



Pathways to Professional Development

Building Foundations in Infant
and Early Childhood Mental Health

**Infant and Early Childhood Development: A Cross-
Domain/Cross-Disciplinary Informed Perspective**

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Pathways to Professional Development: Building Foundations in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health



Pathways to Professional Development was developed to build workforce competence and to prepare professionals working in the perinatal and birth to 5 periods

- 21 webinars focused on the foundations of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health.
 - Provided live virtually
 - Recorded for viewing as LMS modules
- Diagnostic Classification of Mental Health And Developmental Disorders of Infancy and Early Childhood (DC:0-5) offered virtually and in-person.
- View all offerings here → <https://www.ctacny.org/special-initiatives/pathways-to-professional-development/>

The aim is to develop a well prepared and competent workforce trained to **identify** and address mental health concerns early, to **promote** awareness of mental health, to **prevent** long-term problems and to **intervene** to help children stay on developmental track.



Pathways to Professional Development Webinar Series



- **Module I:** Developmental and Psychodynamic Foundations of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health – 6 Webinars
- **Module II:** Assessment, Diagnosis, Formulation and Professional Development – 4 Webinars
- **Module III:** Risk, Stress, Protection and Resilience – 2 Webinars
- **Module IV:** Through the Lens of Family, Community and Culture – 2 Webinars
- **Module V:** Specific Disorders: A Closer Look: 4 Webinars
- **Module VI:** Helping in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health – 3 Webinars



Who we are



These trainings are funded by the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) and provided by the New York Center for Child Development (NYCCD) in collaboration with CTAC.

- **New York Center for Child Development** (NYCCD) has been a major provider of early childhood mental health services in New York with a long history of providing system-level expertise to inform policy and support the field of Early Childhood Mental Health through training and direct practice.
- **NYU McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research** houses the Community and Managed Care Technical Assistance Centers (CTAC & MCTAC), Peer TAC, and the Center for Workforce Excellence (CWE). These TA centers offer clinic, business, and system transformation supports statewide to all behavioral healthcare providers across NYS.
- **NYCCD and McSilver** also run the **NYC Early Childhood Mental Health Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC)** which offers ongoing training and technical assistance for those working during the perinatal period to age 5

<https://ttacny.org/>



A Cross-Disciplinary Informed Perspective

The content discussed is informed from many disciplinary perspectives and contributions including:

- Creative arts therapies
- Nursing
- Occupational therapy
- Pediatrics
- Physical therapy
- Psychiatry
- Psychoanalysis
- Psychology
- Social work
- Speech Language Pathology

The Principles of Development



Development progresses in a “gene-environment interplay” and is largely experience dependent.

- Development reflects the interdependence of nature and nurture - it is recognized today that heredity is not an unmodifiable determinant but rather that gene expression can be altered by environmental conditions (Thompson, 2016).
- **Culture is a powerful shaping force.**

Developmental change is both quantitative and qualitative

The Principles of Development



Development progresses in predictable patterns

- Unified to differentiated
 - Concrete to Abstract
 - Self-centered to Other-centered
 - Head to toe (motor development)
- Center of the body (proximal) to extremities (distal) (motor development)

The Principles of Development



- Developmental progress is not an even trajectory but rather occurs in spurts, plateaus and regressions with regressions sometimes signaling a falling-back to spring-forward
- Development is relationship dependent
- The lines of development are interdependent
- More complex skills are synthesized out of the components of simpler skills

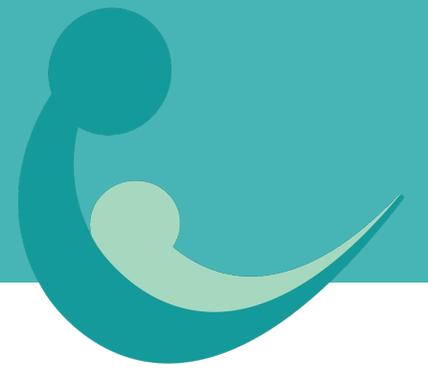


**Development is both continuous and
discontinuous**

**Development is shaped by play,
learning and mastery**

**Individual differences are more the
norm than the exception**

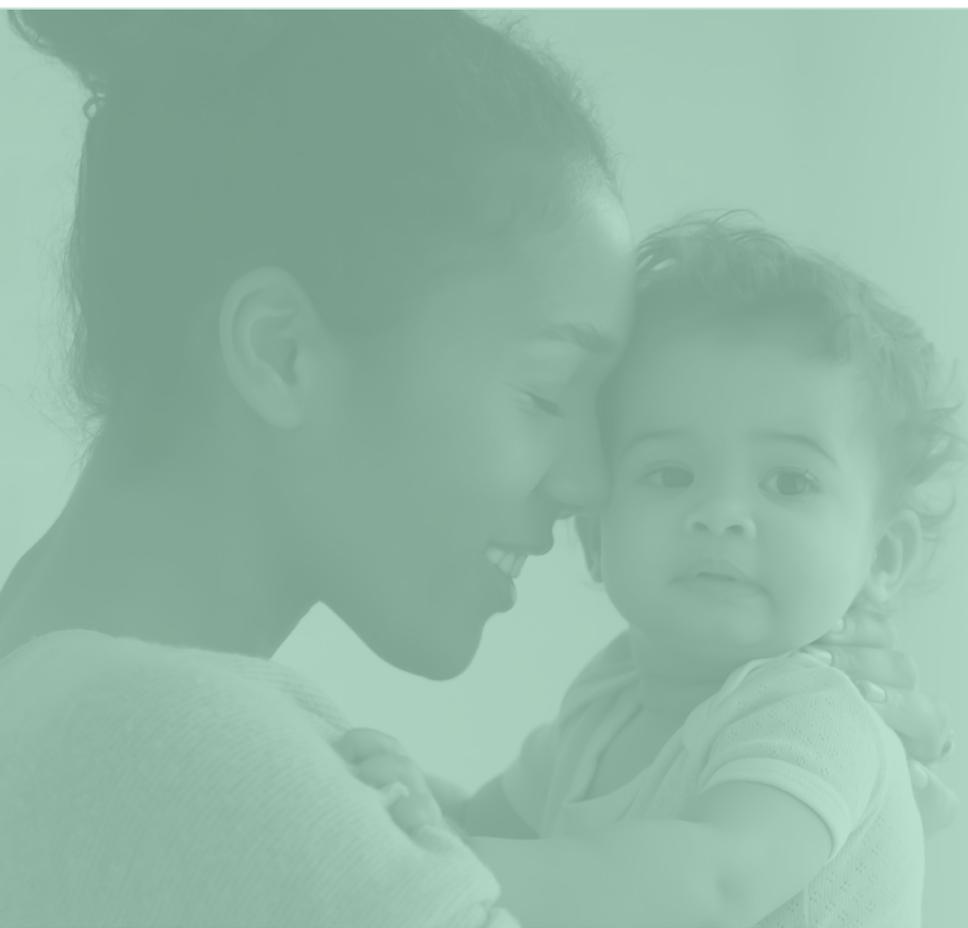
Infancy (Birth-12M)



Developmental Tasks:

- Get and take-in the world through oral-sensory experience
- Develop attachments and trust
- Construct sensorimotor knowledge through experience
- Gradually gain control of body, posture and motor skills
- Develop beginning ability to regulate arousal and affect





First Falling-In-Love

NOTE



Typical and Atypical Development in Infants and Young Children will be covered more closely in Module 1 – Webinar 6, scheduled for November 1st.

Anticipating Baby: Attachment Readiness



- Heightened empathy, attunement and assessing threat
- Formation of the hoped-for-child
- Identification with the fetus

Pregnancy in the Perinatal Period was covered more closely in Module 1 Webinar 4



Getting Acquainted- (Naïve Synchrony; “Normal Autism”; birth -1M)



- Inborn patterns of action and reaction
- Orients to face/recognizes caregiver
- Discovering the body of the baby
- Reading cues
- Consistent patterns of caregiving
- Confidence in sustaining the life of the baby
- Providing comfort
- Characterizing baby
- “Primary parental preoccupation”



Related Developmental Domains (Birth-1M)



Motor/sensory

- Inborn patterns of action and reaction (reflexes, reactivity)
- Orients to sights and sounds within range of visual acuity
- Alternating states of alertness and accommodation to stimuli

Cognition

- Discriminates between novel and familiar experiences
- Integrates perception across senses- eye-hand-mouth pattern



Falling-in-Love/Attachment-(Reflective Synchrony; Symbiosis; 1-7M)



- Molding and melting
- Preferential smile
- Recognizes primary caregiver as distinct and unique-
“an enduring emotional tie”
- Confident expectation-trust
- The child becomes aware that she lives in a world of
“being seen by the other” mirroring and reflecting.
- “I am seen therefore I am.”

Related Developmental Domains (1-7M)



Motor/sensory

- Gradual development of control over upper body functions
- Head, neck and shoulder girdle (3+M)-bearing weight, stretching body on tummy (Prone extension); brings hands together (4-5M+)

Cognition

- Memory development as seen in preferences for interactions and play sequences

Language

- Vocalizing and babbling/shared attention





From Infant to Individual (Separation-Individuation)



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Mental Health**



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Demarcating – (Discriminate Synchrony; Differentiation, 6-12M)



- Separating has two main features: the formation of boundaries and the development of distance between self and other
- Lap baby
- Lap-to-floor transition
- Joint attention/social referencing
- “Good-enough parenting”

Related Developmental Domains (6-12M)



Motor/sensory

- Persistent motivation to develop locomotion : crawling, creeping, cruising (stability, shifting weight, balance, rotation)

Cognition

- Object permanence
- Increase in memory: beginning awareness of past & present and predictability of repeated events

Language

- Gestural communication-shared intentionality (pointing 10-12M)
- Follows simple directions, comprehension, shared meanings



Toddlerhood (12-36M)



Developmental Tasks:

- Ableness and agency
- Autonomy and mastery
- Ambivalence and emotional extremes
- Internalization of parental values and standards
- Development of representational skills and mentalization



Outward Bound-(Distal Synchrony; Practicing; 10-18M)



- Upright locomotion and “leaving the nest” assert one’s will and proves one’s muscular mobility.
- Emotional refueling-secure base behavior
- Use of transitional objects (16-36M)
- To live means to expand aggressively, to act on one’s own terms and to construct and insist on one’s own boundaries-AGENCY.
- As separation begins, the gap between need and reality is bridged by the creation of a transitional object. This sustains the illusion of the presence of the caregiver in her/his absence. The caregiver can be felt even when she/he cannot be seen.

Related Developmental Domains (10-18M)



Motor/sensory

- Upright locomotion

Cognition

- Falls-in-love with the world-increased interest in learning and understanding about the world
- Imitation learning
- Conscious goals and plans

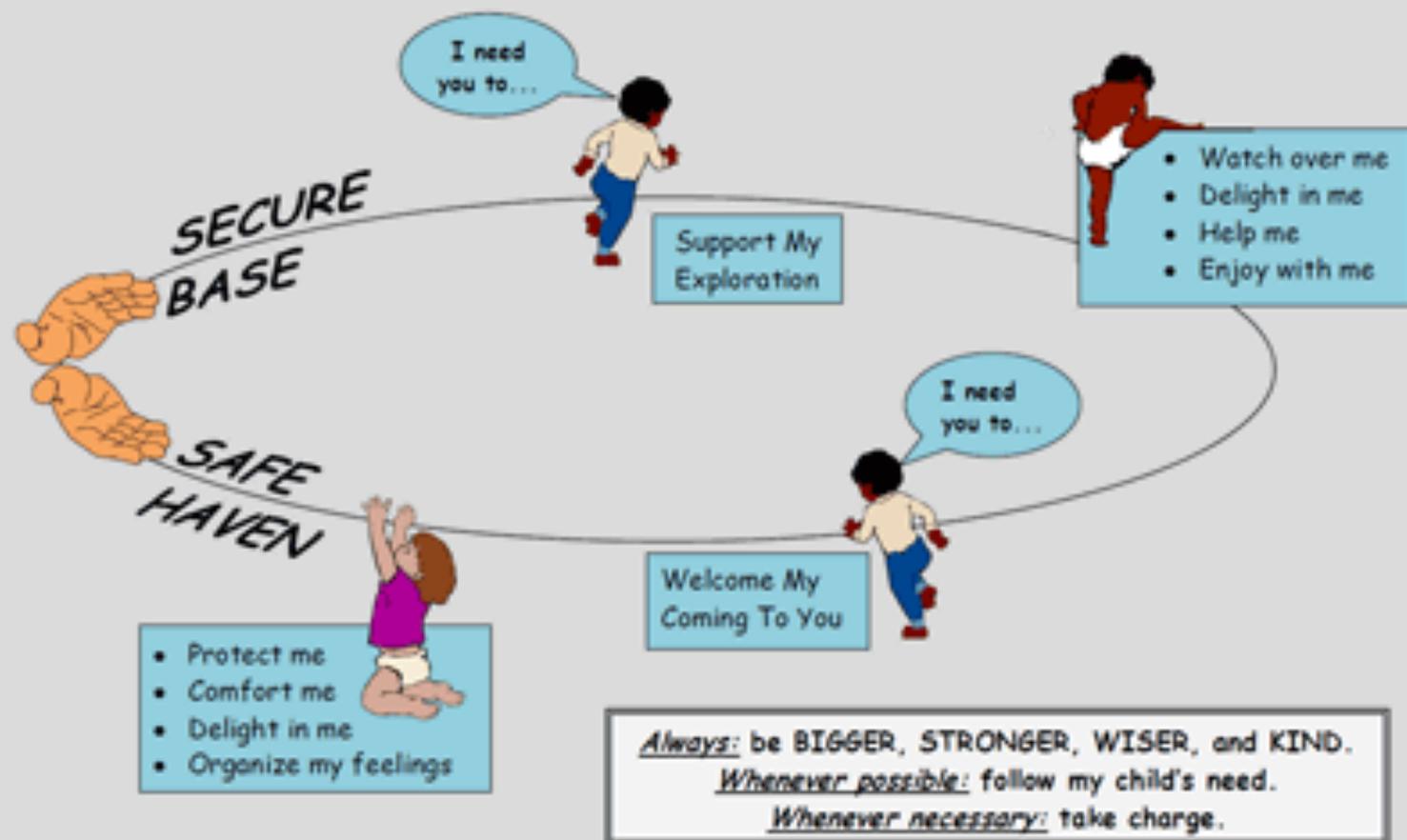
Language/play

- Functional and early representational play
- Lexical spurt (18M+)- large increase in one word vocabulary
- Using words to mediate thinking; construct the world and ask questions



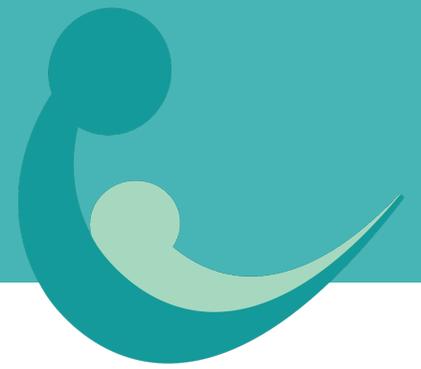
CIRCLE OF SECURITY[®]

PARENT ATTENDING TO THE CHILD'S NEEDS



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Toddler or Infant: That is the question (Ambivalent Synchrony; Rapprochement; 16-24M)



- A challenge of fusion and separateness, progression and regression, autonomy and dependency: A conditional self.
- Potentially rough waters-developmental guidance
- Emotional quiet availability
- “Bigger, stronger wiser and kinder”
- Limit setting alters the Junior Toddler’s relationship to objects: “You may not touch this or that -do this or that -you may only look!” Here is the beginning of separation of perception from action-the wellspring of ideas and symbolization.

Self Synchrony (Beginning Object and Self Constancy; 18-36M+)



- The formation of a relatively constant multisensory, mentalized representation of self and much-loved caregiver **“with feeling”**
- The child can “see” her/himself in the minds-eye and can evoke the mentalized multisensory representation of the “good-enough parent” to refuel himself/herself emotionally in times of need and stress.

Related Developmental Domains (16-36M)



Motor/sensory/regulation

- Improved fine motor planning skills-tool use; drawing
- Beginning spontaneous regulation

Cognition

- Development of conscious expectations, goals and plans
- Beginning of symbolic thought and commentary

Language/play

- Symbolic play with object substitutions, pretense and proto-narrative
- Beginning use of word combinations and early connected discourse and development of the social use of language

The Preschooler (3-6 years)



Developmental Tasks:

- Use of play as a means of differentiating and exploring reality
- World-view shift from one based on fantasy, egocentricity and magical thinking to a more logical, reality-based, decentered perspective
- Spurt in conceptual and logical thought
- Finding a place in the family
- Establishing a peer group based on cooperative and prosocial skills/friendships based on common play themes



Key Developmental Markers in the Preschool Years (3-6 years)



Motor/sensory/regulatory

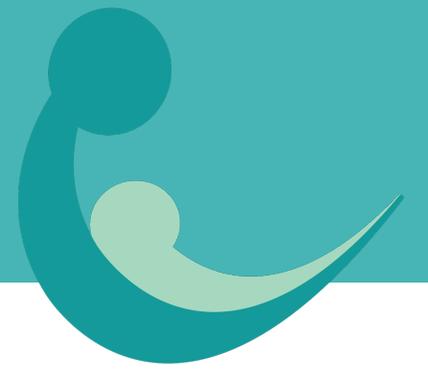
- Combining the components of movement, posture and milestones into more complex skills-such as climbing, bike riding, navigating playground equipment
- Use of inner or private speech to self-regulate/ conscious inhibition
- Internalized dyadic models of regulation: negotiation, dialogue cooperative stance



Cognition

- Growth of conceptual thought, categorization
- More refined cause-effect-thinking

Key Developmental Markers in the Preschool Years (3-6 years)



Cognition

- Improved memory/generalization and transfer of learning

Language/play

- Play tends to be imaginative, dramatic and interactive
- Increase in vocabulary (1,000 words by 3), more complex connected discourse, speech clear and easy to understand
- Language supplants action as the child's main means of communication



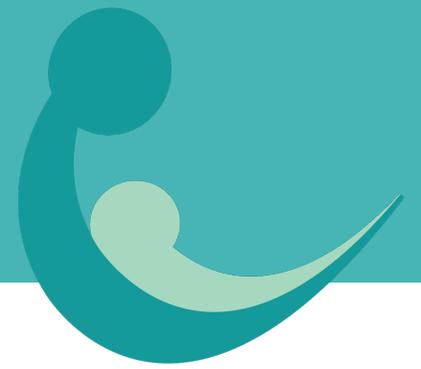
Key Developmental Markers in the Preschool Years (3-6 years)



Self-social-emotional

- Attachment needs being expressed in words more often than action
- Memory and language support better coping with separation and recovers independently from small hurts and stresses
- Improved social skills including negotiating play scenes and conflicts arising from egocentricity and possessiveness, competition and exclusiveness
- Growing skills in empathy, theory of mind, perspective taking and consequently prosocial behavior including cooperation, sharing and problem solving
- Better able to displace anxiety and aggression in play and symbols

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