What is mental health?

Mental health means that young children are growing in their ability to:
- understand and share feelings
- have close and positive relationships
- explore and learn

Why Is It Important?

Having Positive Mental Health Makes It Easier for Children to:
- Have close relationships with family and friends
- Do well in school
- Learn new things
- Solve tough problems
- Develop patience (or not give up)
- Focus on a task
- Ask for help

When Young Children Are Worried, Sad, or Angry, It Can Be Hard To:
- Make friends
- Follow directions
- Express feelings or wishes
- Follow simple directions
- Pay attention in class
- Solve problems in positive ways
- Do well in school

Things You Can Do and Say to Help Your Child

For Your Infant
- Hold your baby during feedings.  
  “I love cuddling when I feed you.”
- Look at your baby and smile, smile, smile!  
  “Hey, when I smile, you smile back.”
- Talk about what you are doing.  
  “I’m going to change your diaper now.”
- Try to relax and have fun.  
  “When I am happy, you are less fussy.”
- Read and sing to your baby every day.  
  “It is bedtime. Time for a story and favorite song.”
- Take care of yourself.  
  “When I am rested, I take better care of you.”

For Your Toddler/Preschooler
- Make sure they always feel safe.  
  “I know loud noises can be scary, but it’s OK.”
- Offer choices.  
  “Do you want the blue shirt or the red shirt?”
- Practice patience.  
  “Let’s wait until the song is over and then we’ll go outside.”
- Show understanding.  
  “You REALLY want another cookie! It is hard when you can only have one.”
- Leave extra time.  
  “I see you don’t want to leave the playground. One more time on the slide, then we need to leave.”
- Play together at least 15 minutes a day.  
  “There is so much to do but it is important for us to play together.”
- Follow her interest.  
  “I see you want to play with the blocks. What are you going to build?”
- Praise your child when she keeps trying.  
  “I love the way you keep trying to find the right piece for the puzzle.”
- Practice following directions.  
  “First pick up the blocks, then take out the cars.”