

Did you know 85% of a child's brain develops in the first five years?

Early Childhood Years Are Most Important In Brain Development

A child's brain continues to develop long after birth. The term "brain development" refers to more than how smart a child is. It is the actual growth that takes place in the brain. The experiences a child has in the first few years creates the connections between brain cells to develop the foundation for relationships and learning.

Repeated positive experiences with caring adults, strengthens the connections to create the growth of a brain. This makes the brain ready to get along with others and eager for more learning. However, constant exposure to stress, limited stimulation, poor nutrition and lack of a nurturing relationship all create a brain being "wired" in a way that leads to emotional and learning problems. Growing brains adapt to what ever environment they are exposed to. It will adapt to a negative environment just as easily as it will adapt to a positive environment

Understanding this makes us aware that parents and caregivers can have a long-lasting impact. Here are some simple things your child wants you to do to help boost his/her brain power.



Warm Responsive Care

Talk with me, hug me, attend to my needs. Smile at me and make me feel secure. Routines and rituals are important for my development. My brain likes to know what to expect next.

I need loving touch. When you pay attention to my needs you let me know that I am loved. When you comfort me when I am upset or sad, it helps me learn how handle stress, and how relationships work now and when I'm grown.





Talk

My brain is making connections from what I hear you say. So, while we're together – at home, in the store, in the car --- tell me what we're doing and seeing. Your words help me learn. Read stories to me or show me pictures in a book. Give me a chance to practice using the language I am learning.



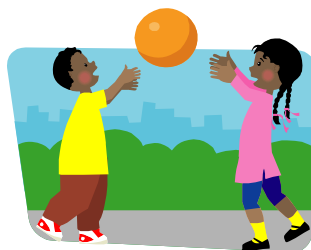
Safe, Healthy Environment

Make sure I eat a variety of good foods. My brain needs healthy foods and they will help me behave better. I will learn best when I have a breakfast that includes protein, not sugar. I need to have regular checkups and make sure my immunizations are current. Provide a safe and lead free environment for me to explore. During my first year, put me to sleep on my back. Sleep and rest give my brain time to process all I am learning.



Play

Play is how I discover the world. Lots of interaction and exploration help my brain form connections that make learning easier. Play with me and talk with me to help me understand. Lots of physical activity gives my brain the oxygen it needs. Limit my TV time! I learn MUCH more from playing with real things.



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