters, T., Peters, W., Julianne, . . . Better Baker. (2017, June 13). Strawberry Blueberry Yogurt Pops. Retrieved from <https://www.wineandglue.com/strawberry-blueberry-yogurt-pops/>



# 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](http://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 19, Issue 3, Summer/Fall 2023

## Three Main Keys to Communicating with your Child

Praise your child when they do something right. The more you praise a behavior, the more likely it is your child will behave the same way again.

Pay attention when your child is talking to you or trying to communicate with you. Giving your full attention will help you understand what your child is telling you. It will also make your child feel like you care about what they have to say.

Set aside time each day to talk and play with your child. Creating a special time lets your child know they are important. It also strengthens the bond between the two of you.

### **Responding to Behavior**

Giving your child positive attention for good behavior can boost self-esteem, improve your relationship, and help your child understand the behaviors you like and want to see more often.

### **Praise**

Praise means giving attention to your child for something they have done that you like.

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.

Permission to photocopy

Praise should be as specific as possible.

Use labeled praise to tell your child exactly what you like. Sometimes labeled praise is best when it is not expected. If your child is playing quietly in the living room while you are cooking dinner, take the time to let your child know you like it. You might say, "It's so nice when you are playing quietly all by yourself while I am trying to cook dinner!" This will send a message to your child that you are paying attention.

Hugs, high-fives, a pat on the head, or a pat on the back along with labeled praise can give more power to your praise.

Some parents notice their child's behavior gets worse when being praised. [Click here to get some ideas from parenting experts about how to address this issue.](#)

Some parents find it difficult to find things to praise about their child's behavior. [Click here to learn some ways to address this issue from parenting experts.](#)

### **Imitation**

Imitation happens when you copy or mimic things your child does.

Imitation is when you play with the same or a similar toy and copy the

way your child is playing with it. Any behavior that is imitated by you is likely to be repeated by your child, so carefully choose which behaviors to imitate.

Match your actions to your child's activity. Try not to do it better or faster, which could discourage your child.

Whatever you imitate will likely occur again. It is best to model or demonstrate positive or appropriate behaviors.

If you imitate behavior or words that are not appropriate, your child is more likely to say or do those things again. Inappropriate behaviors and words can be ignored if they are not dangerous for anyone else or destructive. If your child is doing something that is dangerous or destructive, stop those behaviors immediately.

### **Description**

Description involves giving attention to good behavior and talking about what your child is doing.

When you use description, you describe your child's activities as a sports reporter or commentator would describe it. You provide a lot of detail so that someone who is listening, but not watching, would know what your child is doing. Focus on describing your child's

good behaviors. If you describe misbehavior, your attention will likely cause those behaviors to happen more often.

### **Active Listening**

When parents actively listen to their children, they show that they care and are trying to understand how the child feels about what is happening. Reflection is one way for you to show that you are actively listening to your child.

Reflection of what your child says: Repeat out loud what your child says. You can extend, add to, shorten, or correct what your child says. For example, your child says: "I drew some sghetti!" You might say: "You drew some long spaghetti." (grammar and pronunciation correction with elaboration)

Reflection of your child's feelings: Notice how your child feels about something and describe the feelings with words. For example, your child is: crying/seems sad. You might say: "I can see that you're upset."

Reflection of emotions is not always easy. Here are some tips to make it easier.

Take a guess even if you are unsure.

Words aren't needed all the time.

You don't always have to agree.

Talk about other feelings.

### Special Playtime

Special playtime is time you spend with your child when you focus on the positive things your child does. Special time with your child is important in building a nurturing relationship. Keep the following in mind during special playtime:

- Try to make special playtime at the same time each day and have it at a time when you can focus only on your child.
- Try to spend at least 5-10 minutes each day on special playtime.
- Let your child lead the play.
- Praise your child's good behaviors.
- Imitate your child's behavior.
- Describe what your child is doing.
- Reflect your child's words and emotions.
- Be enthusiastic.
- Limit questions and commands during special playtime, as they take the lead away from your child.
- Try to stay positive and avoid criticisms during special playtime.
- Ignore minor misbehaviors during special playtime.
- Have fun and be silly!

*Reprinted from CDC, Essentials for Parenting Toddlers and Preschoolers: Quick Tips (<https://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/toddlersandpreschoolers/communication/quicktips.html>)*

## What happens when children read during summer break?



Children can lose months worth of reading skill improvement over summer break – but they don't have to.

Simply reading for pleasure causes children to practice and retain skills they learned during the school year. Pleasure reading during school breaks builds vocabulary and background knowledge, an important factor in reading comprehension.

Spending vacation time with books also teaches children that books are something they get to enjoy -- not just something they have to deal with during school.

Summer learning loss is cumulative, so students who lose reading skill each summer tend not to progress as far the following school year. By the time they reach high school, students can be a year or more below their reading potential, which makes everything else in life more difficult.

A proven way to prevent this problem – read for fun. Anything counts – sports magazines, mysteries, picture books, comic books, animal, fantasy, non-fiction. Reading to children benefits them, as well as when they read on their own. Children who are read to are more likely to pick up books and read on their own.

-Reprinted from Read Aloud West Virginia, Summer 2023

# Concerned about Development?

## How to Get Help for Your Child



Talking to the doctor is the first step toward getting help for your child if you are concerned about his or her development (how your child plays, learns, speaks, acts, or moves). **Don't wait.** Acting early can make a real difference!

### 1 Make an appointment with your child's doctor

- When you schedule the appointment, tell the doctor's staff you have concerns about your child's development that you would like to discuss with the doctor.

### 2 Complete a milestone checklist

- Before the appointment, complete a milestone checklist by downloading CDC's free [Milestone Tracker mobile app](#) from the App Store or Google Play or printing a paper checklist from [www.cdc.gov/Milestones](http://www.cdc.gov/Milestones).
- Write down your questions and concerns; take these with you to the doctor's appointment.

### 3 During the doctor's appointment

- **Show the completed milestone checklist to the doctor**
  - > If your child **is** missing milestones, point them out, and share any other concerns that you have.
  - > If your child **is not** missing milestones but you still have concerns, tell the doctor about them.
- **Ask the doctor for developmental screening for your child**
  - > Developmental screening is recommended whenever there is a concern. It gives the doctor more information to figure out how best to help your child.
  - > For more information about developmental screening, go to [www.cdc.gov/DevScreening](http://www.cdc.gov/DevScreening).
- **Ask the doctor if your child needs further developmental evaluation**
  - > If your child does, ask for a referral and call right away. If you have difficulty getting an appointment, let the doctor know.

### 4 Make sure you understand what the doctor tells you, and what to do next

- Before you leave the appointment, check the notes you have written and make sure all of your questions have been answered.
- If you do not understand something, ask the doctor to explain it again or in a different way.
- When you get home, review your notes and follow the steps the doctor has given you. Remember, you can always contact the doctor's office if you have any questions.

## You Know Your Child Best

If your child's doctor has told you to "wait and see," but you feel uneasy about that advice:

Talk with others (doctor, teacher, another provider) to get a second opinion

### AND

Call for a free evaluation to find out if your child can get free or low-cost services that can help.

- **If your child is under age 3:** Call your state's early intervention program. Find the phone number at [www.cdc.gov/FindEI](http://www.cdc.gov/FindEI).
- **If your child is age 3 or older:** Call the local public elementary school.

**You do not need a doctor's referral to have your child evaluated for services.**

Find more information, including what to say when you make these important calls, visit [www.cdc.gov/Concerned](http://www.cdc.gov/Concerned).

**Don't wait.**  
**Acting early can make a real difference!**



[www.cdc.gov/ActEarly](http://www.cdc.gov/ActEarly)

1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

**Learn the Signs. Act Early.**



Download CDC's free Milestone Tracker app

