



Minding the Baby®
home visitation program

Minding the Baby®

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Greetings from Minding the Baby®!

Thank you to all of the families who came to the MTB reunion in April! It was such a special day. We hope you enjoyed it as much as we did. We also hope you have enjoyed the summer! This may be a very happy and exciting time of year. It can also be really hard. Getting back into bedtime routines alone can be a challenge. If you or your child has a tough time with something, stop and wonder...could this be about changes and starting school again? Is your child missing being home? Could your child be worrying about friends, rules, or teachers? Think, wonder, and talk about how you and your child may be feeling. You might be surprised at how much better you both feel!



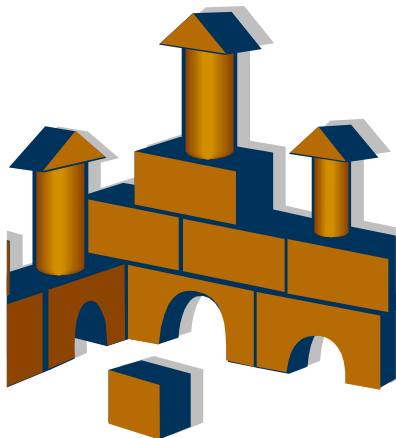
Building Blocks & Your Child's Brain

Did you know that the brain develops like building blocks?

The **cortex** is where reading, writing, math, decision making, and other kinds of thinking develops.

The **limbic area** is responsible for feelings.

The **mid brain** and **brainstem** develop first. We need these to survive, including for breathing and heart rate.



Cortex

Limbic

Mid brain

Brainstem

When children feel unsafe or threatened they spend more time in the lower blocks. Sometimes this happens because of stress or trauma. They might be thinking:

Where am I going to sleep tonight?

I'm hungry. Is there any food to eat?

Everyone's yelling. What if my mommy gets hurt?

I'm cold. I don't have clothes or a coat to put on.

When children feel safe and nurtured they spend more time in the upper building blocks. This means they can learn better and bond with you more easily.

Some stress is good in our lives. It motivates us to do things. But we need to learn how to deal with stress so that it doesn't hurt us or make us sick.

Help your child with stress. If he or she has a school project, help to plan it out and have enough time to work on it. Offer to take your child to the library to research the project.

You don't have to fix and solve all of your child's problems, but help him or her figure out a way to resolve problems.

Don't tell a child that feelings don't matter! Listen to your child's fears and help find a way to cope with them.

What is trauma in a child's life?

There are many things that can cause trauma for a child, including:

- Having to move from home very quickly without warning or with special things like a favorite toy or teddy bear.
- Witnessing a natural disaster or accident when there is fear of serious injury or loss of life.
- Seeing or hearing threats of physical violence towards themselves or family members.

What does trauma do to the brain?

If children experience trauma, the upper brain may not develop as well, leading to a smaller brain size and fewer brain connections.

They may have trouble focusing and paying attention. They may be

anxious or unable to settle down.

Some children who have had trauma in their lives may have trouble with bullying. They may be the bully or be bullied more easily. They also may be aggressive.

We all experience stress and sometimes trauma...so how do we help our children?

Spend quality time talking, hugging, singing, playing, and reading with your child. This can increase your child's brain power and make them feel secure.

Be there for your child. Help comfort, love, and encourage them. Healthy relationships are food for a child's growing brain.

Build self esteem! Praise and reward your child. Have face-to-

face interaction. Cut back on TV, computers, and cell phones!

This means less cell phone use for your child AND for you when you are with your child, so you both can interact with each other.

Eat meals together. Talk about your day and your child's day.

DO NOT humiliate, tease, or threaten your child.



Adapted from Chamberlain, LB (2008). *The Amazing Brain*, Philadelphia, PA.

More Tips: Dealing with Stress & Building Your Child's Brain

Children need to be safe and have a predictable environment. What does this mean?

- Maintain just one caregiver, or a few who you and your child know well.
- Let your child keep special toys, stuffed animals, or other objects that mean a lot to them.
- Have similar routines every day so your child knows what is going to happen on most days.
- Make sure your child has someone to talk to whenever needed.
- Listen to your child and do your best to understand your child's fears or worries.

It is never too late to connect with children and build their brain power!



Minding the Baby®

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