

Child Development in the Second Year of Life: How Toddlers Think and Feel

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Announcer: Welcome to "Head Start Talks," where big ideas support your everyday experiences.

Beth Zack: Hello, and welcome to "Research on the Go," a podcast where we explore some of the latest research in the field of child development, and the implications and the practical applications of this research. My name is Beth Zack, and I'm joined by my colleague, Dawson Nichols, for this conversation. Dawson and I are from the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. And we are based at the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle.

Today, we're continuing a three-part series in which we discuss how children think and feel during the first three years of life. We're approaching these conversations from the child's perspective. This series is created with a conviction that understanding how children experience the world, what they are going on, can help us in our work with them. When we see the world the way they see it, when we empathize with their experience, we are in a much better position to understand how they learn and how we can help them learn. That's what we're after here.

In the last episode, our conversation focused on how children think and feel during that very first year of life. We're continuing with the second episode in this series, focusing on how children think and feel during the second year of life. Dawson will kick us off here to begin our conversation.

Dawson Nichols: From the very beginning, we talked about how babies have this connection with people. They learn best in social situations.

Beth: Yes, in that first episode, we introduced three principles of development. And we're going to go over them again today because they don't just apply to those first 12 months, they apply to this second 12 months, too. And that's our topic today. Let's look at those again. We have, "I am fascinated by people, and I readily learn from them," "I learn from experience, and I need help getting access to the things that will help me learn and grow," and "I need help navigating change and regulating my emotions."

Dawson: I'm so glad that we're carrying these principles forward, because it is so true that they really do apply. It's nice to have a first birthday, but it is not as though a child steps through a door and becomes a different child on the other side of that. Development is gradual. And also unique to every child. And the things that help an 11-year-old develop, and grow are also going to help a 13-month-old to grow and develop as well.

Beth: And people that are working with family childcare programs, you're especially attuned to this because you're working with kids of all ages. Sometimes babies and preschoolers at the same time.

Dawson: Yes, yes. Shoutout to family child care folks.

Beth: Now, obviously, we need to adjust as children grow and their interests and their abilities expand and change, but these principles are consistent. Today, we're going to talk about new practices, but these principles, they're going to carry along with us.

Dawson: Yes. We're going to talk about typical changes during the second year of life – 13 to 24 months. But how and when a child builds these skills is really going to be individual and it's dependent on experiences, different temperaments, different caregivers.

Beth: Culture, language, environment.

Dawson: Yes. And family and, of course, relationships.

Beth: Yes. Relationships. Relationships are key to learning during that first year. And well, it is true again. Many children, they're learning to walk, they're developing more complex relationships. And they're learning to communicate more effectively. There is a lot happening. But most of it's still learned from the adults in their environment. They're really taking their cues from us.

Dawson: Yes, yes. And this is one of those places where I think it's really helpful to look from the child's perspective. I am living in this tremendously complicated world. It's complex, I don't know how most of this stuff works. But there's these wonderful examples walking around. Adults! And if I watch them, I can learn so much from them. They're so useful for learning new things. Especially when I can trust that they are going to meet my needs, that allows me to concentrate on what they're doing and learn from them.

Beth: And they're learning from us all the time and they're only getting better at it this year. That imitation from the first year? Now they're imitating more complex things.

Dawson: Yes. As I experiment, I'm learning more, I'm remembering more. And I'm also learning other skills because I'm becoming better at focusing my attention. I'm building up more and more curiosity. Look at all of these interesting things in the world. It's this big, wonderful place. And I'm exploring and learning about it as I do.

Beth: Yes. So much to explore and learn. But we're going to be concentrating on language and social and emotional learning. Last time, we really talked a lot about that sensory and physical development. And that's because they developed first.

Well now, in the second year, those systems are developed enough to support language. And all language production is physical, whether we're talking about spoken language, sign language, or even our body language. And there's lots of muscles that are involved.

And now we know children have had a whole year of practice. And during that time, they've also strengthened those neural pathways between the language regions and their brain. And by month 13, they are ready to start communicating if they haven't already. It just really gets going during this time.

Dawson: And I would add, from the child's perspective, it's sort of easy to see why it's happening this way. I've had 12 months of experience and now I'm starting to get up, I'm

starting to move around a little more, gaining some independence, I'm starting to realize just how powerful this communication thing is. I can learn so much!

There's this special focus on other people from the very first moments of birth. And as I'm developing this communication, I'm developing more relationships, deeper relationships. Especially with trusted and supportive adults in my life. I realize more and more how much they have to teach me, and I can watch them doing these things. These adults are so full of information. And the more I communicate, the more I can benefit from that information that they have.

At the very beginning of life, they have this impulse to pay attention to other people. But now, as they're developing and learning more and more, they're starting to intentionally pay attention to the adults in their life. It's becoming this intentional act. And children are just so observant. They're really good at this.

Beth: They are. And this makes me think about that food sharing study from a recent issue of Science. Did you read that one?

Dawson: Yes, yes. Bring that in.

Beth: OK, there's this series of experiments that was done with hundreds of toddlers. And they were trying to see whether toddlers could distinguish kinds of relationships just by observing other interactions. In one experiment, a toddler watched and there was this puppet, and it was seated between two research actresses. And one of those actresses pretended to share an orange slice with the puppet, and the other actress shared a ball. And then the toddler watches as the puppet acts in distress. The question is, who is going to help that puppet?

Dawson: Because he's crying! Who's going to comfort the puppet?

Beth: And toddlers overwhelmingly looked to the actress who shared the orange slice to help. And it's like they seemed to infer from that interaction that that actress had a closer relationship with the puppet compared to the one who shared the ball.

Dawson: If I'm the child, I'm watching this interaction. And now I can see that if you were willing to share food with the puppet, you're probably willing to help out when the puppet needs some comfort and cries.

Beth: Yes.

Dawson: But if you only played ball, well, you could just be a playmate and maybe you're not as likely to help out as this other person.

Beth: Exactly. And it's just one example of how children are learning from observing interactions with others. And something so subtle as this.

Dawson: I think it's so interesting. And it's amazing that it happens, but it's also, of course. Children, this is them learning. They're growing and developing these social and emotional skills at this stage. And this is of course our first strategy. It comes right out of that first principle from last time, which was, "I am fascinated by people, and I really learn from them." Yes. And this is continuing. And I'm getting better at it, I'm starting to realize how helpful this is. It's not just an instinct anymore. Now it is a tactic. I look at the adults in my life and I learn from them.

Beth: And the important thing here is that we're not talking about instruction. This is learning through observation. Through watching other people interact.

Dawson: Yes, exactly! And again, from the child's perspective, I'm no longer just learning from direct interactions here, I'm observing how you are interacting with other people. And I can learn from that, too. Again, I'm a little scientist. I know about different kinds of relationships. They have different obligations. And I can know about your relationship with another person just by watching you interact with that other person. I'm getting to be a pretty sophisticated thinker here.

Beth: Alright, during the second year, children are becoming more sophisticated at understanding social situations and emotions, and understanding these things is important.

Dawson: Let's recognize too, I mean, this is the gateway to all of learning. Because as a child, most of what I am going to learn, I'm going to learn from other people. Understanding them through working with them and understanding their emotions. It is absolutely key to learning in every domain.

Beth: That's right. And it happens in unexpected ways, too. Children are learning to recognize different emotions. But also, these complex social situations too. There is this other study out of our home institute I-LABS that I wanted to bring up. And they did it with 100 19-month-olds and their parents. And they brought them into the lab for a study on sharing. Now this was all pre-COVID.

And what they did was they asked parents to bring their child's favorite toy and then they secretly gave that toy to the researcher. The researcher's across from the child and the researcher pretends that this toy slips out of their hand, and they cannot reach it.

The question is, what is that child going to do? Are they going to be willing to give up that toy and hand it back? Or are they going to hold onto their favorite toy for themselves? And what they found was that many children were willing to share even with the stranger.

Dawson: I love that study. I mean, a lot of people assume that toddlers are selfish. "Mine" is a word that comes out during these early years.

Beth: Yes.

Dawson: Often, toddlers are really generous, even with strangers.

Beth: And we don't really see this in other animals. And scientists believe that these early pro-social behaviors, like sharing, are the building blocks for human generosity. And really it just starts with recognizing the desire in another person.

Dawson: It reminds me of a study from a couple of years ago where 17-month-old children were shown to already have pretty sophisticated expectations about how sharing works based on the context in which the sharing was happening. These are 17-month-olds, and they can already understand that sometimes things get distributed equally and sometimes they don't. And both of those can be fair depending on the situations.

I might not have understood this in my first year of life. But this year, I'm starting to get it. I'm starting to understand it. And I want to know more about these different situations and these different contexts. I develop these strategies to help me figure it out.

Beth: This brings us back to our first strategy. I look to those adults in my life and I learn from them.

Dawson: Yes, yes, yes. And I learn from direct interaction. And now, I'm also learning from observing as well.

Beth: That direct interaction is still important. Which brings up our second strategy, I communicate. And infants are communicating from their first moments. They're crying, they're cooing. They're gesturing and after a year of an experience, well, they're much better at this.

And the second year, it really takes off. And they have this impulse to communicate. To do it in whatever ways they can. And this is true for all children. Including children with disabilities and suspected delays. Most children born deaf, they'll babble with their hands during the first year. And that will just only accelerate in this second year. For children learning more than one language, they're going to be building vocabulary in both of those languages. And we're talking about all kinds of communication here. And both with familiar adults and with other children.

Dawson: And we're going to talk a lot about spoken language. But I want to say a word for the other kind, too. Children learn language from the very first – but they learn body language, too. We're so good with body language with adults that we sometimes forget that it's even going on. But we use it all the time. Where we gaze, we point, we smile, we smirk. We make gestures, we slump our shoulders. This is all communication. And children learn this language in the same way that they learn spoken language. And children are really good at this. If I pout as a child, you know what I mean. I'm not happy. And I'm using my facial expression to communicate that to you.

Beth: And they use their whole bodies to express that too. Some might turn away. Or the classic throw themselves on the floor if you've worked with toddlers, you've seen that.

Dawson: Expressions, postures, gestures, and let's recognize emotions, too, are a kind of communication. A child might be hungry and not have any other ways to express that yet. Other than by crying. But that is communication in that context.

Beth: Definitely.

Dawson: There's no doubt, though, that words are really useful. It's probably the most important communication tool that we have. And especially during the second year, when we start to talk. And talk and talk and talk.

Beth: Yes.

Dawson: Think about language from the child's perspective for a moment. As my language is developing, it deepens the kinds of interactions that I can have with adults. Suddenly, I'm better able to let you know what I'm interested in. What I'm seeing, what I'm thinking. And I can ask you about what you're seeing and what you're thinking. In this way, the invisible things are all around me are starting to become visible. And I can talk about them.

It's easy to understand things like what other people like and what they dislike, why they're doing what they're doing, which has been a mystery forever. What are people feeling and thinking? Suddenly, these are opening up for me.

Beth: And this really strikes me about all this communication is both coming from and going toward other people. This strategy is really linked to that first one. Looking to and learning from other adults.

Dawson: Absolutely. I mean, that's the whole point of communication. We want to understand one another. And as children become better communicators, they're deepening their connections with their caregivers. Their families, their friends. And let's remember their culture as well.

Beth: Now I want to bring in this third strategy, which also helps children in their blossoming relationships. Number three, "I experiment. "

Dawson: I do experiment, yes. During my second year of life, I will experiment.

Beth: Yes. Banging that rattle again and again and again. Or saying the same word over and over and over.

Dawson: Yes. And people can disparage this by saying they're getting into things, children are getting into things. But that's what good scientists do. You don't experiment just once. All of those research studies that we were talking about, they involved dozens of studies and hundreds of children. Why? Because it's almost impossible to learn something from doing it just once.

Yes. I'm going to say this word over and over. Yes, I pushed my toy off of my tray onto the floor. Not just once, but twice. Because I wanted to know the first time it was given back to me. The second time, it happened again. And I have just learned something. But that happened when my caregiver was in the room. Now the caregiver's outside of the room and I'm not sure it's going to happen again. I'm going to have to push it off one more time! Because I want to know. Do different initial conditions lead to different outcomes?

Beth: Probably not how the child would phrase it. But yes. That repetition, absolutely key and part of experimentation during this stage.

Dawson: Yes.

Beth: As Dawson has been saying, children are these amazing little scientists doing tests of all kinds. And that includes with other people. Figuring out other people, it's difficult. It's difficult for us as grown-ups. All those invisible things that Dawson mentioned are about other people. Their emotions, their ideas, and because they're invisible, we do a lot more testing to figure them out.

Think of something as simple as let's say sharing. The rules are complicated. When I share, what I share, how you share, who you share with. With different people, there is no rulebook, unfortunately. I'm sure everyone would like one. But because of that, children need to test, and they're also getting better at that communication. And that testing sometimes comes out as ...

Dawson: No.

Beth: Yes.

Dawson: No.

Beth: No, I mean, yes, I agree with you. You got it, Dawson.

Dawson: Yes.

Beth: It's easy to feel like things are going wrong when a child is upset. But this is entirely typical. And I can't say it better than the folks at Zero to Three, who write, "Caregivers recognize that toddlers constantly test limits and express opposition." And we don't want to avoid these exchanges. Because being there to help navigate them really helps children learn from them. And when we create that calm environment, we help them practice the social skills, we really show children that they're safe and they're capable of learning. And when children have that feeling of being capable, well, that's what's important to becoming capable.

Dawson: Absolutely.

Beth: And this brings us to our final strategy, "I play". Do you want to introduce this one, Dawson?

Dawson: Play is learning! It is not frivolous. It is not a break from learning. Play is learning. From the child's perspective, it can help us understand this. I mean, the world is so big and so complicated, and I want to learn about all of this. What can I do? What strategies do I have?

Beth: It's all of those things that we've said. Watching those adults in your life and how they do things and learning from them, communicating. Learning by listening. But more and more by talking, asking questions, testing boundaries. And experimenting. That child's rolling that ball again and again and again. Because they want to learn about roundness. And that's what they're learning about as they do that. Experimenting often involves learning about new things, but sometimes we experiment to get better at the things that we already know. And for that, we need practice.

Dawson: Yes. And that's what play essentially is. I mean, it is safe, joyful, practice. I may have learned how to toddle already. And I'm working on walking. But I need to practice. Why? Because there's different surfaces. Different angles. There's with and without shoes. I want to go alone and with other people. All of these are different. And the fun of play draws me in so that I practice these skills willingly.

I run through the grass because I'm chasing after my grandpa, I put the puzzle piece in just so because it feels good to do that. I put the pants on my doll so that we can play together. And as I'm doing these things, I am practicing skills. I'm developing. This is joyful learning. That's what play is.

Beth: Yes. Play involves this experimentation, too. There's a lot of overlap here. And just to bring it back to the adult perspective, one powerful thing about identifying children's strategies for learning is that it really helps us see that learning. And when we see the learning, we're in a better position to support it. And to help children along.

As adults, we are often focused on getting things done. And then we just see children as these little people who, well they're not very good at getting things done. Let's take eating for an

example. Children can seem quite unskilled. And it's true, they're not as coordinated as we are. But eating is really only part of what they're doing.

Dawson: And just, a quick reminder, stepping into help sometimes isn't always helpful. If, for instance, I'm this little girl having trouble putting my sandals on to go outside, let me try! Don't jump in too quickly. I have to learn this at some point. And I'm working on it now, I'm focused, I'm trying. Just let me do it. Don't step in too quickly. And if I get upset, yes, yes. Step in. That's fine, then. But less is more. We sometimes say be that guide on the side. I remember, I would sometimes step in too much when my daughters were growing. And I remember them pushing my hands away. And saying self it, daddy! Self it! I had to listen.

Beth: I love that. Self it, Daddy! Learning is a slow process. And really allowing sort of that time to try things in their own is so beneficial to them. Your story reminds me of my own daughter, who has loved helping in the kitchen since she was a toddler. And there were times I just wanted to crank out a meal. Or even if they were like doing something fun like baking cookies together and I just wanted to be done! But I had to remind myself, I needed to slow down and enjoy that process with her.

And then watching her, one of her favorite things is to either take the whisk or the hand mixer and just like whisk with gusto. And just go around and around and she'd get her little tongue and go "lblb" " back and forth. And like she took such delight in it. And when I slowed down, I was able to see that magic. And watching the world through her eyes.

Dawson: Yes! Seeing through their perspective, yes, yes, yes. It helps us understand their learning, too. And we need to schedule this extra time. Let children do things on their own. They are little scientists, they need time to do their experiments. Have them help you with a task that you're doing. The more that we do things like that and slow down and have them help us, the more we help with their development.

And this is again something that home visitors can share with the families that they work with. When kids are taking a long, long, long, long time to get something done, remember that that is productive time. Because during that time, there's a lot of learning going on.

Beth: And this is so important. We are going to add it as a fourth principle. "I benefit from doing things by myself when I can." Now remember, this is going to look different for different children. Children with differing abilities, different temperaments, cultures, developmental levels, and of course, we also need to adjust for children as they grow and change. But this principle, it's consistent. Give children that time and the space to learn things for themselves. Research shows that children who feel that sense of agency actually learn better.

Dawson: That doesn't mean that the adult doesn't help when needed, of course. Or demonstrate a new skill or a task. A responsible caregiver who is there to encourage and guide the child is absolutely essential.

Beth: Providing that support when needed is important. But it is that when needed. That is so key here. Because we know that stepping in too early can actually interrupt children's learning. Research also shows that providing this support helps build children's executive functioning skills, which is great for school readiness. They need this.

Dawson: Absolutely. Absolutely. Okay, now, I think we are ready to transition over to what we as caregivers can do. Here are some effective practices that we want to share.

Beth: Yes, let's do it. But before we do, a quick note about flexibility. And I know this isn't new to anyone who works with children, but I want to put the reminder anyways. Flexibility is ... It's the name of the game. Children are unpredictable!

Dawson: Delightfully unpredictable!

Beth: Yes. And I truly ... I'm really mentioning it here because we're about to talk about different practices. And you know what? Sometimes they're going to work, and sometimes they won't. For example, one child might just really not like the feeling of sand on their hands or one minute a child's happily dumping sand into the table, and then the next minute, right on their friend's head. Children are different, situations are different. And we as the adults – we need to be flexible.

Dawson: Yes, and it's good to be prepared with more than one option, too. That's a type of flexibility.

Beth: Yes. That can definitely help. Let's look at this first strategy that children use to learn. We said, "I look at the adults in my life and I learn from them," which we're going to shorten to I watch here. I want us to think back to that emotional eavesdropping video again. Children are learning from us even when we're not directly interacting with them. Dawson, knowing this, what's a good effective practice here?

Dawson: Well, we like to think that we are always on our best behavior. But maybe we're not. And it can feel like that's okay. Because maybe infants and toddlers will overlook this, they won't notice if I have a little bit of a short temper or I'm rude now and again. But no. They won't.

Beth: Yes. Children are watching how we behave, too, just like we're watching them.

Dawson: Yeah.

Beth: We as the adults are an example to them. And they will emulate what we do. Our first expected practice is set a good example.

Dawson: Yes. I am learning about how to interact in the world. And I don't have a lot of experience with this yet. I am watching what you are doing. And it's just something to be aware of.

Beth: And this is not just avoiding those bad behaviors, it's also modeling good behavior. This is an opportunity to help children learn what they should do in any given situation. There's this classic study from a few years ago where they found that 15-month-olds will work through frustration and persist on a difficult task. When they first see an adult having difficulty with that task, but then also putting in the effort to figure it out. That is super powerful. Modeling persistence can build up persistence in the children that you work with.

Dawson: And from the child's perspective, again, I'm looking at these adults and everything seems so easy for them! And here I am struggling to put on my sandal or my boot! It's so hard!

Beth: And exactly. But this kind of modeling, so sticking with difficult tasks and trying things over and over is just so beneficial to young children.

Dawson: Yes. And the same thing with behaviors and emotions. I see you being patient and waiting and now it's easier for me to be patient and to wait. And I see you getting frustrated, but then I see you take a deep breath and calm yourself down, and what am I learning? I'm learning that now, oh, when I feel that come up in me, I can do that same thing, too. I'm still learning to control my emotions. I can use all the help I can get. And that, being a good model is really, really helpful.

Beth: I think a reminder here that emotions can be invisible. And hard to see sometimes. Using that second practice here, so talking, talking to children, is super important. But especially talking about our emotions and their emotions and feelings. When you say oh, I'm feeling frustrated right now, it helps the child know what that feeling is. And then also identify their own emotions, too.

Think about it. Feelings of frustration and anger can seem pretty similar sometimes. Children need help distinguishing those two even in themselves. And hearing you talk about it can help. And then it also shows children, hey, you know what? We all get frustrated. And that's OK.

Dawson: We can learn how to deal with it, too. OK, we've moved into our second strategy that children use, which is good. They do work together, all the strategies do. I like to observe adults. But I also like to communicate with them. When you are talking to me, if you would please talk to me at my level. My level, that means my level with gestures. With expressions. But especially, and perhaps most importantly, with the words that you use.

[Audio clip begins]

[Woman and child speaking in Spanish]

[Audio clip ends]

The mom is talking at the children's level. No baby talk, using real words and real sentences that her daughter can understand. Now remember that this will change a lot during this second year. As a child, my vocabulary is growing a lot. Talking to me is going to help me. It's going to help me build that vocabulary and come to understand more and more. Feel free to repeat things, please. Talk slowly. But again, people are the most important part of my environment. And I'm excited to understand more and more as I'm going along. Better understanding the social and emotional interactions that I'm having. And this communication really helps with all of that.

Beth: It really does. And I also want to note that the mom also paused for the child to respond during that interaction, too.

Dawson: Yes. Absolutely. Thank you for bringing that up. Make space for talk. For the child.

Beth: Talking with children and not at them. There was just a beautiful back and forth conversation that involved both verbal and nonverbal communication. This is a time of repaired development in children's speech production. But it's going to look different for different

children. Some might be making sounds rather than words, and that's okay. They're still communicating. Make that space in the conversation for them.

When they're starting to say a few words and then string them together, first, help them sound things out. Repeat things. And just go with it. And resist that impulse to correct them. Because what we want to do here is encourage communication, not precision. If a child asks for more "leche," you could say, "Yes! You would like more milk! Más leche. Thanks for asking. Gracias!"

Dawson: And it's worth remembering that we are also talking about building social and emotional skills here. I learn from watching the adults and communicating with the adults. And I'm having big emotions this year. Again, please talk to me about emotions as well. And you can include pictures and visual supports whenever you can, that's really helpful. I want help identifying and understanding these emotions that I'm having. And managing them as well.

Beth: Children, they're watching, they're communicating, and they're experimenting. Number three, I experiment.

Dawson: Yes. And we should encourage these experiments, giving as much time as we've been saying as possible. Children can have autonomy. And we can do this in a couple of, I think, crucial ways. Prepare spaces. And materials for me. As a child. Speaking as a child again. It's just really, really helpful if you can get ahead of that and help me by preparing that way. One way to do that is to ask yourself what would my little scientist be interested in today?

Beth: Not just what will be most efficient or what would be easiest to manage, and of course, those are considerations, too. But most important, what will the children enjoy experimenting with today? And of course, we have to consider their developmental levels, physical abilities, and cognitive delays. And encourage you to adjust for children so they can take part, too.

Dawson: I would also point out, though, that it doesn't have to be fancy. The Keurig container holder. Brilliant, brilliant. Less is often more. Think about rotating materials. Having a mix of familiar and unfamiliar so children can have that sense of I know how to do this and I can do this and I can enjoy that sense of accomplishment and being expert at something, and then I can find something new, too. It's a wonderful way of keeping things lively for children.

What a child likes to interact with changes through time, too. And with changes, with children's temperaments and things as well, so be aware of that, as well. But I also want to recommend here time. Do not rush things. As adults, we have a tendency to try and get a lot done. But here I want to say it's okay to relax. As a child, I'm trying to learn. I'm not trying to mark things off on a sheet. I'm not trying to get something done in that way. I'm trying to learn. And if you move me from one task to another too quickly, I won't have the time that I really need to experiment in the way that is going to help me most in terms of my development.

Beth: Based on that, let's adjust number four. "Prepare space and materials for me, AND don't rush me."

Dawson: Yes. Don't step in too quickly. Don't rush me! I want to do things on my own as much as I can!

Beth: Got these strategies that give children space and time for exploration. Children like to go slowly sometimes. But we can plan for that.

Dawson: Yes. Children love to play. And play is learning. Let's emphasize this again. In that second year, play is becoming a lot more sophisticated. I still love playing with objects, but they're getting a little more complex now. But I may need your help to work with these new objects. I'm starting to play on my own a little bit more. Sometimes next to other children, trying to figure out how to work with other children.

And that's a work in progress right now. But understanding other kids and figuring out the emotions and things that are going on. I'm going to need help understanding those things. I love hiding games. I love singing games. But again, even with those, I'm going to need some help learning those things.

Beth: In short, children are enthusiastic about play, but they will need our help. Be there for them! But really follow their lead and be sure to give them that space they need to play in their own way.

Dawson: Absolutely.

Beth: And really, it's just an extension of the experimentation and exploration that children do. And the adults' role is the same. I think we can step right back through the things that we've said because they all work here. First, don't rush me. And then you want to set up the play for young children. Make sure that space is safe, the materials and activities are at the right developmental level. And free from distractions. And be there to help children be as independent as they can be.

Dawson: Yes.

Beth: Then there's talking to children. At that appropriate level. For children who are dual language learners, if you're able, facilitate their play in the home language. Or incorporate that where you can.

Dawson: And encourage them to use their home language. But also bring that language into the space as much as you can with signs and with language.

Beth: You can do that through books and through music, too.

Dawson: Absolutely.

Beth: And then finally, you'll be able to provide that good example. And home visitors can really support families and these efforts at home, too.

Dawson: Yeah. Well, we've done it forwards and now we've done them backwards. I think that's a good summary and it is just in time. There are so many useful resources. And what we call "e-click," the ECLKC. If you have any questions or want to dig more deeply into any of the topics that we've covered here, please, go there. They have so much wonderful information there. Thank you especially for all that you do on behalf of children.

Beth: Yes. Thank you so much and we hope to see you next time.

Announcer: Thank you for joining "Head Start Talks." For more information on what you heard today, visit the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, or ECLKC, at eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov.