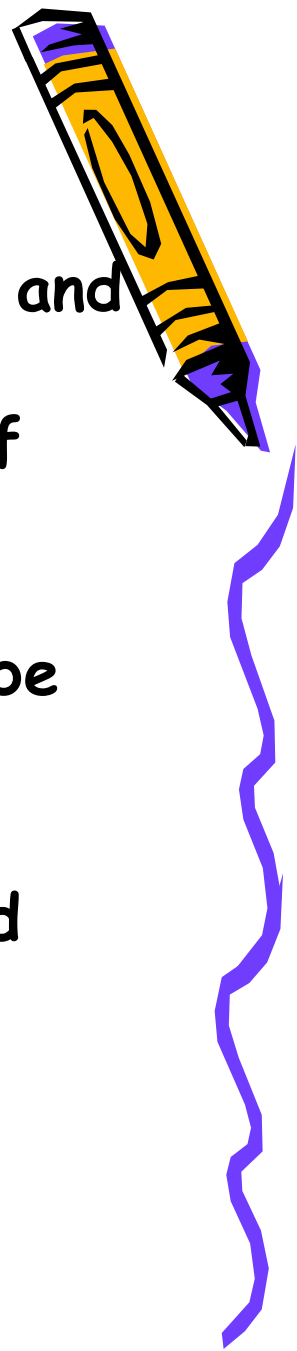




# Giving Infants and Toddlers Their Props!

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# Introduction



As a provider, your first priority is to create and maintain a safe environment for children.

Adults feel safe when they are in control of situations by taking measures to prevent injuries and prepare for emergencies. Once these concerns are secure, then focus can be on creating and providing a developmental program.

Providers help children learn safety habits and attitudes by modeling appropriate safety behaviors.



# What Research Says

Brain research has helped early care providers to become more effective in creating appropriate learning environment for infants and toddlers. The findings have helped us to know -

Babies come into the world primed to communicate.

Babies need adults who love them.

Each baby is unique.

Babies and toddlers are avid learners.

Babies are social beings.

Babies are particularly vulnerable.

Early disorders and delays can have long-lasting consequences.

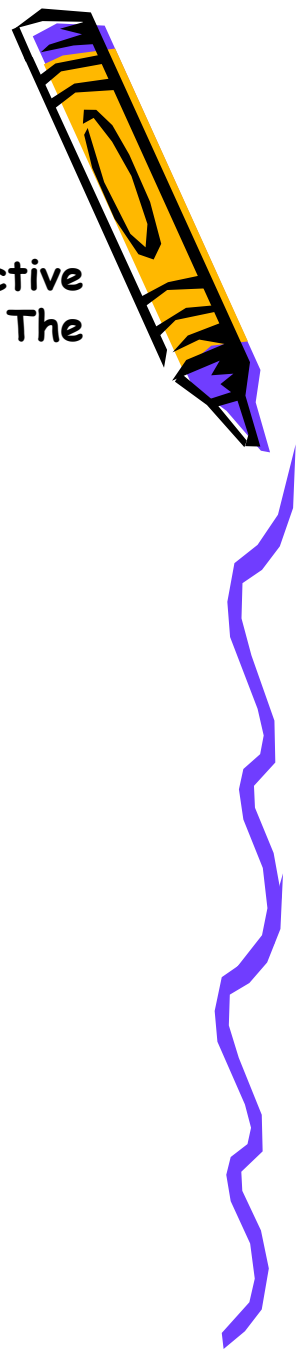
The intensity of infants' inborn inclination to learn and develop in particular areas.

The holistic nature of infant learning.

Infants' rapidly move through three major developmental stages in their first two years.

Development of a first sense of self occurs during first three years.

Early experiences create paths for future learning success.



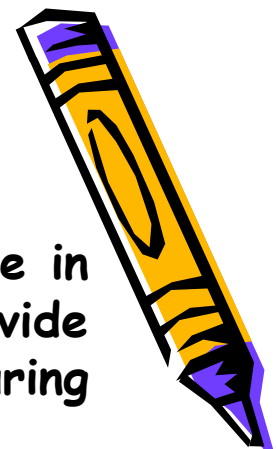
# What We Already Knew

Early care providers are aware that infants and toddlers thrive in environments that allow for safe free exploration and play; provide sensory stimulation; encourage communication, continuous nurturing care and positive adult interactions.

Early care providers are also aware of the importance of keeping abreast of child development trends and research for assisting in providing a safe and healthy, developmentally appropriate learning environment.

The most important aspect of early care is the importance of the learning experiences provided during the first three years of life for young children. To be the most effective for the young child's development, these experiences must be varied, positive and consistent.

Let's look at what we already knew and what is just being discovered to help us to give our infants and toddlers their props!



# Blending Knowledge

## Creating an effective environment



### Create a multi-sensory environment

- ✓ Experiment with different smells in the classroom. Try scents like peppermint and cinnamon to keep children alert and lavender to calm them down.
- ✓ Remember that lighting affect alertness and responsiveness. Bright lights keep infants and toddlers alert; soft lights help infants and toddlers to calm down.
- ✓ Expose infants and toddlers to colors that stimulate the brain. Use colors like pale yellow, beige, and off white to create a calm learning environment; use bright colors such as red, orange, and yellow to encourage creativity and excitement.
- ✓ Use quiet and soft music to calm infants and toddlers and rhythmic music to get them excited about moving.
- ✓ Create a texture book or board that includes swatches of different fabrics for infants and toddlers to feel.
- ✓ Describe the foods and drinks that you serve infants and toddlers and use words that are associated with flavor and texture (“oranges are sweet and juicy;” “lemon yogurt is a little sour and creamy”).



# Safety Needs for Infants

Safety in the care environment depends on the age of the children in care. Young children grow and develop quickly. Preparing for those rapid growth patterns helps to keep the environment safe.

- Infants start exploring their environment at birth. They touch and taste everything as soon as they can. As they begin to roll over, scoot, sitting up, creeping and crawling they discover new and exciting things to see and do. Providers have to be careful to keep dangerous items out of their reach.
- Where infants are concerned, no setting can be entirely childproof. They cannot think ahead and see the consequences of their actions. Their well-being depends on your alertness and attentiveness.



# Safety Needs for Toddlers

Toddlers are explorers on the move. To keep toddlers safe, you must think as toddlers and constantly watch them and remind them about safety practices. This age love to model adult behaviors and learn self-help skills.

Where infants and toddlers are concerned, there is no area that is completely child-safe. Toddlers are able to explore all areas in their environment. Because of this, providers have to constantly ensure the environment is safe and hazard free; be ready to handle any emergencies and be in constant supervision of young children. Model safe habits and explain to children in concrete and simple language ways to keep safe.



# Creating a Healthy Environment

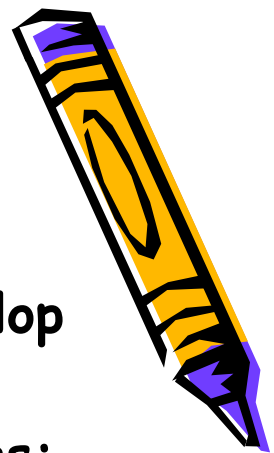


Good health is a state of well-being, physical, mental and social. Adults who are healthy people feel good about themselves. Young children learn about good health and nutrition by following our lead. As providers, we try to provide an environment that promote wellness and prevent illness and abuse. When good habits are developed at an early age, they usually become lifelong habits.

- Maintain sanitary indoor and outdoor environments that reduce the spread of disease.
- Helping children develop habits that promote good hygiene and nutrition.
- Recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect.



# Nutrition for Young Children



When you feed young children, you can help them develop healthy attitudes toward eating.

- With infants, holding them as they take their bottles; talking to them soothingly or sing to them. This helps to make mealtime relaxing and enjoyable.
- Increase their ability to feed themselves with finger foods as their development progresses. Still continue the soothing conversations to make mealtime relaxing, enjoyable and being available if needed.
- Allow children to assist in meal preparation. Toddlers are able to help in preparing portions of the meal or snack. This is also a learning experience for the child.



# Infant and Toddler Learning Environment

- Keep part of the floor bare and part covered with a rug so infants can crawl and walk on different textures.
- Create places where children can be alone, play close to each other, or play in small groups.
- Provide indoor and outdoor spaces for crawling, sitting, walking, tumbling, climbing, rolling, and other large muscle activities.
- Hang on the walls interesting things to look at and touch.
- Rotate some toys each week so there are new and interesting things to explore.
- Offer toys to respond to children's actions: mobiles that move when they are kicked or rattles that make noise when shaken.



# Learning Environment continued



- Create safe places for young infants - provide a safe place for a young infant to stretch, reach, and practice rolling over without being in the path of older children.
- Create safe places for crawlers - provide a texture path for the crawlers using pieces of carpeting, tires, floor mats, and natural materials.
- Create safe places for cruisers - provide areas where they can pull themselves up and walk by holding on to it.
- Create safe places for climbers - provide surfaces that are designed for giving toddlers the ability to safely climb and enhance large motor skills.
- Create safe places for running - provide activities that include their natural desire to run.
- Use diapering time as one-on-one bonding time.



# Building Relationships

Here are some tips for how to effectively establish relationships with infants and toddlers and to promote early brain development:

- ✓ Learn to read the physical and emotional cues of the infants and toddlers in your care. Recognize the individuality of each child and sensitively respond to these differences.
- ✓ Assign a *primary caregiver* to each infant and toddler in your program to work with the child and his/her family.
- ✓ Observe and record the infant and toddler behaviors that are indicative of early brain development. Share these observations with other caregivers who play an important role in the children's lives.
- ✓ Accept infants' and toddlers' strong emotions as signs of their desire to communicate with you and the world. Respond quickly and appropriately to these communications; give meaning to these emotional communications.
- ✓ Find a balance between being overinvolved and being under involved; recognize the child's current developmental status and create opportunities for each child to reach beyond his/her abilities.



# Taking Care of Yourself



Being a caregiver involves giving of ourselves to others.

In order to take care of others, we have to take care of ourselves.

- Take care to maintain your own good health and proper nutrition.
- Improve your health and nutrition one step at a time.
- Eat a variety of foods.
- Maintain healthy weight.
- Choose a diet low in fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol, and moderate in total fat.
- Choose a diet with plenty of vegetables, fruits, and grain products.
- Use sugar and salt in moderation.
- Exercise daily.

