



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE Vol. VII, No. 6

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 Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Provide Positive Guidance

Healthy Relationships, Healthy Brains, Healthy Behaviors

According to Siegel and Payne Bryson in *The Power of Showing Up*, showing up means not only being physically present but also *mentally and emotionally present for the child in the moment*. When you are mindful of your own emotional state, you can better respond sensitively to what the child's behavior is telling you, and thereby, support the child's healthy brain development and positive behaviors.

Providing **positive guidance** means guiding children to make better choices by helping them develop self-regulation and learn pro-social behaviors rather than focusing on a behavioral outcome. A secure and trusting relationship between a child and a caregiver lays the foundation for self-regulation, the upper brain's *conscious control of thoughts, behaviors and emotions*. Without this conscious awareness, the brain defaults to the *unconscious, auto-pilot reactions* of the lower-brain.

By understanding how the brain works, you will have a better understanding of children and will be able to respond versus react to difficult situations. We want children to use their whole-brain in a coordinated or integrated manner with the different parts working together. Due to *neuroplasticity* (our brain's potential to build new connections or networks based on experiences), caregivers can directly shape the child's developing brain by how they show up, respond, and provide experiences. This building of new neural connections is what integration is all about.

This newsletter will discuss brain development to help you focus on the whole-child rather than the child's behavior – to build healthy relationships, and help the child develop skills and confidence be a critical thinker who makes positive choices.



Caregiving with the Whole-Brain in Mind

We have a hierarchical brain. The lower area of the brain (also known as the *reptile brain*) allows us to act instinctually for survival and feel strong emotions. The lower-brain responses are unconscious. The upper area of the brain (also known as the *executive or mammal brain*) controls higher-order thinking, imagining and planning. The upper-brain responses are conscious, and although it does not fully mature until our mid-twenties, a child's early experiences lay a critical foundation for its development.

Young children are lower-brain dominant, reacting to their body's sensory experiences and their emotions. When upset, stress hormones flood a child's body, and the upper-brain cannot fully function. It's important for caregivers to use **whole-brain strategies** for integrating the upper and lower brain, such as:

- **Connect and Redirect** – When a child is upset, first connect emotionally with her. Once she is calm, her brain will be receptive for learning a more prosocial behavior.
- **Name It to Tame It** – When the big emotions are out of control, help the child feel more in control by naming what she is experiencing/feeling. Research shows that assigning a name or label to what we feel, calms down the activity of the emotional circuitry of the brain.



Here are some ways to use these strategies with young children:

- **Infants** – Use a nurturing tone of voice and empathetic expression to show your understanding. Acknowledge and name the child's feelings. Rock the child to calm her, then redirect and move on to an appropriate alternative.
- **Toddlers** – Use an emotions emoji chart or a picture feelings book to help the child identify her feelings. Acknowledge her feelings then model an appropriate behavior and/or provide choices of alternative appropriate behaviors.
- **Preschoolers** - use a puppet to narrate emotions for the child; for example say, "You look very sad. You didn't like that your friend didn't play with you." Once you have connected, help direct the child toward problem-solving; for example you can say, "Is there another friend who you can ask to join you?"

In addition, Seigel and Payne-Bryson in *The Whole Brain Child*, recommend the following whole-brain strategies that help to lay the critical foundation for children's brain development.

- **Engage, don't enrage** – In a high- stress situation, engage the child's reflective upper-brain (e.g., speaking calmly and gently) rather than triggering her reactive lower brain.

- **Move it or lose it** – Have the child actively engage her whole body in movement as it is a powerful way to help regain upper and lower brain balance.
- **Use it or lose it** – Whenever you can, provide the child with opportunities to use her upper-brain (e.g., by giving the child choices) so it can be strong and integrated with the lower brain.

Here are some ways to use these strategies with young children:

- **Infants** – while holding the child, use her movement preferences (rocking, or simply going on a walk with you) to calm her, then reassure her and engage her upper-brain by saying, “You’re safe, I’m here.”
- **Toddlers** – save your “no,” avoid power struggles, and engage the child’s upper-brain for example say, “Hmm, I wonder how you can use this stick?” Then get the child moving by showing her what she could do, such as marching while hitting the stick on a pot to make a sound versus throwing it.
- **Preschoolers** – as often as possible, provide opportunities for the child to make decisions for herself and problem-solve for example you can say, “You and your friend both want to play with the toy. Hmm, what could you do?”



Reflection Questions

When a caregiver is present and attuned to the child’s signals, she responds with understanding of the whole-child rather than the overt behavior. To help you put together a picture of the **whole-child**, here are some questions you can reflect on:

- How intensely does the child respond to things?
- How active is the child?
- How does the child interact with others?
- How does the child respond to change?
- How persistent or easily frustrated is the child?
- How does the child respond to different sensory experiences?
- How is the child’s development (skills/abilities)?

Training Opportunity

This online training offers a certificate for training hours.

Healthy Relationships and Attuned Interactions Support Early Development
by Early Childhood Investigations

<https://www.naeyc.org/events/trainings-webinars/recorded-webinars>

Featured Activity

A Jar Full of Feelings



What You Need:

- Clear plastic jar
- Pom-poms of different colors

What to do:

1. Have the child choose a pom-pom color for different emotions e.g., yellow=happy, blue=sad, purple=nervous, etc.
2. When talking with a child on how she is feeling, have her fill the jar with the corresponding colored pom-poms to show how she is feeling. For example, the child may pick 10 blue pom-poms and 2 yellow pom-poms because she's feeling very sad, but also a little happy.
3. Talk about what she could do to remove or add pom-poms to her feeling jar, associating it with how she's feeling. For example, "I'm sorry you're feeling sad today, but I see you're also a little happy. What can we do to make you feel happier?"
4. Dump the pom-poms out and have the jar ready for next time.

Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the Hawai'i State Public Library www.librarieshawaii.org

Infants and Toddlers

Baby Faces by Margret Miller

This book uses photographs to share various facial expressions of feelings e.g. yucky or oh-oh.



Calm with the Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

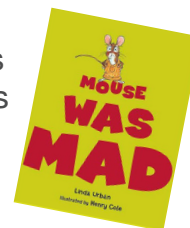
When the very hungry caterpillar gets anxious, he takes a moment to breathe.



Preschoolers

Mouse was Mad by Linda Urban

This book shares how a mouse struggles to express his anger. His animal friends model different ways, only for the mouse to discover his own way may be best.



Sometimes I Feel like a Storm Cloud by Lezlie Evans

A child describes her experiences of a variety of emotions.



Citations

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Siegel, D. J. & Payne Bryson, T. (2011). *The Whole-Brain Child*. New York: Delacorte Press.



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