



Early Learning Digest

Research-based early childhood development information provided by LifeBalance Solutions



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The Power of Belief

The power of belief starts at a young age and while we may outgrow some of our childhood beliefs, most adults acknowledge the need to believe. Belief can make our lives more exciting, mysterious and connected.

Children start with their own simple beliefs. Encouraged by adults, they learn to deal with more advanced forms of belief like the invisible forces of everyday life, such as emotions, intentions, thoughts and relationships. Not encouraging children to believe can limit their psychological development by severing the link between imagining and learning.

Parents should nurture a capacity for some form of belief. Here are a few tips to get started.

- **Tell stories early and often.** Reading or watching stories nurtures a child's capacity for belief. Stories provide an experience in which we can visit other places and times, but also learn to understand our own ways of feeling and thinking.
- **Ask questions.** Stories fire up our imaginations and invite questions. Encourage your child to ask questions about the stories you are telling. If your child asks if something is real, maintain the mystery



by asking additional questions such as, "If it is real, where do you think it came from?"

- **Create space for bigger questions.** Each belief has a function and different beliefs appeal to us in different stages of our lives. The belief in Santa Claus, for example, creates space for exploring a number of larger questions like the moral need to do the right thing even if nobody sees it.

Teaching children to make informed predictions about the meaning of words, concepts and "what happens next" is crucial to learning. Having everything explained teaches passivity and avoiding risks rather than taking them. It is more empowering and inspirational for children to figure it out for themselves.

Source: "Santa Claus and the Power of Belief" by Marek Oziewicz, December 2014, <http://cehdvision2020.umn.edu/cehd-blog/power-of-belief/>.

The Three C's of Healthy Child Development

Research points to three essential experiences that provide the foundation for development in the early years of a child's life. These can be considered the three C's of healthy child development.

Connection - The number one protective factor in a child's life is the connection to caring, supportive adults. Strong, secure attachments begin in the earliest days of life. They provide the framework for lifelong social skills, and for the development of special interests and academic learning.

Competence - At each stage of child development, a child needs to experience what it means to handle the challenges of day to day life, and to discover what it means to do something well. A baby has her first experience of competence when her cries draw adults to her to provide comfort. Gradually, the child who has been comforted by others develops the ability to calm herself and to regulate her own feelings. Children from toddler

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The **Getting Ready for Kindergarten** calendar is a great resource for parents and caregivers to help prepare 3, 4, and 5-year-olds for kindergarten. The school year calendar is available in English and Spanish. For more information visit www.kindergartencalendar.org.





What Is Early Intervention?

It's not uncommon for parents and family members to become concerned when their baby or toddler doesn't seem to be progressing according to the normal schedule of developmental milestones.

- "He hasn't rolled over yet."
- "The little girl next door is already sitting up on her own!"
- "He should be saying a few words by now."

While it's true that children develop differently, at their own pace, and that the range of what's "normal" development is quite broad, it's hard not to worry and wonder.

Early intervention is a system of services that helps babies and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities. The term "developmental delay" is important in early intervention. It means that a child is delayed in some area of development. Early intervention focuses on helping eligible babies and toddlers learn the basic and brand-new skills that typically develop during the first three years of life, such as:

- **physical** - reaching, rolling, crawling, and walking
- **cognitive** - thinking, learning, solving problems
- **communication** - talking, listening, understanding
- **social/emotional** - playing, feeling secure and happy
- **self-help** - eating, dressing

If you think your child is not developing at the same pace or in the same way as most children his age, it is



a good idea to talk to your child's health care provider. Explain your concerns. Tell the doctor what you have observed with your child.

If an infant or toddler has a disability or a developmental delay in one or more of these developmental areas, that child will likely be eligible for early intervention services from birth through the third birthday (and sometimes beyond). Those services will be tailored to meet the child's individual needs.

Source: Center for Parent Information and Resources, March 2014, <http://www.parent-centerhub.org/repository/ei-overview/>.

Test Your Knowledge!

- 1) T F The number one protective factor in a child's life is connections to caring, supportive adults.
- 2) T F Not encouraging children to believe can limit their psychological development.
- 3) T F All children develop at the same pace and the range of what's "normal" development is quite narrow.

The Three C's of Healthy Child Development

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age and beyond thrive when others teach, coach, and model positive social skills and coping strategies.

Contribution – A child who is allowed, encouraged and supported in identifying and using his unique qualities and skills will discover what he can contribute to the wellbeing of his family and community.

Healthy development means that children of all abilities are able to grow up where their social, emotional and educational needs are met. These positive experiences help children become caring, responsible adults and may even provide protective factors that enable children to rise above risk.

Source: "The Three C's of Healthy Child Development," Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota, July 2015, <http://cehdvision2020.umn.edu/cehd-blog/three-cs-of-child-development/#sthash.REL3s9nw.dpuf>.

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If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or go to www.helpmegrowmn.org