



# CONNECTING THE DOTS

WEST VIRGINIA BIRTH TO THREE RAU ONE – WINTER 2021 NEWSLETTER



## IN THIS EDITION

- A Note from Our Parent Partner - 1
- Snowballs and Snow Plows Play Tray - 2
- Playing with Baby is Fun - 3
- Christmas Book Advent Calendar - 4
- Winter Car Seat Safety Tips - 5
- Contact Us - 6

## A NOTE FROM OUR PARENT PARTNER

Hi! My name is Jade, and I'm the Parent Partner for Region One and the "editor in chief" of our quarterly newsletter. I'm also a self-proclaimed Mama Bear to two wonderful kids, including my now eight year old son, who is a graduate of our Birth to Three program.

2021 feels like it has flown by and we're officially in to my favorite seasons of the year! As Christmas draws near, I'm looking forward to all of my favorite traditions with my littles ones - setting up our nativity, our Christmas book advent calendar, and baking cookies! What fun traditions do you have with your family?

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at (304) 214-5775 or via e-mail at [jjeffers@ccwva.org](mailto:jjeffers@ccwva.org), and please follow us on Facebook at **West Virginia Birth to Three RAU-1, Catholic Charities** for the latest program updates, new resources, and activities for you and your family.

## SNOWBALLS AND SNOW PLOWS SENSORY TRAY

Make a snowy sensory tray for an invitation to imaginative play this winter! Sensory trays and bins are inexpensive and easy to create, and provide engaging play for your little ones.

For this sensory tray, you'll need the following - cotton balls, sparkly white or blue pom poms, mini construction trucks, mini Christmas trees, and a tray or bin.

The sparkly white and blue pom poms are optional - you can use just cotton balls! The cotton balls are fun to play with because they stick together and kids can make bigger snowballs with them.

Add the mini construction trucks to the sensory tray to push and move the snowballs and Christmas trees.

This activity pairs well with one of my favorite Christmas books, *Construction Site on Christmas Night* by Sherri Duskey Rinker and AG Ford. Check your local library for a copy to enjoy with your little one!

Adapted from [www.entertainyourtoddler.com](http://www.entertainyourtoddler.com).

**All activities require adult supervision and participation. Please be aware of small parts that could pose a choking hazard.**





## PLAYING WITH BABY IS FUN – UNTIL IT’S NOT

Why is it sometimes hard to play like babies?!

Most of us love to play with our little ones. Peek-a-boo, stacking blocks, reading books and lots of things in between can be creative, fun and silly times to enjoy being together. However, there are times when what our babies and toddlers need does not match up with what we need as parents. Here are some ideas for what you can do when you hit the wall on playing with your littles!

Adapted from MacLaughlin, S.S. and Parlakian, R. (n.d.). Playing with baby is fun (until it’s boring). Retrieved from <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/2143-playing-with-baby-is-fun-until-it-s-boring>.

How Babies and Toddlers Explore, Learn, and Play	Why It Might Be Challenging and What You Can Do
<p><b>Young children like to do the same thing over and over.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your baby may sit and put blocks in and out of a bin or bucket.</li> <li>Your toddler may want you to read the same book 17 times in a row.</li> <li>Your child may be happy to feed you the same plastic banana over and over (and over).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Grown-ups may find this boring and tedious after a while.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make staying engaged a game for yourself to help you stay in the moment. Try looking at each and every feature on your baby’s face. Look around the room and try to find five things that are red. Take five deep belly breaths.</li> <li>Try a joke. For example, calling a banana an apple. Your toddler will love it. Babies often enjoy some slapstick humor, too. Try pretending to sneeze blocks into a bucket.</li> <li>Remind yourself that what you’re doing is important. Say to yourself, “Reading this book over and over is good for my child’s brain.”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Young children move quickly from one thing to another.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your baby may be very focused on an activity—like shaking her rattle and smiling at you—and then after a minute or two, turn away.</li> <li>Toddlers can be among the most active humans you ever meet. They have a lot of energy and need ways to let it out.</li> <li>Your child is likely interested in anything “new” and may move all around a room touching and exploring as he goes.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Grown-ups may want some moments to last longer!</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Young babies quite naturally take breaks because activity and interaction are tiring for them. When you see your baby turn away, start to yawn, or get a little cranky, give her a break. Wait for her to make eye contact again—that’s how you’ll know she is ready to play.</li> <li>Adults can support a toddler’s growing attention span by helping him re-focus on activity by asking a question or making a comment: “What do you think the dolly would like to eat next?” Or, “I see some blocks we could use to build a garage for the cars.”</li> <li>It may sound crazy—but consider removing some toys from your child’s environment. Fewer toys can mean fewer distractions for some toddlers. They may spend more time playing at one activity if there aren’t so many options in sight.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Young children benefit when we let them take the lead.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Babies love when grown-ups delight in their antics. Paying close attention to baby’s actions while he plays builds your shared connection and baby’s self-esteem.</li> <li>Allowing young children to choose what to play tells them that they are smart, capable, and powerful.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Grown-ups may be used to giving directions and “steering” the play.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Challenge yourself to not speak or interrupt your child’s play for a short period of time. Pay attention to how often you find yourself wanting to “jump in” and watch what happens when you don’t.</li> <li>When playing with babies, let a few seconds pass after you say something before speaking again. Babies take longer to process and plan their responses. Giving them time to respond is an important part of letting them lead.</li> <li>With toddlers, try a statement that doesn’t direct the play, like, “What next?” Or, “What should I do?”</li> </ul>

## CHRISTMAS BOOK ADVENT CALENDAR

The Christmas book advent calendar is a tradition that I started when my daughter was little and we continue it to this day!

Each year, I choose 25 winter and Christmas themed books and wrap each of them individually. I put all of the books in a basket under our Christmas tree, and the kids take turns choosing a book to unwrap and read every night in December.

I do re-use books from year to year and the kids love to find their favorite books as much as they love to find new ones!





## WINTER CAR SEAT SAFETY TIPS

Winter is a tricky time for car seats. As a general rule, bulky clothing, including winter coats and snowsuits, should not be worn underneath the harness of a car seat. In a car crash, fluffy padding immediately flattens out from the force, leaving extra space under the harness. A child can then slip through the straps and be thrown from the seat.

These tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) will help parents strike that perfect balance between keeping little ones warm as well as safely buckled in their car seats.

- Store the carrier portion of infant seats inside the house when not in use. Keeping the seat at room temperature will reduce the loss of the child's body heat in the car.
- Get an early start. If you're planning to head out the door with your baby in tow on winter mornings, you need an early start. You have a lot to assemble, and your baby may not be the most cooperative. Plus, driving in wintry conditions will require you to slow down and be extra cautious.
- Dress your child in thin layers. Start with close-fitting layers on the bottom, like tights, leggings, and long-sleeved bodysuits. Then add pants and a warmer top, like a sweater or thermal-knit shirt. Your child can wear a thin fleece jacket over the top. In very cold weather, long underwear is also a warm and safe layering option. As a general rule of thumb, infants should wear one more layer than adults. If you have a hat and a coat on, your infant will probably need a hat, coat, and blanket.
- Don't forget hats, mittens, and socks or booties. These help keep kids warm without interfering with car seat straps. If your child is a thumb sucker, consider half-gloves with open fingers or keep an extra pair or two of mittens handy — once they get wet they'll make your child colder rather than warmer.
- Tighten the straps of the car seat harness. Even if your child looks snugly bundled up in the car seat, multiple layers may make it difficult to tighten the harness enough. If you can pinch the straps of the car seat harness, then it needs to be tightened to fit snugly against your child's chest.
- Use a coat or blanket over the straps. You can add a blanket over the top of the harness straps or put your child's winter coat on backwards (over the buckled harness straps) after he or she is buckled up. Some parents prefer products such as poncho-style coats or jackets that zip down the sides so the back can flip forward over the harness. Keep in mind that the top layer should be removable so your baby doesn't get too hot after the car warms up.
- Remember, if the item did not come with the car seat, it has not been crash tested and may interfere with the protection provided in a crash. Never use sleeping bag inserts or other stroller accessories in the car seat.
- Pack an emergency bag for your car. Keep extra blankets, dry clothing, hats and gloves, and non-perishable snacks in your car in case of an on-road emergency or your child gets wet on a winter outing.

These precautions can make sure your child is as safe as can be when traveling to their next well-child visit or over the river and through the woods to grandmother's house.



## CONTACT US!

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Is your child moving, hearing, seeing, learning and talking like other children their age?  
If you have any questions, please give us a call!

West Virginia Birth to Three Region 1 RAU is a program of Catholic Charities WV. West Virginia Birth to Three services and supports are provided under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). It is administered through the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health.

1-800-619-5697 • [www.wvdhhr.org/birth23](http://www.wvdhhr.org/birth23)

Find more COVID-19 resources on our website!  
[http://www.wvdhhr.org/birth23/covid19\\_resources.asp](http://www.wvdhhr.org/birth23/covid19_resources.asp)

