

Babies, toddlers and children's behaviour can be challenging at any time put when you are experiencing additional situations it's often confusing and worrying. Here are two contribution to ponder over, one from Kate Cairns Associates - Five to Thrive for very young children.

The other comes from an email from Positive Parenting Connection (see below) link which if you think would be helpful, you can sign up too:

Five to Thrive

Five to Thrive was developed by Kate Cairns Associates and it promotes positive parenting skills to help understand the things you do everyday to help your child's growing brain.

Five to thrive complements our established practice ensuring babies and young children are offered a wide range of activities and given opportunities to develop strong relationships with their key person to ensure they are RESPONDED to, CUDDLED when needed, enjoy quiet times to RELAX, PLAY with a variety of stimulating activities and TALKED to using high quality communication.

If you would like a "Guide for Parents and Carers" please contact nigel@familiesfirstsouthampton.org

The Brain is amazing.....

In the first year of life the brain doubles in size. By the first years the brain is two thirds the size of an adult brain. If babies grew in height like this, they could be four feet tall when they were one year old.

The brain is not like any other part of the body. Nearly all the cells of the brain are in place when we are born - about a hundred billion of them. But they are not yet working. The brain grows when connections are made between the cells in response to what is happening to us. These connections are forming all the time through our lives. What happens to us shapes our brains.

In the first three years of life the brain is growing and changing faster than it ever will again. At times during the first year of life a million connections are forming every single second in your baby's brain.

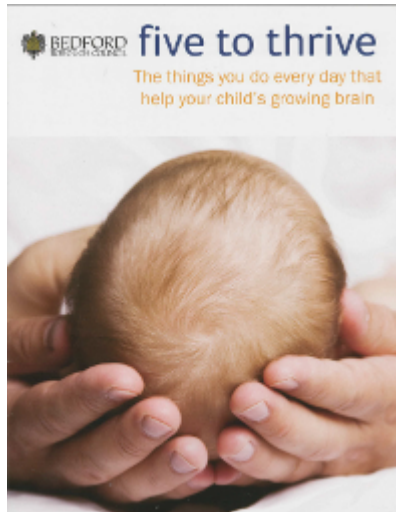
So what happens to your baby shapes their brain. And the most important thing that happens to your baby is YOU! Everything you do when you are with your baby sparks connections in their brain turning connections into pathways that the child can use again.

Five to thrive

Your child's body grows better when you give the child good food. Your child's brain grows better when you do five simple things that feed the growing brain:

Respond . Cuddle . Relax . Play . Talk

These are your child's daily 'five to thrive' - the building blocks for a healthy brain. A healthy brain will help your child be happy in themselves, make friends and enjoy their family life, as well as being the best start for learning once they go to school. And every day will bring many opportunities to give your baby's brain what it needs to grow well. *(Kate Cairns Associates 2014)*



RESPOND

My brain grows better when you respond to me.....

"From the moment I was born I needed you. If you hadn't made sure I was looked after I would not have survived. I couldn't do much, but everything I did, the sounds and the movements I made, were for you. I was asking you to respond to me so that I could live. I feel very scared if I get no response from you. When you look at me with love in your eyes I feel safe. Being close to you helps me to feel safe. When you look at me I am interested in your face, and I look at you. This helps my eyes work together. My brain builds connections for looking at other people and understanding them.

*When you copy the expression on my face, this helps me to understand what I am feeling. Then I copy you, and this builds connections in my brain for understanding and managing my feelings.
When you move I copy your movements. This helps my brain to grow connections that make it possible for me to manage my own body, and to use my body to communicate with other people.
My brain works very slowly at first. But when you respond to me in the same way over and over again the connections you are helping to build grow strong. Then they can carry messages between the different parts of my brain more quickly."*





Some Suggestions

- Try to guess what your baby's crying means and meet their basic needs - warmth and comfort, food, a clean nappy, sleep.
- Copy the sounds or facial expressions your baby makes and see how they react.
- Help your baby to see something if they show you they want to look at it.

Remember

- Everyone takes time to learn how their baby communicates.
- Crying doesn't always mean your baby is 'upset'. It's the only noise they know how to make to get your attention. Sometimes they may just be singing or talking to you!
- When your baby has your full attention, their whole brain is working. When you are watching TV, texting or talking on the phone, they don't get the benefit.
- As children get older they begin to sort out their own problems as well as asking you for help. So sometimes 'wait and see' is a good response for older children.

CUDDLE

My brain grows better when you cuddle me.....

"Before I was born I was more aware of touch than of any other sense, and I was safely held in a small space. Now I can move freely, but I still feel most safe when I am in contact with a grown up who loves me.

Feeling safe with you fills my body with special chemicals that help my brain to grow. The patterns that grow when you cuddle me will mean that all my life I will be able to feel safe with safe people.

When I am close to you my body begins to work in tune with yours. When you feel excited or stressed your heart beats faster and so does mine. When you feel calm or happy your heart beats slower, so does mine. Connections are building that will make it possible for me to control my body one day. Remember that my brain works more slowly than yours, so I need time to notice what is happening and respond to it."

Some suggestions

- Cuddle your baby as often as you like - babies can't have too much contact.
- Respect the space of infants as they grow older. There may be times when they don't want a cuddle but you should try to find other ways to provide reassuring contact.
- Using different kinds of touching. Massage and stroking, tickling, hair brushing and finger games (like 'Round & Round the garden') are all good for your baby's brain.
- Use gentle circular rubbing of the stomach to help a baby with wind or constipation.

Remember

- Babies need touch that soothes (cuddles) and touch that stimulates (tickles).
- Some very young babies (especially if they are small at birth) may sleep too much - gentle stroking or finger-play can encourage them to make and feed.
- As well as cuddling, it is good to put your baby down to experience some quiet time - this is the start of learning how to be independent.





RELAX

My brain grows better when you relax with me.....

"When I was born I had no way to calm myself down or to manage my own reactions. When we are stressed our bodies are full of chemicals that make us active so that we can deal with whatever is upsetting us. These chemicals can be bad for the brain if we can't get the stress under control.

So when I feel stressed I need you to help me. My body works in tune with yours. When I am stressed I need you to calm down!

I know that having a baby is stressful. But if you can find ways to relax when you are with me, you can make a big difference to the way my brain works.

When you relax your heartbeat slows down - and so does mine. Your breathing slows down - and so does mine. Your blood pressure drops - and so does mine. Your muscles relax - and so do mine. Then you feel calm and comfortable, and so do I. That calm relaxed feeling fills my body with chemicals that help my brain to grow.

Just remember that my brain works more slowly than yours, so it may take some time for me to respond".



Some suggestions

- Try to end exciting play or activity sessions with a wind-down time in which you and your baby can enjoy a few moments of calm.
- Think about what makes a relaxing space for your baby to be in - soft lighting, warmth and gentle sounds all help.
- Sing or hum if you or your baby are getting stressed - this will help you relax and is very soothing for your baby. Singing is better than shouting!
- Try to have some time when you are just focused on the warmth, sounds, sights and smells of your baby, not on things you need to get done, or on people or events that have made you upset or angry.
- Find some of your own time to do special things that help you relax - you have to look after yourself if you want to look after your baby.
- Relax into being a parent - the experience can be unfamiliar, scary or leave you feeling guilty or stressed, but all parents have had to learn the hard way.

Remember

- A baby that has become over-tired and over stimulated may need particular help to wind down. A close cuddle, rhythmic rocking and persistent Ssh-ing in a dark environment will sometimes 'reset' an over-stimulated baby brain.



PLAY

My brain grows better when you play with me.....

"I need you to soothe me when I'm upset, but I also need you to make life interesting for me. Toys are great, but the best toy in the world for me isyou!

When you stick your tongue out at me I copy you, and connections build in my brain linking together controlling mt tongue and communicating. That will help me learn to speak.

When you pull faces at me I copy you, and connections in my brain make links between the expression on my face and communicating. That will help me to understand feelings.

When you play counting games, or singing games or action games, my brain builds connections that help me to make sense of the world around me and to have fun.

As I get older, playing with me and helping me to play on my own or with other children builds connections in my brain that make it possible for me to think and plan, to make sense of the world around me and to develop social skills.

And whenever I smile and you smile back at me I feel happy. Happiness fills my body with chemicals that help my brain to grow".





Some suggestions

- Follow your child's lead - if you join in their game, you are telling them that their ideas and decisions are important.
- Try to ensure you spend some time outside every day. The outside world is full of interesting, exciting things for your baby, and being able to look across long distances is very important in helping their developing vision.
- Get down on the floor for creative play - with models, dolls, blocks or just pieces of paper.
- Explore shapes, colours and textures with your child. You could look at picture books together, or make simple toys and pictures with pens, paper, fabric etc.
- Encourage your growing child to play pretending games. Who will they be? Where will they go? What will they do there?

Remember

- Play works best when you are on the same level as your child - on the floor together, sitting at a table etc.
- As your child grows older they will need more time to play by themselves and invent their own games - but they will always love to have some special time with you.



TALK

My brain grows better when you talk to me.....

"I love the sound of your voice. I could hear well even before I was born, and when I was first born I already recognised the voices of the people I live with. I love it when you talk, when you make nonsense noises, and when you sing. I get frightened if there is too much shouting or arguing.

When you talk to me I copy you. At first I can only make a few sounds, but the more you talk to me the more I can make sounds into words. I need you to tell me everything right from the start. I know nothing, so everything I learn in my life will be built on what you are teaching me now. Involve me in life by telling me about it.

I need you to listen to me as well. Remember that my brain works more slowly than yours, so it will take me time to respond when you speak to me. When I make sounds to you, it really helps the connections in my brain if you look straight at me and copy the sounds back to me. Then I know you are listening to me, which makes me feel I matter.

As I get older, take notice of what I am trying to say to you. Help me to tell you how I feel, so that I learn to manage my feelings by talking about them.

Reading is a great way to talk to me. Looking at a book together helps me to focus my eyes, to concentrate, and to think in a logical way. I can enjoy looking at a book with you right from the start of my life. And helping me to be interested in books and reading gives me a good start for learning through all my life".



Some suggestions

- Start by copying your baby's sounds and generating new ones (from 'Ma ma ma' to 'Ga ga ga'). The first talking doesn't have any words.
- Use as many rhymes, poems or songs as you can - to your baby you are the worlds greatest singer!
- Read to your baby regularly, even when they are very young. Simple rhymes and rhythms will hold their attention.

- Talk to your baby about what they are experiencing. "Can you feel the soft toy?" "Did you see the cat?" "You're enjoying your milk this morning."
- Provide a running commentary on your own life. Tell your baby about colours, count the steps you climb or the socks and towels as you do the washing.
- Keep your 'sharp' voice for when you are warning a baby about something dangerous.

Remember

- Any words will help to build your baby's brain. Pop songs, a shopping list or the writing on the cereal packet are more meaningful than Shakespeare to young children.



Many thanks to Kate Caine Associates for this information and please ask for one of their booklets
nigel@familiesfirstsouthampton.org or 07427289813

Positive Parenting Connection (see below) link which if you think would be helpful, you can sign up too: Positive Parenting Connection <info=positiveparentingconnection.net@mail211.atl61.mcsv.net>; on behalf of; Positive Parenting Connection

info@positiveparentingconnection.net>

Why Choosing Positive Guidance over Punishment Helps Reduce Attention Seeking and Other Unhelpful Behaviors

Posted on July 5, 2016 by [Ariadne Brill](#)



Children often seek attention in mistaken ways. When you offer guidance, you can help your child feel connected, understood and ready to make better choices.

As children grow they become very skilled at figuring out really clever ways to get adults to pay attention to them. Sometimes the requests for attention are cute and wonderful. Does your child like making funny faces, telling you a joke, giving you sweet hugs and smiles? This kind of attention and connection seeking is just wonderful right?

Other times, children seek attention in not so wonderful ways. Some typically unhelpful attention seeking behaviors are: Whining, crying, tantrums, back talk, defiance, and aggression.

These are all very unhelpful and typically thought of as misbehavior. These are also ways in which children mistakenly work towards getting the parental attention they need (Jane Nelsen, Positive

Discipline). Children work so hard at getting attention because attention really is a legitimate need for a child to grow well and thrive.

Children need attention like a plant needs sun and water. -Rudolf Dreikus

Attention Seeking is Usually Age Appropriate Behavior in need of Guidance

Aggressive behaviors are often attention seeking behaviors that can be transformed by putting effort into understanding feelings instead of only trying to stop the behavior.

Louisa shared with me that Ethan, her seven year old had been hitting his younger brother a lot lately. If Ethan was playing and Corbin came around to look at his big brother's toys he got hit. Louisa had been using time out, ignoring and taking away what toy was causing issues each and every time this happened. She was doing a great job being really consistent with her "discipline", except there was no change at all in Ethan's behavior. Ethan's toy box was practically empty at this point too as he had lost the privilege of playing with most of his toys but he was still "pretty determined to hit his little brother."

"He is actually hitting more. He is also yelling at me, or ignoring anything I say, and screams at his brother to get out of his way. It's stressful, tense and tiring. I am at a loss." Shared Louisa.

Why was the consistency of time outs and toy removal not helping Ethan behave better?

No matter how many times we "discipline" a child for hitting a sibling, if we don't first acknowledge the feelings the child is dealing with, the misbehavior is unlikely to stop.

Fear, jealousy and insecurity don't stay in the corner when time out is over.

Ethan's need for connection and understanding were running on empty way before his toy box ever did.

Children don't necessarily know how to explain to us why or when they need attention. Much of the attention seeking behaviors we dislike are developmentally normal, even if not helpful.

Parents often refer to unhelpful behaviors by saying "my child is acting out" or "it's just attention seeking" and this is actually a great way to remember that children really do typically act just as they feel and that they really do seek attention because they need it.

When a child acts "badly" it's because they are not feeling well and need guidance. Guidance that helps the child understand her feelings and decisions. Guidance that helps the child learn better skills so she can do better next time.

It is connection, guidance and positive attention that can help a child get back to feeling well and behaving well.

When Louisa made time to talk to Ethan and to acknowledge that being a big brother is hard sometimes, that little brothers can be annoying things started to change. Louisa began to notice ways in which she could protect the space her older son needed for his own activities and play. Turns out Ethan was feeling like his mom was always sending Ethan away when he wanted to tell her about his latest creation or play idea. Ethan was also convinced that little brother Corbin was getting way more of mom's free time. Ethan was feeling jealous and insecure.

Children usually don't come out and say "hey mom, i'm feeling jealous and love insecure ever since Corbin started walking around and talking and you keep saying how darn cute he is... also, you've been ignoring me. this makes me feel agitated...."

Usually what we see and hear is "HEY! THAT IS MY TOY! I SAID IT'S MINE. GET OUT OF MY ROOOOOOOOOOOOM." Slap! and Cue the crying....

Don't children need to know that bad behaviors are unacceptable?

We are often in a hurry to stop bad behaviors. We correct a child swiftly and sternly, because rightfully so, we are invested in raising responsible, respectful children.

Swift discipline tends to invite more trouble, not solve problems. When we put our focus on stopping "the bad behavior" we end up ignoring what is at the core of that unhelpful and mistaken behaviors. Much more than time out or a consequence, what a child really needs in order to make better choices, is for us to first understand the feelings underneath their behavior.

Our children needs us to yield, to slow down instead of charging forth so we can actually get to the core of what is going on underneath their unhelpful behavior.

They need safety and comfort from their parents, and not fear and adversity that comes with punishments and consequences.

Children benefit tremendously when parents are willing to work on understanding or decoding feelings instead of just focusing on stopping unhelpful behaviors.

When the goal of discipline is to just stop behavior, we miss an opportunity to help the child not only make a better choice, but to learn from their feelings and experiences.

One of the most important principles of parenting is that the feelings behind a child's behavior must be recognized, accepted, understood, and openly dealt with, before the behavior can change. -Jan Hunt, M.Sc., Director of The Natural Child Project

Children really do benefit from receiving clear guidance.

Part of offering positive guidance is about helping children understand their own behaviors, feelings and choices. When we help children understand their feelings and behaviors we equip them to make better choices the next time those same feelings start to show up. If we skip this step, we get stuck in a cycle of addressing bad behaviors and never understanding feelings or what fuels the behaviors in the first place.

Give guidance by focusing on ways to teach your child to recognize and talk about feeling and choices.

Do set limits on the unhelpful behaviors.

Do address unhelpful behaviors in a kind and clear way.

Do follow up after setting a limit with positive guidance.

The guidance that follows will depend on the child and situation. It may be helpful to stay present to listen, or to help your child take a calming break first before they can talk. Delaying the “teachable” moment so a child can

calm down does not take away from your message or make you permissive.

Try to remember that every child, in every situation is worthy of respect, connection and love.

You can reduce unwanted attention seeking behaviors by focusing on your child’s needs for unconditional love and connection.

Children feel a true sense of connection when parents slow down and take the time to be with their child, in their world. Connection can happen during play, but it can also happen during every day tasks, like cleaning, cooking, brushing teeth and putting toys away. The key is to be present, mindful, attuned, in other words, really being there in those moments WITH your child.

If unhelpful behaviors are showing up, look for positive ways to guide and teach your child so they can feel and do better. It’s not straightforward, it’s not a magic 1,2,3 solution. It’s really just about being present. Step in with kind and clear actions and words. Strive to work things out together and have confidence that your child can learn to do better.

Do you have a question about misbehavior or attention seeking behaviors that are challenging in your home right now?