



# Tips for Tots



## Tip #7: The Early Years: Supporting Development

## Strategies

Did you know?

### Infant/Toddler:

The first three years of life are marked by rapid growth and development. It is important for caregivers to have an understanding of typical development and to know that timelines can vary for each child. Development happens in different domains such as cognitive or thinking, physical, emotional, and social. Early experiences play a critical role in the child's development and adverse experiences can derail them. Developmental milestones can help assess if the child is on track. Protective factors can mitigate the impact of adverse experiences by building resiliency in the child and providing needed supports.

### Preschool:

Preschoolers are more aware of their surroundings than adults realize. It is important that caregivers are sensitive to the individualized needs of each child based on where the child is developmentally and on the profound impact significant stressors have upon their development. Consider the child's history, including typical and atypical behaviors in all developmental areas. Be aware of the child's stress. This can be obvious (regression in previously mastered skills) or subtle, such as withdrawal or inattention. Work to develop a comprehensive plan that is based on strengths and relationships and provides the needed support.

### Infant/Toddler:

- Learn about the typical development of infants and toddlers.
- Understand that infants and toddlers communicate through behavior. The reactions that infants and toddlers may have to stressful events can significantly affect their developmental track.
- Use an assessment in an environment that the child finds comforting/familiar and one that is responsive to the complexity of development in all domains to help understand the child's skill development.
- Develop a working knowledge of attachment. Know that loving and responsive infant/caregiver relationships provide the foundation for healthy development.
- Evaluate the attachment between child and caregivers include observations in many settings. How do they interpret the child's behavior? Are they capable and able to nurture, empathize and put the needs of the child first? Can they cope with specific issues of infant/toddler? What might be helpful to this caregiver to better support the child/caregiver relationship?
- Include medical evaluations & histories in the assessment. Consider daily patterns of sleep, eating, etc.

### Preschool:

- Understand where the child is in his/her development and the impact of stressful life experiences upon this.
- Monitor the child's development in all domains, making referrals to obtain any additional support. Provide caregivers with information on resources in their community.
- Know the social/emotional needs of the preschooler. Do they have opportunities to interact with peers & develop social skills?
- A high quality preschool experience can support the child's development and provide the structure and security he needs. Determine which preschool setting is most appropriate for the child. Do this through interviews and site visits.
- Think about the how the child views himself in his family unit. Create visuals or life books to help support the child's understanding of his/her experiences and circumstances.
- Develop positive rapport with child, family members & providers.
- Support the child in developing coping skills to manage emotional challenges. Embed these techniques into everyday routines.
- Build the child's resiliency by focusing upon the child's & family's strengths and promoting healthy relationships.

### Resources:

CT Early Learning Guidelines  
<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/>  
Ages and Stages Questionnaire ASQ and ASQ:SE Social Emotional

Contact your area ECCP Consultant for **free** Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation services.

To learn of the consultant in your area visit [www.eccpct.com](http://www.eccpct.com) or call ECCP at (860) 704-6378

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