



20+ Tips for Quality Infant/Toddler Caregivers and Supervisors

19th Annual (virtual) Birth to Three Institute (vBTI)
 July 22, 2015
 Early Head Start and Zero to Three

TIP #1

1. Plan your environment to feel safe, warm and welcoming for early learning

- ❖ Learn Early Milestones. know when to wonder, when to worry, and when to be delighted for a child.
- ❖ Learn **wide windows** (toilet learning) and **narrow windows** (pincer prehension).
 Learn **normative** ages:
 - > Rotary chewing occurs by 7-9 months.
 - > Babies start to walk anywhere from about 8 to 16 months.
 - > Infants show joint attention and pointing by 10-11 months.
 - > Babies babble with intonations by 1 year, turn pages of a book, and point to pictures.
 - > Toddlers use two word phrases by 2 years.

TIP #2

2. Well-fed Babies Flourish

- Children with iron deficiency may be more solemn and have lowered IQs.
- Support breastfeeding by having comfortable rocking chairs for moms. Breastfeeding lowers obesity rates in kids!
- Lure toddlers into trying little bits of new nutritious food.
- Model your own enjoyment of a bit of new food.
- Secret tool: tiny whiskey shot glass tempts tot to take a sip of milk!



TIP #3

3. Tune in to Infant States

drowsy;
deep sleep;
crying;
awake thrashing/irritable;
awake quiet and alert



- Infants learn best when in the calm, alert state.
- High-risk infants have irregular waking and sleeping and they cry more.
- High-risk babies are harder to soothe, putting more stress on caregivers.

TIP #4

4. Emphasize Positive Discipline Techniques

- Use the word "gently" over and over (instead of "don't touch!" when a baby is curious).
- Conjure up empathic attunement: Be sure your MIRROR NEURONS are at work!
- Empathize when a baby shows separation anxiety or stranger anxiety. These feel so scary and stressful!
- Ask yourself: What is this child's behavior telling me?
- Baby needs you to become wise in understanding (like "Glinda the good"!).

TIP #4

4. Emphasize Positive Discipline Techniques (continued)

- Together you co-construct with each child a unique budding personality.
- Become an expert decoder of each baby's body and facial signaling system!
- Playful encounters work wonders: Say, "Mr. Diaper is calling you! Hi!" (instead of: "Come here. You need a diaper change!").
- You are the message a child receives when being disciplined.
- Use the Magic Triangle technique whenever possible.
- Tempo is important in all love relationships.

TIP #3



5. Promote Secure Attachment

- o Loving touch is crucial for infant brain development.
- o Attachments are coded as: Secure or Insecure.
- o Insecure ratings are:
Hesitant/Ambivalent; Avoidant; Dazed/Disorganized (Ainsworth).
- o Children balance needs for brave exploration with needs for intimate contact and comfort.
- o Having at least one secure attachment should be the birthright of every single child who is born.
- o A baby creates an attachment relationship separately with each caregiver.
- o Babies rated as insecure/avoidant tend to become bullies as preschoolers.

TIP #4

Signs of Secure Attachment to you:

- Drapes, molds, and cuddles on your body.
- Accepts soothing comfort readily from you.
- Greets you with smiles or open arms when you come back into the room after a break.
- Baby uses your body as a REFUELING STATION: Baby flings self on you when frustrated or upset!
- Toddler acts more cooperatively with you when the "terrible twos" arrive.

TIP #6

6. Generously Accept Self-Soothing Lovies

- o Linus is not the only child who desperately needs his "blankie"!



TIP #7

7. Promote Early Language Skills!

A. Research Findings

- Babies and toddlers from poor families heard **600** words/hour.
- Babies from working-class families heard **1200** words/hour.
- Children from professional families heard **2100** words/hour.
- In a poor family, a child heard **30 million fewer words** at home compared with a 3-year-old in a professional family.

TIP #7

7. Promote Early Language Skills!

B. How to Help

- **Respond** to infant coos and babbles with genuine pleasure, interest, and engagement. The diapering table is a language-sharing, language-enhancing, intimacy-promoting opportunity par excellence.
- Babies love funny sounds (such as fricatives!) (try "foo-foo" with an eight-month-old baby).
- Be **generous** with turn-taking-talk. Be a word giver!
- Use open-ended (Socratic) questions to stimulate retrieval from memory of events and sequences as well as to stimulate thinking, reasoning, and planning skills.
- Create scenarios and provide props to teach polar opposites: big/little; tall/short; smooth/bumpy, up/down, in/out.
- **Promote humor**: Do doggies go "Meow"?!
- Give children **words for feelings** as well as foods and toys and clothes and body parts.

TIP #8

8. Help Babies Become Passionate Book Lovers!

- Remember: You are the "**tour guide**" in charge of a book.
- Change the story and just talk about the pictures with a young baby.
- Choose books with one picture per page for tiny babies.
- Choose cardboard and oilcloth books for teething babies.
- Dialogic reading promotes early language learning. Talk about the pictures.
- Babies love books with pictures of animal mummies and babies.



TIP #8a

Loving Hugs!



TIP #8b



8. Help Babies Become Passionate Book Lovers! (continued)

- Toddlers love stories about naughty characters such as Dr. Seuss' 'The Cat in the Hat.'
- Read books with rhymes (nose and rose; or in Spanish, try "rosa and mariposa" - (rose and butterfly).
- Read with rich cadences in your voice.
- Read books that promote kindness, such as "The Little Engine That Could."

TIP #8c

Baby Babbling to Book by Himself



TIP #8d

Baby Professor?!



TIP #9

9. Tune Into Temperament Styles

- Is baby mostly: easy/flexible/adaptable?
- Is baby irritable/feisty/triggery/impulsive?
- Is baby slow-to-warm up/shy/suspicious of new folks, foods, and experiences?
- Be careful that the quiet, non-demanding baby does not get ignored.
- Compulsive body-rocking is a sign that a quiet baby needs attention.
- Temperament interacts with caring style: Seven-month-old babies with anger-prone temperaments who had attuned, responsive caregivers became more self-regulated as toddlers.

TIP #9

9. Tune Into Temperament Styles (continued)

- Moms (with irritable babies) learned from home visitors in Holland how to soothe, swaddle, and calm their babies. The babies at 1 year were far more likely to be securely-attached to mom compared to controls.
- Promote emotional self-management skills.



- **Customize** your approaches to children with different temperament styles. Your words and actions are the **mirrors** by which a child learns early to feel that he or she is good or bad.

TIP #10

10. Choose Toys at Appropriate Developmental Levels to Enhance Attention Span, Pretend Play, and Play Persistence



- Allow generous amounts of time for self-directed play.
- Match a toy's difficulty to baby's level of competence.

TIP #11

11. Sing with your babies. Singing soothes; singing brings joy!



- Teach songs with clapping and body movements (for example, *The wheels on the bus*; *This little piggy goes to market*; *Ring around a rosie*; *Sally go round the sun*; or *Open, close them*).
- Sing lullabies to soothe babies into sleep.
- Babies are born to dance. Babies smile more when they synchronize their movements to music.

TIP #12

12. Encourage Prosocial Peer Interactions



- Tune into and affirm tiny gestures of cooperation.
- Sprinkle **positive attributes** throughout the day such as "You were such a **kind friend** to Sarah when she held out her teddy for you to take for a ride in your wagon!"
- "You were **so helpful** to move over and let Jimmy sit next to you so you can both draw pictures together."
- Your words and actions are the mirrors by which a child learns early to feel that he is good or bad.

TIP #13

13. Keep Alert for Prerequisites for Skill Building

- o Knowing all the steps to new learning helps us ease a baby's struggles while learning a new skill.
- o **Example: What are the steps for a toddler to learn to use the potty?**
 - Toddler can feel ahead of time when a poop is coming.
 - Toddler has physical skills to run to a potty.
 - Motor neurons from Betz cells of motor cortex to anal and urethral sphincters are fully myelinated (this normally takes 18 to 24 months).
 - Toddler knows the words for "poop" and "pee".
 - Toddler CAN sit still for a few minutes on a potty!
 - Toddler can pull down own pants.
 - Male toddler can steady a penis to get pee right into a toilet!

TIP #14

14. Decide when an Action is Truly Aggression or Developmentally Expectable

- o A baby may bop another with a toy and be very startled and even cry when hearing the peer cry.
- o A toddler who is suspicious of a curious peer standing too close to his block-building may hit out to "protect" his work and feels tense and worried about others' motives.
- o Remind little ones by frequent use of the word "GENTLY"! And show gentleness in your actions.
- o Prepare techniques to deal with biting:
 - Safety-pin a rubber biter to a child's jacket.
 - Give perioral massages (around the mouth).
 - Shadow a biter and give loving interactions every few minutes to head off tensions that lead to biting.

TIP #15

15. Enhance Motor Skills



- o Hang a yarn ball over a baby's head so she can kick at it with her feet.
- o Arrange for toddlers to dance with large nylon scarves to dreamy waltzes.
- o Parade around with toddlers, while each is banging on a drum, or shaking jingle bells, or tapping on a metal triangle.
- o Stretch and curl and march and twirl!
- o Encourage toddlers to play pretend action games:

hop like a bunny; fly like an airplane with arms outstretched; grab each other's ankles and slither like a snake on the floor; gallop like ponies.



TIP #16

16. Provide Safe Sensory Activities and Experiences

- Teach sensory words and concepts
 - wet vs. dry (use washcloths).
 - sour vs. sweet (dab honey on lemon juice in a teaspoon).
 - bumpy (beans) vs. smooth (cornstarch goop).
 - warm/cold (use basins of water).
 - soft vs. loud



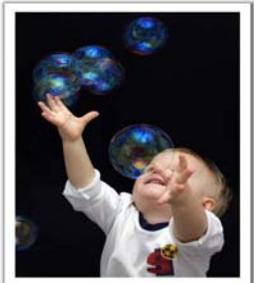
TIP #16a

Rejoice in Outdoor Sensory Surprises!

- Provide outdoor opportunities for sensory joys
 - planting veggies
 - sifting sand
 - squishing mud
 - splashing in water
 - sniffing flowers
 - listening to birds singing
 - watching earthworms and ants in the grass
 - blowing rainbow bubbles

TIP #16b

Babies Delight in Catching Bubbles!



TIP #17a

17a. Become Alert to and Aware of any Early Child Mental Health Troubles

- o A "typical child" could be lagging OR in advance for some developmental milestones.
- o JOINT ATTENTION and SOCIAL REFERENCING are usually clearly evident by one year. A child should be able to look where you point.
- o A baby should be able to look to your face to find out whether something is scary or, at 11 months, scan your face: Is it OK to keep on crawling on a glass table that looks unsafe?
- o Some children have troubles with the BALANCE between holding on and letting go. They hurl away toys or persons, or clutch them too possessively.

TIP #17b

17b. Become Alert to and Aware of any Early Child Mental Health Troubles

- o Learn developmental norms and progressions to tune in to possible troubles.
- o Orchestrate transitions peacefully to avoid emotional troubles.
- o The typical toddler still has magical thinking; kiss her "booboo," and miraculously, she can then happily run off to play.
- o Worrisome behaviors include:
 - compulsive body-rocking
 - lack of eye contact
 - smiling when others are hurt
 - facial grimaces
 - indifference to a peer's feelings of fright, pain, or worry
 - aggressive responses to a crying child
 - floppy body
 - frequent tantrum meltdowns where child turns blue
 - hand flapping
 - echolalia
 - giggling wildly when threatened

TIP #18

18. Enhance Aesthetic Delights for Babies

- o Create colorsapes.
- o Create aromasapes.
- o Create lightsapes.
- o Provide hanging plants; grow bulbs so babies can sniff wonderful spring flowers, such as hyacinths.
- o Provide samples of textures with beautiful colors for a child to feel -such as soft velour and velveteen.
- o Hang up beautiful (cheap) posters such as Renoir's "Two Sisters."
- o Set a lunch table with a plastic pretty vase with fake flowers.
- o Keep a fish tank (with top!) for goldfish with swishing tails.
- o Awaken babies' natural delight in beauty - rainbows; puffy lovely clouds sailing on high; a field of daffodils.
- o Nature and outdoor experiences provide a chance for little ones to see entrancing natural beauty.



TIP #19

19. Become the Best Model for Children and for Their Families

- Keep promises.
- Model **kindness** and **musical voice tones**.
- Model **self-reflectivity**: your secret weapon for success in avoiding burn-out!
- If you “blow it,” try to figure out what triggered the upset or angry feelings and try to think of a different way to handle the situation.
- Model Active Listening to child body messages.
- Give **simple choices** to a toddler to increase a toddler’s feelings of control (“Do you want apple juice or orange juice?”).
- Even though a child cannot remember your cherishing with words, a CHILD’S BODY will remember forever your **loving kindness**, your **smiles**, your **delight**, your gentle **caresses**, your **careful helping and teaching**.

TIP #20

20. Partner Positively with Parents



- Prepare materials, photos, clay work, etc. to show parents. Admire their kids!
- Become a parent coach as well as an emotionally sensitive child coach.
- Send home little notes to describe new learning.
- Feed parents during meetings.
- Teach that prevention is a wonderful discipline strategy.
- Teach “I” statements and AL (Active Listening).
- Teach parents how to turn chores into games.
- Teach parents about “authoritative” rather than “permissive” or “authoritarian” parenting.
- Explain how shaming and threats hurt a child’s soul!
- Provide resources and referrals when parents are distressed.

Families Enrich Children’s Lives with Book Sharing!



Extras: Tips for Supervisors

- Be a kind and clear **model** in the classroom in your interactions with babies.
- Encourage caregivers: Be **patient** as you try daily to strengthen a loving attachment between each baby and yourself!
- **Tune in** to caregiver **body language** and **verbal interactions** with babies to guide your reflections on what and how **you** need to engage with them in order to enhance caregiver skills.

More Tips for Supervisors

- Teach the four-letter word "**LURE**" to help teachers engage babies at each child's individual level as they encourage each child into more mature and confident behaviors.
- Provide **specific admiring words** to emphasize positive teacher interactions you have noticed.
- Use AL (**Active Listening**) to address caregiver concerns.
- Work with each teacher to find **win-win solutions**.

Conclusions

- Rejoice in your **competence**.
- Rejoice in your **cherishing**.
- Feel pride that your precious work, as teacher or supervisor, sets the foundation for a lifetime of **positive personality growth** for each child.
- **Love** is a language that the blind can read. Love is a language that the deaf can hear.
- In giving to the little ones, and giving to those we counsel and teach, we also receive.

Go forth and be the best infant/toddler care providers and supervisors that you can be!

Blessings and thank you so much for being with us for this special virtual conference!!
