# BRIDGES

Early Intervention...Building Bridges for a Bright Future

West Virginia
Birth to Three
Growing Together

SPRING 2018

# Why Play is Important

When your child plays, they learn about them self and their surroundings. This includes how to coordinate their body movements, talk with friends, apply rules, and more. But the learning process is even broader than this.

Play is more than you think; it is a way for your child to familiarize themselves with the world while exploring and testing their own limits. At the same time, they are engaged in an activity that provides them enjoyment or amusement. Play helps them learn about things such as the earthworm they find on the ground, how to avoid arguments with others, their favorite make believe character during role play or that mom does not like when they yell inside the house. Promoting playtime helps your child learn about their skills and abilities, while interacting with others and their surroundings.

Play begins early. When baby studies and interacts with the things around them, whether this is by putting a toy in their mouth or touching a new textured object, they are "playing." Part of exploring their environment also includes figuring out how to get your attention such as when baby coos or babbles at you. It is important to remember playtime helps baby to continuously master and reinforce concepts that become important milestones.

Your child will continue to play throughout childhood and you may be surprised at the number of skills they develop such as:

- Learning to exercise problem solving skills
- Showing an ability to think flexibly
- Practicing processing their emotions
- Facing their fears
- Trying new things without fear of mistake



All children should have time for play. It is the building blocks for establishing confidence, coping abilities, flexibility and positive interactions with others. Through play, your child will be able to apply these skills as they grow into a young adult.

Excerpts taken from: www.pathways.org/blog/why-is-play-important/

**WOW!**

# Amazing Facts About Children's Brain Development

**WOW!**

60% of all the energy a baby expends is concentrated in the brain!

Did you Know?

Babies whose parents frequently talk to them know 300 more words by age 2 than babies who parents rarely speak.

"Floor Time" with a child including talking, singing, reading, playing, and exploring objects and physical space are the best ways to stimulate brain development.
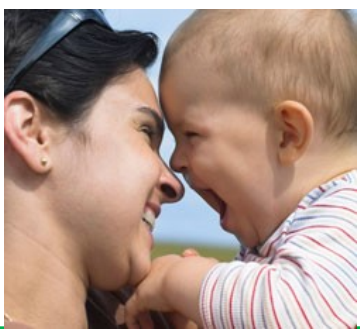
A strong parent-child bond in early childhood prepares children to better handle stress throughout life.

The birth-to-three period is the fastest rate of brain development across the entire human life span!

Holding and stroking an infant stimulates the brain to release important hormones that allow him to grow.

Reading aloud to children helps stimulate brain development, yet only 50% of infants and toddlers are routinely read to by their parents.

Babies use the facial expressions of adults to decide how they feel.

did you know?

# WV Infant/Toddler Mental Health Association
## Supporting the Social and Emotional Well-Being of Children

Infant mental health is recognized as the ability of a child to "experience, regulate and express emotions; form close and secure interpersonal relationships; and explore the environment and learn – within the life of their family, community and culture" (*ZERO TO THREE Policy Center, 2004*).

Another term for infant mental health is social-emotional development. Social-emotional development plays an important role in every child's life. Each child is born ready to form a strong bond with a primary caregiver, usually a parent. For babies, this is a critical element to survival. Most people realize that a baby depends on an adult to help facilitate every basic physical need—eating, sleeping, and staying clean and dry. Babies also depend on their primary caregiver for their emotional needs. By consistently responding to your baby's cry with a warm, soothing hug, and attention to the child's need, he or she will learn to trust and regulate emotions, which over time will lead to school readiness, positive social behavior, and lifelong nurturing relationships.
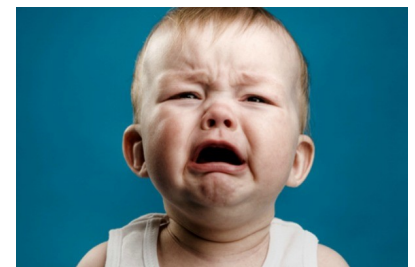
## How can I help my child?

Here are a few ways you can help your child to begin to develop friendships, express feelings, and explore his importance in the family and community:

- Read to your child daily. Not only will you encourage brain development, but you will also provide a time for you to connect with your child.

- Make emotion faces in a mirror. You can explore happy faces, sad faces, surprised faces, angry faces, and more.

- Share a seed with the birds or ask your child to help with watering the plants. Explain that living things need to be taken care of to grow healthy and strong.

- Encourage your child to develop independence by making simple choices. For example, "Would you like to wear your red shirt or blue shirt today?"

- Establish a routine around familiar activities such as washing hands before eating, brushing teeth after eating, reading books before bedtime, and eating meals together.

## Where can I learn more?

In addition to talking with your WV Birth to Three team members, you can find many resources for information on the internet. You might want to explore the following:

- WV Infant/Toddler Mental Health Association – https://www.nurturingwvbabies.com/
- The American Academy of Pediatrics - https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/Mental-Health/Documents/SE-Tips.pdf
- Zero to Three – Magic of Everyday Moments Booklets - https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1092-magic-of-everyday-moments-booklets-how-the-brain-body-and-mind-grow-from-birth-to-3

## Studies have found that high-quality home visiting programs achieve the following results:

- Pregnant mothers who participated in home visiting had **48%** fewer low-weight babies
- Families that participated in home visiting services were **50%** less likely to be involved with Child Protective Services
- Participating children scored **25% higher** on first-through-third grade reading and math achievement tests
- Participating mothers were **5 times** more likely to be enrolled in an education or training program

## Check out your local Visitation Program

**Fayette and Raleigh County:**

New River Health MIHOW (Maternal Infant Health Outreach Worker) contact Debbie Withrow 304-469-2415.

**Wyoming County**:

MountainHeart Community Services Parents as Teachers contact Karina Paynter 304-682-8271.

**McDowell County:**

Community Crossings Parents as Teachers contact Karen Wilson 304-436-8300 ex. 101.

**Mercer County:**

REACHH Parents as Teachers contact Liz McKinney-Brooks 304-431-5420.

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