



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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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

Build Trusting Relationships

Building Relationships with Effective Communication

Did you know that how you communicate with children in your care can have a strong impact on their security, learning, and relationships? In fact, every warm, responsive interaction you have helps to build pathways in the brain for language, emotional regulation, and problem-solving. The way you communicate verbally and non-verbally will help build a strong, trusting relationship, fostering a sense of safety and security.

The way you speak with children shapes how they see themselves and the world. Here are some specific things that you can do when talking to children:

- **Get on their level** – Kneel or sit close so you are face-to-face or eye-to-eye with them. They will see that you are genuinely interested in what they are saying or doing. This increases connection by helping the child feel seen and heard.
- **Use simple, clear language** – Young children process information in short phrases better than long explanations. This helps them understand what you want. For example, "Please tell me what you want — you can point or use your words," or "We can run outside; we use walking feet inside." When they know what you want, it makes it easier for them to respond.
- **Practice active listening** – Reflect back what you hear or see. For example, "I hear you telling me that you're frustrated because the block tower fell," or "You pushed the bowl off the highchair — you're telling me you are full."

In this newsletter, we will explore these strategies to communicate effectively with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.



Get on Their Level

Coming down to a child's level means making eye contact to communicate your interest, attention, and engagement. It also means being able to talk to the child face-to-face and listen to their responses. By getting on the child's eye level to communicate, you are establishing trust and building a connection with the child. When children feel seen and heard, they are more likely to be open to new things, take risks, and participate in activities. Here are some ideas for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers:

- As you hold the infant close and look into her eyes, the sound of your voice brings her comfort. Hum or sing to her. Don't worry about how you sound when you sing; she will respond because you are singing to her.
- Crouch down to a toddler's level in the grass, for example, to look at what has caught her attention. Comment on what she is seeing and saying, for example, "Yes, you see so many legs on the green caterpillar."
- Secure preschoolers' attention by being close to them and speaking their name in a calm voice before engaging in a conversation or asking a question.



Use Simple, Clear Language

For young children, it is important to use simple, clear language, keep sentences short, and narrate what you or the child is doing throughout the day, for example, "Auntie is washing hands." Or "You are stacking the blocks." By using this type of language, you are helping the child to hear and understand the world around them without overwhelming them with too many words or questions.

Here are some ways to use simple, clear language with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers:

- When you are close to the infant, vary the pitch of your voice – this is called "Parentese." Use a high-pitched, sing-song voice to exaggerate words, such as "I loooooovveee yooooouuuu" or "oooohhh, you want moooooorrrre."
- Toddlers are easily distracted and can get overwhelmed by lots of words. Use specific language and limit instructions to only 1–2 steps at a time. For example, "Please pick up the blocks and put them in the basket."
- Avoid posing statements as a question. For example, "Could you please put the toys away?" This question allows preschoolers the opportunity to say "No" or ignore the question. Instead, say: "Please put your toys away." This gives her a clear directive, so she knows exactly what you want her to do.

Practice Active Listening

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Active listening involves giving your full attention to a child and is a great way to enhance your connection.” This technique is a good way to let the child know you are interested in what she is doing and that you are really listening to what she has to say.

Active listening is a practice of engaging closely with what the speaker is saying. Here are some practical examples of how to engage and show attentiveness:

- Tune in to what the infant is communicating and respond in a nurturing way by nodding and smiling. This shows her that she matters and that her needs will be met by someone who cares about her.
- Give the toddler time to find the words for their ideas. Pause for 10 seconds after asking a question. Wait to hear the answer rather than saying the words for them. You can also repeat back what you think your child wants or needs. For example, if she says “Apple,” you can say, “Do you want more apple?” Then pause for her response.
- Show genuine interest by asking the preschooler open-ended questions, which are questions you don’t know the answer to. For example, “What are you creating?” Be present and allow time to listen and have back-and-forth conversations regarding her interests or wonderings.



Citations

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (August, 2024). *Essentials for Parenting Toddlers and Preschoolers - Tips for Active Listening*. <https://www.cdc.gov/parenting-toddlers/communication/active-listening.html>

Zero to Three. (2016, February 25). *How to Support Your Child’s Communication Skills*. <https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/how-to-support-your-childs-communication-skills/#:~:text=Respond%20to%20the%20baby%27s%20gestures,continue%20to%20develop%20these%20skills>

Training Opportunity

Infant-Toddler Care: Language and Literacy

Discover ways to support language and literacy development in infants and toddlers and learn 5 communication strategies. View this *Better Kid Care* webinar and earn a 2-hour certificate of completion for \$5.00.

<https://extension.psu.edu/programs/betterkidcare/lessons/itc-language-literacy>

Featured Activity

“I Spy”



What you need:

- None

What you do::

1. Choose one player to be the “Spy,” who selects a visible object without revealing it. Make sure everyone can see the object.
2. The Spy gives a clear, specific clue by saying, for example, “I spy with my little eye, something that is red...” (Color/shape/texture or size of the object).”
3. The other player or players take turns asking questions about the object, such as, “Is it in the car with us?” or “Is it my red wallet?”
4. The player who correctly guesses the object will be the next spy.

This is a great game to play while having to wait in the car. It shows children that you enjoy engaging with them, and are curious about how they see the world.

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Suggested Books

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

Infants and Toddlers

Baby! Talk!

by Penny Gentieu

Infants will enjoy looking at the pictures of other babies in this book. Each page introduces a baby doing things that babies do, such as finding their feet, playing patty-cake, eating, hugging, and more.



Can You Say Please? (Rookie Toddler)

by Children’s Press

This book introduces manners to children, such as sharing and how important it is to say please and thank you.

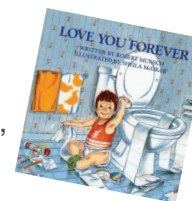


Preschoolers

Love You Forever

by Robert Munsch

“I’ll love you forever, I’ll like you for always, as long as I’m living, my baby, you’ll be.” This story of the love mama has for her child touches both children and adults alike. The ending has a twist most don’t see coming.



The Book of Rules

by Brian Gehrlein

This book clearly presents a series of rules that the children must follow to avoid being eaten by Dennis the monster. Some of these rules include sitting on the floor, making a fish face, and preparing to listen mindfully.



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