

# Relationships that Nurture

Monthly tips provided by St. David's Center in partnership with Mom Enough

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## What is a Parent's Role in Brain Development?

Audio can be heard at the end of the [3/19/12 ME interview](#)

Here are some tips on what parents can do to nurture their child's developing brain:

### I. Developing brains seek patterns and growth with repetition

- Develop rituals – such as the same bedtime routine every night: bath, books, bed
- Provide predictable and pleasurable mealtimes/snacks
- Read books with/to your child
- Set up supervised play dates for your child

### II. Developing brains need regular opportunities to learn from other brains

- Find 20 minutes per day and dedicate that to your child and his or her agenda
- PLAY with your child – turn your phone, computer and television off and follow your child's lead
- Check in with your child – ask questions like, “What was your favorite/least favorite part of the day?”

### III. Developing brains need both consistency and novelty

- Limit screen time – on the computer/iPad/watching television and turn off unnecessary background noise
- Have books and toys available to your child that are appropriate for his or her developmental level
- Rotate toys – take out a set of toys for a set amount of time and then rotate a new set in
- Create a simple calendar (with pictures of upcoming activities if your child cannot read) so your child can anticipate what is happening during the week
- Get to know your child's teachers – volunteer in the classroom or stop in and ask questions
- Get to know the parents of your children's friends – if they are having play dates, find out if your child will be supervised and by whom, and verify that it is a safe environment

### IV. Developing brains need exposure to manageable stress and challenges

- Create age-appropriate situations that occur in real life and act out different ways your child could solve a problem or deal with difficult emotions
- When an activity or instruction is not an option, offer choices – for example, “Do you want to run or hop to the door?” to allow your child some control over the situation while still complying with your expectations
- Set limits and stay with your child during stressful times

### V. Parent resources

- <http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/areas-of-expertise/free-parent-brochures-and-guides/>
- [http://developingchild.harvard.edu/topics/science\\_of\\_early\\_childhood/#](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/topics/science_of_early_childhood/#)