Building Blocks for Resilience

Birth to 2 Years

Alberta Health Services
Provincial Addiction and Mental Health

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Building Blocks for Resilience: Birth to 2 Years
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What is this booklet about?

Building Blocks for Resilience: Birth to 2 Years, is designed to provide parents and caregivers with information and activities to help build resilience in their baby (birth to 12 months) or toddler (13 to 24 months). Some of the information and activities in this book applies to all children from birth to two years. Other information and activities have been given an approximate age range. Please note that the age ranges are **only a guideline**—every child develops at their own rate.

Other books available in this series:

Building Blocks for Resilience: 2 to 4 Years
Building Blocks for Resilience: 5 to 8 Years

We use the term 'parents and caregivers' throughout this booklet to refer to anyone who cares for babies and toddlers aged birth to two years—such as parents, grandparents, relatives, foster parents, and other caregiving adults.

Community Resources

- Public Health Unit: www.ahs.ca
- Friendship Centre: anfca.com
- Community Library: thealbertalibrary.ca
- Parent Link or Family Resource Centres: www.humanservices.alberta.ca/family-community/15576.html

If you're feeling overwhelmed or frustrated, need more information, or want to talk to someone call:

- Mental Health Help Line: **1-877-303-2642**
- Health Link: **811**

Supervise your child with any objects they play with. Small objects may be swallowed and cause your baby to choke. Follow toy manufacturer guidelines for age. If your baby is too young for the toy, don't let them play with it. The safest toys for small children are bigger and longer than the opening and length of a toilet paper roll. For more information on choking prevention go to: myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?Hwid=uk1002

Your opinion matters. To tell us what you think of this resource go to:
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Introduction: Building Resilience in Your Child

Parents and caregivers are the most important people in helping to build their child's resilience.

Starting from birth, the relationship your child forms with you and other caregivers plays an important role in their healthy brain development. As they grow, you'll help them learn to solve problems, cope with conflict, and handle stress. This will nurture their positive mental health and strengthen their **resilience**.

Resilience means being able to 'bounce back' from serious challenges and hardships. It's driven by your biology and surroundings. Resilience is something that we work on throughout our lives. People who are more resilient tend have better relationships, do better in school, and are less likely to get depression.

Building Blocks for Resilience

This booklet provides information, tips, and activities to help you nurture your child's positive mental health and resilience through:

1) building attachment
2) communication & language
3) social & emotional development
4) learning through play
5) cultural & community connections

For more information about your child's development go to: **www.healthyparentshealthychildren.ca**

Brain Development & Mental Health

Experiences that happen early in life shape and wire your child's brain. Warm and positive experiences help them develop a secure attachment with you and allows them to see the world as a safe place. When you sing, talk, play, and take care of your child, their brain responds in positive ways. This creates connections that will help them learn to communicate, cope with strong emotions, handle conflict, socialize, and understand who they are. These experiences help to support a lifetime of positive mental and physical health.

Doing Activities With Your Child

Your child's personality and temperament affects how strongly they experience feelings like frustration or anger, how they react in different situations, and how easily they calm down. There's no right or wrong temperament. Take the time to understand, accept, and appreciate their unique temperament and personality by nurturing individual strengths at their pace.

Tips when doing activities:

Be sensitive. Watch how they respond to an activity, and move on to something else if they're scared, frustrated, or bored.

Have fun. If they're laughing and/or smiling, you're on the right track.

Be present. Put your electronic devices such as tablets and smart phones away.

Coping with Stressors

If you or your family are having trouble managing your stress talk to your healthcare provider or call Health Link at **811**.

Stressors are a normal part of life—they can be physical (e.g., very hot or cold temperatures, illness, pain), psychological (e.g., events, situations, people), or anything we think of as negative or threatening. Learning to cope with stressors, challenges, and hardship can help build your child's resilience as long as you're there to help, support, and respond to them. For example, your child may have to wait a few minutes to be fed or until you can get to them after a nap. Respond and reassure them with your voice that you're coming (e.g., I'm just in the laundry room. I'll be there very soon."). Parents and caregivers who cope well with everyday stressors show their children to do the same.

Stress & Toxic Stress

Stress is what we feel in our bodies after stressors cause the release of stress hormones (e.g., adrenaline, cortisol). These hormones do things like make you breathe more quickly and make your heart beat faster to let you fight, freeze, or get away from danger.

Stress can become a problem when it takes place over a long period, is intense, or when a child doesn't get the help they need. This is known as **toxic stress** and can be harmful to a child's development, mental and physical health, and resilience for their lifetime. Supportive and responsive relationships with caring adults can prevent or partially reverse the damaging effects of toxic stress over time.

Being a Resilient Parent or Caregiver

Becoming a parent or caregiver can be a period of joy and excitement but it's also a time of change and adjustment. Parents and caregivers may experience stress caused by stressors that come with raising a child such as:

- Normal events and life changes (e.g., getting less sleep, money problems, calming a crying baby, always watching your child).
- Unexpected events (e.g., finding out your baby has a medical problem, losing a job).
- Individual factors (e.g., past traumatic experience, coping with mental illness, substance use).
- Social factors (e.g., relationship problems, feeling lonely, or isolated).
- Community, society, or environmental factors (e.g., poverty, racism, a natural disaster).

Asking for help is a sign of strength and positive mental health!

If you're feeling overwhelmed or frustrated, need more information, or want to talk to someone call:

- Mental Health Help Line: **1-877-303-2642**
- Health Link: **811**

Tips for Being a Resilient Parent

Ask for help. Reach out to your healthcare provider, community programs, family, and friends.

Get enough sleep. Nap or rest when your baby naps. Even short periods of sleep will help you regain energy.

Be active. Get fresh air and exercise—it may help you relax and relieve stress.

Eat well. Eat plenty of vegetables and fruit and drink lots of water to keep energized and healthy.

Make social connections. Everyone needs a positive, trustworthy person they can depend on during the ups and downs of caring for a new child.

Learn. Get to know how babies and toddlers grow and develop.

Stay calm when your child is upset. Babies and toddlers can tell what you're feeling and they respond to your feelings. If you stay calm, this will help your child calm down faster because they feel safe, secure, and loved.

Model good coping skills. Your child sees your emotions through your words, facial expressions, and actions. When you're upset name your emotions. Talk about how you feel and how you're going to cope so that your child can see what you do. (e.g.,"I'm frustrated that the traffic is so slow." *Take a deep breath*. "Let's sing a song while we wait.").

Breathe. When you're in a situation that you find frustrating try breathing in and out of your nose.

- Breathe in for a count of 5.
- Breathe out for a count of 5.
- Continue breathing this way for 5 or 6 breaths.

If a count of 5 is too long or too short adjust your count but keep it even (e.g., count 4 in and 4 out or count 6 in and 6 out). Often one breath is enough to start a calming response.

Apologize. If you've experienced a strong emotion and how you handled it has upset you or your child, apologize for your behaviour and reassure your child. (e.g., "I'm sorry my loud voice scared you. I was angry and shouldn't have yelled. No matter what, I'll always love you." *Follow with a hug*.)

Baby Blues, Postpartum Depression, & Anxiety

Baby Blues

During the first 2-3 weeks after your baby is born, you may have periods of postpartum (baby) blues. You may feel sad, cry for no reason, feel very tired, or have trouble concentrating. This is common. If you feel like this, it's a good idea to talk to someone about your feelings.

Did you know?
Although postpartum blues, depression, and anxiety are most common in birth mothers, it can also occur in fathers and other primary caregivers. If you or your partner have experienced these symptoms for longer than 2-3 weeks talk to your healthcare provider or call Health Link at **811**.

Postpartum Depression & Anxiety

If these feelings don't go away or get worse after 2-3 weeks you may have postpartum depression and/or anxiety. Postpartum depression and/or anxiety can happen anytime within the first year after your baby is born.

Common symptoms of postpartum depression include:

- feeling sad, worthless, hopeless
- having mood swings
- being close to tears for no reason
- eating too much or too little
- not looking after yourself
- not wanting to do anything

Common symptoms of postpartum anxiety include:

- worrying that something bad will happen to you or your baby
- feeling irritable, restless, or unable to relax
- being very strict with routines and planning
- having panic attacks (e.g., rapid heart beating, fast breathing, tight muscles, sweating, upset stomach)
- feelings of extreme fear that don't go away

Getting Help

Postpartum depression and/or anxiety responds well to treatment. Getting help when you first notice symptoms can help you feel better faster.

For more information on postpartum blues, depression, and anxiety talk to your healthcare provider, call Health Link at **811** or go to:
www.healthyparentshealthychildren.ca

Building Attachment

One of the most important ways that you can help build your child's resilience is by forming a secure **attachment**. Attachment is the term used to explain the emotional relationship that develops between you and your child.

Having at least one secure attachment relationship from birth—most often this is with a parent or primary caregiver—is the most important factor for children in developing resilience. Forming other attachments (e.g., siblings, grandparents, other caregivers) can also play a positive role in your child's development.

Tips for Building Attachment

Attachment takes time. It doesn't happen instantly, it takes place through daily interactions (e.g., caring, feeding, talking, reading, singing, playing). You develop a secure attachment by caring for and responding to your child in a warm and caring way.

Soothing isn't spoiling. When you soothe and respond to your child, you're not spoiling them. Soothing lets them know that they are being heard and cared for. You may not even need to pick them up, but reassuring and responding to them is important for building attachment and trust.

Serve and return. Your daily interactions are much like playing a game of tennis. For example, when your baby coos or looks at you, they're 'serving the ball' to you. When you smile back or speak to your baby, you're 'returning the ball' to them. These are called serve and return interactions and are an important part of building attachment.

Skin-to-skin contact helps babies and toddlers feel secure and attached. Each child, parent, or caregiver is unique. What works for one may not work for another. Do what works best for you and your child (e.g., holding, cuddling, massaging).

You won't always get it right. Sometimes you won't be able to comfort your child—what's important is that you respond warmly and calmly.

Attachment Building Activities

> Never leave your baby alone on their tummy. Ensure that they're awake, are on a firm, flat surface while doing this activity. Always place your baby on their back for sleep.

Face Play (Ages 0 to 3 months)

Your baby is getting to know your face and is starting to recognize you. While your baby is awake, hold your baby close (20-30 cm from you) and make eye contact. Slowly move your face from to one side to the other and watch what your baby does.

Finger Play (Ages 0 to 3 months)

Caring touch connects you to your baby and they'll become familiar with your voice. Gently grasp each of your baby's fingers on one hand and sing the following rhyme to them.

"I love my baby." *(grasp pinky)* "Yes, I do." (*grasp ring finger*) "I love 'Emma'." (*grasp middle finger*) "Emma…" (*grasp pointer finger*) "I love you!" (*grasp and kiss thumb*)

Baby Massage (Ages 4 to 6 months)

Your baby gets comfort from physical contact with you. Place your baby on a comfortable safe surface, lying on their back or tummy. Massage your baby's hands, feet, legs, arms, and back gently but firmly enough so you don't tickle them. Use a soft tone to tell your baby what you're doing. Notice how your baby communicates what they do and don't like.

Peek-a-Boo (Ages 7 to 9 months)

Your baby is beginning to understand that things and people are still there even when they can't see them. They're also learning to enjoy seeing your face and their favourite toys that comfort them. Place your baby where they can see you, hide your face behind your hands or a towel and then show your face again. Smile and laugh as you play. You can also do this with a favourite toy.

Hello & Goodbye (Ages 10 to 12 months)

Your baby is learning that you come back every time you leave. They're also starting to learn that others can comfort them. Tell your baby that you're going to leave and will come back. Tell them who's going to look after them. Before you leave, give them their favourite object or stuffy, a hug and kiss, and say goodbye. Leave your baby for a few minutes, come back, and say hello. On different days, use the same routine and extend the time you're gone.

Safety Explorers (Ages 13 months +)

Encourage your toddler to safely explore their surroundings. Stay near your child and help them if needed. This makes them feel safe and secure knowing that they can explore what's around them but can come back to you for help and comfort any time.

Head & Shoulders (Ages 19 to 24 months)

Playful and gentle contact will show your toddler you love them. Sing the following song and point to or touch each body part. Once your child knows the name of the body parts and can point to them correctly—be silly and make mistakes on purpose so they can correct you or laugh with you.

Head and shoulders, knees, and toes
Knees and toes
Knees and toes
Head and shoulders, knees, and toes
Eyes, ears, mouth, and nose
I love you!

Separation Anxiety

Most children develop **separation anxiety** around 7 to 18 months. This is the feeling of fear or anxiety they get when you leave the room, can't see you, or are with people they don't know well. Your child is attached to you and trusts you. They may find it hard when you're not around.

Tips that make the separation process easier include:

Practice separation. Play games like peek-a-boo or leave your child with a caregiver for a brief time at first and build up.

Schedule separations after naps or feedings. Babies are less likely to be anxious when they aren't tired or hungry.

Make a 'goodbye' ritual. Try a kiss, a hug, a high five, or a special wave.

Quick goodbyes. Tell your child you're leaving and that you'll be back and when. Keep the goodbye short and keep your timeline (e.g., "I'll be back after you read this book and play with Grandpa.").

Keep familiar settings. When you are first practicing separation activities, if you can, have the caregiver come to your house. If your child is being looked after away from home, bring a favourite object and a family picture. The caregiver can use the object or picture to provide comfort to your child.

Communication & Language

Learning to communicate goes hand-in-hand with building attachment. Babies are born with the ability to communicate and connect with those around them. They tell us when they need something by moving their arms and legs, smiling, cooing, or crying. Your responses to their early communication attempts will soon lead to words becoming the easiest way to communicate with you. When you use serve and return interactions in a warm and caring way, your child learns that what they have to say is important—building their self-worth. Talking, singing, mimicking sounds, and reading all help build your child's communication and language skills. It also strengthens their resilience because they can tell you what they need and have their needs met. This makes them feel secure.

Tips for Building Communication & Language

Talk. When your baby gestures, looks at you, or makes sounds, they're 'talking' to you. 'Talk' back to them (e.g., make eye contact, touch, pick them up, sing, talk). These are serve and return interactions.

Describe. Even before your child speaks, name and describe everything for them as often as possible (e.g., ball, dog, park, spoon, chair). Describe things that are happening throughout the day (e.g., "I'm cutting an apple.").

Take turns. When you talk with and listen to your child, let them finish before you reply. You can do this even before they begin speaking. Make eye contact and pretend they're really talking back to you.

Word building. Once your child begins to speak, build on their words (e.g., if they say "truck", expand and say "Yes, a red truck.").

Cuddle and read. Make reading a part of your daily routines. Encourage your older child to turn pages, touch, explore, and point to things they see. Read the book but also take time to talk about colours and shapes, count things, make noises for animals, let them re-tell the story, etc.

More than one language? Talk to your child in the language that feels most fluent and natural to you. By learning at least one language well, children can more easily learn another language outside of their home like at daycare, school, and other community programs.

Your toddler is starting to understand more of what they hear and will enjoy the same books and songs over and over. Repetition helps build their language and communication skills.

Communication & Language Activities

If Baby Could Talk (Ages 0 +)

Describe your baby's experiences in words to help them learn what you're doing as you respond to their cues and reactions. Talk about what your baby may be thinking and feeling when you care for them (e.g., changing a diaper, giving a bath, cleaning their gums). Say what you imagine your baby would say if they could talk (e.g., "I'm smiling and giggling because I am happy.").

Reading, Reading All the Time! (Ages 0 +)

Read books to help your child learn language and listening skills and prepare them for recognizing the written word. Reading gives you both time to enjoy each other's company in a quiet, fun, and emotionally satisfying way. For example, get a book and point out and describe different objects on each page (e.g., "Look at all the balls. Let's count how many there are.").

For suggestions on books to read to your child go to page 9.

Copy Cat (Ages 7 to 9 months)

Your baby is starting to learn that their actions can help control their environment. Copy an action that your baby does, like clapping their hands or making a noise. When your baby sees that you respond to their actions, this helps them learn how to communicate.

Baby Play Date (Ages 10 to 12 months)

Your baby is learning to communicate with others and how to have social interaction with people other than you. Make a playdate to visit another baby. Give them time and space to look at each other. Encourage any form of communication (e.g., smiles, sounds, cooing). Try different things with the babies and see what they do (e.g., play music, sing songs, give toys).

Sock Puppet (Ages 13 months +)

Use puppets as a fun way to help your toddler learn language and turn-taking skills. Draw a face on an old sock and put it on your hand as a puppet. Make the puppet talk or sing using a silly voice. Take turns with your toddler.

Books

Baby Can't Sleep
by Lisa Schroeder

Baby Faces
by Margaret Miller

Big Hug for Little Cub
by Lorie Ann Grover

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?
by Bill Martin Jr.

Chick Chick Boom Boom
by John Archambault & Bill Martin Jr.

Clifford's Animal Sounds
by Norman Bridwell

Dear Zoo
by Rod Campbell

Good Night
by Caroline Jayne Church

Goodnight Moon
by Margaret Wise Brown

Gossie and Gertie
by Olivier Dunrea

Hands Are Not for Hitting
by Marine Agassi

HUG
by Jez Alborough

Hug You, Kiss You, Love You
by Joyce Wan

I am Happy: A Touch and Feel Book of Feelings
by Steve Light

If You're Happy and You Know It
by Ken Geist

I Love You Through and Through
by Caroline Jayne Church

I Love You too!
by Eve Bunting

Little You
by Richard Van Camp

Love is Everywhere
by Jim Benton

Mr. Grumpy's Outing
by John Burningham

My Five Senses
by Aliki

My Friend Rabbit
by Eric Rohmann

My Heart Fills with Happiness
by Monique Gray Smith

My Many Colored Days
by Dr. Suess

No No Yes Yes
by Linda Patricellei

Oh, David!
by David Shannon

Oops!
by David Shannon

Peek-a WHO?
by Nina Laden

Quiet Loud
by Linda Patricellei

Splash
by Roberta Grobel Intrater

Sweetest Kulu
by Celina Kalluk

Teeth Are Not for Biting
by Elizabeth Verdickem

Time for Bed
by Mem Fox

The Baby's Catalogue
by Janet & Allen Ahlberg

The Bear Went Over the Mountain
by Rosemary Wells

The Feelings Book
by Todd Parr

The Odd Egg
by Emily Gravett

The Very Busy Spider
by Eric Carle

The Very Hungry Caterpillar
by Eric Carle

Ten Tiny Toes
by Caroline Jayne Church

This Little Piggy
by Jill Ackerman

We're Going on a Bear Hunt
by Michael Rosen

Where is Baby's Belly Button?
by Karen Katz

Where's Spot?
by Eric Hill

Words Are Not for Hurting
by Elizabeth Verdickem

Social & Emotional Development

The relationship your child has with you and other caregivers teaches them how to be in relationships with other people. Young children need their parents and caregivers to help them regulate their feelings, name their emotions, and describe their experiences. This early support provides children with a strong social and emotional foundation which makes it easier for them to make friends, follow rules, share, take turns, show empathy when others have been hurt, and regulate themselves. Children who develop social and emotional skills early on are more likely to be healthy and resilient, have positive attitudes and behaviours, and do better in school.

Tips for Social & Emotional Development (Ages 0 to12 months)

Respond. Responding quickly when they're crying helps them learn that their cries will get help from you. Things to try:

- Wrap them snuggly (0 to 3 months).
- Feed them slowly and burp them often (0 to 4 months).
- Make them as comfortable as possible (not too hot or cold).
- Hold them in different positions (e.g., skin-to-skin, in a carrier, tummy down across your lap).
- Gently rock or walk with them.
- Sing softly or listen to soft music.
- While you're their biggest comfort, some babies may start to find comfort from stuffies or other special objects.
- Call your baby's name when they start to fuss so they know you're there (e.g., "Hi Juhee, I'm here, I'll be there soon.").
- If your baby seems afraid of someone or something, hold your baby, go slow or be next to your baby.
- Help your baby calm down when they're upset (e.g., give cuddles, hugs, kisses, tell your baby they're okay).

Never shake your child for any reason. Shaking your child can cause serious injury to them.

If your child doesn't stop crying and if you begin to have strong feelings of frustration or anger, take a brief time out. It's better to leave them safe in their crib or room and go into another room for a few moments to calm yourself or ask for help. Short periods of crying while you calm yourself will not hurt your child.

For more information on understanding why your child may cry and how to cope go to: **myhealth.alberta.ca/Alberta/Pages/crying-plan.aspx**

Tips for Social & Emotional Development (Ages 13 months +)

Name emotions in the moment. Name their feelings when they happen. (e.g., "You're mad that you got an orange cup, not a green cup."). Use facial expressions and body language to convey what mad might look like. This helps them understand their feelings and learn to name their emotions.

Time-in. Provide warmth, comfort, and affection for strong feelings. Help your child cope with strong feelings by using a time-in (e.g., give cuddles, hugs, kisses, tell your child they're okay).

Discuss behaviour later. After your child calms down you can talk about the behaviour that you would like to see (e.g., "Cups are for drinking, not throwing.").

Temperament. A toddler who has strong reactions might have a harder time calming their emotions than one who doesn't. You can try:

- **Providing routines**. Knowing what to expect helps children feel safe, confident, and secure. Try to keep a daily routine, doing things near the same time each day.
- **Preparing.** Let them know before activities are going to change (e.g., "We're going to stop playing with your toys in 2 minutes, then we're going to clean-up and have lunch."). To help your child learn how long 2 minutes takes try using a timer (e.g., egg timer, stopwatch).
- **Offer choices.** Create opportunities for your child to choose activities, toys, clothes, or snacks (e.g., "Do you want an orange cup or a green cup?").

To help your toddler learn the names of emotions you can use the activity on page 36.

Accept feelings and emotions as they are. All feelings are okay. Feelings are just feelings, they're not right or wrong. It's what we do or don't do about our feelings that can be a problem. Don't make fun of or laugh at your child when they're upset or afraid.

Model. Show positive ways of coping with strong feelings. When something happens that's upsetting or frustrating for you, manage your strong feelings calmly.

Your child feels the same emotions that you do (e.g., angry, sad, frustrated, happy) but they don't have the words to talk about how they feel. This can lead to strong reactions, especially if they are tired, hungry, uncomfortable, or frustrated. As their communication and language skills improve strong reactions decrease.

Social & Emotional Activities

Emotion Explorers (Ages 13 months +)

Sing songs to help your toddler learn the names of emotions. Try a song like *If You're Happy and You Know It* and do the actions.

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands, clap, clap! (*clap hands*)
If you're sad and you know it, cry out loud, boo hoo! (*rub tears*)
If you're mad and you know it, stomp you feet, boom, boom! (*stomp feet*)
If you're excited and you know it, shout hooray! (*hands in the air*)

Read & Feel (Ages 13 months +)

Notice and describe how your toddler feels when reading a story (e.g., "This part of the story makes you smile and laugh. You look happy."). Talk about what characters might be feeling and why (e.g., "She's sad because she bumped her head.").

Sharing & Caring (Ages 13 months +)

Teach your toddler how to share by taking turns. Start by playing with a toy and then giving it to them to play with. Say something like, "Aashi, I'm sharing this toy with you." After they've had it for a while, encourage them to give it back to you. When they do, thank them for sharing.

Learning to share takes time because it's a difficult idea to understand. Your toddler thinks everything belongs to them. They aren't able to understand that sharing a toy means taking turns and getting it back. Be patient and provide many opportunities for practice. Praise their efforts.

Social & Emotional Milestones

Your child's first two years are a time for taking first steps, saying first words, and also learning about their world and the people in it. The following chart provides general information on social and emotional milestones for birth to two years.

Age	Social & Emotional Development	Social & Emotional Milestones
0-3 months	Even before your baby can speak, they're 'talking' through body language and noises. This early communication is important for social and emotional development. As you learn what your baby is saying and you respond to their attempts to 'talk' (e.g., cries, smiles) in a sensitive, timely, and consistent way—they're learning to trust you. This is the start of a trusting attachment relationship.	• Look at your face and in the direction of your voice. • Smile spontaneously (by 2 – 3 months, your baby's smiles are signs that they know who you are). • Recognize a familiar voice. • Make cooing sounds when they are happy, content, or talkative. • Be soothed and comforted when picked up (most of the time). • Let you know when they need attention by expressing their emotions and needs through cries and actions.
4-6 months	During this time your baby will start to express their temperament. You may notice they're easy and calm or more strong-willed. If it takes time for your baby to adapt to changes or people you'll find it easier to reduce their stress and yours by working with their temperament (e.g., doing things more slowly, being close by, not pushing them until they are ready).	• Intentionally express emotions (e.g., cry, fuss, or smile when they want attention). • Recognize their primary caregivers. • Make eye contact. • Read facial and vocal expressions and learn what different expressions mean.
7-12 months	As your secure attachment relationship becomes stronger, your baby mostly prefers you for comfort and help in managing their emotions and early social experiences. At this time, separation anxiety and other fears may start (e.g., loud noises, being in the dark). Providing warmth and comfort will provide the attachment and emotional base they need for healthy growth.	• Start to intentionally tell you what they want. • Afraid when you're not around (separation anxiety). • Seek comfort from you. • Show emotions. • Show affection towards you. • Develop a sense of self with their own likes and dislikes. • Show interest in other babies.
13-18 months	Socially, toddlers are focused on themselves. They know other people exist but they don't yet know how others think or feel. They aren't able to play with others the way older children play and may have difficulty sharing. Emotionally, toddlers struggle between being independent and still needing you. They want to try new things but if they're sick, tired, or afraid they'll want your comfort.	• Become more confident and have a greater sense of self. • Will try new things or explore on their own when you're there to provide support. • Take ownership of objects and belongings, such as toys. • Notice their peers. • Express emotions to you. • May start to show empathy if someone is hurt.
19-24 months	At this age, toddlers are starting to learn about feelings and that others have them too. During playtime, they begin to be interested in imaginary games and imitating others (e.g., when your toddler is putting their stuffy to bed, you may hear your words or tone of voice). Emotionally, they're starting to learn their feelings, actions, and impulses.	• Want to make their own choices and decisions about how they do things. • Develop their imagination (e.g., plays pretend). • Have more words to express what they want. • Parallel play starts (toddlers playing next to each other but not with each other).

Learning Through Play

Playing with your child helps build their physical, thinking, emotional, and social skills. When your child has confidence in their abilities, it helps them become more resilient and respond well to problems throughout life. By getting good at things that come with their age and stage, they'll learn how to handle difficult or frustrating situations when they happen (e.g., rebuilding a tower of blocks if it falls).

Tips for Play

Let your child lead and discover. It's okay if your child isn't using a toy the 'right' way. Let them show you a 'new way' to play with their toys.

Be their 'safety-net'. Your presence is the most important support. As long as they can see you and can reconnect with you as needed, they'll feel comfortable to explore, play, and learn on their own.

Do it over and over. Your child will want to do things over and over. Even if that toy is noisy or dropping a spoon is annoying, let them do it again and again and cheer them on.

Watch for stop signs. Stop activities when your child has had enough (e.g., cry, fuss, arch their back, fall asleep, turn or move their eyes, head, or body away from you).

Toys don't make your child smarter! Things you already have in your house sometimes make the best toys. Talking, playing, and reading to your child are more important for their development than toys, electronic devices, or screens (e.g., any time spent with smart phones, tablets, television, video games, computers, or wearable technology).

> ! For children under two years, screen time isn't recommended. There are some possible developmental risks and no known benefits to 'screen time'.

Play Activities

Music Time (Ages 0 +)

New sounds like soft lullaby music for quiet times or more upbeat music for playful times can be as comforting as your voice. Dance or move around to the music as you cuddle.

> ! Supervise your baby with any objects they play with. The safest toys for small children are bigger and longer than the opening and length of a toilet paper roll.

Rattle & Play (Ages 3 to 6 months)

Help your baby understand how their hands can make objects move and make noise. Rattle a toy that makes a noise while your baby is looking at it. Place the toy close enough for your baby to hit it. For older babies, place the toy just out of reach to encourage them to reach for it.

Mirror Mirror (Ages 3 to 9 months)

Your baby is becoming aware of their body and starting to learn that they're separate from others.
Hold your baby in front of a mirror so they can see themselves and let them try to understand what's happening. Say and point to the mirror, "This is you, Brayden." Then point to your child and say, "This is Brayden's hand. This is Brayden's foot." Each time, show your child their body part on them first and then in the mirror.

Surprise Boxes (Ages 7 to 12 months)

Put different toys (e.g., rattle, stuffy, blocks) inside different containers or boxes around your child's play area. Encourage or help them to go from one box to the next to discover and explore the surprises in each box.

Let's Solve Puzzles! (Ages 13 to 24 months)

Help your child solve puzzles (e.g., matching animals or shapes) to learn new words and develop problem solving skills. You can make your own puzzles by tracing objects on a piece of paper or cardboard. Together, match the object to the shapes you have drawn. As your child gets better at this, you can try other matching activities such as putting lids on containers, matching lids to pots, etc.

Imitate Me (Ages 19 to 24 months)

Toddlers often want to imitate what you do. Include your toddler as you do household chores. They can use child-sized tools (e.g., broom, rake, shovel) or they can also help carry light objects, put laundry in a laundry basket, etc.

Cultural & Community Connections

Relationships with family, other caregivers, friends, early childhood educators, and faith, cultural, or community groups play a big role in developing your child's resilience. These relationships help build a sense of hope, belonging, and identity. Taking part in family, cultural, community, or faith activities builds your child's resilience by giving them a chance to do unique activities and create connections. You'll also strengthen your own social support network.

Tips for Building Cultural & Community Connections

Show appreciation and gratefulness. Sharing appreciation can motivate just as much as praise. It strengthens your connections to one another. When you share your appreciation and gratitude with others, your child sees your tone, actions, and words. They'll see what being kind, generous, and grateful looks like.

Pass on your family's traditions. Help your child learn about and value their own culture by involving them in your family's faith or cultural traditions.

Cultural & Community Connections Activities

Music Time (Ages 0 +)

Play or sing children's songs that are familiar to your unique family and culture.

Eat Together (Ages 0 +)

Share meals with family and friends. When you're talking, include your child in the conversation too.

Greet Neighbours (Ages 0 +)

When you're out for a walk or in a line-up at the store, use the opportunity to greet neighbours or strangers. Once your child is comfortable they can say hello in their own way.

Special Time with Siblings, Family, & Friends (Ages 4 months +)

Let your child have special time with their siblings, other family, and friends (e.g. talk, read stories, be held).

For those with young siblings always supervise the special time.

Family Photo (Ages 10 months +)

Make a small photo album of your family and friends. Show your baby the pictures, point to, and talk about each person (e.g. "That's Nana. She lives far away but we talk to her on the phone.").

Share Your Family's Culture & Traditions (Ages 12 months +)

Do crafts, dance, sing, and read or tell stories to your child about your culture and traditions.

Volunteer (Ages 19 months +)

Volunteer with your child. Find something they can do too (e.g., pick out items for food donations, help make cookies for a bake sale, do a walk to raise money). Explain what you need them to do and why (e.g., "We're going to shovel the snow from our neighbour's sidewalk. We are helping them.").

Volunteering can help to develop compassion and builds community responsibility.

Resources

Songs & Rhymes

Giddy up

Have your baby seated in your lap. When you say, "Don't fall down!" open your legs a bit and let your baby dip down a little.

Giddy up horsey
Go to town
Watch out *(say your baby's name)*
Don't fall down

Play this only if your baby has head and neck control.

Itsy Bitsy Spider

Do this with your baby on their back on a safe surface.

The itsy bitsy spider climbed up the water spout *(walk your fingers up your baby's legs and stomach)*
Down came the rain and washed the spider out *(wiggle your fingers quickly back down your baby's stomach and legs)*
Out came the sun and dried up all the rain *(make gentle circles with arms)*
And the itsy bitsy spider climbed up the spout again *(walk your fingers up your baby's legs and stomach)*

Pat-A-Cake

Do this activity with your baby on their back on a safe surface. Once your baby has sitting control, try this with them seated on your lap and their back to your belly.

Pat-a-cake, Pat-a-cake
Baker's man
Bake me a cake
As fast as you can *(clap hands to beat)*
Roll it *(roll hands)*
Pat it *(pat lap)*
Mark it with a B *(finger write 'B' on baby's belly)*
And put it in the oven for baby and me *(tickle baby's belly)*

Humpty Dumpty

Have your baby seated in your lap. When you say, "had a great fall" open your legs a bit and let your baby dip down a little.

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again

Play this only if your baby has head and neck control.

Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

Do this with your child on their back on a safe surface. As your child gains sitting and standing control, try it sitting and then standing.

Twinkle twinkle little star *(put your hands up and wiggle your fingers)*
How I wonder what you are? *(put your hands up like you're wondering)*
Up above the world so high
Like a diamond in the sky *(put your hands up and make a diamond shape with your index fingers and thumbs of both hands)*
Twinkle twinkle little star
How I wonder what you are? *(put your hands up like you're wondering)*

Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Do this activity with your baby on their back on a safe surface. As your child gains sitting and standing control, try it sitting and then standing.

Row, row, row your boat *(row your boat)*
Gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream

Row, row, row your boat *(row your boat)*
Gently down the stream
If you see a crocodile
Don't forget to scream *(hands to face and scream gently)*

Row, row, row your boat *(row your boat)*
Gently down the river
If you see a polar bear
Don't forget to shiver *(cross your hands over your body and make a big shiver movement)*

Row, row, row your boat *(row your boat)*
Gently to the shore
If you see a lion
Don't forget to roar *(roar like a lion and swat your hands like paws in the air)*

Row, row, row your boat *(row your boat)*
Gently in the creek
If you see a little mouse
Don't forget to squeak *(act like a mouse, hands up to face and make a tiny squeak)*

Row, row, row your boat *(row your boat)*
Gently to and fro
Merrily, merrily, merrily
Merrily into the water you go

Teddy Bear Song

Do this activity when your child has standing control.

Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn around *(turn around)*
Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch the ground *(touch the ground with your hands)*
Teddy bear, teddy bear, reach up high *(reach your hands above your head)*
Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch the sky
Teddy bear, teddy bear, bend down low *(bend at your knees)*
Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch your toe! *(touch your toes)*

Wheels on the Bus

Do this with your child on their back on a safe surface. As your child gains sitting and standing control, try it sitting and then standing. As your child gets older they'll do the actions on their own.

The wheels on the bus go round and round
Round and round
Round and round
The wheels on the bus go round and round all day long *(make fists and circle your fists around each other)*
The children on the bus go up and down *(move hands up and down for young babies, stand up and sit down for children who can stand and sit without support)*
The doors on the bus go open and shut *(put your hands on your stomach, one over top of the other and open up and close your arms on your stomach like doors opening and closing)*
The wipers on the bus go swish swish swish *(put your hands up and pretend they're windshield wipers)*

How do you feel?

Happy

Angry

Worried

Sad

Excited

Scared

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