

Early Brain and Child Development

Building Brains, Forging Futures

The “5 Rs”

As a pediatrician, you know the important role that safe, stable, and nurturing relationships play in building healthy brains. For better or worse, plasticity makes the developing brain exquisitely sensitive to early experiences – particularly early relationships. Brain development is also a cumulative process, with simple connections and circuits forming the foundation for more complex pathways and behaviors later on.

Early Brain and Child Development (EBCD) is a strategic priority of the AAP. The Academy is working to provide pediatricians and families with strategies and activities to foster the relationships that build healthy brains, particularly within the first 1,000 days of life. As a first tool, please share some or all of the following messages with families to reinforce the important role that families play in their child's healthy development.

The “5 Rs” of early literacy proactively build the critical social-emotional-language skills that support healthy brain development. Encouraging parents to engage in the following activities will nurture these critical skills and may alleviate or minimize the toxic stress that often derails healthy brain development:

- ✓ **Read** together every day with your child (your practice can participate in Reach Out and Read and provide books to families)
- ✓ **Rhyme**, play and cuddle with your child every day
- ✓ Develop **Routines**, particularly around meals, sleep, and family fun
- ✓ **Reward** your child with praise for successes to build self-esteem and promote positive behavior
- ✓ Develop a strong and nurturing **Relationship** with your child as the foundation for their healthy development

Investments in the first 1000 days of life will promote EBCD, provide a healthy start, and build a solid foundation for school success and life-long productivity. Please visit the AAP Web site at

www.aap.org/ebcd for more information and stay tuned for additional tips and resources from the AAP.

