

BUILDING HEALTHY FAMILIES



Building Healthy Brains

Healthy brain development begins in the womb.



The environment in which a developing baby grows is as important to plan as the nursery.

Expectant mothers support brain development before birth when they:

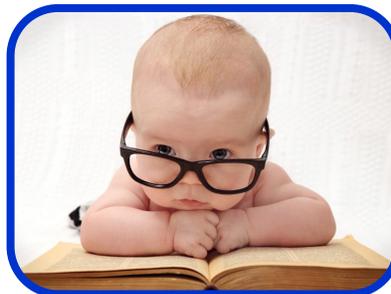
- ◇ Eat a healthy diet
- ◇ Get plenty of sleep
- ◇ Get regular exercise
- ◇ Refrain from alcohol, cigarette, & drug exposure
- ◇ Manage stress
- ◇ Create a healthy social life

Experiences are the architects of the brain.

Parents can stimulate brain growth and start bonding with their babies before birth. Talk and sing to your little one, play

music, and try gentle responsive touch when you feel your baby kick.

Responding to infant needs in a nurturing, consistent manner builds brain connections that last throughout life.



Brains get “wired” for growth when a parent :

- ◇ Shows love and concern
- ◇ Comforts a crying baby
- ◇ Feeds baby on demand
- ◇ Keeps baby safe
- ◇ Keeps baby clean & healthy
- ◇ Holds and “wears” baby
- ◇ Gives baby sensory experiences (things to look at and watch, things to hear, things to touch)

Nurturing, responsive parenting lays the foundation for healthy brain development.

Brains are built from the bottom up.

First to develop is the Reptilian Brain that controls instincts and urges. Next to develop is the Limbic Brain that controls emotions and motivation. Last to develop is the Neocortex, which is the rational or thinking brain.

If a child lacks consistent loving care, is exposed to a stressful environment (yelling, toxic air, violence), the brain can suffer damage that impacts healthy development, the ability to regulate emotions and the ability to complete higher level thinking tasks.

Dad's Corner
A father loves completely, gives quietly, teaches gently and inspires deeply.
-Unknown

