



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

CENTER ON THE FAMILY ♥ UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Show Your Child that He is Important and Loved



Everyone, especially young children, needs to feel wanted, loved, and connected to other people. Young children thrive on consistent, loving care from important adults in their lives. Feeling important and loved by someone they know and trust allows children to learn to trust and form relationships with others. It gives them confidence to learn and explore the world on their own, and helps them develop their independence.

Children feel important and loved when they are respected, noticed, and heard. Know that to your child a simple smile, a gentle touch, time spent together, or kind words from you can mean: "I love you," "I care about you," or "You are special." Your words and actions send powerful

messages to your child. The following are simple ways to send these messages every day.

- ♥ **Pay attention to your child.** Spend time together talking and listening; show interest in his interests and activities.
- ♥ **Express your affection often through physical contact.** Enjoy holding and cuddling your child. Offer hugs, kisses, an arm over his shoulder, or a pat on his back.
- ♥ **Communicate and talk to your child often.** Tell your child that you love him. Let him know that you enjoy being with him and think he is great!

This newsletter will focus on ways to show your child how important he is to you. It will also include ideas of age-appropriate activities you may enjoy doing together with your child.

In This Newsletter:

To support you in fostering your child's healthy development and school readiness, this newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information** and suggestions about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child's development as a result of doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Community Resources:** for more information, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

Your baby gains a sense of being important and loved when you respond in a loving way to his cries and other communications. For example, when you gently talk to and pick up your baby when he cries or lifts his arms in the air, he knows by your prompt response, soothing words, and gentle touches that he is safe and that you will take care of him.



Some parents worry that they are spoiling their baby if they respond too quickly to his cries. However, research from the Center for Early Education and Development has shown that responding right away to his cries teaches him that others will respond to him in a caring and predictable way. When you respond quickly, he learns that he is capable of making his needs known and that his needs will be met. These experiences allow him to develop a strong trust in others and a sense of security.

In your interactions with your baby, when you touch, hold, comfort, rock, play with, and talk or sing to your baby, he learns that he is important and loved. The following are additional ways for you to build this important connection with your child.

- ♥ **Be a safe “home base” for your baby.** Watch how your child crawls away, then comes back to check-in with you. He wants to be sure you are still there and may be looking for some encouragement to explore more.
- ♥ **Share in his discoveries.** Your baby looks to see your reaction as he makes a new discovery — like shaking a rattle. Seeing your delight and hearing positive encouragement makes him want to explore more and try new things.

Activity for Infants: *Swaying, Swaying*

Materials: None

What to Do:

1. Sit in a chair with your baby lying on your thighs with his feet pointing toward your stomach.
2. Cradle his head with your hands and gently sway your body from side to side.
3. Gaze into his eyes and talk or sing to him. Your smiles and words may inspire him to coo and grin back at you.
4. The sound of your voice, the feel of your hands, and the sight of your face can reassure and soothe your baby.



(See page 6 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

Toddlers

One of the most important ways to show your love to your toddler is to pay attention to the small and big things he says and does. Your toddler is now learning to use his words to express his feelings and thoughts, and he wants to use this developing skill with you. He may use short sentences, gestures, and facial expressions to communicate what he needs or feels, but because he is still learning how to express himself, he may rely on you to interpret what he is trying to say.

When you take the time to actively listen to your child, try to interpret what he says, and respond to him, you are letting him know that his thoughts and feelings are important and matter to you. The following are ways that you can show that you are listening to your child.

- ♥ **Give your child your full attention.** When you are talking to your child, make sure there are not interruptions or distractions. Resist the temptation to do other things like check your cell phone, watch TV, or do housework at the same time.
- ♥ **Pay attention to his nonverbal language.** Look for emotions, gestures, and actions that your child may not be able to describe to you using

words. Ask questions or identify how it made him feel, “What happened? You have a frown on your face. Did something make you mad?”

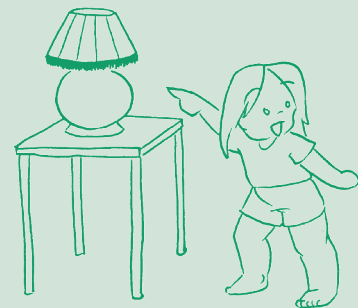


Activity for Toddlers: *Guessing Games*

Materials: None

What to Do:

1. Tell your toddler that you are thinking of something in the room and that he has to guess what you are thinking of.
2. Give him simple clues. For example, “I am thinking of something we turn on when it gets dark.”
3. If he gets it right, praise him: “Right, I was thinking of the lamp! If he does not get it right, give him simpler clues: “you can find it in the living room. It is on the little table.”
4. Next, give your toddler a chance to think of things for you to guess. Ask him for clues.



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Preschoolers

With today's busy lifestyles, time spent with your child is precious. Spending time with your child provides both of you with opportunities to learn more about each other. Most of all, it provides you and your children with time to connect with each other, and it's these connections that make your children feel loved.

Create some time each day with your child to focus your attention on him, even if it's just for a few minutes. Make sure that the time spent together is meaningful to you and your child, a time in which thoughts and feelings can be shared. The following are simple ways to spend time with your child to make him feel important and loved by you.

- ♥ **Have a little helper.** Have him help you with daily routines such as preparing dinner or helping in the yard. While it might be messier and it may take more time in the beginning, over time, as your child becomes your regular helper, this can be his special time with you.
- ♥ **Create activities that focus on your child.** Choose an activity that your child is interested in and customize it to feature him.

For example, create your own story about your child and his adventures and read it together at bedtime.



Activities for Preschoolers: *My Body Puzzle*

What You Need:

- Paper or brown paper grocery bag (for bigger outlines)
- Pencil
- Crayons
- Scissors (for adult use only)
- Cardboard
- White glue or glue stick

What to Do:

1. Have your child select a body part that he wants traced.
2. Trace an outline of the body part on the paper. Cut it out in one piece then glue it onto cardboard.
3. Have him decorate it with crayons. Talk about how each part of his body makes him unique and special.
4. Cut the puzzle into pieces (start out with a few large pieces and then increase the number of pieces as your child becomes more familiar with the activity) and encourage your child to put it all together!

(See page 6 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons. As you follow this recipe with your child, show him how to safely handle the items and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Make sure to wash your hands and your child's hands before preparing any food.

Ham and Cheese Scones

Adapted from: www.rachaelray.com

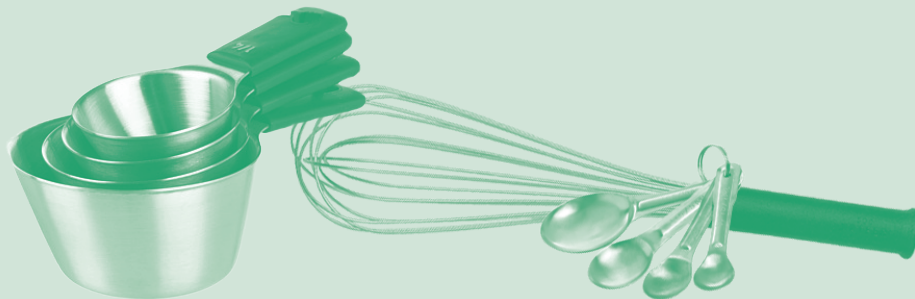
Ingredients:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 8 tablespoons cold unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup plus 1 tablespoon cold whole milk, divided
- 3 eggs, divided
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sharp cheddar cheese, shredded
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked ham, diced small



Instructions:

1. Pre-heat the oven to 400 degrees. Lightly grease or line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Have your child whisk together the flour, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl.
3. Together, cut the butter into the flour using a pastry blender or two forks. The butter should break down until it's the size of small peas.
4. Have your child whisk together $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk and two eggs in another bowl.
5. Together, add the milk mixture to the flour mixture and stir with a wooden spoon. Talk about what is happening to the ingredients.
6. Have your child add in the ham and cheese to the dough and together mix until everything is incorporated. Do not over mix.
7. Lightly flour a cutting board and turn the dough onto the board. Together, knead it just until you can shape it into a ball. Then, have your child pound out the ball using the heel of his hand until it is a flattened disk about $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch in thickness.
8. Together, cut out the scones into circles using a 2-inch biscuit cutter or the rim of a small juice glass. Place the scones onto the prepared baking sheet.
9. Whisk together the remaining 1 egg and 1 tablespoon of milk and brush the tops of each scone. Have your child make a prediction about what the scones will look like when it bakes.
10. Bake for 18–20 minutes, until they are lightly brown.



How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

Physical Development

- ♥ Use and strengthen small muscles
- ♥ Develop eye-hand coordination

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Develop a close bond with you
- ♥ Feel important and good about himself

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Develop skills needed for writing
- ♥ Build verbal skills, vocabulary, and use of descriptive language

Cognitive Development

- ♥ Develop his creativity and imagination
- ♥ Recognize math concepts like numbers, sizes, shapes, and sequences.



Community Resources

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html>

Tools for families focused on promoting the social emotional development and school readiness of young children.

Developing Self-Esteem

http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/self_esteem.html

Kids Health has lots of topics for you to read about, including self-esteem.

Suggested Books

Recommended by Hawaii State Public Library www.librarieshawaii.org.

Infants and Toddlers

My Love for You by Susan L. Roth

One can hear the loving voice of a parent or caregiver in this book as she assures the child listener of her love. This book is a counting book with a nice surprise.

Hug by Jez Alborough

Little Chimp notices various jungle animals hugging their young, but doesn't experience what they are experiencing. Finally, he cries for 'HUG!'

Preschoolers

The OK Book by Amy Krouse Rosenthal

OK is turned on its side, upside down, and right side up to show that being OK can really be quite great. This book celebrates the real skills and talents children possess, encouraging, and empowering them to discover their own individual strengths and personalities.

Hooray for Me! by Remy Charlip, Lillian Moore, and Vera Williams

What kind of me are you? This is a great book to share with children who are just starting to wonder who they are in relation to family, friends, and even pets.

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