

**Caring Connections Podcast 3:
Let's Talk About... Routines**

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Amanda Perez: Hi! Welcome to the third podcast in the Early Head Start Caring Connections series. My name is Amanda Perez and I am a senior writer/training specialist with the Early Head Start National Resource Center. We hope that you are enjoying these podcasts and that you will share them with your colleagues or anyone else you think would find them helpful.

Also, take a look at the information sheet that accompanies each podcast. It will direct you to resources that we refer to and Head Start Program Performance Standards that are relevant to the information covered. In the last podcast, Laura Annunziata and some colleagues talked about the difference between nutrition and nourishment. They described how nutrition is getting food in the baby, but nourishment is making that feeding routine a rich social, emotional, and cultural experience.

This podcast will apply those ideas to routines in general, and will look particularly at the importance of routines to the youngest babies. Sandy Petersen and Donna Wittmer define daily routines as the regularly occurring events that infants and toddlers experience during the day. You have them too, you know.

Think about how you started your day. Maybe the alarm went off and you woke up, got out of bed, had a cup of coffee, maybe, before a shower and breakfast. More than likely, you have morning routines, activities that help you transition from asleep to awake, from home to work. Consider why those routines are important to you. For many of us, the transition from sleep to being awake is not so easy. These activities help ease that transition. As we look forward to a new day, and all the uncertainties it brings, all of the elements in our morning routines not only help us to take care of our physical selves, but they also offer us a sense of security, don't they?

Now, consider the infants and toddlers you serve -- whether they are in center-based or family child care settings, or if you see them at socializations and home visits. What are the major routines of their days? We have talked about feeding. What about those important arrivals and departures? Bathing and grooming, including hand washing and tooth brushing. Diapering and toileting. And sleeping. How many caregiving routines do you think a young child goes through in a day? It's enough to make all of us exhausted! Let's listen to Silvia Pizarro-Gamarra, a family child care provider with an Early Head Start program in Fairfax County, Virginia, as she describes her morning with the children she works with. As you listen, see how many routines you count.

Interviewer: How would you describe a typical day in Silvia's program? What is your typical routine?

Silvia Pizarro-Gamarra: Well, for instance, today my first baby arrived at four in the morning. I have to get up earlier since they ring the bell, so I have to be up and running, and be ready for the baby. Sometimes when he arrives he is still asleep, but most of the time he is not. I start playing with him in

the room where the other children sleep. Then I give him his milk. I stay with him for a while, reading him a book and we stay like that until he falls asleep. Then, at seven in the morning, he wakes up because Anai, the other little girl, arrives. I change Daniel's diaper.

Anai asks when she wants to go potty because she's a toddler. Then we start getting ready for the other children and we have breakfast. At ten in the morning, the children have a snack. But before their snack, we do a routine activity. We read, or we play, or do some other activity, depending on the day, and also depending on each child since they are so different, so I have to make sure that they progress almost at the same rate.

Amanda: Wow. Silvia listed twelve routines, just before lunch! Did you hear her talk about the way that she individualizes them for the children in her care? For example, she diapers Daniel at pretty regular times, right? But is flexible to when Anai needs to use the bathroom. That seems obvious, but is a great example of why individualization of routines is so important to making sure that each child's individual needs are met in ways that make sense to him or her. Your days, your work are chock full of routines. Why are they so important to young children? Consider the youngest infant -- a newborn. We often talk about how remarkable the youngest children are, how much they are learning. And they are. But they enter the world completely dependent on adults to take care of them. Physically, they need safety, nutritious food, good health, and sound sleep.

Remember that sense of security you get from your morning routine? For young infants, between birth and eight months, their primary social and emotional goal is to develop a sense of trust and security in their environment and with the people who take care of them. When they feel secure that their needs will be met, children can devote their attention to learning all that the world is offering them. One way that we can provide that sense of security is to make sure that the routines in child care or in socializations mirror, to the extent possible, the routines used at home. Angie Godfrey, the infant-toddler specialist at the Office of Head Start talked about this and showed a short clip from an Early Head Start program during the webcast, "Beyond Sweet Dreams and Bedtime Stories." Let's listen in.

Angie Godfrey: It is so important that program staff talk to families and work with them to ensure that the infants and toddlers in their care find comfort and rout -- in the routines that they know from their home. In the following clip, we'll see how one program began using a cradleboard to help a child sleep after talking with a family to find out what worked best at home.

Little Raven Limpy: Are you ready to go take a nap? Are you ready for a nap?

Narrator: Little Raven Limpy is a teacher at the Arrapahoe Early Head Start Center. Infant Hailee was having difficulty sleeping. In her role as partner with the family, Raven sought help from the home. Little

Raven Limpy: He said that he had a cradleboard. It was given to her by her great-grandmother and that he put her in there after a feeding. So, I asked him if he would bring it in and I would put her in there so she could have a good nap. I sing to Hailee a lullaby that was sang to me by my grandmother. [Singing] Cradleboard is that security and comfort. And so when she's in there, it's not like restraint or anything.

It's for her needs. Developmentally she is getting the love that -- and everything with the cradleboard. She was sleeping.

Amanda: So, in child care settings and socializations, staff can really incorporate elements from home during routines to support children in building that sense of trust and security. This is important not only in sleep routines, but in all the daily routines in the program -- from arrivals and departures, to toileting. Consider your program. How do you learn about family routines in ways that support each child's sense of security? Routines are important for home visitors, too. In the following clip, from the audio conference, "Laying Foundations: Supporting Social and Emotional Development in the Earliest Years," a home visitor, Maggie Anderson from Education Connection, talks about home visiting with a three-month-old named Joel and his parents.

Maggie Anderson: The routines of my weekly home visits, and the predictable structure of the visits in turn, encourages and supports the family in creating their own routines. For example, the routine of mom and dad diapering, offering Joel a teething ring to hold, followed by a bottle and then some tummy time provides the same sense of security for Joel as our predictable home visits provides security for mom and dad.

Amanda: So, on home visits, Maggie does two things. First, she talks with families about the importance of their children's routines. Then, through the regular scheduling and structure of her home visits, she offers Joel's family the same sense of predictability and security that Joel needs. If you're a home visitor, how do you talk with families -- particularly families with the youngest babies -- about caregiving routines? And how do you structure your home visits so that adults and children in the family feel the same sense of security that Maggie describes? Routines seem so simple, so basic, but their importance is vast. Let's close by listening to Magda Gerber, the great early childhood thinker and educator, as she talks about routines. This is a clip of a mother changing her baby's diaper from "Seeing Infants with New Eyes." As we listen to Magda, you will notice that this is an older clip, developed in the 1980's. But while our ideas about safety in cribs and how to diaper a baby may have changed, the importance of relationships and interactions between a young child and adult has not. Listen to Magda's message and watch the rich exchange between this mother and her baby.

Magda Gerber: When you're reading books, you usually talk about teaching your child, stimulating your child, playing with your child, entertaining your child. But very seldom do they say what happens while you care. Because, it is during the caring that you really develop, hopefully, a caring relationship.

Mother: We're going to undo it. Unzip, unzip, unzip. Okay, let's pull one arm out.

Magda: This is one thing you can't, you do while the child is close. You cannot do it via distance. You have to be there. You look at the child. You talk to the child. you talk about what you are doing together. You talk what you expect from the child. And all these are incredibly important learning experiences, emotional experiences, refueling experiences for both parties.

Amanda: Magda reminds us of the importance of nourishment during these routines that take up so much of a child's day. As parents, child care providers, and home visitors, we have an opportunity to

make the very most of that time. So, don't just feed a baby, nourish her. Don't just help a toddler learn to brush his teeth, nourish him. Caring for infants and toddlers is more than just daily routines. It's about using those routines to nourish the infants and toddlers you serve. Thanks so much for joining us today. You can look us up at www.ehsnrc.org, or on Head Start's Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center at eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov for more resources designed to support you in your work. Stay tuned for the next Caring Connections podcast on "Environments," hosted by Jan Greenberg.

This is Amanda Perez at the Early Head Start National Resource Center wishing you all the best and some nourishment, too, in your work.