






# Keystones of Development

## ~Clinic Tip~

Brush teeth	Put on PJs	Read books	Get in bed	Lights out
				

## Sleep Transitions

As a provider, families may come to you with concerns about their child's sleep. Caregivers may notice that children become upset when it's time to go to bed. Meltdowns are totally normal, and it's very common around transitions like bedtime. Here are a few suggestions you can offer to families to make sleep transitions easier:

1. **Have a consistent schedule** – Create a predictable routine that happens around the same time and in the same way. It's easier for children to control their behavior when they know what's coming next.
2. **Give the child a sense of control over transitions** - You can suggest families make a chart together with the different steps, like brush teeth, put on PJs, read two books, get in bed, lights out.
3. **Ask for one behavior at a time** – If you ask for one behavior at a time, you can break a task down into simple steps. Caregivers can say, "Please brush your teeth. After that's done, it will be time for bed. Time to put on your pajamas, so we have time to read!"



Login to the curriculum for more tips like these.

# Provider Tip of the Week

September 22, 2021

## Ways to Promote Cognitive Flexibility

Cognitive flexibility is the ability to adapt our behavior and thinking in response to our environment. It occurs in 2 main ways-the ability to think about multiple things at the same time and the ability to think based on a change in demands or expectations. Cognitive flexibility is important in problem solving and making new and surprising connections allows children to develop executive function skills that they need for their overall health and wellness. Keep reading for ways you can promote flexible thinking in the visit. You can...

### Discuss:

- The importance of pretend play to promote creativity and understanding different perspectives

### Model:

- Silliness - "I'm going to check your ears now. Just kidding! I was being silly. I said I was going to check your ears, and then I checked your foot!"

### Praise:

- Parents for speaking multiple languages in the home which has also been shown to promote cognitive flexibility

Check out the clip below for a demonstration of how you can use silliness to promote flexible thinking at the 2 year visit:

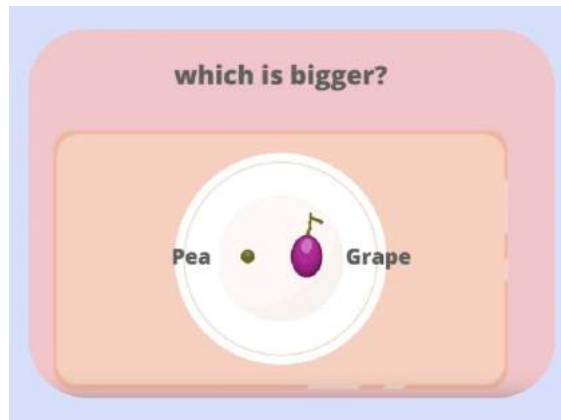


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# Provider Tip of the Week

September 29, 2021

## Promoting Numeracy in the Exam Room



The well-child visit can be a great opportunity to promote **early numeracy**. Early numeracy refers to the foundations of mathematical understanding and can be promoted by discussing different quantities, the relationship between large and small amounts, and number naming. Keep reading for a few suggestions:

**Counting & Number Naming** - Try asking children questions like, "How many cups of milk do you drink?" or "How many times a day do you brush your teeth?" Remind parents that this everyday math talk can promote their child's academic knowledge.

**Making Comparisons** - Let parents know that they can promote numeracy by making size comparisons, like less, more, bigger, and smaller. You can model this by asking the child, "Do you drink a lot of juice, a little juice, or no juice?"

**Categorizing and Sorting** - Talking about categories and sorting can also promote a child's academic knowledge. You can ask, "What vegetables do you eat? Do you like any green vegetables?"



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# Provider Tip of the Week

October 6, 2021

## Pretend Play



Did you know that children are learning through play every day?

**Pretend play** is great for a child's cognitive development. Pretending to be someone else requires concentration, building their **self regulation** skills, and allows a child to put themselves in someone else's shoes, promoting their **perspective taking** skills. As a provider, you can model for families how they can promote pretend play in your next visit by:

- **Having the child pretend to be the doctor** - During the physical exam, you can discuss playing doctor. You can say things like, "Today, let's play a game. I want you to pretend to be the Doctor. What should you examine first - my eyes or my ears? Great, now it's my turn and I'm going to listen to your heart. It sounds healthy and strong!"
- **Using pretend play to get through painful procedures** - During a painful procedure, like giving a vaccine, you can suggest that the child pretend to be their favorite superhero. Try saying, "I know that you've had shots here before, and it hurt. I promise that I'm going to go as fast as I can and that it'll be over soon. To make it easier, I want to play a game. Do you know any superheroes? I want you to imagine that you're your favorite superhero and show me what they'd act like if they got a flu shot."



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# Provider Tip of the Week

October 13, 2021



## Understanding & Labeling Emotions

Labeling emotions is a great way for parents to promote secure attachment, self regulation, and perspective taking skills. Labeling and validating a child's emotions helps them to feel heard and understood, to learn about how to regulate their own emotions in the future, and to understand the emotions of others. Keep reading to learn how you can model labeling emotions during your next visit:

- **Empathize with fears** - Vaccine administration is one of the more stressful events for both caregivers and children during a well-child visit. If a child is upset, you can acknowledge their feelings and say, "I know that made you upset. I am sorry that was painful. You were so brave!"
- **Discuss parental self-regulation** - You can tell families that in upsetting situations, children take cues from their parents. By modeling calm, adaptive responses, they can not only soothe their child, but also serve as potential role models. They can say, "I know you are nervous about being at the doctor. I get nervous sometimes too, so the first thing I do is take three deep breaths to calm myself down."
- **Model explaining how a child's actions make others feel** - You can promote the development of perspective taking skills by labeling your own emotions in the visit. You can say something like, "When you told me about all the healthy foods you've been eating, it made me feel so proud!"



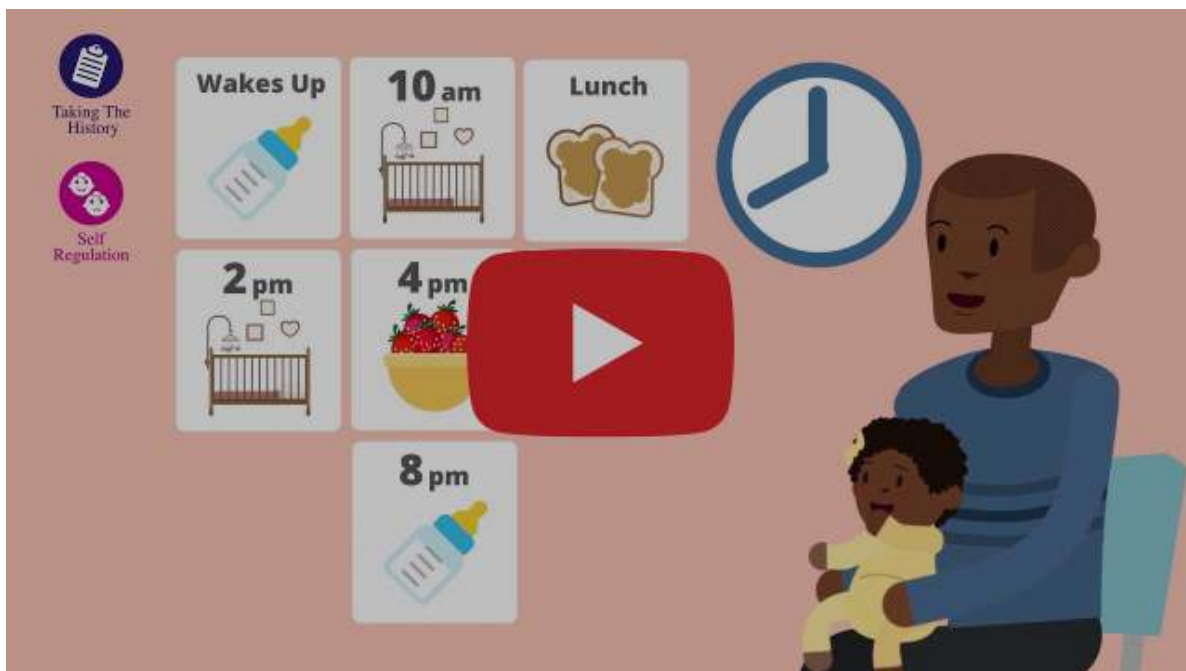
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# Provider Tip of the Week

October 20, 2021

## The Importance of Routines

Discussions about feeding and sleep schedules are great opportunities to provide families with information about the importance of self-regulation through **routines**. Routines help children anticipate what is coming next, help them manage or regulate their behavior, and help them feel secure in their environment. As a provider you can let families know that routines help children understand what to expect next and makes them feel like their world is safe and predictable. You can praise parents and say things like, "I'm so impressed that you have regular routines! Babies love consistency in what they do and when they do it." Scan the QR code below for an example of what you can say in the visit:



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# Provider Tip of the Week

October 27, 2021

## Halloween Safety



Halloween is an exciting time for many children. Even though there is fun to be had, limits often need to be set, especially in relation to safety in street crossing. Per the AAP, "pedestrian injury [is] the most common injury to children on Halloween." As a provider, you can discuss this risk with families and weave in **strategies to promote self-regulation**, which will help children practice controlling their bodies and coming to a stop before crossing the street.

- Remind parents to always hold their child's hand when crossing the street.
- Discuss how parents can promote self-regulation by playing games like freeze dance, the statue game, or red light, green light.
- Let parents know that they can practice saying, "Freeze!" when their child gets to the corner to avoid needing to say, "Stop, don't!"

Wishing everyone a happy and safe Halloween!

Read more Halloween health and safety tips from [HealthyChildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)



**Provider Tips powered by the Keystones of Development curriculum,**

# Provider Tip of the Week

November 3, 2021

## Picky Eating



During well-child visits, you may hear complaints from caregivers about their child's picky eating. As a provider, you can validate parents' concerns, set expectations, and explain how giving some choices can promote their child's autonomy and healthy eating habits. You can remind parents of both the importance of not forcing a child to eat and avoiding food battles. It can take a while for a child to try and like something new. Keep reading for an example of what you can tell families:

"I know picky eating is frustrating, but this is a normal phase for toddlers. You still want to ensure they get some fruits and vegetables throughout the day. You can try to offer two healthy choices with each meal, let your child help pick out healthy foods when grocery shopping and involve your child in preparing food for meal time. Allowing your child more control over what they eat lets them practice making choices for themselves, makes them more likely to eat healthy and can be a positive bonding experience between you and your child."

[See more tips from the AAP and Healthy Children on strategies to manage picky eating.](#)



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# Provider Tip of the Week

November 10, 2021

## Creating a Yes Environment



As babies grow, they become more mobile, and caregivers may find themselves saying “no” a lot more as they try to help children navigate their surroundings. Exploration is a key part of growth and saying “no” often makes it less effective. By baby-proofing and creating a “yes” environment, caregivers can save “no” for the times when they really need it. As a provider, you can:

- Discuss how creating a “yes” environment decreases the need for the word “no.” This allows for greater child autonomy and makes playtime more enjoyable for everyone by reducing caregiver stress.
- Suggest that families set aside a time and space to encourage exploration. Baby-proofing a play area and keeping an alert adult nearby ensure that a child can safely explore.
- Praise caregivers for allowing safe exploration, which encourages children to learn new information, feel independent and gain confidence.



**Provider Tips powered by the Keystones of Development curriculum,**

# Provider Tip of the Week

November 17, 2021

## Supporting Children Through Painful Procedures



A trip to the doctor's office can be scary for children, especially when there are possibilities of vaccines and bloodwork. Over the next month, we will be sharing a series of tips on how to help make children feel more comfortable during a wide variety of procedures. Here are three to get started:

### Take Deep Breaths

Encouraging children to take slow, deep breaths in and out can help relax their bodies and minds during procedures.

### Use Visualization

Guided imagery, or visualizing images in the mind, can also help reduce stress associated with procedures. For instance, telling a child to imagine their favorite place and then describing the place by the various senses that the child may see, hear, or smell in that place.

### Give Choices

Providing opportunities for appropriate choices can help children feel like they have some control in a situation where they may otherwise feel powerless. Simple, appropriate choices include whether the child watches the procedure or looks away, which arm the provider looks at first, or where the child sits during the procedure.



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# Provider Tip of the Week

November 24, 2021

## Reflective Practice



Thanksgiving is a time to express gratitude, and reflective practice can help people connect with feelings of gratitude. Reflective practice is the act of thinking about our experiences in order to learn from them for the future.

As a provider, you may want to find time to reflect and encourage families to do so as well. You can try:

- Discussing the benefits of reflection for both caregivers and children. Reflection enables children to develop perspective, identify areas for growth, boost creativity, and cultivate emotional intelligence.
- Modeling this behavior by asking a child “what was your favorite part of the visit and why?” and “what was your least favorite part of the visit and why?”

Wishing all providers and families a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday.



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# Provider Tip of the Week

December 1, 2021

## Comfort Positioning During Painful Procedures

A trip to the doctor's office can be scary for children, especially when there are possibilities of vaccines and bloodwork. **Comfort positions** are ways that caregivers can hold their children to provide comfort, while also helping keep them still. You can try suggesting that caregivers hold children **chest to chest, back to chest, or sitting side by side** and remind caregivers that their touch, their voice, and their love is so valuable to help their children feel supported during challenging times at the doctor (and can help with the procedure, too)!

See this video for an example of how to discuss comforting a child during procedures:



Watch the Video!



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# Provider Tip of the Week

December 8, 2021

## Tummy Time

As you know, many caregivers may avoid doing tummy time, since babies often get a little fussy when on their tummy. By modeling and discussing it in the visit, you can help caregivers understand how important tummy time is to build a child's autonomy, self-regulation, and motor skills. Your words can encourage caregivers to do it throughout the day and give them strategies to help their baby be less distressed during it!

See this video for an example:



Watch the Video!



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# Provider Tip of the Week

December 15, 2021

## Storytelling



Storytelling serves many purposes. It can help to build memory, imagination, attention and focus. It can connect children to generations past and present, raise cultural awareness and build a positive sense of identity. Here are a few ways to incorporate storytelling into your next visit:

- Ask patients over 3 to tell you about a holiday they celebrate
- Model storytelling by narrating during the visit
- Encourage parents to think about storytelling when they are reading, going beyond the words and pictures on the page
- Suggest to parents that they tell their baby stories about the day they were born and favorite things they used to like to do



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# Provider Tip of the Week

December 22, 2021

## Shifting Attention



In stressful moments, many children can benefit from shifting their focus out of the exam room and onto something else. Once you've validated any feelings a child has, you can suggest an activity or exercise to help them shift their focus away from the procedure or exam. That may go something like this, "It's normal to be scared, I get scared sometimes too. Sometimes, it helps me to sing my favorite song. Do you have a song you want to sing now?" Other ideas include playing with a favorite toy or fidget, holding a stuffed animal, and playing I Spy around the room or with a book.



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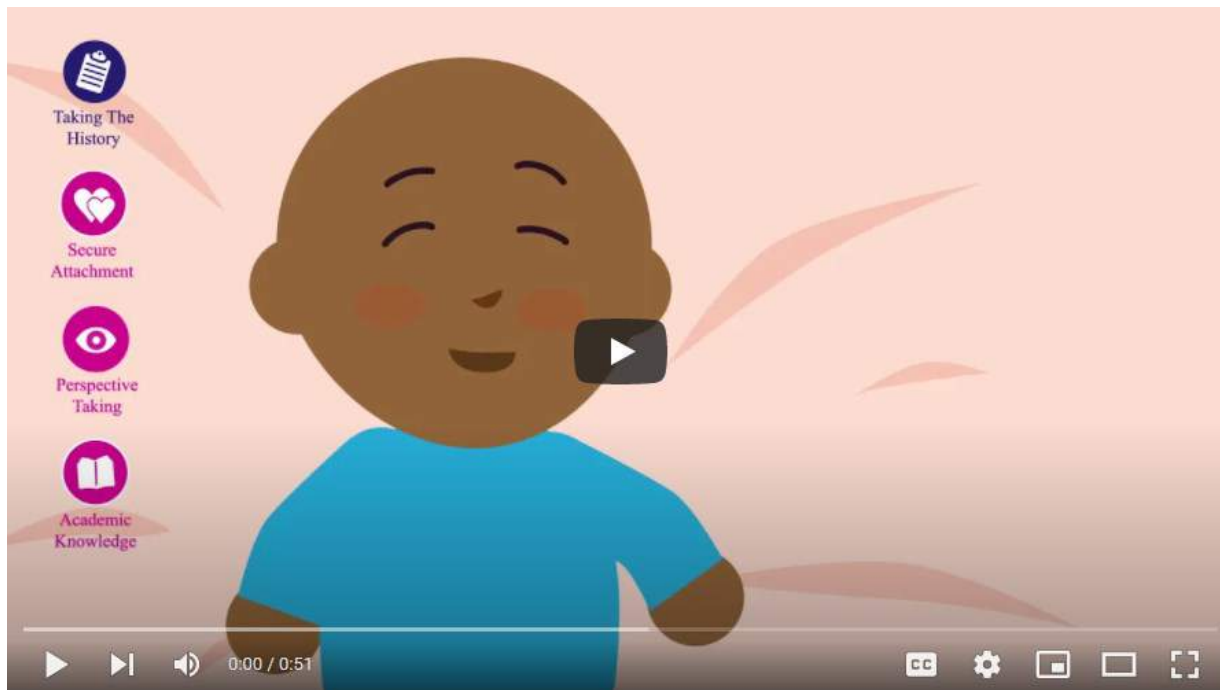
# Provider Tip of the Week

December 29, 2021

## Being Bilingual

Many bilingual or non-native English speaking caregivers ask about the potential impact of multiple languages in the home. You can reassure them that research shows that being bilingual has MANY advantages for kids, and that there is no known language delay. In addition, in order to teach the variety and depth of language and emotion, caregivers should use their native language with their baby as much as possible.

See this video for a sample on this from the well child visits: [Being Bilingual](#)



Watch the Video!



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# Provider Tip of the Week

January 5, 2022

## Noticing Positive Behavior



Research shows that giving attention to any behavior - positive or negative - increases the likelihood that you'll see more of it. In the exam room, you can use the power of praise to notice and comment on *positive behaviors* and model this technique for parents. Try something like, "Great job taking in a deep breath. That really helps me to listen to your lungs." Or, "Thank you for holding still for the exam, you listened so well to all of my instructions." By encouraging parents to *notice* the behaviors they would like more of, you can help change their focus on more positive behavior.



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# Provider Tip of the Week

January 12, 2022

## Anxiety about Illness and Death



Given the uptick of COVID variants and cases, children may be experiencing even greater anxiety about sickness and death. As a provider, you can help parents give children a clear and age-appropriate explanation of this crisis, and this may stop them from making up their own explanations, which can be scary or inaccurate. Being available and willing to answer specific questions from patients can also help children feel safe and express any lingering worries.

For more COVID-19 resources, [click here](#).



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# Provider Tip of the Week

January 19, 2022

## Family Meals



Research suggests that regular family meals are associated with children having healthier eating habits, better academic performance, and higher self-esteem. Family meals also help with picky eating, power struggles around diet, and getting children to sit at the table for longer periods of time. When you're discussing nutrition in any visits from 12 months on, suggest to parents that they pull up that highchair and engage in meals together. It's an opportunity for connection, conversation and skill building.



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# Provider Tip of the Week

January 26, 2022

## Postpartum Depression and the Baby Blues

Parents of infants may express concerns around fluctuating emotions during the first few weeks after birth. Reassuring parents that it is totally normal to experience Baby Blues, while discussing more serious signs of PPD or PP Anxiety, is an important part of ensuring baby's health, too. Untreated parental depression can disrupt a parent's ability to sensitively respond to their infant, accurately read infant cues, and to engage in verbal and non-verbal communication.

See this video for an example of how to discuss these concerns: [Postpartum Depression and the Baby Blues](#)



Watch the Video!



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# Provider Tip of the Week

February 2, 2022

## Crying and Fussiness

Though infant crying and fussiness is an expected part of development, it isn't easy for parents. Help build knowledge and understanding with these strategies:

1. **Promote soothing.** Newborns cannot be spoiled and need help from adults to calm down.
2. **Encourage sleep.** Remind caregivers that being overtired contributes to fussiness. Advise putting the baby down every 1.5-2 hours.
3. **Frame crying as communication.** Help caregivers to look for cues as to what their baby is trying to say. Parents can then name that need and respond sensitively.
4. **Give permission for breaks.** Remind parents to take a break when they need it and put their newborns in a safe space for a chance to take a few breaths or pour a cup of coffee.

See this video for an example from the well child visits: [Crying and Fussiness](#)



Watch the Video!



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# Provider Tip of the Week

February 9, 2022

## Synchrony

Quick tip to promote **synchrony**: Encourage parents to think about how their baby is feeling, or what their baby is communicating. Then, model for parents how they can match their baby's mood with their voice and response. For example, you can say: "I know you're cold, that isn't fun. I'm right here, and I'm going to get you dressed."

See this video for more information: [Synchrony](#)



Watch the Video!



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# Provider Tip of the Week

February 16, 2022

## Positive Opposites

Quick tip to promote **positive opposites**: When you hear parents commenting on challenging behaviors in the visit, model how they can ask for the behavior they want to see instead. Try things like, “please keep your body on the table,” instead of “stop moving,” or, “please hold this,” instead of “stop touching that.”

See this video for an example from the well child visits: [Positive Opposites](#)



Watch the Video!



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# Provider Tip of the Week

February 23, 2022

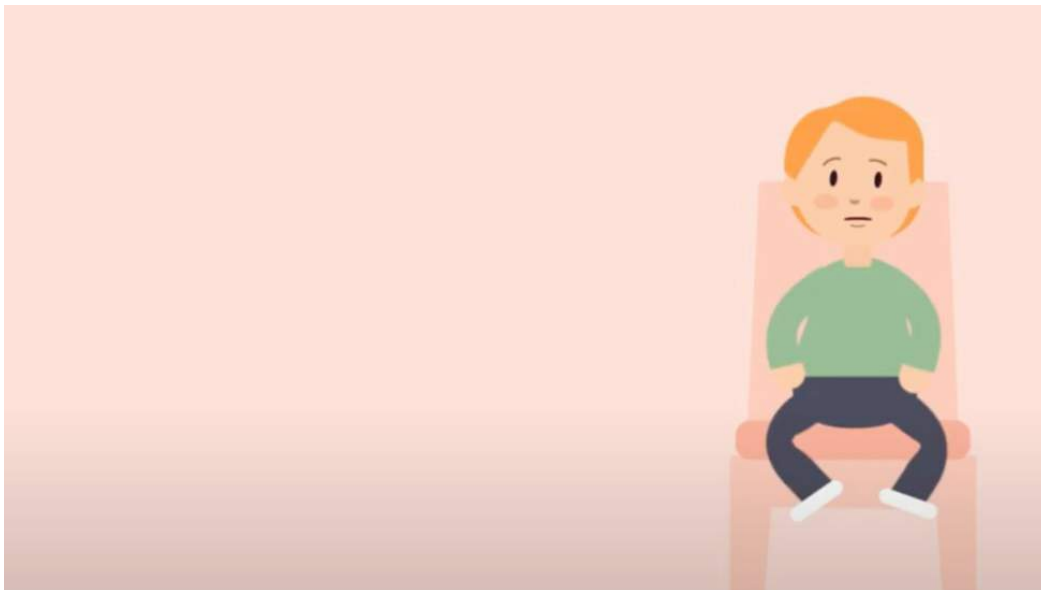
## Time-Outs

Time-outs are an often misunderstood and misused technique for discipline.

Here are a few quick ways to explain time-outs to caregivers:

1. It's a pause or body break, not a punishment.
2. It's meant to interrupt physically aggressive behavior only.
3. It's short: 30-60 seconds.
4. Time-outs are not a replacement for caregiver soothing.
5. Learning to pause and calm down takes practice and consistency.

See this video for more information: [Time-Outs](#)



Watch the Video!



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# Provider Tip of the Week

March 2, 2022

## Getting Out the Door on Time

For many families, getting out the door to school each morning can be a source of stress and conflict. For preschoolers, you can help parents promote autonomy and self-regulation skills by suggesting that they create a simple picture schedule of the morning activities to empower their child to be “in charge” of their own behavior. Having control over how and when things get done increases cooperation skills and builds competence.

See this video for an example from the well child visits: [Getting Out the Door on Time](#)



Watch the Video!



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# Provider Tip of the Week

March 9, 2022

## Ping Pong Talk

Many new parents are thrilled to hear their baby's first coos and noises! Encourage them to respond back as if they are having a conversation with an adult. They can respond by imitating the noise the baby made, or by saying something like, "tell me more." Then they can pause and wait for the baby to respond again. Like a game of ping pong, parents can keep back and forth conversations going with and without words. Smiling, kicking and even turning away are all part of baby communication.

See this video for more information: [Ping Pong Talk](#)



Watch the Video!



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# Provider Tip of the Week

March 16, 2022

## Independent Feeding

Learning to feed themselves is important for babies' regulation and fine motor skills. Being able to stop when they're done allows babies to control how much they eat – and learn their bodies' own signs of fullness. Feeding can exercise the small muscles in a baby's hand and assist in learning the pincer grasp – a preliteracy skill that facilitates writing. Whenever possible and safe, encourage families to allow babies to feed themselves. While it may be messy, it's an important practice that extends beyond nutrition.

See this video for an example from the well child visits: [Independent Feeding](#)



Watch the Video!



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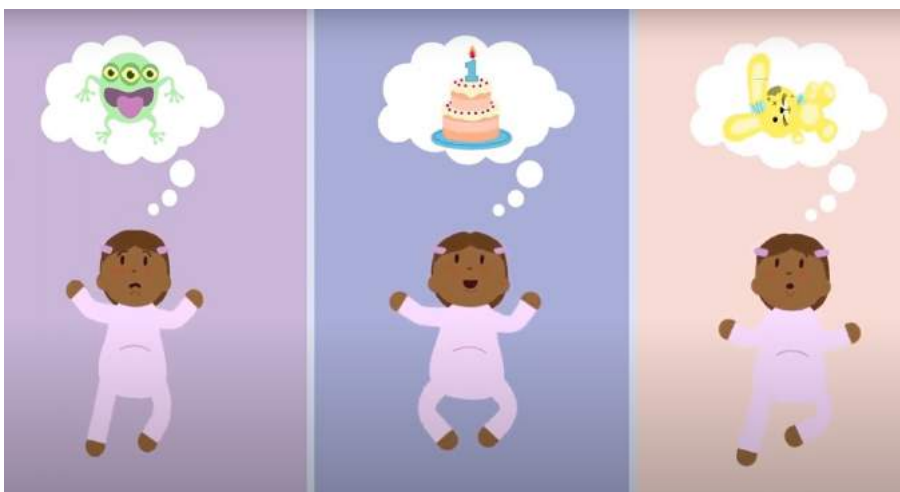
# Provider Tip of the Week

March 23, 2022

## Development of Memory

Caregivers may have noticed their baby's developing memory – like crying when they see the doctor or remembering hand movements to their favorite song or game. In your visits, you can build on this by asking the baby to follow simple directions, like touching their toes, giving a high five, or making an animal sound. When they do it (if they do it), offer praise for the connections they are making! “You remembered that from last time – way to go. Your brain is working so hard to listen and follow.” Noticing how hard they are working to figure out patterns in the world around them – like what usually happens at the doctor's office – will help caregivers to notice and appreciate this hard work too.

See this video for an example from the well child visits: [Development of Memory](#)



Watch the Video!



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# Provider Tip of the Week

March 30, 2022

## Activity: What's the Feeling

From our partners at VROOM, here's a fun activity to try in your next visit with a 3-year-old:

Make a face and ask your patient to try and guess what you're feeling—like sad, tired, excited, surprised or scared. Then take turns and ask your patient to make a face while you guess what they are feeling. Have fun going back and forth. Matching faces and feelings helps children to understand how they, and other people, think and feel. This builds social skills in the future.

Click [here](#) to download the handout.



See the handout!



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# Provider Tip of the Week

April 6, 2022

## Mistakes

Research shows that children with a **growth mindset** – the belief that intelligence is not fixed and that they can work hard and practice to improve – understand mistakes as opportunities to learn. In your visits, you can try taking a simple mistake – like closing the computer when you still need it, or dropping a bandage on the floor – and model for children how they can grow from that experience. You may say something like, “Whoops, now I know to keep it on the table next time” or “That was silly, but now I know what to do next time.”



Watch this video  
for an example

# Provider Tip of the Week

April 13, 2022

## Parentese

Research shows that babies learn language best through high pitched, sing-song, exaggerated speech. This type of voice – **parentese** – uses real words and appropriate grammar, and may come naturally to many parents. If it does not, try incorporating it in infant visits when you can. And try offering parents a quick explanation on why they should use it too. You can say something like, “This voice may seem silly, but babies like it, and it actually helps them learn more words. It isn’t gaga-gugu, but it does sound a little more like singing and has exaggerated facial expressions.”



Watch this video  
for an example

# Provider Tip of the Week

April 20, 2022

## Joint Attention

You may know that **joint attention** is an important part of screening for autism, but it's also important to explain to parents why sharing attention and focus is an important part of communication. Try asking parents to notice whether their infant involves them in an activity, or if they can get their baby to look at something they point to. Encourage parents to practice this by sharing what they see, hear and experience throughout the day. This can be narrating what they see during a walk, pointing to objects in books as they read, or getting on the floor to participate in a baby's play.



Watch this video  
for an example



# Provider Tip of the Week

April 27, 2022

## Teeth Brushing

Many children fight teeth brushing. While parents may tell you that their children don't like it, you know it matters to their health. Try suggesting that parents brush alongside their toddlers or take turns letting the child brush their teeth and then brushing their child's teeth. Singing songs can help too, or a toothbrush with a favorite character. A little bit of playfulness can increase cooperation and reduce power struggles.



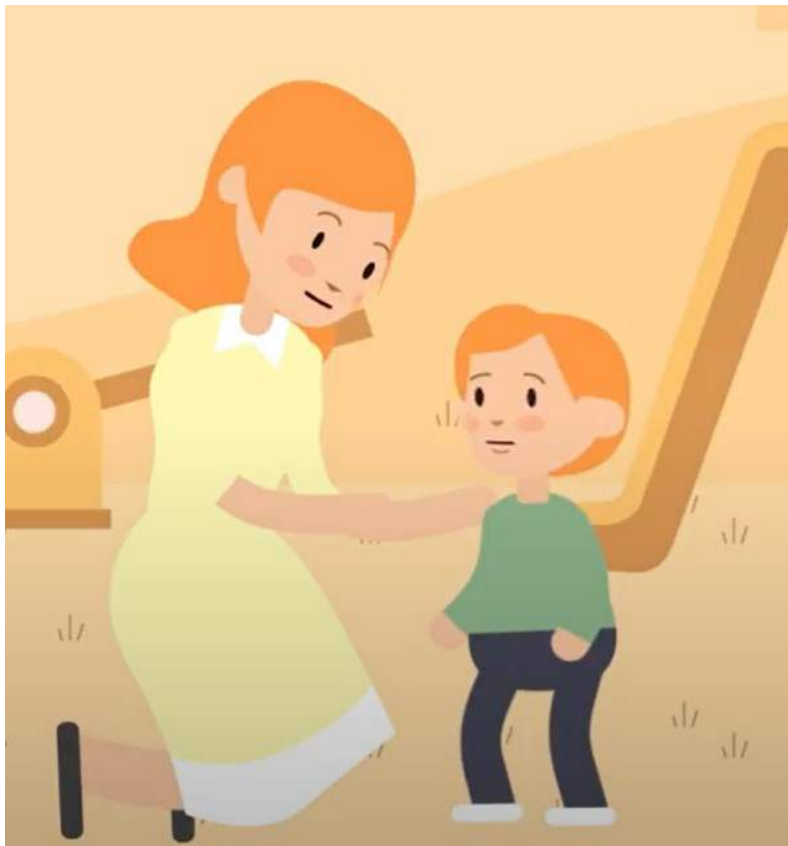
Watch this video  
for an example

# Provider Tip of the Week

May 4, 2022

## Avoid Negative Labels

In the toddler years, it's important to help parents address their child's behavior without labeling their child. This looks something like, "What you did was not OK, we don't hit," versus, "You were very bad." How parents label their children can impact how children see themselves as they grow, and even increase unwanted behavior.



# Provider Tip of the Week

May 11, 2022

## Comparisons

Practicing early numeracy skills for pre-K and Kindergarten comes naturally in the exam room. Show your patient their growth chart and talk about how the curve represents them getting bigger. Compare it to last year and then show them how they compare to a younger sibling.



Watch this video for  
an example

# Provider Tip of the Week

May 18, 2022

## Helping Parents Identify Sleep Cues

It can be helpful to explain to parents of newborns some signs their infant is ready to sleep again. These include having a far-off stare, pulling on ears, rubbing eyes, or sudden, loud crying. Remind parents to begin the sleep routine at the first sign that their newborn may be tired.



# Provider Tip of the Week

May 25, 2022

## Diaper Changes

Each diaper change is an opportunity—to build relationships, and for language development, face-time, and touch. Help parents to use each diaper change in the first few months to let their baby see their face, listen to their voice, and begin to observe how their baby is trying to communicate. Small moments add up!



Watch this video for  
an example

# Provider Tip of the Week

June 1, 2022

## Drowsy But Awake

Learning to fall asleep without being rocked, fed or held is an important way that a baby practices self-regulation skills. Suggest that parents try putting their baby to sleep awake, but drowsy, and let them practice falling asleep on their own. This may involve a little fussing or crying, but parents can be encouraged that they are helping their baby develop a new skill that will improve quality sleep now and in the future.



Watch this video for  
an example



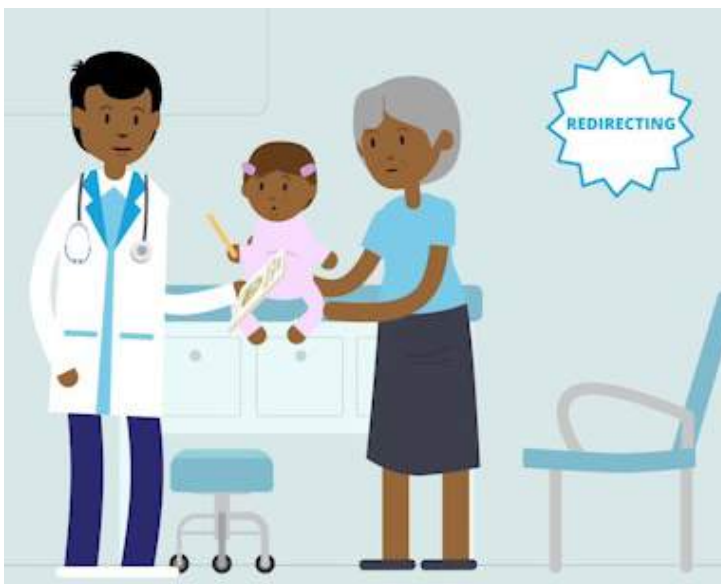
# Provider Tip of the Week

June 8, 2022

## Redirecting

For younger children, removing the source of their distress and replacing it with something else can be an effective tool in managing behavior. Explain this 3-step process to parents of children around and under age 2:

1. Acknowledge the child's feelings, "I know you want to play with the remote control."
2. Provide a brief explanation, "But it isn't safe for you to put in your mouth."
3. Replace the item with something else, "You can play with this rattle instead."



Watch this video  
for an example

# Provider Tip of the Week

June 15, 2022

## Talking About Toilet Training

It can be helpful to share some developmental signs of toilet training readiness with families. These include the ability to:

- Follow simple instructions
- Stay dry for at least two hours, or through naps
- Recognize signs indicating the need to pee or poop

However, **it's most important that the family is ready**. Toilet training requires lots of time and attention from caregivers, and accidents are messy and exhausting for families. Keep in mind that toilet training is a known time of increased child abuse as both children and families can get frustrated, angry and embarrassed.

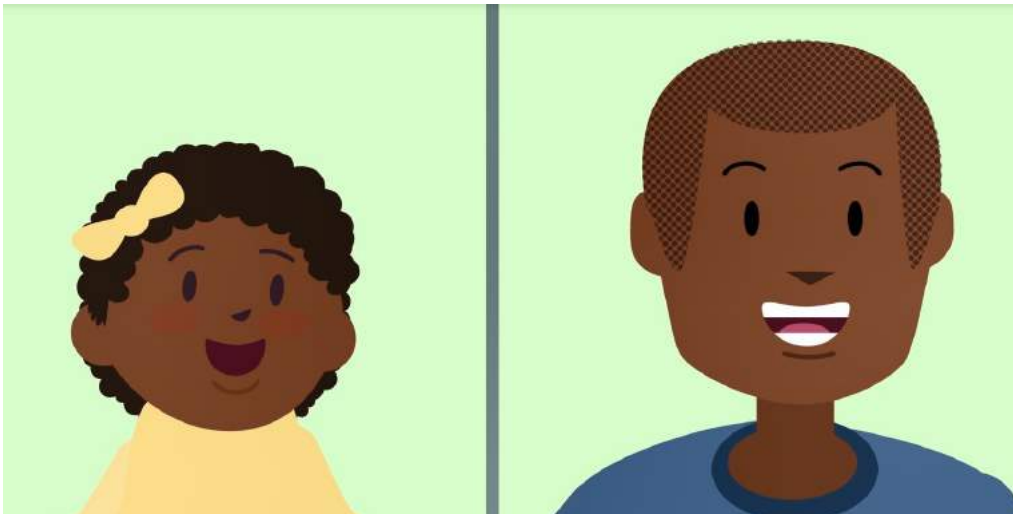


# Provider Tip of the Week

June 22, 2022

## Show Delight

It's important for caregivers to show delight in their children. Noticing that their parents or loved ones enjoy their company, delight in their presence, or take pleasure from their actions, helps to build a strong parent-child relationship and the foundation for healthy development in the future.



Watch this video  
for an example

# Provider Tip of the Week

June 29, 2022

## Praising Caregivers

YOU can be the person who makes a parent feel seen, appreciated and acknowledged today. Try praising a parent for making it to their appointment on a rainy day, remembering to follow-up on the referrals you gave them, soothing their baby through the blood draw or vaccine, or being an advocate on their child's behalf. Humans need praise to help us to feel motivated, inspired, and recognized - and to know what to do more of in the future.



Watch this video  
for an example