

All About Kids



Presented by: Child Care Training Consultants

Agenda

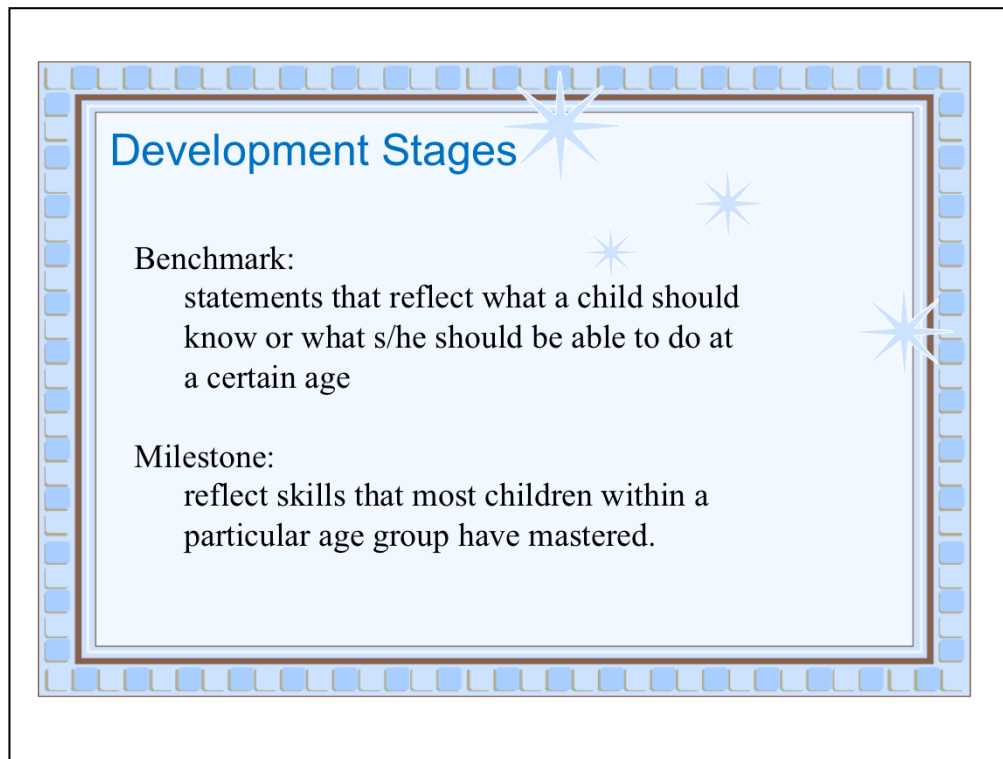
- Developmental Stages
- Personality Traits
- Milestones
- The Importance of Play and Purposeful Play Activities



Early childhood is a time of remarkable physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. Infants enter the world with a limited range of skills and abilities. Watching a child develop new motor, cognitive, language and social skills is a source of wonder for parents and caregivers.

There is a **range for each early child development stage**. The key word in all this is "development" and it should not be confused with "achievement" or "accomplishment." Each child develops differently.

From a teacher's perspective, as long as a child is within the range of development and they are showing progress over time there is no need for alarm. A red light should light up if a child is not showing any progress and s/he remains static.



Developmental stages

As a child grows, you may find yourself searching for clues to his/her behavior. You may hear the words “developmental stages.” This is just another way of saying a child is moving through a certain time period in the growing-up process. At times, s/he may be fascinated with hands, feet, and mouth. Then there will be an age when independence is all s/he wants. At every stage, what s/he needs is your understanding and time.

The terms **benchmark** and **milestone** are often used interchangeably, depending on who is speaking. While they look the same on the surface, there are some technical differences between benchmarks and milestones.

Benchmarks are statements that reflect what a child should know or what s/he should be able to do at a certain age. Benchmarks are often used in the educational setting to clarify what is expected of a child at each developmental level. Because benchmarks outline the behavior or knowledge a child should be able to demonstrate, they are easy to measure and provide specific guidelines for assessment. Benchmarks typically leave little room for variations in normal child development.

Milestones, on the other hand, reflect skills that most children within a particular age group have mastered. Developmental psychologists, developmental specialists and pediatricians refer to milestones to assess whether a child is developing normally. Although there are ages associated with each milestone, these vary greatly. Normal development occurs along a continuum and does not occur at specific ages.

The Four Stages of Development

- Social
- Emotional
- Cognitive
- Physical



Early childhood **emotional** development and **social** development is the key to a child's overall well-being. It is the ability to learn the difference between right and wrong, and true and false. It is also the ability to become empathetic and take into account the emotions, feelings, and needs of others. A child that has a difficult time socializing and expressing his/her emotions will face a greater challenge when trying to play and connect with peers. As a result, they can suffer from a lower self-esteem and feelings of the excluded 'outsider.'

Cognitive learning development is our ability to think, problem solve, make decisions, and make sense of the world around us. Cognitive development is divided into five main categories:

1. Information processing
2. Intelligence
3. Reasoning
4. Language development
5. Memory

Physical development in children follows a directional pattern:

Large muscles develop before small muscles. Muscles in the body's core, legs and arms develop before those in the fingers and hands. Children learn how to perform gross (or large) motor skills such as walking before they learn to perform fine (or small) motor skills such as drawing.

The center of the body develops before the outer regions. Muscles located at the core of the body become stronger and develop sooner than those in the feet and hands.

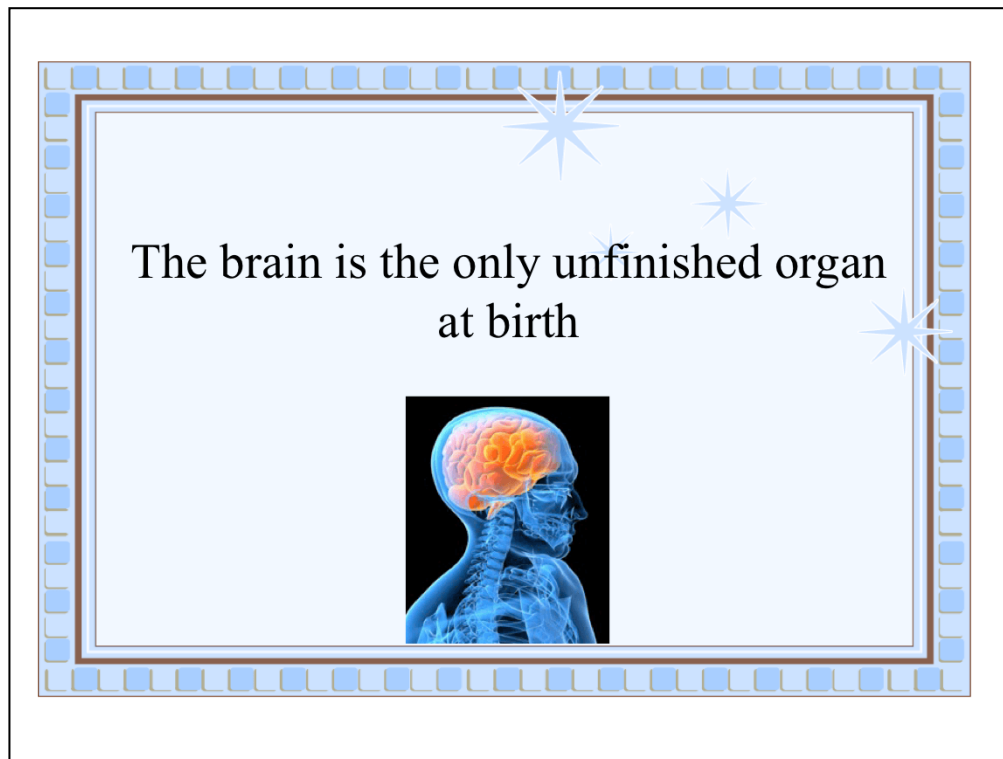
Development goes from the top down, from the head to the toes. This is why babies learn to hold their heads up before they learn how to crawl.

The Four Stages of Development continued...

Social and emotional development involves the acquisition of a set of skills. Key among them are the ability to:

- Identify and understand one's own feelings
- Accurately read and comprehend emotional states in others
- Manage strong emotions and their expression in a constructive manner
- Regulate one's own behavior
- Develop empathy for others
- Establish and sustain relationships

Social-emotional development is a child's ability to understand the feelings of others, control their own feelings and behaviors, and get along with peers. In order for children to attain the basic skills that they need such as cooperation, following directions, demonstrating self-control and paying attention, they must have social-emotional skills. Feelings of trust, confidence, pride, friendship, affection and humor are all a part of a child's social-emotional development.



Brains are built over time

- The interactive influences of genes and experience literally shape the architecture of the developing brain, and the active ingredient is the “serve and return” nature of children’s engagement in relationships with their parents and other caregivers in their family or community.

Both brain architecture and developing abilities are built “from the bottom up,” with simple circuits and skills providing the scaffolding for more advanced circuits and skills over time.

- Stress in early childhood is associated with persistent effects on the nervous system and stress hormone systems that can damage developing brain architecture and lead to lifelong problems in learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health.
- For infants and toddlers there is amazing growth that takes place during the first years of life.
- In fact, the brain is the only unfinished organ at birth. The brain needs time and experience to grow and develop.

“Brain development begins before birth, within a week of conception. During the prenatal period, brain cells are already busy sending and receiving sensory messages of touch, hearing and movement”

- Moon, 2012



The basic architecture of the brain is constructed through an ongoing process that begins before birth and continues into adulthood. Like the construction of a home, the building process begins with laying the foundation, framing the rooms, and wiring the electrical system in a predictable sequence, and it continues with the incorporation of distinctive features that reflect increasing individuality over time.

Brain architecture is built over a succession of “sensitive periods,” each of which is associated with the formation of specific circuits that are associated with specific abilities. The development of increasingly complex skills and their underlying circuits builds on the circuits and skills that were formed earlier. Through this process, early experiences create a foundation for lifelong learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health. A strong foundation in the early years increases the probability of positive outcomes and a weak foundation increases the odds of later difficulties.

Nine Personality Traits

Each child starts life with an inherited set of nine personality traits

- 1) Activity level
- 2) Regularity
- 3) Sociability
- 4) Adaptability
- 5) Intensity



Researchers believe that each child starts life with an inherited set of nine personality traits. The specific combo he comes bundled with puts him into one of three categories: easy, slow to warm up, and challenging

Activity Level:

What to look for: Does the baby usually seem content to watch the world from a bouncy seat? Or does s/he turn diaper changes into wrestling matches?

How to deal: If s/he has a low activity level, you may not want to overwhelm the baby with too much physical play.

The highly active baby has a high tolerance for stimulation. The baby may reach gross-motor milestones like walking sooner than other babies. Always use the safety belt on the changing pad, and never leave the baby unattended in a bouncy seat. The baby will probably be a good sleeper, since all this action is bound to wear s/he out!

Regularity:

What to look for: Does the baby seem to sleep, eat, and even poop like clockwork? Or does s/he defy your every attempt to impose a routine?

How to deal: For a baby who thrives on a schedule, structure your day around the baby's habits as much as possible for now – the baby's sense of security depends on it -- and s/he'll make your life easy. When s/he gets a little bigger, s/he'll be able to tolerate the occasional missed nap.

If s/he's unpredictable, try not to be too rigid or you'll make yourself crazy. Don't obsess about routine, but do try to keep elements of it the same day to day.

Sociability:

What to look for: Does the baby smile and coo at just about anyone who scoops it up, no matter how abruptly? Or does s/he seem to have been born with stranger anxiety?

How to deal: If the baby is a social butterfly, give lots of opportunities to interact with others.

Don't force a baby into unfamiliar situations. Keep the baby close until s/he signals that s/he's ready to interact -- by making cooing noises or, if s/he's older, by trying to wriggle off your lap and crawl around.

Even the friendliest baby will go through a clingy stage -- known as stranger anxiety -- somewhere around 9 months, which will gradually taper off around 18 months.

Adaptability:

What to look for: Does the baby typically go with the flow? Or does s/he spit new foods back at you?

How to deal: Easygoing babies are adaptable enough to tolerate changes and new people in their lives. If the baby is less flexible, go slow when introducing new things.

Intensity:

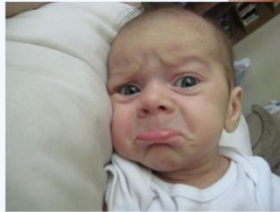
What to look for: Does the baby make her/his feelings known -- loudly -- with earthshaking cries? Or is s/he more liable to whimper if something is bothering her/him?

How to deal: While you're going to want to soothe the baby's every cry, don't feel guilty when you can't. This is how intense babies show their feelings.

Life may seem easier with a less intense baby, but you have to work harder to understand what the baby thinking. Pay attention (watch for scowls or signs of boredom, like looking away) and talk the baby through feelings -- "Oh, you don't like that noise!" -- so the baby knows you're there and involved.

Nine Personality Traits

- 6) Disposition
- 7) Distractibility
- 8) Persistence
- 9) Sensitivity



Disposition:

What to look for: Does the baby wake up with a smile and keep it almost all day long? Or does s/he tend to start the day with a scowl, whimper, or whine?

How to deal: What's not to like with a happy baby? You can bond by having fun: singing songs, blowing raspberries at each other, and playing silly games.

Some babies frown more than grins -- it doesn't mean the baby doesn't like you. Do your best to make sure s/he isn't uncomfortable or ill, and make sure to provide plenty of smiles and affection to help the baby view the world more optimistically. As s/he gets bigger and learns to express feelings, the crying should diminish. The secret to keeping these children happy is to let them be just who they are.

Distractibility:

What to look for: Can you soothe the baby quickly by changing the scenery or offering a new toy? Or is it harder to calm the baby down if s/he's not getting exactly what s/he wants, when s/he wants it?

How to deal: It's a cinch to keep an easily distracted baby out of trouble or avert temper tantrums. Simply steer the baby away from the light socket and s/he'll forget about it. But keep in mind that things may also distract the baby in a negative way -- for example, a noisy room may disrupt feedings -- so when possible, keep such stimulation to a minimum.

Persistence:

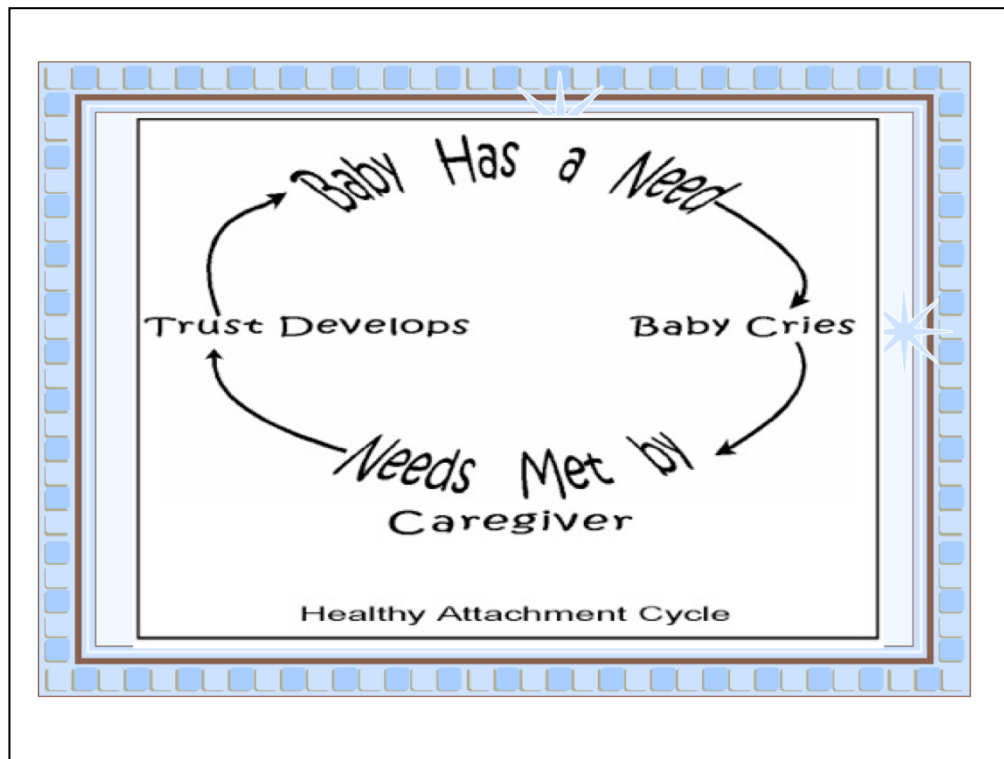
What to look for: Is the baby the type who doesn't give up easily, whether s/he's trying to reach a toy or resist a diaper change? Or does s/he cry when s/he can't master a toy and tend to flit from activity to activity?

How to deal: Let the tenacious baby take a rattle to the changing table, or change a diaper wherever s/he's playing. Keep the baby engaged by increasing the complexity of toys -- by introducing the shape sorter when the stacking ring is no longer a challenge, for instance.

Sensitivity

What to look for: Does the baby fuss at the slightest provocation: too much noise, too many people, a soggy diaper, or cold crib sheets? Or is s/he seldom set off by changes in the environment or routine?

How to deal: Keep the environment soothing whenever possible for the sensitive baby: low lights, soft music, and not too many staff changes. Talk to the baby in a low voice, and avoid too much activity before naptime or s/he may have extra trouble settling down.

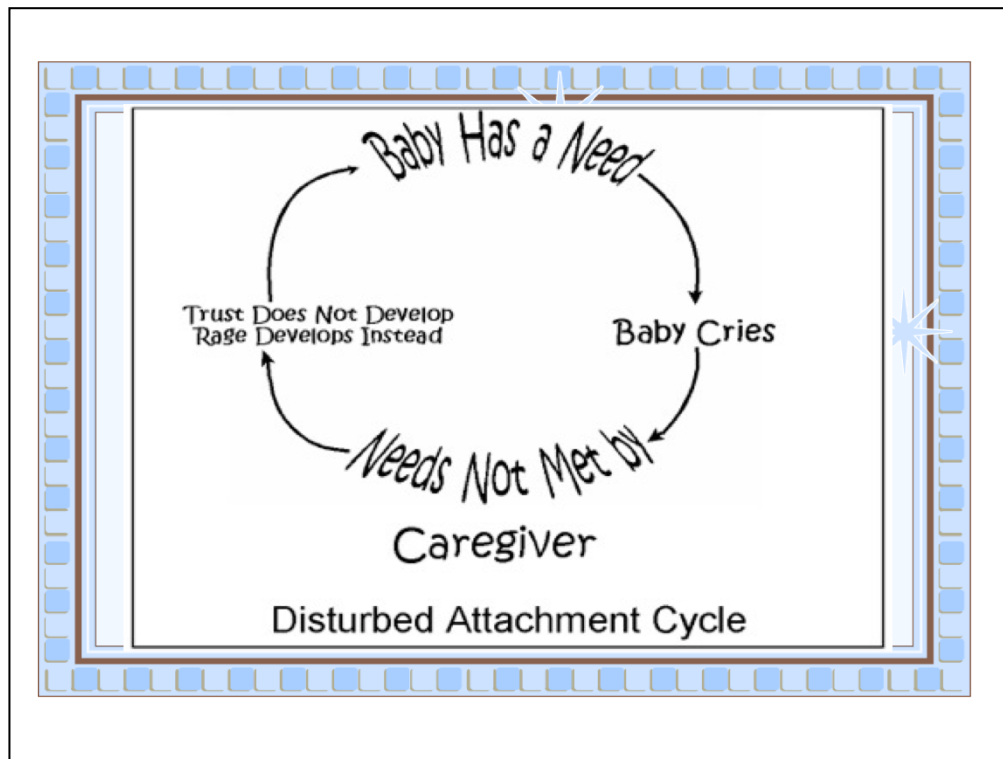


Trust develops when needs are met. When baby's needs are met consistently, a typical CYCLE OF NEEDS develops trust between caregiver and child.

Diagram shows First Year Healthy Attachment Cycle:

- Baby signals need by crying.
- Caregiver comes, soothes, and meets needs.
- When repeated over and over again by same caregiver, baby learns to trust.

If successful going through First Year Healthy Attachment Cycle, most likely will proceed through second year Secure Attachment Cycle.



In the Disturbed Attachment Cycle, the baby's needs are not met in a consistent, appropriate way.

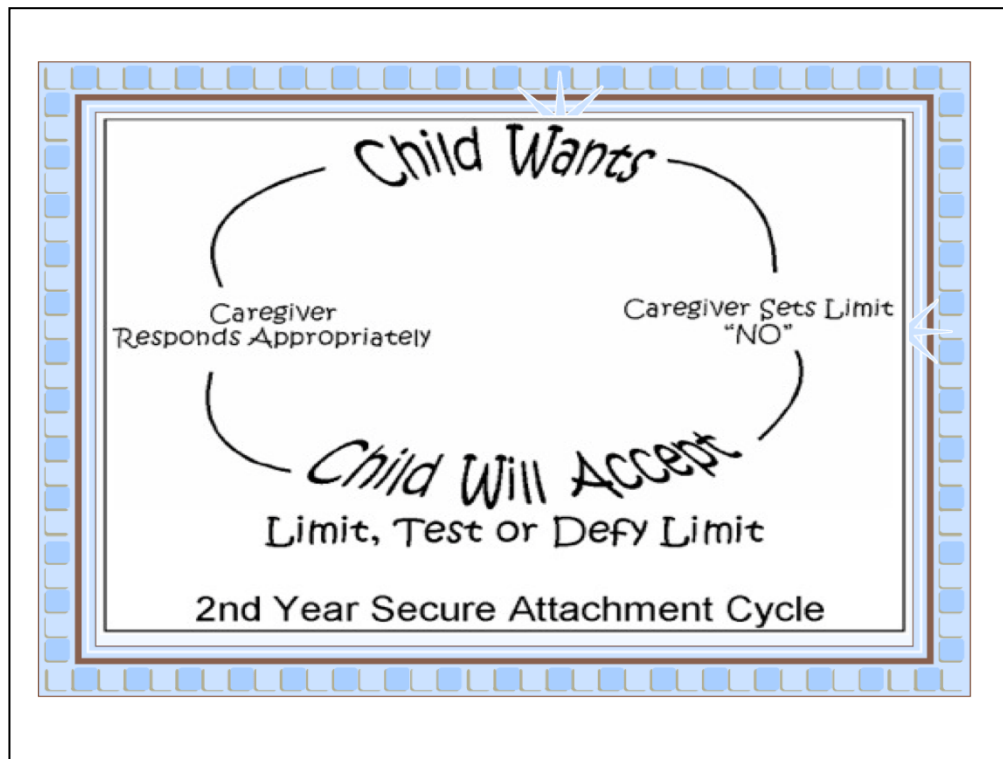
Various causes include:

- The baby expresses a need and cries, but this time the need is not met by the parent or caregiver.
- Or perhaps the need is inconsistently met, or different caregivers are not attuned to the baby.
- Sometimes cries go unanswered (neglect) or are met with physical abuse.

The result is that the baby learns:

- That this world is an unsafe place.
- That he must take care of himself.
- That he can trust no one to meet his needs.

Instead of trust developing, rage develops and is internalized. This child learns that he/she must be in charge of their own life for their very survival.



The Second Year Secure Attachment Cycle is important for optimum learning to occur:

- Only by going through Second Year Secure Attachment Cycle that child will ever be able to learn to accept limits on his behavior.
- By accomplishing these two cycles, the First and Second Year Attachment Cycles, child learns to:
 - trust
 - engage in reciprocity
 - regulate his/her emotions

Two years



- Walks alone
- Pulls toys behind while walking
- Finds objects even when hidden under two or three covers
- Begins to run
- Stands on tiptoe
- Begins make-believe play
- Begins to show defiant behavior



What are some of the developmental milestones a child should reach by two years of age?

A baby enters the second year and becomes a toddler, crawling vigorously, starting to walk, even talking a little. Exploring the boundaries established by your rules and her/his own physical and developmental limits will occupy much of her time for the next few years.

Toddlers/ (2 – 3 years)

When a child takes the first step on his/her own, a new phase in development begins. At this stage children are now free to roam around their world. It is a time for active exploration of their environment.

Language development takes major leaps which leads to learning the names of objects of interest, the ability to ask for things and as they discover their independent nature, yes, they develop the ability to say “NO!”.

During this developmental stage, a major challenge is developing what psychologists call emotional regulation. “Meltdowns” are common during this period but caregivers can use the bond they have developed to help the children learn to modulate their emotional expression and begin to grasp the difficult concept of delay of gratification. While they instinctively seem to be able to say “NO” toddlers also need help in learning how to accept “No” from others.

This is also a stage of rapid physical and intellectual development preparing these children for starting school which includes interacting cooperatively with peers while at the same time being able to compete physically and intellectually. A child’s caregiver is in the position to be a coach providing just the right combination of encouragement, support and guidance. Caregivers need to help children with the mastery of basic learning skills and encourage active discussion and experimentation of new concepts and skills.

Three Years

- Hops and stands on one foot up to five seconds
- Understands the concepts of “same” and “different”
- Cooperates with other children
- Throws ball overhand
- Correctly names some colors
- Moves forward and backward with agility



What are some of the developmental milestones a child should reach by three to four years of age?

With a child’s third birthday, the “terrible twos” are officially over and the “magic years” of three and four begin—a time when a child’s world will be dominated by fantasy and vivid imagination. During the next two years, s/he’ll mature in many areas.

Three years

During the preschool years, children will be incredibly busy. Cutting, pasting, painting, and singing are all daily activities. Make sure child care activities include learning numbers, letters, and simple directions.

What I’m Like: Watch out! I am charged with physical energy. I do things on my own terms. My mind is a sponge. Reading and socializing are essential in getting me ready for school. I like to pretend a lot and enjoy scribbling on everything. I am full of questions, many of which are “Why?” I am becoming fairly reliable about using the potty. Playing and trying new things out are how I learn. Sometimes I like to share. I begin to listen more and begin to understand how to solve problems for myself.

What I Need: I want to know about everything and understand words, and when encouraged, I will use words instead of grabbing, crying, or pushing. Play with me, sing to me, and let’s pretend!

Four and Five Years

- Stands on one foot for ten seconds or longer
- Hops, somersaults
- Recalls part of a story
- May be able to skip
- Can count ten or more objects



What are some of the developmental milestones a child should reach by four to five years of age?

Before you know it, the somewhat calm child of three becomes a dynamo of energy, drive, bossiness, belligerence, and generally out-of-bounds behavior. Also obvious during this time is the tremendous spurt of imaginative ideas that spring from children's minds and mouths. All of this behavior and thinking will help the youngster build a secure foundation as s/he emerges into the world of kindergarten.

Four years

What I'm Like: I'm in an active stage, running, hopping, jumping, and climbing. I love to question "Why?" and "How?" I'm interested in numbers and the world around me. I enjoy playing with my friends. I like to be creative with my drawings, and I may like my pictures to be different from everyone else's. I am proud that I am so BIG now!

What I Need: I need to explore, to try out, and to test limits. Giving me room to grow doesn't mean letting me do everything. I need reasonable limits set for my own protection and for others. Let me know clearly what is or isn't to be expected. I need to learn to give and take and play well with others. I need to be read to, talked to, and listened to. I need to be given choices and to learn things in my own way. **Label objects with real pictures, not cartoons** and describe what's happening to me so I can learn new words and things.

Five years

What I'm Like: I'm slowing a little in growth. I have good motor control, but my small muscles aren't as developed as my large muscles for jumping. My activity level is high and my play has direction. I like writing my name, drawing pictures, making projects, and going to the library. I'm more interested now in doing group activities, sharing things and my feelings. I like quiet time away from the other kids from time to time.

What I Need: I need the opportunity for plenty of active play. I need to do things for myself. I like to have choices in how I learn new things. But most of all, assurance that I'm important. I need time, patience, understanding, and genuine attention. I am learning about who I am and how I fit in with others. I need to know how I am doing in a positive way. I understand more about things and how they work, so you can give me a more detailed answer. I have a big imagination and pretend a lot.

The Importance of play

Play is how children learn:

- To think
- To socialize
- To solve problems
- To mature
- To HAVE FUN!!!



PLAY IS A CHILD'S WORK. PLAY IS IMPORTANT for children's development and for children to bond. It offers a chance to connect with a child. Play helps a child learn rules and what is expected of him or her. As children grow, play helps them learn how to act in society.

Playing with children builds lasting bonds. Playing allows child care providers to appreciate the uniqueness of each child. Playing with children can also be a stress reducer for over-worked teachers. Laughing and relaxing are important to your own well-being.

Try to spend individual time with each child. When a teacher plays a board game with a child, shares a bike ride, plays baseball, or reads a story, the child learns

self-importance. A child's self-esteem gets a boost. You are sending positive messages to the children when you spend quality playtime with them. From these early interactions, children develop a vision of the world and gain a sense of their place in it.

The Importance of Play

- How does play influence child outcomes?
- What types of play best support children's development?



Early Childhood Education (ECE) is the term frequently applied to the education of young children from birth through age 8. Although early childhood education has existed since the creation of kindergarten in the 1800s, the last decade has seen a tremendous amount of attention devoted to the subject of early education for young children and the importance of play.

Play is so important to optimal child development that it has been recognized by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right of every child.

Research shows that 75 percent of brain development occurs after birth. Play helps with that development by stimulating the brain through the formation of connections between nerve cells. This process helps with the development of fine and gross motor skills. Fine motor skills are actions such as being able to hold a crayon or pencil. Gross motor skills are actions such as jumping or running. Play also helps your child to develop language and socialization skills. Play allows children to learn to communicate emotions, to think, be creative and solve problems. Play enhances language development, social competence, creativity, imagination, and thinking skills. They react to each other socially. They think about what they are doing or going to do. They use language to talk to each other or to themselves and they very often respond emotionally to the play activity. The integration of these different types of behaviors is key to the cognitive development of young children.

The Purpose of Play



Misconceptions of Play

“I can’t believe I spend money to have my kid play with sand and water,”

“My child is in preschool, but it is really more like babysitting.

“All they do is play all day!”

The purpose of play is often misunderstood in the early childhood classroom.

Comments such as, “I can’t believe I spend money to have my kid play with sand and water,” or “My child is in preschool, but it is really more like babysitting.

They don’t teach him anything, he just plays all day!”

are often heard by early childhood educators.

parents often expect “more for their money in play based programs.”

Six Types of Play

- 1) Unoccupied Play
- 2) Solitary (Independent) Play
- 3) Onlooker Play
- 4) Parallel Play
- 5) Associative Play
- 6) Cooperative Play



When a child engages in play, whether it's rolling a ball back and forth or putting on a costume they are developing important social skills like:

- learning to take turns,
- how to cooperate
- getting along with others
- as well as exploring creativity and imagination.

Research shows that there are six types of play that a child will take part in, depending on their age, mood and social setting.



1) Unoccupied play Referring mostly to newborns and infants, the term unoccupied play refers to activity when a child actually isn't playing at all.

- The child may be engaged in seemingly random movements, with no objective.
- This type of play is definitely setting the stage for future play exploration.

2) Solitary (independent) play Just what it sounds like -- when your child plays alone.

- This type of play is important because it teaches a child how to keep himself entertained,
- Eventually setting the path for being self sufficient.
- Any child can play independently, but this type of play is the most common in younger children ages two or three.
- Part of it has to do because they are still pretty self-centered,
- If a child is on the shy side and doesn't know the person who he is playing with well, he may prefer this type of play.



3) Onlooker play Also common in younger children who are working on their developing vocabulary,

- Onlooker play is when a child simply observes other children playing and doesn't partake in the action.
- Often time the child feels shy or needs to learn the rules or maybe is the youngest and wants to just take a step back for a while.

4) Parallel play Put two three year olds in a room together and this is what you are likely to see:

- The two children having fun, playing side by side in their own little world.
- It doesn't mean that they don't like one another, they are just engaging in parallel play.
- Despite having little social contact with her playmate, children who parallel play actually learn quite a bit from one another like taking turns



5) Associative play

- Associative play is slightly different than parallel play, it features children playing separately from one another,
- With associative play, children are involved with what the others are doing –

For Example: think about children building a city with blocks. As they build their individual buildings, they are talking to one another, and engaging each other. This is an important stage of play because it helps little ones develop a whole host of skills such as:

- ◆ Socialization (what should we build now?)
- ◆ Problem solving (how can we make this city bigger?),
- ◆ Cooperation (if we work together we can make our city even better!) and
- ◆ Language development (learning what to say to get their messages across to one another).

Through associative play is how children begin to make real friendships.



6) Cooperative play

- Where all the stages come together and children truly start playing together.
- Common in older preschoolers (or in younger preschoolers who have older siblings or have been around a lot of children),
- Cooperative play brings together all of the social skills your child has been working on and puts them into action.
- Whether they are building a puzzle together, playing a board game, "house" or an outdoor play with a group,
- Cooperative play really sets the stage for future interactions as your child matures into an adult.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- While these stages are important and necessary for a child's social development, there are other types of play that also contribute to a child's maturity.

Cooperative Play

- 1) Dramatic Play
- 2) Competitive Play
- 3) Physical Play
- 4) Constructive Play



These types of play usually develop as a child begins to engage in cooperative play and include:

1) Dramatic/Fantasy play Children who play dress-up or restaurant engage in dramatic or fantasy play. Through this type of play, not only does your child's imagination get a workout, but they learn how to take turns, cooperate, share and work on language development. Through role play, kids are also able to learn about functioning in the greater community.

2) Competitive play entails playing board games, or ball games. With these types of games your child is engaging in competitive play. Rules and turn taking are the big lessons taken from this type of play, but so are taking turns and functioning as part of a team (if that is the type of play involved). This can be a very fun type of play if your child wins, but be prepared to talk your child through it if she loses.

3) Physical play This type of play is less about being social (although it certainly involves that) and more about being physical. Gross and fine motor skills really come into play here, whether your child is throwing a ball or riding a bike. Physical play is important because it encourages kids to be active, something they are likely to do as they get older.

4) Constructive Play Building with blocks and making a road for some toy cars is constructive play. Constructive play teaches kids about manipulation, building and fitting things together. During constructive play your child learns to figure out how to make something work best, whether it is a block tower that won't stand up or a sand castle that keeps collapsing.

Unstructured Play

- 1) Use all senses to acquire information
- 2) The more senses involved in learning, the more learning is retained
- 3) Less play in early grades
- 4) Engage in materials at their own level



Why Is Unstructured Play Important?

Unstructured play is developmentally appropriate for the needs of young children in classrooms. Children at this age use all their senses to acquire information. Therefore, “the more senses that are involved in learning, the more information is retained.” Children from ages infant to five years often engage in free time or unstructured play in classroom settings.

However, by the time a child reaches the early grades, recess is often the only time allowed for free play – and even this opportunity is disappearing from the lives of many children as recess periods are often co-opted for increased academic periods.

How Does Unstructured Play Affect Child Development

- 1) Social Development
- 2) Emotional Development



How Does Unstructured Play Affect Child Development?

Social Development

In the social domain free play allows for the development of cooperation, sharing, and language acquisition.

When children create and participate in games of their own choosing they learn how to resolve conflicts and develop respect for rules and the opinions of others. It is through play that children begin to gain a sense of self and an appreciation for their abilities.

Emotional Development

Unstructured play provides children with an outlet for reducing anxiety.

Children learn to manage stress and gain self control.

They also have an opportunity to express themselves.

During dramatic play children express feelings of frustration and disappointment.



How Does Unstructured Play Affect Child Development continued...

3) Cognitive Development

Cognitive Development

Unstructured play allows for the development of cognitive understandings through hands on experiences, exploration, and the use of manipulative materials. The context of play provides the most appropriate scaffolding for children as they develop their skills.

After children practice their skills in play situations they are ready to use these newly acquired skills in different contexts.

A child who experiments with different sand and soil mixtures at the water table is able to understand concepts such as, erosion, water holding capacity, water movement; and apply this knowledge to create the optimal soil mixture for use in a classroom garden.

How to Promote Unstructured Play

- 1) Balance of open ended activities
- 2) Use materials to construct and solve problems
- 3) Allow extended periods of play time

Methods/Ideas on How to Promote Unstructured Play in Classroom

Unstructured play does not mean that children are let loose in an unstructured classroom. The prepared environment is an important part of having successful free play periods.

- Have a balance of open ended activities such as dramatic play props and clothing; an assortment of blocks, LEGOs, magnetic and felt boards for acting out and telling stories, puppets; scarves and art materials.
- Think of materials that children can use to construct and solve problems with.
- Ensure you have sufficient quantities so that numerous children can engage in the same activity simultaneously.
- Remember to include a variety of self correcting materials, such as puzzles, pattern cards and matching games where children can engage in a task independently and will know if they have succeeded.
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How to Promote Unstructured Play continued...

- 5) Be involved in unstructured play
- 6) Allow opportunities for free play both indoors and outdoors

Children are most successful in free play when they are provided with large blocks of time – 45 minutes to one hour is best. This extended period allows children time to recruit other children to participate, to thoroughly negotiate roles and rules, to agree on a storyline, and to construct the elaborate structures that are often included in dramatic play

- Unstructured play time does not mean that it is “free time” for the teachers. Teachers and classroom assistants need to be actively involved with the children during this time.

- This is an opportunity for teachers to engage in open ended questioning in order to extend children’s thinking
- Structure your day so that children have free play time both indoors and out.

Nutrition and Development

- The effect of nutrition on the brain begins before birth, with the nutrition of the mother
- Under nutrition and the resulting negative effects on brain development during pregnancy and the first two years of life may be permanent and irreversible

The relationship between nutrition and learning is important for people who care for children. Cognitive development is a term that covers human perception, thinking, and learning. Nutrition, genes, and environment are three major factors impacting cognitive development. Because there are many factors that impact learning, scientists cannot say, "If you eat this, you will be smarter." However, the role of good nutrition in child development and learning is important. Nutrition during the early years of a child's life is linked to performance in later years. Many research studies focus on the relationships between breakfast and learning in school-age children; other researchers identified the importance of nutrition at earlier ages.

Nutrition and Development

- Under nutrition results in decreased activity levels, decreased social interactions, decreased curiosity, and decreased cognitive functioning
- Poorly nourished children have more problems fighting infections. Therefore, they may be sick more often, miss more school, and fail to keep up with classmates

Caregivers can encourage children to eat nutritious foods and to try new foods. Preparing fresh, attractive foods will help ensure that the children eat well while in child care. A variety of positive food experiences and activities can help develop good eating habits and food preferences. The child care provider should also be a good role model.

Food Insecurity

A family is considered food-insecure if they frequently:

- Are unable to afford balanced meals
- Reduce the size of meals because of lack of money
- Reduce the quality and variety of their normal diet due to lack of money

Children in the US are mostly safe from the severe hunger often seen in poor and developing countries. However, many children live in families who do not have a consistent and dependable supply of healthy food. Researchers refer to this as food insecurity.⁴

Food insecurity is not the same as hunger. Food-insecure families are often able to avoid hunger by choosing cheaper, more filling types of food over more costly nutritious foods. For young children, the result is often a diet that provides inadequate nutrients for normal growth and development.

Food Insecurity

A recent study found that compared to their peers in food-secure families, food-insecure children under age 3 are:

- 90 percent more likely to have fair or poor health rather than good or excellent health
- 31 percent more likely to spend time in the hospital
- 76 percent more likely to have problems in cognitive, language, and behavioral development

Food insecurity has been linked to nutrient deficiencies that lead to learning and development problems, especially among infants and toddlers. Long-term effects include low achievement in school, emotional problems, and poor health.

Children in food-insecure homes are actually more likely than other children to be overweight. This is often called the hunger-obesity paradox.

This pattern appears early in life. Food insecurity in a child's first years is associated with obesity at age 4, even after accounting for other factors. Researchers have suggested several reasons why food-insecure children may become obese. Parents facing a shortage of food may encourage their children to eat cheaper, more energy-dense foods. Families may develop a tendency to overeat during periods when food is plentiful.

<http://www.urbanchildinstitute.org/articles/updates/nutrition-and-early-brain-development>

Wrap Up

- Developmental Stages
- Personality Traits
- Milestones
- The Importance of Play and Purposeful Play Activities
- Nutrition and Brain Development



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