

Everyday Moments Young Children's Play and Exploration

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.

Infancy and toddlerhood is also a learning time for parents who find themselves in an ongoing juggling act when it comes to finding the just-right balance between promoting exploration and learning and, at the same time, keeping their young children safe. This is a time when parents guide behavior and set limits for their children in nurturing ways. As parents discover what works for their child and for them, the trust between parent and child grows.

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.

In this section, you will find Chapters and *Family Pages* that will support you in conversations with families as you discuss how to support children's exploration and learning; build trusting relationships; and provide nurturing guidance in ways that balance the styles, expectations, and needs of both adults and children.

Exploring and Learning about the World

Children learn about themselves, others, and the world around them during play and daily routines. Play gives children opportunities to experiment, explore, pretend, observe how things work, develop and

practice new skills, solve problems, and figure out how to get along with each other. Daily routines invite children to investigate the extraordinary learning opportunities of ordinary daily life events. This chapter talks about why and how parents are children's first and most important teachers and discusses how they can keep children safe and support exploring and learning during play and daily routines.

Building Trusting Relationships

When parents show their children they can be trusted, children begin to learn what trust is and how to be a person who can be trusted. Children learn they are safe when their needs are met. Children feel valued and cared for. Children who feel good about themselves are more likely to be more successful – in school and in life. They are more prone to feel free to explore, experiment, take risks, question, and learn. This chapter offers parents insights into what trusting relationships are, why they matter, and strategies for building the trusting relationships their children need to be confident and capable learners.

Nurturing Guidance and Discipline

Nurturing guidance and discipline goes beyond getting children to stop certain behaviors. These strategies encourage children's development of the self-control that will guide their decision-making about how to behave throughout their lives. Learning to guide a child's behavior in positive and nurturing ways can take time. This may require parents to question and make decisions that differ from those made by their important adults when they were growing up. In this chapter, parents are invited to reflect upon their childhood experiences and are provided with information and insights to help them consider how they want to guide their child's behavior.