



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Vol. III, No. 1

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

Trusting Relationships, Provide Consistent Care

Serve and Return Interactions Support Brain Development

What does trusting and nurturing relationships have to do with healthy brain development? A LOT, according to recent research.

For years, child development specialists have affirmed the importance of ensuring that young children form trusting and nurturing relationships with the adult(s) in his/her life. We have learned that, among other benefits, when young children experience trusting relationships, "they approach the world with openness and enthusiasm, and they grow to be responsive and caring people."

According to experts at Zero to Three, *these relationships have a significant impact on the development of the brain.*

The brain is made up of billions of cells called neurons. At birth, most of these neurons are present. As a child experiences the world around them, connections or wiring between neurons are formed. These connections form the brain's architecture. Neurons which don't form connections to other neurons are gradually sloughed off. When a child experiences interactions with an attentive care provider, connections are made and a healthy and optimal brain architecture is formed.

In this newsletter, we will focus on one of the significant parent and child care provider behaviors that support children's brain development: *Serve and Return Interactions.*



What are serve and return interactions?

It's what you do when a baby coos at you. You probably respond with vocalizations (coo back), eye contact, and a smile. When a baby reaches out for interaction with an adult through babbling, facial expressions and gestures—**and the adult responds** with the same kind of vocalizing and gesturing back at them—this is an example of “serve and return” interactions. Researchers are calling this type of interaction one of the most essential experiences that shape the architecture of the developing brain. It is like a game of tennis. A child will make a sound, and the adult returns the serve by noticing and responding. The infant or toddler reaches out to a trusted adult, and the adult responds by acknowledging the child's intention or need, thus encouraging further interactions. Here are some strategies for making the most of serve and return interactions:

1. Pay attention to your serve and return interactions—chances are you will find that you are already doing it.
2. Now do it more. What prevents us from doing more of this? Other things on our mind, stress about finances, relationships, etc. Clear your mind and be in the moment with the child.
3. See tips below for increasing “serve and return” opportunities with infants, toddlers and preschoolers.



Infants

- Turn to page 47 in your copy of *Learning to Grow Developmental Guidelines and Early Learning Activities for Infants and Toddlers* for an example of serve and return in the activity called *Alert Attention*.
- Make frequent eye contact.
- Hold baby so he/she can see your face.
- Play games such as “Peek-A-Boo.”
- When baby coos, babbles or makes other vocalizations, do it back.
- Respond to baby's gestures and facial expressions by doing it back and vocalizing baby's wants and emotions. “*Looks like you want me to carry you. Okay, 1-2-3, up!*”
- Talk to baby during daily routines, such as feedings. Talk about how different foods look, feel, smell and taste.
- During diapering, describe what you are doing and respond to baby's vocalizations and gestures—“*Yes, I know that feels cold. Almost done!*”

Toddlers

- Turn to page 64 in your copy of *Learning to Grow Developmental Guidelines and Early Learning Activities for Infants and Toddlers* for an example of serve and return in the activity called *Copy Me*.
- Give smiles and hugs frequently; show physical warmth.
- When the child points to something, name it.
- Allow the child to choose books to read and activities to do. Respond with enthusiasm to his/her selections.
- Read books together. Ask questions about the story and answer any questions the child may ask.
- Narrate what the child is doing. *"I see you are lining up the cars..."* Respond to the child's responses.
- Sing songs together. Initiate movements and imitate the child's movements and gestures.
- Use encouraging and positive words to tell the child what to do instead of what not to do.



- Find out the child's interests and provide activities that build on that interest. For example, if the child likes insects, go on an insect-hunt in your yard, build a house for it if appropriate, read books about it, etc.
- Acknowledge the child's efforts. *"You worked hard at that puzzle."*
- Add props to stimulate the child's interest. For example, if the child likes sand play, add different props such as funnels, shovels, small plastic animals, etc., talk to the child about what he/she is doing and join in the child's play.
- Follow the child's lead. For example, the child might make a flat circle with playdough and say, "Here is a cookie for you." You might pretend to eat it and say, *"Mmmm. That is the best cookie ever. You used chocolate chips and fresh strawberries didn't you? I can even taste some sprinkles."* Wait for child to respond. Chances are you will probably get more cookies! Continue to respond – use your imagination and introduce the child to new vocabulary words and ideas, – *"Did you grow these strawberries yourself or did you buy them from the store?"*
- Use enthusiasm to encourage the child.
- Use encouraging and positive words to tell the child what to do instead of what *not to do*.
- Give hugs, high fives, and thumbs up upon accomplishments and displaying positive behaviors.

Preschoolers

- Turn to page 79 in your copy of *Learning to Grow Developmental Guidelines and Early Learning Activities for Young Preschoolers* for an example of serve and return in the activity called *May I take Your Order*.
- Give smiles and hugs frequently; show physical warmth



Citations:

Fong, G. F., Nemoto, M. A., Chang, W., Choy, A., Furoyama, L., Hisatake, T., Kadomoto, V., Tom, A., & Yuen, S. (2007). *Learning to Grow Early Learning Activities for Young Preschoolers*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, CTAHR/Center on the Family.

Fong, G., Tom, A., Gorecki, D., Nemoto, M., Hisatake, T., Furoyama, L., & Yuen, S. (2006). *Learning to Grow Developmental Guidelines for Infants, Toddlers, and Young Preschoolers*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, CTAHR/Center on the Family.

Harvard University Center on the Developing Child (2004). Serve & Return Interaction Shapes Brain Circuitry. <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resourcetag/serve-and-return/>

Zero To Three. (No date). 27-tips-on-helping-your-child-build-relationships. <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/>



Reflection Sheet and Award Book

- To receive the award book for this month, fill out your caregiver's reflection sheet and return it to the Learning to Grow Program in the postage paid envelope by the deadline posted.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.
- Update your address or contact information if any changes have taken place.

REMINDER: Registered QCC participants can use their participation in the program to fulfill the relicensing requirement of "increased knowledge." Ask your DHS Licensing Social Worker about the requirements today.

DID YOU KNOW?

Any time that you are submitting more than one reflection sheet at the same time, feel free to enclose them in a single envelope. It will save postage costs for our funder and facilitate efficient data entry when they arrive.



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