



Relationships and Learning from the Viewpoint of Infants and Toddlers: Development Unfolds Quickly

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Healthy Social and Emotional Development

- Infant Mental Health is the developing capacity to:
 - Experience, regulate, and express emotions
 - Form close, secure interpersonal relationships
 - Explore the environment and learnAll in the context of family, community and cultural expectations for young children
(ZERO TO THREE, 2001)

Science *and* Common Sense Tell Us: Young Children Develop in Relationships



What the Baby Brings

- “Hard-wired” to communicate & learn.
- Biologically designed to form relationships that support regulating all emotions & eventually to self-regulation.
- Innate capacity to convey -needs, desires, pleasures, and what is distressing -in multiple ways.

What Caregivers Bring

- “Hard-wired” to respond to a baby.
- Ways of being with a baby learned in family and community.
- Innate capacities and learned strengths & difficulties in relationships.

Building Blocks: Nurturing and Stable Relationships

- Initial and continuing emotional give and take with *parents*-smiles, gestures, vocalizations sets the stage for development.
- Emotional give and take with *childcare* providers- elaborates and strongly influences development.
- Babies and toddlers also learn from observing adults and from each other.

What are positive ingredients in relationships?

- Expressing reciprocal interest and warmth
 - Cultural variations in how this system looks
 - Communication
 - Physical Contact
- Learning to be together
 - Perfect coordination not the goal
 - Miscommunication and repair are part of growth

Developing a “theory of mind”

- As development unfolds, babies develop a clearer sense of themselves and others. Stern (1989).
- Babies and toddlers need adults to help them learn to regulate all emotions-even positive ones.

Birth to 9 Months

- Babies begin life with a sense of self and other. (Gopnik, Meltzoff & Kuhl, 1999; Stern, 1985)
- Take turns in vocalizing.
- Use a range of emotions when interacting with caregivers and show signs of satisfaction in response to caregivers' attention, e.g. smiles, focused looking, cooing.
- By nine months show what "I like" to a caregiver by-pointing.

14-24 Months

- Around 14 months, toddler's sense of self and other leads to more complex ways of sharing what he/she wants e.g. taking caregiver by the hand to bring them to toy or refrigerator.
- Around 18 months emerging understanding that other people see the world differently than 'I do'.
 - Express empathy for adult or child e.g. pat a hand.
 - Work hard to understand what is "okay" with adults

24-36 Months

- Play including “pretend” play is essential for understanding self and other people in more complex ways.
- Give and take includes language and naming feelings.

A Relational Model of Childcare

- Values the relationships between childcare teachers and parents.
 - Babies and toddlers observe and care about all their significant caregivers.
- Uses the behavior of the child as the language for discussion and sharing.

» Touchpoints (2005)

All relationships are Key for Infants and Toddlers

- Childcare teachers and parents develop strong connections with each other through caring for and about the same young child.
- Childcare providers are in a unique position to support the parent-child relationship.

» Touchpoints (2005)

Infants and Toddlers Evoke Strong Feelings/Passions

- Parents and childcare teachers experience joy, anger, sadness, frustration in getting to know and caring for very young children.
- Daily separations and reunions, developmental and achievements are opportunities for childcare teachers to know their own feelings and acknowledge parents' feelings.

Babies and Toddlers form Distinct Relationships

- Opportunities for a parent to share her/his knowledge of the infant/toddler and for teachers to share their knowledge with the parent supports that child's sense of well-being.

» Zimmerman (2003)

The Power of Holding Others in Our Mind's eye

*One of the most basic human needs,
beginning at birth, is to be gazed on
by another. To be seen is to be real.*

*When babies receive reasonable care,
they feel that they exist in their
caregivers' minds.*

Pawl (1995)