BabyTalks: Responsive Caregiving as an Effective Practice to Support Children's Social and Emotional Development

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Identify the strategies children use to connect to other people and learn about their world in the first years of life.

- Babies are born social and ready to interact! For example, newborns often imitate facial expressions of adults.
- Babies are attracted to the human face – and even shapes that only vaguely look like human faces.
- Young children notice and follow the eye gaze of adults to learn.

Summarize the importance of healthy and supportive early relationships and responsive caregiving.

- Brain development in the first few years of life depends on strong, social relationships with a primary caregiver.
- Over time, responsive caregiving yields positive outcomes for the child, such as persistence in scholastic pursuits, that persist into adulthood.
- Strong relationships with at least one nurturing, responsive adult early on in life also builds resilience to stress. Home visitors and teachers can help support parents and other caregivers' ability to recognize their children's cues and be more responsive to them.

- Young children can form strong relationships with teachers, primary caregivers, education staff, and other important and consistent adults in their lives. The more responsive caregiving a child receives, the more resilient they become!

Describe at least three research-based components of high-quality interactions with children. High-quality interactions should:

- Be face-to-face with a responsive adult.
- Use back-and-forth, or turn-taking, interactions.
- Be contingent on the behavior or action of the child. In other words, the behaviors and actions of the adult should be influenced by the child's.
- Use "sharing attention", or the use of social cues such as pointing and eye gaze, to communicate with young children even before they can speak. This is also effective for supporting dual language learners' language development.
- Be adjusted to meet individual temperament, ability, and needs of the child. For example, allow more time to explore new surroundings for a child that is "slow to warm up" before moving on with a task or transition.

OTHER RESOURCES

Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center
- Introduction to Temperament:
- https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/mental-health/article/introduction-temperament
- Infant Toddler Temperament Tool for Infants: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/infant-toddler-temperament-tool-infants
- Infant Toddler Temperament Tool for Toddlers: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/infant-toddler-temperament-tool-toddlers
- Quick Start Guide for Responsive Interactions: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/no-search/webisode-8-quick-start.pdf
- Early Essentials Webisode 8: Responsive Interactions: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/early-essentials-webisode-8-responsive-interactions
- Individualization - Resources: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/browse/keyword/individualization
- Social Emotional Development - Resources: https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/browse/keyword/social-emotional-development