

Family Pages

Everyday and Special Focus Moments



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Part 6.1

Daily Care and Living Routines

Part Introduction

Daily care and living routines are fascinating learning opportunities for babies, toddlers, and twos. They are filled with interesting things to see, touch, taste, hear, and do. Children under three are just beginning to shape their first pictures of themselves, other people, and the world around them. They are learning about who they are, their bodies, and their feelings. They are learning how to communicate with others and what to expect from people. They are learning about things around them—their colors, sizes, and shapes and how to use them.

From the perspective of young children, these daily events are predictable, so they can learn what to expect and gain a sense of competence. At the same time, there are enough differences that a child's interest and curiosity are sustained.

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Chapter 1: Sleep

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Sleep from a Child's Point of View



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some of the things your child might tell you about what she is experiencing and learning about sleep if she had the words:

Try to look through my eyes at learning about sleep.



Through a Young Child's Eyes		
Sleep		
0-4 months	4-8 months	8-12 months
I fall asleep anytime, anywhere.	You may think we are getting this nighttime sleep thing down. And then, around 4 months, I start waking up during the night.	At night, I might wake up and call for you. You are my most important person, and I don't want to be apart from you.
I spend a lot of time in deep sleep, which is why it can be hard to wake me up—even to feed me.	Like you, my sleep now goes in and out of light and deep sleep every 1-2 hours. You know how to fall asleep at night and fall back to sleep in the middle of the night. I don't. Yet.	Also, I am learning to move and do things. The world is so exciting it can be hard for me to fall back asleep.
The first 2 months or so, I don't know the difference between night and day. That's why our sleep times might be so different.		I might be your little night owl for months—calling you. It is normal and to be expected because I love you and need you so much.
Chances are I may sleep a few hours at night, then wake up to be fed. Repeat. And take four to six shorter naps during the day.	By the time I'm 6-7 months old, I may be down to two to three naps during the day.	I probably still take two naps a day, 1 to 2 hours each.



Through a Young Child's Eyes		
Sleep		
12-18 months	18-24 months	24-36 months
As I begin to walk, I want to be on the move. It can be hard for me to fall asleep. You may even see my legs moving when I am asleep.	I want to be with you—just you. At night it can be hard for me to say “goodbye.”	Though I know how to fall asleep, I may want to be in charge and fight going to bed.
I may still not want to say “goodbye” to you at night.	I may wake up many times. And, as my brain learns to shift into stages of sleep, I may have nightmares or night terrors (where I may cry, mumble, call out but do not wake up all the way.)	I may still be waking up often. It is because of how my brain shifts me from deep to light sleep so many times at night. Also, I may have nighttime fears—of monsters under my bed or the shadows on my wall.
During this time, I may be ready to shift to one afternoon nap.	By now, I’m probably down to one nap a day.	By now, I may be sleeping in a big bed.





Take a Moment: You and Your Child

What might your child say about sleeping through the night?

How might you respond?

What is Your Child's Sleep Pattern?



Figuring It Out Together

To understand your child's sleep pattern, think about the following:



We may sleep at the same time each day or at very different times. Together we can make bedtime work for both of us.



Notice your baby's early rhythms around sleeping and waking.

Does he find it easy to sleep but not so easy to wake up? Does he fall asleep but often wake up crying 20 minutes later? Does he seem full of sunshine and ready to go in the morning? Does he need a quiet and calm morning in order to wake up and have a good start to his day?



Talk to your baby about sleeping and waking.

Help him begin to become aware of behaviors that are associated with feeling sleepy and waking up. For example, as you lay Allie (5 months) in his crib for a nap, you might say, "Allie, you've done so many things this morning! I can hear you telling me you are tired by how you wanted to snuggle and sway while I sang to you. Rest a bit and we will enjoy more things when you wake up. Papa (Mama) is near."



Keep the routines simple.

Routines let everyone know what to expect, which is calming. A simple place to start may be to read or tell a story, say prayers or reflections, sing a song, snuggle and say, "Sweet dreams—I love you."



Practice positive thoughts.

Choose words that keep things in a positive light—even in the middle of the night. You are more likely to respond with more patience and thought if you say "We sure have different sleep patterns, which can be tough" instead of "My baby is a bad sleeper" or "If he doesn't start sleeping more than 20 minutes at a time, I'm going to lose my mind."



What is Your Child's Sleep Pattern?

Take a Moment: Calming Ideas

Can you recall a time when you were desperate for sleep but couldn't rest? Do you have strategies to calm yourself and relax into sleep?

What do you do to help your child relax into sleep?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Tell me a story, sing me a song and give me a cuddle each night...	I can count on what is going to happen before I fall asleep. This helps me relax and feel safe.
Tell a friend that I like to play at night instead of saying "I am bad"...	You love and respect me, even when things aren't going the way you want them to.

0-4 Months: Learning the Difference Between Night and Day



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help your baby understand how life works in your family—people sleep at night and spend time together in the day. You can do this by changing your space and deciding how and when you play with him:



Let him know that daytime is for being with you and playing:

- Limit naps to 3 hours starting at 2 weeks old. Stretch out the time between naps. Try to get some rest yourself when he is dozing.
- Keep him up. Play, talk, and sing together when he is awake and alert.
- Make your space light and bright.
- No need to hush. Let the phone ring, dishwasher whirl, or door buzz.



At night, make it easier for him to fall asleep:

- Keep the lights low and noise down as you feed him and change him—even in the middle of the night.
- Limit talking and playing. He'll start to get the idea it is time for sleep.
- Rock or sway him gently in your arms.
- Give him something to suck—like a pacifier, but not the bottle. If you're breastfeeding, suckling at the breast is fine. Introducing a pacifier after 1 month of age helps prevent nipple confusion.
- Swaddle him or wrap him in a cozy sleep sack.
- Play a continuous sound, such as white noise.
- Gently massage his tiny arms and legs.



Any other ideas?



Take a Moment: Getting More Sleep

When does your baby sleep and for how long?

When do you sleep and for how long?

What new strategies will you try to help you both get more sleep?





0-4 Months: Learning the Difference Between Night and Day

What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Gently wake me after 3 hours of nap time and play, sing, and talk with me to keep me awake a little longer between naps...	Daytime is for playing and being together.
Keep the lights low as you quietly reassure me I am fine and gently rock me in your arms when I wake up in the middle of the night...	Nighttime is for sleeping; it is not a time for talking and playing together.

4-8 Months: Learning to Fall Asleep and Fall Back to Sleep



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help your baby start to learn how to calm herself and how to fall asleep at bedtime. You can do this by giving her cues that it is time for bed, and you can look for cues that she is getting tired.

Can you believe that at one time you didn't know how to fall and stay asleep?



Create a routine to let her know it is time to get ready to sleep.

Whatever you do, do it every time—day or night.

- Change her diaper.
- Dim the lights.
- Make the room quiet.
- Explain it is time for sleep in a quiet, gentle voice.
- Sing her a song and/or rub her back.



Watch for cues to help you decide if she is over-tired.

Is she yawning, rubbing her eyes, fussing? These are signs she may be tired. Try starting your bedtime routine 15 minutes earlier. Being too tired makes it hard to relax and fall asleep—as many of us know.



Any other ideas?



4-8 Months: Learning to Fall Asleep and Fall Back to Sleep

Here are some ways to help her start to learn to fall back to sleep. You can do this by giving her a chance to practice this new skill in a calm and loving way.



Use a simple sleep routine you both know to tell her “It’s time to sleep.”

For example, give her a bath, sing a goodnight song, and cuddle.



Give her practice falling asleep on her own.

- Slowly shorten how long you rock her and then put her in her crib.
- Lay her down when she is drowsy for her morning nap.
- Take it step by step. Once she can fall asleep for her morning nap, do the same for the afternoon nap and then at bedtime.



Give her time—just a minute or two—to comfort herself.

- Even if she is crying, give her a chance to find those tiny fingers to suck or the soft edge of her blanket to touch.
- If she keeps crying, go to her, comfort her. Rub her arm. Use calming, loving words or songs. Try these strategies before lifting her out of bed or taking her to another room.
- Not working—for either of you? Try again in a few days.



Any other ideas?



***Take a Moment: Sleep Routines***

What is the sleep routine you have created or want to create for you and your baby?

What else can you do to help your baby relax into sleep?



4-8 Months: Learning to Fall Asleep and Fall Back to Sleep

What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Decide to help me get ready to fall asleep when you see me rubbing my eyes and yawning instead of waiting until I get over-tired...	I can count on you to help me manage when I start to get tired. With your help, I can have the experience of falling asleep instead of losing it.
Give me a few minutes to try to comfort myself when I am crying in my crib, then come in if I keep crying or begin to cry harder...	I can comfort myself, and if I need help, I can trust that you will be there for me.



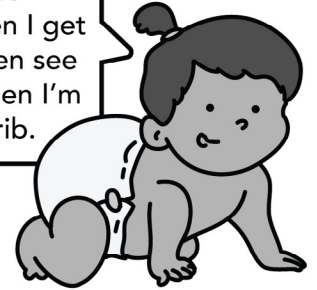
8-12 Months: Helping Your On-the-Move Baby Slow Down to Sleep



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help your active baby slow down, so he can fall asleep. You can do this by letting him know it is time to sleep and keeping him cozy and relaxed.

It's hard for me to stop - even when I get tired. You may even see my leg moving when I'm asleep in my crib.



Use your routine to tell him "time to sleep."

- Give him plenty of active play during the day. Before bedtime, begin to calm down your activities and the noise level. Explain in a soothing voice, "It will soon be time for bed. Let's sit here and play with your blocks for a while or crumple up this paper."
- Your routine may change a bit as he gets older. For example, it may be bath, reading, or story time, or it could be bath, reading, a gentle back rub, and a kiss goodnight. Whatever works for both of you is great.



Give him a chance to calm himself.

- If he cries for you after you leave the room, give him a minute or two to calm himself.
- If he keeps crying, go to him, comfort him. Rub his arm. Use calming, loving words or songs. Try these strategies before lifting him out of bed or taking him to another room.



Keep the temperature just right.

- Cold? Dress him in one layer more than what you are wearing. A wearable blanket or sleep sack will keep baby warm when cold winds blow, but it will not cover his face.
- Hot? Remove a layer.



Any other ideas?



Take a Moment: Put Yourself in Your Baby's Place

How might your baby finish these sentences if he could ask?

"It is hard for me to fall asleep at times because..."

"It helps me calm down and fall asleep when you..."





8-12 Months: Helping Your On-the-Move Baby Slow Down to Sleep

What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Give me plenty of time for active play during the day and then help me shift to quiet play, like building blocks or playing with my stuffed animals before bedtime...	I feel different as I shift from being active to being more calm and quiet, which lets me know it is getting to be bedtime.
Give me a few minutes to try to comfort myself when I am crying in my crib then come in if I keep crying or being to cry harder...	I can comfort myself, and, if I need help, I can trust that you will be there for me.

12-18 Months: Helping Your On-the-Move Toddler Slow Down, so She can Sleep



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help your toddler learn to calm himself. You can do this as you take steps to make sure he is comfortable and feels safe and then let him know it is time to sleep.



Keep him comfortable.

- Be sure his tummy is filled throughout the day.
- Is he getting a new tooth? He may need something cold (a teether or frozen bagel) to chew on during the day. His healthcare provider may have other ideas.



Let him know it is time to sleep.

- Keep to a regular routine and bedtime.
- Clear away toys in his crib—except for his *love*y or cuddly toy.
- Keep his morning nap as long as possible. When he first gives it up, he may need to go to bed earlier.



Help him feel safe.

- If he cries for you, let him know you are there, then give him a chance to settle down himself.
- Be sure he has his *love*y or cuddly toy if he has one. It may be a blanket or stuffed animal or even one of your t-shirts. It carries the feelings of being cuddled by you and helps him feel safe.
- If he keeps crying, rub his arm. Use calming, loving words or songs. Try these strategies before lifting him out of bed or taking him to another room.



Any other ideas?



Take a Moment: It Can Be Hard to Fall Asleep

How might your toddler finish these sentences if he could talk?

"Some of my favorite things to do are..."

*"It can be hard for me to say 'goodbye' to the world when it is time to fall asleep.
You help me calm down and fall asleep when you..."*





12-18 Months: Helping Your On-the-Move Toddler Slow Down, so She can Sleep

What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Make sure I have my <i>lovey</i> to help me feel safe and connected to you when I fall asleep...	I can feel safe even when we are apart.
Give me time to try to comfort myself when I am crying in my crib before you come in to help me...	You have confidence in me because I can comfort myself, and I can do it—sometimes. If I need help, I can trust that you will be there for me.

18-24 Months: Helping Your On-the-Go Toddler Slow Down to Sleep



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help your toddler learn to sleep. You can do this when you take steps to make sure he is comfortable and feels safe and then let him know it is time to sleep.



Keep him comfortable.

- Be sure his tummy is filled throughout the day.
- Is he getting a new tooth? He may need something cold (a teether or frozen bagel) to chew on during the day. His healthcare provider may have other ideas.



Let him know it is time to sleep.

- Keep to a regular routine and bedtime.
- Give him a few real and manageable choices.
 - "Do you want to wear your blue pajamas or the yellow ones?"
 - "Shall we sing *Itsy Bitsy Spider* or *Wheels on the Bus*?"



Keep him safe.

- Clear away toys in his crib—except for his *love*y or cuddly toy.
- Lower the mattress to make it harder to climb out.
- Place pillows or folded blankets on the floor alongside the crib—in case he does escape.
- Baby-proof his room. Your home visitor can tell you more.



Help him feel close to you.

- If he cries for you, let him know you are there, then give him a chance to settle down himself.
- Be sure he has his *love*y or cuddly toy if he has one. It may be a blanket or stuffed animal or even one of your t-shirts. It carries the feelings of being cuddled by you and helps him feel safe.
- If he keeps crying, rub his arm. Use calming, loving words or songs. Try these strategies before lifting him out of bed or taking him to another room.



Any other ideas?



Take a Moment: How is it Going?

What is something that you have tried to do to help your child calm down and fall asleep?
How did it go?

What will you do the same or differently tonight?





18-24 Months: Helping Your On-the-Go Toddler Slow Down to Sleep

What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Give me a choice between two bedtime books to read: "Do you want to read <i>Waiting is Not Easy</i> or <i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i> ?"	You listen to me and respect me. There are some times I can have control over what happens in the big world. It helps me feel safe before I go to sleep.
Help me find Mr. Monkey, my lovey, and give him to me to cuddle with before you say "good night" and leave my room...	You have confidence in me because I can comfort myself, and I can do it—sometimes. If I need help, I can trust that you will be there for me.

24-36 Months: Making Bedtime Work for Your 2-Year-Old (and You)



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help you get your 2-year-old to sleep. You can do this as you give him a sense of control, let him make some decisions, and help him feel safe and close to you—even after you leave his room.



Let him know bedtime is coming.

- Wind down activities starting half an hour before bed. Play soft, soothing music and quiet games.
- Follow your *goodnight...sweet dreams* routine.



Give him a sense of control.

- Give him a few real choices: "Do you want to wear your blue or green pajamas?" "What song should we sing?"
- Does he keep asking for "just one more...drink, story, glass of water?" Give him *one extra*. And let him know *only one*.
- Is he in a big bed? Tell him how proud you are when he stays in it.
- If he keeps popping out of bed, return him, explain it is time to sleep, say "good night," and leave.



Help him feel close to you.

- If he cries for you, let him know you are there, then give him a chance to settle down himself.
- Be sure he has his *lovey* or cuddly toy (if he has one) when you leave the room. It may be a blanket or stuffed animal or even one of your t-shirts. These transitional objects give him the feeling of being cuddled by you and help him feel safe.
- If he keeps crying, go to him. Gently rub his arm or back. Use calming, loving words or songs, and explain kindly and firmly that it is bedtime and that you will be nearby to keep him safe.



Any other ideas?



Take a Moment: Giving Your Toddler a Sense of Control

What realistic bedtime choices can you give your 2-year-old?





24-36 Months: Making Bedtime Work for Your 2-Year-Old (and You)

What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Get me <i>one more</i> drink of water and explain, "Now it is time for you to go to sleep."	You listen to me and take care of me. At the same time, you are clear and let me know now it is time for me to go to sleep.
Explain to me that you will be nearby and that you will keep me safe...	I can be confident you are there for me.

Safe Sleeping



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help you keep your young infant safe during nap and bedtime.

When you keep me safe, I feel more confident.



Safety Alert: Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS)

SIDS is the sudden, unexplained death of a baby younger than 1 year—usually during sleep time. There are no warning signs or known causes. The risk is highest for babies from 2-4 months and then declines. Most SIDS deaths happen in the first 6 months. Here are some steps you can take to reduce the possibility of SIDS:



Place baby on her back to sleep and tell grandparents, babysitters, and child care providers to do the same.

Sleeping on her stomach or side may make it harder to breathe. By the time she is able to roll over, SIDS is not such a concern.



Share a room—but not a bed—with your baby.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that baby sleeps in her own crib or bassinet. Why? Your sheets, pillows, blankets, and even your body, if you roll over on her, can block her breathing. Put her crib next to your bed for comforting or breastfeeding. Then put her back when you are ready to sleep.



Lay her on her back to sleep on a firm mattress or surface with a fitted sheet.

Remove all blankets, toys, pillows, and crib bumpers.



Avoid overheating.

Let baby sleep in light comfy clothes in a temperature you find comfortable. If you think she may be cold, dress her in a onesie or a sleep sack rather than a blanket. It won't bunch up near her face and block her breathing.



Stop smoking around your baby.

Don't let anyone light up around her or even wear *smoky* clothes around her. Secondhand smoke increases the chances of SIDS.



If you are breastfeeding, keep it up as long as you can.

Some experts think breast milk might protect baby from infections that could raise the risk of SIDS.



Immunize your baby.

Research shows that following the immunization recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) leads to a 50% reduced risk of SIDS as compared to babies who haven't gotten all their shots.



Consider giving her a pacifier to fall asleep.

Pacifier Tips

Here are some tips when you are using a pacifier to help your baby fall asleep:



Breastfeeding?

Wait until you and baby have your routine down (at least 1 month) before using a pacifier to avoid *nipple confusion*—that is, you don't want your baby to prefer the pacifier nipple over yours.



Don't force it.

If baby doesn't want the pacifier, forget it this time.



If it falls out when she falls asleep, don't put it back into her mouth.



Keep the pacifier clean.

Buy a new one if the nipple is damaged.



Never coat the pacifier with alcohol, honey, or any other substance.



IMPORTANT: No honey for your honey—until she is at least 1 year old. Honey can lead to botulism bacteria that may be linked to SIDS.





Take a Moment: How You Keep Your Baby Safe

What steps do you already take to keep bedtime safe for your baby?

Is there anything you are going to change?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Tell other adults how to keep me safe...	I can count on you to protect me—even when you are not there.
Place me on my <i>back</i> to sleep every night...	I can expect you to do it which can help me relax.



Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child



You are your child's first teacher about sleep. It may take time, but you will figure it out together.

Have these thoughts ever crossed your mind?

- I'm so tired I can hardly move.
- Can I give him back and take a nap?
- I love to watch the way his mouth puckers when he sleeps. If only he would sleep longer.
- Sometimes I feel so angry—even though I know he is just a little kid.
- It's only 7:00 am. I've fed him twice, changed his diaper twice, played peek-a-boo, and walked to the park. How are we going to make it through the rest of the day?

• **Anything to add:**

You are not alone. Knowing more about sleep—yours and your child's—can help you think and decide about what to say and do. Even when you are in need of some sleep yourself.



What do you remember about sleep from when you were little?

How you teach your child about sleep today is likely shaped by how your adult(s) taught you about sleep when you were little.



Take a Moment: Look Back at Sleep Time

Is there anything from sleep time in your childhood that you want to introduce your child to, such as a song or story?

Is there anything you want to be different?





To Help You Sleep



Be screen-free 30 minutes before bedtime and in the middle of the night.

Sending photos of your little one or checking in with friends can wait until morning.



Watch what and when you drink and eat and when you smoke.

- Try not to drink water for 2 hours before bed.
- Caffeine and nicotine keep you awake, so finish that coffee or soda 4 hours before bedtime. Now you have another reason to stop smoking.
- Alcohol may make you sleepy at first, but it often wakes you up later.
- Keep after-dinner snacks light and healthy. Finish any munching an hour before bed.



Make your sleeping space dark, quiet, and cool.



Take notes to quiet your mind.

Write down thoughts, worries, important things you have to do tomorrow. Then let them go. They'll be there in the morning.



Lie down—even if you can't sleep.

It will give your body some rest.



Any other ideas?



**What about when you are so tired you can't believe it?
More tired than you ever thought possible?**



Get some support.

Is there anyone who can help you and give you a break? Is there a place you can go with your child that will make life easier for a few hours, such as the park or visit a neighbor?



Calm yourself and your child.

Sometimes, the things you do to quiet your child—rocking him, singing softly to him, bouncing him gently in your arms, dancing with him, telling him “everything will be OK”—will calm both of you.



Smile.

Even faking or forcing a smile can lessen stress and help you feel happier.



Prioritize.

Don't worry about the small stuff right now. The dusting or folding the laundry can wait.



Try a visualization exercise.

Known as guided imagery, the idea is to direct your mind to focus on a positive, calming experience or place.

Here is an example from *Breathe to THRIVE*:

1. Imagine you are hiking in the woods;
2. See the sun setting behind the mountains in the distance;
3. Listen to the sound of the wildlife around you;
4. Feel the cool breeze against your skin;
5. Savor the smell of the evergreen trees around you; and
6. Enjoy the refreshing taste of cold water.





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Call someone in your <i>Circle of Support</i> to help you take care of me...	We have people in our lives we can ask to help us. It is a good feeling to know there are family and friends we can trust to be there for us.
Slow down inside and sing a song you love in a soft voice as you rock me to sleep...	You keep me safe and can help me relax.





Practical Applications for Families: Figuring It Out Together

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Figuring It Out Together: Sleep Routines



Areas of Development

A quality sleep routine impacts these areas of development:



Cognitive



Socio-Emotional



Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors



Social Connection



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development



Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Associated Family Pages

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Scenario: Sleep Routines

It's getting close to the baby's bedtime, and her father is perched on the couch under the light of the lamps watching his favorite TV show. The parent looks over and notices his 9-month-old child rubbing her eyes and yawning. The father picks her up to cradle her in his arms, but she whines and squirms out of his lap to play with one more toy. He allows her to continue playing and waits for the baby to tire herself. Before long, the baby is no longer interested in her toys, and she begins to cry hard.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Children thrive on a regular, predictable bedtime routine. Plentiful sleep improves children's health, behavior, and school readiness.

- Keep bedtime around the same time each night.
- Incorporate activities that distinguish night from day, like turn down the lights and turn off screens.
- Establish a consistent bedtime routine that includes having quiet time and bath time and reading books together.
- If there are other adults in the home, have them participate in the bedtime routine, and even swap responsibilities when able.

Figuring It Out Together: Infant Soothing – Swaddling



Areas of Development

Swaddling an infant correctly can impact the following areas of development:



Motor Skills



Socio-Emotional



Sensory & Perceptual

Scenario: Infant Soothing – Swaddling

A mother places her 8-week-old baby down to sleep for the night. Minutes later, a loud truck drives by, and the baby awakens. As a reflex, he extends his arms and legs; starts to cry; and then, pulls his limbs close to his chest. The mother picks up her child to rock him, but his crying won't stop, and he begins to scratch at his face.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

Related Protective Factors



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development



Social and Emotional Competence of Children

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

When infants are swaddled, they are protected from their natural startle reflex. Swaddling a baby mimics the womb environment, which can reduce anxiety and help a baby learn how to self-soothe. Therefore, swaddling can help a baby sleep more soundly.



SAFETY ALERT: Always place your baby on his back to sleep. When your baby begins to show signs of being able to roll over, you must stop swaddling him!

Swaddling can increase the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) or sleep-related death, if he rolls over while swaddled and doesn't have the use of his arms to move himself. Once your baby can no longer be swaddled, consider using a sleep sack.

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Chapter 2: Nutrition and Feeding

6.1.2 Nutrition and Feeding

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Learning to Feed Myself from a Child's Point of View



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some of the things your child might tell you about learning how to eat if she had the words:

With you as my model, time and practice, I'll soon be a pro at healthy eating.



Through a Young Child's Eyes	
Learning to Feed Myself	
0-4 months	4-6 months
I have a special cry that tells you, "I am hungry" or "my tummy hurts."	I let you know I am hungry in different ways. I may cry or fuss, reach for you, smack my lips, or get frustrated if I have to wait.
I look in your eyes, coo, and smile when you hold and feed me.	I can control my head better. I can roll over and am beginning to sit with help.
I discover my hands and may reach out to touch your hand, breast, or the bottle.	I am gaining the skills I need to eat solid foods. I can sit in my high chair. My tongue moves food to the back of my mouth, and I know how to swallow it.
I feel better when I'm burped because this whole sucking, swallowing, and breathing thing is tough to coordinate!	If I am pushing cereal or mashed food out, I may not quite be ready yet, but I'm learning.
	I tell you I am done when I turn away or push away the breast, bottle, or spoon.

**Through a Young Child's Eyes*****Learning to Feed Myself*****6-12 months**

I may babble, coo, catch your eye, reach for the breast, or point to my bottle to tell you, "I am hungry."

I can hold my own bottle. I also begin to use my fingers and hands to feed myself. I reach for a graham cracker and dip my finger in the bowl of applesauce and lick it off.

I may push the bib away to say, "I don't want it." (You can put it on me anyway.)

I reach for the spoon when you feed me or the washcloth when you wipe my face.

I may push your hand or the spoon away or shake my head "no" to say, "I am done."

I may start drooling (a lot!) and mouthing both food and non-food items as my teeth start coming in. You can help me stay safe by watching what I pick up—because I don't yet look at things before putting them in my mouth. And, I may enjoy and be comforted by a teether that you keep chilled in the refrigerator.

12-18 months

I may say, "Ba ba," point to or try to reach for a cracker to tell you, "I am hungry."

I still enjoy sitting with you and nursing or having my bottle, especially when you talk and sing with me.

I can drink from a sippy cup.

I like to explore my food and the utensils I'm learning to use. Things may get messy!

I can hand you the cup or banana when you ask for it.

I am getting new finger skills. I try to pick up a crumb and eat it, or I may try to buckle or unbuckle the strap on my high chair.

I may refuse to eat mashed cauliflower and point to the applesauce that I want instead.

I may kick the high chair, push my cup onto the floor, or say "down" when I am done.





Through a Young Child's Eyes	
Learning to Feed Myself	
18-24 months	24-36 months
I may say, "Eat," when I am hungry.	I may walk over to the fridge and try to pull open the door when I am hungry.
I may grab the spoon and try to feed myself. (Having two spoons will make life easier for both of us.)	I may ask for a "sandmich" and refuse apple slices when I am hungry.
I may use my word for bottle when I want my cup.	I may reach for food on your plate or hand you a piece of my peach.
I can use my thumb and forefinger to pick up small pieces of food.	I feel proud to be a real helper when you let me carry the napkins to the table, stir the pancake batter, or tear the lettuce leaves for our salad.
I may get frustrated when things don't go my way, like when the cooked carrots slip off my spoon or fork.	I can walk to the sink and wash my hands with you before we eat.
I pretend to feed my stuffed animals or dolls and to cook. Watch, and you may hear me say and do things you say and do with me.	I can hand you the plate when you ask me to pass the sliced pears to you.
I may say, "No," "Done," pull off my bib, or shake my head to tell you when I am done.	I may watch to see if someone gets a bigger cookie than I do.
	I may tell you, "Get down please," when I am done.
I may get angry when someone teases me with food or pretends to take something off my plate and eat it.	I may show you my sense of how things work by demanding only milk in my blue cup and only juice in my orange cup.



Take a Moment: You and Your Child

What would your child tell you about learning about eating healthy?

How would you respond to help her take her next steps in learning about being healthy?



Understanding Your Baby's Needs



Figuring It Out Together

Get your baby off to a healthy start. For the first 4-6 months, breast milk and/or formula will give her the nutrients she needs. At her 4-month well-baby visit to her healthcare provider, talk about when you can begin to give her water and when and how to introduce solid foods.



If you are breastfeeding:



Ask for help.

Breastfeeding is a skill that can take practice—for both mom and baby. Someone with experience, such as a lactation consultant or community group (e.g., La Leche League), can help you with basic instruction.



Keep it up as long as you can.

Breast milk is all your baby needs for the first 6 months. It helps keep baby from getting sick and can help prevent obesity later in life.



Pump milk to give other family members a chance to feed her— and to give mom a break.

If you are bottle feeding:



Be exact.

Wash your hands. Follow the instructions to mix her formula.



Put only breast milk or formula in her bottle before 6 months of age.

Unless her doctor says otherwise. No water, cow's milk, or juice.



Hold, don't prop.

Propping up the bottle can make it easier for baby to choke. It can cause liquid to collect in her mouth and get into her ear which can lead to ear infections and even hearing loss. It can also lead to early tooth decay.



To warm baby's milk...

Use a bottle warmer, warm a bottle or milk bags in tap water, prepare formula with warm tap water.



SAFETY ALERT: Warming milk or food in the microwave can lead to *hot spots* that can burn baby's lips and mouth. Always stir, shake, and test the temperature before feeding baby.



Breast or Bottle...

No matter how you are feeding your baby, here are some ideas to keep in mind:



Show your love.

Put down your phone. Turn off the TV. Hold baby. Eye to eye. Talk to her—about anything. Your voice is music to her ears.



Hold off on water until baby is about 6 months old.

Breast milk or formula is all she needs. Adding extra water to formula or feeding water in addition to breast milk decreases nutrient intake, can slow growth and development, and can lead to risk of water intoxication.



Look for hunger signs.

Babies have several ways to show they are hungry! These actions include smacking or licking her lips; opening or closing her mouth; sucking on her lips, tongue, hands, fingers, toes, toys, or clothing; and fussing and crying.



Burp her.

Tummy gas hurts. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says to burp before switching breasts or between every 2-3 ounces if using a bottle—up until about 6 months old.



Look for signs she is full.

Slowing down on sucking, pausing between sips, releasing the breast or nipple, and relaxing or even dozing off are signs she is full.



End mealtime when she has had enough.

It will help prevent a tummy ache today and reduce risk of obesity later in life.



Take care of her gums and mouth.

Wrap a piece of gauze or soft wet washcloth around your finger and wipe inside her mouth and gums after feeding and before bedtime. This removes bacteria that can cause plaque and damage new teeth as they emerge. No toothpaste needed.





Introducing Solids



Get the OK from her healthcare provider.

Decide first steps for baby's first foods. Keep in touch about baby's growth and weight during scheduled visits and in between visits, if there are concerns.



Look for signs she is ready.

Is she around 6 months old? Can she hold her head up? Sit up in her high chair? Use her tongue to move food to the back of her mouth (instead of pushing it out)? Is she looking at or trying to reach for your food?



Lessen the chance of allergies.

Most babies begin their eating careers with infant cereal and pureed veggies, fruits, and meats that rarely cause allergies.



Take it slow.

Offer her a teaspoon or two of soft food after nursing or bottle-feeding, and use a baby-sized soft-tipped plastic spoon. Let her smell it. Gum it.



Keep food safe.

Pour baby's food into a small dish. If you dip her spoon into the jar throw the rest away because bacteria from her mouth will now be in the jar.



As teeth begin to appear, brush them gently with a soft baby toothbrush.

Brush her tongue too, if she'll let you. Use a tiny rice-sized dab of baby toothpaste (available in drug stores and supermarkets). Keep on the lookout for decay (brown spots or pits). Talk about her teeth care with her healthcare provider and decide when to make her first dental appointment.



Keep up brushing until she learns to do it herself.

Usually around age 6.



A Word on Food Allergies

If other members of your family have food allergies, your child is at higher risk of developing similar allergies. If your child is adopted, you may not know her medical history. **Talk with your baby's healthcare provider to learn what is best for your baby.**

Research shows that introducing foods that can cause allergies, like soy, eggs, wheat, fish and peanut butter at 4-6 months may help to prevent the development of food allergies later. You and your healthcare provider can develop a plan to accommodate your child's food allergy needs.



Take a Moment: Any Questions?

What questions do you have about feeding your baby in her first year of life? Write them down to share with your home visitor or healthcare provider at the next visit.





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Feed me and add in social time...	Eating together is about more than food. It is about our relationship.
Work with our home visitor to get information or food that we need...	There are people I can depend on besides you and other family members.

Eating Right for Toddlers and Twos



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some tips about eating right for toddlers and twos:



Basics of Healthy Eating for Toddlers and Twos



Expect a slow-down around 1 year of age.

At this age, children aren't growing as much. They generally need 1,000 calories a day on average.



Expect the unexpected.

He may eat as much as he needs for the day at breakfast and pick for the other meals. He may not eat much today and make up for it tomorrow.



Stick with the food groups.

Your child needs the vitamins, minerals, fats, and roughage she gets from these food groups: whole grains, fruits and vegetables, milk and dairy products, meat, fish, and meat alternatives. Treats she could enjoy occasionally may include: cut up fresh fruit, cheese sticks, bagels or mini pita breads with cream cheese, unsweetened or lightly sweetened cereals, animal or cheese crackers, drinkable yogurt or a small glass of juice diluted with water.



Give her milk.

Children should have 16 oz. of milk each day. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends children drink whole milk until they are 2. Then switch to low-fat and then no-fat over a few weeks.



Avoid power struggles as much as possible.

Let him make choices. Offer finger foods and child-sized utensils so he can eat on his own. Assist as needed.



A Note of Reassurance

Most parents worry about eating. It's natural. Is he eating enough? Too much? The right foods? The thing is, most of the time, your child will know how much to eat and will choose a variety of foods that give him the nutrition he needs over time. Of course, if you have concerns about his appetite and growth, speak to his healthcare provider. But most of the time, if you are giving him healthy food from the basic food groups with different textures and colors, he will be OK.

Be Prepared for Picky Eating and Food Refusal



Honor what your child is learning about himself and his needs.

Children eat when they are hungry. If you give them good options from which to choose, they can't go wrong. Research suggests that children do a better job of eating when they choose what and how much they want.



Mix it up.

There is no law that says you can't serve a grilled cheese sandwich or hamburger for breakfast or have whole wheat pancakes for dinner.



Give it time.

Researchers have found it can take 10 to 15 tries for a child to get to know and like a new food.



Watch the milk and juice.

Too much to drink will fill his tummy and he won't have room to eat. (Note about juice: Always add some water to cut the calories and sugar.)



Take a deep breath.

The more you can relax about eating, the less tense mealtime will be, and the more likely everyone, no matter their age, will eat and be happier.



Any other ideas?





Take a Moment: Trying a New Food

How do you feel when someone offers you a new food that may look, taste, and feel different from what you are used to eating?

How do you respond to new or unfamiliar food offerings?

Do you think your child has similar thoughts and reactions when you give him a new food?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Let me choose foods from what you offer and don’t force me to eat more than I want...	I have some control over my own eating. I can trust myself to know what I like and how much I want.
Offer me many chances to try a new food...	There are lots of tasty foods out there to try. Some I like. Some I don’t.



Meals are About More than Eating Right



Figuring It Out Together

Eating is about more than good nutrition. It is about helping your child develop new motor skills, like chewing, swallowing, and holding a cup or spoon. It is also about deepening relationships as you prepare food and the table together, eat together, and share stories of your family and culture.

Things may get a little messy around here, but I'm learning so much.



Check In with You



What is your picture of mealtime?

What do you want mealtime to be like? How is this the same or different from mealtime when you were growing up?



How do you feel about *messiness*?

What can you live with? How can you keep your feelings from making mealtime a tense time?



Meals are About More than Eating Right



What can you do ahead of time to reduce the stress of a mess?

(For example, putting a bib on your child, having paper towels nearby, changing from work or school clothes).



How do you navigate decision-making?

When do you follow his choices? Insist on yours?



What do you want him to learn about mealtime from watching you?

You are his model.





Take a Moment: Your Influence

How do you shape family mealtime?

Is there anything you want to continue doing? Anything you'd like to change?



Invite Your Child to Help You Prepare for a Meal

Of course, there are times you are in a hurry and just want to get dinner ready alone and quickly. This may be true most of the time. But, when life allows, these ideas will help your child develop new skills and feel *I can do it* as you work together.



Your baby, sitting safely in his baby seat, may enjoy the sights, sounds, and smells as you prepare dinner and talk with him about what you are doing. He may enjoy a nap knowing you are nearby.



Your toddler will enjoy doing *real jobs* as he tears lettuce leaves for the salad, stirs with a wooden spoon, carries napkins, or pushes his high chair to the table.



Your 2-year-old will enjoy pouring milk from a measuring cup into a plastic bowl and stirring the pancake batter; counting and scrubbing carrots or potatoes (on a small tray with a little water and vegetable brush); carrying anything unbreakable to the table; and wiping crumbs off a table, chair, or floor.



Any other ideas?





Eat and Talk Together



Find times when everyone sits and eats together—or at least some of you—as your family schedule allows.

It isn't always easy to get everyone together these days. Gathering everyone lets your child know that eating is about being together too.



Give mealtime a sense of order by developing a simple routine.

For example, wash hands, everyone sits down, say or sing a prayer, put on your child's bib, be sure everyone has a napkin, and then begin to eat.



Give your child a sense of control.

Remind him to chew. Give him child-sized utensils and plastic dishes he can use on his own.



Create one or two basic rules for everyone—for now.

For example: everyone sits in their seats to eat or talk in inside voices, or food is for eating not throwing. And for the adults: "Put cell phones away" is a big one. It is hard to be a family and to enjoy a little time together when the adults and older kids are worlds away on their phones.



Model mealtime conversation.

It isn't always easy to think of something to say when trying to get a toddler to eat. Something simple like everyone sharing a sentence about their day can get you started.



Any other ideas?



Eating Out



Choose a place that is family friendly.

If you aren't sure, check ahead. Find out if they have high chairs.



Choose the right time.

A tired, cranky child will guarantee no one will enjoy their meal so plan to go out after a nap. Is he not feeling well or have there been many unusual events lately? Wait for another day.



Bring the right stuff.

Pack wipes and a clean shirt to take care of spills. Small toys or books can keep him busy at his seat. Put a healthy snack in your bag, so he can start to eat, if service is slow.



Take a walk.

Young children can't sit too long. If you notice he is getting antsy, take him for a walk around the restaurant inside or outdoors.



Be prepared to leave.

If he—and you too—are spending more time fussing and start to lose it, pack up a doggie bag and head home. You can try again another day.



Any other ideas?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Invite me to help you set the table or stir the pancake batter...	I am competent. I am part of this family, and I am proud to help get dinner ready.
Tell us about your day and ask about mine...	Eating together is a time for listening and talking together. You care about what I have to say.

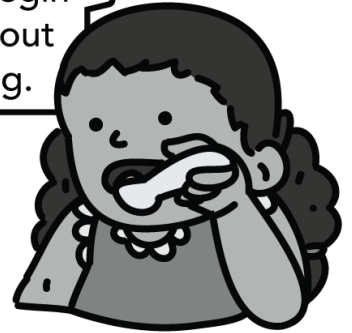
Safe Eating



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help you keep your child safe while eating. You can do this when you pay attention to where, how, and what your child eats. Knowing what to do if there is a problem, and being sure all the adults in his life know it too are also safety steps to take.

When you keep me safe, I begin to learn about safe eating.



Let Him Know Where and How to Eat



Help your child understand that her high chair is the place she eats when she is able to sit.

She should drink her bottle there, too, or in your arms. Walking around with food and drink can lead to choking.



Invite her to pay attention to chewing and swallowing.

Show how you chew and swallow. Explain: "Mommy chews and swallows her food before she talks."



Is she a big eater? Redirect her from putting too much in her mouth at a time.

Invite her to slow down by talking and singing together between bites.



Any other ideas?



SAFETY ALERT: Prevent Choking

Safety Tests: You can check food items and toys or other play objects for their safety against choking.



Use the toilet paper roll test:

Safe items CANNOT fit through a toilet paper roll.



Read the packaging of any new toys for suggested ages.

Small pieces are not meant for children under 3 years. Avoid latex balloons, small balls, marbles, and toys with small parts intended for older children. Check her toys for pieces that could break or fall off.



Check used toys (yard sale, hand-me-downs from friends and family).

Make sure they are in good working order and that there are no small pieces that can come off.



Choking is always a hazard.

Young children explore and learn by putting things in their mouths. They have small airways, and their coughing is not strong enough to push out something that is blocking it.



Some health conditions may make it more likely a child will choke.

Such as swallowing disorders, neuromuscular disorders, developmental delays, and traumatic brain injury.



Foods to avoid for children age 4 and under include the following:

Hot dogs, chunks of meat or cheese, grapes, raw vegetables, fruit chunks that could lodge in your child's throat, seeds, nuts, popcorn, hard candy, chunks of peanut butter, marshmallows, and chewing gum.



Your baby is new at chewing and swallowing.

Cut fruit and cooked vegetables into small pieces—about ¼ inch (pea-sized). Give her a little bit of food at a time, so she is not tempted to put too many pieces into her mouth at once.





Take a Moment: Safe Eating

What steps do you already take to keep eating safe and healthy for your child?

Is there anything you may want to do differently? Add?



Food Allergy Basics



A food allergy happens when the body reacts against harmless proteins in food.

The reaction often occurs shortly after eating or drinking that food.



A child can be allergic to any food.

There are eight common suspects to check out first with your doctor: milk, eggs, peanuts, soy, wheat, tree nuts (e.g., walnuts, cashews), fish, and shellfish (such as shrimp).



Signs of an allergy can include...

Itching, rashes, vomiting, diarrhea, wheezing, sneezing, and/or difficulty breathing.



The good news:

Most kids outgrow egg, milk, wheat, and soy allergies by age 5. Allergies to peanuts, nuts, and seafood more often can last for a lifetime.



Research shows that introducing foods that can cause allergies,

Like soy, eggs, wheat, fish, and peanut butter, at 4-6 months may help to prevent the development of food allergies later. Talk with your baby's healthcare provider to learn what is best for your baby.



SAFETY ALERT: No honey for your honey—until she is at least 1-year-old. Honey may contain spores of botulism bacteria that may be linked to SIDS.

Talk Safety with Other Adults Your Child's Life



Be clear about safety messages.

Convey these messages to everyone who cares for your child whether in your home, their home, or a child care program. You may want to even write down and post the safety rules you want them to follow.



Talk food allergies.

Make a sign at home and be sure your child care facility has a list of food allergies for your child. When you go to a birthday party or travel, be sure there will be food your child can eat or take some with you.



Share contact information.

Be sure anyone and everyone has your contact information and your child's healthcare provider's contact information.





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Tell other adults safe eating rules and let them know about any allergies I have...	I can count on you to protect me—even when you are not there.
Bring food I can eat to a birthday party even with my allergies...	It is fun to eat and be with others.

Prenatal Health: Your Nutrition



Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) can help individuals understand what foods are recommended for women who are preparing for pregnancy, are pregnant, or are breastfeeding. These guidelines offer an opportunity for you to start a conversation with your healthcare provider about your own nutrition and dietary needs.



SAFETY ALERT: Not everyone has the same needs and medical history, so it is important to talk to your healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Nutrition needs during pregnancy is a common topic at prenatal visits and may be a common theme among your *Circle of Support* people. Pregnancy can alter one's taste buds and cravings. Expectant parents may experience nausea and indigestion with foods that they previously enjoyed or desire some unexpected foods, like spicy foods or lemons.

There may be foods that have cultural significance for pregnant and nursing women in your family, and these foods may be considered important to eat or important to stay away from.

Good Nutrition Helps You and Your Growing Baby Stay Happy and Healthy

Eating well will help you keep your energy levels up. Remember, growing an entirely new person in 40 weeks takes a lot of energy! Your growing baby benefits from the nutritious foods you eat. Eating well is one of your first opportunities to take care of your growing baby!

Eating well means getting enough calories for you and your growing baby and making food choices that are packed with nutrients. What does this mean?

Calories:

The DGA recommends that most (non-pregnant) women should consume 1,800 to 2,000 calories per day. Pregnant women should consume 300-450 additional calories per day, and breastfeeding women should consume 300-400 additional calories per day.



Tip! If you are carrying multiples, are breastfeeding while pregnant, or have an unhealthy pre-pregnancy weight, you should consider consulting your healthcare provider about how many calories you may need to maintain a healthy pregnancy.



Take a Moment: Reflecting on What You Know About Nutrition and the Advice You Receive

What foods have you been told are good for a healthy pregnancy? What reasons are shared for why these foods are good?

What foods have you been told are bad to eat when you are pregnant? What reasons are shared for why a pregnant person should avoid these foods?

Who gives you nutrition advice?





Nutrient-dense foods:

Certain foods are called nutrient-dense foods. These include foods that are high in nutrients, like essential vitamins and minerals, and foods that provide your body with protein, healthy fats, and fiber.

Generally, nutrient-dense foods are lower in calories than foods that are high in sugar and carbohydrates. For example, a piece of fresh fruit with some nut butter is higher in nutrients and lower in calories than a candy bar and a good snack choice.

There are many benefits to consuming nutritious foods and eating a balanced diet of protein, fat, and fiber while you are pregnant. Eating nutritious foods can do the following:



Help you stay healthy;



Give you longer-lasting energy;



Reduce stress associated with trying to conceive or during pregnancy;



Decrease the occurrence of anemia, fatigue, or nausea, which are symptoms often associated with pregnancy;



Support your baby's brain development;



Help ensure a healthy birth weight; and



Reduce the risk of some birth defects.



SAFETY ALERT: Talk with your healthcare providers if you follow a diet that restricts certain foods or food groups (e.g., plant-based only) or if you have special dietary needs (e.g., food allergies or sensitivities) as it might be harder for you to get important nutrients, like key vitamins and minerals, which are needed for a healthy pregnancy.



Special Note: Diabetes and Pregnancy

Diabetes is a special concern during pregnancy. There are different types of diabetes, but all forms of this condition mean that a person has trouble regulating their blood sugar (glucose). Most people are able to regulate glucose by producing insulin, but that process is impaired or does not work when diabetes is present.

When eaten, carbohydrates turn into glucose for your body to use as energy. Glucose is important for you and your growing baby, but too much may lead to significant health problems like kidney damage and vision loss. Uncontrolled glucose during pregnancy can also lead to delivery complications due to high birth weight (greater than 8.8 pounds or 4,000g) and an increased risk of an infant later developing diabetes.

Type 1 Diabetes (T1D):

This type of diabetes is usually discovered during childhood. It is an autoimmune disease, and it prevents your body from making insulin. T1D is controlled with daily insulin intake and is a chronic condition.

Type 2 Diabetes (T2D):

This type of diabetes is usually discovered in adolescence or adulthood. The body makes insulin but either does not make enough or cannot use it effectively to control blood sugar levels. T2D can be controlled through a healthy diet, exercise, and sometimes medication including insulin.

Gestational Diabetes:

This type of diabetes occurs only during pregnancy and may resolve after birth. Having gestational diabetes increases the risk of developing T2D later for you and your baby and may cause large birth weights.





Making Healthy Food Choices

The DGA offers information about healthy foods you should consider eating while you are pregnant. Remember, foods should be nutrient-dense and lean or low-fat, and foods should be prepared with minimal added sugars, refined starches, saturated fats, or sodium. Eating a variety of foods, especially fruits and vegetables, is beneficial for your baby. Think, “eat the rainbow”! Many important nutrients are found in foods like the ones listed below (your home visitor can offer additional suggestions for healthy eating):



Vitamin C – citrus fruit, broccoli, strawberries, peppers, potatoes



Calcium – dairy, nuts, vegetables, non-dairy milks, sardines, figs, fortified foods



Choline – eggs, meats, seafood, beans, peas, lentils



Iron – meat, poultry, some seafoods, spinach and other dark leafy greens, beans, tofu



Iodine – iodized table salt; table salt should be used, within daily sodium recommendations, when pregnant. Iodine helps a baby’s brain development and is found at very low levels in most foods. Your body needs more iodine when you are pregnant.



Protein – beef, pork, poultry, seafood, eggs, beans, nuts, and dairy



Carbohydrates – whole grains breads and pastas, rice, oatmeal, corn, potatoes



Healthy fats – olives, nuts, avocados, meats, dairy; healthy fats are found naturally in the abovementioned foods and are healthy additions to a balanced nutrient-dense diet.



Avoid adding saturated fats and modified fats, such as margarine, to foods.

Supplemental Nutrients

Folic acid – pregnant women should consume 400 to 800 mcg per day; this important supplement can help prevent neural tube defects, which occur early in pregnancy.

Prenatal vitamins – these vitamins often contain folic acid; iron; calcium; vitamins D, C, A, and E; zinc; and iodine. Talk to your healthcare professional about which prenatal vitamin he or she recommends.



SAFETY ALERT: Ask your healthcare provider before using any supplements! What is appropriate use of supplements for you and your baby, may be different than national guidelines.



Tips on Food Safety During Pregnancy

Women are more sensitive to food-borne illnesses during pregnancy. Good food safety practices should be followed and include the following:



Ensure food has been cooked to safe minimum internal temperatures;



Wash all fresh produce;



Avoid raw dairy and eggs and raw sprouts;



Check that foods like milk, cheese, and juice say pasteurized on the label;



Consume fish with some caution. Fish can have mercury, a heavy metal that can make you sick and harm your baby's development. Shark, swordfish, tuna, and marlin often contain mercury. Smaller fish like sardines, cod, flounder, tilapia, and canned light tuna are nutrient-dense and provide many benefits;



Avoid raw fish and raw shellfish;



Stay away from deli luncheon meats, and hotdogs should be reheated to steaming hot to kill Listeria;



Avoid organ meat, like liver, as it may have too much vitamin A;



Minimize your caffeine intake. A little caffeine is OK but aim for no more than 300 milligrams or 2 to 3 cups of coffee a day;



Avoid sweetened beverages and junk foods. These foods are not nutrient-dense and contain significant added sugars or sugar substitutes.



SAFETY ALERT: Alcohol and Pregnancy

It is not safe to drink any type or amount of alcohol when you are pregnant. Alcohol can harm the baby at any time during your pregnancy. If you need help to stop drinking alcohol while you are pregnant, talk to your home visitor and healthcare provider for support and resources.

You can talk with your home visitor and your healthcare providers for more information about healthy eating. To make a plan that is just right for you, home visitors can guide you in finding information that is available online and supports that are available within your community.





Take a Moment: Planning Ahead for Healthy Eating During Pregnancy

How is your eating going? Have you made some changes to your diet because you are trying to pregnant or are currently pregnant? Consider the questions below to help guide you as you focus on your nutrition and health during this time.

Have you thought about making changes to your diet because of this pregnancy? If so, what are you thinking about?

Have you food tastes, preferences, or tolerances changed during this pregnancy? If so, how?

What are some nutrition questions or concerns you might want to discuss with your home visitor or healthcare provider?

Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child



Eating right is a win-win for you and your family! You will be more healthy, focused, and optimistic—even when life gets bumpy. Family members will be more healthy and strong too.



What have you been eating since your child arrived on the scene?

- ☐ Meals you plan and prepare ahead? (If so, give yourself a pat on the back for eating healthy.)
- ☐ Meals prepared for you by family or friends?
- ☐ Meals that are almost ready-to-eat from the supermarket (like frozen meals, rotisserie chicken/deli meats, or salads)?
- ☐ Ice cream and other quick or comfort foods (like mashed potatoes)?
- ☐ **Anything to add?**

Even if you started off healthy, you may have slipped into eating some of the following:

- ☐ Meals of fast food burgers, chicken, fries, and shakes
- ☐ Junk food, like cake or a chocolate bar
- ☐ **Anything to add?**

Maybe some days you are lucky to even eat and, gratefully, grab whatever you can find quickly. You are not alone. Who knew someone so little could take so much time and energy? The choices you make about foods are one part of what mealtimes involve. Meals are about more than eating. Preparing and eating foods provide opportunities to deepen family relationships.

Looking Back at Mealtime

The foods you eat and serve your family are likely shaped by your childhood mealtimes. Being aware of this can help you decide what you want to do today.





Take a Moment: Looking Back at Mealtimes

What were mealtimes like in your family? For example, was there enough food? Did people sit together and talk? Was dinner on the run? Did you have to clean your plate? Were you given choices? Were certain foods *family favorites*?

What are mealtimes like today with your family?

Is there anything you would like to change?





Ready to upgrade to more healthy choices?

Eating well will help you keep your energy up. Thinking about what your child is eating is a chance for you to think about what you are eating.

Nutritious foods will help you be healthier and have more energy. If you are nursing, eating nutritious foods will help you produce more milk and could help you drop some baby weight.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture and the American Dietetic Association have published guidelines to help you make healthy choices. Most women should consume 1,800 to 2,000 calories per day. For men, 2,200-2,800 calories per day is recommended. If you are a breastfeeding mom, an additional 500 calories per day is typically suggested.

Talk with your home visitor if you want more information about healthy eating. She can guide you to information online and supports in your community to make a plan that is just right for you.



A Note About Beverages

What you drink is as important as what you eat! It is critical to drink fluids to stay healthy, but sweetened beverages add extra sugar and calories to your diet. Avoid sugary drinks, including soda, sports drinks, energy drinks, lemonade, juice, and sweetened coffee and tea.

Here are some tips to help you make better choices:



Water: Make water the beverage that you choose most often.



Milk: Milk has beneficial nutrients, such as protein and calcium and 1 cup counts as a serving of dairy. Choose 1% or skim milk to help reduce fat and calories.



Juice: Limit the amount of juice you drink and be sure to choose 100% fruit juice instead of fruit-flavored juice drinks. Juice drinks contain added sugar and only a very small amount of juice.



Coffee and tea: When choosing coffee or tea, try reducing the amount of sugar, cream, or whole milk you use.



Soda: Try replacing soda with sparkling water. Add a splash of 100% juice or a squeeze of lemon or lime for flavor.



Aim to drink zero sweetened beverages. Buy fewer and fewer sugary drinks each week until you no longer buy any!



To Help You Sleep

Keep after-dinner snacks light and healthy, like nuts, an apple, or popcorn. Finish any munching an hour before bed. In addition, try to follow these recommendations:



Try to not drink water for 2 hours before bed.



Caffeine keeps you awake, so finish that coffee or soda 4 hours before bedtime.



Alcohol may make you sleepy at first, but it often wakes you up later.



Nicotine may also keep you awake. (Another reason to stop smoking).

Planning Ahead for More Healthy Eating

How is your eating going? What are ways you can improve your eating habits? Consider the questions below to help guide you in improving your eating habits, one meal at a time.



What is one small change you'd like to make?



What ingredient might you add to your next food shopping trip to accomplish this change?



Consider creating a shopping list of grocery items that you can keep in your house to help you make meals healthier. What items would you put on this list?





Partnering with Your Child

As you think about family mealtime, think of you and your child as partners. While you start off doing most of the work when it comes to preparing and serving food, it won't be long before he is reaching for the spoon, feeding himself finger-foods, and helping you prepare healthy snacks. Here are some ideas to help:



Show him how it's done.

Prepare and eat healthy foods for snacks and mealtimes. (Of course, treats are allowed). Talk together at meals and discuss your day, what is on your plate, and how these foods will help all of you be healthy and strong.



Look for how he does his part.

For example, does he turn towards you when he sees you coming with his bottle? Does he reach for the spoon you are using to feed him applesauce? Does he ask to help tear up the spinach leaves to make a salad?



Be aware of how much he has to learn to be a healthy eater.

For example, he has to learn to swallow, chew, and pick up finger food; bring the food to his mouth; use a spoon, fork, maybe chopsticks, and a cup; discover how his tummy feels when he is full; learn to stop eating when he feels full; and recognize what healthy foods are.



Provide what he needs for success.

For example, offer child-sized plastic plates, spoons and forks, a sippy cup with handles, a bib, your patience, and plenty of paper towels because there will be spills for sure.



Any other ideas?



Take a Moment: Being Partners

How does your child show you he wants to be your partner at feeding or mealtimes?

What healthy eating skills do you think he will work on next?





Think of Eating as a Learning Time

Meals are times to learn:



New vocabulary words.

Use interesting words. For example, describe the refreshing feel of the soft water or the glimmering stars on his pajama pants.



New concepts or ideas.

These are words and phrases that help define the world, such as cool and warm, soft and crunchy, sweet and sour.



"I can do it."

When you point out how he is helping, he learns he is competent. "Thank you for handing me your spoon. Would you like to take a drink now?"



He can trust you to keep him safe and comfy.

When you are sure he has had enough to eat and remind him to stay seated in the high chair so he doesn't fall, his trust in you builds.



Any other ideas?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Eat healthy food and take care of yourself...	Taking care of yourself is important. Because you can do it, I will want to do it too. I love you and want to be like you.
Think about your childhood mealtimes and what you want to share from them with me...	Mealtime is family time. Our family has our way of doing things. We share a prayer and a story about our day.





Practical Applications for Families: Figuring It Out Together

Practical Applications: Nutrition and Feeding

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Figuring It Out Together: Transitioning from Breast to Bottle



Areas of Development

Transitioning a baby from the breast to a bottle contributes to the following areas of development:



Motor Skills



Cognitive



Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Associated Family Pages

- 6.1.2 Learning to Feed Myself from Child's Point of View55
- 6.1.2 Understanding Your Baby's Needs59
- 6.3.1 Sharing Care from a Child's Point of View.....5
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Scenario: Transitioning from Breast to Bottle

A mother has spent the time since the birth of her child learning and growing with her baby. However, her parental leave is soon coming to an end. The mother needs to prepare herself and her infant for the upcoming changes to their daily schedules. Since giving birth, the mother has been exclusively breastfeeding, but, now, she needs to plan for how her baby will receive the milk she needs while the mother is away.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

The bottle should slowly and gently be introduced to the baby when she is not hungry and frustrated. An opportune time could be an hour after nursing. Ideally, the bottle should be introduced by someone other than the mother, like a partner or another adult in the child's life. It may take time for the baby to feel comfortable drinking from the bottle, and you may need to try different nipple styles to meet your baby's needs.

In addition, nursing mothers could consider building up a supply of breastmilk that can be frozen for 6-12 months and used when she is away. This can help reduce the mother's stress and is healthy for the baby. Remember, as a mother reduces her nursing time, her milk supply will probably decrease. Consider pumping after the morning nursing session, when milk supply may be the highest. Continue to pump when you are away from your baby at the times you would normally nurse her.



NUTRITION ALERT: If you have any return-to-work questions, seek pumping and milk storage advice from a lactation professional. They can also share workplace rights and benefits for breastfeeding mothers to help facilitate conversations with your employer.

Figuring It Out Together: Eating Out Together as a Family



Areas of Development

Eating as a family outside of the home helps the following areas of development:



Motor Skills



Language



Socio-Emotional



Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors



Social Connection



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development



Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Associated Family Pages

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Scenario: Eating Out Together as a Family

A family has been solely eating home-cooked meals inside the home since they left the hospital. The mother has been craving her favorite dish from her favorite restaurant and wants a change in scenery. She decides today is the day for an adventure and would like the family to go out for a meal with baby.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Dining out is an important opportunity to encourage children to try new foods and practice social skills. Start with a kid-friendly location, where patrons and staff are more understanding. Pick a time when the restaurant is less crowded and the wait times are not as long. Once seated, remove all potential hazards and distractions from the table. Be prepared and bring along items that will make the experience go smoothly. For example, you could bring food or milk for infants and picky eaters; toys to keep the curious occupied; and accessories like bibs, plates, cups, or bottles to minimize chances of your child making a mess.



SAFETY ALERT: While dining out, be sure to use the facilities provided highchair appropriately and ensure your child is safe and secure in the seat.



Chapter 3 : Diapering and Toileting

6.1.3 Diapering and Toileting

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Diapering and Toileting from a Child's Point of View



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some of the things your child might tell you about diapering and learning to use the toilet:



Through a Young Child's Eyes		
<i>Diapering and Signs of Readiness for Toilet Learning</i>		
0-4 months	4-6 months	6-12 months
I am learning the sounds and feels of milk moving from my tummy and out from my body.	The gentle, respectful, safe way that you handle my body tells me that you love me and teaches me about respect.	I look at you and hold out my arms to be picked up when you say, "Time to get changed."
Sometimes my body makes funny noises and you can help me by holding and burping me and by rubbing my tummy.	You also help me begin to learn I can count on you to keep me safe and comfortable.	I might cry or kick in frustration when you interrupt my play to pick me up and change my diaper.
I may be a baby who does not like feeling wet or soiled at all! I cry as soon as I notice it. I may be a baby who does not seem to get upset with a full diaper.	I want to be a partner. I begin to lift my bottom when you slide my clean diaper under me.	I am learning parts of my body. I point to my nose, tummy and belly button when you name them.
You will get to know me and my reactions to wet and messy diapers and then be able to help me.	I learn new words you use to describe what is happening and that talking with you is fun when you tell me about what we are doing together.	I may protest, squirm, and try to roll over when you lay me on my back to change me.
One day I will be using the potty. Can you believe it? I will need your support all the way.	I start to babble and talk back to you, letting you know I'm paying attention, and I want to stay engaged.	



Through a Young Child's Eyes

Diapering and Signs of Readiness for Toilet Learning

12-18 months	18-24 months	24-36 months
I can carry my clean diaper to you and, if I'm close to that box of wipes, I may pull out a few to help you!	I am learning the names of more parts of my body and repeat the new names you tell me.	I act out using the potty—with my doll or myself. You can support me and also help me learn about setting my own privacy about my body.
I may want to continue playing when a diaper change is needed. I can stand and play and still help you change me. It will take some practice and coordination, but we can do it together.	I can go to the sink and wash my hands (with a little help) after you change me.	I begin knowing when I have to go or when I have gone to the bathroom. I may pull on my pants. Tell you, "I am wet." I might hide when I'm having a bowel movement.
	I stick out my legs one-by-one as you pull on my pants.	I love to practice flushing the potty. Again and again. Unless the noise frightens me, in which case, I may ask you to flush.
		I can hold my urine longer and can signal to you when I need to pee-pee.
I am very busy. I can be in the bathroom in a flash, so be sure toilet locks and cabinets are secured.	I may start noticing differences and similarities between my body and others—particularly if I have siblings or go to a day care with others my age.	I'm curious. I may follow you into the bathroom and imitate you by sitting on my potty seat and <i>reading</i> just like you are doing as you sit on the toilet.
		I may be able to stay dry during the day but learning to stay dry at night can take much longer. Sometimes even children in elementary school have nighttime accidents.





Take a Moment: Focus on You and Your Child

What might your child tell you about diapering or learning to use the potty?

How could you respond?

Making Diapering Work for Your Baby and You



Figuring It Out Together

A few basic steps can help make changing time safer, healthier, and easier.

Let's make diaper changing time the best it can – for both of us.



Diapering Basics for a Baby



Choose a safe spot.

There are many flat, clean surfaces that will work just fine. Anything from a changing table to a cleared dresser top or floor can work.



Be prepared.

Have your supplies within easy reach. Warm water and cotton balls (if he has sensitive skin), wipes, diaper rash cream (if needed), a clean diaper, and a little extra patience.



Keep one hand on baby at all times.

Even a newborn can surprise you and roll off a table or the bed.



Wipe from front to back—never from back to front.

You won't spread bacteria that can cause urinary tract infections, especially in little girls, when you follow this rule. Don't forget to get underneath and to clean the creases in those little legs and that sweet bottom.



Place a clean cloth or diaper over your little boy's penis—or get out your umbrella.

Being uncovered, out in the air, often causes baby boys to urinate.



If you find marks on baby's legs or waist, the diapers you are using are too small, or you are closing them too tightly.

Try them a little looser next time, and, if that doesn't work, try the next bigger size. Talk with your home visitor about possible places to get diapers at low or no-cost, like a diaper bank or community-based pantries.



Diapering Basics for a Toddler On-the-Move



Be prepared.

Have your supplies within easy reach. Wipes, diaper rash cream (if needed), a clean diaper, and a little extra patience. Don't forget a spare set of clothes!



Keep one hand on him at all times.

It only takes a second for him to tumble off the changing table or bed.



Put yourself in his place.

Changing means holding him still—on his back. To understand how difficult this is for baby, try to imagine you want—and need—to move and do, to see and explore an amazing world that has opened up for you. How would you feel if you were asked to stay still in these circumstances?



Change him standing up, if at all possible.

This is an art, but one you can master with practice.



Give him a job.

Ask him to hold his clean diaper or count to five with you as you replace his diaper.



Laugh it up.

Make a silly face. Sing a silly song. Play peek-a-boo.



Make it quick.

Be as quick as you can.



SAFETY ALERT: It only takes a few seconds for a baby to roll off a changing table or bed and land on the floor. Even a newborn can surprise you with a roll.

Buckle your baby in on his changing table at home and when using public restroom facilities. Keep one hand on him at all times.



Any other ideas?





To Prevent or Treat Diaper Rash



Change diapers often and right after bowel movements.

Laying or sitting urine and feces will irritate baby's tender bottom.



Clean gently.

Use a cotton ball or clean soft cloth and warm water. Dab gently instead of rubbing back and forth. If necessary, use mild soap. Avoid wipes when baby has a rash because they may burn or irritate his skin.



Diaper ointment.

Check with the baby's healthcare provider to see what will protect your baby's skin and help it heal.



Let your baby go diaper-less—as much as possible.

For example, let him play on a waterproof tablecloth covered with cloth. Or place an absorbent dish drying mat under his sheet in his crib.



Make a plan with other adults.

If your child has diaper rash and is going to child care, make sure his providers know what to use to care for his tender bottom.



Take a Moment: What Others Say

What do family members, friends, or neighbors tell you about diapering and toileting?

Is there anything you've heard that you think will work for you and your child?

Is there any advice you will decide not to act upon?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Say to me, "Let’s try to change your wet diaper standing up, I know lying still on your back is very hard to do."	My feelings matter, and you understand what they are. You <i>get me</i> .
Give me a job like holding my fresh diaper or new pair of pants...	We are partners. I can do <i>real work</i> to help.

Making Toilet Learning Work for You and Your Child



Figuring It Out Together

Looking at your feelings can help you move forward with your child today.



Check In with You



How do you feel about the smells and messiness that are a natural part of toilet learning?

What can you live with? How can you keep your feelings from making toilet learning a tense experience?



What is your comfort level with sharing bathroom time?

Your child may be curious about what happens in the bathroom and joining you there is one way to find out.



What can you do ahead of time to reduce stress for you and your child?

Be realistic that toilet learning can take a while. Pack extra underpants and clothes for her in your bag.



What choices can you let your child make?

Being a decision-maker gives your child a sense of control and competence. By giving her realistic, genuine choices during toilet learning, you convey the message you are truly partners. Things she might decide include where to put her potty seat in the bathroom, what pants she wants to wear, and does she want to sit on the potty now or in 5 minutes.



What do you want to show her about her body and using the toilet?

She looks to you and is very tuned in to your feelings. What messages do you want your facial expression, words, and actions to say to her?





Signs Your Child is Ready

If your child could tell you in her own words when she is ready to work on toilet learning, she might say, “I am ready when I...



Stay dry for at least 2 hours or during my nap.



Show you that I know I am urinating or having a bowel movement.

For example, I might tug on my wet diaper or walk away and hide behind the door when I am having a bowel movement.



Show the skills I will need to put together to use the potty.

For example, pull my pants up and down, turn the bathroom light off and on, climb into my potty seat or up onto the toilet with your help, follow your simple instructions.



Follow you into the bathroom and imitate what I see you do.



Ask you to change me as soon as my diaper is wet or soiled.

Tell you I want to wear “big boy underpants” or sit on the potty like you do.

When Not to Begin Toilet Learning—or When to Press Pause



Toilet learning will take your attention, time, and patience.

Think about what is happening in your life—at home and work. Can you be there for and with your child? If your answer is yes—go for it!



Times of big changes are not the time to begin toilet learning or can be a time to put plans on pause.

For example, are you moving to a new home? Is your child beginning a new child care program? Are you expecting or welcoming a new baby?



Challenging times can be a time to wait.

For example, if a family member is ill, has recently died, or has lost a job.



Have Realistic Expectations for Success



It will take some time.

At times, you may feel like you take one step forward, two steps back. This is an age of pushes and pulls and intense emotions—for both of you. She may want to be big and little at the same time. You may be pushing for her to use the potty when she isn't so sure herself.



Be matter-of-fact.

This is part of growing up. Everyone learns to use the potty—some sooner, some later.



Be cautious about rewards.

Rewarding your child can add pressure and a feeling of failure when she wets or soils herself.



Think about your words and tone.

Focus on your child's effort rather than on success or failure. "You sat on the potty." Share your enthusiasm and support with your tone and smile. "You are trying hard to remember to stop your play and to go to the bathroom." Avoid words that will shame your child.



Read together.

There are many children's books about learning to use the toilet. For example, *Everybody Poops* by Taro Gomi and *Once Upon a Potty* (a boy and girl version) by Alona Frankel. You may be able to find these and others by taking an outing to your local library. This is a good way to promote toilet learning and love of books and reading.



Be aware—keeping dry at night comes later.

Sometimes staying dry at night does not happen until a child is in elementary school.



Any other ideas?





Take a Moment: Learning Something New

Can you remember a time someone supported you as you were learning something new?

What did that person say or do?

How did that support make you feel the next time you faced something new?



Preventing and Responding to Accidents—at Home and Away



Invite your child to use the potty before you go out.

Make it a habit for everyone in the family.



Carry the right stuff.

Things happen. Packing wipes, extra clothes, and a plastic bag will assure you are prepared.



Watch to see how she responds to new or different bathrooms.

Different toilets and loud hand dryers can be upsetting for some children. They may refuse to go. Others are eager to *dive right in* and explore. When possible, time your trips so your child can use the bathroom at home. Bring plenty of hand wipes. Do your best and know she is trying to do her best too.

Keeping Dry at Night



Count on it—this will take time.

It might be until elementary school until she stays dry all night. Boys may take longer than girls.



Wait until she is ready.

You may even want to ask her if she is ready to try staying dry at night, if you notice her pull-ups are dry some mornings.



When you are both ready, let her try sleeping in her underpants.

It can feel like a big step. Using a waterproof mattress cover and having a spare pair of sheets on hand can help you breathe easier.



Stay calm and know she may wet the bed.

Be matter-of-fact as you change her bedding. Things happen. Focus on the positive—the fact that she tried.





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Avoid shaming me—even if I wet or soil my pants...	You respect me. You are on my team. I will get it with your support.
Give me real choices between two options—sitting on my potty seat or the big toilet; what pants to wear...	I have ideas. You listen to me. I can decide.

Safe Diapering and Toileting



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ways to help you keep your child safe during diapering and toileting:

When you keep me safe, I learn I can trust you – and the world.



SAFETY ALERT: One hand on baby at all times!

It takes only a second for a child—even a newborn—to roll off a changing table or other surface onto a hard floor. Prevent a fall that could change your baby's life—and yours forever.

Talk Safety with Other Adults Your Child's Life



Be clear about safety messages.

Talk with any and every adult who takes care of your child—whether at home or in child care—about bathroom safety. Your messages may include, “Never leave my child alone in the bathroom” and “Always secure the toilet lock.”



Share your realistic expectations that toilet learning takes time and that things happen.

Changing diapers and toileting accidents can frustrate even the most kind and loving adults. You can help everyone in your child's life keep their cool by sharing that learning to use the toilet may take your child time, and you are OK with that.



SAFETY ALERT: Toilet Locks

Prevent splashing and the possibility of drowning with toilet locks. Note: be sure all the older children and adults in your home know how to open them and secure them each time they use the toilet.



Take a Moment: Safety Tips

What steps do you take to keep diapering and toileting safe for your child?

Is there anything you may want to do differently? Add?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Tell other adults how to keep me safe...	I can count on you to protect me—even when you are not there.
Choose words that work for you to talk about parts of my body and what it produces...	My body and its products are healthy and natural. I do not have to feel embarrassed or ashamed.

Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child



Say you change your baby eight times a day. In his first year of life, you will have given him a new diaper 2,920 times! Let's say your 2 ½-year-old who is learning to use the potty has two accidents a day before he *gets it*. Anything you do together this often deserves thought and attention.

To be honest, diapers and soiled clothing can be smelly and messy. Sometimes, you will hurry as fast as you can to get your child into fresh and clean clothes.

But, the rest of the time, diapering and toilet learning are opportunities to teach your child that his body and what it produces is natural and healthy and there are new words to learn. Most of all, diapering and toilet learning are a way to deepen your relationship by working with him as a partner while he develops the body awareness and control that he needs to be a successful toilet-user.



How do you feel about diapering and toileting?

How you feel about diapering and helping your child learn to use the toilet was likely shaped by what your adults said and did when you were little. Looking at your feelings can help you move forward with your child today.



Take a Moment: A Look at Your Feelings

How do you feel about changing your baby's diaper? Or helping your child learn to use the toilet?

How old do you feel a child should be to start using the potty?

How do you feel about having your toddler or two come into the bathroom with you when you are using the toilet?





Partnering with Your Child



Think of you and your child as partners.

It is natural to feel you are in charge, and, in many ways, you are. But, when it comes to going to the bathroom, it is up to your baby or toddler as to when and where he is going to go to the bathroom. Your job is to support him as he gains awareness and control of his body.



Look for how he does his part.

For example, does he lift his tiny bottom so you can slide his diaper under him? Does he have a sign to tell you he needs to use the potty like tugging on his pants or saying "pee-pep"?



Choose your words.

What words does your family use for parts of the body? For body products? If you are comfortable talking with your child, he will sense this and be comfortable too.



Be aware of how much is involved in toilet learning.

Here are some of the skills that your child needs to learn when mastering toileting: knowing you need to go, stopping play, going to the bathroom, turning on the light, pulling down your pants, getting onto the toilet or potty seat, getting toilet paper (not too much, not too little), wiping yourself, flushing, pulling up your pants, and washing and drying your hands.



Provide what he needs for success.

Show him what happens in the bathroom, read children's books about using the potty, find a potty chair he likes, tell him that *things happen*, show patience, and use your sense of humor.



Any other ideas?



Take a Moment: Being Partners

What does your child do to partner with you around diapering or toilet learning?

What partnering skills do you think he will work on next?





Think of Diapering and Toileting as Learning Times

Besides learning about his body and using the potty, diapering and toileting are a chance for your child to learn:



New vocabulary words.

Use interesting words as you talk about the colors and pictures on his clothing (for example, “That is a magenta humpback whale on your shirt”) and what you are doing (for example, “I am dabbing on some diaper cream”, “I am sanitizing your changing table”).



New concepts or ideas.

These words help define the world, such as up and down, wet and dry, cool and warm, used and fresh.



You keep him safe.

He learns to trust he is safe with you—even when being changed in a high place or the first time sitting on the toilet in a new place.



Things happen and life goes on.

Your matter-of-fact response when he wets his pants teaches him, “No big deal... let’s take care of it and keep on moving.”

Avoid the Comparing Game

Avoid comparing as much as possible. It is natural to compare what and how your child is doing in regards to toileting to others. Comparing can put unnecessary pressure on you, which ultimately can end up adding stress or tension to your interactions.

Every child learns to use the potty in his own way and at his own pace. Some are happy to try and, if they have accidents, so be it. Others wait—and it can be a long time—until they feel they *have it* and are comfortable letting go of their diapers.

Lots of people like to share advice for toilet learning. Think ahead about what you might say when someone comments about your child or compares your child to others.

If you have a concern, talk to your child’s healthcare provider. Ask your questions and pursue them until you have the information you need.



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Are my partner in toilet learning...	I am capable and competent. Together we can do anything.
Talk about and treat my body and body products with respect...	You value me and my body. Pooping and peeing are natural body functions, and they are not anything to be ashamed or embarrassed about.





Practical Applications for Families: Figuring It Out Together

Practical Applications: Diapering and Toileting

Handling Toileting Accidents	137
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Figuring It Out Together: Handling Toileting Accidents






Areas of Development

Patient toilet training can support the following areas of development:

-  Motor Skills
-  Cognitive
-  Language
-  Socio-Emotional
-  Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors

-  Parental Resilience
-  Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
-  Social and Emotional Competence of Children


Associated Family Pages

- 6.1.3 Diapering and Toileting from a Child's Point of View107
- 6.1.3 Making Toilet Learning Work for You and Your Child117
- 6.2.2 All Relationships Wobble Sometimes.....77
- 6.2.2 Keep Your Child Safe: Provide Emotional and Physical Safety87
- 6.2.3 Partners in Teaching Cooperation.....147

Scenario: Handling Toileting Accidents

A couple has been toilet training their child, and, for the last few weeks, their 30-month-old hasn't had any accidents and has done a great job letting them know when he needs to use the toilet. Dad excitedly tells his child he is officially ready for "big kid underwear." The next weekend, the family attends a play date at a friend's home, and, at one point, the child hides and begins to cry. Dad approaches the child and soon realizes what has happened. He asks sternly, "Why didn't you tell me you had to go?" The child continues to cry as they both walk away.

 What is the child thinking and feeling?

 What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Regression is usually a child's response to a change in environment or stress. Using child-friendly language to identify what is overwhelming for your child, while showing understanding and sympathy, is the first step in helping your child get back on the toilet-learning track. Involve your child as you both determine ways to increase his comfort and confidence. Remember to be supportive, flexible, and consistent as you help your child with this developmental step. There may be times when your child regresses. Be encouraging and remain calm during these times and keep working at it—it will happen.



SAFETY ALERT: Regression can sometimes be a sign of a health concern or infection. Seek advice from your pediatrician if you begin to see regressive behavior after your child has shown mastery of a skill for an extended period (e.g., starts wetting themselves 6 months after being fully potty trained).

Figuring It Out Together: Treating Diaper Rash



Areas of Development

Careful diaper hygiene affects these areas of development:



Cognitive



Sensory & Perceptual

Scenario: Treating Diaper Rash

The packaging on your diapers boasts that they can keep your baby dry for 12 hours. So, you imagine you can go 12 hours without changing your baby's diaper. At this point, your baby has gone 6 hours without a diaper change, and the diaper feels as if it may explode. You change him but continue this behavior for days. Soon, you notice redness in the diaper area, and your baby's bottom is tender.



What is the child thinking and feeling?

Related Protective Factors



Concrete Supports of Families



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

Associated Family Pages

- 6.1.3 Diapering and Toileting from a Child's Point of View107
- 6.1.3 Making Diapering Work for Your Baby and You111
- 6.2.2 Keep Your Child Safe: Create a Family Care Plan91
- 6.3.1 Partnering with Other Adults in Your Child's Life 15
- 6.3.1 Advocating for Your Child: Problem Solving, Not Blaming35

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Diaper rash is very common among children, and it can usually be treated with home remedies and a change in diapering practices. Diaper rash can be prevented by limiting contact with urine and stool.

- Thoroughly and gently clean the diaper area and apply a thick layer of ointment, like A&D ointment or diaper rash ointment, after every change.
- Change the diaper frequently (about every 2 hours), and make sure the diaper is not too tight.
- This can reduce the chances that the diaper or its contents will irritate the skin.



SAFETY ALERT: Call your doctor if the diaper area seems to be painful, your baby develops a fever, or the rash does not improve within 2-3 days.



Chapter 4: Bathing and Dressing

6.1.4 Bathing and Dressing

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Bathing and Dressing from a Child's Point of View



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some of the things your child might tell you about what he is experiencing and learning during bathing and dressing:



Through a Young Child's Eyes		
Bathing		
0-6 months	6-12 months	12-18 months
Let's start with sponge baths. In a few weeks, we can use the sink or a small plastic tub.	We have to figure out the best way to wash my hair. Let's experiment. Maybe I can lean back sitting on my small tub. Maybe I am OK leaning forward and holding a washcloth over my eyes.	When I start to outgrow my baby tub and am a strong sitter, you may want to give me a try in the big tub.
In the first few weeks, I need to have some special care around my umbilical cord until it heals. Follow directions from my healthcare provider to keep it clean, dry, and protected.	Please use a no-tears baby shampoo, and keep water from getting into my ears. We're going to have to be creative and work together.	Give me some time to get used to such a big, open space. We might want to start with putting my baby tub into the big tub.
Don't be surprised by the appearance of some mild skin irritations.	After a bath, rub baby lotion over my body. It feels so good! (And will keep my skin from getting dry.)	Let's play. No need to buy anything. Plastic kitchen containers and cups will do.
My skin is very soft and sensitive, but these irritations will resolve over time with gentle care.	We may have figured out that I like baths at a certain time of day, mornings or evenings. Let's make this a regular schedule.	Let's have playtime, then bring on the baby soap and shampoo and a rinse. Staying in soapy water can give me a urinary tract infection.



Through a Young Child's Eyes		
Bathing		
18-24 months	24-30 months	30-36 months
You may have to remind me to stay on my bottom. "No standing in the tub" is a good rule for us to have.	I may challenge you when you say, "It's bath time." I like choices, though. They make me feel like a partner, and I may offer a deal of doing my bath later —after I finish what I'm doing...But give me a time!	I have skills and opinions about this bath stuff. I may bargain with you about hosing off outside in the summer with a bar of soap or ask to use the shower like you do.
And remind me to keep the water in the tub. Splashing is fun! It makes me feel powerful to move my body and make waves.	I can also do some things myself—wash my face and hands, dump rinse water over my head.	
Keep it short to keep my skin from getting dry and itchy. 10-15 minutes.	Remember that I may be confident, but I should not be left alone in the tub! Never ever! Empty the tub right away after my bath. I may want to continue playing while you are not watching. It only takes 2 inches of water for me to drown.	My self-cleaning skills are getting strong. You help me notice where I need to pay attention—between the toes, behind my ears and knees, my private areas. You can support me and also help me learn about setting my own privacy about my body.





Through a Young Child's Eyes		
Dressing		
0-6 months	6-12 months	12-18 months
<p>Please move my body gently so that you don't twist or hurt me.</p>	<p>I love it and hear different sounds of words when you tell me about what you are doing.</p>	<p>I want to be on the move—and that makes it hard for me to stay still and to have you move my body when dressing me.</p> <p>I'm not trying to be bad when I fuss. I want to move. Try to distract me. Make dressing fun. Most important, make it fast.</p>
<p>Dressing will be easier for both of us if you dress me in clothes that are easy to put on and off, like onesies, shirts with openings that can expand, pants with snaps so you can change my diaper easily.</p>	<p>I may start showing you my preferences for certain textures of clothing and how many layers I like to wear to keep comfortable.</p>	<p>I'm also developing some preferences for how I like my clothes to fit on me—sometimes I like to feel like I can stretch and stretch! Other times, I like to have clothes that hold me close to my center and make me feel safe and snugly.</p>
18-24 months	24-30 months	30-36 months
<p>Do you know how I want to do things my way? When I want? It is the same with dressing. Sometimes I know there is no choice, and I have to get dressed no matter what.</p> <p>But when you can, it will be easier for the both of us if you can allow extra time, be patient and keep your sense of humor. One day I will be dressing myself. I promise.</p>	<p>When you give me choices between two options, I learn about making choices and feel competent and proud. (For example: Do you want to wear your red shirt or your yellow one?)</p> <p>If you give me choices, please let me wear what I choose, even if my green polka dots and red stripes are not your fashion choice.</p>	<p>Will you help me learn dressing skills? Teach me how to flip my coat over my head. If you start it, I can do the rest of my zipper. Let's see if I can make a snap go <i>snap</i>.</p>
<p>I may be able to pull off my shoes, socks, or pants. Once you get my shirt over my head, I may be able to pull it down. If I can't do these things yet, I will do them soon. Keep watching.</p>	<p>Watch. Can I unbutton large buttons? Do I try to put on my socks? What other new skills am I working on?</p>	<p>Keep a lookout and see my new skills growing. With a little help, I may be able to put on my shoes (they might be on the wrong feet), pull my pants with an elastic waist up and down, and zip or unzip my jacket if you get it started.</p>



Take a Moment: You and Your Child

What might your child tell you about bathing and dressing?

How could you respond?



Bathing Across the Ages



Figuring It Out Together

A few basic steps can transform the task of bathing into quality time for you and your child!



Bathing Basics for Your Infant



Sponge bathe her the first few weeks after birth.

Remember to gently clean around the umbilical cord. After a few weeks you can move her bath to the sink or a small plastic tub.



Have all the supplies you will need within reach before starting the bath.

Have a washcloth, towel with hood, mild shampoo or soap (talk with your child's healthcare provider about which ones), clean diaper, and clean clothes within your reach.



Run the water—2 inches is enough for starters—before you put baby in the tub.

That way the water won't get suddenly hot and burn her.



Test the temperature with the inside of your wrist as it runs into the sink or plastic tub.

It should be body temperature.



Handle her gently and surely.

Take care not to twist, pull, push, or turn her body into uncomfortable positions. Support her head and body as needed. Always remember—a wet baby is a slippery baby.



Talk about what is happening.

Talk about anything and everything. "You are moving your hand in the water."
"And now let's dry those tiny, sweet toes."



Wash her from top to bottom.

Pay attention to creases in her little arms, legs, and her diaper area. Wash between her fingers and toes.



Don't be surprised if she pees or poops in the bath!

This will likely happen at least once. If you know that she had a dry diaper or hasn't had her normal poop yet, you can plan around what may happen and be ready to change the water and do a mid-bath clean-up.



Wrap her in a towel right after taking her out of the water so she doesn't suddenly get cold.

Rub her gently dry from head to toe keeping her covered as much as possible. Then, it is time for a little lotion.



Any other ideas?





Bathing Basics for a Toddler On-the-Move



Test the temperature with the inside of your wrist as it runs into the tub.

The water should be body temperature, not too warm or cold but comfortable.



Sit her on her bottom in her bathtub or on the plastic mat in the big tub.

The water should be no higher than her waist. Make “bath time is sitting time” a bath time rule.



Add some playthings and let her play for a while.

No need to buy toys. Plastic kitchen containers, measuring cups, and a funnel will lead to exploring and fun.



Give a 2-minute warning after playtime and explain, “Now it is time to wash you.”

Start washing your child at the top and work down.



Wash her hair.

Most children don’t like to have their hair washed. You will have to be creative to figure out how to get this job done with the least hassle for both of you. Once a week is fine. Sing or tell a story to distract her. Try this for starters and modify as needed for you and your child: put a nickel-size dab of no-tears baby shampoo in your hand, add some water, and rub it into her hair. Then, have her lean back and rinse her hair with a cup of water, repeating until her hair is squeaky clean.



Wash her face.

Many children don’t like to get their faces wet so remember to wring out the washcloth well.



Soap up her body and rinse.

You may want to use the rinsed washcloth or have her stand up with your help and rinse her with a sprayer.



Dry her off with a big hug in a towel.

Then, dry her from head to toe.



Any other ideas?



Bathing Basics for a 2-Year-Old



Try to stay calm and relaxed.

Bathing usually happens at the end of a busy day. Take a breath, and try to make it a relaxing time to be together to talk about the day, enjoy the feel of the water, and enjoy each other.



Allow a little extra time—when possible.

Feeling like you don't have to rush as you help get her undressed, in and out of the tub, and dressed for bed can make bathing work for everyone. She will sense you are with her, which can be calming for her.



Add plastic kitchen objects or small plastic toys to make bath time more fun.

Blow bubbles. Bring on the shaving cream. Sometimes 2-year-olds have their own ideas of what they want to do and taking a bath isn't always one of them. A few props can make bath time more inviting.



Invite her to do it herself.

Wring out the washcloth and invite her to wipe her face. Put some soap on her feet and invite her to wash each toe. When it is time to come out of the bath, give her a hand towel to help you dry her hair.



Any other ideas?



**Take a Moment: Quality Time**

Think of a time that bathing time was quality time for you and your child. What did you do to make that happen?

How did you feel?

How do you think your child felt?



Bath Time Safety: Across the Ages



Water temperature should be body temperature.

It may feel cool to you but be just right for your child. Check the temperature of the water as it runs into the tub. As your child gets older, invite her to put her hand or toes into the tub for a temperature check.



Bath time is sitting time.

Make sure she understands she must sit on her bottom and on a plastic no-slip mat. Always.



Never leave her alone.

DO NOT ever leave your child in a tub alone—not even for a minute.





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Take a few minutes to laugh and enjoy a little playtime with me in the bath...	We enjoy things together. I love being together with you—even when we have a job to do, like getting me clean.
Remind me to sit down in the tub...	There are ways I have to behave in different places. Sitting down in the tub is a way to keep myself safe.

Dressing Across the Ages



Figuring It Out Together

A few basic steps can transform the task of dressing into quality time for you and your child:

Let's make dressing our time.



Dressing Basics for Your Infant



Handle him gently and surely.

Take care not to twist, pull, push, or turn his body into uncomfortable positions. Support his head and body as needed.



Talk to him about what you are doing together.

"Let's lie you down here on the bed." "How about wearing this bright red shirt from Auntie today?"



Change his clothes on a safe, flat surface keeping one hand on him at all times.

The bed, a changing table, the floor with a pad or blanket will do. Even a newborn can surprise you and roll off a table or the bed.



Choose clothes that are easy to put on and remove.

For example, stretchy onesies, shirts with folds in the necks that can open to make necks bigger (sometimes called envelope openings), pants with stretchy waistbands, and snaps for easy diaper changes are good choices.



Loosen clothing before putting it on or taking it off.

Unsnap each snap. Stretch open a neck or arm or pants leg opening. Put a hand through openings and then use your hand to guide the clothes onto baby's arms and legs.



Any other ideas?



Dressing Basics for a Toddler On-the-Move



Make it fun.

Sing a song. Be silly. "Does your hat go on your foot?"



Give him a choice between two options that are alright with you.

Limiting the number of choices keeps your child from not being overwhelmed and makes it easier for your child to be a successful decision-maker. For example: "Would you like to wear your red socks or yellow socks?" "It's raining outside. Do you want to put on your raincoat now or in 3 minutes?"



Put yourself in his place.

Getting dressed means holding still and someone else moving your body. To understand why he might protest at times, imagine you want and need to move and do to explore an amazing world that has opened up for you. How would you feel if you had to stay still, and someone was moving you where they wanted you to go instead of where you wanted to go?



Choose clothes that are easy to put on and remove.

For example, stretchy body suits, shirts with folds in the necks (envelope openings), pants with stretchy waistbands, and snaps for easy diaper changes are good choices.



Give him a job.

Ask him to hold one sock while you start putting on the other sock or ask him to reach his slipper that you can see under his bed.



Don't be surprised to turn around and find him undressing, faster than you dressed him.

It is easier—and usually gets quite a reaction.



Any other ideas?





Dressing Basics for Your 2-Year-Old



Expect protests.

It is hard to stop what he is doing and to be still enough to get dressed.



Take a breath and allow a little extra time.

When you are calm and relaxed, he will sense it, and dressing will be easier for both of you.



Invite him to pick out his outfits and put them out the night before.

Talk about the weather and if he needs long or short sleeves, pants, or shorts. Give him a choice between the blue short socks and the yellow ones with cars on them. Put his clothes in the same place each evening.



Invite him to do it himself.

Gently pull his socks over his toes or his pants over his feet. Invite him to pull them up. When it comes to undressing, chances are he won't need an invitation. Undressing is easier than dressing, and it feels good to be free of clothes.



Make a rule that you have to wear clothes when you go outside—as needed.

Some children don't like to wear clothes. The clothing may feel scratchy, uncomfortable, or stiff. No clothes are OK inside your home, but, when you are going out, it is a different story.



Show him the routines you have for shoes, outerwear, or other items and invite him to participate.

Do you have a place you put your coats when you come inside, like a closet or set of hooks by the door? Maybe your family takes off shoes once inside the home and puts on slippers or inside shoes. Maybe everyone puts on a bathrobe after a shower or bath that they hang inside the bathroom until needed.



Any other ideas?



Take a Moment: Quality Time

Think of a time that dressing time was quality time for you and your child.
What did you do to make that happen?

How did you feel?

How do you think your child felt?





Dressing Safety: Across the Ages



Choose safe and comfortable clothing.

Whether buying or using hand-me-downs, look for cotton to put near baby's skin. Be sure sleepwear is flame resistant.



Avoid drawstrings, ribbons, laces or anything else that hangs off clothes.

They can strangle a child.



Avoid small pieces that can come off and choke a child.

Buttons, bows, and plastic decorations can look tasty to a young child.



Bare feet are best for learning to walk.

His foot muscles will get a work out, and he will learn the feel of different surfaces, such as a wood floor, tile floor, and carpet. Non-slip socks or soft slippers can keep baby's feet warm. He won't need real shoes until he is walking outdoors.



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Choose clothes that are easy to take off and put on and loosen openings at my neck, arms, and legs while dressing me...	Dressing can be uncomfortable. There are right ways to do things. You take extra steps to keep me comfortable.
Allow a little extra time to talk with me and to give me a chance to take part...	We are partners. You respect me and have confidence that I can understand and work together with you as a partner.



Safe Bathing and Dressing



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some tips for safe bathing and dressing:



Safe Bathing



Never, ever leave your child alone in the bath.

DO NOT leave your child in any kind of tub, at any time—no matter if your phone rings in the other room or if the doorbell rings. Never! Always stay an arm's length away from your child while bathing and give your child your undivided attention.



Run water in the tub, and test it with your wrist before you put your child into the bath.

The water should feel warm and comfortable, about body temperature.



Bathe your child in a warm room and wrap him in a towel after taking him out of the water.

This will keep his body temperature from lowering too much.



Make a bath time rule: "Bath time is for sitting."

Put a non-slip mat on the bottom of the big tub for him to sit on. Remind him of this rule if he forgets, which he will at times.



SAFETY ALERT: Never leave your baby alone around water—in the tub, by a pool, even near a bucket of water.

For children under 5, drowning is a leading cause of death. Never leave your baby alone around water. Not ever. A baby can drown in less than 2 inches of water. It can happen quickly and quietly.



Talk Safety with Other Adults Your Child's Life



Be clear about safety messages.

Talk with any and every adult who takes care of your child, whether at home or in child care, about dressing and bathing safety. While your child won't be taking a bath in child care, he may play with water or go swimming. Never leaving a child alone in or around water is a rule that should apply everywhere.



Share this page of safety messages with anyone dressing or bathing your child.

Sometimes seeing something written down makes it seem more important and helps people remember it.

Safe Dressing



Choose safe and comfortable clothing.

Whether buying or using hand-me-downs, look for cotton to put near baby's skin. Be sure sleepwear is flame resistant.



Avoid drawstrings, ribbons, laces or anything else that hangs off clothes.

They can strangle a child.



Avoid small pieces that can come off and choke a child.

Buttons, bows, plastic decorations look tasty.



Bare feet are best for learning to walk.

Non-slip socks or soft slippers can keep baby's feet warm. He won't need real shoes until he is walking outdoors.



Protect your child's skin and eyes from the sun with a hat and sunglasses.

A chinstrap will help keep his hat in place.





Take a Moment: Keep Your Child Safe

What steps do you already take to keep bathing and dressing safe and healthy for your child?

Is there anything you may want to do differently or add to your routines?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Talk with other adults about how to keep me safe and I hear you...	I can count on you to protect me—even when you are not there.
Remind me to sit when I am in the tub...or to hold on to you when I stand on one foot to pull off my pants...	I can do things to keep myself safe.



Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child



How many times do you bathe your child a week or dress or undress your child each day? Chances are, for his first 4-5 years, it may seem as if you are doing most of the work. You wash and dry his body and hair and snap and unsnap his clothes.

But, watch closely. From the very start, your child is partnering with you on his way to independence. Do you see him looking at you when you explain it is time for a bath? Close his eyes as you pull a shirt over his head? Hold out the arm you are washing?

He is busy exploring and learning. Bathing and dressing are important opportunities to learn about his body and his self-image, to develop self-care skills, and to gain new vocabulary words. These are also perfect times for him to explore concepts like off-on, up-down, left-right, clean-dirty, and wet-dry.



Most of all, bathing and dressing are chances to deepen your relationship during these one-on-one times as you work as partners and learn more about each other.



How do you feel about bathing and dressing?

How and when you bathe your child, the clothes you choose for him, and how warmly you dress him are likely shaped by what your adults did when you were little. Being aware of this can help you decide what you want to do as a parent.



Take a Moment: Look Back at Bathing and Dressing

What do you remember about bath time? Was it a time to play or all business?

What do you remember about dressing? Were you expected to keep your clothes neat and changed the moment you got a spot? Or were you allowed to get messy?

Is there anything about bathing or dressing from when you were little that you want to do the same? Differently?





Partnering with Your Child



Think of yourselves as partners.

While you start off doing most of the physical work of bathing and dressing, each year he will be able to do a little more. By age 5 or 6, he will be able to wash and dress himself with your guidance.



Choose your words.

What words does your family use for parts of the body? If you are comfortable talking about your child's body, he will sense this and be comfortable too.



Look for how he does his part...

For example, does he turn towards you, so you can wash his face? Take the washcloth from you and say, "My do it"? Does he stand still when you towel dry him? Does he try to zip up his jacket when you start the zipper?



Think about how much he has to learn to bathe and dress himself.

For example, bathing takes these skills: safely climbing into the tub, wringing out the washcloth, washing, rinsing, climbing safely out of the tub, drying with a towel.

Dressing skills include doing snaps, buttons, and zippers; fastening or tying shoes; figuring out that socks go on before shoes; and learning that holding his head back will keep the zipper from pinching his neck.



Provide what he needs for success.

For example, offer a washcloth or scruffy with liquid soap and give him clothing with elastic waistbands and shoes that fasten with Velcro. Most important of all, give him your patience and sense of humor.



Any other ideas?



Take a Moment: Being Partners

What does your child do to partner with you while bathing?

What does he do to partner with you while dressing?

What partnering skills do you think he will work on next?





Think of Bathing and Dressing as Learning Times

Bathing and dressing are times he could learn the following:



New vocabulary words.

Use interesting words. For example, describe the refreshing feel of the soft water or the glimmering stars on his pajama pants.



New concepts or ideas.

These are words and phrases that help define the world, such as up and down, in and out, tight and loose, cool and warm.



"I can do it."

When you point out how he is helping, he learns he is competent. "Thank you for pulling off your hat. Now will you hold out your arm, and I'll pull off your sweater."



He can trust you to keep him safe and comfy.

When you keep the soap out of his eyes as you wash his hair and replace his shoes that are too small, trust builds.



Any other ideas?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Call attention to how I help you dress or bathe me: "I notice how you rinsed the soap off your arms." "Thank you for pulling off both of your socks."	I am capable and competent. Together we can do anything.
Choose words that work for you to talk about parts of my body and what it produces...	My body and its products are healthy and natural. I do not have to feel embarrassed or ashamed.





Practical Applications for Families: Figuring It Out Together

Practical Applications: Bathing and Dressing

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Figuring It Out Together: Moving to an Adult Bathtub



Areas of Development

Bath time routines help identify these areas of development:



Motor Skills



Cognitive



Language



Socio-Emotional



Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development



Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Associated Family Pages

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Scenario: Moving to an Adult Bathtub

A grandparent has come to visit for a few weeks and has offered to give her grandchild a bath and put him to bed. The mother instructs Grandma to use the infant tub, but, during the bath, the 9-month-old child seems too big for the infant tub. Several times, the child threw his toys out of the infant tub, climbed out of the tub with no assistance, and was returned to the tub.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

From a research standpoint, little evidence has been published regarding when a baby should move from an infant tub to an adult tub. Use your judgment to determine when your baby has outgrown the infant tub. Consider these steps as you make this determination:

- Baby can sit up on his own.
- Baby no longer fits comfortably in the tub.
- Baby is mobile.



SAFETY ALERT: Before putting your baby in the tub, have the bathing supplies nearby so you can provide constant supervision. Encourage your baby to stay seated, but also use no-slip strips at bottom of tub. Check the water temperature with your wrist or elbow. Fill the tub with no more than 2 inches of water, and make sure the water is drained immediately after the bath.

Figuring It Out Together: Bathroom Safety





Areas of Development

Bathroom safety is necessary as children grow in the following areas of development:

-  Motor Skills
-  Cognitive
-  Language
-  Socio-Emotional
-  Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors

-  Parental Resilience
-  Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Scenario: Bathroom Safety

A parent welcomes his 13-month-old baby into the bathroom while he gets ready for the day. The baby immediately heads to the cabinets just beneath his dad to open and close them. Dad blocks the cabinet, and his son moves to the toilet. Dad grabs him just before he sticks his hand inside and sits the child near the bathtub. The child sees another opportunity for play and nearly falls into the tub. Dad decides to hold his son while he gets himself ready.

 What is the child thinking and feeling?

 What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Babies can topple over at any time, so childproofing the bathroom can help prevent drowning and other injuries. These tips can help make the bathroom a safer space for your baby:

- Keep the toilet lid down and install a latch.
- Never leave standing water in the tub, faucet, or any other water holding containers (except the toilet, which should have a safety latch).
- Keep cabinet doors closed and consider using a doorknob cover or safety latch for added protection.
- Consider placing the baby in a playpen right outside the bathroom door so they can see you while you're getting ready.



SAFETY ALERT: Accidents happen, especially with children. All parents and caregivers should be trained in CPR to provide support to their child in the event of an emergency.

Associated Family Pages

- 6.1.4 Safe Bathing and Dressing.....161
- 6.2.2 Your Trusting Relationship
Dance with a Toddler
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Explorer and Learner Safe.....25

Part 6.2

Young Children's Play and Exploration

Part Introduction

Children are born curious and ready to learn and engage with the people and things in their world. As they play and explore, they gather information. At first, babies experience the world through their senses. As they begin to move and do (in other words, get into things), their learning and sense of self as a learner continues to grow—always at a child's own pace and in his or her own way. Later children gather information from words. Bit by bit their images grow of themselves and how the world works.

Children begin to view themselves as respected, competent explorers and learners when they are supported by trusted adults. This is a good foundation for personal satisfaction and success in school and life.

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Chapter 1: Exploring and Learning about the World

6.2.1 Exploring and Learning about the World

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Exploring and Learning from a Child's Point of View



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some of the things your child might tell you about exploring and learning:

I was born ready and eager to explore and learn!



Through a Young Child's Eyes	
Exploring and Learning	
0-6 months	6-12 months
<p>When I am born, I can see about 8-15 inches away—just the right distance to see your face when you hold me.</p> <p>Over the months, I will be able to see more. I will turn my head to follow an object or person. When I see you coming, I might kick my feet and coo with excitement.</p>	<p>I like to study and explore objects around me. I might turn my toy caterpillar over and shake it many times.</p>
<p>I start to bring my fingers and toys to my mouth.</p>	<p>I almost always bring things to my mouth to learn about them. My mouth is sensitive and can tell me about how something feels and tastes. So, please watch to be sure I am only mouthing things that are safe and good for me.</p> <p>Try the toilet paper roll test: if something is too big to fit through the cardboard roll, it is safe. If it slips through, keep it out of my reach. It could choke me.</p>
<p>When I smile or coo and you respond, I learn that I can make something happen. You will respond. I am learning how relationships work.</p>	<p>I remember things. I might turn my head away when I see my washcloth in your hand because I know you are going to wipe my face.</p>
<p>I am learning I can make things happen, like when I kick in my bath and splash us.</p>	<p>I am beginning to move from place to place. I am eager to explore everything—the outlets, the electrical cords that I can reach (and pull on), and the breakable items on low shelves. It is time to childproof if you haven't already. Keeping our space safe is one of the most important ways you can help me explore and learn.</p>
	<p>I expect that when I squeeze my toy it will squeak. When I turn the can over, the clothespins will fall out. If something different happens it is a big surprise.</p>



Through a Young Child's Eyes

Exploring and Learning

12-18 months

I love to experiment and explore. I like to push, pull, bang, fill and dump and fill, and taste things. You might call it "getting into things" or "making a mess," but for me, it is learning.

I can use my hands now to grab and hold something to explore and to wave and play patty-cake with you. I can pick up pieces of cereal and banana from my high chair tray to eat. I can and will pick up crumbs and other small things like buttons or coins that you drop on the floor and eat them, too. So, please pick up what you drop. We will both be happier and healthier.

I remember how things happen. I might imitate how you put on your hat or the way you stir milk into a pretend cup of coffee. I notice when our routines change and might get upset if we go away and I have to sleep in a new crib.

I try the same things over and over again. I know what will happen, at least most of the time, like when I drop my spoon off my high chair tray and wait for you to pick it up again and again! It feels good to make things happen and to know what to expect next. That is why it can be hard for me to stop dropping the spoon or banging the pot lids—even when you ask me to.

Watch me play. I am putting together my picture of the world. I might pretend to make a call on a toy phone—just like you do. Or use a wooden spoon to stir in a pan—like you.

I can move from place to place easily and quickly. I can crawl up the stairs, go over and stick my fingers into an outlet, and pull myself up a bookshelf. So, please be sure our home is safe for me. This is one of the most important ways to help me explore and learn. Plus, if everything dangerous is out of the way, you won't have to tell me, "No," so often.

18-24 months

I want to explore and learn about everything. When you explore with me or I find something very interesting, you will see that I can have a long attention span. I check out things carefully and with focus.

I am learning to use my hands and eyes together to do many things: turn the pages of a book, string large beads, explore putting together a puzzle, or scribbling with a crayon. Keep your eyes on me—just in case I decide to suck or chew on something that isn't food.

I remember what is supposed to happen at certain times. Knowing what to expect helps me feel secure and safe. It gives me a sense of control in the big world around me. That is why I can get upset when we change routines. It is why I ask you to sing the same song and read the same book over and over. I know it may be boring for you sometimes, but routines and repetition help me learn how things work.

Watch me play. Let me help you with chores. I am learning about our daily life. You might see me singing our goodnight song to my doll before laying her to sleep or sorting the blue socks from the green ones.

I love to try things in new ways. You may see me bang a pot lid on the hard kitchen floor and then the rug in the living room to make different noises. I may push my truck in and out of the cardboard box garage you made for me to learn more about how my truck, even though I cannot see, it is still there.

I can walk, run and climb now. I love to jump and dance, throw, and push things around. I learn about myself and the world by moving. So, please be sure I am in a safe place whether we are indoors or outside.





Through a Young Child's Eyes	
Exploring and Learning	
24-30 months	30-36 months
Thanks to all the chances you have given me to explore and play, I am beginning to understand ideas or concepts of color, same and different, big and little, heavy and light, now and later.	I am curious about everything I come across—and that's a lot. I notice details, like the door on my toy car or the snail in the tank at child care. I love to pretend and build. I am getting good at matching and comparing things. I can see how things are the same and different.
I am getting more skilled at doing things with my fingers and hands. So, let's explore painting, simple puzzles, rolling the ball back and forth, and drawing with crayons or markers. (I'll try not to eat them—but I may need a reminder.)	My eyes, fingers, and hands work together even better now. I enjoy tearing paper, gluing, using playdough, counting and arranging big bottle caps or beads, and doing puzzles. I may still need you to remind me not to put things into my mouth.
I am beginning to plan to make things happen. I may ask you if Grandma is coming today or push my blocks together to make a road for my car. I can decide what book I want us to read or show you the shirt I want to wear today. I still count on our routines to help me feel secure.	I am doing more planning. You might see me making cookies out of playdough, pretending to bake them, and serving them to my stuffed animals. Or, I might see if my friends want to make a zoo by pretending to be zoo animals with me.
I am learning how things are the same and different. I may want the same color marker as my big brother or notice my friend has more crackers than I do. I still love to dump, pour, fill, pull things apart, and put things together.	I am getting better at figuring things out—though I still need your help. I might ask you for help when my jacket zipper gets stuck or look behind the sofa to find my missing car. You can help me learn to problem solve by giving me words for what is happening and ideas for what I might try.
I love to do things for myself now and may protest if you try to help me. Watch and you may see me take off my jacket, peel my banana, carry napkins to the table and put one at each place, and pull off my socks. I need practice and your patience to get better at these tasks. Warning: Our <i>Everyday Moments</i> may take longer now.	I am getting better at doing things myself and may insist, "My do it!" I may want to dress, feed, and bathe myself—though I will need some gentle assistance from you. I may be very clear and firm about what I want to and won't eat. Please be as patient as possible and pick your battles. Does it really matter if I don't eat my carrots today?
I love to move and am learning more new skills. You might see me tiptoe, gallop, or jump with two feet off the ground. I may be able to climb higher on the jungle gym in the park, though I may need help getting down. So, please be sure I am in a safe place	Watch and you will see that I still love to move. I am beginning to have a goal in mind more often when I move and do. I might gallop with my friends, so we can be a herd of horses, or ride my push toy and pretend I am a truck driver delivering packages.



Take a Moment: Focus on You and Your Child

What might your child tell you about exploring and learning?

How might you respond?



Exploring and Learning Happen All the Time



Figuring It Out Together

Your child is exploring and learning all the time and everywhere he goes.



Exploring and Learning Happens Any Place and Any Time

Your child makes new discoveries in your home, as you push him in his stroller, as you ride in a bus or travel together in the car, while you shop at the supermarket, when you visit his doctor or a relative or friend, and when you listen to the birds while playing in the sand at the park.

Each of these experiences and the hundreds of others you experience together in a week are filled with colors, textures, smells, and sounds to notice. Your child sees, listens and communicates, and interacts with you and other people. He learns about trust when he is comforted after receiving a shot or when grandma reads the book she promised to read when he visited last week. There are toys, car seat buckles, and zippers for his little fingers to work on. There are apples, pomegranates, and pineapples to see and to talk about as his vocabulary grows. He has the chance to develop new physical skills as he crawls, runs, climbs, jumps, and slides.

Slowly but surely, over the weeks and months and years, he picks up bits of information that get pulled together into his first pictures of himself, other people, and the world around him. These early views can shape his ideas for a lifetime.

At First, He Learns Through His Senses

At first, your baby takes in the world through his senses. He fingers the soft edge of his blanket, mouths your shirt or a nipple when you hold it to his lips, hears the sound of your voice as you sing him a song, sees your face when you hold him close, and smells your special smell and tastes his milk.

His mouth is very sensitive and gives him a lot of information. This is why over the first months and years he may put things in his mouth—even things he shouldn't eat, like specks from the floor or your keys. He wants to learn. He needs you to keep him safe by keeping small items he might choke on, or that could make him sick, off the floor and out of reach.



As He Learns to Move and Do, He Can Explore in New Ways in New Places

His world and his ability to explore and learn grow over the months and years as he gains more control over his body at his own pace and in his own way.

He learns to roll over, sit, crawl, pull himself up, walk, climb, walk up and down steps, run, throw a ball, and, maybe, catch it. When you give him the chance to move and do, inside and outdoors, he develops his skills and has the chance to learn even more.

By around 3 months, he discovers that those things moving in front of him are his arms and that he can control them. He learns to use his fingers and hands to reach for and hold and let go of his toy cloth caterpillar. Over time, he learns to reach for his bottle, feed himself a cookie or a cracker, shake a rattle, stack rings, turn the pages of a book, pick up a spoon to feed himself, scribble on paper, or drink from a cup.

These new skills let him see the world in new ways, go to and play with objects and toys that catch his interest, and gain a sense of competence and confidence.

Language Lets Him Explore Feelings and Ideas

As his language develops, it is another way he can gather information about here and now, and about people and objects that are not right there for him to see and handle.



He is able to understand, communicate, and explore how people connect with each other.



He is able to think about and begin to understand how he and others feel about things.



He begins to engage in pretend play, which stretches his imagination and understanding.



He begins to understand ideas about time and what it means to be under, over, in, out, and beside something.





Take a Moment: Your Child's Picture of the World

What do you see your child say and do as he explores something in your home?

What are three things your child has already learned?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Keep the floor clear of small things that are not healthy or could make me choke...	I can trust you to keep me safe. The world is a safe place for me to explore.
Give me a chance to move and do, indoors and outdoors...	I can reach, explore, and learn—everywhere. The world is an exciting place.



What Do You Notice and Know About Your Child?



Figuring It Out Together

You know more about your child than you may think. Taking the time to think about all you know—and your questions too—will help you decide how best to support her as she explores and learns.

I explore and learn in my own way – in my own time.



Press the Pause Button: Take Time to Think About What You Know

Life as a parent is so busy, and it can be hard to find the time to think. But, taking some time will help you see how much you know about your child!



What makes her smile and laugh?

For example: Peek-a-boo games? Your face in the morning? When you sing a silly song using her name? Her favorite stuffed animal?



What is something you see her learning?

For example: A new skill using large or small muscles? Exploring what happens when an object moves out of sight by dropping her spoon from the high chair tray? Saying new words? Counting?



What is a new accomplishment that she had made over the last month or so?

For example: Sitting on her own? Pulling herself to standing? Pointing to a picture of a dog in the book you are reading when you ask, “Where’s the doggie?” Putting together a four-piece puzzle?



What upsets her?

For example: Unfamiliar adults who come too close, too quickly? An unexpected sound like a thunderclap or doorbell ringing? Another child crying? When you walk out the door?



What have you found as a way to comfort her?

Hold and rock her gently? Offer her a favorite blanket or stuffed animal? Tell her goodbye with her caregiver and remind her you will come back like you always do?



Watch Her Explore and Learn

One amazing thing about young children is you can often see what they are feeling and thinking on the inside as you watch them from the outside. Try watching or observing your child for a few minutes. Do this on your own, or better yet, with a person who is also part of her life. Perhaps your partner, another family member, her teacher, or your home visitor would like to join you. Compare thoughts about what you see her doing and how she does it.

Find times to watch her every now and then. The more you practice observing, the more you will see. Here are some questions to consider as you watch her:



What interests her?

Signs a child is interested include she is looking at something, reaching for it, touching and moving it, pointing to it, naming it, talking about it, or focusing on it for a while. Do you see something else?



What seems to be her personal style of exploring something new?

Does she jump in and go for it? Does she watch and then begin to explore at her own pace? Does she respond with intensity, for example, with joy or a lot of activity? Do you see something else?



How does she respond to sounds, new textures, tastes, and smells?

Does she take new sensory experiences in stride? Does she take time to get used to them? Does she respond intensely showing her like or dislike of a new sensory experience? Do you see something else?



How does she respond when she gets frustrated?

For example, when the block tower she is building falls over, does she start to rebuild it? Does she get quiet or look at you for support? Does she get very upset and perhaps throw blocks or break into tears? Do you see something else?



Any other ideas?





Discuss What You Notice About How Your Child Explores and Learns

Here are some questions to talk about with your observing partner:



How is what you and your observing partner see the same? How is it different?

People often focus on different things when watching a child.



Is there something you saw that you already knew about your child?

Anything new that you learned about your child?



How can you use what you know to support her?

For example, does she take her time to get used to new people, places, and situations? You may decide to stay nearby until she is comfortable. Does she get easily frustrated? You may decide to try again.



Take a Moment: Watching Your Child

What is something new you have seen your child exploring in the last 2 months?

What do you think she may be learning?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
And our home visitor watch me play and talk about what I am doing and learning...	You care about what I am doing and think that what I say and do is important. That helps me feel that I matter.
Are a learner — about me or other things...	Being a learner is something you care about. If you care about learning, I will care about learning too.

You are Your Child's First and Most Important Teacher



Figuring It Out Together

You are your child's most important teacher. Because you are so important to him, your child is always paying attention to you. He has an amazing ability to tune into you—the sound of your voice, the look on your face, how you move.

You may purposefully focus on a moment or experience. For example, you might add plastic measuring cups or decide to blow bubbles at bath time. You can invite your child to find the yellow lemons at the supermarket and to put three in a bag. You and your child can take a listening walk around your back yard or neighborhood.

Sometimes you may experience the wonder of discovering something new too. For example, you might see the beauty of a dragonfly that lands nearby, or you might slow down and enjoy the soft feel of the grass on your feet as you walk across the park with him.

Other times, the lessons you teach may not be lessons you want him to learn. For example, when you burn your finger in the kitchen and curse. You can almost count on it that you will soon hear your child repeating your language. You may scream at a friend, which is obviously not behavior you want to promote. You may keep checking your phone during dinner and get upset when your child tries to get your attention at the end of a long day apart.

Your child loves you like no other and wants to be like you. He learns from you every day.





Your Trusting Relationship Supports His Exploring and Learning

When your child trusts you, he feels free to move, do, take risks, discover, and stretch his thinking and skills. He knows you are there to keep him safe. Around the age of 2, his favorite blanket or *lovey* or a photo of you together can help him feel connected with you when he is at child care or grandma's house.

Here are some ways to build a great relationship and support your child as he explores, experiments, discovers, and learns.



Keep the trust between you growing.

Show him the many ways he can count on you. Listen and respond. Keep your promises. Let him know what is happening next. For more: Ask your home visitor for a family page on *Building Trusting Relationships*.



Be there as he gets to know new people and places.

Your presence gives this new person or place your seal of approval. If he feels unsure, he can come to you or look over for a smile before he interacts and explores more.



Get in the habit of trying to see through his eyes.

Ask yourself, "What might he be exploring? Learning?" to help you decide what to say and do. It may help to imagine a thought balloon over this head.

What might he be saying, for example, when he is banging on a pot ("I am powerful. I can make this loud noise start and stop."), turning the pages of a book ("I am learning how books work. Look, I found a picture of a dog! What else?"), or making marks on a paper with big crayons ("This is a long line. This is a short one.")?



Any other ideas?





What You Say and Do Supports Exploring and Learning

Here are some ways you can support him and always keep in mind that to your child, the ordinary is extraordinary:



Welcome him to be your partner in *Everyday Moments* and chores.

Dressing, bathing, combing your hair, brushing your teeth, preparing meals, dusting the living room, doing laundry, watering the plants, and feeding the cat are all amazing learning opportunities. They happen often enough for a child to gain a sense of mastery as he learns to understand what is coming next, yet there is enough variety to keep these tasks interesting.



Help him see himself as a thinker.

Think out loud with him. Comment on his thinking. "That was good thinking to blow on your noodles to cool them off."



Talk with him about what he is doing.

When you notice what he is doing and you comment on it, he feels valued and that what he is doing matters. "You are taking little breaths to blow bubbles."



Point out words everywhere.

Invite him to be a reader with you as you run your finger under the words in his book. Point out signs on the street, in the store, or on the front of a bus. Show him the words on food cartons as you prepare dinner. Invite him to help you write a shopping list or snail mail note to Grandpa.



Use interesting and fun words.

Help his love of words and vocabulary grow. "Did you see how that excavator moved the dirt?" "That tree is enormous." "That sign is golden, glowing yellow."



Ask questions.

Invite his curiosity and stretch his thinking muscles. "Where is your nose?" "What color is your ball?" "What did you see on our walk today?" "What does this seashell feel like?" "How do you think that works?"



Have fun together.

Smile. Laugh. Enjoy. You will be showing him learning is important and fun, and he can do it. Enjoying being a learner is key to success in school and life.



Take a Moment: Seeing Through Your Child's Eyes

As your child plays, imagine there is a thought bubble over his head. What do you think he is feeling? Thinking? Learning?

What is something that makes you and your child laugh when you are together?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Build a trusting relationship with your child...	I can depend on you to be there for me. You make me feel safe to experiment and discover new things.
Invite me to help you do daily chores...	I am a real member of this family. I can help you. That makes me feel competent and proud.

Keeping Your Little Explorer and Learner Safe



Figuring It Out Together

Make Your Home Safe

Childproofing means eliminating possible dangers from your home. Not only does it keep your baby safe, it also cuts down on how often you have to say “No,” which allows baby to be freer to explore, discover, and learn. If you haven’t child proofed, now is the time to do so! You may be wondering, “How do I start?”



Whether you live in a city apartment, a mobile home, a house in the country, or student or military housing, there are common hazards and basic steps you can take to help keep your baby safe.

Use the home safety checklist below with your home visitor. As you do so, try to look through your child’s eyes. Get down on the floor at her eye level. What interesting and possibly dangerous things do you see? What is calling her to touch, taste, pull, or explore? What might be a danger to a new crawler or walker?

Post the phone number of your local Poison Control Center in a place where you can find it easily.

Choose Safe Toys

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) offers these tips about toy safety. You can use them to check for safety when buying a toy, checking out a used toy at a garage sale, or when your child is given a gift.



Choose toys that suit the age, abilities, skills, and interest level of your child.

These will build developmental skills. Toys that are too advanced may pose safety hazards for younger children.



Keep button batteries and magnets away from young children.

They can lead to serious stomach and intestinal problems—including death—if swallowed. Call your health care provider immediately if your child swallows one.



Do not give children under age 10 a toy that must be plugged into an electrical outlet to prevent burns and electrical shock.

Instead, buy toys that are battery-operated.



Look for toys without small pieces.

Young children can choke on small parts contained in toys or games. Government regulations specify that toys for children under age 3 cannot have parts less than 1 1/4 inches in diameter (slightly wider than a quarter) and 2 1/4 inches long. A toilet paper roll is an everyday item you can use to test if parts are too small.



Do not allow children under 8 to play with balloons.

Children can choke or suffocate on broken or uninflated balloons.



Remove tags, strings, and ribbons from toys before giving them to young children.

Watch for pull toys with strings that are more than 12 inches long because they could be a strangulation hazard for babies.



Read the label and instructions on toys.

Warning labels give important information about how to use a toy and what ages it is for. Be sure to show your child how to use the toy. The ages listed on the label are as much for safety as for appropriate ages to be engaging.



Store toys in a designated location, such as on an open shelf or in a bin.

Keep older kids' toys away from young children. If you use a toy box, choose one with no lid or a lightweight, non-locking lid and ventilation holes.



Any other ideas?





Being Safe Outside Your Home



Water Safety



Never leave your baby alone around water—in the tub, by a pool, even near a bucket of water.

For children under 5, drowning is a leading cause of death. Never leave your baby alone around water. Not ever. A baby can drown in less than 2 inches of water. It can happen quickly and quietly.



Sun Safety



A few serious sunburns can increase your child's risk of skin cancer and eye damage later in life.

Protect your child's skin from the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays whenever she is outdoors by using sunscreen or clothing. Have your child wear sunglasses that block these damaging rays.



Car Safety



Your baby should ride in his car seat no matter how short the trip or how hard he protests.

Infant car seats should be installed in the back seat, ideally in the middle but, most importantly, in a position where it fits securely. It should face the rear of the car.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that children should sit in a rear-facing seat until they are 2 years old or until they reach the weight and height limits of the seat's maker. Read the owner's manual for instructions. If you need help installing your car seat, check for a nearby child car seat inspection station or with your local health, police, or fire department. Ask for a certified child passenger safety technician to assist you.



Never leave your child alone in the car—not even for a minute.



Animal Safety



Teaching your child about how to be safe around animals will help your child—and you—be able to enjoy pets and even wild animals.

Animals can bring great delight and love to your child—and to you. Being safe with animals can enrich your child's life.



Take a Moment: Keep Your Child Safe

Take a safety tour with your home visitor. Focus on one area of your home (e.g., the kitchen or playroom) to get started.

What is something you do already that keeps your child safe?

What is something you can change to eliminate a danger in your space?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Take steps to keep me safe indoors and outdoors...	The world is safe. I am safe. I can count on you.
Put me in my car seat or put on my hat or sunscreen—even if I fuss...	Even if I protest, you will do what it takes to keep me safe.

Distracted Parenting: When Media Connections Become Disruptive



SAFETY ALERT: Research in the United States indicates there has been a 10% increase in accidental childhood injuries since the introduction of the smart phone (CDC, 2020). Media distractions have become a significant child-safety risk as parents may be more preoccupied and inattentive. From reading a few emails or social media posts while your baby is lying unprotected on your bed to texting while driving with your child in the car, being distracted by technology can place your children in unnecessary danger.

Safety First and Always: Monitoring Your Child and Media Distractions

You are your young child's first guide to the amazing, new world around him or her. You are also your child's first protector and early warning system as your little one relies on you to keep him or her safe and secure while he or she explores and learns about the world.

As toddlers and twos gain mobility, they can move from safety to danger in a split second! Remember, young children have very little understanding of what is safe and what is not.

Actively monitoring your little one takes a lot of focus and energy. For example, you may have days when you desperately hope your child will take a nap, so you have a break and nap too. You may often try to multi-task while keeping an eye on your child. Research indicates that the majority of people are terrible at multitasking effectively, particularly when media is involved. Watching a TV program, using your phone, or completing a task on your computer/tablet require you to multi-task if your child is present and are attention-intensive tasks. These types of tasks divert our attention, so we are less able to keep up with activity going on around us, which means it is challenging to safely monitor young children.

Media Distractions Can Happen in Many Ways!

There are three types of distractions: Visual, Manual, and Cognitive:



Visual: Line of sight. Can you see your child(ren)?



Manual: Arm's length. Are you close enough to your child(ren) to keep them from harm?



Cognitive: Distracted mentally in the moment. Are you focused on your child(ren)?



Anything That Takes Your Attention Away from Monitoring Your Child is a Distraction.

Sending text messages, talking on a cell phone, gaming, scrolling through social media, and texting while driving are just some examples of media distractions.

What other types of media distractions have you experienced or seen?

So, how can you create a safer environment for your active child when media is part of your everyday life?

Here are some practical suggestions to reduce your risk of being distracted by media when you need to be watchful and ready to engage with or redirect your child.



Take responsibility and make a plan to switch off, or put down, all devices when you are caring for your baby, toddler, or two.



Plan your tech time. Check emails and messages or play video games before baby wakes up, during nap time, or after bedtime. This way you'll be free when your baby is awake.



Keep mealtimes and other quality time media free. Some families turn off their Wi-Fi during certain hours to help everyone in the household take a digital break.



Do not use your phone while driving—EVER! Especially when you have your baby in the car!



Become water wise! Don't use tablets and phones when your child is anywhere near water. Drowning is a real danger!

Fully participating in and monitoring your child's behaviors will benefit your child and help to ensure his or her safety and healthy playtime and learning.



Any other ideas?





Take a Moment: What Types of Digital Distractions Happen in Your Day?

Think about the kinds of media you use on a daily basis. What types of digital distractions happen when you are monitoring or playing with your child?

Is there a certain time of day when these distractions are more likely to happen? (e.g., calls during bath or bedtime routines) If so, what could you do to change this situation?



Distracted Parenting: When Media Connections Become Disruptive

What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Let a phone call go to voicemail while driving, and then pull over to check the message...	The safest way to do two things that take your attention is to do one at a time.
Create media-free playtime...	I can count on you to be a partner, ready to engage, and keep me safe.



Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child



Parenting is a continuous journey of new discoveries about your baby—his preferences, his way of moving in the world, how he thinks, what catches his attention, and what makes him smile. It is also a journey of discoveries about yourself. You learn about your beliefs, values, and patience level. You may also discover abilities you didn't know you had, like being able to make up silly songs.

Have you ever noticed how just when you figure something out, your child moves to a new stage, and you have to start all over again? Exploring and learning are essential when it comes to parenting.

It can be easy to look at another parent or a teacher and think that person has figured it out. The truth is, everyone knows some things when it comes to parenting but no one—no parent, no teacher, no home visitor—knows it all.

The good thing is that your child doesn't need you to know everything! He needs you to be you. Every child's needs are different, and, when you think about what you do that works and what you might do differently next time, you are exactly what your child needs. You show him what it means to be a learner when you are open to asking questions, trying out new ideas, or making new discoveries (on your own and with family, friends, teachers, and home visitors).

Rest assured, sometimes you may stumble. Other times, you will get it, and it will feel great. It is all part of the journey of parenthood.

Looking Back at Exploring and Learning

How you feel about you and your child as an explorer and learner is likely shaped by how your adults supported you as you were growing up. Thinking back on your own childhood can help you determine what you want to do as a parent today.



Take a Moment: Look Back at Exploring and Learning

Are there ways in which your adults helped you feel safe to experiment and explore?
What did they say and do?

How did they respond when you made a new discovery?

What do you want to do that is the same or different with your child?





Your Feelings About Exploring and Learning



Do you remember the wonder and joy of a making a new discovery in your life?

For example, seeing raindrops on a flower and its leaves after a shower passes by? Realizing that, yes, you can replace a dripping faucet or being confident enough to taste a new food that a friend introduces you to are examples of new discoveries.

If you find you have forgotten those feelings, try slowing down and looking at the world through your child's eyes. To him, everything is new. Share his wonder of lying on his back and discovering that those are his arms flying past and that he can control them; that he can turn his little pail upside down and all the pop beads inside scatter across the floor; or his amazement at those ants walking across the sidewalk when you walk outside.



How do you feel about messiness? About noise?

Both can be part of exploring and learning.



Can you slow down? If no, how can you figure out a way to slow down and give your child and yourself time to mess around?

Life can be busy—you know that. Yet, exploring and learning take time. Trying to do something, trying to do something in new ways, and repeating things are part of exploring and learning.



Any other ideas?



Watching and Guiding Your Child's Exploring and Learning

Your child depends on you to supervise him as he explores and learns. If he had the words, he might say, "I rely on you to watch over me, to keep me safe and to guide me as needed." He might add, "Sometimes, I need space and time to experiment and enjoy. Sometimes, I may need you to step in to say or do something that can extend my learning or make it even more fun."

The decisions you make every day, sometimes without even realizing you are making them, shape possibilities of what your child explores and learns during daily routines and play. Some of these decisions you make ahead of time. For example, deciding to child proof rooms in your house so your child is safe as he explores or deciding to go to the park with another parent so your child has a playmate are decisions made in advance. Other decisions you make in the moment. For example, what kinds of toys you provide, what you say and do as you bathe your child, what songs you sing, or which crayons you put out so he can color are more spontaneous decisions.

Here are some ideas to consider as you decide how best to guide your child as he explores and learns:



Use household items and homemade toys to promote learning.

No need to spend a lot of money. No need to buy fancy toys. Household objects, such as measuring cups, spoons, pots, pans, a roll of masking tape, and a blanket, are fascinating to your child because he sees you use them. You can make an obstacle course using chairs, pillows, a low step stool, and masking tape to create a path on the rug. A cardboard box can become anything: a garage for a toy car, a fire engine, house, or space for your child to sit in. Old keyboards and calculators will keep toddlers and twos busy pretending for a long time.

Ideas for homemade toys may include a drop and fill container, a board book, a stacking game made of large lids from different containers, and a matching game made from magazine photos.



Share in your child's curiosity or delight.

Be a mirror, and reflect his feelings. For example, smile when he smiles or stick out your tongue when he sticks out his tongue.





Look through his eyes to see what he might be exploring and learning.

Sometimes, it may feel like he is just making a mess or trying your patience when you are trying to get out of the door. While these both may be true, look through his eyes and you will see he is exploring and learning:

- When he splashes in the tub or in a puddle, he is learning he can make things happen and discovering that water moves and takes different shapes.
- When he drops his spoon off the high chair tray—again!—and looks at you to pick it up, or drives his car in and out of the cardboard box garage you made for him, he is learning that the spoon and car (and more importantly you) exist even when out of sight.
- When he puts on your hat or stands in your shoes, offers you a taste of the soup he just made, reassures his teddy bear everything is alright, or pretends to be a firefighter, he is exploring roles, how to treat others, and seeing the world from different perspectives.



Give him time.

Today, even toddlers often get scheduled into playdates and classes. Yet, children need time to be quiet and to think and dream. Even to be bored, which can lead to wondrous ideas and discoveries!



Watch to see if he needs you to step in to keep him safe.

For example, step in if you see him or his friend getting frustrated and ready to hit each other. If you have to keep reminding him on a rainy day that the couch is for sitting on, not climbing, give him a chance to move by making an obstacle course together on the living room floor.



Ask yourself if there are opportunities you can say or show to enrich or extend his learning.

Perhaps ask a question, offer a prop, describe what he is doing, or invite him to think and problem-solve with you and link something new to the familiar.



Sometimes, the best thing you can do is stand back and watch.

Give your child space and time to think, to try ideas, and solve problems to make exploring and learning his.



Appreciate How Much You are Learning Too

Like your little one, you are learning and growing every day. It can be hard to see the changes in yourself when you are busy or tired. But, it is important to take a moment to reflect on how you have changed and grown as a parent since your child came on the scene and to give yourself a pat on the back.

Here are some of the things you may be learning to do:



Get quickly out the door with your baby and all his things.



Sing and read during the day with your child.



Find you don't mind reading the same book and singing the same song over and over again.



Laugh more easily when things don't go as planned.



Share your child's wonder at falling leaves or ants walking across the sidewalk.



Any other ideas?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Give me real objects to play with like a plastic measuring cup to pour water in the bath or a pot and spoon to bang together...	I can make the water move or make a big sound. I can make things change. I can do it!
Decide to step back and watch me play sometimes...	What I am doing is important if you are watching. I have time to explore and discover. I can figure things out.





Practical Applications for Families: Figuring It Out Together

Practical Applications: Exploring and Learning about the World

Preventing Choking Hazards	45
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Figuring It Out Together: Preventing Choking Hazards



Areas of Development

Always check for choking hazards as children explore the following areas of development:



Motor Skills



Cognitive



Language



Socio-Emotional



Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors



Concrete Supports of Families



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development



Social and Emotional Competence of Children

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Scenario: Preventing Choking Hazards

Grandpa was visiting with his 18-month-old granddaughter and propped her up next to him as they sat watching daytime TV with an afternoon snack. The granddaughter reached for a new toy, and a small part fell off. Immediately, the baby put the piece in her mouth. Grandpa pulled the toy out of the baby's mouth, and the baby became upset. To quiet her crying, Grandpa grabbed a handful of trail mix — comprised of popcorn, raisins, chocolate candies, and nuts — to share with his granddaughter.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

As children explore and learn, mouthing objects is very common, but this action can also present health and safety hazards. Look for labels on toys and objects that assign appropriate age ranges for children. Some small objects are unsafe and can present choking concerns for babies and young children, such as the following:

- coins;
- buttons and button-like batteries;
- balloons, small balls, and marbles;
- bows and barrettes; and
- bottle, pen, or marker caps.

In addition, foods, such as popcorn and nuts, which can be found in trail mix, can present a choking hazard for infants. Additional hazard foods for children under 4 years old include the following:

- hot dogs,
- seeds,
- whole grapes or grape tomatoes,
- raw veggies,
- chewing gum, and
- hard or sticky candy.

When eating, children should be seated in an appropriate infant chair and, foods should be cut and provided in a pea-size amount.



SAFETY ALERT: If your child begins to choke, determine if she can speak and/or cough while choking. If yes, continue to encourage these behaviors as these actions are the best defense to clear the blockage. If your child cannot breathe or falls unconscious, call for help immediately. Parents and caregivers should be trained to provide life-saving measures until help arrives.

Figuring It Out Together: Keeping Favorite Items Clean



Areas of Development

Regularly cleaning baby toys and supplies impacts the following areas of development:



Cognitive



Socio-Emotional



Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development



Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Associated Family Pages

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Scenario: Keeping Favorite Items Clean

As a mom is carrying her 8-month-old child, the baby drops her teething toy to the floor. The mom gives the baby a pacifier and sets the baby on the floor next to her while she quickly washes the toy off. The baby crawls a short distance away, dragging the pacifier across the floor before putting it back into her mouth. The mom shrugs to herself, saying "I guess it's building her immunity."



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

In less than 5 seconds, bacteria and viruses can attach to surfaces so take precautions to help your child avoid germs when possible. Try following these tips to help reduce bacteria and viruses:

- Wash infant feeding items after every use.
- Clean pacifiers frequently and any time they touch an unclean surface (e.g. floor, tabletop, car seat, dog's mouth).
- Clean toys frequently, especially when they are visibly dirty or if they were used when the child was sick.



Chapter 2: Building Trusting Relationships

6.2.2 Building Trusting Relationships

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Building Trusting Relationships from a Child's Point of View



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some things your child might tell you she is learning about trust—if she had the words:



Through a Young Child's Eyes	
Trusting Relationships	
0-6 months	6-12 months
Reading my cues to understand what I am telling you is key to our trusting relationship.	Around 6 months, I may have some people who are at the top of my list: parents, maybe an older sibling, a child care provider. I will look for these people first—I know I can count on them.
Crying is my first way of communicating how I feel and what I need. If you listen closely, you will hear different cries for different needs.	Other people I see occasionally may be OK, but I have stronger routines and histories with my main people.
When I'm a newborn to about 2 months, I will respond to everyone who gives me care and comfort. I recognize the voices and smells of the people who care for me and talk to me, but I am not picky about who takes care of my needs...yet.	I kick my legs or reach for you with arms or catch your eye and smile to say I want to be with you.
As we get to know each other better, I will start to coo, smile, and squeal when I see and hear people I feel connected to.	I reach for you for comfort when I get hurt or upset. No one else will do.
By 4 months, my vision has improved, and I can look to see if you are coming before I start crying.	I trust you. I look to you to tell me if I am OK when I get a little bonk or fall onto my bottom. If your face and words say I am OK, I keep going. If you are upset, I get upset too.
	If I meet a stranger, I will look at you to see if this person is OK. I may still bury my face in your shoulder and stay close to you.



Through a Young Child's Eyes

Trusting Relationships

12-18 months

I rely on you as my home base of security. When I wander off to explore or play, I check in with you. I may come over and touch you or look for your smile and nod across the room.

When you are nearby, I am more comfortable playing with a new toy or trying a new activity, like doing an obstacle course.

I may interrupt you when you are talking on the phone or with a friend in the park. I am not trying to be bad. It's that I want you to be with me. You make me feel safe.

I may fuss and cry when you drop me off at child care—or even at grandma's house. After a while, with that person's help, I'll settle down.

I may have a special object like an old t-shirt of yours, a stuffed animal, or a blanket that you've used when you comfort me. That may become my *lovey*, something to remind me of our relationship when we are separated.

I talk to my stuffed animals in a kind, gentle voice and pat their backs when they are upset—just like you do with me.

18-24 months

As I grow more active and move more, I need you to be there so I can check in with you more.

When you are close by, I feel safe to move and do, explore, experiment, and learn.

Sometimes I put my toys in your lap or try to eat food from your plate or pull your face to look at me when you are talking with someone else. Why? I love you and trust you. I want to be with you.

Please help me take care of my *lovey*. If we lose it, chances are I won't accept a substitute. My *lovey* lets me carry you with me, and I want and need it.

If there is a change in my daily routines, I may protest about it because I rely on things I know to help me understand and predict my world. You can help me learn about flexibility when things feel bumpy.





Through a Young Child's Eyes	
Trusting Relationships	
24-30 months	30-36 months
Even though I insist on doing things myself—even when they are too hard—you are still my base of security.	I may seem very grown-up, but I still depend on you to be there for me, reassure me, and help me know I am safe.
I may stay close to you, then go to see a new toy in the park, then come back and want to sit in your lap.	I am learning to be like you. You may see me singing to my baby doll just like you sing to me at bedtime.
I am learning what your words and expressions mean when you talk with me, and I can change my goals to match yours—or I may challenge them!	I am starting to form my first friendships. What I've learned from you will help me understand how I should treat others and how I want to be treated.
I am learning that other adults help me feel safe too. I may look for a smile and nod from my teacher before I run through the sprinkler for the first time.	I may teach you a nursery rhyme I learned in child care and be patient like you are when you teach me something new.
I may be testing the limits of my skills and safety. That can make me frustrated. And, sometimes, I may take chances that aggravate or frighten you. You help me learn I can have negative and scared feelings and still be loved.	When we are apart, I might pretend to call you on the phone (a block) or paint a picture of us together.
I look at family pictures, and it makes me feel safe and happy.	



Take a Moment: You and Your Child

How do you describe your relationship with your child?

What do you imagine your child might say about your relationship?



Your Trusting Relationship Dance with Your Baby



Figuring It Out Together

Your baby was born ready to communicate and connect with you. She is ready to be your partner in a trusting relationship.

Your relationship is like a dance. At first, your baby totally depends on you to take the lead. However, it won't take long for you to see she is your partner. It may be subtle at first. As a newborn, she may turn her head towards you when she hears your voice. By the time she is 2 months old, she may wait a minute or two after waking up from her nap without crying because she knows you are coming to feed her.

Over time, she will begin adding more steps of her own to your dance. Your steps will influence your child's and vice versa. Together you will create your own dance of trust.

I was born ready to communicate and connect with you.



Getting to Know You

Your newborn will welcome care from anyone. This can be good because, in the busy first weeks of life, you can hand her over to someone you trust when you need a break.

Between 1 and 6 months, she will begin to let you know that she knows you and other familiar adults in her life and wants to be with you. For example, you may notice that she does the following:



Turns her head towards you when she hears your voice.



Follows you with her eyes around the room.



Fusses to get your attention.



Coos or smiles and looks into your eyes when you talk or sing to her.



Kicks her legs and reaches towards you when you come near her.

Understanding Her Sounds and Movement

Babies communicate through their different cries, the expressions on their faces, and how they move their bodies. They begin to understand the meaning of words before they can speak them. You may see this, for example, when a baby laughs at a silly song or gets excited when her adult asks if she wants a bottle.



Over time, you will understand more of what your baby is communicating. This gives you the information you need to decide how best to respond to her.

For example, is it late in the morning and is she rubbing her eyes? Knowing she is tired, you decide to get her ready for a nap. Does she squeal and smile when you start a game of peek-a-boo? Knowing she is excited and happy, you may decide to play again. But, if she turns away and starts to fuss, you know she is telling you she has had enough. It is time to stop the game.

By tuning in and trying to understand what she is communicating, you build trust between you. Here are some ideas to help you understand her:



Be a detective looking for clues.

Pay attention to her face, her gestures, and her crying and look for sounds and words.



Ask yourself, "What is she feeling?" "What is she saying to me?"

As you watch her from the outside, try to figure out what is happening on the inside for your child. Is her face relaxed as she plays? Tight? Is she smiling? Frowning and about to cry?



Listen and look for patterns.

Have you noticed that the sound of her crying when she is wet differs from how she cries when she is hungry? Keep listening, and you will discover that what the crying sounds like can tell you many things.



Tell her in a gentle, calm voice:

"I am trying to understand what you are saying." This may lead to a calming moment of connection that will help you understand what she is saying.



Compare notes with others who know her well.

Check in to learn what other adults who are regulars in her life notice as they try to figure out what she is communicating.



Be patient with yourself.

You will miss some of what she is saying; count on it. Sometimes this may lead to upset feelings—for one or both of you. It's part of life. Keep trying. Over time, your baby will learn she can trust you to be there for her.



Any other ideas?





Take a Moment: Understanding Your Baby's Sounds and Movements

What is something your child has told you without words?

What did she do to relay her message to you?

How did you respond to her?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Pay attention, watch, and listen to me...	You care about me. What I do and the sounds I make are important. I am important too.
Tell me, “I am trying to understand what you are saying.”	Even if I am upset or can’t get my message across, I can count on you to be there for me.



Your Trusting Relationship Dance with a Toddler On-the-Move



Figuring It Out Together

Your relationship is like a dance. As you communicate and model trusting interactions with your child, she learns about the back and forth of trust. By the time she is a toddler, your child has a clear idea of who she wants to be with, usually you and other familiar and trusted adults in her life.

Her new communication and physical skills allow her to make this known, clearly and loudly.

I want to be with you as much as I can.



For example, you may notice that she does the following:



Clings, hits, and/or screams when it is time to say “goodbye” at child care even though you know she has a good time there.



Runs toward you for a hug when you come home after being away, or she may also ignore you or be angry. These are all ways of letting you know she missed you, though some are harder to take than others.



Brings a book to you and climbs up on your lap even though you are ready to start making dinner.

Over time, the trust that exists between you and your child allows her to trust others and want to be with them also. But for now, your dance partner may often stick as close to you as she can. Keep watching and you will see signs of her growing trust in herself and others. For example, you may hear her repeating your words to her teddy bear, “You are OK. We are together, and I will keep you safe.”



Figuring Out Her Moves on the Dance Floor

Toddlers' behaviors can be confusing. She may insist, "No!" even as she reaches for a cookie. She may blurt out, "Me do it!" one minute, and the next moment she calls for help to put on her shorts. Here are some ideas to help you understand her moves:



Ask yourself "What is she experiencing?"

It may help you to imagine the words in a thought balloon over her cute, little head.



Look for patterns in her behavior.

This can help you figure out how to keep your dance as smooth and enjoyable as possible. For example, knowing she is a child who needs lots of time to wake up in the morning can help you adjust your morning routine.



Follow her lead, then respond.

Researchers call this "serve and return," and it is one of the best ways you can help organize her brain and strengthen the trust between you. For example: When she wiggles and protests as you change her diaper, she may be telling you, "I love to move. I have to move." When you say, "I know this isn't your favorite," then give her a diaper to hold, you are helping her learn, "You understand what I am feeling. We are partners in changing my diaper. I can help! I can do it!"

When You Step on One Another's Toes

All dancers get out of sync or stumble. There will be times you get upset with each other. It is part of life.

When things don't turn out the way you planned or wish, acknowledge it: "We both sure got upset today when you wanted to walk, and I wanted you to ride in your stroller. I am sorry I yelled at you. How about we try again tomorrow? If we leave earlier, you can walk and I'll bring the stroller in case you get tired."



Any other ideas?



**Take a Moment: Getting Back in Sync**

Think of a time you have been upset with an adult family member or friend.

How did you recover and move forward in your relationship?

What do you think your child will learn from moving forward together with you after you both get upset?



You are Her Base of Security

No matter how big and independent she seems, she still relies on you (and other familiar, trusted adults) to help her feel safe. Your presence energizes her to be able to play, explore, discover, and learn.

Your toddler shows you how important you are when she does the following:



Sticks by your side even when other children are playing a fun game.



Pulls you by the hand over to the sandbox and insists you sit down next to her.



Pulls your face towards her when you are talking with another adult.



Looks back at you from across the playground and waits for your smile before she starts to climb.



Wants to eat the food on your plate.



Any other ideas?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Follow my lead, then respond...	I am competent and have good ideas.
Tell me the story of why we both got upset and that we will do better tomorrow...	Our relationship can be bumpy, but it can recover, and we can move forward together.

Your Trusting Relationship Dance with Your Two-Year-Old



Figuring It Out Together

Your relationship is like a dance. As you communicate and model trusting interactions with your child, she learns about the back and forth of trust.

By the time she is 2, your child often switches between wanting to be in charge and wanting to be a baby. No matter how grown up she may seem, she still relies on you and other familiar, trusted adults to feel secure and to have the confidence to explore new people, places, and objects.

Her new communication and physical skills allow her to stick close to you and to show you how much she has already learned about relationships. For example, you may notice that she does the following:



Holds your hand tightly, then she lets go to check out another child's toy.



Climbs into your lap, out of your lap, goes to see what other children are doing in the sand box, then climbs back into your lap.



Insists on tying her own shoe even though she doesn't know how.



Cries for you when she falls and scrapes her knee.



Looks to you and waits for your nod and smile before trying a scooter for the first time.



Runs toward you for a hug when you come home after you have been apart, or she may ignore you or be angry. These are all ways to let you know she missed you. Some are harder to take than others.

If not already, she soon will begin early friendships with other children though you are her favorite play partner for now.



Figuring Out Her Moves on the Dance Floor

Two-year-olds' behaviors can be maddening and bewildering. Twos want to be independent *big kids*. At the same time, they still want to be babies. It can be a time of intense feelings for both of you. Here are some ideas to help you understand her moves:



Ask yourself "What is she experiencing?"

It may help to imagine the words in a thought balloon over her cute, little head.



Look for patterns in her behavior.

This can help you figure out how to keep your dance as smooth and enjoyable as possible. For example, knowing she is a child who does best in small groups may lead you to not take her to the sandbox when it is crowded.



Follow her lead and respond—as often as possible.

Researchers call this "serve and return," and it is one of the best ways you can help organize her brain and strengthen the connection between you.

For example: When she brings you a book to read, one you have read many times before, she may be saying, "Let's read this book. I love how we snuggle and cuddle and look at it together." When you pat your lap and invite her to crawl into it and then say, "This is a book about a baby llama and his momma. Do you remember what happens? Let's see what they are going to do," you are helping her learn that reading is enjoyable, which will encourage her to be a reader.





When You Step on One Another's Toes

All dancers get out of sync or stumble. There will be times you get upset with each other. It is part of life.



When things don't turn out the way you planned, acknowledge it.

At this age you can use more direct language about relationships and how she should behave, for example: "We both sure got upset today when you didn't want to hold my hand crossing the street. No matter how upset we get, we don't pinch. How about we try again tomorrow? We can sing a song together as we walk across the street holding hands."



Expect Nos! and testing.

They come with this age as children try to figure out who they are.



Help her feel safe by setting clear limits that guide her behavior and, at the same time, allow her to feel good about herself and her growing abilities.

For example: "Climbing on the dining table is dangerous because you might fall off and hurt yourself. You are a good climber and can practice your skills in the park, but we don't climb on the table at home."



Model upsets and recovery with your home visitor and others in your life.

No relationship is perfectly smooth. When your child sees you and another adult have to work things out together—such as the timing of home visits or who is going to clean the dishes after dinner—she sees a trusting relationship in action.

Your Words May Last a Lifetime

Because you are so important to her, she pays attention to what you say about her. Your words can become a voice that replays regularly in her head, maybe even for her whole life.

No matter how tired or frustrated you may be at times—and all parents are at times—think before you speak.



Any other ideas?



Take a Moment: Messages You Want to Give to Your Child

What messages do you want your child to hear about herself over the years?

What messages do you want to give her about relationships with other people?





First Friendships

Two-year-old children are very interested in other children. At first, they tend to play side-by-side. But, watch and listen and you will see that they pay attention to and know a lot about one another. For example, they could tell you who the green shoes belong to or who has a big sister.

Over time and with your support, they are able to pretend play together. For example, the children may take their baby dolls shopping or they may be firefighters together. They start to play in small groups; however, they will need you (or another trusted adult) to be nearby to help negotiate hurt feelings, taking turns, sharing, and problem-solving.

Between the ages of 2 and 3, you may notice your child do the following:



Sit next to another child, both making a tower with small blocks.



Tell a friend her mother is here at pick up time.



Drive her toy truck along the block road, saying “beep beep” when she reaches a friend’s car.



Choose to play at the sand table because her friend is playing there.



Be angry when another child reaches for her stuffed bear, then, with your help, say, “My bear” instead of hitting.



Pretend to go food shopping or drive a fire truck with two other children.



To Support Your Child in Forming New Friendships



Model being a friend.

Your child is always watching you and learning. Show her how to be a good friend as you interact with others.



Take photos of family friends.

Look at the photos together. Talk about what it means to be a good friend.



Stay nearby or arrange for a trusted adult to be near when two or more children are playing together.

Watch what children are doing. Give them a chance to work things out before getting involved. At the same time, be prepared to step in if needed to avoid hurt feelings and to keep children safe.



Have realistic expectations.

Encourage them to, but do not expect children this age to share. Be aware that 2-year-olds often have intense feelings and may hit, scratch, or bite to express big feelings they cannot yet put into words.



Notice and talk about your child's positive experiences with friends.

For example: "You and Jorge sure had fun collecting stones in your buckets. I saw you give Jorge some stones, and he smiled and said, 'thank you.'"





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Talk, laugh, solve problems, and learn with our home visitor...	Trusting relationships are important. People who trust each other can work together and learn together.
Stay nearby when I play with other children...	I can have fun with my friends and trust you to be there if we need your help.

Thinking About Temperament: Your Child's and Yours



Figuring It Out Together

We are each born with our own personal style—our own way of approaching the world and responding to it—our own temperament.

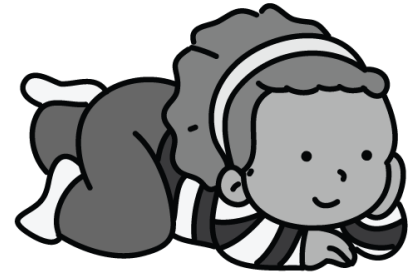
Think about yourself for a moment. How do you typically respond to a new situation? Are you the type of person who jumps in, engages with new people, and is ready to try whatever comes your way? Or, would your approach be to quietly arrive, blend in, and take time to become familiar with what is happening in this new situation? Maybe you find new situations hard and avoid them whenever possible. Maybe you just do your best to stick with the known and familiar?

Now look back over the years. Do you see a pattern? Our temperaments tend to remain fairly consistent throughout our lives.

There are also patterns in your toddler's behavior. They have been there since birth but are a little easier to see now that he is a bit older, and you can see consistencies in his behavior.

Being aware of how your temperament is the same and/or different than your child's can help you deepen trust by taking steps to make situations, like going to a busy supermarket, work better for your child and you.

How are we the same?
How are we different?



Patterns of Temperament

Researchers have described three general types of temperament. Understanding these general types can help you see patterns in your child's behavior. It's important to remember, though, that children and temperaments do not fit neatly into a box.



Thoughtful or Cautious:

This child tends to be reserved and watchful, and he takes in everyone and everything around him. He might protest at first when you put him in his stroller or shopping cart seat, or he may turn away when someone stops to say, "Hello." Then, he slowly warms up and smiles as he points at a doggy.



Feisty or Intense:

This child is more active, and he squirms to get out of his stroller or the seat in the shopping cart. You may have to hold onto him with one hand on the bus or give him something to hold to keep him from pulling items off the drugstore shelf. When he thinks something is funny, you are likely to hear a belly laugh. When he is upset, everyone will know it.



Flexible or Adaptable:

This child sits happily in his stroller or the shopping cart. He smiles at people you walk by. When you talk about a dog, bus, or the flowers you notice, he smiles and points when he sees one. When this child finds something funny he laughs with delight. If he is upset, he cries or fusses and then moves on.

Using What You Know About Temperament to Strengthen Your Relationship

Learning about your child's temperament can help you predict how your child might respond in different situations, such as a trip to the supermarket. This, in turn, can help you think about steps you can take to make these experiences as enjoyable as possible for everyone, which deepens your relationship.

For example, a child who is thoughtful or cautious may find a shopping trip easier if you plan and give him some warning about what is going to happen next: "We are going to the supermarket to buy some fruit after we finish our lunch." A child who is flexible/adaptable may be able to quite easily handle a quick last-minute stop. For a child who is feisty or intense, you may decide to go shopping following some active outdoor play.

As you think about your child, remember temperament is a way of being, not a guarantee of behavior. Someone once described temperament as the "climate" and behavior as the "daily weather."



Also, keep these two facts in mind:

- There is no right or wrong way for a person to be.
- There is no better or worse when it comes to type of temperament.



***Take a Moment: Think About How You and Your Child are the Same and Different***

Imagine walking down the aisle in the supermarket. The lights are bright, and it is busy as people walk by pushing their carts. You can hear people talking and music is playing in the background. You are looking for one kind of cereal on the shelves crowded with over 30 different types.

How would you describe your child's reaction? Yours?

- Thoughtful or cautious?
- Feisty or intense?
- Flexible or adaptable?

What is one thing you could do to make shopping work better for both of you?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
See me as a unique individual and how we are the same and different...	I am respected for who I am.
Decide how to make our daily routines and play work for both of us...	We enjoy time together. When there is a problem or one of us gets upset, we can figure it out.



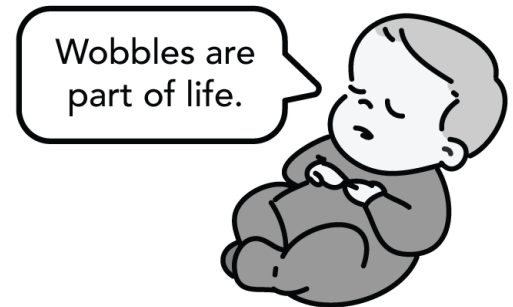
All Relationships Wobble Sometimes



Figuring It Out Together

All relationships have wobbles. It may feel as if you and your child are dancing to different music or at different speeds, or it may feel as though you are dancing on unsteady ground.

Wobbles can happen at any age. All parents feel them, and children do too.



Reasons for Wobbles

Wobbles are part of life. In some cases, it may take only a few steps for you and your child to get back into your special rhythm with each other.

Other times, you may feel out of sync for days, weeks, or even months. You may not even be aware of the reason why it is happening, but you notice that you and your child are no longer dancing like partners. You feel disconnected. When this happens, it is important to talk with someone. Your home visitor can help you think about what is going on, and together you can decide what steps to take. You may have other people you can connect to for support. Every parent needs support sometimes. A wobble is one of those times.

Here are some common causes of wobbles:



You didn't fall in love at first sight.

People often talk about falling in love at first sight with their newborn baby. While this is true for many parents, it is not the case for many others. It can take time to love a new little person in your life—one who cries and wakes you up and who needs his diaper changed all the time. Needing time is natural.



You are experiencing baby blues.

If you have just given birth, you may have mood swings, feel down, irritable, tired, sad, or impatient. You may even have trouble sleeping, despite the fact that you are exhausted. These *postpartum blues* are very common. The blues can make it hard to enjoy and respond to your baby. Don't feel alarmed. Many new mothers (i.e., 50-80%) experience the blues. Fathers, adoptive parents, and foster parents can also experience the blues.

Usually, baby blues tend to lessen in about 1 or 2 weeks. The key is to recognize the signs. Get as much rest as possible; accept the help of family and friends; talk with other new parents; and avoid alcohol and recreational drugs, which can make mood swings more intense.



You are experiencing postpartum depression.

If the blues don't disappear after a few weeks, or become more intense, you may be experiencing postpartum depression. Postpartum depression most commonly affects mothers within the first 3 months after giving birth but can occur at any point during the first year. Not only mothers can feel depressed after welcoming a new child to the family—fathers and adoptive parents can experience it too.

If you think you are depressed, talk with your home visitor to find out about available supports in your community. Arrange to talk with your health care provider. There are treatments, including talk therapy and medications, that can help. The sooner you get support, the sooner you will feel like yourself again, and you will be able to enjoy your baby.



SAFETY ALERT: At any time, if you feel you may hurt yourself or your baby, put your baby in her crib or another safe place and call for help right away.



Your child may not be who you imagined.

For example, she may not look like the baby you have pictured. She may have a disability—emotional or physical. Her curly red hair might remind you of your cousin who cannot keep a job, or her insistence to do things her way may remind you of your ex-partner whom you hope to never see again. She may not be cuddly; not all children are.



You may want to be a different parent than you had and worry you don't know how.

For example, your parents may have hit you when you did something they didn't like, and now your 2-year-old is pushing your buttons. You have already taken the first step: realizing you want to be different. Now, it will take work and support to find your own parenting style. Knowing what you don't want to do is not the same as knowing what you do want to do.



You may be stressed out in other areas of your life.

There are many factors that could be influencing your stress level: trying to balance parenting with school or work, getting settled in a new home and community, being away from family, caring for an older relative, or expecting or caring for a new baby while also looking after older children. Give yourself permission to slow down—you do not have to do everything. Reach out to someone in your *Circle of Support* to talk to or take a moment to breathe.





Here are Some Ideas to Support Your Relationship



Make sure home visits work for you.

You and your home visitor are partners in making visits helpful. If and when you are feeling a wobble, tell your home visitor. Sometimes, just knowing you are not alone is enough. Other times, you can make a support plan with your home visitor for you and your child.



Give yourself some time.

Some children's ages and stages may be easier than others for you to appreciate and enjoy.



Be aware of your individual styles or temperament.

Each of us is born with our personal way of being. For example, you or your child may be described as one of the following:

- Flexible or Adaptable: You take things in stride—most of the time.
- Feisty or Intense: You react in big ways—most of the time.
- Thoughtful or Cautious: You watch before joining in. It takes time for you to adjust to new people, places, and activities—most of the time.

When it comes to temperament, there is no good and bad or right and wrong. Yet, you may find your child's temperament challenging to handle. For example, if you are easy going, you may feel mismatched when your feisty and intense infant screams louder than you ever knew a baby could scream when she is hungry.

Understanding each of you is an individual can help you begin to appreciate your baby for who she is, which is a big step to connecting.



Take steps to see, accept, and appreciate your one-of-a kind child for who she is.

Watch her with your home visitor. What do you notice? What does your child say or do that makes you smile? What interests her? What makes her happy? What upsets her? What are five things she has learned in her short life? What is she working on learning now?



Figure out ways to adapt your dance steps to fit hers.

For example, some babies and children do not like to cuddle. They may stiffen their bodies or push away from you when you try to hold them close. It is who they are; this reaction is not a rejection of you. Be creative. Find ways to show your love—lay your baby on your lap and gently rub her back, play horsey by bouncing her on your lap, or kiss a toddler on the head.



Support your child's use of a lovey.

Does your child hold onto or carry around a soft object, for example a stuffed animal, a blanket, or one of your t-shirts? This is a *lovey* or transitional object. Its feel and smell give your child the safe and secure feelings of being with you. Keep track of her *lovey* and be sure she has it with her when you are apart—whether for the night or day or longer.

If your child doesn't have a *lovey*, think of other ways to help her carry feelings of your love and trusting relationships with her. For example, give her a photo of you together to keep in her pocket or put a love note in her cubby or tape it to the wall by her bed.



Create a place(s) to be together at home.

Do you and your child have a special place where you cuddle together? Read together? Play together?

Perhaps you spend time together in a comfy chair or on the living room rug. Maybe, you read or tell a story each night in a rocking chair before your child goes to sleep.

These are places that are filled with the safe feelings that come from you being together. They are places to enjoy each other's company and places that will provide feelings of security and comfort when you and your child are in sync and when your relationship is wobbly.



Any other ideas?





Take a Moment: Connecting with Your Child

Have you ever found it hard to feel close to your child?

Why do you think this is so?

What did you do or can you do to get back in sync?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
See me as a unique individual...	I am respected for who I am.
Ask for support to help you feel connected with me...	You are there for me.



Keep Your Child Safe: Use the Protective Factors



Figuring It Out Together

The trust between you and your child deepens when you keep him safe during bumpy times. There are actions you can take to keep your child safe—sometimes on your own; sometimes with help from family members; and sometimes with outside resource people you trust, such as your home visitor or healthcare provider.



When you keep your child safe during bumpy times, you teach him he can trust you and also trust himself. He may also begin to learn that challenges can be handled, you can bounce back, and life moves on. These early lessons about dealing with difficult times can help your child develop self-confidence, coping skills, and resilience.

To keep your child safe and deepen the trust between you means you will probably buffer him and your family from stress and encourage everyone to be resilient during difficult times. The protective factors can help you do this.

Use the Protective Factors to Help You Deal with Stress so You can be There for Your Child

When you feel safe, secure, effective, and confident, your child senses this. He is more likely to feel that way himself. Making the protective factors part of your family's everyday life can help you feel more confident, so you can be there for your child and decide how best to deepen the trust between you.

On the following page are the protective factors some of which you and your home visitor may have already seen in your family or decided to work on. We invite you—on your own or with a family member, trusted friend, or your home visitor—to think about each factor and how it supports you as a person and a parent when you face challenges.



Protective Factors—Helping Your Family Thrive

You will help your family grow stronger and thrive when you make these protective factors part of your *Everyday Moments* and lives. Like a tree in stormy winds, these factors will help your family grow deep roots that will let you bounce back to stand straight and tall when the going gets tough.



Social Connections

Having family members and/or friends you can count on and who can count on you makes life easier and more enjoyable. Giving and receiving support makes everyone stronger.



Concrete Supports

Every family needs a support network of people and community services to provide information and other resources during challenging times. Knowing you are not alone can help you make the best decisions possible for your family and yourself.



Parental Resilience

Every parent faces challenges that can be stressful. Your ability to bounce back—your resilience—means learning to solve problems; building trusting relationships, including with your child; and knowing how to find help when you need it. When you respond to stress in these positive ways, you are teaching your child how to manage difficult times—a key skill for life.



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Learning about how young children grow and learn will help you know what to expect at different ages. This will help you decide how to respond in ways that will help your one-of-a-kind child thrive.



Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Your relationship teaches your child what to expect and how to relate with others. When your child learns to interact in positive ways, manage his behavior, and communicate his feelings, his relationships with adults and children will be more positive.





Take a Moment: Your Family's Protective Factors

Are there one or more protective factors that you feel are already a part of your family's life?

Is there a protective factor you want to develop or make stronger? What is it?

What steps will you take to develop this specific protective factor?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Talk and learn together with our home visitor...	People care about each other and help each other.
Bounce back the best you can from a tough time...	You are strong. I am safe. I can count on you to be there for me.



Keep Your Child Safe: Provide Emotional and Physical Safety



Figuring It Out Together

The trust between you and your child deepens when you keep him safe during bumpy times. There are steps you can take to keep your child safe—sometimes on your own; sometimes with family members; and sometimes with trusted outside resources, such as your home visitor or a healthcare provider.



When you keep your child safe during bumpy times, you teach him he can trust you and also trust himself. In addition, he may begin to learn that challenges can be handled, and life moves on. He may experience how you bounce back from a challenge. These early lessons about dealing with difficult times can help your child develop self-confidence, coping skills, and resilience.

To keep your child safe and deepen the trust between you means you will be aware of his emotions or states of mind, such as anger, happiness, hatred, love, or fear, which can be caused or intensified by a situation or interaction with a person. It also means responding in ways that help your child feel he can manage or cope.

Notice If Your Child Isn't Growing or Gaining Weight as You Might Expect

All babies develop and grow at their own rate. Most young children go through times of not wanting to eat or even losing weight. Sometimes there are medical reasons, and sometimes there are stress-related reasons. The good news is you can work with your child's doctor to take steps to help your child get back on a path of healthy growth.

If you are concerned your child isn't eating enough, it is important to talk to your home visitor and with your child's healthcare provider.

Some important signs include the following:



He isn't interested in what is happening around him;



avoids meeting your eyes; becomes fussy;



or seems to be behind in reaching developmental milestones, like walking and talking.

These may be signs of a condition called *Failure to Thrive*. This condition is treatable, and your child's doctor can help coordinate the care your child needs.



Develop a Family Plan for Emotional and Physical Safety

Everyone gets angry, fearful, or anxious sometimes. Sometimes, these feelings can be so strong they can be overwhelming.

When a person is under great stress, shocked, or frightened by something or when a person experiences fear, anxiety, anger, or hurt, the primal brain takes over. The brain shifts into survival mode making it hard to think, to problem-solve, and to make good decisions. In this state of mind, adults may say or do things that can injure a child (or worse) and undermine trusting relationships.

Planning ahead can help you keep your child physically and emotionally safe.

Here are some parts of a plan to consider:



Know the signs someone is losing control.

Signs can include a tensing of face or body, a change in the sound of one's voice, pacing, or quieting and growing still.



Create a cool-down spot.

"I will go to the cozy red chair in the living room. When I am there I will...(take 10 deep breaths). I will return to my family when...(my body feels calm and I can think about how glad I am I sat in my chair)."



Choose a place(s) to go when you and your children have to get out of the house.

The house of a family member, friend, or neighbor or your place of worship are options.



Be sure contact numbers are easy to access.

Put contact numbers on your phone or on a card in your bag, and include numbers for family members, a neighbor, doctor, police, and ambulance services.

If there are intense and stormy emotions in your home most days, you need to get some outside emotional support. Getting this help is a big step in keeping your child safe and healthy. If you have doubts about finding help for yourself, understand that getting help is in the best interest of your child. Your home visitor will be able to give you the names of places that can support you.





SAFETY ALERT: Never shake your infant, toddler, or two!

When a young child is shaken or thrown, his head whips back and forth and from side to side. His brain slams against his skull. No matter how long he has been crying, one forceful shake in a moment of frustration—even when playing—can damage his brain, neck, spine, or eyes forever. It can even lead to death. His life and yours will never be the same.

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE GONG TO LOSE CONTROL:



Put him in his crib or in another safe place.



Shut the door.



Pull out your headphones, take deep breaths, and have a good cry yourself.



Call someone.



Wait until you have calmed down before you try again to calm him.



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Observe me and seek help if you see I am not eating or growing as expected...	People have questions. Sometimes, they know the answers. Other times, they need to ask someone to help find the answer.
Create a cool-down spot and tell me about it...	Adults have big feelings too, and there are ways to handle big feelings while keeping me safe.




Keep Your Child Safe: Create a Family Care Plan



Figuring It Out Together

The trust between you and your child deepens when you keep him safe during bumpy times.

There are steps you can take to keep your child safe—sometimes on your own; sometimes with family members; and sometimes with trusted outside resources, such as your home visitor or a healthcare provider.



I depend on you to keep me safe.

When you keep your child safe during bumpy times, you teach him he can trust you and also trust himself. In addition, he may begin to learn that challenges can be handled, and life moves on. He may experience how you bounce back from a challenge. These early lessons about dealing with difficult times can help your child develop self-confidence, coping skills, and resilience.

If you or your spouse is a member of the military and is going to be deployed, create a family care plan to keep your child safe. This plan provides vital information about child care or school, medical and dental care, and daily life to those who will be caring for your child. This will allow your child's caregiver to keep a sense of continuity in his life.

Create a Family Care Plan

If you or your spouse is a member of the military, you may be called away from home for training or a deployment. Create a family care plan to care for your child(ren) when you are apart. While slightly different for each Service, this plan will give your child's caregiver important basic information that will allow him or her to meet your child's needs and provide a sense of continuity that can help your child feel safe and connected to you.

Information in a family care plan includes details about a child's daily activities; your family's routines; medical and dental information and contacts; information about how to reach close friends and relatives who will remain part of your child's life; contact information for resources your family uses on and off base; and the location of important documents, including wills, insurance certificates, and power of attorney forms. Care plans will also include information about the importance of dependent IDs and how to use services available on your installation.



Take a Moment: Create a Family Care Plan

If you were taking care of a relative or friend's child for months, what information would you want and need?

How can keeping daily routines consistent help your child when you are away?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Give someone information about the things we do together every day so they can take good care of me...	I can count on you to keep me safe—and feel close to you because my routines are the same—even when we are apart.
Imagine what information you would want to take care of someone else’s child and share that information with my caring person...	Life continues and I will be well taken care of—even when you are away doing your job.

Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child



When you trust another person, you believe they are dependable. You can count on them. You feel safe with them—physically and emotionally.

A trusting relationship develops when each of you decides to trust the other. A trusting relationship lasts when each of you discovers you can rely on the other over time.

Every day you interact with your child, you have the opportunity to teach her about trusting relationships. Pausing a moment to reflect on your own experiences with trust can help you understand what you bring as a partner in a relationship with your child.



Can you think of a trusting relationship in your life? Perhaps the relationship was with a family member, teacher, friend, or healthcare provider?



What did that person say or do that invited your trust? Smile at you? Listen to you? Help you when you needed support?

Some parents have many trusting relationships in their lives, while others may not be able to think of one. Either way, learning about the behaviors that lead to trust within a relationship can help you decide what to say and do to show your child that she can count on you.



Take a Moment: Look Back at Relationships

When it comes to trust, are there ways you want your relationship with your child to be the same as the one you had with the adults(s) who raised you?

How do you want it to be different?





Why Building a Trusting Relationship with Your Child Matters

Who your child will be as an adult depends in large part on your relationship when she is young. When you show your child that she can trust you, she begins to learn what trust is and how to be a person who can be trusted.



She learns she is safe when you meet her needs.

She feels valued and cared for. Over time, she will begin to trust and care for herself. Children who feel good about themselves are more likely to be more successful—in school and in life.



When you try to understand what she is communicating to you—with or without words—she learns she can relay her message successfully.

She also learns how she feels when someone listens and pays attention to her. This, in turn, teaches her to listen and pay attention to others.



She learns how to interact with others from the way you relate to her.

When you show her respect, try to understand what she is feeling and cooperate with her. She will be more likely to do this in other relationships with family and friends throughout her life.



You also help her learn about the world around her.

Your presence helps her feel safe in a big world. You give her confidence to explore, experiment, and learn.



Note: None of this means that you have to be perfect. There is no such thing as a perfect parent...or a perfect child...or a perfect anyone. Do your best, ask for support when you need it, and know that tomorrow is another day.



Take a Moment: What Do You Want for Your Child?

What do you want your child to think and feel about herself?

What do you want your child to think and feel about relationships with other people?

What do you want her to think and feel as she explores, experiments, and discovers the world around her?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Come as soon as you can when I cry...	I can trust you will come—even when I have to wait a few minutes for you.
Stay nearby when I am learning about a new person or place...	I am safe and free to experiment and explore.





Practical Applications for Families: Figuring It Out Together

Practical Applications: Building Trusting Relationships

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Figuring It Out Together: Emergency Child Care Assistance



Areas of Development

Open communication with child care providers affects these areas of development:



Cognitive



Language



Socio-Emotional

Related Protective Factors



Social Connection



Concrete Supports of Families



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Associated Family Pages

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Scenario: Emergency Child Care Assistance

A single dad needed to return to work, and he arranged for a neighbor to provide child care for his 7-week-old son. When he dropped his son off in the morning, the child care provider informed him that her daughter needed emergency surgery and that she would be flying out to be with her daughter the next day. Unfortunately, this situation has left little time for the father to find an alternative form of child care, and he doesn't know if his boss will give him the time off on such short notice.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

When child care services are closed or otherwise unavailable, parents must improvise. Alternative solutions require compromises that families don't always have access to or the means to make. Aside from taking a temporary or indefinite leave from work to care for your child, some families have opted for these alternatives:

- Organized group child care at public institutions.
- Non-profit after-school programs.
- In-home daycare within the neighborhood/ community.
- Learning pods with groups of children.
- Recruiting a family member, friend, neighbor, or associate to provide care on a regular or emergency basis.

Figuring It Out Together: Surviving Separation Anxiety



Areas of Development

Separation anxiety is apparent as children experience these areas of development:



Cognitive



Language



Socio-Emotional



Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors



Social Connection



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development



Social and Emotional Competence of Children

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Scenario: Surviving Separation Anxiety

A mom notices her 10-month-old son has become very clingy. When family and friends come to visit, he clings tightly to her arm and hides his face. She can't even give him to her partner for short periods of time, like when she needs to use the restroom. In addition, at daycare, when she drops him off, he starts to scream from the time they go into the room until she leaves.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Separation anxiety is completely normal and is a sign of a secure attachment between you and your child. Behaviors can be worse when the child is tired, hungry, or sick. To help alleviate separation anxiety, try the following suggestions:

- Practice being apart from your child around the home, such as when babysitters are there or during play dates when another adult can supervise.
- Maintain a consistent good-bye routine that is warm, short, and quick.
- Talk warmly to your child about your return in terminology he can understand.
- Help your child gain comfort in new environments, like taking your child along to visit facilities or schools prior to start dates or identifying people and objects by name.
- Create a distraction by offering a small toy or object, but always say goodbye.

Understand your child's cries will not last forever. At the peak of separation anxiety, your child is keenly aware of the present and can quickly focus his attention on something else when you are gone. Remember, he will grow more comfortable as he feels more secure and becomes more aware of your pattern. Eventually, he will look forward to your reunion.



Chapter 3: Nurturing Guidance and Discipline

6.2.3 Nurturing Guidance and Discipline

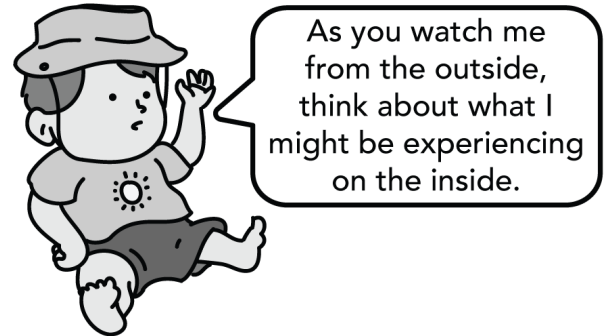
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Nurturing Guidance from a Child's Point of View



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some of the things your child might tell you about guiding her behavior:



Through a Young Child's Eyes

Guiding Behavior

0-6 months

I can feel when you are calm, and I can hear and feel the tension in your voice and arms when you are upset or angry. When you are calm, it can help me feel calm and safe when I'm upset.

My crying can stir up deep feelings. It can feel like I am *trying to get you*, but that is not true. Please hang in there.

Try to understand what my crying is telling you and respond. Sometimes, I just need you to hold me and be supportive. I will figure this out with your help.

Crying is the main way I *talk* with you. You can also watch my expressions, listen to my sounds, and watch how I move—for example, when I look away. This may mean that I need a little break from talking and playing together.

The research is in: There is no such thing as spoiling a baby. Please come to me when I cry and try to figure out what I need and help me with it. Your supportive responses help me build trust and feel safe in our growing relationship.

Crying can be hard to be around. I may cry a lot during these months and that is normal. I'm doing a lot of growing, and it can be hard to regulate myself when things are changing so quickly.

When you soothe and comfort me, you are helping me begin to learn how to soothe and comfort myself when I am upset.



Through a Young Child's Eyes

Guiding Behavior

6-12 months

You are the center of my world. I pay attention to what you say and do—with me and others. I repeat actions and sounds back and forth with you. Showing me how to behave is even more powerful than telling me how to behave.

Crying is still my main way of communicating. I watch you to see if I need to cry to get your attention. I can also move to you, reach for you, and point to things I want. I can let you know you are helping me by snuggling, smiling, babbling, and cooing. We are creating our conversation style as we go back and forth.

You've become an expert in understanding my cries, but they can still stir up deep feelings. I still only have a few months of practice in being a partner. I am not trying to hurt your feelings. I need you to gently guide me. I'm exploring and learning and can get overwhelmed with my discoveries. Please hang in there. Try to understand what my crying, fussiness, or distress is telling you.

When you soothe and comfort me, you are helping me continue to learn how to soothe and comfort myself, when I am upset.

Baby proofing our home can cut down on telling me "No!". When our home is safe, life is easier for both of us.

With your help, I am learning how to control my own behavior. Notice and comment when I do so. For example, when I shake my head and push a spoon away at breakfast, ask "Are you finished? Would you like to get down? Thank you for letting me know you are full. Let's clean hands and get out of the high chair."

12-18 months

You are my safe base of exploration. I want to know where you are as I explore and check in with you every few minutes. I check to see if you think I'm safe. I mimic your actions and expressions. Showing me how you feel helps me understand how I feel.

I'm not crying as much, but my cries still tell you important things—like I'm tired and need support; I'm frustrated because I can't figure something out; I'm overstimulated and need to relieve some stress; I'm feeling anxious or scared and want to stay close to you; I'm not feeling well and need you to figure out what is wrong.

When you soothe and comfort me, you are still helping me to learn how to soothe and comfort myself when I am upset. Using emotion words for your feelings and my feelings helps me know what I am feeling. Showing me how you calm down shows me ways to help myself.

I have more skills to get into things that can be risky for me. Updating the toddler-proofing in our home can cut down on telling me "No!". When our home is safe, life is easier for both of us.

Encourage me to share but know it will take me time to get good at it. When you share with me and others, I learn sharing is important.

With your help, I am learning how to control my own behavior. Notice and comment when I do so. For example, "I notice that you were able to stop digging in the flower pot when I asked you to please stop. Thank you."





Through a Young Child's Eyes	
Guiding Behavior	
18-24 months	
<p>You are my social bridge, helping me learn to make friends and play as a partner. I want to be like you and will copy you. I watch you to see how to connect to others and how to treat others.</p> <p>Showing me how to behave and describing respectful behaviors helps me understand how to adjust my behaviors, like using gentle touches and trying simple words like "No" and "Stop" when I'm upset instead of hitting or screaming with anger.</p>	<p>It helps me when you use words to describe what you think I am feeling and how things also affect you. I am learning more about how I feel and how to respond to challenges and joys.</p> <p>As I get to be 2, I want to be a big kid and a baby all at the same time. It can be a time of push and pull and intense feelings. I may say "No!" even when I want the cookie you are offering me. Hang in there. No matter how confusing my behavior may seem to you, it is just me figuring out who I am.</p>
<p>My crying is usually pretty specific and tells you that I've reached the end of my coping abilities and I need some support.</p> <p>I'm making progress in managing myself for longer periods of time. But I may have a meltdown after I get home from childcare because I feel safe enough to ask you for support.</p>	<p>I'm still exploring and trying new things! Child proofing our home and setting up my play area, so my curiosity doesn't create problems—like safely storing markers that might end up being used on walls and floors—can cut down on telling me, "No!" When our home is safe and hassles are minimized, life is easier for both of us.</p>
<p>You may have helped me build some soothing routines in our 2 years together. If you start the routine, I can often find my part and we can connect and find our rhythm. Calming and soothing routines help each of us settle when we are out of sorts.</p>	<p>Encourage me to share but know it will take me a few years to get good at it. When you share with me and others, I learn that sharing is important.</p> <p>When I don't want to share something, such as a bite of food, you can show that you respect my choice by letting me keep my bite.</p>



Through a Young Child's Eyes

Guiding Behavior

24-30 months

My social connections are growing, but you are still my most important person. I want to be like you and will copy you.

I'm picking up your conversational phrases of how to say hello, goodbye, "Yes, please," and "No, thank you," just like you do. If you say, "That's not nice," you can be sure you will hear me say that too!

If you complain about drivers when we are going to the store, I will start to do that too! I will try out those words in different situations and in my pretend play.

My crying is still a good indicator of me thinking or feeling that something is not right. I am developing a strong sense of fairness and starting to become possessive of things that are mine...or that I just really like and want.

I need you to help me learn how to be fair, recognize when I am not fair or kind to others, and connect the feelings of fairness and unfairness to actions.

You may feel like you are a referee, sorting out conflicts and talking a lot about what is and is not OK. It's a lot of work to let me feel big feelings and learn to manage them in healthy ways. Stick with me!

I still may want to be big and little at the same time. This is a hard position to be in since that is impossible. Expect that I will have many strong feelings that I don't know how to handle yet. This is a time of testing and temper tantrums.

Sometimes my feelings are so big, I don't know how to control them. I might love playing in my bath so much that I splash you as I kick the water. I might get so angry that I hit, bite, or have a temper tantrum.

With your trusting, kind, clear, and firm help from the outside, I will learn to control my feelings from the inside. It will happen slowly and surely over the next few years.

With your help, I am learning how to control my own behavior. Notice and comment when I do so. For example, you could say, "I notice that you said, 'I am angry!'" instead of hitting your friend. That was great use of your words."





Through a Young Child's Eyes	
Guiding Behavior	
30-36 months	
<p>My social connections are growing, but you are still my most important person.</p> <p>Showing me how to behave, and talking to me about my—and other's—behaviors helps me become a skilled social partner.</p>	<p>Keep encouraging me to share but know it will take me a few more years to get good at it. Assure me that some things I do not have to share—like my special book on dinosaurs. When you share with me and others, I learn that sharing is important.</p>
<p>My crying has really dropped off as I've learned other ways to communicate my emotions.</p> <p>I may do a quick cry-yell or screech to get a person's attention and then use my words to share what I'm feeling. When I'm overwhelmed, I will fall back on crying, because that is my strongest and most practiced coping skill.</p>	<p>Sometimes my feelings are so big, I don't know how to control them. I might love riding on the strider at school so much that I go too fast and run into a classmate. I might be so overstimulated from a birthday party at the park that I just can't manage myself when we stop at the grocery store. I'm not really that upset about not getting my favorite box of cereal; that is just the thing that set off my meltdown from a full day.</p>
<p>I'm becoming more skilled at sharing and understanding other's feelings. But I will make mistakes.</p> <p>Sometimes, I will try hard to get a friend to do what I want because I feel very strongly about it and I may run right over their feelings.</p>	<p>With your trusting, kind, clear, and firm help from the outside, I will learn to control my feelings from the inside. It will happen slowly and surely over the next few years.</p>
<p>Continue to show me how to be kind and fair and respectful of myself and others.</p>	<p>With your help, I am learning how to control my own behavior. Notice and comment when I do so. For example, you could say, "I notice that you shared part of your sandwich with Grandma. That was being very kind."</p>



Take a Moment: Focus on You and Your Child

Think about a time when your child's behaviors frustrated you.

If you reframe her behaviors as trying to communicate with you, how does that change your frustration?

How can trying to understand her perspective help you decide how to respond?



Crying



Figuring It Out Together

At the beginning, crying is the main way that your child communicates with you.

Listen. Ask yourself, “What is he trying to tell me?” It won’t take long until you begin to recognize patterns and to understand him.

Listen and you will learn what my different cries are saying to you.



Ask Yourself: “What might my baby’s crying be telling me?”

It can be helpful to run through, in your mind, a checklist of possibilities to figure out what your baby’s crying might be telling you. Here are ideas your checklist may include:



I am hungry. I show you I am hungry when I smack or lick my lips; open and close my mouth; or suck on my lips, tongue, hands, fingers, toes, toys, or clothing. This behavior is known as my rooting reflex.



Please burp me. This gas in my tummy hurts. If you check the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), they recommend burping me before switching breasts—or between every 2 to 3 ounces if we are using a bottle—until I am about 6 months old.



I’m tired. Signs that show you I am sleepy include pulling at my ears, yawning, staring into space, fluttering my eyelids, looking serious, sucking on my fingers, and being fussy. As a newborn, I can usually stay awake for 45 to 60 minutes before needing to sleep again. By the time I am 6 months old, this time stretches to about 2 hours. As a toddler, I’ll usually be good for 4 to 5 hours of awake time.



Whoa...there is too much going on for me to handle! Try sitting with me facing you or take me to a quiet space for gentle rocking and singing.



Hey...I’m bored. Smile at me. Sit down, and let’s talk or sing. Offer me a fun toy to play with.



My diaper needs to be changed. You got this one!



I want to be with you. How about a cuddle? I miss being together and need a little you-time.



I’ve been lying here a long time. Sometimes, I just need to change position. Pick me up. Let’s take a tour around the room. So many exciting things to see!



I don’t feel well. If you have questions or worries, check with your child’s healthcare provider.



Infantile Colic

No matter how good your checklist, sometimes babies cry for reasons that we don't really understand. Infantile colic is one of these reasons.

Infantile colic is crying. It is intense screaming that can make you feel like screaming too.

No one knows why infantile colic happens. What we do know is that it usually starts around 2 to 3 weeks and is pretty common. In fact, about one in five infants across the world get colic.

Colic typically happens on a schedule, usually beginning at the same time of day. Some common times for it to start are after meals, late in the afternoon, or in the early evening.

Many times, colic is recognized by what is known as the *Wessell Criteria*: it lasts for at least 3 hours, 3 days a week, and continues for at least 3 weeks. You may notice that your baby pulls his knees up, clenches his fists, and arches his back while crying.

While this may be a tough time for you, remember it is also hard for your baby. Remind yourself that it doesn't last forever. Usually, it goes away at about 3 months.

Sometimes Babies Just Need to Cry

You've checked everything. You've tried everything. Sometimes, some babies just need to cry. No matter how you try to soothe him. No matter if you spend all day with him or if you have periods apart while you work or run errands. This is a phase or *period* of development that begins around 4 weeks of age and often peaks around 3 to 4 months and then begins to lessen.

The National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome refers to this time as the Period of PURPLE Crying®

THE LETTERS IN PURPLE STAND FOR

P	U	R	P	L	E
PEAK OF CRYING	UNEXPECTED	RESISTS SOOTHING	PAIN-LIKE FACE	LONG LASTING	EVENING
Your baby may cry more each week, the most in month 2, then less in months 3-5	Crying can come and go and you don't know why.	Your baby may not stop crying no matter what you try.	A crying baby may look like they are in pain, even when they are not.	Crying can last as much as 5 hours a day, or more.	Your baby may cry more in the late afternoon and evening.

THE WORD PERIOD MEANS THAT THE CRYING HAS A BEGINNING AND AN END

The word **period** means that the crying has a beginning and an end.

Researchers have found that babies in all cultures have periods of increased crying during the first few months. **IT WILL END.**





Make a Plan

Have some steps in mind for you to try to help you feel a little calmer when your baby begins to cry:



Listen for a moment.

Have you heard this kind of crying before?



Go to him.

Check your baby.



Run through your “Why is my baby crying?” checklist.

Does one idea seem more likely than the others?



Choose one.

Try it.



Give your baby a few minutes.

If his crying slows or quiets and his body relaxes, you’ve got it. If not, try another.



Always talk calmly and quietly to baby:

“I hear you. Let’s see what we can do to make you feel better.” Sometimes your voice and presence will be enough to help him soothe himself.



Any other ideas?



Soothing a Crying Baby

Here are some ways to soothe your baby:



Go through your “Why is my baby crying?” checklist.

Offer him a breast or bottle. Check his diaper. Does he need to burp?
Rock or cuddle him.



Get moving.

Some colicky babies respond when you walk—and walk and walk—with them. Inside and outside. In your arms. In a carrier. In a buggy on smooth or rough surfaces. Others may like gentle rocking or going for a ride in their car seat.



“Shwoosh” in his ear or sing to him.

Making a white-noise type sound or one of your favorite tunes might calm him—and you.



Use a gentle touch.

A warm bath and gently rubbing his tummy might help.



Do knee bends.

Put him on his back. Gently push both his knees up to his chest. Hold them there for about 10 seconds, then slowly straighten his legs. Do it a few times in a row.



Hold him in different positions.

On your chest or across your lap or like a football or an airplane.



Swaddle him.

Wrap him up like a baby burrito in a cozy blanket. It helps some babies feel safe and secure and can be calming and quieting.

How does he respond? When you rub his back, does he relax or stiffen his arms and legs? When you gently bounce him, do his arms relax and move with you? Just like adults who like a neck rub sometimes and at other times prefer not to be touched, babies have their own preferences. The expression on his face, his sounds, and whether and how he moves and holds his body are other ways besides crying that he tells you what he needs.





Take a Moment: Your Crying Baby

What are three things your baby communicated to you in the last 2 days by crying?

How do you decide how to respond to your child when he is crying?



You Cannot Spoil Your Baby

The research is in: Picking up a baby who is crying is a good thing! It helps shape a baby's brain for his whole life. When a baby cries, he is asking for help, and it is important to respond. When babies get lots of holding, cuddling, touching, and rocking, it helps their brains learn to remain calm. Babies who are left to cry a lot are more likely to grow into adults who react more strongly to stress and who have a harder time calming themselves.

A baby cannot be spoiled! Pick him up when he is crying, cuddle him, and show him how much he is loved.



SAFETY ALERT: Never shake your infant, toddler, or two!

When a young child is shaken or thrown, his head whips back and forth and from side to side. His brain slams against his skull. No matter how long he has been crying, one forceful shake in a moment of frustration—even when playing—can damage his brain, neck, spine, or eyes forever. It can even lead to death. His life and yours will never be the same.

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE GONG TO LOSE CONTROL:



Put him in his crib or in another safe place.



Shut the door.



Pull out your headphones, take deep breaths, and have a good cry yourself.



Call someone.



Wait until you have calmed down before you try again to calm him.





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Respond to me promptly when I cry...	You are listening to me. I can trust you. I can communicate.
Calm yourself and hold me when I just need to cry...	I am safe. With your help, I can learn to calm myself.

Temper Tantrums, Hitting, Grabbing and Biting: Toddlers and Twos



Figuring It Out Together

It isn't easy to be a toddler or a two. Wanting to be *big* and *little* at the same time can be very frustrating and unsettling. Also, children in this age range are just starting to be able to control their own behaviors and be in charge of themselves. They can react strongly when adults tell them what to do and what not to do. This can result in being swept away at times in *storms of powerful feelings*, which is also known as temper tantrums or meltdowns. These are feelings that young children have no control over or words to talk about.



Sometimes my feelings get so big, they overwhelm me. I need you to help me manage my behavior.

It also isn't easy for parents. Sometimes, it can feel like your child is *out to get you*, but that isn't the case. Your child's behavior is telling you something. It's up to you to figure out her message.

Looking at these challenging behaviors through your child's eyes can help you understand what your child's behavior may be saying, so you can decide how best to respond. No matter how embarrassed, frustrated, confused, angry, or unsure you may feel, you are on the same team.

What Your Child Might Tell You About Why He Hits and Grabs

When I hit or grab...

"Sometimes my feelings are so strong that I can't control them yet. This happens sometimes when I am upset at you or when another child bumps me or takes my favorite toy. Sometimes, I am curious to see what happens when I grab my book from your hands or a toy from a friend.

I am still learning about my emotions and how other people feel and react to me. I know you tell me to be nice and to share, but I still often will need your help to manage my feelings and behavior.

When I am playing with other children, please stay close by and be ready to step in if I need your help. If I hit or grab something from you, remember how much I love you. I may just be frustrated, angry, tired, or hungry. Take a breath. Gently but firmly help me to stop. Get us back in sync. We are a team, you and me, and I am counting on you to be on my side."



Here are Some Ways to Help Me When I'm Hitting or Grabbing



Give me lots of chances to feel and be competent.

Invite me to help you put napkins on the table, water the plants, dust, or carry my ball to the park. This will build my confidence and help me learn that I can manage my behavior.



Give me a chance to be a baby again.

Sometimes, I will ask you to feed me, carry me to bed, give me extra hugs and cuddles, and let me know I am still your little guy and that you love me like you always did even though I am growing up.



Keep my frustration levels as low as possible.

Am I tired? Hungry? It may not be the time to run errands. Is the new puzzle too difficult? Put it away and bring it out again in a few months. Is it too hard to blow bubbles? You be the bubble blower and let me be the bubble popper.



Keep your frustration levels as low as possible.

If you are upset, I will sense it. So consider little things—and big ones, too—that you can do to feel as calm and steady as possible.

For example, you know those blocks that you are always stepping on? Ouch! Put them away for now. Need a break or at least some adult company? Call someone, a family member or friend, to give you a break or to meet you for a walk in the park.





What Your Child Might Tell You About Why He has a Temper Tantrum or Meltdown

When I have a tantrum or meltdown...

"I am having a 'feeling storm' inside. I need your help to calm down but I might push or kick or scream at you. Please stay by me so I know I am not alone. Big feelings can be scary. Be sure I am safe, and others around me are safe too. Talk quietly and gently to me. Say, 'I am here, and I will stay with you. You are OK.' When you can, maybe rub my back or give me a cuddle.

After I calm down, give me some words for what happened: 'You wanted to walk into the street. But that is dangerous. I took your hand and said, We have to walk on the sidewalk. You got very angry and frustrated. Mommy sat with you and you calmed down.'

I know it can be embarrassing when I do this in a place where people see us. But, hang in there with me. I need you."

Ways to help your child when he is having a tantrum or meltdown include the following:



Give him lots of chances to feel and be competent.



Give him a chance to be a baby again.



Keep his frustration levels as low as possible.



Keep your frustration levels as low as possible.



What Your Child Might Tell You About Why He Bites

"Biting is a behavior that seems to upset everyone. My parents, teachers, the child I bite—and it is upsetting and scary for me too. There are many reasons that I may bite. I may be teething, and my mouth hurts; I may be experimenting to see what happens; I may be frustrated or angry; I may feel threatened. Trying to think of what the reason may be can help you figure out how to help me stop from biting.

Just remember, I am doing my best here."

Here are some of the reasons I might bite and how you can help me not bite:



Do you think I am teething?

Offer me a chewy toy; a cold, wet washcloth from the freezer; or a bagel to mouth.



Am I trying to cause something to happen?

Offer me more toys and objects that allow me to *be the cause*: pots to bang with a wooden spoon, blocks to stack and knock over, a pull toy to drag behind me.



Do I start to bite when I get angry or frustrated?

Try to keep the frustration down—yours and mine. Give me some space when I am with other children. Keep your eye on me and be ready to step in if needed.



Do you think I feel threatened? Afraid?

Some children withdraw while others may lash out and, yes, bite. Remind me that you are here to keep me safe.



Any other ideas?





Take a Moment: Looking at Challenging Behaviors Through Your Child's Eyes

How does it feel when you take a breath and try to look at a challenging behavior through your child's eyes?

How can taking a breath and looking through your child's perspective effect your decisions about how to respond to challenging behaviors?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Remember we are on the same team...	I am not alone. I can count on you to help me—even when I behave in ways that embarrass, confuse, or upset you.
Keep your frustration level as low as possible and stay present...	You are there for me. I can use our relationship to help steady myself as I learn to manage my own behavior.



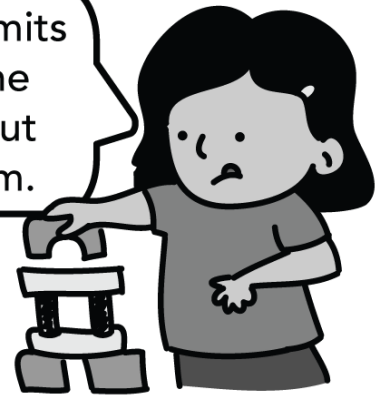
Testing Limits: Toddlers and Twos



Figuring It Out Together

Testing limits is one of the ways children figure out who they are and how the world works. It is a sign he sees himself as a separate person and takes pleasure in his own actions. He is exploring and learning how far he can go. Often, that means pushing boundaries or breaking your rules to see what will happen.

Testing limits helps me figure out who I am.



When you set limits in positive ways, you give your child the chance to be a decision-maker. At the same time, you assure him that he is safe because you are in charge. This frees him to keep exploring boundaries and to discover he is competent and respected. He also learns that there are rules that people, including him, have to follow.

Looking at challenging behaviors through your child's eyes can help you decide how best to respond.

What Your Child Might Tell You About Testing Limits

"Testing limits helps me find out what exactly they are and to discover who is really in charge around here. It helps me figure out who I am. Because I trust you to be here for me no matter what I do, chances are I will test limits more with you than anyone else.

Sometimes I just want—and need—to do it my way, when I want to, even if you have told me 'no.' Please, try not to take it personally. I really am not trying to make your life miserable. I love you. I need you. I want to please you, but I want to try it my way this time.

My impulse control is still developing. My emotions are intense and, at times, stormy. This is why sometimes I throw the ball, dig in the plant, or even hit you—no matter how many times you have told me 'no.'

Try to think of it this way, I test limits with you because I trust you to be there to keep me safe."



What Your Child Might Tell You About Helping Him Learn to Manage His Behavior

To help me learn to manage my behavior, you could try these ideas:



Take a breath.

This won't last forever—though, we may find ourselves here again in the teenage years! Talk with some other parents and you will find it isn't just me. This behavior is a normal and expected part of development. When you take a breath, I learn that I can too.



Offer realistic choices between two choices.

This helps me to learn how to be a decision-maker. For example: "Do you want to wear your yellow shirt or the blue one?" or "Would you like watermelon or a peach?" or "Shall we put the puzzle together or read a book?"



Set only a few, clear, consistent, and doable limits.

Examples can include take off your shoes when you come into the house, no climbing on the coffee table, or we wash hands before dinner.



Respond in predictable, consistent, clear, respectful, and kind ways when I test the limits.

When you respond in clear, yet kind ways, you help me understand that I can learn rules and still feel good about myself.



Notice my positive behavior.

Behaviors you pay attention to are likely to be repeated.



Be a little flexible.

Does it really matter if you give me an extra 3 minutes to play? Or let me bring my boat into the tub? When you cooperate with me, I learn what it means to cooperate.



Pick your battles.

Does it really matter if I want to wear a polka dot shirt with striped pants? Sometimes, it is just easier to let it go.





Take a Moment: Testing Limits

Do you remember a time you tested limits in your childhood?

What was the response? How did this response make you feel? How did you respond in return?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Set limits in clear and kind ways...	You will keep me safe. Even when you have to guide my behavior. I feel competent and know you love me.
Notice my positive behavior...	What I am doing is something you like. This makes me want to do it more often.



Sharing



Figuring It Out Together

Sharing is about being fair, taking turns, and being aware of another person's needs and feelings. It is a life skill that will take your child time to learn. Be patient, give your child lots of time to practice and, most important of all, show your child that you share.



Look at Sharing Through Your Child's Eyes

Looking through your child's eyes can give you a sense of how much there is to learning to share. Toddlers and 2-year-old children don't understand what it means to share. Everything belongs to them.

Learning to share includes the following:



Understand you are a person—apart from your toys.

For many toddlers and twos, when a friend takes their ball or truck or doll, it feels like a threat. It feels like part of themselves is taken.



Manage emotions.

Toddlers and twos are often overwhelmed by big feelings—like when a friend takes something or has something they really want. Children this age are just beginning to learn how to talk about and manage their feelings.



Express empathy or understand someone else wants or needs something.

Most children don't really have a firm hold on this skill until about age 6.

So, for now, encourage but do not expect your toddler to share. Don't force sharing. Instead, promote sharing, support sharing, and show her what sharing looks like and how rewarding it can be.



Encourage and Model Sharing



Model sharing.

Because you are so important to her, she wants to be like you. Let her see you share with other adults. Share with her often by offering her a piece of your sandwich or peach. Take turns zooming her truck.



Notice when your child shares.

"I notice you shared your boat with Frank. He was very happy. That was kind of you."



Point out when others share.

Explain, "That was very kind when Lisa shared her markers with you."



Expect *selective sharing*.

For example, it may be easier for a 3-year-old to share with a baby than with a peer. Your child watches what you do and sees that you do not always choose to share. Sorting out when to share and when to say no takes time.



Reassure your child that some things are just for her and that's OK.

Things like her favorite stuffed animal or other *lovey* or the book from her grandparents are special and do not need to be shared.



Introduce a *timer* or *countdown* to mark times for friends to exchange and share toys.

It can be easier to respond to a *bing* than to an adult saying it is time to share.



Give her and her friends a chance to work things out.

Stay nearby in case they need assistance.



Tell stories or read books about animal and people friends who share.

Talk about how it feels to share and to have someone share with you. Invite your child to share her story about sharing.



***Take a Moment: Being a Sharer***

When and how does your child see you share?

What do you say and do to encourage your child to share with you? With others?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Share with me and other people...	Sharing is something that is important to you. That makes it important to me.
Give my friends and I a chance to work things out while staying close in case we need your help...	You have confidence in me. I can count on you to be there when I need your help.



First Friendships



Figuring It Out Together

From the early months, children show interest in and awareness of other children. Babies watch their older siblings and may reach out to touch each other, connect to each other, share and take turns, listen, and solve problems. By the end of the first year, they may cry when they hear another baby cry or push a truck back and forth next to another child doing the same thing.

I need your support as I learn to be a friend.



At first, they interact more with toys than with other children.

They may offer a toy to another child, make a silly face with another child, or hit the child who tries to take their ball.



Toddlers may play briefly with others.

They may run across the backyard together or see another child pretending to be a lion and do the same. Yet, they depend on their adults to stay close and be ready to step in as needed when they need help to take turns or to share.



As they approach 2 years, toddlers show growing awareness of other children's feelings.

They might give a friend a big hug or pat the back of a crying child who fell off her riding toy. Children this age are learning to play together.



By the age of 3, children of the same age can play fairly well together in small groups with adult support.

They might wear hats together and pretend to go shopping or turn the pages of a book with a friend.



For some children, playing with another child is a new experience.

Others spend their day with other children in child care and are more experienced at playing with others.



Help Everyone Enjoy Playtime



It all begins with you.

Your child learns about being a friend by playing with you. As you play peek-a-boo, drive her cars across the rug, or make breakfast for her stuffed animals, you show your child what it is like to play back-and-forth. You give her a chance to practice taking turns, sharing, and solving problems. These are skills that are part of playing and living with others.



Keep playdates short.

An hour having fun is better than a morning filled with struggle and tears.



Give children space and time to do what they do.

You may be surprised. For example, your child and a friend may ignore the toys you brought outside and spend their time playing peek-a-boo, collecting leaves, and running.



Encourage but don't force sharing.

Sharing is a skill that takes years to develop.



Stay nearby and ready to step in if needed.

Children may need your helping hand to get along.



Offer a snack. Bring everyone together in a familiar routine.

Check to see if your child's friend has any allergies when choosing a healthy snack, like fruit chunks or string cheese.



Join in or pack it up if there is more upset time than playing time.

Are the children getting tired or frustrated? Are they starting to poke, hit, and cry more? They are telling you they have had enough time together. A short fun time teaches more about friendship than a longer time filled with upset.



Give a warning before it is time to leave.

Give children a 10-, 5-, and 2-minute warning so they can get used to the idea playtime is almost over.



***Take a Moment: Make Playtime a Fun Time for Friends***

What does your child do or say that shows you she is interested in and learning about being friends?

How do you decide when your child needs you to step in to help her get along with another child? What do you say and do?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Take turns, share, and solve problems with me when we play...	Getting along with another person feels good and I want to do it more.
Give my friend and me a chance to play on our own—but stay nearby in case we need your help...	There are many fun things to do with a friend. As we play, we are safe because you are there.



Screen Time



Figuring It Out Together

Almost all children today are growing up in a world of smart phones, computers, tablets, and video games. Once they experience screen time, most children like it and want more.

The reality is most parents give their child some screen time. Here is some information to help you decide if and how much screen time to give your child.

Screen time for your child usually means free time for you—to cook dinner, take a quick shower, and, yes, to check your own screen. You may want screen time to last a little longer too. Sometimes, that is OK.

Here's the thing though, your child learns best by moving, doing, and interacting with people and objects in the world. You need to make a plan to limit screen time, to be sure the content is right for your child, and to make some of your child's screen time learning time. Of course, spend lots of time talking and being together during *Everyday Moments*.



Look at Screen Time Through Your Child's Eyes

Here is what your child might say about screen time:

"Hey. Look at me. I'm like my mom, my dad, my big brother (or sister) looking at this phone or tablet. The pictures change. There is music. Every time I press a button or slide my finger across the screen, something happens.

I can do it! And I want to do it again. It's fun. And it's hard to stop."

Thinking About Your Own Screen Time

Being aware of your screen time habits can help you decide if they work for you and your child or if you may want to adjust them in some way. Here are some questions to consider:



How do you decide if and when to check your phone?

Do you seem to check it automatically? Do you follow a more structured plan, for example, and check emails as soon as you get to the office?



How many times a day would you say you check your phone?

The number may surprise you.



When do you check your phone?

Do you check your phone during play time with your child? During meal times? While you are bathing your child? Reading to your child? When your child is sleeping? Other times?



Take a Moment: Your Screen Time

How much do you spend on screen time when your child is around?

What messages do you send to your child when you focus on your screen instead of him?





What Researchers Say About Screen Time

There are many concerns about how screen time can affect your child's development:



Children learn language by talking with parents, other family members, and those who care for them regularly. The good news is that children under 12 months can learn new words from a children's show if their parents watch with them and use the new words many times.



Screen time can get in the way of parents and children interacting with and enjoying time with each other.



Screens are always changing, which may lead to short attention spans.



Children who are distracted by screens when they are upset may find it harder to learn how to settle and soothe themselves.



Too much screen time can lead to overweight children in preschool and beyond.



Screen time in the evening can make it hard for your child to fall asleep. Young children need sleep to thrive.



Babies and toddlers learn most when they are moving and doing and exploring and discovering with adults they love and trust.

Guiding Screen Time

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends the following:



Keep screens off around babies and toddlers younger than 18 months.



Limit screen time to an hour or less for older toddlers and 2-year-olds.



Choose high-quality shows and games.



Sit and watch with your child instead of just handing over a screen or tablet.



Be sure your child has plenty of time for active play outdoors and creative, hands-on play, and you have time together to talk and share *Everyday Moments*.



As Your Child Gets Older



Set and follow rules about how much screen time you will allow.

Be sure your children know the rules. Giving a 5- 4 -3- 2-1-minute warning or setting a timer can help your child know and prepare for when the time is up.



Choose what your child watches and does online.

Check out shows or visit websites before your child sees them. Does this programming reflect your values in terms of how people treat one another in regards to diversity of gender, race, culture, and ability? It is visually appealing? Is it appropriate for his age? Will it make sense to him? Will it frighten him? Will it engage him?



Watch together with your child.

Talk about what is happening and how the characters might feel. For example, you might ask your 2-year-old, "What do you see?" Or you could ask your 3-year-old, "What do you think is going to happen next?"



Check with him often...

If you go off to do something while your child is focused on the screen—even if you have a lot to do while he is *busy* watching.



Ask if screen time is used in your child care.

If so, how is it used and how often? Add this time into the amount of time your child may be in front of a screen at home.



Any other ideas?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Share screen time with me and watch and talk about what we see...	Looking and talking and learning with you is fun. I am a learner.
Give me lots of time to move and do, to play and explore, to talk and sing, and to read with you...	The world is an interesting place, and it is fun to learn about it with you.

Partners in Teaching Cooperation



Figuring It Out Together

Your child needs you to be her partner to learn to cooperate. Looking through her eyes can give you information you need to help you decide how best to create moments of cooperation between you. Moments will add up over time to give your child skills she needs to have trusting, caring relationships with others, which is key to life and school success.



Be Aware of How Much Your Child Needs to Know and Do to Cooperate

Imagine you ask your 2-year-old to put her two cars away on the shelf. Here is what she might experience in trying to do this task that seems simple, but it is not.

"I hear you. You want me to put away my cars. But I really want to play with them. I love to see how the wheels turn, and I can make them go so fast. It is hard for me to stop playing.



If I can stop...

Then I have to carry them over to the shelf. I dropped one. It made a noise on the floor. What will happen if I drop the other one? Oh, look, there is my favorite book on the floor. I want to look at the pictures. There goes Snowflake, our dog. I wonder where he is going. I am going to follow him into the kitchen.



If I make it over the shelf with my cars...

I have to find a space for them. Hey. Look. There are so many interesting things to see. Here is another car and my book about the hungry caterpillar and the collection of bottle caps you gathered for me. I love to stack those bottle caps.



When you tell me again to put the cars away...

I still have to find a space. Can you help me find a space? Okay, there it is. I'll put my cars there. Look, there goes Snowflake. I'm off to play with him."



Partner with Your Child to Teach Cooperation

Being aware of what your child might be thinking is the first step in being her partner to teach her about cooperation. There is a lot going on in that little, sweet head. A lot. Always.

To teach her about cooperating and to help her be successful try the following:



Have realistic expectations.

Learning to cooperate will take years of practice. Think about some adults you know. They are still figuring it out!



Get her attention.

Say her name. Look her in the eye. Kneel down next to her.



Invite her to cooperate clearly and politely.

"Will you please carry your cars across the room. Put them on the shelf next to the bottle caps."



Give her a few minutes warning, then repeat your request.

"I can see you having fun racing the cars. This is the 3-2-1-minute warning." After you count down to one, say again what you are asking her to do.



Join her in starting, or completing, the task as needed.

"How about I pick up the red car and you get the yellow car? Then we can take them over to the shelf together."



Notice and appreciate the steps she takes to cooperate.

"I notice you have taken one car to the shelf. Thank you for cooperating. Now can you get the other one?"



Any other ideas?





When She Can't or Won't Cooperate

Most of the time when a young child doesn't cooperate, it is because she can't. Perhaps she doesn't yet have the ability to easily move from one activity to another. Maybe she is at the age when she has to test boundaries to learn who is who. She may be tired or hungry, which can make life harder for both of you. Maybe she is overwhelmed with big feelings.

Believe it or not, your child wants to please you. She wants to do things well. She wants to be like you. Here are some ways to figure this out together to have a win-win experience as often as possible:



Stay calm.

This is just one of hundreds of thousands of interactions and opportunities to teach her about cooperation.



Let her decide.

Give her a sense of control by offering two acceptable options: "Would you like to put away the cars in 2 minutes or 3 minutes?"



Turn it into a game.

Invite her to race her cars to the shelf or to see which one will get there first.



Be willing to back off sometimes instead of forcing the issue.

"Okay. Then for tonight, park your cars by the shelf."



If big feelings take over, reconnect.

Talk about what happened: "You got so upset, you started screaming and threw one of your cars. Daddy got angry and yelled at you. How about we both take 10 breaths and start over."



Take a Moment: Cooperating

What are two times your child has cooperated with you?

What are two times you have cooperated with your child?

What do you say and/or do to encourage your child to cooperate?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Break down what I can do into little steps so I can be successful...	I can do it. This makes me want to cooperate more.
Give me choices by asking a question like, "Would you like to put your cars away now or in 5 minutes?"	I have some control. You trust me to decide.

Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child



Children under three are just beginning to learn about the world. They are discovering what to expect from other people and how different objects and materials, like water and sand, behave. Perhaps most important of all, they are learning about themselves. Everyday routines and activities are a chance to explore their feelings, interests, and increasing abilities.

You are your child's guide as he explores his new; amazing; and, at times, overwhelming and confusing world. As you guide him, you build trust between you. Every action offers guidance: as you hold him, talk together, laugh together, ask questions, read together, sing, play together, try out new ideas, visit new places, set limits, and talk about rules.

When your guidance is nurturing, clear, and consistent, you help him feel safe, secure, and competent:



When you rock him gently and sing to him when he is crying, you help him learn how it feels to calm down. This is the first step in learning how to calm himself.



When you invite him to carry the napkins and spoons, you help him learn that he can contribute to daily chores, like setting the table. He learns an early lesson in what it means to be part of a family and how it feels to be competent and appreciated.



When you and your 2-year-old take turns rolling a ball back and forth, you help him learn about give-and-take with another person. It may feel like simple play, but it is a way to share important lessons about sharing and cooperation; noticing things in the world around you, such as balls roll and bounce; and noticing the satisfying feeling of cooperating with another.

How you guide him shapes who he is today and who he will become in the future.

Challenging Behaviors are Part of Life and Not Easy for Anyone

One thing you can count on as you and your child make your way through the world is challenging behaviors, like crying, temper tantrums, hitting, grabbing, biting, and not sharing, will occur. These behaviors stir up strong and deep feelings in parents and children.

When emotions are big, it can feel overwhelming—no matter your age. The part of the brain for experiencing emotions (the amygdala) takes over, which makes it hard to tap into the parts of the brain that control emotions (the hypothalamus) and allow you to think and make decisions (the prefrontal cortex).

Adults and children experience big, intense feelings. Children need their adults to show and help them how to manage these feelings.



Your Feelings About Guiding Your Child's Challenging Behavior



What is something that your child does or says that you find challenging to be around and handle? Why do you think these behaviors bother you so much?



What do you do to calm yourself when you are upset by your child's behavior? Can you slow down? Take a breath? Think?



Who is someone you can talk to about guiding behavior? A partner, a family member, a teacher, your home visitor?





Looking Back at Guiding Behavior

How you feel about guiding behavior and what you say and do is likely shaped by your adults' actions when you were growing up. Taking a moment to look back can help you think about and decide how you want to respond to your child's challenging behaviors today.



What is a time when one of your adults guided your behavior in a way that helped you feel competent? Respected? Proud to be you?



Did your adults talk with you about what they expected and why?

What happened when you didn't do what they told you to do or when your behavior was challenging? Did they give you a time out? Yell? Smack or hit you when you did something they did not like? Did you discuss and make family rules together?

This is especially important to think and talk about because when you are upset by something your child says or does, it can trigger deep feelings that cause you to go into *auto-pilot*. You repeat what was done to you without thinking about it or just automatically. If you want to do things differently with your child, it will take thought and decision-making on your part.





Take a Moment: Look Back at Guiding Behavior

What did your adults say and do to guide your behavior when you were growing up?

How did their actions make you feel?

What do you want to do that is the same or different with your child?





Strategies for You to Take a Moment Before Guiding Your Child's Challenging Behavior

Here are some strategies that can help you as you respond to challenging behaviors in nurturing ways that, over time, will teach your child to manage his own behavior.



Pause, breathe, think.

These actions will help you calm down, so you can think and decide what to say or do. You will also be showing your child how to calm down and respond thoughtfully when the going gets rough.



Remind yourself that learning to guide his own behavior will take time.

Slowly but surely, your child will gain the ability to control his behavior.



Have realistic expectations.

Ask yourself, "What can I realistically expect?" For example, even though your baby hears you say, "No," he will most likely keep tugging at your hair. He isn't trying to defy you. He is curious and, at this age, he can't stop without your help. So, gently remind him. Explain, "It hurts daddy when you pull his hair." He needs you to stop and physically redirect him. Take his hand and gently touch his face saying, "Let's be gentle. This is how gentle feels."



Look through your child's eyes to try to understand what he is experiencing.

This will give you information to help you decide how to respond.



Model the behaviors you want to see.

Your child is always watching you. He wants to be like you. Behave the way you want him to behave.



Share your pleasure in behaviors you want to see.

When he gently pets the kitty or turns the page of a book without tearing it, comment with a big smile, "I see you are being gentle with kitty," or "You are learning to take good care of your books."



Look for moments of success on your own or with another adult who knows and cares about your child.

Have you noticed that sometimes, in some situations, he is able to adapt or adjust his behavior? Is he able to handle situations that he may have found frustrating or upsetting in the past without losing it?

For example, he might do the following:

- Whine when he wants a cracker. Then says, "Cracker, please" when you ask him to use his words.
- Tell a friend, "Stop!" instead of hitting her.
- Take off his jacket, hang it on the hook, and then pick it up and hang it up again when it slips to the floor.
- Try and try again to pull his zipper up, crinkle his brows in frustration, and then ask you to help him.



Redirect his attention.

Is he trying to grab your phone? Crawling toward the toilet bowl? Pick him up and dance around the room together or begin a game of rolling the ball. Invite your new walker to walk down the hallway or across the lawn with you as you hold his hand. Dance a silly dance.



Save "Nos" for times of danger.

For example, when he crawls towards the hot oven. If you say "No" too often, it will lose its meaning.



Remember that you are on the same team.

No matter how upset you may feel at your child, sometimes he needs you and your support to thrive.



Be kind to yourself.

Are you saying "No" too often? Losing patience more often? Put on your favorite song. Make yourself a cup of tea. Call someone from your *Circle of Support*, and talk for a few minutes. Give yourself a break!



Any other ideas?





Taking a Time Out

Sometimes adults need a time out too. What might you do to help you calm down, think, and decide what to say and do?

Here are some ideas to get you started:



Stop in your tracks.

Step back. Sit down.



Take five deep breaths.

Inhale, exhale. Slowly, slowly.



Count to 10, or better yet, 20.

Or count backwards.



Say the alphabet out loud.



Do something unexpected and funny.

For example, begin to dance. Make silly faces. Take five giant steps. Stand on one foot. It may just be enough to break the mood and help you and your child connect.



Any other ideas?



SAFETY ALERT: Physical punishment is not the answer.

Spanking—that is, hitting a child with an open hand—has been shown in many studies to lead to negative behaviors in children. Spanking your child can also be a slippery slope that leads to harsher and more intense physical punishment. Avoid starting the habit of using physical punishment in the first place.



Cooperation Teaches Cooperation

Cooperating is a skill that leads to positive relationships and to success in school and life. The best way to teach your child to cooperate is to cooperate with him. You do this when you do the following:



Take turns, back and forth, during *Everyday Moments*.

You teach your child this as you talk and listen to each other, turn the pages of the book, roll a ball back and forth, fill and dump small blocks from a bucket, stir the pancake batter, or put toys back on the shelf.



Work as a team to do chores together.

Work together as partners as you change your baby's diaper (watch and you will see him lift his bottom so you can put a new diaper in place), find and fold the washcloths in the laundry basket, set the table, water the plants, and write a shopping list.



Model and problem-solve together.

For example, when your toddler's noodles are too hot, talk about how you might cool them (e.g., wait, blow on them, stir them around with a spoon).



Notice and comment on cooperation.

Be specific about what your child does and why it matters. "Thank you for helping me carry the laundry basket into the living room. It is easier when there are two of us working together."



Give your child some say.

Offer realistic choices between two options. For example, "Would you like to wear your red shoes or the blue ones with polka dots?" Or "Do you want cooked carrots or cauliflower on your plate?" Or "Would you like to put on your socks or do you want me to help you?"





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Tell me you notice times I can manage my own behavior...	These behaviors are important to you. This makes me want to do them more often.
Tell me: “I am counting to 10 to help me calm down...1...2...3...4...”	There are ways I can help myself calm down when I am getting upset.





Practical Applications for Families: Figuring It Out Together

Practical Applications: Nurturing Guidance and Discipline

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Figuring It Out Together: Positive Discipline



Areas of Development

Discipline practices are key factors in these areas of development:



Motor Skills



Cognitive



Language



Socio-Emotional



Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development



Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Associated Family Pages

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Scenario: Positive Discipline

Two moms were talking, and the topic of discipline emerged. Mom 1 stated that she did not believe in spanking her child. Mom 2 scoffed and proclaimed, "My parents whooped me when I was younger, and I turned out fine." Shortly after, Mom 2 caught her 3-year-old daughter trying to stick a comb into an electrical socket. She called the child's name, slapped the comb out of the child's hand, and slapped the child's hand away from the socket. She then grabbed the child with both hands, looked her in the eye, pointed her finger, and roared, "NO!"



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Teaching good behavior rather than punishing bad behavior demonstrates a parent's ability to remain patient and not lose control around her child. When correcting inappropriate behavior, try these suggestions.

- Remain calm.
- Explain, in age-appropriate terms, why the behavior is inappropriate (in this case, it's a safety concern).
- Anticipate situations, and prepare accordingly.

Children learn new information daily and need loving support and guidance from parents to help them learn. Spanking creates an unhealthy cycle of aggressive responses without any positive changes in behavior occurring. In addition, parents risk injuring their child or breaking the bond with their child, which can cause short-term and long-term effects.

Figuring It Out Together: Self-Soothing Habits






Areas of Development

Thumb sucking is an expression of or response to these developmental areas:

-  Motor Skills
-  Cognitive
-  Language
-  Socio-Emotional
-  Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors

-  Social Connection
-  Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
-  Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Associated Family Pages

- 6.2.3 Nurturing Guidance from a Child's Point of View109
- 6.2.3 *Nurturing Guidance and Discipline* — Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child153
- 6.2.2 Your Trusting Relationship Dance with Your Two-Year-Old65
- 6.3.1 Being the Bridge Between Your Child and Other People in His Life23
- 6.3.3 Big Feelings for Your Child105
- 6.2.1 You are Your Child's First and Most Important Teacher19

Scenario: Self-Soothing Habits

A 2-year-old is waiting in line at the ice cream stand with her foster parent. While standing there, she grabs the parent's hand and with the other hand sticks her thumb in her mouth. The parent kneels down and with a smile tugs the child's thumb out of her mouth and says, "Get that thumb out of your mouth. It's nasty." The parent makes a funny, disgusted look. The child laughs, looks around, and sticks her thumb back in her mouth. From then, it becomes a cycle in which the parent pulls the thumb out of the child's mouth, and the child puts the thumb back into her mouth.

 What is the child thinking and feeling?

 What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Thumb sucking typically begins as a natural response to a child's sucking or rooting reflex, which is needed to eat and drink. As it continues, thumb sucking makes your child feel secure or helps her calm down. While most children stop on their own, the habit can be harder to break for some. However, thumb sucking doesn't become a problem until the child's adult teeth start to come in. At this point, it can affect the shape of the mouth or how the teeth line up.

To reduce thumb sucking behaviors, try these gentle approaches.

- Identify if the thumb sucking occurs in response to stress or boredom and help your child cope with the situation by offering a stuffed animal or special blanket, affection, attention, or other toys and/or activities, like drawing with crayons.
- Try role playing with stuffed animals to show other ways they are able to regulate their feelings aside from sucking their thumb.

Part 6.3

Parenting Life

Part Introduction

Parents are the magic ingredients young children need to THRIVE. The parent-child relationship is one that will last across the miles and years. This doesn't mean parents have to be perfect. There is no such thing as a perfect parent...or a perfect baby...or a perfect anyone. It also doesn't mean parents can or should try to do it alone. Every parent needs the support of other adults.

Raising a child is an awesome, challenging, exhausting, rewarding, demanding, life-changing task. Over time, parents continue to learn about their child(ren) as they interact during daily routines and play time. Together, each parent and child create their own unique *dance* that reflects their temperaments, preferences, interests, and culture.

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Chapter 1: Co-Parenting and Sharing Care

6.3.1 Co-Parenting and Sharing Care

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Sharing Care from a Child's Point of View



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some things your child might tell you about sharing care—if he had the words:



Through a Young Child's Eyes		
Co-Parenting and Sharing Care		
What I can learn being with other trusted adults...	Communicate to help me be safe, healthy, and happy with other adults in my life...	Be my bridge to help me feel comfortable with other adults...
There are more people who take care of me. We can have fun together, and I can count on them. We are part of a community.	You know me best so be sure anyone and everyone taking care of me knows how to reach you.	I feel most safe and secure when I am with you. When I can hide behind you or sit on your lap to check out a new person, you help me be more comfortable.
People are the same and different. They care about me and keep me safe. Some of them are tall and others are short. Their hair is different; they may even be bald. Their skin may be different colors. They may speak different languages. I care about them too.	Leave important health information, like a note about my allergies and my doctor's phone number, for anyone taking care of me.	When I see you talk and laugh with that person, I learn they are OK. They have your seal of approval.
My important adults don't do things exactly the same way. That is very interesting. Sometimes it is a little confusing and funny too. Why does Grandpa make those funny noises when he blows his nose?	Insist that everyone put me on my back to sleep (until I can roll over myself) and never smoke around me.	Stay with us awhile.
I can learn about new things. My teacher sings me songs in Spanish. My babysitter takes me to the library, and we bring books home.	Tell my other adults about me. For example, share my favorite songs and activities, things that upset me, how you help me calm down, what I like to eat and when, and how you help me fall asleep.	Talk with the other person to show me she or he is OK.
Auntie's house looks different than my house. Her kitchen has different smells when she is cooking.		Invite the unfamiliar person to hand me a toy or a cookie or other object. It feels safe to connect that way.
I am safe and welcomed in many different places by different people.		



Through a Young Child's Eyes		
Co-Parenting and Sharing Care		
Make a visit to my healthcare provider as easy as possible...	Support me with goodbyes and hellos...	What I feel when sharing care is a struggle...
Pretend play with me that we are doctors or nurses or going for a visit. A toy medical kit and box of band aids will make the play more real and fun.	Goodbyes and hellos are a normal and sometimes bumpy part of life that we are all learning to handle. With your support, I can do it.	When my important people struggle, I may struggle too.
	Goodbyes and hellos often stir up deep feelings for everyone. When you try to understand what I may be experiencing, it can help you figure out who is feeling what, so you can support me.	It may be tough for me to be comforted by dad when momma is not feeling well. I may be fussy because momma does comfort care more often, and she is my first coping choice.
Tell me what will happen. And be honest. When you tell me a shot will hurt for a minute, my trust in you grows deeper.	Routines will help me feel more in control and confident because I will know what is coming next. So, let's make some routines to use! Maybe, we give each other two kisses and a bear hug before you go, or we read a story when you come back.	When my most important people are not getting along, I can feel that. But, I may not be able to tell you with words. I may be clingy, cry easily, or have more tantrums. I may feel like I've done something wrong and try to fix it by showing care.
At our visit, I'll look at you to see how upset you are when I get a shot. If you are upset, I will be upset. We'll cry together. The calmer you can be, the calmer I will be.	If I ignore you when you come to pick me up at child care, I may be telling you I wanted you to stay today. If I cry when you walk in the door, and my teacher says, "But he was fine all day," don't worry and try not to feel bad. I trust you more than anyone, which is why I feel safe to cry, whine, or protest when you say we have to go. I know you will be there for me, no matter what I do.	Even when my important people struggle, I can feel when they put my well-being first. That feels good. It shows me that people can disagree and still show love and be loved.





Take a Moment: You and Your Child

How do you think your child might describe the time he spends with you?

How do you imagine your child might describe the time spends with another trusted adult in his life?

What might be the same about how your child sees you both?

Co-Parenting



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some questions to ask yourself and talk about with your partner to help make co-parenting work for each of you and for your child:



What do your interactions with each other and your child teach her about how people can live, work, and thrive together during *bumpy* and *smooth* times?

As the protective factor *Social and Emotional Competence of Children* says, your relationship teaches your child what to expect from and how to relate to others. Do you interact in positive ways? Model ways to manage your feelings, like counting to ten or taking a deep breath? Talk about feelings? Show you care? Listen to each other?



What is good parenting? To you? To your partner? To your extended family members or close friends?

Each of you brings your family history, culture, and values to your relationship and parenting. Understanding how people see the role and responsibilities of parenting—how views are the same and how they are different—can help you in your supportive interactions with each other and with those who also care about you and your child.



Are there little or big ways you might get in the way of the relationship between your child and your parenting partner?

For example, do you always correct your partner about what she or he is doing in front of your child? Are you always the one to make your child's dinner, give her a bath, read to her, or put her to bed because you know the *right* way to do it? Are you the first in the door at child care when picking her up? Are there other things you might do that get in the way of your child's and your partner's relationship? If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, ask yourself, "What can I do or say differently to be sure our child has a strong relationship with both of us?"



How do you appreciate differences in your parenting styles?

Everyone has their own parenting style. For example, do you hear yourself saying, "Be careful" most of the time. While your partner says, "Go for it! You can do it!?" Do you watch what your child eats while your partner gives her treats? If your child is safe and thriving, take a breath. She is learning from and enjoying both of you. Who knows, maybe you'll learn a trick or two that you'll want to add to your parenting style.



Have you made a plan about how to handle disagreements about child rearing, which are certainly going to come up?

Talking ahead of time can help you know what to do when emotions heat up during a disagreement. Here are some ideas and strategies you may want to keep in mind during times of conflict:

- Keep your focus on what is best for your child. This can help you determine if this is a disagreement between you two or is it truly something about your child rearing?
- Remember, your child will notice what you say and do. If you can talk together and work things out do so. You will be teaching your child that disagreements are part of life. Develop a hand sign or other signal for times you may be very upset that says, "We will talk about this later."
- Consider letting small things go. Does it really matter if your partner gives your child a treat? Dresses her in clothes you don't think go together? Forgets to comb her hair?
- If there is an issue that feels big and impacts your child's health, safety, or sense of self or learning, here are some steps to follow:
 - o Put the problem into words
 - o Make a plan
 - o Give yourself a set time to try the plan
 - o Check back at the end of that time to see how things are going
 - o Revise your plan as needed
 - o Try again



Do you talk regularly and often about your child? Are there ways you can communicate more often and more easily? Here are some ideas you might want to make part of your conversation:

When and where can you find time to talk? In the morning? At dinner? Before you go to sleep? During the day? In person? By phone? By text? By email?

- Is there a family calendar to keep track of appointments and plans?
- Is there a family shopping list and/or a To Do list where you can write down a note when you think of it?
- How much of your time do you spend talking logistics and plans?
- Do you find the time to share stories? Special moments? Your questions? And those moments that bring you joy? If not, how can you find time to do this?





Co-Parenting When Separated or Divorced and Sharing Custody

Even though your marriage didn't work, your parenting still can. You both love your child.

Here are some thoughts to help you work together in your child's best interest:



Be willing to take a look at yourself and your feelings, needs, actions, and words.

Making things work for your child begins with you. Understanding yourself can help assure that you keep your child's best interests in the forefront—even as you go through challenging times.



Try to be steady and calm when you are with your child, even though your emotions may be running high.

Even babies and toddlers sense the tension of their adults. When you are upset, your child will be upset.



Give your child some simple, clear words to acknowledge the changes she sees, hears, and feels.

"Mommy (or Daddy) is crying. I am feeling sad. Let me wipe my eyes. Now, shall we sing a song together to help me feel better?" "Mommy and Daddy sure have loud voices. We were angry at each other—not at you." "This weekend, Daddy is going to take good care of you. I will take you to school on Monday."



Any Other Ideas?



Provide as Much Continuity as Possible in Regards to the Following:



Where your child lives.

Sometimes, it works for parents of babies and toddlers to share the care in one home. Other times, young children may rotate between two homes if parents are living separately.



Your child's daily routines.

Be as consistent as possible about when your child eats and how you help her fall asleep at night. It will likely take communicating with your former partner to be sure you are both keeping life as steady as possible for your child. If communicating is a challenge, it can help to agree to focus only on your child and save talking about yourselves and your relationship for another time.



Relationships with other adults.

Your child's teachers, her doctor, and grandparents are important adults in her life. These are people who know her and care about her and can be steady figures during this time of change. Inform them about what is happening in your life so they can support you in supporting your child.



Expect that your child may fuss more and her sleep and eating may be disrupted.

These are ways that a young child lets you know she is feeling some stress with all the changes in her life. Knowing this is a normal response to challenging times will help you respond with more patience and kindness.



Any Other Ideas?



***Take a Moment: Working Together to Support Your Child***

Are there some things that you do that support and encourage the relationship between your child and your parenting partner? What are they?

Are there some things you do that interfere with the relationship between your child and your parenting partner? What are they?

What might you do the same or differently to support their relationship?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Have an argument with another important adult in my life, work it out and explain to me what happened...	Sometimes people get upset, but they can still figure out how to be and work together.
Share a story about something fun or funny that we did...	It feels good to tell stories and to laugh together. What we do together matters to you. I matter to you.

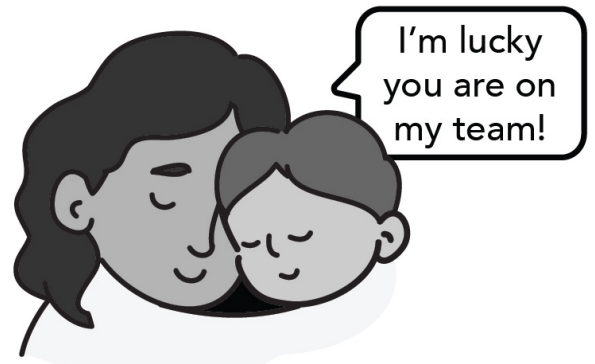


Partnering with Other Adults in Your Child's Life



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some ideas to keep in mind as you partner with family members, teachers, babysitters, your child's healthcare provider, and your family's home visitor:



You Know Different Things About Your Child

When you share what you know, you each get a more complete and helpful picture of your child.



You know your child like no other.

You know details about your child because you live with and love him. For example, you know your child's routines, likes and dislikes, and his health concerns. You know what you are feeding your baby these days, how you help him take a nap, what upsets him, how you help him calm down, what makes him smile or laugh, or whether he has allergies.



Your child's other adults have other information that you need to support your child as he moves out into the world. Here are some examples:

- **Grandparents and other relatives** know stories about your family. They likely have ideas about parenting—and may be very willing to share them with you. These ideas and suggestions may or may not fit how you have decided to raise your child.
- **A teacher** knows about child development and how to create a learning space and plan for and work with children in a group and as individuals.
- **A healthcare provider** knows about the health and development of young children.
- **Your family's home visitor** knows about families and how to support parents who are raising their children when life is bumpy and smooth. Home visitors also know about community resources you may find helpful.
- **Babysitters** vary widely in what they know and how they respond to children. When hiring a babysitter, ask other parents about her dependability and how she interacts with children—especially in the face of crying or other challenging behaviors. Consider hiring her for a few hours of a *test run* when you are nearby and able to check in regularly to see how things are going.



Provide Information to Keep your Child Safe and Healthy When Others Care for Her

Everyone caring for your child needs basic information. Fill out and post a *Caring for My Child Checklist*. You can also make a second copy to give to your child's program if she is in child care. This way everyone will have the following information:



How to reach you.



Health issues, such as allergies and medications your child may be taking.



Safety issues, such as safety routines you follow and instructions for opening the child lock on the toilet (which can be challenging!).



Your child's daily routines for sleeping, eating, changing or toileting, bathing and dressing.



SAFETY ALERT: If your child is an infant under 6 months, remind everyone who cares for him about Back to Sleep and to keep bumpers, blankets, and toys out of the crib to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).



SAFETY ALERT: Phone numbers for your child's healthcare provider and Poison Control should be highlighted and easy to find.





Preparing for a Visit to Your Child's Healthcare Provider

You will make many visits and calls to healthcare providers in the first 3 years of your child's life. Well-baby visits and immunizations happen regularly in the first years of life, so the healthcare provider can check your child's growth and development and give vaccines when needed.

Fevers, rashes, and bumps are common and often mean calls to your healthcare provider—sometimes in the middle of the night. During these visits and conversations, your relationship with your child's healthcare provider will grow, and you can work together to keep your child safe and healthy.

Here are some ideas to make your visits and calls work for you and for your child—and for his healthcare provider:



Write down your questions and any important information.

Now, you won't forget something important. Questions could include the following: "When can I start feeding him solids?" "A child in his family child care home has pink-eye. Is there anything I should do?" You might jot down his temperature over the last few hours or note that his rash is red and bumpy.



Write down what the healthcare provider says—whether over the phone or during a visit.

For example, your provider could say the following, "Use the dropper from the package, NOT a kitchen spoon to measure cough medicine" or "Call back in 2 days."



Prepare your toddler and 2-year-old for visits.

Talk about what is going to happen. Make up a story or read a book about going to the doctor. Act out a visit. You might take turns being the doctor and being the patient or treat your child's stuffed animals or a doll. Adding a toy doctor's kit, a box of band aids, or roll of reusable gauze bandages can make your pretend play even more interesting and fun.



Be honest.

Getting a shot means a little prick that hurts for a minute.



Take a family member or friend to visits when possible—especially when your child is an infant.

You'll be nervous and focusing on your child. A second pair of ears is always helpful.



Share any worries.

If you feel something is wrong, trust your gut. You know your baby better than anyone. Rather than compare your child to others and worry, talk to your child's healthcare provider. Ask your questions and pursue them until you discover everything is fine, which is likely the case, or until you have planned to learn more.



Stay calm and steady.

Your child will be watching you to see how he should respond. If you are upset about him getting an exam or a shot, he'll be even more upset.

Compare Notes, Learn, and Enjoy Time Together as Your Child Learns and Grows



Talk about your child.

Try looking through your child's eyes to understand how he sees the world and why he behaves like he does. This is information you can use when you decide how you want to respond in a particular situation.



Share the joy and wonder of living and learning with a young child.

Did your baby laugh with delight and play peek-a-boo when you were changing her? Did your toddler tell her teacher that, "Mommy put that peel on my banana"? Did your 2-year-old explain, "Leaves are on the ground because it is falling time"?





When You Disagree—Which You Will...



When you feel upset by something, sometimes you can let it go.

Choose to react calmly or in a nonnegative way if a teacher or grandma loses one of the baby's socks or if your toddler comes home with dirt on her pants.



Other times, it is important to be clear about your expectations and explain them—clearly and respectfully.

For example, if play looks a little too rough, you might say to a babysitter, "I notice sometimes you are shaking him and bouncing him. I am worried that could hurt his neck or brain. Let's figure out another game for you both to enjoy." If you have any doubts that this person will not pay attention to or remember what you said, it may not be safe to leave your child alone with him or her.

Show Your Appreciation to the Other Adults in Your Child's Life



Acknowledge how much you appreciate the support and care offered.

Say "thank you"—even to grandparents. If your child is in child care, help pick up toys at the end of the day. Perhaps, most important, come back to pick up your child on time. Teachers and babysitters have families and lives too.



A Closing Note: Remember: No one can ever take your place in your baby's life. No matter how skilled a teacher or how funny a babysitter or grandparent, you are at the center of your child's world.



Take a Moment: Working Together with the Other Adults in Your Child's Life

When, where, and how do you share information with your child's teacher? Babysitter?
Healthcare provider?

How do you show your thanks and appreciation for the other adults in your child's life?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Say thank you to Grandpa or my teacher...	Saying thank you is important. If you do it, it is something I will do too.
Tell me: "You are getting a shot today to help you stay healthy. It will be like a little pinch and will hurt for a minute or two. I will be there with you. Then, the doctor will put on a band aid afterwards to help you feel better."	I can count on you to tell me the truth and to be there to help me.

Being the Bridge Between Your Child and Other Caring People in His Life



Figuring It Out Together

Whether on a walk to the park, down the supermarket aisle, at child care, or at a family gathering, at around 6 to 8 months and over the next year or so, your child is likely to need your support to feel comfortable with unfamiliar people.



What Your Child Might be Experiencing

In the first months of life, you can give another person your baby to hold, and she may not seem to notice. But this will change because your baby is growing, learning, and changing.

Beginning around 6 to 8 months and for the next year or so, she may begin to react to new people with a stare, hiding her face in your shoulder, crying, or clinging to you. It happens even with a family member who may have visited a month ago. (A month is a long time in a baby's life.) This is called stranger anxiety.

This can be confusing. Why is she crying when she has been alright with everyone until now? It may hurt Uncle Leo's feelings when he comes a long way to visit her and is greeted with tears. Stranger anxiety may look like a step backward; however, it is really a step forward in your child's development. It tells you your baby's sense of self as a separate individual and her trust in and love for you are deepening. She is saying, "I want to be with you—my most favorite and loved person in the whole wide world."



Supporting Your Child with Stranger Anxiety

Here are some ideas you can try to help your baby feel more comfortable with someone unfamiliar or someone she knows but hasn't seen for a while:



Let her sit on your lap or hold her in your arms as she checks out the other person.



Talk to your baby about time that she has spent with this relative.

Remind her of the loving time she had with the family member: "Baili, remember last time she was here, Grandma sang you *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star* over and over again."



Introduce her to the new person.

"Maria, this is Cordell. He goes to school with mommy." Though she won't understand the words, she will understand you are comfortable with that person.



Talk with the unfamiliar adult while your baby is in your arms or on your lap.

By doing this, you are giving your seal of approval, and your baby will sense your comfort.



Invite the other adult to offer an object (e.g., a large key ring, glove, measuring cup or a small toy) to your child.

This could create a bridge between them.



Sit with her on the floor near the other person.

Let her sit on your lap. Explain you are going to stay there so she knows she can come back to you if she crawls off to get closer to the person she is getting to know.



Any Other Ideas?





Being a Bridge Between Your Child and an Older Sibling

A new baby in the house means many changes—for everyone. Try to look through your older child(ren)'s eyes and it is easy to see this can be a time of many and mixed emotions for them. People stopping by and admiring the baby, changes in routines that may occur, and a newborn's crying can be stressful. However, Grandma coming to stay for a time, special treats, the pride of helping mom pat baby's back, and the occasional gift can be exciting.

Here are some ideas you may decide to try to build a bridge and get your older children's relationship with the new baby off to a sound start:



Give your older child(ren) words for what is happening.

"Sometimes, new babies cry a lot." "I know you'd like to have a drink too. You have a sippy cup. Let's look together and find it on the counter."



Make enough room on your lap for everyone at times.

"We can all sit together for a snuggle. We are a family."



Give your toddler or 2-year-old time to play being baby.

Young siblings often want to be a big kid and a baby at the same time. Now, your older children may think the new baby is getting everything—sleeping in your room, nursing or a bottle, or always riding in the stroller. So, give her a chance to be a baby. You might wrap her in a blanket, rock her, sing her a favorite lullaby, take her for a ride in the stroller, or feed her lunch.



Give your older child(ren) one-on-one time.

Some activities you could share include taking a walk, going to the store, setting the table, reading a book, playing with a ball, or building a block tower.



Give your older child(ren) a chance to help you with the new baby.

Give her a real job to do, like hold a clean diaper, choose baby's socks, or help pat baby's back. Thank her for helping.



Acknowledge the times your older child(ren) behaves in caring, loving ways to your newest family member.

"I noticed that you sang to him when he was crying in his stroller. That was very kind to try to help him calm down." "Thank you for getting him a dry shirt to wear."



Take a Moment: Being a Bridge for Your Child

What are your hopes and dreams for your children's relationship(s) today and in the future?

What would you like them to think and say about each other 10 years from now?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

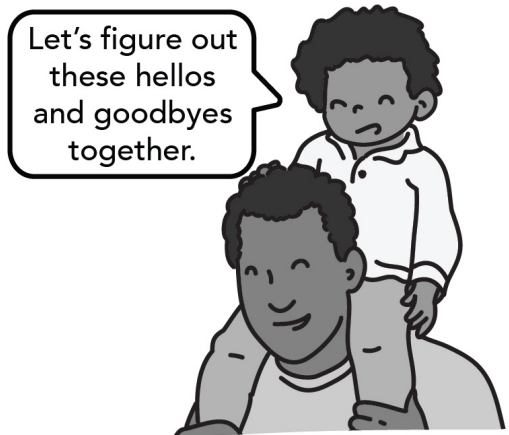
When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Stay nearby while I am getting to know someone new...	I am safe because you are there. If I move away to be with someone else, you will still be there when I get back.
Give me the words for what is happening when you bring home a new baby...	You understand when I need some support with such a big change. We can talk about anything.

Supporting Your Child with Goodbyes and Hellos



Figuring It Out Together

Sharing the care means that you and your child will have goodbyes and hellos when you leave him in the care of another trusted adult. These moments of going away and coming back are a part of life that we experience our whole lives. Sometimes goodbyes and hellos are smooth. Other times they are bumpy. That is true for all of us no matter our age.



Saying "Goodbye"

Around the age of 6 to 8 through 18 months, goodbyes get more complicated. If your baby cries, screams, or clings to you when you say goodbye, he isn't being bad. He just wants to be with you. He loves you. He trusts you. He knows you can leave at any time and isn't yet able to keep you in his thoughts or remember that you will come back like you always do.

By around the age of 2, he will be able to hold a picture of you in his mind, and, from experience, he will begin to have the idea that you will return always.

With your support and by working with the other caring adults in your child's life, over time he will learn to negotiate this normal, and at times challenging, part of life.

Supporting Your Child with Goodbyes

Here are some ideas you may decide to try to support your child with goodbyes:



Play peek-a-boo.

Peek-a-boo is a way of practicing hellos and goodbyes, and it gives your child a sense of control. The best thing about it is that you are always there when he looks through his hands. It is a reminder that you will always come back.



Spend time together with your child and the adult(s) who will be caring for him before you leave.

Stay a little while even when it is a family member who comes to take care of your child. Arrange a visit with a new babysitter before the day you need to leave your child with her. Starting child care? A quality program will have a phase-in time where you stay with your child, then leave for gradually increasing periods of time. These are chances for everyone to get to know one another and for your child to know you give your seal of approval to adults who will care for him.



Talk with his caring adult about how you can work together to say goodbye.

For example, your child and his caring adult might walk you to the door or wave to you through the window. There may be times you decide together that it is best for you to say goodbye and simply leave knowing the other adult is right there to support your child. At other times, it may be best for you to stay a little while to help your child adjust rather than saying goodbye and immediately leaving.



Develop a goodbye routine.

For example, a 5-, 2-, and 1-minute warning, then three kisses on the nose before you leave could work well. Familiar routines give children a sense of competence and comfort because they are soon able to count on what is going to happen next. They make goodbyes easier for you too.



Let him have a lovey, blankie, or cuddle toy (also known as a transitional object) if he shows interest.

A soft object—maybe a stuffed animal, a blanket, or one of your t-shirts—can provide emotional comfort for your child. It carries with it feelings of being with you and, perhaps, feelings of cuddling with you. About 60% of children have a lovey. Having this object may start around 6 months. They tend to be very important for children between the ages of 18 and 30 months.



Avoid sneaking away.

Let him know he can count on you to tell him what is going to happen, even if it means some tears. Otherwise, he may spend time and energy looking for you and worrying you will disappear even when you are together.



At the same time, avoid prolonged goodbyes.

It can be tempting to walk out the door and then come back in when you hear him crying. But, doing that can make it harder for both of you. So, stand outside and listen. Look in the one-way mirror if your child care program has one, or call for an update from the sidewalk. Chances are good he is already settling into the day.





Saying “Hello”

You might be thinking that if separating can be so difficult, reuniting should be a joyful experience. Sometimes it is; your little one looks at you with a bright smile and crawls right over to you. But, this is not always the case. Your reappearance may lead to a meltdown, or you may be ignored. Sometimes, you may experience the heart-wrenching experience of your child breaking into tears.

What is really happening is that when you walk in, your child is telling you he is tired or letting go after holding himself together all day. He may be telling you that someone took his toy, that he has feelings about you leaving, or that you’ve disrupted an activity he wants to finish. Most important, he is showing you he feels safe because he can count on you and your love no matter what.

Here are some ways to support your child when you reunite:



Try to find time to take a little breath for yourself on the way home or to child care.

This will allow you to pay attention to your child when you walk in the door and make the greeting easier for both of you.



Develop a routine for hellos.

Maybe try a wave and then a hug, or, again, try three kisses on the nose.



Be present even if he seems to ignore you or acts up.

These hard-to-take greetings show how much your child loves and trusts you. Be gentle, reassuring, and remind him, “I came back just like I always do.”



Share a healthy snack for the trip home from child care.

Low blood sugar can lead to cranky children and adults. Share a rice cake or a banana as you come back together again at the end of a busy day.



Take a Moment: Goodbyes and Hellos

How do you handle leaving and reuniting with people you love? Do you prepare and think about these times? Do you get them over as quickly as possible? Do you try to avoid these moments? Do you brush them off as not important?

What are three things you want your child to learn about goodbyes and hellos in his life?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Remind me, “I will come back like I always do”...	I can count on you. I can trust you will come back.
Develop routines for us to say “goodbye” and “hello” (and really for anything we do together)...	I know what is coming next, which helps me feel comfortable and competent.

Advocating for Your Child: Problem Solving, Not Blaming



Figuring It Out Together

Sometimes you may change who or how someone cares for your child, or you may have a concern about how your child is developing and learning. These are times your child needs you to advocate for her and to try to solve a problem on behalf of her best interests.



When Something Doesn't Feel Right

Sometimes something doesn't feel right when sharing the care. A babysitter may show up late. A grandparent may seem very tired or unsteady when he or she arrives to be with your child for the day. You might notice that your child reacts negatively to a teacher, or your child's healthcare provider might seem distracted when you ask questions about your child's diet.

There are no easy answers on how to handle situations like this or your feelings of unease. Here are some ideas you might want to consider:



Trust your feelings.

If something doesn't feel right, check it out.



Feel your big feelings thoughtfully.

Being aware of your feelings can allow you to take a pause to think and respond in a helpful way rather than becoming very angry or losing control. When you do this, you help your child begin to learn how to have intense emotions, manage these emotions, and solve the problem.



Watch to see. Is the concerning behavior a one-time event?

Everyone has an off day. Keep your eyes open. If the days go by and you don't see a worrying behavior again, things may be OK.



Say something if concerning behaviors continue.

Sometimes noticing and calling out a behavior are enough to influence the individual to change the behavior. Perhaps your babysitter needs a reminder that being on time is important to you. Perhaps grandma or grandpa isn't getting enough sleep, and he or she needs to change a medication. You may discover that your child's teacher has been out of class for a week, and your child is adjusting to her return. There could have been a family crisis in your child's health provider's life around the time of your last visit, so he or she was distracted.



Talk the situation over with someone you trust.

Try to get a trusted person's perspective regarding your concerns: a family member, friend, child care director, or your home visitor.



Focus on solving the problem rather than blaming.

For example, talk with the other person about how to make things work better. There may be steps he or she can take. For example, your babysitter can set her alarm, so she leaves for your home on time. There may also be steps that you can take, such as spending a little more time with your child and her teacher to support their relationship. There may be steps you can initiate, such as talking to a healthcare provider about what you both can do to assure you get answers to your questions.



Any Other Ideas?





When You Need to Consider a Change

If concerning situations continue, it may be time to consider a change. This is often easier said than done. In many locations, there are not enough affordable spaces for babies and toddlers in child care. In other situations, there may not be many pediatric healthcare providers or family practitioners. There are no simple answers; however, here are a few thoughts for you to consider.



Consider what is in your child's best interest.

Be your child's voice.



Talk over your thoughts with someone you trust.

Discuss your concerns with your partner, a family member, friend, your child's teacher or healthcare provider, or your home visitor. Do they see the situation in the same way? Do they have ideas that can help you make a current situation work?



Explore options.

For example, if you want to change child care programs, talk with people you trust and who have knowledge regarding different, available programs. Think creatively. Is there another parent or two who might want to team up to hire a child care provider with you? Is there a relative or neighbor who might be able to care for your child on a regular basis?



Take action if your child is in danger.

If you fear for your child's safety, health, or well-being, she needs to be in a different situation, and you should make an immediate change.



Develop a short-term plan with your home visitor if you have to make an immediate change.

Explore resources together, and identify steps to find an arrangement that will work better for you and your child.



Take a Moment: Advocate for Your Child

What does "trust your feelings" mean to you?

How can you keep your focus on solving a problem rather than blaming someone?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Talk with someone and try to work something out...	People can talk together even if they disagree. Talking together can be a way to solve problems.
Take action if I am in danger...	I can count on you to watch out for me and keep me safe.

Building Healthy Relationships: Transitions to Parenthood



Becoming a parent creates life changes for adults, whether one is parenting with or without a partner. Some of these changes may feel a little bumpy (e.g., morning sickness, extra doctor visits) or create a few relationship wobbles (e.g., prickly discussions over finances and added costs, changes in intimacy).

Parenthood generates new experiences (e.g., loss of sleep, first smiles, C-section recovery), opportunities to explore and set expectations (e.g., how to divide household chores once baby arrives, what kinds of discipline to use), and the need for decision-making (e.g., will I go back to work, breast feed and/or formula feed, new or secondhand nursery furniture). It can be overwhelming, at times, to think about all the changes

Your *Circle of Support* may grow and change as you prepare for and become a parent, but your *Circle* is still comprised of the people you count on to give and receive support as needed. If you plan to parent without a partner, members in your *Circle of Support* may become key partners in helping you parent and manage family life. Whether partnered or not, you may seek advice from members of your *Circle* who have parenting experience.

If you plan to parent with a partner, it is important to recognize that each of you is experiencing these life changes. Sometimes those experiences are similar, and sometimes they can feel very different! Finding ways to support one another through this transition will help you handle the bumps and wobbles along the way.

Expectations

Expectations influence how a person handles changes in life including the changes that come with parenthood. We all have expectations of how we see parenting and family roles in our relationships. You may want to think about what expectations you have for yourself and your partner regarding what being a parent and being a partner mean after your child arrives.

Thinking and talking about changes that might happen once you become parents are good ways to plan ahead and understand how your perspectives and thoughts are similar to and different from your partner's.

Change can be exciting, scary, nerve-wracking, wanted, and unwanted. Many aspects of your life, big and little, are going to shift as you prepare for parenthood and experience your first year with your little one.

There will be **bumps**—experiences or circumstances that can create short- or longer-term disruptions to your plans or daily routines.

Bumps can include things like everyone in your house or at work gets sick with the flu (short-term) or a fierce storm hits your community and affects homes, businesses, and schools for several months (long-term). These are conditions that can affect you, your family, your workplace, and your community.



Take a Moment: Thinking about "Firsts"

What are some "firsts" that you are looking forward to for yourself?

If you have a parenting partner, what are some "firsts" you are looking forward to seeing them have?

Are you wondering or feeling anxious about some "firsts"? If so, what are they?





There will be **wobbles**—when something is out of sync between you and a partner, child, co-worker, family member, or friend. Wobbles happen in relationships... and ALL relationships wobble sometimes.

Sometimes wobbles are little and stay little or can be easily resolved, like differences in how you squeeze the toothpaste tube or do you leave dishes in the sink or clean them right after a meal. Sometimes wobbles grow and can become significant sources of distress for one or both people in the relationship, like determining how much money you spend or save or feeling a loss of intimacy after the baby arrives. A wobble may be rooted in fear or anxiety about change, and becoming a parent certainly creates change.

There are a few common, significant changes during the first year of parenthood that can create wobbles in parenting and partner relationships. Do any of these feel familiar to you?



New and changed roles:

What do I expect of myself as an intimate partner? A parent? A co-parent? What do I expect of my partner in each of these roles?



Family life management changes:

How will daily chores, bills, and home/vehicle maintenance be handled after your baby is born? How do you and your partner think family life responsibilities might change after your baby arrives? Are any of these prickly subjects already in your conversations between you and your partner? How are you and your partner managing those conversations?



Financial changes:

What do your family finances look like now? Who is bringing in income, and who may have the health benefits tied to work? Do you have a flexible or rigid work schedule? Will your income change after your baby arrives? What costs are expected to change after your baby is here (e.g., paid childcare, groceries)?

The good news is most expectant parents don't have to figure out everything all at once!!

Strategies to Help Manage Wobbles of New Parenthood and Co-Parenting



Recognize your expectations for parenthood—for yourself, your partner, and others whom you expect to be active in helping you parent.

- Identify the changes you expect to enjoy and embrace.
- Identify the changes you are concerned about.



Listen to and understand your partner's expectations for parenthood, what they hope to enjoy and what they are concerned about.



Do and say small things often to keep your cups filled.

- Build a daily habit of showing appreciation for each other.
- Create your own connection rituals—a wink with an air kiss, a daily note of positive qualities or flirty thoughts under a coffee cup.
- Observe your and your partner's bids for connection and support.
- Engage in self-care.



Practice a soft start-up for difficult conversations. (From The Gottman Institute)

"I feel [your feeling]... when [specific behavior/instance]... and I need [state positive need]."



Practice repair and taking responsibility when there is conflict.

- Seek common ground even when there is disagreement (e.g., "I believe we both want what is best for our family.")
- Acknowledge mistakes or carelessness (e.g., "I'm sorry, can I take back what I said?", "I made an assumption, and it was wrong.")
- Take a break when emotions run high (e.g., "Let's talk about something else for a while.", "I need some time to cool off.")



Reflect compassion for yourself and your partner.

Acknowledge emotions and feelings surrounding changes.



Practice pausing with curiosity using three reflective questions.

- What is my partner thinking and feeling?
- What am I thinking and feeling?
- How can we resolve this together?

Reconnecting as a Couple



Remember to date your partner. When your baby comes, you may have to get creative! Setting aside time just for each other helps strengthen your relationship.

Try not to talk about the children, work, or the bills during your date. This is about the two of you and your relationship with each other.

Extra support can help new parents work through bumps and wobbles that seem to be growing bigger. Ask your home visitor about building friendships and strengthening your *Circle of Support*. It is healthy to have relationships outside of your marriage or your home with friends and family.





Take a Moment: Feeling and Showing Gratitude

What kinds of behaviors and comments can others do that make you feel make you feel appreciated?

What kinds of behaviors and comments do you do to show your appreciation for others?



Take a Moment: Planning for Reconnecting

List a few of your favorite things to do together (pre-baby). How might you continue or adapt those activities once your baby arrives?



Focus on Your: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child



You are the magic ingredient your child needs to *Take Root*, so she can *Thrive* in the years to come. She loves you like no other. You literally create and shape connections in her brain when you interact with her during diaper changes, toileting, meal time, bath time and sleep time... when you comfort her, talk, sing, play, and read with her. Day by day she begins to gather information about herself and about what to expect from others and her world through her interactions with you.

This doesn't mean you have to be perfect. There is no such thing as a perfect parent...or a perfect baby...or a perfect anyone. It also doesn't mean you can or should try to do it alone. Raising a child is an awesome, challenging, exhausting, rewarding, demanding, life-changing task. Every parent needs the support of other adults.

Whether you are a stay-at-home parent, you work, or you go to school, there are times when you will need to and want to share the care of your child with others. This may be a parenting partner; a grandparent or other family member; a child care teacher; or a person or people your child spends time with occasionally, such as a babysitter, her healthcare provider, or your home visitor.

One thing to always remember: No matter with whom you share the care, no one can ever take your place in your child's life.

Looking Back at Sharing Care

How you feel about sharing care is likely shaped by experiences you had as you were growing up. Taking a moment to look back can help you think about and decide how to share the care today.



As a child, do you remember spending time with other adults besides your parent(s)?

How often? Who were they? How did you feel when you were with them? What kinds of things did you do together? How was your time with them? Was it like being with your parent(s)? Different?



Take a Moment: Look Back at Times You Were Cared for by People Other Than Your Parents

Do you remember something you enjoyed or learned while spending time with a caring, trusted adult other than your parents?

What do you think sharing care meant for your parents? For your relationship with them?





Feelings About Sharing Care

Sharing care can be a positive a wonderful experience for all. You get a break and your baby's world of people she can trust and depend upon expands. Sometimes though, it can be a bit bumpy. Caring about and for a young child can create big feelings.

Here are two main reasons why sharing care is not always as easy as expected. These reasons may not often be discussed, but being aware of them is the first step in ensuring these reasons and the feelings they evoke do not interfere with you and your partners working together for your children's well-being:



You come with the history of your own childhood, which could often be very different from others' experiences.

How you were raised is part of who you are. It shapes how you parent. For example, the language(s) you speak at home, what and how you expect your child to eat, how you set limits and guide behavior, and even how you talk and play with your child are influenced by your own upbringing. In some aspects of life, you may want to parent as your parents raised you; however, in other facets of parenting, you may choose to do things differently. Adults sharing the care of a child—even parents of the same child—have different opinions about topics that range from food choices to what is acceptable behavior.



Sometimes you may feel jealous or competitive.

While uncomfortable, these feelings are fairly common. You may even feel this way with a spouse or a partner! These feelings are because of your deep love for and connection with your child—not because you are petty or the other person is doing something wrong. Adults you share the care with may experience these feelings too. It is a sign of their attachment to your child, which is a good thing! Being aware of these feelings and that they are to be expected can help keep them from getting in the way of partnering with the other adults in your child's life.



Your Circle of Support

Parenting is an amazing, awesome, surprising, challenging, and exhausting job. Every parent needs support.



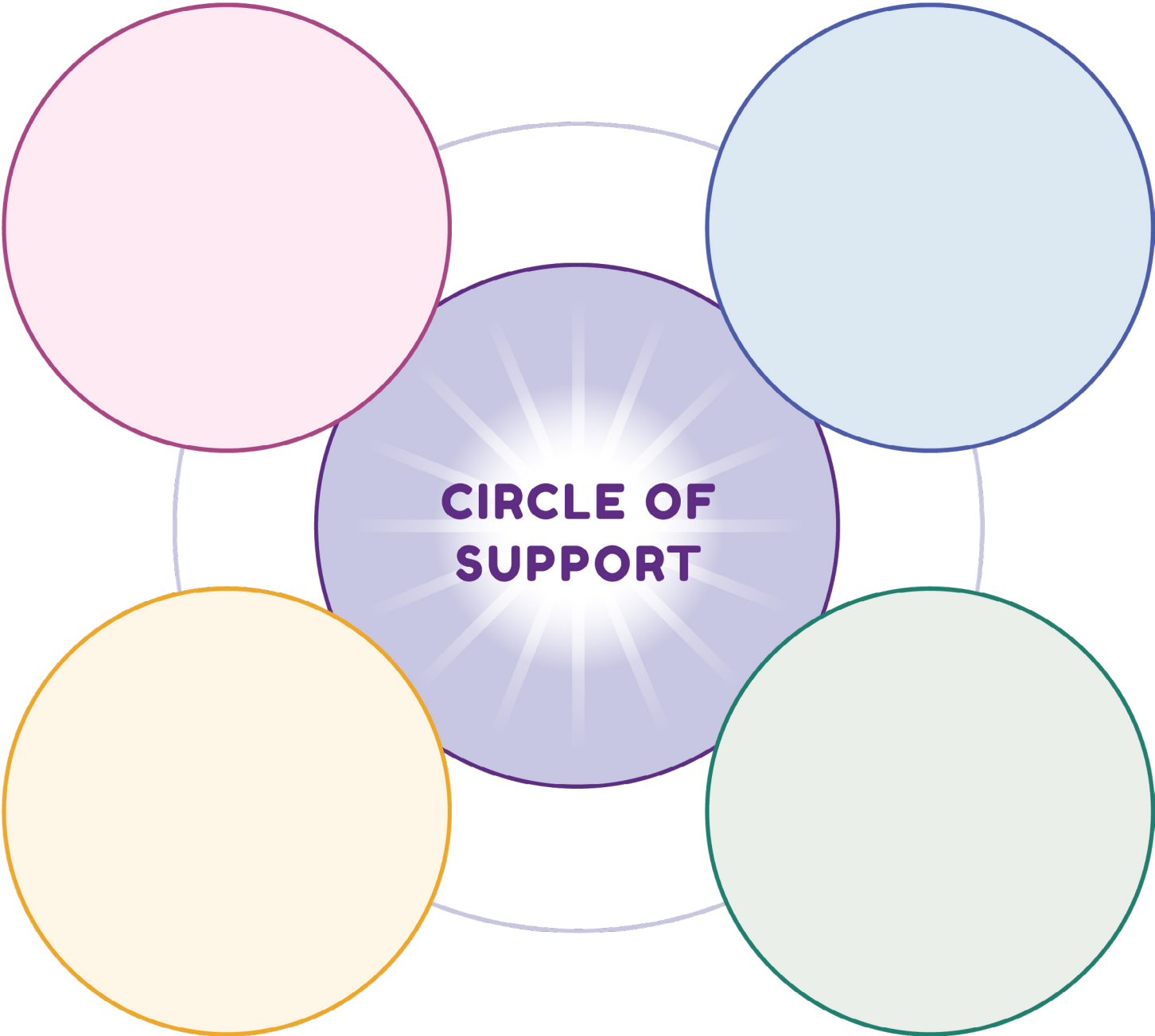
When you have **Social Connections**, you help your family build roots, which makes your family strong and resilient during difficult times. Having family members and/or friends you can count on and who can count on you makes life easier and more enjoyable. Giving and receiving support makes everyone stronger.



Concrete Supports comprise your family's support network of people and community services. They provide information and other resources during challenging times. Knowing that you are not alone can help you make the best decisions possible for your family and yourself.

On the next page, we have provided you a *Circle of Support* resource. Write down a name or two and their contact information. Post it somewhere that you can easily see, such as on the refrigerator. Then, it is easy to find when parenting starts to feel like too much. Sometimes, knowing you are not alone will be enough. And, if that doesn't do the trick, call or send a message to someone on your list







What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Learn to work with the other adults in my life...	I have other people in my life who I can depend on to keep me safe. We can play and learn and laugh together. (But always remember, no one can take your place.)
Ask for support and help from others...	Everyone needs support and help sometimes—and it is a good idea to reach out to others.





Practical Applications for Families: Figuring It Out Together

Practical Applications: Co-Parenting and Sharing Care

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Parenting After Separation	57

Figuring It Out Together: Setting Boundaries with Family



Areas of Development

Setting boundaries for extended family impacts the following areas of development:



Cognitive



Language



Socio-Emotional

Related Protective Factors



Concrete Supports of Families



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Associated Family Pages

6.3.1	Sharing Care from a Child's Point of View.....	5
6.3.1	Partnering with Other Adults in Your Child's Life	15
6.3.1	Advocating for Your Child: Problem Solving, Not Blaming	35
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6.2.2	Keep Your Child Safe: Create a Family Care Plan	91

Scenario: Setting Boundaries with Family

The grandparents have come for an extended visit. The parents are having a hard time figuring out how to gently provide a few instructions to the grandparents for managing their 8-month-old child after they noticed some of the following behaviors:

- A grandparent feeding the child inappropriate foods.
- The child spending his entire nap in the grandparent's arms.
- One of the grandparents wrapping the child in a large blanket and lying her down on her tummy for bedtime.
- A grandparent not taking the appropriate measures when changing diapers (e.g., using diaper cream).
- One of the grandparents leaving the child in a seated baby walker for hours at a time.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Grandparents often support their family by caring for their grandchildren while parents are at work. Grandparents' special bonds with their grandchildren have proven to be beneficial for all involved and can help parents feel confident that their child is being loved and truly cared for. From the start, it is vital that parents have a sincere discussion with grandparents about their goals and expectations. Check in regularly to alleviate the pressure of addressing issues/concerns all at once. Parents could write reminder notes on how grandparents should handle certain situations or regarding specific doctor's recommendations. Discuss new parenting tactics with grandparents, particularly those that keep the child safe. Remember, the grandparents have experienced most, if not all, of common situations and have probably handled them efficiently, but you may want to explain or show the grandparents some new ideas. Show your appreciation and be sure to honor the advantages of having their love and support.

Figuring It Out Together: Parenting After Separation



Areas of Development

Positive parental relationships contribute to these areas of development:

-  Cognitive
-  Language
-  Socio-Emotional

Related Protective Factors

-  Concrete Supports of Families
-  Parental Resilience
-  Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
-  Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Associated Family Pages

- 6.3.1 Sharing Care from a Child's Point of View.....5
- 6.3.1 Co-Parenting.....9
- 6.3.1 Building Healthy Relationships: Transition to Parenthood41
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Scenario: Parenting After Separation

After a huge argument, one parent moves out. However, that parent wants to protect his relationship with his child. Therefore, this parent has arranged for extended visits on weekends and regularly attends the child's events. The parent and child always enjoy being together. This parent, however, is usually or always excluded from day-to-day decisions, routines, and other happenings regarding the child, but he wants to be part of all these decisions.

 What is the child thinking and feeling?

 What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Parents often feel guilty about how a separation will affect their children, but children often thrive if parents lead more positive lives apart rather than together. Consider how you can work together to keep your child safe and assure him that you both are active participants in his life.

Be sure that you, together, as parents do the following for the benefit of your child:

- Prioritize your child, not your failed relationship.
- Keep communication open and centered on working together to find a solution for your child's situation.
- Include both parents' (and the child's) inputs in decision-making.
- Plan on how to keep routines consistent and what limits to set.
- Don't keep score.
- Attend doctors, or other health-related, visits together to understand how the separation is affecting your child.



Chapter 2: Parental Self-Care

6.3.2 Parental Self-Care

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Taking Care of You from a Child's Point of View



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some things your child might tell you about taking care of yourself—if she had the words:



Through a Young Child's Eyes	
Parental Self-Care	
What I Might Learn When You Take Care of Yourself	
Taking care of yourself is important for grownups and children too. I take care of myself when I eat fruit, brush my teeth, and play with my friends. I go to the doctor just like you.	Some people and places help you feel better. I learn more about this when I hear you say things like, "Today we are going to take a walk to the park where it is quiet and calm, so we will feel calm too."
When you take care of yourself, you are happier. When you and my other important people are doing well, we have more fun singing, playing, exploring, and enjoying. I am happier too.	We can make choices that work for us. I learn about this when you tell me, "Aunt Rachel sent these clothes your cousin wore, so you can wear them now. That was kind of her. Now you have great clothes, and we can use our money for other things we need."
It is OK to ask someone for help. You do not have to know everything or be able to do everything for yourself. Sometimes people ask us for help, and we help them. People help each other. We are part of a community.	Counting to 10 and taking a deep breath is calming. When we are both upset, it helps us if we stop, count to 10, and take a deep breath together.



Take a Moment: Focus on You and Your Child

What might you tell your child about why it is important that you take care of yourself?

How might taking care of yourself support you in taking care of her?



Nurturing Your Well-Being: Feeling Good About You



Figuring It Out Together

When you feel healthy and happy, you are more likely to feel good about yourself and your life. You are likely to feel more confident and to build trusting, caring relationships with others. You are more likely to feel competent and engaged at home and at work, and you are positioned to cope better with the stresses of everyday life.



You Are Not Alone

Whatever you may be feeling—joyful, loving, sad, frustrated, angry—it's important to remember you are not alone. Other parents share your feelings! It is important to be able to feel what you feel and still be able to see and respond in thoughtful ways to your child.

When you have someone to talk, laugh, cry, complain, share your joys and your doubts with, and to listen to, you know you are not alone. Someone sees you and understands what you are experiencing.

Have you created a *Circle of Support*? Do you have a list of people you can call and count on? Is the list on a piece of paper or in your phone? Is it hanging on your fridge or bathroom mirror? These are the people you can reach out to when parenting starts to feel like too much or when your child does something amazing that you have to share. You are not alone!



Baby Blues

If you have just given birth, you may be experiencing mood swings, or you may feel down, irritable, tired, sad, or impatient. You may even have trouble sleeping, despite the fact that you are exhausted. These *postpartum blues*, or *baby blues*, can make it hard to enjoy and respond to your baby.

Don't be alarmed. These feelings are very common. Many new mothers (about 50-80%) experience the blues. Fathers also might notice *the blues*. The same is true for adoptive and foster parents.

Usually, *baby blues* tend to lessen in a week or two. The key is to recognize the signs and get as much rest as possible, accept the help of family and friends, and talk with other new parents. In the United States, newborns typically have several well-baby check-ups in their first few months. It is good to share about any baby blues you or your parenting partner may be feeling with these healthcare professionals. They can work with you, whether the blues lessen on their own or continue to affect and concern you.



Always Remember— alcohol and recreational drugs can intensify mood swings and use of them should be avoided by those who care for young children.

Postpartum Depression

If the *baby blues* don't go away after a few weeks, or become more intense, you may be experiencing postpartum depression. Postpartum depression most commonly affects mothers within the first 3 months after giving birth but can occur at any point during the first year. Approximately 10% of women are affected, and each woman experiences her own unique combination of symptoms.

It is not only mothers who can become depressed after welcoming a new child to the family, fathers and adoptive parents can experience it too. Your home visitor has resources for you including hotline numbers you can call.



SAFETY ALERT: If you feel you may hurt yourself or your baby, put your baby in her crib or another safe place and call 9-1-1, or one of the emergency hotline numbers listed below, right away. Explain what is happening, and ask someone to come be with you immediately (e.g., A family member or trusted neighbor).

Arrange to talk with a healthcare provider. There are treatments, including talk therapy and medications, that can help. The sooner you get support, the sooner you will feel like yourself again and be able to enjoy your baby.



**National Hopeline Network: 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)**

If your depression is leading to suicidal thoughts, call the National Hopeline to connect with a depression treatment center in your area. The Hopeline also offers a live chat feature for those who don't want to, or who are unable to, call and can dispatch emergency crews to your location if necessary.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

This national hotline is another valuable resource for people whose depression has escalated to suicidal or other harmful thoughts. Their network of crisis centers provides emotional support and guidance to people in distress and are also available via a chat service and a special hotline number for the hearing impaired: 1-800-799-4889.

National Youth Crisis Hotline: 1-800-448-4663

This resource provides brief interventions for youth who are dealing with pregnancy, sexual abuse, child abuse, depression, and suicidal thoughts. They also provide referrals to local counseling, treatment centers, and shelters.

Text 741741 when you are feeling depressed or suicidal, a crisis worker will text you back immediately and continue to text with you. Many people, especially younger people, don't like talking on the phone and would feel much more comfortable texting. This is a free service for anyone.



Appreciate Your Own Parenting Journey

Every parent is on his or her own journey. Parents are finding their way with their very individual child. Appreciating who you are and your path as a parent is one of the most important ways to respect and care for yourself. This means not getting caught up in the comparison game.

Comparing yourself to others can be a slippery slope because it is often easier to notice what another parent does well than to see your own strengths. Part of self-care is knowing there are parts of parenting you do well and other aspects you are working on—just like every other parent!

The reality is that there is no such thing as a perfect parent...or a perfect child...or a perfect anyone. To help you appreciate your journey, give yourself a break. Parenting is a juggling act. Usually there are so many balls in the air at once that some will inevitably fall. For example, the laundry may not get done, and you and your child go to child care in the same clothes as yesterday. Perhaps your flower patch in front of your home needs to be weeded, there may be toys all over the living room, or you may realize it has been 3 days since you've had a real shower. It happens. You can't do it all. No one can—and that is OK.

Just pause and realize and appreciate all you do well and those special moments that you and your child share.

Moving from Comparing to Appreciating Your Child

It is natural to compare what and how your child is doing to others, for example your friend's 7-month-old baby has already started to crawl or your niece started using the potty at 26 months. Comparing can happen anytime, anywhere: while on a walk with a friend and her baby, in the park, at the supermarket, in child care, or on the bus.

You need to understand that comparisons often aren't the best thing for you, or for your child, even though, at times, it may be reassuring or even lead to a burst of pride. Comparing can put unnecessary pressure on you, which ultimately can add stress or tension to your relationship with your child.

It's hard not to compare at all, but focus on and try to appreciate your child's unique way of being, her path of growing and learning. She, like you, is one-of-a-kind, and there is no better way to help her thrive than to see and enjoy what makes her special, for example the way she smiles when you pick her up out of her crib; her interest in filling and dumping or trying to stack bottle caps; or how she startles at loud, unexpected sounds but runs across the yard shrieking with delight trying to catch the bubbles you blow.

You may be wondering, "But what if I feel something is really wrong?" What if you feel your child is significantly behind and not meeting recommended developmental milestones? If that is the case, trust your gut. You know your baby better than anyone. Rather than compare and worry, talk to your child's healthcare provider. Ask your questions and pursue the answers until you have the information you need.





Take a Moment: Parenting Moments That Give You a Boost

What is something you and your child do together that makes you both smile or laugh?

What is a memory of a loving moment between you and your child that you want to remember to share with her when she is older?



Soothing Thoughts and Practices for You

When you are quiet inside, it can be easier to notice and to appreciate positive traits about yourself and parts of your life.

Sometimes, the things you do to quiet your baby like rocking her, singing softly to her, bouncing her gently in your arms, dancing with her, telling her “everything will be OK,” will help you calm down too. Here are some other ideas to try when you need to soothe yourself:



Make a note or talk to yourself.

Putting your feelings on paper or saying them aloud can be a relief.



Organize.

Cluttered space can cause stress. Take a few moments to put stray items in their place.



Laugh.

Enjoying a comedy movie, telling a joke, or sharing good times with a friend will remind you that life is good, even when you may be feeling overwhelmed.



Prioritize.

If tasks get pushed back, don't sweat the small stuff.



Dance.

Sway, stomp, whatever it takes.



Reconnect.

Take a look at your baby's precious little face—when she is calm or asleep.



Recharge.

Enjoy a warm bath or a run or a few pages of a good book or a song you love. Do whatever it is that helps you take a breath and care for yourself.



Any Other Ideas?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

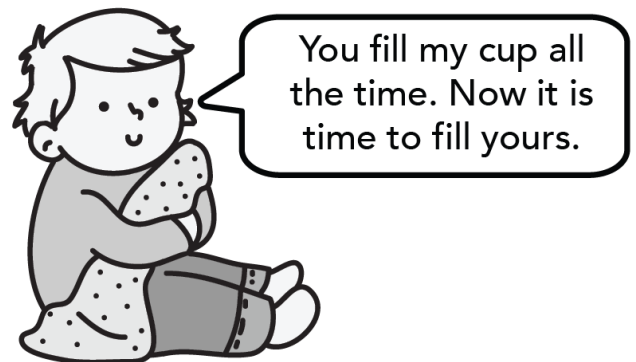
When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Notice and appreciate the things you do well...	I can feel proud and happy about things I am learning to do well. It feels good.
Notice and appreciate who I am as a unique person...	You see me. I can be confident and satisfied with myself.

What Fills Your Cup?



Figuring It Out Together

Before a plane takes off, a flight attendant reminds adult passengers traveling with children to put on their own oxygen mask before helping children with their masks. If you have passed out from not enough oxygen, there is no way you can be there to support yourself or your child.



It is the same when you are running on empty. Keeping your cup filled isn't selfish or indulgent. It is necessary to assure you can be there for your child and share her pleasure in the everyday moments of your lives; to be there for other family members; and, most important, to be there for yourself.

Here are some questions to think about on your own with a family member or friend or your home visitor:

What Empties Your Cup?

Who and/or what drains your time and energy? Taking time to think about these points can be a way of taking care of yourself:



Are there family members and friends who may mean well but sap rather than fuel you since you've become a parent?

This could be a friend you hung out with when you were single who just can't understand why you have to cancel a date because your child is sick. Perhaps, a family member is so full of advice that it is a source of anxiety in your life. Young children stir up deep feelings. You may not need to make a complete break with them but just limit how often and for how long you see them.



Are there parts of your daily routine that bog you down?

For example, this could be getting out the door in the morning or late afternoons with a cranky child.



Are there events in your life that you have no control over that make tasks harder to complete?

For example, you may experience more challenges if your parenting partner is not able to help because of sickness or being deployed, your roof is leaking, or you come down with the flu.



What Fills Your Cup?

Who and/or what makes you happy and gives you energy? Taking time to think about these points can be a way of taking care of yourself.



What activities and places give you energy?

Perhaps it fills your cup when you wear your red scarf, listen to your favorite music, walk in the park, have video calls with family members who live far away, go out for dinner, go hiking in the mountains, spend time by a lake or river, or care for a pot of flowers on your porch. Whatever it is that fills your cup, do it as often as you can. In addition, try be open to finding new ways to fill your cup.



Who sees and appreciates your strengths—and helps you see them?

It is often easier for someone else to see your strengths than to see them yourself. This may be anyone: one of your parents, your home visitor, a friend, or a neighbor. How often do you see this person? How can you arrange to talk with him or her more often? How can you own what he or she tells you about the positive things you say and do as a person and a parent?



Who or what makes you laugh?

Do you have a friend who always has a funny story to share? Is there a book, a movie, a song, something you do with your child that makes you smile?



What personal care routines help you feel healthy?

Do you see a medical care provider for regular checkups? Are you able to set your family's sleep needs as a priority and build routines that support better sleep for everyone?

Does engaging in these activities, spending time with these people, and going to these places recharge you? You deserve it. Taking care of you is a winning strategy—for you, your child, and your family.





Take a Moment: Talking About Filling Your Cup with People You Trust

Who is someone you can comfortably talk with about what depletes and fills your cup?

What is something you might tell this person about what depletes or fills your cup?

How does having someone you can share with help you keep your cup filled?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Keep your cup filled...	It is important to take care of myself. I will learn how to do that by watching you over the years.
Laugh often...	Laughing together is fun and feels good.



Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child



Taking care of yourself is a win-win for you and your child. This is true for moms and dads.

Self-care activities help you de-stress; refuel emotional and physical energy; and recognize when there is a need to connect to others, whether with a supportive friend or a professional, such as a healthcare provider or your home visitor.

Caring for yourself can help you be healthier, more focused, and optimistic—even when there are life challenges. With a more positive mindset, you will find it easier to see what you do well. You'll be a better problem-solver and feel more confident asking for support. You'll make even better decisions for yourself and for your child.

Yet, when you are so busy caring for everyone else in your family, it can be easy for your needs to be pushed to the side, and you may feel guilty taking time for yourself.

Self-care is not about being selfish or adding another task to your already busy life. It is about being aware of what you already do to support your well-being and building upon those actions as needed.

Self-care activities *fill your cup* and might include:



Enjoying activities that calm, refresh, and energize you.

Maybe you look forward to going for a long run or listening to your favorite music. Perhaps you've made child care arrangements, so you can get a much-needed nap or exchange books and movies at the library.



Choosing activities that fit into your life and work best for you.

Some examples include going window shopping rather than giving your credit card a workout when you are trying keep to your budget, spending an afternoon working on your motorcycle project, or choosing to pass up dessert for a few weeks when you want to drop your sugar consumption.



Connecting with others.

You may want to meet a friend for coffee, join in a pick-up game of basketball at the park, or talk with your home visitor.



Being aware of what depletes you and how you can adjust.

For example, if you end up feeling angry and drained every time you see or talk with your sister, it may be better to agree to email for now or even take a break for a few months and then try again.



Looking Back at Self-Care

Self-care isn't always as easy as it sounds. You or a member of your family may be going through an especially bumpy and stressful time right now, like an illness, the loss of a job, a deployment, or a homecoming. The more stress there is, the harder it can be to find time and energy for self-care—even though these are times caring for yourself are most important!

But there is good news! There are things you can do that are under your control and that can help *fill your cup*.

The Power of Mindfulness

Mindfulness is about being aware. It is noticing and paying attention to your feelings and thoughts. Being mindful helps you focus on and be in the here and now. Mindfulness helps you be aware of what you notice and feel in the moment without judgment.

Everyone has some ability to be mindful, and it can happen at any time and in any place. Being mindful releases chemicals in the brain that are associated with happiness. With practice, this ability can grow stronger and become a more intentional part of your everyday life.

Here are two mindfulness exercises to practice. Talk with your home visitor about other suggestions.

Experiment with Visualization

Also known as guided imagery, the idea is to reduce stress and calm yourself by directing your mind to focus on a positive, calming experience or place:



Imagine you are hiking in the woods.



See the sun setting behind the mountains in the distance.



Listen to the sound of the birds around you.



Feel the cool breeze against your skin.



Savor the smell of the evergreen trees around you.



Enjoy the refreshing taste of cold water.





Watch Your Breath During Mindful Meditation

Mindful meditation influences how your body and mind work. Researchers have found that meditation actually slows brain waves to the point where your learning, thinking, and planning brain shifts into a deeper state of awareness (which many describe as drowsiness) in which your intuition and ability to visualize become stronger and clearer to you.

Learning to control your brain gives you an inner resource. You can help yourself move from feeling drained because you are replaying negative experiences or worrying about what tomorrow might bring and move toward accepting what happened in the past and making different choices for your tomorrows.

Try this once a day for 3-5 minutes to get started. You can then add time when you feel ready. Shorter and regular meditations are more helpful than a longer session every few weeks.



Find a quiet and comfortable spot.



Sit tall with your hand rested on your lower abdomen.



Close your eyes or glance downward.



Take a deep breath in through your nose.



Notice your breath flow in and out.



If your mind begins to wander, turn your attention back to your breath.



Notice that as your breaths grow deeper and longer, your body and mind begin to calm.



Repeat as many times as you feel are necessary.

It may take time for these exercises to feel natural and relaxing. You deserve the gift of giving yourself that time.



The Power of Positive Thoughts

Some things in life you can control. Other things you just have to cope with. One element you can control is your approach to the world. Your mindset can define your experience, and it is up to you.

Positive thoughts lead to a positive attitude. A positive attitude makes you happier and more resilient and allows you to see yourself as a person who can actively direct your own life. When you are optimistic and positive, you may see setbacks as temporary. Problems become challenges that provide you opportunities to learn and grow.

On the other hand, blaming and complaining can weigh you down. It can feel as if you are living in a cloud of negativity and can make you feel like you have no control in your life.

Here are some suggestions you may decide to try for a more positive attitude:



Think about the words you use.

Your language matters: "I feel strong." "I can manage." "I like myself."



Notice and enjoy small pleasures.

Your child's smile, a cooling breeze on a warm day, the smell of your morning cup of tea, the taste of a fresh peach are small delights.



Decide how you are going to feel.

Try to manage your emotions and reactions no matter what is happening around you.



Find a positivity partner.

Search out someone you can talk to during the day, and share one or more good things that happened to each of you.



Write down at least one thing you are grateful for before falling asleep.

It is a calming way to end the day.



Expect life to be bumpy at times.

Sometimes you just have to make it through and adjust as you go.





Appreciate How Much You are Growing and Learning

Like your little one, you are learning and growing as a parent every day. It can be hard to see the changes in yourself when you are busy or tired. Yet taking a moment to think about how you have grown and changed can nourish and energize you.

For example, you might have learned how to do some of the following:



Quiet your fussy baby—most of the time.



Ask a friend to babysit so you can take a nap.



Respond better to your child's needs because you have a good understanding of what her behaviors communicate.



Get out the door in the morning with everyone and everything.



Make a list of questions to ask your child's healthcare provider before an appointment.



Keep a clean shirt by the front door so you can do a quick change if needed before you go to work or school.



Add in more vegetables to your own meals as your toddler is trying out new foods.

You Are Not Alone

Whatever you may be feeling, it's important to remember that you are not alone. It may be helpful to think about the words you would share with a friend to support him. Then, say those words to yourself. This can help you change your inner voice to be more compassionate toward yourself.

All parents find life easier when they have other adults to count on and trust. Supportive people can include a spouse, partner, family, friends, neighbors, community leaders, or your child's healthcare provider.

Thinking about and writing down the names of people you can call upon can be helpful. You may have already identified members who form your *Circle of Support*. Perhaps you have one or two key support people in your life. If you find yourself forgetting you have people you can depend upon for help, post their names in a place you can easily see, such as on the refrigerator or your bathroom mirror. When parenting starts to feel like too much, sometimes knowing you are not alone will be enough. But if that doesn't help, pick up your phone and reach out.



Take a Moment: Appreciating How Much You Have Grown and Changed

What is something you have learned to do since becoming a parent?

What is something you have learned about yourself?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Reach out to friends or our home visitor...	We are not alone. It is OK to share with others and to ask for help or support. We are part of a community.
Use mindfulness to be calm and present...	You are here for me. I can count on you. Being with you will help me feel calm and safe.





Practical Applications for Families: Figuring It Out Together

Practical Applications: Parental Self-Care

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Figuring It Out Together: Daily Family Chores



Areas of Development

Staying on top of daily family chores helps children develop in the following areas:



Motor Skills



Cognitive



Socio-Emotional



Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors



Social Connection



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Associated Family Pages

6.3.2	Taking Care of You from a Child's Point of View	61
6.3.2	Nurturing Your Well-Being; Feeling Good About You	63
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Scenario: Daily Family Chores

A mother and her newborn have a daily routine that involves dropping the older children off at school and coming home to begin daily family chores. Most days, the baby nurses nearly every 2 hours and needs a diaper change between feedings. This doesn't give the mother much time to do anything else. Sometimes, while the baby naps, the mother has a few minutes to take a shower, grab something to eat, or take a nap. As the days pass by, the clothes and dishes start to pile up. The mother begins to struggle to find enough time in the day to get, let alone keep, the house in order.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Family chores and housework do not go away, but everyone benefits when families cooperate and communicate fairly. Completing tasks around the baby's schedule, and not your own, takes some adjustment. Make a plan that can help you manage the household chore load and keep you content. For example:

- Make a list of the daily and weekly household responsibilities. While the baby sleeps, keep the baby monitor close, and start with item number 1 on your list and continue with your tasks until the baby wakes up or you need a break.
- As a family, discuss and determine the lowest level of cleanliness you can tolerate and work together to maintain the house.
- Save big cleanups for the weekend or for a cleaning service (if accessible).
- Don't be afraid to ask for (or hire) help or seek advice from other parents.
- Delegate responsibilities to your older children.
- Reward yourself and get out of the house. Relish the moments—remember the infant stage doesn't last forever or even very long.



Figuring It Out Together: Circles of Support



Areas of Development

Strong support networks improve the following areas of development:



Cognitive



Language



Socio-Emotional

Related Protective Factors



Social Connection



Concrete Supports of Families



Parental Resilience

Associated Family Pages

6.3.1	<i>Co-Parenting and Sharing Care — Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child</i>	47
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6.3.2	<i>Parental Self-Care — Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child</i>	75
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Scenario: Circles of Support

A family is new to the area and is moving into their new home with a new baby. One parent is frequently away for work, while the other parent is alone and hundreds of miles away from her family, friends, and anything familiar. These parents wonder if they will be able to find anyone they could trust to babysit while they have a date night or while they catch up on chores. They also wonder how they will learn about the best resources, child care, or community events for their child.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Finding friends and being connected to a community can help parents become better nurturers and can offer practical support for families. It might be awkward at first, but you should take the first step and introduce yourself to neighbors, talk to other folks at the playground and begin conversations, and say “yes” to an invitation.

Try building your support network through these ideas:

- Discover new activities in your community to try with your child.
- Volunteer at community programs or centers.
- Join a parent group.
- Take a parent-child class.
- Find baby-friendly events or mom/dad nights at a local establishment.
- Use social media to find interest groups or forums in your area.
- Meet other parents at child care centers or schools.
- Host a play date.
- Watch who your kids connect with and follow their lead.



Chapter 3: Loss, Grief, and Growth in Young Families

6.3.3 Loss, Grief, and Growth in Young Families

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Loss, Grief, and Growth from a Child's Point of View



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some things your child might tell you about how she thinks about death and grief if she had the words:



Through a Young Child's Eyes

Loss, Grief, and Growth

0-2 years

I am focused on what is happening in the present moment. Our connection right here and now is what I understand the best, and it is based on our relationship history.

I don't understand death, but I can feel significant distress if someone I have developed a relationship with dies or is no longer able to connect with me physically and emotionally. I can feel this because my relationships are full of connections and care that help me understand who I am and what my world is like.

I can pick up on the emotions and behaviors my important people show when they are grieving. By the time I'm 12 months old, I may try to show comfort and care to my important people when they are sad or find it hard to connect with me. I do this because I've seen you do this when I am upset, and I'm trying to be just like you.

What helps me when I feel the loss of an important person can also help you! I find comfort and security when we connect and share our feelings and try to help each other. You help me with big and tough emotions when we can talk about them and find ways to soothe ourselves and each other.

Routines are predictable ways I can connect with you and my loved ones, such as mealtimes, playing games like "patty-cake," snuggles at bedtime, and even diaper-changing times. Please help me feel those connections by keeping our daily routines as normal as possible.

Understand that I like predictability, so I may protest when things are changed or unusual. I'm letting you know that I notice these differences, and they can be challenging for me. I may want to repeat these routines again and again because they make me feel safe.



Through a Young Child's Eyes

Loss, Grief, and Growth

2-3 years

Even though I may say the word sometimes, I am not sure what it means when something or someone dies. My understanding of time and permanence is simple and changes as I gain new experiences with these concepts.

I may ask the same questions over and over as I try to figure out what death means. There are a lot of things we are able to do again when they end, like a new day or rereading a book, but, if someone is gone when they die, I may not understand or know if I will see them again.

Clear words help me because I am learning to use my imagination, and, sometimes, I can scare myself with the new things I think about! I can scare myself thinking that I could die if I fall asleep or go away because I heard someone use those words to describe what death is like.

When a person close to me dies, I feel that loss in many different ways. I feel a loss of security and safety, which may show up in my behaviors like being anxious, acting out, using "baby" talk, or wetting the bed.

I feel the distress in my body, my emotions, and my relationships. It helps when we keep our daily routines because those are predictable and make me feel safe when many things feel uncertain.

I may find comfort in the rituals our family uses to recognize death and loss. These rituals will be new to me, but I like learning new things, and, being part of them, helps me feel connected.

You help me understand my grief when you recognize I'm feeling big or stressful emotions. Sometimes, I may act in ways that can appear naughty, but I'm looking for connection—maybe to the person I've lost or maybe to you. I am trying to increase my feelings of safety and security.

Sometimes, I need your help to sort out and move through big emotions. Help me by naming my feelings, like sharing that a tummy-ache could be part of feeling sad. Help me by running and jumping with me when my body feels like it just needs to GO to let off some energy!

Show me that these feelings are normal, and I can trust you to help me figure out ways to handle them instead of ignoring them.





Through a Young Child's Eyes	
Loss, Grief, and Growth	
4-6 years	
<p>I understand a little more about death, but I can still be confused by it or think things that seem silly to older people. Like, I might wonder if I can catch death from someone, or I may develop a fear that other important people are going to die.</p> <p>My imagination can create all sorts of connections to help fill in gaps for things I don't fully understand. For example, I might never want to play with a toy again because my sister played with it before she died.</p>	
<p>I have more words to help describe my feelings and emotions, but I may not always be able to use them when I'm really distressed, and my feelings may come out in other ways. It is hard to use language when feelings are so big and raw, so I may show my distress in physical ways, like hitting someone or throwing toys. Help me identify ways to calm myself and understand my feelings, so I can learn to express them appropriately.</p>	<p>Work with me to build coping strategies that we can use when one or both of us feel overwhelmed. We might create our own "remember and feel box" that we can use to store emotions when they are too big to hold inside our bodies and minds.</p> <p>Our box can also hold items we might want to keep because they help us remember good and happy things about our lost person or thing. We can look at these items together and talk about our emotions and share the simple and complicated parts of our grief.</p>



Young children learn about different aspects of death at different ages. Clear language can help you explain difficult concepts and understand scary thoughts a young child may have about death (from *The Children's Hospital of California, CHOC*):



Death is *Universal*.

This means that all living things will eventually die. Even when steps are taken to extend life, death will inevitably come at some point, and death is usually unpredictable.



Death is *Irreversible*.

Young children often wonder if a person will come back to life after death. Realizing that death is a permanent state is tough for young children to understand.



Death means bodies are no longer *Functional*.

When a person dies, their body and mental functions stop working. This means that the person (or pet) can no longer do what he or she used to do.



Death always has a *Cause*, but we may not always know what it is.

Young children, particularly preschool and early elementary age, can wonder if they are responsible for the death of a person. For example, a child might wonder if a person died because she thought mean thoughts about the people or didn't pray for the person.





Take a Moment: Focus on You and Your Child

When your child experiences the loss of someone or something important, what do you notice in how he feels and processes the loss?

What is an idea of how you might help your child understand his loss?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Patiently answer my questions about death...	I can rely on you to help me figure out puzzling and emotional events, even when figuring it out takes time.
Share and describe how grief can feel...	I can recognize my feelings and see what grief looks like in my important people.



Big Feelings for You



Figuring It Out Together

Loss, grief, and growth stir up deep feelings in everyone—whether young or old. You may find yourself questioning beliefs about fairness and even the role of a higher power after a loss. Maybe your emotions flare up easily and no longer seem to be under your control, or you notice that you feel numb, OK, and sad all in the same day...or hour.

It is normal to experience a wide range of emotions that can change and move from anger, guilt, and despair to relief, bitter-sweetness, and happiness. There is no *right* way to grieve. Your loss is personal, even when a loss is shared with others.

Losses can create ripple effects in a person's sense of self-identity and security. Maybe your loss includes a change in part of your relationship identity like being a friend, partner, or sibling. Maybe your loss includes one or more changes in a status that impacts your or your family's security, like leaving or losing a job with health benefits, a medical crisis, or not being able to live in your home due to storm damage.

You may also have family and friendship roles in which you are expected to help others cope with their feelings of grief and loss, in addition to managing your own experiences. Sometimes you may be in a good space where helping others who are struggling is OK. Other times, you may be struggling too, and supporting others with their big feelings can feel especially hard.

It is normal throughout the grieving process to have thoughts and feelings that switch between focusing on your loss and what may come next, now that life is different. For example, you may feel grateful for all you have and trust that with the support of a special person or people (e.g., partner, spouse) you can figure it out. You may feel a sense of loss and/or worry for and about your support person or people. You could feel deep love and profound caring yet also be unsure or fearful about today and your tomorrows.

These experiences are all part of grief and growth. Your home visitor can help you to understand the big feelings you have and how you can find your way forward.





Managing Your Emotions

Sometimes, the emotions that come with grief can be overwhelming. Here are some ideas you may want to consider trying to help you manage your feelings when you feel emotionally overcome.



Be aware that there will be big feelings and this is normal and to be expected.

This is a first step in being able to handle big feelings. You can be emotionally present to support yourself and, if needed, to support other family members including your child.



Be aware of your comfort zone when it comes to sharing your feelings.

Talking about your feelings can help “put them on the table.” They are outside of you, and you can more easily see, think about, and share them with others. Some adults are more comfortable and find it easier than others to put their feelings into words. Some people are more willing to share. How about you? Is this a skill you may want to practice?



Press the pause button.

There may be times when you have to make a decision or handle an issue related to your loss, like talking to an insurance adjuster or medical personnel. Those moments may bring up big emotions. Take a moment to recognize those feelings before you react. Being aware of your feelings can allow you to take a pause to think and give yourself space and respond in a way that is helpful for the situation. When you do this, you help your child begin to learn how to have intense emotions and manage them to solve a problem.



Think about what you are feeling and why.

Perhaps something happened that reminded you of your loss—a smell, a song, or a place. Memories have emotional connections. You can reflect on those memories and what they mean to you. You may find that those memories and what they mean to you change over time because you change over time.



**Engage the thinking part of your brain to help regain your emotional control.**

Sometimes, just thinking is enough to help you make the switch. Maybe you want to build time in your day to let yourself have more intense feelings. Planning time to sit with big feelings and planning how to move out of that moment can be a way to honor your feelings and still recognize that you and your life are more than your deep emotions.

**Talk your feelings over with someone you trust.**

A family member, friend, spiritual mentor, or your home visitor could be good choices. Sharing your grief with another person can help you recognize and understand your feelings related to the grief.

**Any Other Ideas?**



Big Feelings for You



SAFETY ALERT: If you feel your big emotions are out of balance or are leading you to unhealthy coping strategies or wobbles in your family relationships, please reach out to a trusted person. Your home visitor may be a good first step in finding the resources you need to help you through your grief.

[National Hopeline Network](#): 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433)

If your depression is leading to suicidal thoughts, call the National Hopeline to connect with a depression treatment center in your area. The Hopeline also offers a live chat feature for those who don't want to, or who are unable to, call and can dispatch emergency crews to your location if necessary.

[National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

This national hotline is another valuable resource for people whose depression has escalated to suicidal or other harmful thoughts. Their network of crisis centers provides emotional support and guidance to people in distress and are also available via a chat service and a special hotline number for the hearing impaired: 1-800-799-4889.

National Youth Crisis Hotline: 1-800-448-4663

This resource provides brief interventions for youth who are dealing with pregnancy, sexual abuse, child abuse, depression, and suicidal thoughts. They also provide referrals to local counseling, treatment centers, and shelters.

Text 741741 when you are feeling depressed or suicidal, a crisis worker will text you back immediately and continue to text with you. Many people, especially younger people, don't like talking on the phone and would feel much more comfortable texting. This is a free service for anyone.





Take a Moment: Recognize and Respect Grief

What does recognizing and respecting grief look like to you?

How do you try to show others that you recognize and respect their grief, whether or not you are grieving alongside them?



The Power of a Positive Outlook

You can control some situations and events in life. Other times, you just have to find your way through these experiences, like loss and grief. However, something you can control is your approach to the world and others as you grieve. Even when you are experiencing the deep and mixed feelings that are part of loss and grieving, your mindset can define your experience. This is up to you.

Positive thoughts and affirmations can lead to a positive attitude. A positive attitude fosters your resilience and growth and allows you to see yourself as a person who can be active in directing your own life—even when you are working through challenges.

Positivity does not replace or shut down difficult emotions. You can be positive in your outlook and attitude while also recognizing that you may feel frustrated, defeated, sad, heartbroken or any of a number of other distressing emotions.

Yet, when you have an optimistic outlook, you are more likely to see your emotional responses to a loss or setback as temporary and understand that how you feel at this moment is not who you are. In turn, you are more likely to see yourself as capable of successfully working through your distress. Problems become challenges that provide opportunities for you to learn and grow. You can see and use your strengths.

By conveying a sense of confidence that you can find your path through tough times you can help your child feel the same way.

Here are some suggestions you may decide to try for a more positive outlook when your family experiences loss:



Notice and enjoy small pleasures.

Your child's smile, a cooling breeze on a warm day, the smell of your morning cup of tea, or the taste of a fresh peach are good examples.



Decide how you are going to feel—

No matter what is happening around you.



Find a positivity partner.

This is someone you can talk to during the day, and the two of you can share three good things that happened to each of you.



**Write down two things you are grateful for before falling asleep.**

This can be a calming way to end the day.

**Create affirmations to remind yourself you are capable, worthy, and strong.**

Place them on notes around your home or workplace so they are easily seen.
Practice saying them to yourself when you are struggling.

**Expect life to be bumpy at times.**

Sometimes, you just have to acknowledge what you can and cannot change and adjust as you go.

**Any Other Ideas?**

Big Feelings for Your Child

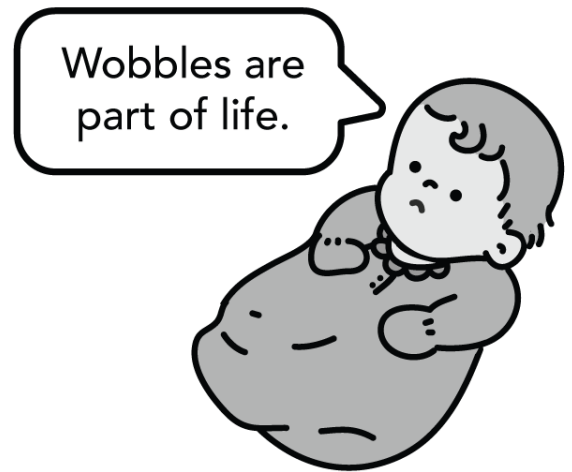


Figuring It Out Together

Unexpected and challenging times can provoke big feelings in everyone, even babies, toddlers and twos. These feelings may include sadness, unhappiness, fear, anger, or confusion, but they can also involve relief, happiness, and joy during together times and play time.

Even the youngest babies will notice and respond to the big feelings of their adults. They tune into differences in the sound of their adults' voices, their facial expressions, and the amount of tension in their bodies.

Babies and toddlers don't yet have the words to express their feelings, but they can communicate through their cries, laughter, and seeking out or running away from their important people. While twos may be learning the words, their feelings can still be big and impact their sleeping, eating, toileting, and playing and interactions. Words are not a young child's first communication tool—behaviors and emotions are!



How Your Child Experiences Loss and Grief

Toddlers and twos are learning words for the world around them and the relationships they are building. Slowly, they are building their understanding of who they are and how they are connected to people, like family members and play buddies; places, like their home and neighborhood; and things, like favorite toys and comfort items.

As young children develop an understanding of how they are connected, they also learn what it feels like when those connections are lost or broken. Sometimes, those feelings of loss are temporary—like when it is time to leave a friend at the end of a play date. But, sometimes, losses are permanent—like losing a family member to cancer or a pet to old age. Both types of loss can be very distressing to young children.

Permanent and Forever are tough to understand because young children live mostly in their current moments. These concepts are part of understanding time, which is also hard for young children. Twos and threes are going to ask questions again and again about a loss, whether it is temporary or permanent, as they try to build their understanding.



Big Feelings for Your Child

You can respond to your child's expressions of grief and loss, whether he shows his feelings through behaviors, emotions, words, or any combination of these. Big and sad feelings can be overwhelming and scary.

You can help your child feel in control and not alone in his feelings by sharing different kinds of connections:



Physical Connections

Hugs, holding, swaddling, and cuddling are common physical comforts for young children. A young child may seek out more physical connection to you through touch, or they may just need to be able to see or hear you to feel comfortable and safe.



Emotional Connections

Recognizing and naming feelings you see children expressing builds their own emotional awareness. Sharing your own feelings helps them recognize that you also have big feelings sometimes. Naming feelings without judgment helps everyone, young and old, learn that emotions happen, and we can make choices about what actions we might want to take based on our emotions.



Action (Behavior) Connections

Crying, yelling, rocking, and running might be actions that help children express big emotions and you could share in these expressions of feelings or thoughts by doing the actions with your child. Giving a kiss, patting another's arm, coloring a picture, or picking a flower are also actions that can connect you and your child in your grief.





Your Child's Behavior Tells You Something... It is up to You to Try and Figure Out What That May Be

Your child needs you to try to understand what he is feeling. Why? You need this information to help you decide how best to respond.

You can usually see a young child's big feelings from the outside as you watch her behavior. Young children have not yet learned to behave in ways that cover up what they feel.

Sometimes, it is simple to understand what a child is feeling. Tears and turning away in a hospital room may say "I have missed you. But it is hard for me to be in this place with strange people, things, and smells." A smile and a giant hug say, "I'm glad to see you."

Other times, it can be more challenging to figure out what your child's behavior is telling you.

Here are some of the reasons why:



Different behaviors can have similar meanings.

Crying, clinging, acting out, sitting quietly not playing, thumb sucking, and regressing in toileting can be ways a child might be saying, "Things are different. It is hard for me."



Quiet behavior can communicate big feelings.

A child who is "being good" or withdrawing and sitting still may be internalizing a lot of distress. When a child withdraws or tries hard to please his parents, he may be communicating feelings that are as big as if he threw a toy across the room or screamed or kicked.



When you also have big feelings, it can be hard to determine who is feeling what.

For example, think about a dad who, today, is intensely mourning the loss of his father. When his toddler falls, scrapes her knee, and starts to cry, he feels tears in his eyes, too. "I know," he says. "I can see that you have a boo-boo from your fall. Let's get that fixed up," he says as he comforts his toddler. Yet the father is crying because he remembers how his dad used to respond to him when he would get hurt.



Even when a person important to your child dies, your child will spend much time living "in the moment."

A child's behavior is often about what happens in the moment, not about a person's death. Your child will laugh and play, smear food on his highchair tray, climb, run, say "no," or want to read and cuddle on your lap like always.



Supporting Your Child With Big Feelings



Be my model.

Show me how we can live, work, and thrive together during “bumpy” and “smooth” times. Model ways to manage your feelings like counting to ten or taking a deep breath. Talk with me about feelings. Reassure me we are on the same team no matter what.



Ask yourself, “What am I feeling?” as you watch and interact with me during daily routines and play time.

This will give you information to help you decide how to respond to your child’s behavior.



Offer me words for what I might be feeling.

“Are you feeling angry because Daddy yelled, ‘Be quiet!’ Let’s go out back to play and give him a little time, then we can come back and be with Daddy?”



Give me lots of chances to feel and be competent.

Invite me to help you put napkins on the table, to water the plants, to dust, or to carry my ball to the park. This will build my confidence and help me learn I can manage even during times when I have big feelings.



Give me a chance to be a baby again.

Sometimes, if I ask you, feed me. Carry me to bed. Give me extra hugs and cuddles. Let me know I am safe and you love me.



**Have realistic expectations.**

Ask yourself, "What can I realistically expect from my child right now?" For example, even though you tell me, "no," when my big feelings are overwhelming, I might pull at your hair or kick you. I may need you to gently yet firmly help me stop and redirect my behavior.

**Keep my frustration levels as low as possible.**

Am I tired? Hungry? It may not be the time to run errands. Is the new puzzle too difficult? Put it away, and bring it out again in a few months. Is it too hard to blow bubbles? You be the bubble blower and let me be the bubble popper.

**Keep your frustration levels as low as possible.**

If you are upset, I will sense it. Consider little things—and big ones—that you can do to feel as calm and steady as possible. For example, you know those blocks that you are always stepping on? Ouch! Put them away for now. Need a break or at least some adult company? Call a family member or friend to hang out with me and give yourself a break and take a walk in the park alone or with a support person.

**Any Other Ideas?**



SAFETY ALERT: Never shake your child!

Your child's big feelings can trigger yours; however, no matter how upset, sad or frustrated you may feel, never shake your baby!

When a baby is shaken or thrown, his head whips back and forth and from side to side. His brain slams against his skull. No matter how long he has been crying, one forceful shake in a moment of frustration—even when playing—can damage his brain, neck, spine, or eyes forever. He could die! His life and yours will never be the same.

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE GONG TO LOSE CONTROL:



Put him in his crib or in another safe place.



Shut the door.



Pull out your headphones, take deep breaths, and have a good cry yourself.



Call someone.



Wait until you have calmed down before you try again to calm him.





Take a Moment: Support Your Child with Big Feelings

What are two messages you want to give your child about managing big feelings?

How can you help your child feel connected to you, even during times when you have big feelings about his big feelings?

Keeping Adult Relationships Strong When Grieving



Figuring It Out Together

Grief is a family experience and an individual experience all at the same time. If one person in the family is grieving, the whole family is affected, sometimes in small ways and sometimes in significant ways.

Intimate partners and co-parents can share a common loss yet experience that loss in ways that are very different, and that can impact the partner relationship. Each loss experience is unique to a person's personal relationship with the person who was lost or what was lost. Each partner rides his or her own waves of emotional distress, encounters good days and bad days, and experiences different kinds of challenges related to the loss.

Sometimes, those waves have a common rhythm—partners feeling similar feelings at similar times. While at other times, it may feel like they are crashing into each other, out of sync, and wobbly.

Wobbles happen in every relationship—intimate partners, parent-child, co-parents, siblings, co-workers, and friends. Loss, whether traumatic or not, can be a source of a relationship wobble or make a current wobble more intense. It can be hard to be a support person when you also feel the need for support.

We can recognize and honor each other's grief and still honor our own experiences.



Some Ideas to Support Your Relationship When You are Grieving



Be aware of your individual styles of expressing grief and mourning.

You may be a person who tends to process your loss and grief quietly and apart from others. On the other hand, your partner may rely on formal or public rituals, like holding a wake or sitting Shiva and having a funeral service, to help process the loss and connect to others who knew the person who died.



Understand how social and community perceptions may impact how each of you grieves.

Partners may feel certain pressures to express or contain their grief in public and private settings due to how they are perceived by the people around them. For example, a husband may feel certain expectations as he supports his wife's grief experience of fetal loss, yet he may feel he cannot show his grief and need for support.



Take steps to see, accept, and honor each other's grief experiences.

What do you notice about how each of you responds when feeling grief? What do each of your "good days" and "bad days" look and feel like?



Give space to your emotional experiences without judgment.

Big emotions related to your loss can pop up at awkward times, like when you are tired, hungry, or fed up with a list of hassles. Unexpected things can trigger a wave of grief, like a cold call from an insurance adjuster or another medical bill. Sometimes, you may judge your feelings— "I shouldn't be sad" or "I feel guilty because I am so mad that this person is gone, and I have to take over all of these responsibilities." When you are feeling big feelings, try to practice a pause that acknowledges the feelings, lets them be felt without judgment, and then lets them pass. Practicing a pause can let the emotional reaction occur without demanding that an action or decision goes with it. Maybe no action or decision is needed other than for you to feel. But, if you decide you do need to take action, you are able to wait until the intense feelings have subsided and you can think about your possible responses before taking that action.



Give yourself and your partner time.

Grief does not have a set schedule or end time for you or your partner. While the intense feelings of loss can and often do subside with time, one or both of you may continue to feel your loss. Anniversary dates of important events can trigger more intense feelings, like the date of an accident, death, or expected birthday or graduation.



Create or participate in a shared ritual to recognize your loss and life.

Intimate partners and co-parents may create one or more rituals to help them stay connected and remember their loss, like having a "happy birthday in heaven" celebration every year for a child who passed away or gathering annually with extended family to celebrate an important cultural reflection on death like *El Dia de los Muertos*. You may find that being part of a larger grief support community helps you build ways to honor your loss, like the annual candlelight service supported by *The Compassionate Friends*.



Connect to your wider Circle of Support.

Your social connections help you and your family build roots, which can make your family strong and resilient during difficult times. When you and your partner have others you can turn to for support, these support people can help remove the pressure that you and your partner may feel to help one another. The folks in your *Circle of Support* may be able to help in a variety of ways that give one or both of you opportunities for respite.





Approach one another from a place of compassion and safety.

There will be moments when one of you may fall short of your partner's expectations (or other support person) regarding loss and grief support. If each of you is able to offer compassion and safety when struggles arise, you may find this approach fosters a mutual sense of working toward the well-being of each other. This approach may help lessen the sting of disappointment, soften harsh responses, and provide an opening to apologize when things are not going well.

Your Circle of Support

Grief and growth after a loss are emotionally intense experiences that can last a few months to a few years. Young families often have multiple aspects of life that demand a high level of attention, care, time, and money resources. These aspects of daily life continue, and the loss and grief add to and, potentially, disrupt daily pressures and routines.

Every parent needs support outside of the family system. Your *Circle of Support* can provide key help during and after a loss. Giving and receiving support can make everyone stronger.



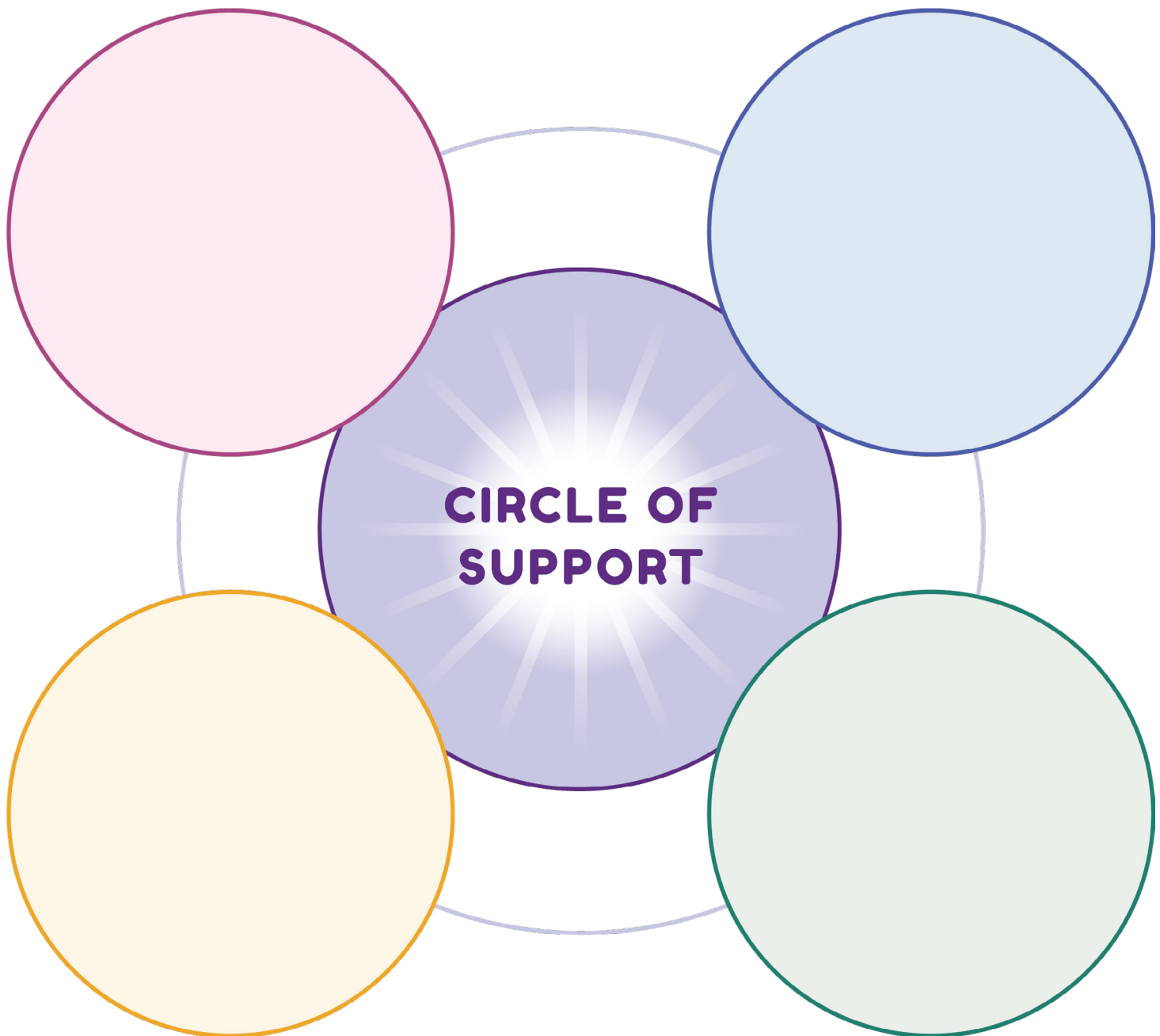
Your **Social Connections** are the friends, family, and community members you can count on for comfort and support, and they are the people you give your comfort and support to when they are in need. These connections are like roots that give each of you stability during difficult times and help each of you become and remain resilient.



Concrete Supports are your family's support network of people and community services. They provide information and other resources during challenging times. Knowing that you are not alone can help you make the best decisions possible for your family and yourself.

On the next page, we have provided a *Circle of Support* resource.

Write down a name or two and their contact information. Post the list of names in a prominent place, such as on the refrigerator. Then, the list is easy to find when parenting starts to feel like too much. Sometimes, knowing you are not alone will be enough. If that doesn't do the trick, call or send a message to someone on the list.





Take a Moment: Connect with Your Intimate Partner or Co-Parenting Partner

Are you and your partner experiencing a loss in similar ways? How?

Can you notice differences in how you and your partner experience loss? What have you noticed?

What are some ways you can let your partner know what is helpful and not helpful to you in supporting your grief?

What are some ways you can ask your partner about what he/she/they find helpful or not helpful in supporting his/hers/their grief?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Recognize that everyone has unique grief experiences...	Everyone’s experiences and feeling matter and can be supported.
Ask for help and support from others...	Everyone needs support and help sometimes, and it is good to reach out to others.



Difficult Diagnoses: Getting the Support You Need



Figuring It Out Together

Some parents may receive a difficult diagnosis for themselves or for their children. A diagnosis can generate a lot of big feelings, questions, and concerns about the future. Difficult diagnoses can happen anytime, including before, during, or after a pregnancy or within the first few months and years of a child's life.



You may feel a sense of loss.



Hopes and dreams could change.



You may be trying to understand what all of this new normal may mean for your family.



You may have lots of questions about your future.

These big feelings are normal, and your home visitor is someone who can help you and your family figure it out together.

Many times, a difficult or unexpected diagnosis can mean that you need to find specific resources for knowledge and support. Yet, you still need to draw on your current *Circle of Support* but maybe in a different way. Finding the support you and your family need can help you meet the challenges you now face.



Expanding Your *Circle of Support*

You do not have to and are not expected to handle a difficult diagnosis alone.



When you have **Social Connections**, you help your family build roots, which makes your family strong and resilient during difficult times. Having family members, friends, and community members you can count on and who can count on you can make everyone's lives less stressful and more enjoyable.

Giving and receiving support makes everyone stronger. You may need your support circle more than ever when facing an unexpected or difficult diagnosis.



Concrete Supports are your family's support network of people and community services. They provide information and other resources during challenging times. Knowing that you are not alone can help you make the best decisions possible for your family and yourself.

On the next page, we have provided a *Circle of Support* resource.

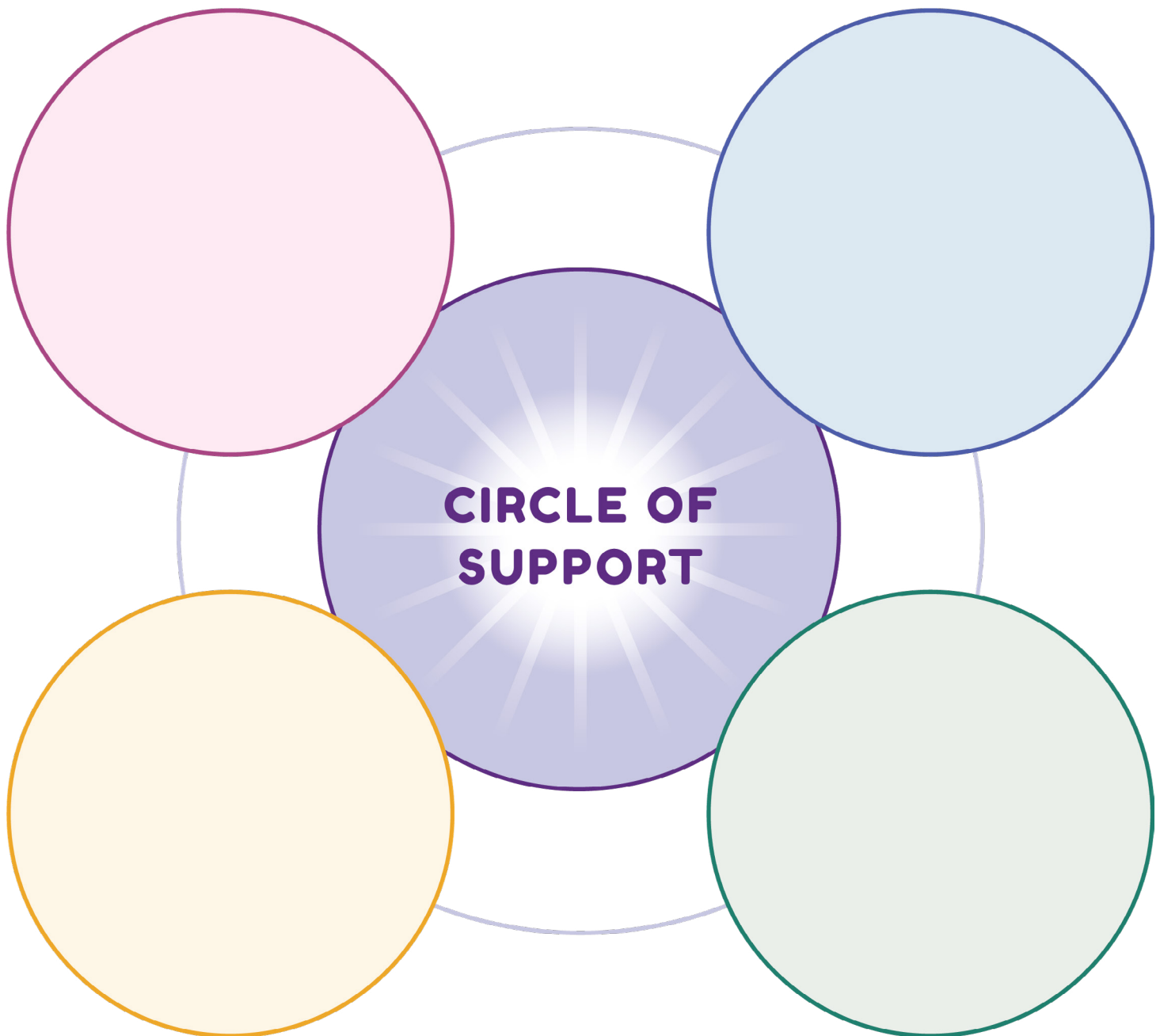
Write down a name or two and their contact information. Think about possible additions to your *Circle of Support*—people and organizations who may have information and resources to help you and your family as you manage this diagnosis. Your home visitor may be able to help find specific organizations related to your needs.

Post the list of names in a prominent place, such as on the refrigerator. Then, the list is easy to find when parenting starts to feel like too much.

Sometimes, knowing you are not alone will be enough. If that doesn't do the trick, call or send a message to someone on your list.

Not every lead will work out when seeking additional resources for support. But, taking action and seeking support can help you gain a sense of control during a time when many things may feel out of your control.







Take a Moment: Identify Specific Resources for Support

What kinds of support needs do you currently have? Identifying the types of support you and your family would find helpful can help direct your efforts and reduce stress.

Do you need information or knowledge?

Do you need to connect with others who have experienced something similar?

Do you need to consider additional help or respite support for home or child care?

Do you need to consider additional financial support or advocacy?

Do you want to seek out religious or spiritual support?

What other support connections do you want to explore?

Talk with your home visitor and other trusted persons in your current *Circle of Support* to see what connections they may have or can find.





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Realize you need additional support for a tough situation...	I can rely on you to help me, even when it takes time.
Expand your <i>Circle of Support</i> ...	We can grow and learn even through difficult situations.

Growth After Loss: Finding Your Pathways with Grief and Growth



Figuring It Out Together

Parents, children, and families can be resilient after experiencing loss. When a loss is sad, but not traumatic, people are usually able to draw on their current resilience, strengths, and social and concrete supports to help them integrate their loss into their normal daily life.

When parents, children, and families experience traumatic loss, they often experience a shift in one or more areas of their beliefs about themselves and their understanding about the world. For example, parents who lose a child may find themselves doubting whether the world is just or if their religious beliefs are accurate. An expectant couple may wonder if they are parents after suffering a miscarriage or if they should include their loss when someone asks how many children they have. Traumatic loss often means you must create a new normal daily life that looks different from life before the loss.



Building Stories about Your Loss

You may reflect on what a loss means to you—what the person (or place or thing) meant to you before the loss and how that meaning may have changed over time. It is normal for individuals, young and old, to build stories about their loss. These stories can change over time and can help you make meaning out of your relationship and loss in important and adaptive ways.

Others may contribute to your story—others who loved, knew, or cared for your person. In this way, other people's memories and stories may help you in your grief and growth processes. Maybe someone tells you a story about your loved one and you had never heard that story before or knew that it had happened. That new story may shape your own memories and stories and may connect you to the other person who was touched by the person you lost. These stories, built by your and others' memories, can create a sense of *continuing bonds* with the person who is gone.

You can receive validation of your loss through these contributions. You may also find that others had very different experiences with this same person (or place, thing, or event). For example, siblings may compare stories of a parent after the parent's death and discover that each sibling had very different experiences even if they grew up in the same home. Families in the same town may be often impacted differently by a natural disaster like a tornado—from home and business damage to personal injury or trauma. Different stories reflect how relationships and loss can be unique.

When a non-traumatic loss occurs, the stories that are created from that loss are more likely to fit with one's existing beliefs, values, and identity. When a traumatic loss occurs, the stories that are created often reflect a change in one or more beliefs, values, or identity.



Take a Moment: Reflect on Story(ies) Around Loss

Can you think of a time you created a story or narrative to describe a loss? What are some of the pieces of that story that are important to you?

Can you think of a time when you realized you had a very different story about someone you lost other than another individual who also knew that person (or place, thing, or event)? What did those differences mean to you?





Building Rituals to Recognize and Remember

Rituals can provide a sense of routine in how a loss is recognized and remembered. A ritual can provide private or public recognition that validates your grief experiences and emotions.

Some losses don't bring out a lot of sadness, but individuals and families may still want to develop a ritual to recognize the loss. For example, the passing of an abusive, neglectful, or absent parent (and other dysfunctional/hurtful relationships) may bring relief, guilt about feeling relief, or regret that the relationship was not resolved. Rituals can be used to help navigate these kinds of complex feelings. An adult child might make a yearly contribution of money or volunteer hours to an organization that supports at-risk children and families, like the *Boys and Girls Club of America* or a local shelter. These actions represent a ritual to acknowledge what was, what was lost, and how the adult child wants to live going forward.

You may develop a ritual that is just yours, like setting aside an hour on a death anniversary to light a candle and reflect on your loss and what you might want to share with the person if that person was still alive. You might develop a shared ritual with your family by creating a memory box of items that represents the person/place/thing that was lost. The memory box can be brought out and explored when one or more family members is/are having a tough day.

Rituals can be flexible. Some families may find that they are important and comforting for the first few years after a death. Some rituals may change over time as individual and family needs for grief support change. Some might be carried on from one generation to the next. Anything that you feel is right to honor your loss can be made into a ritual.



Take a Moment: Think About Rituals

Do you have any rituals that are important as you recognize a loss? If so, think about and write down what they mean to you.

Is there a ritual you would like to create or add to recognize and remember your loss?

Are there any rituals you would like to share with your family/child?



Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child



Taking Care of You

Everyone experiences loss in life. Any loss can be stressful and can create wobbles in daily routines, expectations, and relationships. Some losses feel relatively mild, and family members regain their balance without too much difficulty. Other losses can feel as though your life and your family's life are thrown up into the air, and you may be unsure if or how the pieces will fit back together again.

Loss is unique to each person, and there can be shared feelings of grief, growth, and empathetic support within and across family systems. You may also grieve differently from someone else—even someone in your family. That is OK! There is no wrong way to grieve.

Grief is made up of a combination of emotional, cognitive, and body-based reactions to a loss, whether the loss is a death; a serious disruption, which may be temporary or permanent; or the enduring consequences after a natural disaster. Feeling a wide range of emotions; having negative and positive thoughts; and experiencing disruptions in your sleeping, eating, and social patterns are normal responses to feeling grief.

Some people may need to experience closure or feel at peace with a loss. Others may find their grief never completely goes away but becomes an important part of what their life means moving forward.

When your family experiences the loss of someone or something important, everyone is affected. You may feel as though you need to support another family member as they grieve—just remember to also support yourself!

You can support yourself, and consequently your family, by taking care of your daily physical and emotional needs. When a loss occurs, there can be a deep sense that you have no control over what is happening around you.

Here are some ways to support yourself as you grieve:



Face your feelings.

It is important to acknowledge your grief, even though some of those feelings may be tough to feel or think about.



Understand you can feel many emotions; some are unexpected, and maybe some are conflicting emotions, like being very sad but also relieved.

You might be surprised at some of the feelings you experience regarding a loss. Recognizing how you feel and then thinking about why those feelings have come up can help you acknowledge multiple parts of the relationship you are grieving about. As time passes, those feelings and thoughts may change.



Your grieving process is unique to you, even when you share common feelings, rituals, and beliefs with others.

It helps to connect to others who have experienced the same or a similar loss. Remember, let yourself feel what you feel and know that your timeline of processing your grief is not the same as another person's. You may create ways to remember that are unique to you, but you may also want to share in joint remembrances with others.



Support your emotional well-being by taking care of your daily physical needs.

Stress and fatigue can add to your overall grief. Focus on taking care of the basics—feed yourself good food, let your body rest, and move your body every day. Each of these actions helps reduce emotional distress. For many people, these daily routines have the added benefit of being part of long-standing routines—this means you don't need to spend much energy thinking about them.



Seek support from people in your *Circle of Support*—whether in person or over long distances.

Friends and family, the people who care about you, can be important sources of support and comfort. Some may be awkward at offering emotional support but excellent at organizing meals or making arrangements for childcare or even cleaning your home in between visitors. Others may be able to provide emotional comfort no matter what time you call. Let them support you. Recognize that you would want them to ask the same of you if circumstances were different.



Realize that you may benefit from connecting to additional people or organizations to find support and reduce stressors that stem from the loss.

Sometimes, you need support that is different from or more than what your *Circle of Support* can provide. Sometimes, it can be soothing to talk with someone who doesn't know all the details of your loss. Faith communities, support groups, and grief counselors can be important sources of support.



Recognize that grief is not the same as depression.

A person can be grieving and also have depression, but grief and depression are not one and the same. People who are grieving can feel as though they are on an emotional rollercoaster and can have good days and moments of happiness or pleasure even when they are grieving. Such positive moments rarely happen when a person is depressed.

(Adapted from: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/coping-with-grief-and-loss.htm>)





SAFETY ALERT: If you are unsure if you are experiencing grief or possibly grief and depression, talk with your home visitor or call your healthcare provider. They can help you find the support you need.

Appreciate Your Resilience

A loss can create a need to make short-term or lifelong changes in your and your family's life. Yet, not everything changes. You've built resiliency skills throughout your life, and those skills can help you now as you cope with this loss.

Think about it—you've tailored your coping and self-care skills every time you've met a challenge in your life. You likely have a good idea of which skills and strategies work well for you and which ones are limited in being helpful for you.

There are different ways of coping with challenges, including a loss. Most people use a combination of strategies. Think of times when you used one or more of these coping skills:



Problem-focused coping is when a person tries to address the situation that is causing stress or distress, so the stress is reduced or avoided. Examples of this type of coping include proactively planning to leave early to avoid heavy traffic on a trip or rehearsing responses to insensitive comments about your loss. Problem-focused coping works more effectively when there are situations we can influence with our coping efforts.



Emotion-focused coping strategies try to reduce the negative emotions of a situation. Sometimes a situation is not "fixable" or within our control to manage. But, we can manage our feelings around the situation. You might go for a walk, listen to music, meditate, or use humor to alleviate distress (e.g., watch funny cat videos, share a silly joke). It is hard and exhausting to feel negative emotions all the time. Taking a break by doing something that helps you feel better can give you energy when you have to focus on the hard aspects of your loss again.



Meaning-focused coping is when people draw on their values, beliefs, and goals to understand or make sense of a life stressor. This type of coping can change or reaffirm a person's outlook on life, priorities, or beliefs.



Social-focused coping strategies include reaching out to friends, family, colleagues, professionals, and support organizations. You might call a friend and ask her to help keep your mind off of your loss for a while, seek out an online support and advocacy group for families who have a child with a developmental condition, or participate in a day of remembrance ceremony that a local hospital offers every year for parents.



SAFETY ALERT: Sometimes, people try to cope with grief and loss in ways that are not helpful. For some, these strategies may be short lived because people realize these tactics don't help, or they make them feel worse. However, sometimes, people will keep using those not-helpful strategies and try to make the short-term relief last.

Alcohol and other substance use are poor coping strategies. They are often used to try to lower or numb emotional distress, but they only provide temporary relief and can have unintended consequences. There are other behaviors that can be overused when you try to dull negative emotions. When overused, they can end up creating more distress or problems than they relieve, like exercising, comfort eating, or seeking out casual intimacy.

If you feel you are starting to rely on coping strategies that are not working and may be causing additional harm, please reach out to your home visitor, medical provider, or trusted support person.

You Are Not Alone

Whatever grief looks and feels like for you, it's important to remember that you are not alone. It may be helpful to think about the words you would share with a friend to support him. Then, say those words to yourself. Doing this can help you change your inner voice to be more compassionate toward yourself.

Many parents find life easier when they have other adults to count on and trust. Supportive people can include a spouse, partner, family, friends, neighbors, community leaders, or a healthcare provider.

Thinking about and writing down the names of people you can call upon can be helpful. You may have already identified support people, and they may be part of your *Circle of Support*. Perhaps, you have one or two key support people in your life. If you find yourself forgetting you have people you can reach out to when your grief is strong, post their names in a prominent place, such as on the refrigerator or your bathroom mirror. When parenting starts to feel like too much, sometimes knowing you are not alone will be enough. But, if that doesn't help, pick up your phone and reach out.





Take a Moment: What Works for You?

What kinds of coping strategies are you using to help you as you grieve?

What is working to help you right now?

Are there any additional strategies or supports you would like to try to explore? If so, what are they?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Reach out to a trusted friend when you feel overwhelmed...	We are not alone. It is OK to share tough feelings with others and to ask for help or support. We are part of a community.
Create a ritual to remember someone or something important to you...	We can find ways to keep someone or something important to us close, even though they are gone.





Practical Applications for Families: Figuring It Out Together

Practical Applications: Loss, Grief, and Growth in Young Families





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Figuring It Out Together: Explaining Death






Areas of Development

Honest conversations, no matter how difficult, enhance the following areas of development:

-  Cognitive
-  Language
-  Socio-Emotional
-  Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors

-  Parental Resilience
-  Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development
-  Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Associated Family Pages

- 6.3.3 Loss, Grief, and Growth from a Child's Point of View91
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- 6.3.3 Growth After Loss: Finding Your Pathways with Grief and Growth125
- 6.2.1 You are Your Child's First and Most Important Teacher19
- 6.2.2 Thinking About Temperament: Your Child's and Yours73
- 6.2.2 Keep Your Child Safe: Use the Protective Factors83

Scenario: Explaining Death

A 3-year-old child video chats with an aunt every night. They read stories, sing songs, and laugh just before it's time to go to bed. When the calls stop abruptly (due to the aunt's unexpected passing), the child asks her parents where the aunt is. The parents become sad, avoid the question, and suggest that she is too young to understand the situation. Instead, they ask the child what book she wants to read and what song she wants to sing. The child is upset that the parents do not sing like the aunt, but the parents continue to redirect and, eventually, the child goes to sleep.

 What is the child thinking and feeling?

 What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Parents can be overwhelmed with a loved one's death, and talking about the death can be very difficult. In addition, it is hard, or impossible, for a child to make sense of or understand that death is final. As a parent, though it may be very hard, be open to conversations with your child as this can help your child learn how to mourn. Try using these techniques to discuss the loss of a loved one with your child:

- Use simple language, and be clear and honest. It is important to use accurate terminology, for example, "she died" versus "she went away."
- Be patient and give the child a chance to process small pieces of information at a time.
- Be there for your child.
- Set goals to look forward to. Show your child that life continues, and you all will be OK.
- Pay attention to the child's play and other behaviors.
- Allow the child to grieve in her own way.
- Include the child in finding ways to honor the memory of your loved one.

Figuring It Out Together: Taking a Moment to Yourself



Areas of Development

Demonstrating sound emotional regulation and release helps children's development in the following areas:



Cognitive



Language



Socio-Emotional



Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors



Social Connection



Concrete Supports of Families



Parental Resilience



Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Associated Family Pages

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Scenario: Taking a Moment to Yourself

A parent just received news of her spouse's death. She feels that she must stay strong for her family, so she continues to remain in charge of the household while she gets her spouse's affairs in order per their plan. Many family members come into town to offer support, and she assumes the role of host rather than taking the time to grieve. She fears that she can't cry in front of her children even though she sees her spouse in their faces and habits. She busies herself with tasks and never takes a moment to slow down, accept her spouse's death, and grieve for her loss.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Keeping busy and making sure affairs or housework are in order may help you cope with loss at first, but you will need to accept and face this major change in your life. Family may be present and may offer support, but you may feel they don't understand what you are going through.

- Take the time to grieve.
- Allow yourself to laugh, cry, and feel all of your emotions.
- Manage your health by eating right, exercising, and trying to get enough sleep.
- Find a support group or understanding friends you can talk to.
- Find ways to honor your spouse's memory as you adjust to your new role.
- Journal about the good things in your relationship and revisit the memories as needed.
- Engage in activities that relax and lift you up.
- Be open with family and friends when you need to talk or be alone.
- Let others help you.



SAFETY ALERT: If your feelings become overwhelming or lead you to unhealthy coping strategies, reach out to a trusted friend, professional, or crisis intervention agency.

Part 6.4

Military Family Life

Part Introduction

Military families have a lot in common with civilian families. There are common family development experiences, such as the birth of a child, a teenager earning his or her driver's license, and caring for an adult relative. Military and civilian families often live side-by-side in communities and share schools, religious affiliations, and social connections.

Yet, there are some hallmark features of military family life that do not have a clear counterpart in the civilian population. These include being part of a community that places service to others before self, operates within a clear chain of command, and expects multiple family relocations during time of service. While all families experience separations and injuries, these challenges are accepted as a *typical* risk of duty.

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Chapter 1: Parental Absence in Military Family Life

6.4.1 Parental Absence in Military Family Life

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Parental Absence from a Child's Point of View



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some things your child might tell you about when a parent is away—if he had the words:

I am learning we are still a family even when we are all not in the same place.



Through a Young Child's Eyes

Parental Absence

How I might feel during this time of big feelings...

I might feel many feelings: sadness, longing, anger, frustration, deep love, and confusion. Or, at times, I might be having so much fun playing that you would never know one of my parents is away.

I might get angry more often—at you or at a friend. Sometimes my feelings are so big they overwhelm me. Sometimes, it is hard for me to *hold it all together*. Sometimes, it can be easier to be angry than to be sad.

At times I might be clingy. If one of you is away, how do I know the other isn't going away too?

I might go back to behaviors I used to do like wetting my pants, sucking my thumb, or wanting you to carry me or feed me. When these things happen, I am telling you that this is a hard time for me.

I might show my love for the parent who is away by laughing and singing and reaching for a hug when we are together on a video call or when they come home. Or, I might break into tears or hide my face. These are all ways that I say, "I love you." Some are harder to understand and accept than others.



Through a Young Child's Eyes

Parental Absence

How you can support me during this time of big feelings...

If you are the parent at home with me...

Keep our daily routines—eating, sleeping, bathing, dressing, diapering, and toileting—consistent. This helps me feel safe as I learn that our daily lives continue even during a challenging time.

Keep reminders of my away-parent around so we can see and talk about him or her. For examples, put photos of us all at child-level so I can see them, hang his or her jacket on our coat rack just like always, play the songs we sing together, or read the books we read. Offer me a t-shirt that gives me the security of softness and smell of my parent who isn't here so I can carry it around and sleep with it. You might want one too.

Tell me family stories of times we are all together. We sure do lots of neat things, like walk in the park, read books, and sing silly songs at bath time.

Share stories of things I say and do—of how I am growing and changing so my away-parent feels part of my life and will have a clearer picture of who I am when we are together again.

Give me words for what I might be feeling, "I think maybe you are feeling sad that Mommy is away working. How about we draw her a picture that we can send to her?"

If you are the parent that is away...

Make a tape and/or video of you reading a story or doing daily tasks around the home so I can hear and see you any time I want.

Send photos of you doing the same routines I do at home: brushing your teeth, eating breakfast, going to bed. This helps me keep a picture of you in my head and helps me feel connected because we are doing the same activities.

Give me some simple descriptions of what you do at work. For example, "I work on the computer." "I drive a jeep." "I help my friends fix their airplane." Avoid topics that may worry or frighten me.

Keep our connection strong. Send me letters or video messages. Talk with me on the phone or during video calls. Keep a photo of me nearby and/or pictures of us together in your head—when it is a safe time for you to think of home.

Together you can...

Keep lines of communication open—phone calls, letters, email, and video calls. At the same time, be aware that sometimes planned calls may not work out due to technical issues, work demands, or me!

Give all of us time to reconnect and find our rhythm when we are back together again. We've all changed, and, even though we love each other, we may have some bumps along the way.

Talk about *big feelings* with each other and at times with me. Putting feelings into words can help us feel more in control and know we are not alone.





Take a Moment: You and Your Child

What is something you want your child to learn about being apart from someone he loves?

What is an idea of how you might help your child see you are a family—even if one of you is away?

Big Feelings for You



Figuring It Out Together

Goodbyes and hellos naturally stir up deep feelings in everyone—whether you are the adult at home or the adult who is away. This can be true even for everyday goodbyes. What can be tricky about these feelings is that they are deep, and they can be mixed. They may not seem to go together. This is natural and to be expected, even if it can feel confusing.



For example, you might dread saying “goodbye” to your spouse before she departs and also feel great relief when her bus pulls out. You might feel your deep love for a partner and fury too in the days before deployment. You might feel joy at his return and resentment that he is interrupting the routines you have established or is trying to take charge when you have been handling everything for months.

Every deployment is different, in part, because you and your relationship with your significant other changes over time. Other reasons for this difference could be circumstances, such as a spouse’s pregnancy; the age of your child; and even something basic, like the parent at home and your child are staying on the installation this time rather than with family members.

It is important to be aware of your feelings because they can catch you by surprise and *hijack* the emotional part of your brain (the limbic system), which makes it difficult for you to tap into the *thinking* part of your brain (the prefrontal cortex). This can make understanding, planning, problem-solving—those thinking skills you need the most to make it through challenging times—more difficult.

Managing Your Emotions

Here are some ideas you may want to consider trying to help you manage your feelings, so, when those feelings become overwhelming, you can recognize them, cope with them, and get back to being thoughtful and in control:



Be aware that there will be big feelings and this is normal and to be expected.

This is a first step in being able to handle big feelings, so you can be emotionally present, even if you or your partner is thousands of miles away, to support your child. Try to understand what you are feeling and when; this will help you see if you are over-reacting and if your feelings are calling the shots instead of your brain.



Big Feelings for You



Be aware of your comfort zone when it comes to sharing your feelings.

Talking about your feelings can help make them visible to think about and share with others. Some adults are more comfortable and find it easier than others to put their feelings into words. Some are more willing to share. How about you? Is this a skill you may want to practice?



Pause.

Take a moment to think before you react. Being aware of your feelings can allow you to pause and think and respond in a helpful way rather than in an emotional way. When you do this, you help your child begin to learn how to have intense emotions and manage them to solve a problem.



Think about what you are feeling and why.

Perhaps circumstances are overwhelming and your reactions have, therefore, been a little too intense. Consider these examples: maybe you and your child have both had a stomach bug or you have to pay the car mechanic and the plumber in the same week or your partner was out on an unexpected mission and missed your scheduled video call with home. These circumstances could easily make you feel as if you have too much to handle.



Engage the thinking part of your brain to help get your emotions back under your control.

Sometimes, just thinking is enough to help you make the *switch*.



Talk your feelings over with someone you trust.

It can be clarifying to get another's perspective. So, consider calling or texting a family member, friend, child care director, or your home visitor.



Any Other Ideas?





Having a Conversation When Emotions are Running High

Here are some ideas you may want to consider trying when emotions are running high:



Use I-statements to help avoid blaming.

When emotions run high, it can be natural to want to blame someone else for the situation. Using I statements as in, “I feel this is a difficult time” vs. “This is all your fault” invites you to describe how you are feeling or what you need instead of placing blame on your partner or someone else.



Listen.

When your emotions are racing inside it can be hard to quiet yourself and be able to genuinely listen to someone else. Being aware of this can help you take a deep breath (or 2 or 10 breaths) and turn your focus from your feelings to the words someone else is saying.



Try to understand what may be behind your partner’s words.

As you have a conversation, questions, such as the following, can help you better understand what your partner is telling you: What is she thinking? What is he feeling? What might she be telling me besides what her words say through the sound of her voice, the words she uses, and the expression on her face?



Focus on how to move forward together—

For yourselves and on behalf of your child. For example, talk with the other person about how to make things work more smoothly. There are likely steps both of you can take.



Playback to be sure you both are clear about what was said and agreed upon.

Checking in to be sure you both agree on the path of your conversation will prevent misunderstandings and is a way to promote your partnership and teamwork to move forward together.



Any Other Ideas?



Take a Moment: Managing Your Emotions

What different emotions do you feel about your partner going away or coming back?

What are two things you want your child to learn over time about how to handle big and sometimes confusing emotions?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Listen carefully to another adult—or to me...	Listening is important. Because you listen, it is something I am going to do too.
Talk things out when you have a disagreement, even if it is hard to do.	In our family, sometimes we get upset at each other. But, we still talk and work together. We still love each other.

Big Feelings for Your Child



Figuring It Out Together

Goodbyes and hellos can naturally stir up big feelings in everyone, even babies, toddlers, and twos. These feelings may include excitement, joy, sadness, unhappiness, fear, anger, or confusion.

Even the youngest babies who seem fine with being passed from person to person, sense and respond to the big feelings of their adults. They tune into differences in the sound of their adults' voices, their facial expressions, and the amount of tension in their bodies.

Babies and toddlers don't yet have the words to express their feelings. While twos may be learning the words, their feelings can still be big and may impact their sleeping, eating, toileting, play, and interactions.



Your Child's Behavior Tells You Something... It is Up to You to Try and Figure Out What That May Be

Your child needs you to try to understand what he is feeling. Why? You need this information to help you decide how best to respond.

You can usually see a young child's big feelings from the outside as you watch his or her behavior. Young children have not yet learned to behave in ways that cover up what they feel.

Sometimes, it is pretty simple to understand what a child is feeling. Tears and turning away say, "I will miss you. It is hard for me to say goodbye." A smile and a giant hug says, "I'm glad to see you."

Other times, it can be more challenging to figure out what your child's behavior is telling you. Here are some of the reasons why:



Different behaviors can have similar meanings.

Crying, clinging, acting out, sitting quietly and not playing, thumb sucking, and a return of bed-wetting can all be ways a child might say, "I miss Daddy. Things are different. It is hard for me."



Big Feelings for Your Child



Quiet behavior can communicate big feelings.

At times, a child who is *being good* or withdrawing and sitting still can be communicating feelings that are as big as if a child threw a toy across the room, screamed, and kicked.



When you also have big feelings, it can be hard to separate out who is feeling what.

Think, for example, about a dad who today is intensely missing his wife serving overseas. When their toddler falls, scrapes her knee, and starts to cry, he feels tears in his eyes too. “I know,” he says. “We really miss mommy, don’t we...” he says as he rubs his child’s back to comfort him. Yet, the child is crying because she hurt her knee.



Even when a parent is away, your child will spend much time living in the moment.

A child’s behavior is often about what happens in the moment, not about a parent being away. Your child will laugh, play, smear food on his highchair tray, climb, run, say “no,” or want to read and cuddle on your lap like always.

Supporting Your Child With Big Feelings

Here are some ideas you might want to try to support your child with big feelings—in a child’s voice:



Be my model.

Show me how we can live, work, and thrive together during bumpy and smooth times. Model ways to manage your feelings like counting to 10 or taking a deep breath. Talk with me about feelings. Reassure me we are on the same team no matter what.



Ask yourself, “What am I feeling?” as you watch and interact with me during daily routines and play time.

This will give you information to help you decide how to respond.



Offer me words for what I might be feeling.

“Are you feeling sad because Daddy is away? Me too. How about we write him a letter?”



**Give me lots of chances to feel and be competent.**

Invite me to help you put napkins on the table, water the plants, dust, or carry my ball to the park. This will build my confidence and help me learn I can manage, even during times of big feelings.

**Give me a chance to be a baby again.**

Sometimes, if I ask you, feed me, carry me to bed, give me extra hugs and cuddles, and tell me I am safe and you love me.

**Have realistic expectations.**

Ask yourself, "What can I realistically expect?" For example, even though you tell me, "No," when my big feelings are overwhelming, I might pull at your hair or kick you. I may need you to gently yet firmly help me stop and redirect my behavior.

**Keep my frustration levels as low as possible.**

Am I tired or hungry? It may not be the time to run errands. Is the new puzzle too difficult? Put it away, and bring it out again in a few months. Is it too hard to blow bubbles? You could be the bubble blower and let me be the bubble popper.

**Keep your frustration levels as low as possible.**

If you are upset, I will sense it. Consider little things—and big ones too—that you can do to feel as calm and steady as possible. For example, you know those blocks that you are always stepping on? Ouch! Put them away for now. Need a break or some adult company? Call a family member or friend to hang out with me, or meet a friend for a walk in the park, and give yourself a break.

**Any Other Ideas?**



SAFETY ALERT: Never shake your child!

Your child's big feelings can trigger yours; however, no matter how upset, sad or frustrated you may feel, never shake your baby!

When a baby is shaken or thrown, his head whips back and forth and from side to side. His brain slams against his skull. No matter how long he has been crying, one forceful shake in a moment of frustration—even when playing—can damage his brain, neck, spine, or eyes forever. He could die! His life and yours will never be the same.

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE GONG TO LOSE CONTROL:



Put him in his crib or in another safe place.



Shut the door.



Pull out your headphones, take deep breaths, and have a good cry yourself.



Call someone.



Wait until you have calmed down before you try again to calm him.





Take a Moment: Supporting Your Child with Big Feelings

What are two messages you want to teach your child about managing big feelings?

How can you help your child feel connected to you, even during times when you have big feelings about his big feelings?

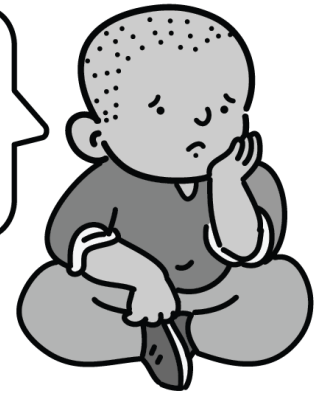
Saying Goodbye



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some of the ways that you and your partner can work together to support yourselves and your child with saying goodbye:

Try to look through my eyes to understand what I might be feeling.



Be kind to yourself and each other before deployment.

The weeks and days before deployment are stressful. Emotions are often running deep for weeks beforehand.

Try to be realistic about what to expect. You may find the pre-deployment period to be a loving, family time. However, it could be a bumpy time that leaves you thinking, "Let's get on with saying goodbye already." Many families report increased arguments and hurt feelings in the weeks before deployment. This is common. Pre-deployment is a time when it can be easier to begin to distance yourself rather than experience the pain of saying "goodbye." Your Service member may begin focusing on his or her mission. The at-home parent may withdraw and begin preparing him or herself for the at-home-alone months ahead. Preparations for deployment (communicating with family, home repairs, doing a big food shop, putting paper work in order, training exercises) can take time and energy.

Being aware that bumpy times and big feelings are normal, can help you cope as the deployment looms. Flexibility and a sense of humor can help too.



Talk about how you are going to keep in touch.

Conversations about how and when you plan to communicate with each other can help assure your moments of connection go as smoothly as possible, no matter how many miles apart you may be.

Options to communicate may include phone calls, texts, emails, web chats, and letters. Yet, even with the technology that didn't exist a few years ago, there may be times when communication will be bumpy. Anything could happen and keep you from communicating on the day and time you have planned: the internet could be down at home or away, an unexpected mission could arise, a communications blackout downrange could be ordered, heavy traffic on the way home from child care could happen, or your baby could have a giant poop when the phone is ringing.



It can be helpful to acknowledge that there may be times when you cannot or should not share information. For example, when the Service member is at an undisclosed location or on a mission there may be restrictions on what can be said, even if there can be communication.

There could be times when the parent at home may want to buffer the away parent from certain information to not put the downrange parent in distress, which can be distracting and ultimately dangerous out in the field. A big home repair, a fight at work, a rough time with a toddler who insists “no” may be examples of times the at-home parent may ask him or herself: “Why share news if there is nothing that my partner can do? Telling him or her may only cause worry.”

Finally, talk about who you can both turn to for assistance in communication in case of a serious health issue, injury, or even a death—whether at home or downrange. This includes your home visitor and rear detachment people for the parent on the home front and the chain of command and buddies for the Service member.



Be up front that during deployments, rumors fly.

During deployments, rumors often fly—on the home front and in the field.

Rumors can be about anything, though gossip about partners being unfaithful is a common one. This can upset everyone involved. If rumors begin to spread about others, it can be very helpful to stay out of the action and not pass them on. If the rumors are about you or your partner, talk with a friend and calm down. Then, decide if you want to talk with your partner while you are apart or wait until he or she returns. Hold off on any big decisions or actions until you’ve had time to cool down and talk together.



Create a family care plan.

Working together to care for your child begins before the deployment with the creation of a family care plan.

While slightly different for each Service branch, developing this plan will give you both the opportunity to affirm and record the basics of how you plan to work together to meet your child’s needs and will provide a sense of confidence that the daily routines of your child’s life are recorded and your family’s paperwork is in order. Information in a family care plan includes details about a child’s daily activities, your family’s routines, medical and dental information and contacts, information needed to reach close friends and relatives who will remain part of your child’s life, contact information for resources your family uses on and off base, and the location of important documents. These documents should include wills, insurance certificates, and power of attorney forms. Care plans will also include information about the importance of dependent IDs and how to use services available on your installation.





Give your child a chance to say “Goodbye.”

It wasn't that long ago that people used to think and say, “Babies and toddlers don't notice when a parent is away for deployment. They are too young.” Many did not think it was even necessary for a parent to say “goodbye” to a baby or toddler before leaving for months.

Today, we know that isn't true. Babies and toddlers *read* the emotions of their adults and definitely are aware that the voice, hugs, and smiles of someone dear is missing when a parent is away. While it can be tempting to skip goodbyes, saying goodbye teaches an important lesson about trust: the people you love and who love you do not just disappear. Saying “goodbye” is a first step in working together to support your child with a long absence from a parent.

Your baby will not understand the words you say, but she will sense something is happening when one parent is leaving. Give her a hug and a kiss and a sentence of two about what is happening. Assure her she will be safe with her at-home parent and that the parent who is going away will come back. If she is an older baby, invite her to wave or blow a kiss.

Toddlers and twos are just beginning to understand goodbyes. They don't yet understand time, but they will know that this goodbye is more than saying “goodbye” at child care or when a babysitter comes for an evening. Explain what is happening simply to your toddler, “Mommy is going to work far away. You and I will stay here together at home. We'll talk with Mommy on the phone and video and say, ‘I love you’. And she will call us and say, ‘I love you’ too.”

Give your toddler a chance to say goodbye in the way that she chooses. For example, she may want to give Mommy a giant bear hug or 10 kisses and/or sing her a song or draw her a picture to put into her duffel. She may end up protesting or be quiet and watch or even walk away. All are ways of saying, “I love you.” “I will miss you.” “I don't want you to go.”



Give yourselves a chance to say “Goodbye” and do so in a way that works for you.

Try to give yourselves a chance to say “goodbye” before you reach the crowded and emotion-filled designated point of departure.

Take care not to let visions of what should be interfere with what is and what works for you. For some parents, a goodbye might happen during a walk, dinner out, or even a night or weekend get-away. For others, it might be a high five and “I'll really miss you,” or it could be working together to get things around the house done and talking about post-deployment plans. Others may find the last weeks and days together are spent apart due to training exercises or at-home arguing that involves feelings that are too big and mixed to put goodbye into words. No matter how you say goodbye or don't, it is OK. This is a challenging time so give yourself and your partner a break.



Saying Goodbye

Take a Moment: Saying Goodbye

How do you feel when you say “goodbye” to someone you trust and love?

How do you think your child feels when a parent deploys and is away for a long time?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Give me a chance to say “goodbye,” even if I might get upset...	I can trust that the important people don’t suddenly disappear. That makes the world feel like a safer place and lets me play and explore more freely because I don’t have to worry that I will turn around and they will be gone.
Keep communication open with each other and with me...	Talking together will help us make it through a challenging time. We can talk about anything and everything.

Keeping Relationships Strong



Figuring It Out Together

Your relationship is always there—across the miles, months, and years. Whether you are together or apart, your relationship with your child is there too. Even if you are the parent who is physically away, you are present in your family member's memories and lives.



Our relationship is a connection of love between us – even when we are apart.

Adults can hold the picture of others in their minds, even though videos and photos are still treasured and enjoyed. This is not true of a young child before age 2. Even when he can hold a picture of his most important adults, that picture can grow fuzzy or disappear when he is stressed or tired. Your child relies on you to help him feel safe. Your presence energizes him to be able to play, explore, discover, and learn.

During a deployment, there are many things you and your partner can do together to keep your relationship strong—and your relationship with your child strong.

Before Deployment

Take a moment to notice things you do each day that keep your relationships with your partner and child strong. These hold the seeds of how you can keep relationships strong when you are apart. Here are some examples to get you started thinking about what you do to keep your relationship with your partner strong:



Share daily routines.

Routines are like familiar dances where everyone knows the rhythm and steps. They can be comforting and reassuring. Routines can be making the coffee in the morning, emptying the dishwasher every evening, or buying muffins on Sunday morning.



Talk together about how you and your child are growing and learning.

For example, meet with your child's teacher, talk with her healthcare provider, or discuss these Family Pages with each other and with your home visitor.



Keeping Relationships Strong



Support and reassure each other during bumpy times—

There will be difficult times at work, at school, with other family members, or with friends. Show your support by having a weekly time that you arrange for child care and take a walk or go out for dinner to check in and talk about life. Leave each other *I've got your back* notes on the bathroom mirror or on the fridge.



Enjoy family photos, videos, and stories.

Are there photos around your home? Do you regularly scroll through photos and videos on your phone? Are there stories that get repeated often. You are creating your family's history.



Listen to music, sing, and dance together.

Hearing and moving to music can be very relaxing.



Laugh together.

Watch cartoons or share jokes or something you or your child said or did that is funny.



Any Other Ideas?





There is a lot of overlap with how you keep your relationship strong with your child. Here are some ideas to start you thinking about the things you do:

**Share daily routines.**

Such as mealtime, bedtime, diapering and toileting, bathing, and dressing. Talk, sing, and be together during these parts of daily life.

**Comfort your child when he is upset.**

Hold him. Listen to him. Rock him. Rub his back. Assure him you are there to keep him safe or help him calm down.

**Enjoy family photos, videos and stories.**

Sharing family photos, videos, and stories can be special moments that deepen and celebrate your family and your relationship.

**Listen to music, sing and dance together.**

Hearing and moving to music can be very relaxing.

**Laugh together over silly games, songs, and jokes.**

Whether on the couch, at the kitchen table, indoors or outdoors, on a bus, in the car, at the store or waiting at the health clinic, laughing together brings you and your child closer.

**Any Other Ideas?**



During Deployment

Build on what you already do to keep connections strong when a parent(s) is away:



Bridge the distance and keep communication open...

Through phone calls, texts, emails, web chats, packages, and letters.



Keep routines consistent.

Talk about “Mommy’s place at the table” as you and your 2-year-old eat dinner. Mention how Daddy keeps his boots here on the rubber mat too when he is at home.



Create physical reminders of the parent who is away.

For example, your child might be comforted and fall asleep with a t-shirt that belongs to and smells like his deployed parent. (You might want to have one too.) Other examples could include keeping the away parent’s coat hanging on the coat hook and having plenty of family photographs around the house; make sure some are at child-level.



Make videos of the deploying parent singing, getting ready for work, washing dishes, or whatever else that parent does around the house before deployment.

Then watch and enjoy the videos while that parent is away.



Record the away-parent reading a few bedtime stories.

Listen to them, at bedtime or during the day—whenever the time is right.



Share family photos and stories from home and away.

Share photos and stories of the amazing, funny things your child says and does. Your Service member can also share photos of daily routines—activities that a child is familiar with like eating, dressing, or sleeping but be careful not to worry or scare the child.



Laugh and play together even though you are apart.

Family members can participate in the same activity as the Service member who is away, such as reading the same book, playing the same game, or working on the same puzzle. You can sing and dance together on video calls.



Any Other Ideas?



***Take a Moment: Keeping Your Relationships Strong***

When you look around your home, what physical reminders of the away-parent are there for your child and for you?

What is a favorite activity you enjoy as a family when you are together? How can you continue the activity and the warm, loving feelings that come with doing this activity when a parent is away?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Share family photos, stories, and routines with me even though a parent is away...	I am safe and secure. Even though someone isn’t here with me, I remember him or her and how it feels to be together.
Play a recording of my away-parent reading me a book or singing me a song...	Even though my parent is away, he or she is still apart of my life.



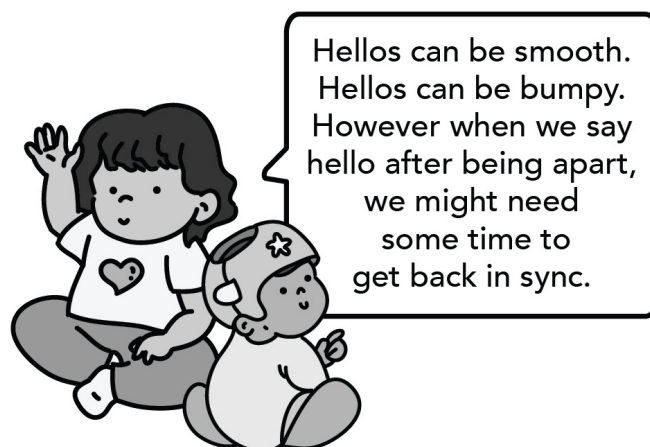
Reuniting



Figuring It Out Together

Saying hello is the other side of saying goodbye. Hellos can create deep feelings, such as joy, excitement, and happiness. You see these feelings in the form of smiles, hugs, and relief seen in public reunions in airports or schools that are sometimes shown on TV.

Reunions can also bring feelings of tension, sadness, or confusion. This is seen when a child has a meltdown, ignores the returning parent, or the heart wrenching moment a child breaks into tears when the parent she has been missing for so long reaches out to her.



Think and, if possible, talk about what saying hello might be like for you and your child.

Hellos can be times of excitement and joy and everything you imagined and hoped for.

Or not. Parents might be exhausted, stressed, feel awkward, or unsure of how to feel and how to respond. An adult or child might be sick and cranky. A child might ignore or cry at the sight of the parent he or she has been talking about and missing.

You and your parenting partner might have different hopes for the hours and days after reuniting. For example, if you were home, you might be longing for family together time or want and need a break. If you have just returned, you may need quiet and to spend time with buddies who are also newly home.



Give yourselves and your child some time.

Adjusting to being back together again takes time—count on it.

During your time apart, you have each grown and changed. You each likely took on different roles, whether around the house or downrange. Your child has also changed. For example, the baby who was just starting to crawl at the start of deployment may be a walking, running, climbing, and talking toddler. Maybe there have been changes to the whole family system with the birth of a baby, the death of a pet, or the serious illness of a relative.

“Who is in charge?” is one of the big questions reunited parents face. There are many reasons for this. For example, the parent who has been at home has been in charge of everything and may not be so happy about having to share decision-making. The parent who has been away



may have been in command during deployment and walk in the door expecting to take command on the home front. Perhaps the parent who has been away may try to take over as a way to feel in control when so much has changed. Whatever the cause, it will take time and conversations to figure out how to work as partners again.

Gatekeeping could be another challenge. This occurs when the parent who has been home has to start again to share the care. This parent may try to limit the returning parent's time with the child or constantly hover and tell the returning parent how to do things. Parents may feel in competition with each other for time with their child or for her smiles.

It often won't be easy. Whatever issues you and your partner are dealing with together, patience and trying to put feelings into words can help. Sometimes you may find that outside support will be helpful. For example, your home visitor, a trusted friend, a chaplain, or counselor may be of great support. Above all, give yourself and each other time.



Give your child, and yourselves, words for what you are experiencing.

Sometimes putting words to what is happening and/or what people are feeling allows you and your child to feel more in control.

It makes it possible to think and talk about complicated times in a way that is not possible when feelings and events are overwhelming. For example, you can acknowledge the feelings and help build a bridge between a toddler and her returning parent when you explain, "Mommy was away for a long time, wasn't she? She missed bedtime with us. We missed her at bedtime too. Let's invite Mommy to come and help with bath time and read you a story. We'll all go together."



Do what works for your family in the first days and weeks.

There is no right or wrong when it comes to settling in post-deployment.

The best way you can support your partner, yourself, and your child is to trade in your ideas of what should be for figuring out what works best for your family. For example, do family and friends want to have a huge Welcome Home party, right now? Does it feel like too much for one of you right now, or is it too much for your child who likes quiet and calm?

Does your Service member want or need to spend time on his or her own or with returning buddies who are also adjusting to being home? Do you, the parent who has been home, want and need a breath and a break from caring for your child and home?

You may want to enlist a trusted family member or friend to come and help out around the house and/or provide child care. Possibly, arrange a later date for the Welcome Home celebration—when the time is good for you.





Develop a Family Plan for Emotional Safety When an Adult Loses It

Everyone gets angry, fearful, or anxious sometimes. As Confident Kids, Confident Parents (<https://confidentparentsconfidentkids.org/parent-resources/family-emotional-safety-plan>) says so wisely, if you didn't know you had these feelings before you were a parent, you know now. For many, these are some of the feelings that are part of homecoming. Other feelings may be excitement, happiness, and joy. This blend of mixed emotions is why reuniting is often described as a time of highs and lows for everyone. Bumps are to be expected as family members reunite and rebalance their lives after a Service member has been away.

At times though, a family member may lose control of his or her emotions and behaviors. For example, a Service member could be dealing with combat stress or post-traumatic stress disorder and may lose his or her temper more easily, or the at-home parent, who has been holding him or herself together for so long, just *lets go* now that his or her partner is home.

This is where a family plan could be helpful. When someone is under great stress or experiencing great anxiety, anger, or hurt, the primal brain, the amygdala, takes over and focuses on survival. The ability to think, problem-solve, and plan may not be available. This state of mind can lead to making poor choices that can result in lashing out, which could end in injuring a child (or worse) and disrupting the bridge of trust between you.

While your child is a baby or toddler, planning is up to you. In a few years, around the age of 4, your child can be part of planning too. Here are some parts of a plan to consider:



Know the signs someone is losing control.

Tensing of face or body, a change in the sound of his or her voice, pacing, quieting and becoming still.



Create a cool-down spot.

"I will go to the cozy chair in the living room. When I am there, I will...[take 10 deep breaths]. I will return to my family when...[my body feels calm and I can think about how glad I am I sat in my chair]."



Choose a place(s) to go when you and your children have to get out of the house.

This could be the house of a family member, friend, neighbor, or place of worship.



Be sure contact numbers are easy to access.

Put these numbers in your phone and on a card in your bag. These numbers should include family members, a neighbor, doctor, police, ambulance.

If there are high and stormy emotions in your home most days, it is time to get some outside emotional support. Doing so is taking a big step in keeping your child safe and healthy. If you have doubts about finding help for yourself, it may help to realize doing so is in the best interests of your child. Your home visitor will be able to give you the names of places that can support you.



Take a Moment: Reuniting

How do you envision your family's reunion?

What are some other ways it might play out in reality?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Give us time to reconnect...	You are there. I can trust you to be there for me even when I am not yet able to cuddle or play with you.
Give me words for what is happening...	I can count on you to help me understand what is going on. We can talk about anything and everything.



Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child



Separating and reuniting are normal, if at times bumpy, parts of everyday life. They happen every day—at bedtime and in the morning, at drop-off and pick-up time at child care, or when you say “goodbye” to run errands and return home with a bag of groceries.

As a military family, besides these everyday goodbyes and hellos, you likely also experience longer and/or repeated separations due to deployment. Being apart for long periods of time can be stressful for everyone, adults and children alike. At the same time, deployment offers you opportunities to grow and learn and for your family relationships to deepen.

Looking Back at Separation and Reuniting

Thinking and talking together about some of your goodbyes and hellos can help you keep connections strong and allow you to work together to support your child. This is true even if both you and your partner face deployment together or sequentially. If you are a single Service member, this means talking with the adult(s) who will care for your child when you are away.

For example, you might think about a past deployment, when your Service member was last away for training, or a time when you were away to visit or care for a distant family member.

Here are some questions to consider:



How did being apart make you feel? About yourself? About the person who is away?



How did coming back together make you feel? About yourself? About the person who was away?



Did you keep in touch when you were apart? How? How often? What will you do the same or different during this deployment?



What would you say you have learned about goodbyes and hellos?



What would you like to teach your child about goodbyes and hellos when your family experiences lengthy separations?





Coping with Stress

Being aware of what helps you cope during stressful times will allow you to be able to take care of yourself and to focus on, tune into, and enjoy your child.

Sometimes, the things you do to quiet your baby—rocking her, singing softly to her, bouncing her gently in your arms, dancing with her, telling her “everything will be OK”—will help reduce stress for you too.

Here are some other ideas to try when you need to quiet your stress:



Make a note, doodle.

Putting your feelings on paper can give you relief.



Organize.

Cluttered space can cause stress. Take a few moments to put stray items in their place.



Laugh.

Enjoying a comedy movie, telling a joke, or sharing good times with a friend will remind you that life is good—even when you may be feeling overwhelmed.



Prioritize.

If tasks get pushed back, don't sweat the small stuff.



Dance away.

Sway, stomp, whatever it takes.



Reconnect.

Take a look at your baby's precious little face—when she is calm or asleep.



Recharge.

Enjoy a warm bath or a run or a few pages of a good book or a song you love. Do whatever it is that helps you take a breath and care for yourself.



Take a Moment: Coping with Stress

Think of a stressful time in your life. What are two things you did that helped you reduce the stress and feel calmer and more present?

Who is someone you can count on to give you a smile, some encouragement, and/or to be there to lend a hand if and when needed?





The Power of a Positive Attitude

Some things in life you can control. Other things you just have to make it through, like a deployment. One of the things you can control is your approach to the world. Even when you are experiencing the deep and mixed feelings that are part of separating and reuniting, your mindset can define your experience. It is up to you!

Positive thoughts can lead to a positive attitude. A positive attitude makes you happier and more resilient and allows you to see yourself as a person who can be active in directing your own life. When you are optimistic and positive, you see setbacks as temporary. Problems become challenges that provide opportunities to learn and grow. You can see and use your strengths.

By conveying a sense of confidence that everything will be fine, you can help your child feel the same way.

Here are some suggestions you may decide to try for a more positive attitude when a family member is away:



Notice and enjoy small pleasures.



Your child's smile, a cooling breeze on a warm day, the smell of your morning cup of tea, the taste of a fresh peach are good examples.



Decide how you are going to feel—

No matter what is happening around you.



Find a positivity partner.

Someone you can talk to during the day to share three good things that happened to each of you.



Jot down two things you are grateful for before falling asleep.

It is a calming way to end the day.



Expect life to be bumpy at times.

Sometimes, you just have to make it through and adjust as you go.



Appreciate How You are Growing and Learning

Dealing with a lengthy separation can be tough—whether you are the person who is away or the person who is at home. It's important that the both of you take a moment to consider how you have grown and what you've learned since your family has experienced the separation. For example, have you learned a new skill that your significant other normally takes care of? Have you taken a moment to reflect on how you felt after you accomplished this task?

Here are some other questions to consider:



Have you done something you didn't know you could do?

For example, repair a leaky faucet? Sing or read to your child on video? Talk together about deep feelings?



Have you met new people who are becoming part of your *Circle of Support*, whether at home or downrange?

For example, another parent having the same experience? A neighbor who is happy to pitch in as a way to say thank you for your service to our country? A chaplain?



Are there ways in which your relationship with each other is changing for the better, even as you both face the challenge of being apart?

For example, have you problem-solved strategies for keeping in touch? For working together to support your child? Are you able to talk about having deep and mixed feelings at times without blaming the other?





You Are Not Alone

Whatever you may be feeling—joyful, loving, sad, frustrated, angry, abandoned, inspired—it’s important to remember that everything you are feeling is normal, and you are not alone. Other parents experiencing deployment share your feelings, which can be very mixed and strong at times. The goal is to be able to feel what you feel and still be able to see and respond in thoughtful ways to your child.

Whether you are the deployed parent or the adult at home, when you have someone to talk, cry, complain, and share your joys and your doubts with or listen to you or laugh or cry with you, life may not feel so overwhelming. Someone sees you and understands what you are experiencing.

Have you created a *Circle of Support*? Are there people you can count on at home and downrange? Do you know people you can reach out to when parenting starts to feel like too much, or when your child says or does something amazing that you have to share?

Working together with the other caring adults in your child’s life increases the support she receives. By letting these adults know what is happening, they can offer your child support and, together with you, help her feel safe, secure, and connected with the parent who is away. Your *Circle of Support* may include your child’s teacher, babysitter, healthcare provider, and extended family and friends.



A Closing Note:

We’ve said it before, and we’ll say it again: No one can ever take your place in your child’s life. No matter how hard it is as times to be the parent who is home, how hard it may be to be the parent who is away, how many miles apart you are, or how long you are apart, you are at the center of your child’s world.



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Sing to me or tell me a story during a video chat...	We can take a breath and have a little time together. Even though you are not here beside me, you love me, and I love you.
Are excited about learning to do something new, such as filling the car tire with air, fixing a leaky faucet, or getting through to our Service member on video...	Learning is something you value. You are learning. I am learning. I can learn things even when I grow up and am big like you.





Practical Applications for Families: Figuring It Out Together

Practical Applications: Parental Absence in Military Family Life

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Figuring It Out Together: Handling Pre-Deployment Stressors



Areas of Development

Reducing pre-deployment stressors impacts the following areas of development:



Cognitive



Language



Socio-Emotional



Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development



Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Associated Family Pages

6.4.1	Big Feelings for You.....	9
6.4.1	Saying Goodbye	21
6.4.1	Keeping Relationships Strong	27
6.4.1	<i>Parental Absence in Military Family Life — Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child</i>	39
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Scenario: Handling Pre-Deployment Stressors

As the weeks draw closer to the deployment date, family tensions can grow strong. Anxiety escalates, but both parents may want to spend as much time together to savor every second. At the same time, they hate the anticipation and want the moment of deployment to come, so they can focus on the other side of the deployment process. They cancel plans with friends and decline working overtime, but, the more time they spend together, the more they nitpick at each other. The stress to savor each moment causes their children to withdraw and arguments to ensue.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

Preparing for deployment can be just as tough as living through the deployment period. One parent is often pulling away, while the other is holding on tighter to savor every “perfect” moment. Conflict is bound to occur. It can feel easier to lash out rather than deal with the pain.

Try these strategies to reduce pre-deployment stressors:

- Talk to each other fairly, candidly, and in detail about expectations during deployment.
- Connect with other people, programs, or resources to manage expectations around deployment.
- Build and strengthen your social networks.
- Be good role models. Your children are watching how you handle stress and will often repeat what they see. Be open with them, and talk to them in simple terms they can understand.
- Commit to your routines to maintain a sense of normalcy for the parents and the children.

Figuring It Out Together: Sharing Responsibility



Areas of Development

Sharing responsibilities helps the following developmental areas:



Cognitive



Language



Socio-Emotional



Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

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Scenario: Sharing Responsibility

A Soldier returns home and tries to find a way to fit into the daily routine that has been altered in his absence. His spouse has organized a well-designed system and seems to have everything under control. His children don't respond well to his help, and he feels he can't do anything right. His spouse tells him to just get out of the way while she silently resents him for not helping or not knowing what to do. He feels like he doesn't know how he fits into his family picture now that he's home.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

During reintegration, Service members and families must find their footing in the new rhythm of the household. This time is a joint venture among individuals, partners, and children. Consider these suggestions to help the process proceed more smoothly:

- Before reintegration, plan for it, and consider and discuss how responsibilities will shift when it happens.
- Establish new routines and daily tasks, and don't expect that you'll find your flow immediately.
- Accept and acknowledge that it is OK for everyone to feel what they are feeling.
- As a family, or just as a couple depending on the children's ages, talk openly and without judgment about feelings, needs, and expectations.
- Allot one-on-one time for each family member to reconnect with the Soldier.
- Give yourself and your family time to adjust to this new normal. It may take days, weeks, or months.
- Discuss and unite on rules that have been established—children may test limits at this time.
- Focus on the positive.
- Reach out to family, friends, or military resources for support when needed.





Chapter 2: Parenting After Injury

6.4.2 Parenting After Injury

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When a Parent is Injured from a Child's Point of View



Figuring It Out Together

Here are some things your child might tell you about when a parent is injured—if he had the words:



Through a Young Child's Eyes

Parenting After Injury

How I might feel during this time of big feelings...

I might feel many feelings: sadness, longing, anger, frustration, deep love, confusion. At other times, I might be having so much fun playing that you would never know there have been big changes at home because one of my parents is injured.

I might go back to behaviors I used to do like clinging to you, wetting my pants, sucking my thumb, or wanting you to carry me or feed me. This is a way I tell you that this is a hard time for me.

I might get angry more often—at you, at a friend. Sometimes, my feelings are so big they overwhelm me. Sometimes, it is hard for me to *hold it all together*. I might need you to gently help me calm down. Sometimes, it can be easier to be angry than to be sad or confused.

I may be curious and ask questions and want to touch your boo-boo. I may shy away and seem extra sensitive about small boo-boos on my own body. Some of these boo-boos may be so small you are not able to see them. I am learning about bodies and boo-boos in my own way.

It is stressful for me when our daily routines change, and you are hurting. I feel unsure about what is happening.



Through a Young Child's Eyes

Parenting After Injury

How you can support me during this time of big feelings...

If you are the parent at home with me...

Keep our daily routines consistent—eating, sleeping, bathing, dressing, diapering, and toileting. This helps me feel safe as I learn that our daily lives continue even during an upset time.

Offer me words for what I might be feeling: "I think maybe you are feeling angry that I have been away at the hospital taking care of Daddy. How about we draw Daddy a picture together to help him feel better?"

Do an attitude-check. If you believe everything will be OK, I will feel that way too.

If you are the parent that is injured...

Give me some simple descriptions of what is happening to you and to us.

For example, "I hurt my leg and for now I will use this wheelchair to move around."

"Will you please play quietly or go outside to play with Daddy?"

"When we are quieter, it helps Mommy feel better."

"My face looks different, doesn't it? But I am here with you. Would you like to sing or read a book together?"

Keep our connection strong if you are away at a medical facility for a long time. Send me letters or video messages or talk with me on the phone or during video calls if and when you can. Keep a photo of me nearby and a picture of us together in your head.

Together you can...

Keep lines of communication open. When you keep talking with each other and to me, you show me that you can work together even when times are challenging. I feel safe knowing you are a team.

Talk about *big feelings* with each other and at times with me. Putting feelings into words can help us feel more in control and to know we are not alone.

Give all of us time to reconnect and find our rhythm when we are back together and finding our *new normal*. We've all had big changes. Even though we love each other, we may have some bumps along the way. This is to be expected. We'll be OK.





Take a Moment: You and Your Child

What do you do to help yourself feel competent during this challenging time?

What are three ways you show your child that she is safe during this challenging time?

Big Feelings for You



Figuring It Out Together

The effects an injury has on the family of the injured person can create deep feelings. You may be the person with an injury. You may be the partner whose world has been transformed as you notice changes in your partner's moods or behaviors. You both must learn to cope with a new normal. These feelings are deep, and they can be mixed, and you may feel confused. This is natural and to be expected.



For example:



You might be angry at your spouse who is hospitalized even as you love her deeply and work night and day to ensure she is getting the care she needs.



You might feel grateful and fortunate to be alive and, at the same time, guilty that your buddy was killed and resentful when your partner tries to support you.



You may avoid the child you love because you don't know how you can be a parent with a missing limb or an injured back that interferes with picking him up or playing the games of catch me that you used to play.



You and your partner might need and want the reassurance you give each other. At the same time, you may find it difficult to talk about what has happened or is happening, and you both may shy away from spending time in each other's company.

Being aware of your feelings is important because they can catch you by surprise and *hijack* the emotional part of your brain (the limbic system), which makes it difficult for you to tap into the *thinking* part of your brain (the prefrontal cortex). This can make understanding, planning, problem-solving—those thinking skills you need the most to make it through a challenging time—more difficult.



Managing Your Emotions

Here are some ideas you may want to consider trying to help you manage your feelings, so, when those feelings become overwhelming, you can recognize them, cope with them, and get back to being thoughtful and in control:



Be aware that there will be big feelings and this is normal and to be expected.

This is a first step in being able to handle these feelings. You and your partner, then, can be emotionally present to support each other and your child. Try to understand what you are feeling and when you are over-reacting and your emotions are calling the shots instead of you.



Be aware of your comfort zone when it comes to sharing your feelings.

Talking about your feelings can help make them visible to think about and share with others. Some adults are more comfortable and find it easier than others to put their feelings into words. Some are more willing to share. Sometimes you might decide that a third person, like a home visitor, chaplain, or counselor, can help you get started talking.



Pause and take deep breaths.

Take a moment to think before you react. Being aware of your feelings can allow you to take a pause to think and respond in a helpful way rather than in an emotional way. When you do this, you help your child begin to learn how to experience intense emotions and manage them to solve a problem.



Engage the thinking part of your brain to help get your emotions back under your control.

Sometimes just being aware and thinking is enough to help you make the switch. For example, babies, toddlers, and twos can be noisy. That is a given. However, if too much and/or sudden noise upsets your Service member due to a TBI or PTSD, plan ways to give your child time for active play in other places, like the backyard, at a friend's home, or at child care. Designate a place for your Service member to go if quiet time is needed.



Talk your feelings over with someone you trust.

It can be clarifying to get another's perspective. There may be one or more people in your *Circle of Support*, such as a family member, friend, child care director, or your home visitor.





Having a Conversation When Emotions are Running High

Here are some ideas you may want to consider trying when emotions are running high:



Use I-statements to help avoid blaming.

When emotions run high, it can be natural to want to blame someone else for the situation. Using I-statements as in, “I feel this is a difficult time” vs. “If you would only listen to the doctor and do what she says...” invites you to describe how you are feeling or what you need instead of placing blame on your partner or someone else.



Listen.

When your emotions are racing inside, it can be hard to quiet yourself and genuinely listen to someone else. Being aware of this can help you take a deep breath (or 2 or 10 breaths) and turn your focus from your feelings to the words someone else is saying.



Try to understand what may be behind your partner’s words.

Questions, such as these that follow, can help you better understand what your partner could be telling you: “What is she thinking?” “What is he feeling?” “What might she be telling me besides what her words say through the sound of her voice, the words she uses, and the expression on her face?”



Focus on how to move forward together—for yourselves and on behalf of your child.

For example, talk with your partner about how to make things work more smoothly. There are likely steps both of you can take. It can be helpful to start with the concrete. For example, this may include setting up a bedroom downstairs in the living room to avoid steps, arranging for a neighbor to cut the grass, or asking a family member to come to help with child care.



Playback to be sure you both are clear about what was said and agreed upon.

Checking in to be sure you both agree on the path of your conversation will prevent misunderstandings and is a way to promote your partnership and teamwork to move forward together. “Let’s check in. For now, even though you are uncomfortable holding the baby, do you want to sit nearby while I hold her and you can talk with her?”



Take a Moment: Managing Your Emotions

What are the different emotions you feel about your partner as you cope with this unexpected situation?

What are two things you want your child to learn over time about how to handle big and sometimes confusing emotions?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Pause and take 10 deep breaths...	Taking deep breaths is a way to calm my feelings. If you do it, it is something I want to try too.
Listen carefully...	What I say and feel must be important. Being listened to feels good. I want to be a listener—just like you.

Big Feelings for Your Child



Figuring It Out Together

An unexpected and challenging time can provoke big feelings in everyone, even babies, toddlers and twos. These feelings may include sadness, unhappiness, fear, anger, or confusion, but they can also involve relief, happiness, and joy during together times and play time.



Even the youngest babies will notice and respond to the big feelings of their adults. They tune into differences in the sound of their adults' voices, their facial expressions, and the amount of tension in their bodies.

Babies and toddlers don't yet have the words to express their feelings. While twos may be learning the words, their feelings can still be big and impact their sleeping, eating, toileting, play, and interactions.

How Your Child Experiences Injuries

Toddlers and twos are figuring out who they are. They are learning words for parts of their bodies and exploring how their bodies move and work. Slowly but surely, they are gaining control of their bodies.

When a young child is injured, it can feel as if their whole selves, their whole being, is hurt. A scraped knee, a scratch, a bruise, or cut is a big deal in the moment. Even boo-boos you cannot see may be a cause of concern for some young children.

A parent's kiss on a boo-boo can be a miracle cure. Band-Aids are also extremely popular and are often found on children, their dolls, and stuffed animal friends. Both can help a child feel the adult is saying, "I see you. I hear you. I know you are upset. Let's do something to make you better."



In addition to responding to your child's injury, your child also needs your support to protect him from overwhelming and frightening experiences and feelings around a parent's injury. For example, think about the following:



Consider holding off on a hospital visit together until the parent who has been injured can notice and interact with your child. In the meantime, you can share photos and stories of things the child and parent do together.



Take your child out of the hospital room, and visit the cafeteria for a snack or go outdoors to play when it is time for a procedure, such as changing dressings, wound cleaning, or removal of a tracheostomy tube that is helping a Service member breathe.

At the same time, you can help your child feel in control and connected by giving him ways to *help*. This may include the following:



Making mom or dad a sign or card.



Sitting on mom's bed or next to dad on the couch and playing a quiet game.



Sharing a kiss, a band aid, a snack, or a song with mom.



Bringing dad an ice pack, a book, water bottle, a fresh shirt.



Singing a song, doing a dance, telling a silly story or showing off a new trick, like standing on one foot.



Any Other Ideas?





Your Child's Behavior Tells You Something... It Is Up to You to Try to Figure Out What That May Be

Your child needs you to try to understand what he is feeling. Why? You need this information to help you decide how best to respond.

You can usually see a young child's big feelings from the outside as you watch her behavior. Young children have not yet learned to behave in ways that cover up what they feel.

Sometimes, it is pretty simple to understand what a child is feeling. Tears and turning away in a hospital room may say "I have missed you. But it is hard for me to be in this place with strange people, things, and smells." A smile and a giant hug could say, "I'm glad to see you."

Other times, it can be more challenging to figure out what your child's behavior is telling you. Here are some of the reasons why:



Different behaviors can have similar meanings.

Crying, clinging, acting out, sitting quietly and not playing, thumb sucking, and going back to bed-wetting can all be ways a child might be saying, "Things are different. It is hard for me."



Quiet behavior can communicate big feelings.

While you might welcome the quiet, at times, a child who is *being good* or withdrawing and sitting still may be internalizing a lot of distress. When a child withdraws or tries hard to please his parents, he may be communicating feelings that are as big as if he threw a toy across the room, screamed, and kicked.



When you also have big feelings, it can be hard to separate who is feeling what.

Think, for example, about a dad who today is intensely mourning his wife's loss of her leg. When their toddler falls, scrapes her knee, and starts to cry, he feels tears in his eyes too. "I know," he says. "Mommy hurt her leg too. Soon she will be walking and running with us in the park on her new leg," he says as he comforts his toddler. Yet, his toddler is crying because he scraped his knee.



Even when a parent is severely injured, your child will spend much time living in the moment.

A child's behavior is often about what happens in the moment, not about a parent's injury. Your child will laugh, play, smear food on his highchair tray, climb, run, say "no," or want to read and cuddle on your lap like always.



Supporting Your Child With Big Feelings

Here are some ideas you might want to try to support your child with big feelings—in a child's voice:



Be my model.

Show me how we can live, work, and thrive together during bumpy and smooth times. Model ways to manage your feelings like counting to 10 or taking a deep breath. Talk with me about feelings. Reassure me we are on the same team no matter what.



Ask yourself, "What am I feeling?" as you watch and interact with me during daily routines and play time.

This will give you information to help you decide how to respond.



Offer me words for what I might be feeling.

"Are you feeling angry because Daddy yelled, 'Be quiet!' How about we go out back to play and give him a little time, then we can come back and be with him?"



Give me lots of chances to feel and be competent.

Invite me to help you put napkins on the table, water the plants, dust, or carry my ball to the park. This will build my confidence and help me learn I can manage, even during times of big feelings.



Give me a chance to be a baby again.

Sometimes, if I ask you, feed me, carry me to bed, give me extra hugs and cuddles, and tell me I am safe and you love me.



Have realistic expectations.

Ask yourself, "What can I realistically expect?" For example, even though you tell me, "No," when my big feelings are overwhelming, I might pull at your hair or kick you. I may need you to gently yet firmly help me stop and redirect my behavior.





Keep my frustration levels as low as possible.

Am I tired or hungry? It may not be the time to run errands. Is the new puzzle too difficult? Put it away, and bring it out again in a few months. Is it too hard to blow bubbles? You could be the bubble blower and let me be the bubble popper.



Keep your frustration levels as low as possible.

If you are upset, I will sense it. Consider little things—and big ones too—that you can do to feel as calm and steady as possible. For example, you know those blocks that you are always stepping on? Ouch! Put them away for now. Need a break or some adult company? Call a family member or friend to hang out with me, or meet a friend for a walk in the park, and give yourself a break.



SAFETY ALERT: Never shake your child!

Your child's big feelings can trigger yours; however, no matter how upset, sad or frustrated you may feel, never shake your baby!

When a baby is shaken or thrown, his head whips back and forth and from side to side. His brain slams against his skull. No matter how long he has been crying, one forceful shake in a moment of frustration—even when playing—can damage his brain, neck, spine, or eyes forever. He could die! His life and yours will never be the same.

IF YOU FEEL LIKE YOU ARE GONG TO LOSE CONTROL:



Put him in his crib or in another safe place.



Shut the door.



Pull out your headphones, take deep breaths, and have a good cry yourself.



Call someone.



Wait until you have calmed down before you try again to calm him.



Take a Moment: Supporting Your Child with Big Feelings

What are two messages you want to teach your child about managing big feelings?

How can you help your child feel connected to you, even during times when you have big feelings about his big feelings?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Pay attention to me and think about how to support me even when I am being quiet and good...	You notice me. You love me. I can trust you to try to understand what I feel and to support me.
Give me a chance to be a baby again for a while...	Even though I am growing bigger and older, I can count on you to still take care of me like you did when I was a baby. Those close feelings help me feel strong and confident as we deal with big feelings.

Keeping Adult Relationships Strong



Figuring It Out Together

Whether you are together or apart, healthy or injured, your co-parenting relationship is always there—across the miles, months, and years. Your relationship with your child is also there. Even if you are the parent who is injured and must remain away for weeks or months in the hospital or a rehabilitation facility, you are still present in your family's memories and lives.

You can keep relationships strong when you are able to truly see yourself and see your partner. This means going beyond looking at someone's physical features, which may be the same or have changed. It also means trying to understand what each of you is experiencing, how you feel, what supports you can offer, and what you need.

Seeing yourselves allows you to better see your relationship, which in turn allows you to see your child and think together about how best to support him.

Our relationship is a connection of love between us, even in difficult times.



See Yourself and Each Other

After the first days and weeks, life will start to settle down a little, and you will be able to take a breath. There will come a time when you can pause and consider your partner, your relationship, and how you both are feeling...

This is a way of starting to assess where you are after an injury. How you are. Even, who you are. It is a big step towards moving ahead together.

You may find it hard to talk with each about yourselves and changes, whether these changes are easy to see or are invisible. Communication takes both of you. One of you may want to talk. The other may not be ready, or it may not be his or her style. One strategy that you might find helpful is to imagine the following:



If you were going to send a text to your partner or write a letter, what would you say? About you? Your feelings and hopes for your everyday lives?

This envisioning exercise may give you the words to say, or it might lead you to actually send your partner texts or a letter as one way to communicate.



Take a Moment: Reflect on What May Be Similar or Different After an Injury

What do you see that looks and feels familiar?

What do you see that may look and feel different?





Notice and Build on What You Do Already to Keep Your Relationship Strong

Take a moment to notice the things you do each day to work on your relationship and keep it strong. Here are some examples to get you started on thinking about what you do to keep your relationship strong.



Keep communication open.

Sometimes during tough times, people turn inward and away from each other. Whether this is the case or not, make an extra effort to set aside a time to talk, text, and/or email to keep your communication flowing.



Share daily routines.

Routines are like familiar dances where everyone knows the rhythm and steps. They can be comforting and reassuring. Routines can be anything, like deciding what to make for dinner, changing bandages, organizing medications into pill boxes, or stopping for coffee on the way to the health clinic.



Talk together about how you and your child are growing and learning.

For example, meet with your child's teacher, talk with her healthcare provider, or discuss these Family Pages with each other and with your home visitor.



Enjoy family photos, videos, and stories.

Are there photos around your home? Do you regularly scroll through photos and videos on your phone? Are there stories that get repeated often? You are creating your family's history.



Listen to music.

Music can take you to another world and can be very relaxing.



Smile and laugh together.

It may seem, at times, like you will never smile or laugh again, but, with time, you will. If that day seems far away, keep your eye on your child. He is sure to say or do something that will bring you a moment of happiness or silliness.



Notice and Build on How You Already Keep Your Connections Strong with Your Child

There is a lot of overlap with how you keep your relationship strong with your child. Here are some ideas for you to consider:



Share daily routines, such as mealtime, bedtime, diapering and toileting, and bathing and dressing.

New routines might include singing a song for mommy who is feeling sad or helping to push daddy's wheelchair.



Comfort your child when she is upset.

Hold her. Listen to her. Rock her. Rub her back. Assure her you are there to keep her safe or help her calm down.



Enjoy family photos, videos, and stories.

Sharing family photos, videos, and stories can be special moments that deepen and celebrate your family and your relationships.



Listen to music or sing and dance together.

Hearing and moving to music can be very relaxing.



Laugh together over silly games, songs, and jokes.

Whether on the couch, at the kitchen table, indoors or outdoors, on a bus, in the car, at the store, or waiting at the health clinic, laughing together brings you and your child closer.



Any Other Ideas?





Give Your Child and Yourselves Words for What He is Experiencing

Sometimes, putting words to what is happening and/or what a child may be feeling can help your child to feel more in control and safe. You will be showing your child that you can talk about anything even during an upsetting time:

For example, your words can do the following:



Promote your child's sense of competence:

"Will you help mommy push my wheelchair down the sidewalk? Thank you. I knew you could do it."



Build a bridge between your child and a parent who has returned home with a physical injury:

"We missed Mommy, didn't we? She is here now. I know her face looks different, but she is still mommy. Let's all sit together and read a story."



Explain behavior in a way that is understandable:

"Daddy is crying because he is sad. Sometimes, you cry when you are sad. Remember when you lost your car in the park? Let's see if Daddy would like us to sing him a song."



Assure your child his body is healthy and strong:

"I see that little boo-boo on your strong leg that can run and jump so high. Let's give it a kiss, and put a band aid on to help it feel better."

Give Yourselves Time

Adjusting to an injury takes time for all of you—count on it.

During your time apart, you have each grown and changed. Your child has also changed. For example, the baby who was just starting to crawl at the start of deployment may now be a walking, running, climbing, and talking toddler. Maybe there have been changes to the whole family system with the birth of a baby, the death of a pet, or the serious illness of a relative.

Now, there is an injury—whether seen or invisible. This means there are even more changes, some of which may not be apparent for weeks or months.

Your new normal will emerge slowly but surely, and it will continue to grow and change with and because of your young child who will also be growing and changing.



Watch for Gatekeeping and Adjust Your Parenting Partnership as Needed

Gatekeeping occurs when one parent tries to limit another parent's responsibilities or time with a child. This parent may criticize, control the scheduling of a child's day, constantly hover, or tell the other parent how to do things. Parents may feel in competition with each other for time with their child or for her smiles.



A parent's injury may require adjustments to parenting practices.

For example, a parent with a back or neck injury may not be able to pick up the child and could, instead, hug and cuddle the child on the sofa or move him or her from place to place in a stroller.



A parent's injury may lead a parent to step back and not be as involved for a time.

Parents who are depressed or anxious may be unable to summon up the energy to take part in routines or worry about doing so. Some parents returning from a combat theatre report feeling "dirty" and do not want to touch their child because of things they may have seen or done.

New ways of doing things and/or the fact that one parent is doing much more of the caregiving, doesn't prevent a partnership. Though, who does what and how will need to be changed.

There is a time when gatekeeping can be helpful, for example, if you feel your child is at risk or in danger when with your partner. If this is the situation in your home, develop a plan to keep your child safe and reach out for support as needed.





Do What Works For Your Family

There is no right or wrong when it comes to adjusting to an injury and moving forward. The best way you can support your partner, yourself, and your child is to set aside your ideas of what should be and focus on what will work best for your family. For example, please see the following:

Do your family members want to come to help?

While their offer may be welcomed and just what you hoped for, it may also feel like too much right now. Are friends and neighbors stopping by to hear your story and to offer support? Does it feel like too much for one of you right now or for your child who likes quiet and calm? If yes, you may want to give people tasks they can do, such as drop off a dinner or take your child to the park. Assure them you will invite them over when the time is right.

Does talking everything over together help you feel more connected and in control?

Does your Service member want or need to spend time on his or her own, or does he or she want to be with buddies? Being *out of sync* is not easy but it is to be expected. So, perhaps for now, you have short conversations with your partner and talk for longer periods with a friend—and see how it goes.

Do you feel like you should be strong and able to handle everything on your own?

Do you want to keep personal concerns and questions private? You can handle many things but maybe not everything. Being strong means being able to ask for outside support from those around you, such as your home visitor, a trusted friend, a chaplain, or counselor.



Develop a Family Safety Plan

Everyone gets angry, fearful, or anxious, sometimes. All of these feelings are to be expected when facing the injury of a family member.

When someone is under great stress or shaken from fear, anxiety, anger, or hurt, the primal brain, the amygdala, takes over and focuses on survival. This new focus makes it very difficult—if not impossible—to think, problem-solve, and plan, which can lead to making poor choices and lashing out and possibly injuring your partner or your child (or worse) and disrupting the trust between you.

While your child is a baby or toddler, planning is up to you. In a few years, around the age of 4, your child can be part of planning too. Here are parts of a plan to consider:



Know the signs someone is losing control.

Tensing of face or body, staring, a change in the sound of his or her voice, pacing, quieting and growing still.



Create a cool-down spot.

"I will go to the cozy chair in the living room. When I am there I will...(take 10 deep breaths). I will return to my family when...(my body feels calm, and I can think about how glad I am that I sat in my chair.)"



Choose a place(s) to go when you and your children have to get out of the house.

Out to your car, to the house of a friend or neighbor, or to your place of worship.



Be sure contact numbers are easy to access.

Put these numbers in your phone and on a card in your bag, so you can find them in any situation. These numbers should include family members, a neighbor, doctor, police, and ambulance.

If emotions are big and explosive in your home most days, it is time to get some outside emotional support. Doing so is taking a big step in keeping your family safe and healthy. If you have doubts about finding help for yourself or your partner, it may help to realize doing so is in the best interests of your child. Your home visitor will be able to give you the names of places that can support you.





Take a Moment: Keeping Relationships Strong

What is something you are doing to keep your parenting partnership strong, even as you and your partner deal with so many changes?

What is a decision you have made since your or your partner's injury that has worked for you and your family?



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Give me words for what I may see or feel...	You are there for me. We can talk about anything. Talking helps me feel safe and connected with you.
Work together with my other parent—or trusted relative or friend—to take care of me...	I am part of a family. We are together, and we are safe. We can manage even during difficult times.



Getting the Support You Need



Figuring It Out Together

If you are feeling overwhelmed or out of control, it can be a sign that it is time to reach out for support. Perhaps, contact friends; family; or support professionals, such as your home visitor, your healthcare provider, a counselor, or your religious advisor.



It Isn't Always Easy To Ask For Help

Every parent of a young child needs a helping hand at some point. Getting support you need —especially during a stressful time—is a key way of taking care of yourselves and assuring you are doing the best for your child. Yet, asking for help can be difficult for many people.

The military has been working hard to take away the stigma of asking for support. Understanding that getting support is a sign of strength and resilience is growing in the military culture, but there are factors that can put pressure on a military family to not seek help. Many Service members feel concern about this type of information getting to command. As a result, command may question whether your Service member can perform his or her duties well and even if your Service member should be allowed to do his or her job.

Even if you decide to ask for support, your partner may not be on board. If it is a matter of disagreement that can cause tension, but not safety concerns, keep moving forward in a positive way because your attitude and actions are all you can control. If your different opinions become a matter of safety in your home, be sure you have a family safety plan in place. Your home visitor can help you develop that plan.

You Are Not Alone

When you have someone to talk, cry, complain and share your doubts with and someone to listen to you or laugh or cry with you, life may not feel so overwhelming. Someone sees you and understands what you are experiencing.

Have you created a *Circle of Support*? Are there people you can reach out to and share with when life feels like too much, when you see progress in your partner's recovery, or your child says or does something amazing? Your home visitor can support you in creating or revisiting your *Circle of Support* and may be able to offer ideas of additional community resources to add.



Working together with the other caring adults in your child’s life increases the support she receives. By letting these adults know what is happening in her life, they can offer your child support and, together with you, help her feel safe, secure, and connected and buffer her from stress. These caring adults could include the following:

- Your child’s teacher
- Your child’s babysitter
- Your child’s healthcare provider

Compassion Stress and Fatigue

When dealing with an injury together, you may find that your trust in each other and your relationship deepens. Your family grows stronger.

It may seem, at first, as if the injured parent is the person under the most stress. This may be the case. Yet, caring for another person can be challenging. Being aware of this can help both of you watch out for one another.

Compassion stress is the natural result of experiencing another person’s suffering, no matter how great or small that suffering is. It can lead to feelings of confusion, hopelessness, and isolation. Practicing self-care, adopting a positive attitude, and reaching out for support when needed can reduce the chances of compassion stress.

Over time, compassion stress can lead to compassion fatigue, which is short-term exhaustion and the inability to function as usual. A person may feel and behave like he or she has been directly exposed to a traumatic event.

To manage this stress, it can be helpful to reach out to support professionals who are knowledgeable, caring, and competent and who can help you take care of yourself and maintain a positive attitude.



Any Other Ideas?





Work with Support Professionals

You may be making many visits and calls to a healthcare provider or other professionals, including your child's teacher, your home visitor, a counselor, or chaplain. Here are some ideas you might want to try to make your visits and phone calls work for you and the support professional you are adding to your team:



Write down your questions and any important information.

By doing this you won't forget something important. For example, you might be wondering, "What can be done to make my prosthetic leg fit more comfortably?" "How can I support my partner who is feeling so down?" "How can I be a good parent if I can't pick up my child because of my back injury?"



Take notes on what the helping professional says—whether over the phone or during a visit.

It is so easy to forget or to mix up information and instructions.



Go together or take a trusted friend to visits whenever possible.

Talk together about your goals for your conversation before you go. A second pair of ears is always helpful.



Be honest.

Share your strengths, your feelings, worries, or challenges.



Taking Care of Yourself

Self-care activities help you and your partner to de-stress; refuel emotional and physical energy; and recognize when there is a need to connect to others, such as a supportive friend, a healthcare provider, or your home visitor.

Caring for yourself can help you be healthier, more focused, and optimistic—even when the road of life is bumpy. With a more positive mindset, you will find it easier to see all the things you do well. You'll be a better problem-solver and feel more confident asking for support. You'll make even better decisions for yourself, your partner, and for your child.

Yet, when faced with an injury, life can become so unsettled and busy that it can be easy for your needs to be pushed to the side. Self-care is not about being selfish or adding another task to your already busy life. It is about being aware of what you already do to support your well-being and building upon what you do as needed.

Self-care activities *fill your cup* and might include:



Enjoying activities that calm, refresh, and energize you.

Going for a long run, listening to your favorite music, or arranging child care so that you can get a much-needed nap.



Choosing activities that fit into your life and work best for you.

Going window shopping rather than using your credit card when you are trying to stay on budget, spending an afternoon working on your motorcycle project, or choosing to pass up dessert for a few weeks when you want to drop your sugar consumption.



Connecting with others.

Meeting a friend for coffee, taking up a game of 3-on-3 at the park, talking with your home visitor, or spending time with your deployment buddies.



Being aware of what depletes you and how you can adjust.

For example, if you end up feeling angry and drained every time you see or talk with your sister, it may be better to agree to email for now or even take a break for a few months and then try again.





You are In Control of Your Attitude

As time goes by, you may find it begins to be easier to take a breath, think about moving forward, and to be more able to feel what you feel. You can control your approach even when there is so much that has been out of your control. Your mindset is up to you.

The more positive you can be, the more likely you can see and use your strengths—yours and those of your partner. You can see problems as challenges you can handle. When you convey a sense of confidence that everything will be OK, your child feels that way too.

Here are some suggestions you may try to maintain a more positive attitude:



Notice and enjoy small pleasures.

Your child's smile, a cooling breeze on a warm day, the smell of your morning cup of tea, the taste of a fresh peach are good examples.



Decide how you are going to feel—

No matter what is happening around you.



Talk together if and when possible about something positive that happened during the day.

Share with your partner and/or child three good things that happened to each of you.



Jot down two things you are grateful for before falling asleep.

It is a calming way to end the day.



Expect life to be bumpy at times.

Sometimes, you just have to make it through and adjust as you go.



Take a Moment: Reaching Out for Support

What is something you can do for your well-being, even during this challenging time?

Has reaching out to a support professional for you and your family been helpful? What can you imagine might be a benefit?





What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child's perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Reach out to others for support...	It is OK to ask for help. We are part of a community. We are not alone.
Take steps to have a more positive attitude...	We can still cuddle, sing, and play—even when times are difficult. I can count on you to be there for me.

Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child



Injuries are a part of everyday life—a pinched finger, a bloody knee, even a broken leg or arm. As a military family, besides these everyday injuries, you may experience service-related injuries, and these can include physical injuries and invisible injuries.

Physical injuries may include:

- back, neck, hip, knee injuries
- loss of a limb(s)
- burns
- broken bones
- paralysis
- loss of sight or hearing

Invisible injuries may be less familiar and may include:

- **Combat and operational stress.**

These are physical, mental, and emotional reactions that persist beyond 4 days after experiencing stressful events while in combat or as a result of other operations.

- **A traumatic brain injury (TBI).**

This is the result of a bolt or jolt to the head or penetration of the head by an object, and brain function is disrupted.

- **Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).**

This may occur within 3 months up to years later following a shocking, scary, or dangerous event in which a person may feel stressed or frightened even when they are not in danger.

Injuries affect every member of your family—from the youngest to the oldest. An injury may be an annoyance. An injury could also be stressful and cause a temporary wobble until family members regain their balance. An injury may mean lifelong changes. Your home visitor can provide you with more specific information about an injury and can discuss with you how this injury could impact your life and that of your family.

Any injury is an unplanned situation that no one wants. You may feel as if your life and your family's life are thrown up into the air and you are left feeling unsure as to how the pieces will fit back together.

Yet, not everything changes; however, it can feel as if everything is different. You, your relationships, your strengths, and your resiliency are still there. This will matter in a big way over time as you and your family meet challenges and discover new strengths and possibilities while getting back to everyday life or as you move forward in your *new normal*.



Drawing from Past Experiences with Unexpected Circumstances

Thinking about and building upon the strengths you have discovered during unexpected circumstances can help you keep connections strong as you work with others to support your child. This is true, even if you don't or can't talk together until your Service member is stabilized. If you are a single Service member parent, think and talk together with the adult(s) with whom you share your child(ren)'s care. You can also talk with your home visitor to benefit from his or her support or knowledge of resources in your community.

For example, you might remember how your humor came into play the time the water heater flooded your basement, how you worked together to handle your budget crunch when you had unexpected expenses, or the way you asked for help in a new language when you were living overseas and went off base.

Here are some questions to consider:



**How did unexpected circumstances make you feel? About yourself?
About your partner?**



What strengths did you draw upon?





Were you able to keep communication channels open with your partner? If so, what were the benefits of this? If not, what might you do this time to keep in touch?



What would you say you have learned about using your strengths during unexpected circumstances?



What would you like to teach your child about dealing with unexpected, challenging situations?



It Is Normal To Feel Like Life Has Turned Upside Down Because It Has For Now

At first life might be chaotic. Your pictures of yourself, your partner, and your life have changed very quickly. If you have experienced a physical injury, you may be in pain and/or have lifelong changes to your body. You may face months of medical treatments or rehabilitation, which may be far from home.

Perhaps you are suffering from an invisible injury — Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). You may find that your focus or memory has changed. You may find that your emotions flare up easily and no longer feel under your control.

If you are the parent who was at home, the phone call or in-person notification brought not only bad news but confusion and upheaval. The first few days and weeks after your partner is injured may mean you have to miss work; locate important paperwork, such as insurance papers or a living will; make last minute arrangements to travel to a medical center that might be across the country; and arrange child care and pet care.

You and your partner may experience any or all of these feelings: depression, anger, resentment, guilt, or worry. You may feel grateful for all you have and trust that together you can figure it out. You may feel bereft, a sense of loss, and/or worry for and about each other. You could feel deep love and profound caring yet also be unsure or fearful about today and your tomorrows.

Coping with Stress

You only have so much energy or attention for the things you do every day, such as making breakfast, picking your child up at child care, and doing laundry. When life is going well, you can think and use your strengths. You feel you can handle what each day brings.

When something unexpected happens, like an injury, it takes energy to handle the unexpected situation. You may even need to tap into your energy reserves. You may find that the decisions you make without a second thought, like what to wear or what to cook, become harder. Little events, like running out of ketchup or having to take your child out on a stormy day, feel stressful. You are depleted. This can begin a cycle of negative thinking: "I'm not enough." "I can't do enough." "I can't handle this." These thoughts can drain even more of your energy.

Unexpected events like an injury can throw you off balance, and this is a normal response. You have a lot of responsibilities. You may find yourself feeling revved up, anxious, or angry, or you may feel like you are shutting down or feel sluggish or numb.

Fight, flight, and freeze are common styles of how people respond to a threat in an attempt to minimize or avoid danger and return to feeling calm and in control. No single style is better than the other, and, sometimes, you might use more than one.



Fight or "I'll fight back"



Flight or "I'll run away"





Freeze or “I’ll shut down and play dead”

Recently a fourth “f” has been added:



The “**Fawn**” response or “I’ll show affection or try to please”

How you react as an adult is connected to your temperament and to how you learned to cope when you were young. As an adult, knowing about your style means you can work with it, so you feel in control. The better you know yourself, the easier it is reach out for support because you know what you need to help you.

Thinking about how you usually respond to a danger or risk—and, if possible, how your partner may respond—can help you figure out behaviors that might otherwise feel upsetting or confusing. For example, knowing that your partner *freezes* or shuts down may lead you to wait until things calm down and everyone feels safe before talking about what you might do differently next time. This can make it easier for you and your partner to work together to manage and problem-solve during a challenging time.

Sometimes, the things you do to quiet your young child, such as holding and rocking her, singing softly to her, dancing with her, assuring her everything will be OK, could help reduce stress for you too.

Here are some other ideas to try when you need to quiet your stress:



Make a note.

Putting your feelings on paper can be a relief.



Organize.

Cluttered space can cause stress so take a few moments to put stray items in their place.



Prioritize.

If tasks get pushed back, don’t sweat the small stuff.



Dance away.

Sway, stomp, shuffle, twist, or twerk—whatever it takes.



Reconnect.

Take a look at your child’s precious little face when she is calm or asleep. Remind yourself that you are not alone.



Take a Moment: Coping with Stress

Think of a stressful time in your life. What are two things you did that helped you to reduce the stress and feel more calm and present?

Who is someone you can count on to give you a smile, some encouragement, and be there to lend a hand if and when needed?





You Are Not Alone

Whatever you may be feeling, relieved your partner is home, overwhelmed, angry, sad, frustrated, resentful, fearful, isolated, anxiety, guilty that a buddy died or was injured more severely than you, grateful for what you have, remember these feelings are normal, and you are not alone. Everyone who has experienced a traumatic or serious injury can have mixed feelings that can be very intense at times.

As Life Grows More Stable, Think About the Fact That You Are In Control of Your Attitude

As time goes by, you may find it becomes easier to take a breath and think about moving forward and to understand how and what you feel. Consider that you can control your approach even though there is so much that has been out of your control. Your mindset is up to you.

The more positive you can be, the more likely you can see and use your strengths. The more likely you can see problems as challenges, the more you can handle them. When you convey a sense of confidence that everything will be OK, your child feels that way too.

Here are some suggestions you may decide to try for a more positive attitude when dealing with an injury:



Notice and enjoy small pleasures.

Your child's smile, a cooling breeze on a warm day, the smell of your morning cup of tea, the taste of a fresh peach are good examples.



Decide how you are going to feel—

No matter what is happening around you.



Talk with your child if and when possible about something positive that happened during the day.

Share three good things that happened to each of you.



Jot down two things you are grateful for before falling asleep.

It is a calming way to end the day.



Expect life to be bumpy at times.

Sometimes, you just have to make it through and adjust as you go.

No One Can Take Your Place

We've said it before, and we'll say it again: No one can ever take your place in your child's life. No matter what your injury, how much your family may struggle for a time, or how hard it is to be the parent who is not injured and find yourself in the role of full-time caregiver, you are at the center of your child's world.



What You Decide to Say and Do Matters

Think about the many ways you support your child. Here are two examples written from a child’s perspective and space for you to add one about your family.

When You...	You Help Me Begin to Learn That...
Relax as you rock and sing to me...	I feel safe when I am with you and trust you to be there for me.
Talk about the good things that happened today...	Good things happen even during times of upset. I am safe here with you.





Practical Applications for Families: Figuring It Out Together

Practical Applications: Parenting After Injury

Giving Care to Many	101
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Figuring It Out Together: Giving Care to Many



Areas of Development

A parent's ability to manage multiple peoples' needs affects these areas of child development:



Cognitive



Language



Socio-Emotional



Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors



Social Connection



Concrete Supports of Families



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development



Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Associated Family Pages

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6.4.2	Keeping Adult Relationships Strong.....	73
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6.4.2	Parenting After Injury — Focus on You: Looking Back and Moving Ahead with Your Child	91
6.3.1	Partnering with Other Adults in Your Child's Life	15
6.3.2	Nurturing Your Well-Being; Feeling Good About You	63
6.2.2	Keep Your Child Safe: Create a Family Care Plan	91

Scenario: Giving Care to Many

A Service member sustained an injury while deployed and recently returned home from the hospital. Since the Service member is still in recovery, one parent becomes the primary caregiver for the injured parent and the children. The family's daily routine has undergone a complete change as the caregiving parent now must help the injured parent and continue to care for the children and help them understand their new normal.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

The caregiving journey is different for every family. Injuries may be temporary or long term, and each day may bring new challenges. Practicing togetherness will help as everyone embraces the transition to a new normal. Here are some suggestions to help you during this time:

- Allow yourself (and your relationship) time to deal with the changes and challenges that are present.
- Find ways to incorporate your children and your partner into daily routines.
- Seek help and understanding from professionals or others who have experienced similar trauma.
- Remember to care for yourself, and continue to practice self-care strategies.
- Make sure all family members, including yourself, feel heard, understood, and valued.
- Share your feelings with your family and encourage your partner and children to share their feelings.
- Use your resources and networks, without guilt, when you need relief.
- Celebrate the wins, big or small.

Figuring It Out Together: Dealing with a Child's Injury



Areas of Development

Responses after a child's injury affect these areas of development:



Cognitive



Language



Socio-Emotional



Sensory & Perceptual

Related Protective Factors



Concrete Supports of Families



Parental Resilience



Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Associated Family Pages

6.4.2	Big Feelings for You.....	59
6.4.2	Big Feelings for Your Child.....	65
6.3.1	Partnering with Other Adults in Your Child's Life.....	15
6.3.1	Advocating for Your Child: Problem Solving, Not Blaming.....	35
6.2.1	Keeping Your Little Explorer and Learner Safe.....	25
6.2.2	Keep Your Child Safe: Create a Family Care Plan	91

Scenario: Dealing with a Child's Injury

While a 12-month-old child is learning to walk, he fell and hit his head on a sharp corner of a coffee table. The dad, only steps away, rushed to pick up the child and noticed a superficial cut above the child's eyebrow. Both parents are petrified, and the child is hysterically crying. The mom yells at the dad asking what happened and why he didn't act sooner. Dad becomes defensive and feels that the mom is blaming him even though this is a common accident among toddlers.



What is the child thinking and feeling?



What is the parent thinking and feeling?

How Do They Figure It Out Together?

When a child is injured, it is common for parents to feel some level of guilt, responsibility, and/or anxiety. Each parent will display and cope with those feelings differently, which may cause conflict. Adult reactions can affect the child's reaction to, and recovery from, her injury. So, managing emotions and responding appropriately is key when caring for the injured child. Take a breather, if necessary. Respond quickly to your child's injury and call the doctor if the injury is severe or worsens or affects your child's behavior or if it would simply calm your own anxiety.



SAFETY ALERT: Falls happen frequently as children are learning to walk. Injuries happen when parents do not anticipate their child's growing capabilities, and these injuries can be dangerous. Because most injuries are preventable, parents must try to make sure the area is safe as children do not understand all areas of danger. In this case, foam pads could have been placed on the sharp corners