

Early Learning Parents' Pages

November 2018



- Trauma and Young Children
- Family Engagement
- How To Stay Connected
- Explore Adoption
- Celebrate **VETERANS DAY**

Handling Trauma and Young Children

Young children may be exposed to trauma in many ways...

watching new reports, movies or tv shows with violence; experiencing or seeing violence in their homes or neighborhoods; being involved or witnessing a tragic accident; experiencing a disaster such as a hurricane, earthquake, flood, tornado;

parents' divorce or separation; or death of a family member, close friend or pet. How a young child is exposed to trauma and family or caregivers react to his behavior during or after the event make a difference in a child's reactions.

As parent or caregiver, you may not recognize the effects of these events on your child or know how to help them cope with grief or anxiety.

There are signs you can look for that indicate your child may need more support and comfort from you or help from a professional. In the weeks or months after a disaster or other traumatic event, pay close attention to

your child for any physical signs of trauma. Is he having difficulty sleeping or sleeping for long periods of time? Is he refusing to go to child care or pre-



school? Does he refuse to eat, eats only small amounts of food or over-eats? Does he have a hard time paying attention to you (or others) when you talk or read to him or play with him? These may be signs of trauma. Difficulty separating from you, worrying about where you are going, asking lots of questions about his and family members' safety, health and locations (Where is daddy? Is grandma at the hospital? Where are you going to buy groceries?) may be other signs your child is suffering from toxic stress.

If your child has experienced trauma, you can help them feel safe and secure by spending time holding, cuddling or sitting close to them and talking calmly about how you will keep them safe. They will benefit from your touch and your calmness. Even if you are anxious and do not feel calm, make sure to use a calm tone of voice and do not talk about your worries when they can hear you or see you. Listen to your child and answer all of their questions without specific details that may frighten them.

Acknowledge your child's feelings by simply confirming what they tell you: "I can see that you are worried about the weather. Another storm is coming, but it is not a hurricane." If you do not know the answer to a question, don't worry. Just tell them, "I don't know, but I will try to find out." Your child needs to know that

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LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

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Family Engagement Month

November is National Family Engagement Month. It is also **Florida Family Engagement Month**. You may wonder, "What is **family engagement** and why is it so important that it has a whole month of recognition and celebration?"

Family engagement is important for preparing children for school and life. Research shows that family engagement

- Increases a child's motivation to learn.
- Reduces behavioral problems.
- Improves social-emotional development.
- Improves school readiness skills, such as impulse control, attention, memory and planning skills.

Your child benefits from your family being engaged in his learning, **healthy development** and well-being at home your child is enrolled in a child care or preschool program, your family can engage with the program by having a positive relationship with the teachers and directors or administrators. Family members communicate with the school, center or child care family home on a regular basis.

A partnership between your family and all of your child's caregivers or teacher supports his healthy development and **learning**. You talk with teachers or caregivers about your concerns and goals for your child. The teachers or caregivers keep you informed about your child's **social and emotional development, language, math** and **other skills** he is learning at school. Your family attends meetings, conferences and other school events as often as possible and discusses problems he may be having at home with his teachers or

caregivers. Family engagement includes **everyday routine tasks** and activities you do with your child at home to support his learning and health.



What does family engagement **look** like?

Parents or other family members...

- **Reading** a book to a child.
- **Talking or singing** to their baby as they change their diaper, dress them or give them a bath.
- Playing a game with their child.
- Taking their child to a park or going for a walk and asking questions about what their child sees.
- **Singing the Alphabet Song** to their child or playing games with letters and letter sounds.
- Stacking blocks with their toddler.

What does family engagement **sound** like?

- Parents or other family members...
- Asking their toddler to name body parts as they point to their arms, legs, toes, fingers, eyes, nose and mouth.
- Singing silly songs while riding in the car or singing lullabies at bedtime.
- Telling their preschooler the names of vegetables in the grocery store.
- Talking to their child's teacher about what they are learning this week at school.
- **Asking their pediatrician** about their child's weight and height or why she is not walking yet.
- Explaining to their child how to make new friends.

What does family engagement **feel** like?

Parents or other family members are...

- Excited when their baby starts to stand, crawl or walk and show their excitement to the baby.
- Concerned when their preschooler runs out into the street when a car is coming and tell their child they were afraid she would get hurt.
- Happy when their infant smiles at them and they smile back at him.
- Surprised when their toddler likes the vegetables they made for dinner and praise her for trying new, healthy foods.
- Proud when the teacher tells them their child is kind to other children at school and they give their child a big hug.
- Disappointed because they have to work and cannot stay with their child every day, but....
- Pleased that they found a great child care center or preschool that is a caring, loving place where their child loves to go while they are at work.



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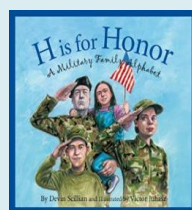
Veterans Day

November 11 is Veterans Day. Your child may be curious about this holiday and ask questions about veterans or Veterans Day parades. Thanking veterans for their service to our country is its purpose. Talk with your child about ways your family can thank a veteran. Suggestions for ways your family can say thanks on Veterans Day (and every day):

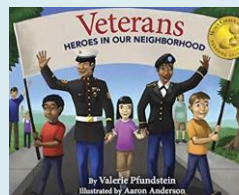
- Fly an American flag outside your home. Have your child help raise and lower the flag each day.
- Participate in or watch a Veterans Day parade together.
- Personally thank a veteran for their service.
- Send a care package to a military service member at home or overseas.
- Donate to organizations like Operation Homefront or the Wounded Warrior Project.
- Help your child make a card or write a note to thank a veteran. Mail or take it to a local veterans' clinic, hospital or VFW or VVA. For a location, go to <https://www.vfw.org/find-a-post>.



Books for young children that help explain the importance of this day:



For school-age children, "**H**" is for **Honor**, written by David Scillian, tells us about the different branches of the military.



Veterans, by Valerie Pfundstein, is a rhyming picture book about friends and neighbors who served our country in the military.

How To Stay Connected

November is the beginning of the holiday season for many families and staying connected with family members is part of many holiday celebrations. Sharing traditions, traveling to visit relatives, sending cards or letters, and calling or skyping family members makes the holidays personal and special. You may have family members who live or work in different cities, states or countries and have to make an extra effort to talk or visit with them. If you are part of a military family, you need to plan early to share holiday messages, send cards and gifts, or schedule time to talk or skype with them.

Staying connected is a challenge military families face. If you are in the military and have young children, it is especially important for you to **connect** with your child on a regular basis. **Babies on the Homefront** is a mobile app that helps military family members connect with babies, toddlers and preschoolers no matter where they are stationed. A dad, mom or other family member can **read a story** or sing a song with their child at bedtime; give their child a thumbs-up, high-five or a kiss with kid-friendly emojis. You can store videos of yourself singing, reading bedtime stories and telling stories about your childhood in the app so your child can view them at different times. **Parenting2Go** is an app that will help you strengthen relationships with your child and reconnect with them after a deployment.



During separation and stress that you may be experiencing, there are resources on the **Zero to Three website** such as **brochures** and **flyers** that focus on the unique experience of parenting a baby or toddler and staying engaged with your young child. Create a personalized **Over There activity book** for your child that you can read together on Skype or make a video of you reading the book and store it on the **Babies on the Homefront** app. As one of the most important people in your child's life, you need to know how to connect with your child in **ways appropriate for their age**. To learn more about your child's development and to find ways to support your child's development as they grow, subscribe to the **Just in Time Parenting** e-newsletters.

It is difficult to stay connected with young children when you are away from home or live in a different city, state or country, but technology makes it easier. The benefits for your child far exceed the time and effort it takes to continue to interact with your child as much as possible.

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Explore Adoption

Do you want every child in Florida to have a safe household, loving parents and a chance to grow up in a positive, loving environment? For some Florida children this is just a dream, but it can happen if you consider adoption. Adoption creates space for a child to grow, thrive and fulfill his or her dreams. Florida has a special adoption initiative that promotes the benefits of public adoption for families called **Explore Adoption**.

If you are thinking about expanding your family, please consider adopting a child who is older or has special needs. If you would like to adopt more than one child, consider children who are part of a sibling group. You can contact *Explore Adoption* to learn more about children available to adopt immediately in the state or your local community.

There are supports and resources for families who adopt one or more children. Florida offers a monthly subsidy for health care; free college tuition for the adopted child at any state

university, community college or vocational school in Florida; and adoption assistance for families who adopt a child with special needs. Federal tax credits are available for families as well.

If you want to make a real difference in the life of a child, explore adoption and adopt a child who needs someone like you.

Consider making a child's dream come true.

Trauma and Children

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they can trust you to **answer questions** and accept their feelings so they will feel safe again.

It may take six months to a year for your child to feel safe and secure once again. Certain sounds, locations or pictures may trigger feelings of helplessness and fear or anger. Reassure them that **you are there to keep them safe** and offer different ways to deal with their **fears**.

How to help children cope after a traumatic event:
[Ages 0-2](#), [Ages 2-5](#), [Ages 6-11](#), [Help Kids Cope App](#), [Complex Trauma](#), [Trauma Informed Care](#).

Special dates in December

Dec. 1 Clark Kent's Birthday ♦ Dec. 2 Special Ed Day & World Aids Day ♦ Dec. 4 Cookie Day ♦ Dec. 5 Bathtub Party Day ♦ Dec. 7 Cotton Candy Day ♦ Dec. 9 Gingerbread Decorating Day ♦ Dec. 10 Human Rights Day ♦ Dec. 11 Kaleidoscope Day ♦ Dec. 12 Chanukah ♦ Dec. 14 Monkey Day ♦ Dec. 15 Ugly Christmas Sweater Day ♦ Dec. 17 Maple Syrup Day ♦ Dec. 19 Oatmeal Muffin Day ♦ Dec. 21 Winter Solstice & World Peace Day ♦ Dec. 25 Christmas ♦ Dec. 26 Boxing Day & Candy Cane Day ♦ Dec. 27 Fruitcake Day & Visit the Zoo Day ♦ Dec. 28 Chocolate Day ♦ Dec. 29 Tick Tock Day ♦ Dec. 30 Bacon Day ♦ Dec. 31 New Year's Eve



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