

Child Brain Development 101

Presentation Overview

Child Brain Development 101:

The Beautiful Brain, The Importance of Understanding How Your Child's Brain Grows and Develops

This discussion has been developed to familiarize caregivers of young children with how the brain develops and how strong brain development can be effectively supported through fun and engaging activities, setting children on a lifelong pathway of success. Discussion materials and content are based on the "Working for Kids: Skill Building" training series.

Facilitator: Cristina Codario & Lindsey Ramsey

Time: 1–1.5 hours

Topic 1: Experiences and Interactions

Topic 2: Brain Basics

Topic 3: Environment

Topic 4: Trauma

Topic 5: Support Systems/ An Educators Role in Development

Experiences and Interactions:

- Child brain development occurs most rapidly during the early years of life. From the prenatal period to seven years of age, experiences, interactions, and environments play a significant role in shaping a child's development and cycle of learning.
- Brain research shows that 90% of brain development occurs during the first five years.

www.ffyf.org/why-it-matters/brain-development/

Brain Basics:

- Humans are born with virtually all of the brain cells they will ever have. What we mean by development is that connections are made between brain cells.
- How strong connections become in a brain area, is determined by how much the circuit is used during the plastic period.
- A strong circuit formed during the plastic period will be available for the rest of life.

Video: [Working For Kids: Building Skills](#)

Environment:

- Supportive environments help children learn new skills. When children are in an environment where they are loved, taken care of, and adults are there to motivate and encourage them, they will be more likely to learn new skills.

Trauma:

- Trauma and adversity have negative impacts on brain development. Caregivers have the ability to counter these disturbances by providing children with the proper environment and support they need to succeed.

www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/index.html

Support Systems/ An Educator's Role In Development:

- Children need supportive environments to help them learn new concepts, and build upon the ones they already have. When children experience environments where they are loved, taken care of, and are supported by empathetic caregivers, they are more likely to have positive life outcomes
- Educators and caregivers may support children in the following ways to serve as their "charging stations" and help their brain development:

Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) :

www.tryingtogether.org/community-resources/dap/

www.tryingtogether.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/DAP-One-Pager_FIN.pdf (PDF)

Serve and Return:

- During serve and return interactions, connections are built and strengthened in the child's brain that support the development of communication and social/emotional skills.

www.developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/serve-and-return/

Culturally Responsive Environments:

- Children need to be in environments that promote inclusion. This allows for them to have diverse experiences that strengthen their neural connections.

www.nameorg.org/learn/photos/Chen_et_al._2009_Becoming.pdf (PDF)

www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2016/culturally-responsive-strategies

Play:

- Experiences and interactions matter when it comes to brain development! Children have the opportunity to learn about the world around them through several daily interactions, but some of the most important learning experiences occur through play!

www.tryingtogether.org/dap/play-physical-activities/

Safety:

- Children deserve to feel safe in their environments. When children experience the benefits of safe environments it strengthens their ability to trust and reduces the risk of experiencing traumas that impact their development.

www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov/about/mandatedreporter/index.htm

Family and Community Partnerships:

- Caregivers and educators need to work together to ensure the children they are caring for receive the best support they can provide. Communication is key! When caregivers are working in partnership with providers, and educators, all parties involved are best able to individualize learning experiences, develop strong relationships, and communicate openly and respectfully. These factors create strong support systems!

Family and Community Partnerships Through Advocacy:

Trying Together

- Facebook: @TryingTogether
- Twitter: @Trying_Together

Support State Efforts:

Caregivers can stay informed about what is going on in the state regarding efforts to support early childhood education.

Check Out the Early Learning PA (ELPA) Campaign Websites:

www.prekforpa.org/

www.childhoodbeginsathome.org/

www.startstrongpa.org/

Follow ELPA Campaigns On Social Media:

Start Strong PA

- Facebook: @StartStrongPA
- Twitter: @StartStrongPA
- Instagram: @startstrongpa

Childhood Begins at Home

- Facebook: @ChildhoodBeginsAtHome
- Twitter: @ChildBegin_Home

Pre-K for PA

- Facebook: @prekforpa
- Twitter: @prek4pa
- Instagram: @prek4pa

Support National Efforts:

www.naeyc.org/get-involved/advocate

www.ffyf.org/