# Two-Thousand Days to Make a Difference

## ...and the Difference Starts with YOU!

**Talk to your baby!** Your baby loves to hear your voice and is learning with every word and sound. Don't be afraid to be animated and expressive with your face as you talk to your baby! Acknowledge your toddler's attempts to communicate with you. Respond to their attempts and ask questions to try and clarify what they mean. Narrate what you are doing to help them understand what different activities and objects are called. Talk often with your preschooler. Ask open-ended questions and try to answer their questions as they are learning about the world around them. Give your child time as he/she is processing what you say and trying to decide how they should respond.

**1**

Make an **informed choice** when looking for **child care**. It is important to choose a child care program where your child feels comfortable and you feel comfortable leaving your child. Visit programs and ask questions to help you decide if a program is a good fit for your family.

**2**

Physical touch is important for a baby's healthy brain development. Provide them with plenty of hugs, kisses, and cuddles. A child is never too old for a hug and should have reminders of your love often. Learn your child's cues and preferences for showing love. Be responsive to their needs for **physical affection** and teach them to **respect others and themselves**.

**5**

As your baby grows, give her opportunities to strengthen her **visual** skills. You can do this by helping her practice visual tracking (holding an object and moving it slowly from side to side so that she can follow the object with her eyes). In later years you can expand this skill by rolling or throwing a ball or blowing bubbles with your baby. If you have concerns about your child's eyes or vision, contact your pediatrician.

**3**

Use **appropriate discipline** with your child. Keep your requests short and simple. Redirect your child to other activities and tasks when possible and praise their positive behavior. Never hit or shake a child. Remember, children are learning from your example.

**4**

Contact us at 1-866-892-3228 OR email referralcenter@mo.childcareaware.org
Visit our website at www.mo.childcareaware.org

# Ten Tips to Help Support Your Child's Brain Development

**ChildCare Aware®** OF MISSOURI
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The following are **screen time** recommendations from the World Health Organization based on your child's age:

**6**

0-24 months = None

2-5 years = No more than one hour

When you child does watch television, make sure to watch with them and talk about what they are seeing. Remember screen time is not limited to television time. Time spent in front of phones, tablets, and video games also affect your child's brain and should be considered when thinking about screen time.

Playing **music and singing** with your child will help them develop their language and literacy skills. Making up silly songs with your child and singing nursery rhymes and lullabies to your baby are fun ways to support your child's development.

**10**

Play with your child! Though your baby is little, you can still **find ways to play**.

Simple activities like pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo are fun ways to connect with your baby. Give your child opportunities for a variety of types of play. Engaging in pretend play helps your child develop imagination and creativity. Playing with peers helps them develop social skills like sharing and taking turns. Give your child access to toys that are right for his age including puzzles, blocks, balls, and items for pretend play.

**9**

Counting, sorting, matching, and recognizing shapes and patterns are all important **math concepts** in early childhood. Counting objects out loud with your baby or letting your toddler match socks while folding laundry supports early math skills. While you're running errands, look for patterns and shapes with your preschooler.

**7**

**Read to your child**. Read **8** picture books and board books to your baby and encourage your child to join in as they grow and learn new words. Read at a pace they can understand and encourage questions and discussion as you go.