



Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

The Power of 'Ohana

Did you know that 'ohana means more than just family? The root word *'oha* refers to the offspring of the Kalo (Taro) plant and *ana* is a term that means regeneration. In this regard, just as the taro plant produces offshoots, our 'ohana is multigenerational, growing in different directions. Hawai'i families are unique, often with various family structures, such as single-parent families, blended families, interracial families, and multigenerational families, and with different strengths and challenges.

One of the biggest questions that have fascinated researchers is, "What qualities make a family strong?" According to a decades long research study from the University of Nebraska, the following six traits define a strong family unit:

- ♥ **Appreciation and affection.** Members of strong families show each other love in positive and respectful ways.
- ♥ **Spiritual well-being.** Strong families have religious or ethical values and commitment to important causes.
- ♥ **Effective management of stress and crisis.** Strong families can adapt and grow through crisis.
- ♥ **Commitment to each other.** They invest time and energy into family activities. They are loyal to each other and the wellbeing and happiness of each family member.
- ♥ **Positive communication.** Members of strong families talk and listen to each other in respectful ways, sharing everyday moments, challenges, and triumphs.
- ♥ **Enjoyable time together.** They prioritize spending quality time together, developing family routines such as family meals, picnics, and holiday celebrations.



This newsletter will highlight some examples of the six traits to strengthen your 'ohana at each age level—infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

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 by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

Infants

Babies come into this world wired to connect and form relationships. The bond that you form with your infant will have an impact on his ability to manage stress. In fact, simple gentle and loving daily interactions help children regulate their emotions as they get older. By providing responsive care, you are building two traits of strong families: **appreciation and affection**, and **effective management of stress and crisis**.

Responsive care means watching and tuning in to your child's cues in order to respond to his needs. This may include:

- ♥ **Observation.** What are your baby's likes and dislikes? When is he alert, hungry, or tired? Knowing your baby's schedule will help you to build a predictable routine so he can feel safe and loved.
- ♥ **Responding.** When baby is crying, it is usually a cue that he is uncomfortable. Responding to his need to be fed, changed, or held is responsive care. If he still continues to fuss and you need a break, put baby down in a safe place such as a crib. Take a break to calm yourself or to call a



friend or family member to support you. Check on your baby every 10-15 minutes.

- ♥ **Nurturing.** Holding, kissing, talking and singing to your baby are great ways to let him know that he is loved. It is easy to do this when babies are calm and happy, but it's also important to nurture babies when they are fussy, crying, and colicky. Attending to him, even when he is fussy, will tell him that he can trust and rely on you.

Activity for Infants: *Tummy Time*

What You Need:

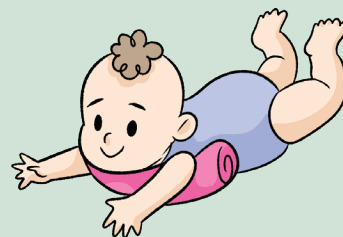
Clean blanket

*Optional pillow or towel

What to Do:

1. It's never too early to start tummy time! Begin by placing baby on his tummy on a clean blanket.
2. Watch his cues. If he begins to get fussy, pick him up and try again later.
3. If your baby dislikes tummy time, try the following tips:
 - Use your own chest as a surface for tummy time.
 - Get to his eye level and sing or talk to him.
 - Place a long firm cylinder-shaped pillow or rolled towel, under his chest to make it easier for your baby to lift and turn his head.
4. If baby falls asleep on his tummy, roll him to his back and place him safely in his crib.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



Toddlers

As your toddler grows, he is learning that he is a separate person. He may want to show his independence by trying to feed or dress himself. Although he is more independent, it continues to be important to build a warm, stable and loving relationship. This goes hand in hand with the following two traits of a strong 'ohana: **commitment to each other and enjoyable time together.**

Spending one-on-one time with your toddler can be challenging, however the American Academy of Pediatrics has found numerous benefits of spending quality time together to children's healthy development. In fact, it often said that when families play together, they stay together! Here are some tips to make the most of your time together:

- ♥ **Unplug.** Turn your phone on silent and focus your attention on your toddler. This will tell him that he is important, allowing for a deeper connection. Have him choose an activity to play with you, read a story together, or simply talk to him about what you are doing together today.
- ♥ **Follow his lead.** Watch to see what he is interested in, then join in his play. You can



even provide an object, toy, or activity for your toddler and then see what he does with it.

- ♥ **Connect during daily routines.** Busy working families may have to squeeze time in during daily routines such as bath time. Grab a bath toy or even just empty plastic cups and join him in some water play fun exploring measuring, pouring, and sink/float.

Activity for Toddlers: *Bath Paint*

What You Need:

- 1/4 cup baby shampoo or baby wash
- 1/4 cup corn starch (sifted)
- Food coloring
- Small containers
- *Optional paintbrushes

What to Do:

1. Add corn starch to a small container.
2. Mix baby shampoo or baby wash with corn starch and stir until the corn starch is dissolved.
3. Add a few drops of food coloring to the mixture and stir until it is well-mixed.
4. Add more food coloring if you want the color to be darker or brighter.
5. Grab a paintbrush and join your toddler in creating a mural. Or use your hands to fingerpaint!

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Preschoolers

Your preschooler is probably asking lots of “what if” and “why” questions as he tries to figure out the world around him. He is also noticing and mimicking the people around him, especially the most important people in his life—his family! This is a perfect time to teach your preschooler two important traits that define strong families—**spiritual well-being** and **positive communication**.

Spiritual well-being can be a religious belief that your family embraces, or it might be the values that are important to your ‘ohana. Experts at *Parents* (Bracken 2023) list some common values that families often strive to teach their young children:

- ♥ **Honesty.** When you talk about the importance of being honest and model that in your interactions with others, your preschooler will learn the importance of truthfulness.
- ♥ **Respect.** Simply put, respect means listening to others and waiting for your turn to speak. As your child gets older, it is important for him to understand that he can have a strong opinion, but that others might also have different but valuable opinions as well. Model respect by



listening carefully to his stories (even if it takes a while) and responding with interest.

- ♥ **Empathy.** This is the ability to imagine how others are feeling and respond with care. You can help your child develop empathy by talking to him about how characters in a book may be feeling and how he would respond to help that character.

When families build these values, they are also building positive communication patterns. Speaking to each other and listening with respect creates healthy family interactions.

Activity for Preschoolers: *Paper Cup Telephone*

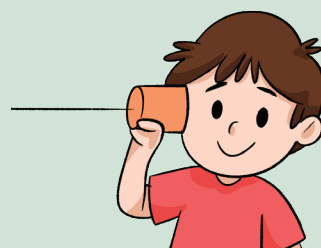
What You Need:

- 2 Paper cups
- String
- *Optional markers to decorate the cups

What to Do:

1. Have your child use markers to decorate the cups (*optional).
2. Poke a hole through the bottom of the cup with a paper clip or needle.
3. Thread the string through the bottom of the cup and tie a knot to secure it. Thread the other end of the string through the second cup, tying a knot at the end.
4. Stand apart and ensure the string is taut. Place your mouth on one cup and ask your child to hold the second cup to his ear as you say something silly (e.g., “Bananas in pajamas”). Ask your child to guess what you said. Next, have him take a turn speaking while you listen.

(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)



How This Helps

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

Physical Development

- ♥ Use and strengthen large muscles such as neck, arms, and legs
- ♥ Learn to use his senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching

Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Learn to cooperate with others
- ♥ Feel important and good about himself

Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Increase his observation, listening, and understanding skills, and attention span
- ♥ Build verbal skills and vocabulary

Cognitive Development

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



Kids in the Kitchen

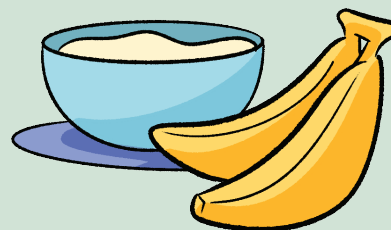
Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math (quantities, measurement), science (how matter changes), fine motor (stirring, pouring), and literacy (print awareness). As you make this recipe with your child, talk about kitchen safety. Show her how to handle items safely and allow her to do as much as she is capable of. Praise his efforts, and ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Most of all, have fun!

Tofu Banana Pudding

Adapted from Keiki Can Cook: Fun Recipes to Make with Kids.

Ingredients:

- 16 ounces silken tofu
- 3 ripe bananas (mash 2, slice 1)
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla



Directions:

1. In a large bowl, allow keiki to mash tofu, and 2 bananas. Combine sugar, and vanilla.
2. Blend until smooth.
3. Pour into serving bowl or dish. Cover and refrigerate until chilled.
4. Slice 1 banana and layer the pudding and bananas for a deliciously healthy treat!

Resources

Zero to Three

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/play-activities-for-12-to-24-months/>

Zero to Three provides great ideas for you to bond with your infant or toddler

Essentials for Parenting Toddlers and Preschoolers

<https://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/toddlersandpreschoolers/index.html>

Parenting is hard work! This resource provides tips and activities to help you handle some common parenting challenges in ways that build a strong 'ohana.



Suggested Books

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

Infants and Toddlers

The Family Book by Todd Parr

The message in this vividly illustrated board book is that every family is special and the only thing that matters is love

Families by Shelley Rotner and Sheila Kelly

This book includes photos of all types of families helping young children providing a mirror into their own families and an awareness of other types of families.

Preschoolers

The Rabbit Listened by Cori Doerrfeld

When Taylor builds a castle that gets knocked down, he gets very upset. Animals come by one-by-one to try and offer advice. But only an empathic rabbit listens and knows exactly what he needs.

Listen to My Trumpet by Mo Willems

Piggie plays her new trumpet for her good friend Gerald, but makes loud and not-so-musical notes. But Piggie isn't trying to make music. She is trying to show Gerald how much she values him by sounding like an elephant. This book demonstrates the values of honesty, respect and empathy.



Learning to Grow is a project of the University of Hawai'i, Windward Community College, with funding from the Hawai'i Department of Human Services. Visit our website at www.learningtogrowhawaii.org or visit us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/learningtogrowhawaii