

TRANSITIONS MANAGEMENT

FOR PARENTS

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR HOW TO LEARN AND GROW: AGE 0-3

There are many ways that families can support their infant or toddler's social development. Infants develop a sense of trust through predictable routines and consistent communication. Toddlers develop a sense of autonomy by exploring and engaging with their environment.

Bonding with your child is critical to their development. Cuddling, rocking, talking, and singing are some of the natural ways you can communicate with your baby and develop the bond, whatever their degree of hearing loss. To help your child develop social skills and positive self-esteem, you and your family need to be able to discuss how your child's hearing affects the family and everyone's feelings. You will also have to make decisions about your child's care and communication. You will learn where to get information, what questions to ask, and find out who can support your family.

Below are key skills that you can learn as a family to support your child's early social development.

Key skills:

- Enjoy being a family: Focusing on what brings you and your family joy
- Be in tune with your child: Reading and responding to your child
- Develop routines and create habits: Developing predictable routines to build trust
- Exploring and problem solving: Developing curiosity and confidence
- Express feelings and empathy: Teaching emotions
- Develop communication skills: Identifying strategies to improve communication with your child
- Make decisions and advocate for your family: Being the champion of your child's care

Enjoying Being a Family

- Go for a walk in the park together; enjoy a family meal; sing silly songs together at bath time; read stories before bedtime.
- Celebrate dates when your baby gave their first smile, spoke their first word, or made their first sign.

Be in tune with your child:

- Help develop their attention by looking together at things that seem to interest them.
- Play turn-taking games: Hold your baby so they can see your face and copy the noises and faces they make.
- Respond to your child. Example: When a child rubs her eyes, you recognize that she is tired and say, “Oh you are sleepy – time for a nap,” and prepare her to take a nap.
- Respond to your environment. Example, if the doorbell rings, look up, point to your ear to indicate you heard something, and say, “Did you hear that? Is someone at the door? I wonder who that can be, let’s have a look.”

Develop routines and create habits

- Try to set a familiar routine for everyday activities like feeding, diaper changes, dressing, and bedtime. Predictability is good for your baby and helps them to develop trust.
- If your child uses hearing devices, perform a listening check at the start of your day. As your child gets older, they will learn to do this themselves.
- Pick a time to read stories with your child daily. Reading with them is one the most important things you can do to help them develop their brains for listening and communication.

Exploring and problem solving

- Develop problem solving by showing your child how you solve problems. Examples:
- Partially cover toys with a blanket and let your child figure out how to remove it in order to find a toy.
 - “Look! It’s stuck. We need to push.”
 - “I can’t hear Daddy, let’s go into the kitchen and see what he is saying.”
- Remember to praise them when they try activities. Example: “You worked so hard! You must be proud of yourself.”

Express feelings and empathy

- Share different feelings with your child so they can see how these feelings look on your face. Example: Put your feelings into words such as “Your hugs make me feel happy,” or, “I have been so busy today, I feel tired.”
- Acknowledge and label how your child is feeling. Example: “You seemed sad that we needed to leave the park,” or “You seemed happy when they shared that toy with you.”

Develop communication skills:

- List all the people that interact with your child. Share successful strategies with these people so they can communicate directly with your child. For example, “It’s easier for him to understand directions when he can see our faces.”
- Encourage family members and caretakers to take turns communicating with your child during daily routines, playtime, and meals. Example: Make sure each person gets a turn to share their day during dinner.

Make decisions and advocate for your family:

- Your child is probably surrounded by a number of experts in early childhood development, communication, and listening development. Together, these experts form your child's support team. You should see yourself as a partner, because you are an expert on your child.
- Write down questions that come up between visits with your child's support team to ask next time. For example, "How can we make communication easier during family get togethers?"
- Make a list of important things you would like to ask or discuss with your child's support team.
- Share with your child's support team what a typical day in your life is like so they can understand your world.
- Tell your child's support team if the recommendations they make seem unrealistic or overwhelming. They can help you find other solutions that better fit your family. Example: "Wearing the hearing aids all day is difficult for my 10 month old, she keeps pulling them off her ears."
- Ask for regular feedback of your child's progress in all areas of development, and note down your own observations that you can share with your child's support team.