Connecting the Dots

West Virginia Birth to Three RAU-1 Winter 2023 Newsletter

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Please follow us on Facebook at West Virginia Birth to Three RAU-1, Catholic Charities for updates about our program, local resources and programs, upcoming events, and activities for you and your family.

A Note From Our Parent Partner

Hello! My name is Amber, and I am the Parent Partner for Region 1, and publisher of our quarterly newsletter. I am the mother of two amazing children, including my almost 4 year-old daughter, who is a graduate of the WV Birth to Three (WVBTT) program.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me at awood@ccwva.org or by calling

304-214-5775.

We love to hear and share your family stories! Family stories are an invaluable way to show the impact that our program makes. If you are interested in sharing your family's story and experience, please contact our Parent Partner at (304) 214-5775 or awood@ccwva.org

Tips on Helping Your Child Develop Confidence

Adapted from:https://www.zerotothree.org/resource/tips-on-helping-your-child-develop-confidence/

Self-confidence is an essential ingredient for all aspects of your child's healthy development and a key ingredient for school success. Here's how you can help your child develop the self-confidence they need for future success.

Confidence is a belief in your ability to master your body, behavior, and the challenges you encounter in the larger world. Children who are confident are eager to learn new skills and face new challenges. They also expect adults to be helpful and supportive of their efforts. Self-confidence is also crucial for getting along with others and working out the many social challenges—such as sharing, competition, and making friends—that children face. Self-confident children see that other people like them and expect relationships to be satisfying and fun.

How does self-confidence develop? Babies are born with no real sense of themselves as separate and distinct beings. They learn who they are primarily through their interactions and experiences with others. Primary caregivers—parents, relatives, caregivers, and teachers - reflect back to children their unique strengths and special attributes. Watch how confidence grows across the first three years of life:

- A newborn cries and is comforted by her parent. This baby is learning that she is loved, important, and worthy of soothing.
- An 8-month-old shakes a rattle and smiles at the sound it makes. His caregiver says, "You figured out how the rattle works!" This baby is learning he is a clever problem-solver.
- A toddler takes a stool to reach her dad's cell phone on the countertop. "I can't let you play with my phone," says the girl's father, "But how about playing with this?" He hands her a toy phone and she happily begins making calls. This toddler is learning that her interests are important and will be respected and supported (within limits) by those who love her.
- A 3-year-old sobs as his parents leave for a night out on the town…without him. They help him calm down and get settled with his babysitter. This toddler is learning that his feelings are important and that his parents will listen and respond to him when he is distressed.

Here are ways you can nurture your child's self-confidence through your everyday interactions together.

Establish Routines With Your Baby or Child	When events happen in approximately the same way at approximately the same time each day, your child will feel safe, secure, confident and in control of his world. If day-to-day events seem to occur randomly, it can cause children a lot of anxiety. If life doesn't make sense, it may feel too scary to fully explore. When children know what to expect, they are free to play, grow, and learn.
Allow for and Facilitate Plenty of Play	Play is how children learn about themselves, other people, and world around them. Through play, children also learn how • to solve problems and develop confidence. • it feels to be someone else, • to try on new roles and • to work out complicated feelings.
Help Your Child Learn to be a Problem Solver	Help your child work through problems, but don't always solve them for her. Move the blocks on the bottom of the tower so they are a little more stable, but don't put the tall one on top—let her figure out how to make it balance. This way you give her the chance to feel successful. If your child is building a block house on the rug and it keeps falling, you could: • Tell her that you see how frustrated she is • Ask her if she knows what may be causing the problem • Offer your observations, i.e., that the rug is soft so the blocks aren't stable • Ask if she has any ideas about what might make them steadier The goal is to guide and support your child in her problem-solving efforts but not do for her what she has the skills to accomplish herself. Sometimes, your child's times of greatest frustration are in fact golden opportunities for her to develop feelings of confidence, competence, and mastery.
Give Your Child Responsibilities	Feeling useful and needed makes children feel important and builds confidence. Jobs should be age-appropriate. Very young children can sort laundry with you, help feed pets, water plants, and pick up toys. Be specific about what is expected. Say, "Please put a napkin on each plate," not "Help me set the table."
Celebrate Your Child's Successes	Showing your child that you recognize how he is growing and learning helps to build his confidence. Make a photo album of his accomplishments. Take pictures of your child struggling to climb onto a chair, and one of your child sitting in it proudly.
Encourage Your Child to Try to Master Tasks He is Struggling With	Children learn by doing. Break down difficult tasks into manageable steps to help him feel in control, confident, and safe. For example, if he is trying to learn to put his shoes on: Unlace his shoes and open them for him Line them up so he can step in Let him lean on you while he steps in Guide his hand, if necessary, as he fastens the shoes Tell him: "Nice job getting your shoes on!" As you work on a task or skill that is tough for your child, let him know you believe in him, but also communicate that you will not be disappointed if he isn't yet ready. You are there to support him whenever he is ready to try again. When children feel in control, they feel strong in the world.
Provide Language for Your Child's Experiences	This should be language that accurately reflects his experience, shows understanding and empathy, and instills confidence. "You tried to pour your own juice. Good for you. Some juice is in the cup. Some spilled. You look sad about that. Here, wipe it up. That pitcher is heavy for little hands. I'll give you a smaller one and you can try again."
Be A Role Model Yourself	Children are always closely watching their parents for clues about what to do or how to feel. When it comes to learning how to manage emotions like hurt, anger, or frustration, you are their "go-to" person. If you can model persistence and confidence in yourself, your child will learn this too. Try new things and praise yourself aloud. "I was really frustrated putting up that shelf. It was hard to do. When it fell, I was mad. I rested and tried again. Now I'm proud of myself for getting the job done and not giving up."

7 Tips to Help Make a Special Needs Child's Holiday More Enjoyable.

1. **Safe Space**

Whenever you visit a person's house or stay at your own, establish a "safe zone" for your child so that she can retreat and be alone, if desired. This may be a room in the house or even a desk she can crawl under for a time.

2. Maintain Routines — as Much as Possible

Quite likely, there will be routines forsaken, forgotten or simply adjusted for festivities. Many children with sensory issues or autism struggle with such change. As a result of their brains and bodies adapting well, they may become overly disorganized and overstimulated; more, they likely will exhibit more sensory seeking/avoidance behaviors and have meltdowns more frequently.

3. Introduce Sensory Input Slowly

For many of the Fall and Winter holidays, sensory input is at a maximum. Between Christmas' twinkling lights and Hanukkah's fragrant oils cooking, many children with special needs are easily overwhelmed. To help with this adjustment, introduce new sites, smells, and sounds one at a time, when possible. Combine it with familiar, cozy sensory input as well.

4. Utilize Tools

Ask a pediatric therapist for recommendations of equipment or tools that may help your child and family. Children with autism may benefit from weighted blankets, earmuffs, and specialty sand. Those with ADHD often find comfort in fidget toys and calming jars.

5. Prep Family

If you'll be spending time with family and friends who haven't been around your child much, consider giving them a little tutorial in advance. If you aren't yet comfortable giving all the details of your child's condition, just offer ideas on how your child best responds.

6. Simplify Opening Presents

For children who struggle with fine motor skills, reduce frustration by adjusting presents and cards. Loosen ribbons, unseal envelopes, and minimize tape so your child can feel successful with little frustration. He'll feel a sense of satisfaction over the ability to complete tasks.

7. Enlist a Support Team

Identify at least one other person who will be on your side during the gathering. This person can help ensure the special space is prepared ahead of time or that your child is taken care of while you visit and eat.

Adapted from http://pediatrictherapies.com/

Paper Chain Advent Calendar

Items Needed

* Scissors
* Construction Paper –brown and white
* Craft foam-black, orange, and brown
* Craft glue
* Googly eyes
* Embellishment for snowman hat
* Pen or pencil
* Ruler

On the construction paper, place the ruler parallel to the short side and trace down the right side of the ruler. Move the ruler over and place the left side on the pen line, then draw another line down the right side of the ruler. Keep going until the whole paper is sectioned off. You'll get about 8 – 9 strips per sheet of construction paper. Cut out all the strips using your scissors. You're going to want 26 strips total – 25 rings for the countdown and then one for the head.

Use glue to turn 24 of the paper strips into rings, attaching them in a row. Glue the 25th ring but don't attach it, and leave the 26th paper strip alone.

Draw out your embellishments (like antlers or a hat) directly onto the craft foam. Then cut out using the scissors. The reason for the craft foam is so the embellishments stick up when you glue them to the paper chain. They provide dimension to the project – construction paper will just flop over! Add fun embellishments to your paper chain countdown if you want to .

To the lone rings, add your embellishments with craft glue (the hat, the antlers, the noses, etc.). Let them dry, then, attach them to the main ring chain with the last paper strip. Your kids Advent calendar is complete! Hang your paper chain countdown on the wall near your tree or in a place where the kids can reach.

You'll have them rip off one of the rings every single day from December 1st through Christmas morning.

Adapted from https://modpodgerocksblog.com/

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

Winter Car Seat Safety

The American Academy of Pediatrics offers 10 safety tips for keeping children safe while traveling during cold weather months.

1. 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.
2. If you are planning to head out the door with your baby in tow on winter mornings, get an early start. You have a lot to assemble, and your baby may not be the most cooperative.
3. 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 rule of thumb, infants should wear one more layer than adults.
4. Don't forget hats, mittens, and socks or booties. These help keep kids warm without interfering with car seat straps
5. Tighten the straps of the car seat harness. Even if your child looks snuggly 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.
6. 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.
7. Use a car seat cover ONLY if it does not have a layer under the baby. Nothing should ever go underneath your child's body or between her body and the harness straps. Be sure to leave baby's face uncovered to avoid trapped air and re-breathing.
8. 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.
9. 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.
10. Leave plenty of time to get to where you are going. Driving in wintry conditions will require you to slow down and be extra cautious.

Adapted from aap.org

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. West Virginia Birth to Three Region 1 RAU is a program of: Catholic Charities West Virginia

Santa's Silent Night

What is Santa's Silent Night? Santa's Silent Night is a rare opportunity for children with special needs or developmental delays to experience the magic of Christmas and meet Santa Claus in a sensory friendly, comfortable environment. We have worked diligently to reduce many of the factors that make visiting a traditional Santa Claus unenjoyable, if not impossible, for many of our families.

Is registration required? Yes, registration is required to participate in Santa's Silent Night. We suggest registering for the event as soon as possible, as space is very limited.

Is there a fee to register? There is no cost to register for or to participate in our event. We simply want you and your family to enjoy the day.

How do I register? You can register for our event by calling (304) 214-5775 between October 2, 2023 and November 2, 2023.

Where will the event be held? The event will be held at 2000 Main Street, Wheeling, WV, 26003. You may park in the parking lot in front of the building.

What can I expect at the event? Please arrive 10-15 minutes ahead of your scheduled time to visit Santa Claus. When you arrive, you will be greeted by one of Santa's elves, who will direct you to our snowy winter village. You will be escorted along our winter path (which is wheelchair and walker accessible) to meet Santa. You will enjoy up to fifteen minutes with your personal Santa.

What happens after we meet Santa? After you meet Santa, your elf will escort you through our winter village to our play area. You will receive a guide to our activities and a designated time to enjoy a story with Mrs. Claus. To ensure that all of our families have time to enjoy our activities, please be mindful of your assigned story time.

Can I take photos? Yes! We encourage families to take photos of their children at the event. In addition, photographers will be on hand to take a photo for each family and a print will be provided to you at no cost after the event.

My child has allergies. Will there be food at the event? Yes, light refreshments will be provided at the event. Because the refreshments are being donated by various organizations, we are unable to guarantee the absence of any allergens. If your child has allergies, please be aware that the provided refreshments may contain allergens.

What activities will be available for the children? We are excited to announce that in addition to meeting Santa Claus, children will have the opportunity to participate in activities in our peaceful play area and listen to a story with Mrs. Claus! We respectfully request that parents remain with their children at all times, as our staff will be unable to provide supervision during the event.

West Virginia Birth to Three
Growing Together

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Region One RAU information

Wheeling Office
2000 Main Street, Suite 222
Wheeling, WV 26003
(304) 214-5775

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

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1-800-619-5697 · www.wvdhhr.org/birth23

West Virginia Birth to Three Growing Together

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