

I Am Your Child: The First Years Last Forever

produced by Johnson & Johnson and hosted by Rob Reiner

Instructor Notes:

- The infant's brain is active and growing. In the first three years of life, 90% of brain growth is through experience. (Dr. Bruce Perry, neurobiologist and child psychologist)
- Consistent, predictable, nurturing, enriched experiences impact how the brain is organized and how it functions.
- Relationships are the foundation to brain connections. Infants prefer the voice of the mother and father at birth (Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, pediatrician).
- When children have a secure attachment to at least one caregiver, children learn faster, feel better about themselves, and make friends more easily. Ways to improve the caregiver-infant bonding:
 - Touch
 - Respond to child's communication
 - Know child's preferences and respond to cues from child
- Infants are communicators, although nonverbally. Research has suggested that caregivers can differentiate between various cries to tell if child is hungry, in pain, or desires attention.
- **Attunement** - process in which the child is completely connected to the caregiver in a face-to-face interaction. This attunement is important for development of brain and for getting infant ready to speak.
- Babies come "wired" to learn any human language, then require exposure to language of parents for language to develop.
- Exposure to the rhythm of the language is an important foundation to language development. Recommended that parents sing, talk and read to children.

Discussion Questions:

1. If 90% of brain growth from birth to age three is based on experience, what does this tell us about "nature" versus "nurture?"
2. What is an example of a predictable and nurturing experience that an infant can have with a parent?
3. What does infant preference for parental voices tell us about the development of auditory perception? How could development of auditory perception affect language learning?
4. How could face-to-face interactions lead to speech and language development? What other skills do infants possess at birth that assist them in developing language?
5. What role could rhythm or prosody play in language development in infancy? Are there aspects of prosody that are universal to languages and aspects that are specific to languages? Discuss with instructor current issues in development research related to prosodic cues for language learning.