2018

Social-Emotional Development in the Early Years: A Common Message Paper
(2nd Ed.)

Social-Emotional Development in the Early Years: A Common Message Paper [2nd Ed.]

What is this resource about?

Social-Emotional Development in the Early Years: A Common Message Paper 2nd ed. is a resource that describes the factors that contribute to the healthy social and emotional development of young children and how that process unfolds.

It is a collection of existing, evidenced-informed information, authored by a number of key organizations that support best practice related to the healthy social and emotional development of young children. The factors contributing to healthy social and emotional development of young children were identified by *Evidence In-Sight,* a division of the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health.

This resource provides:
- A list of evidence informed common messages related to healthy social and emotional development of young children
- Support and information related to each message
- Resources and links supporting further learning

Who is this resource for?

This resource is for practitioners working with families during the prenatal period and/or with children from birth to six years.

Table of Contents

Preamble

The early years provide the foundation for an individual's mental health or social emotional development. *Infant-Early Childhood Mental Health (I-ECMH)*, sometimes referred to as social and emotional development, is the developing capacity of the child from birth to 5 years of age to:

- form close and secure adult and peer relationships;
- experience, manage, and express a full range of emotions; and,
- explore the environment and learn — all in the context of family, community, and culture (Cohen, Oser, & Quigle, 2012).

The development of these capabilities occurs at the same time as a wide range of highly visible skills in mobility (motor control), thinking (cognition), and communication (language). The foundations of social competence that are developed in the first five years of life are linked to emotional well-being and affect a child's later ability to functionally adapt in school and to form successful relationships throughout life.

As a person develops into adulthood, these same social skills are essential for the formation of lasting friendships and intimate relationships, effective parenting, the ability to hold a job and work well with others, and for becoming a contributing member of a community (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004).

The Early Years Mental Health Committee's vision for families in Halton is that they are strong and stable, emotionally healthy and equipped to nurture their children so that they are ready to learn and reach their full potential. The exceptionally strong influence of early experiences on brain architecture makes the early years a period of both great opportunity and great vulnerability for development. A growth promoting environment, both at home and in the community, that provides adequate nutrients, is free of toxins, and is rich in social interactions with responsive caregivers prepares the developing brain to function well in a range of circumstances (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016).

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide those who work with infants/young children and their families with a list of common messages focused on early social-emotional development which contributes to positive mental health and well-being.

A shared understanding of the experiences, resources and protective factors that foster healthy social-emotional development strengthens our collective ability to:
- Provide caregivers with information and resources to promote their infant/child's healthy social-emotional development
- Identify when infants/young children would benefit from additional help and support
- Mitigate factors that can negatively impact an infant/child's social-emotional development
- Ensure that infants/children and/or their caregivers are linked to the 'right people providing the right services at the right time'.

Evidence-based common messages can be used to:
- Increase awareness of the importance of the early years in providing the foundation for mental health

- Orient, educate and align a shared understanding of factors that contribute to optimal social-emotional development
- Tailor marketing and/or communication strategies promoting social-emotional well-being
- Link to and strengthen related initiatives such as Halton's Early Identification, Transition to School, Parenting and FASD initiative and OKN's community Developmental Asset building work.

Disclaimer

This paper represents a summary of existing evidence. It does not give explicit practice or policy recommendations. It is meant as a reference only, to support a better understanding of the experiences, resources and protective factors that foster healthy social and emotional development of young children and to assist in identifying opportunities for future professional development within an individual's and/or agency's scope of practice.

The findings of this search represented a Level 1 Evidence In-Sight response. A Level 1 response involves a quick search and summary of the research literature and grey literature. It is a snapshot and not an exhaustive search or systematic review. The findings within the final report were intended to inform in a timely fashion, and do not imply an extensive knowledge of the current practice. A second review of the literature was undertaken by Evidence In-Sight on behalf of the EYMHC. The 2nd edition of this paper including the 'Summary of the Common Messages' and the 'To Learn More' sections have been modified to reflect the evidence stemming from this review.

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A Community Model of Care

Halton's Early Years Mental Health Committee has focused their attention on three key objectives:

1. Enhancing staff knowledge and skills with respect to relationship-based principles and early years mental health.
2. Ensuring a coordinated, collaborative and integrated system of early years mental health services and supports exists in Halton.
3. Ensuring a flexible continuum of services and supports exists for infants/young children and their families throughout Halton Region.

Throughout this paper we have included examples of community initiatives to illustrate how we have fostered collaboration and partnerships across sectors and disciplines in order to promote, protect and enhance the mental health of infants/children and their caregivers.

Halton's Community Model for Early Years Mental Health
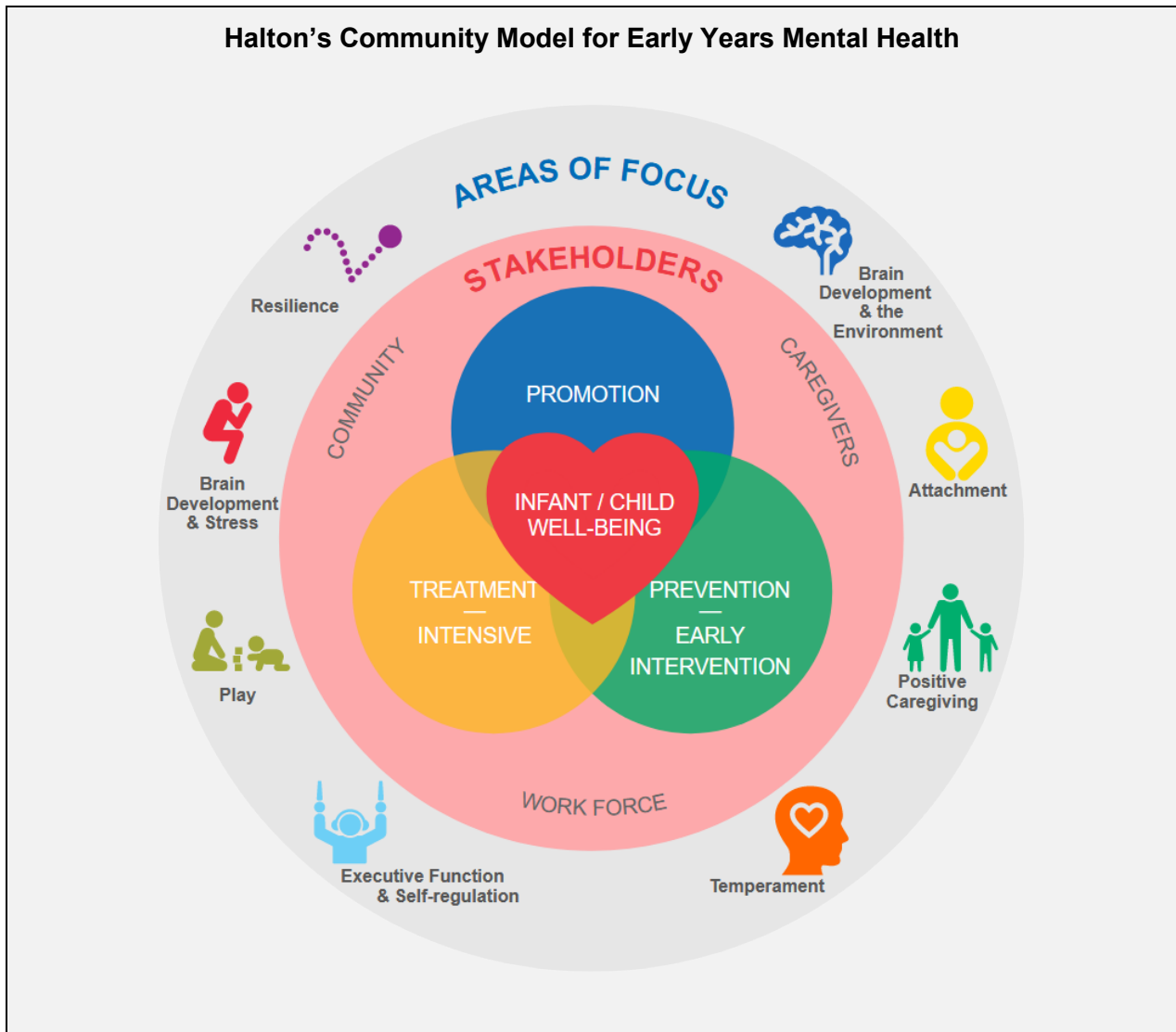
Overview of the Inquiry

The factors contributing to healthy social and emotional development were obtained through Evidence In-Sight, a free consultation service offered by the Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health. To access the full report, please visit the Centre's website: http://www.excellenceforchildandyouth.ca/resource-hub/key-messages-healthy-development-early-childhood.

Search strategy:

Databases searched: Medline, PsycInfo, Psychology and EBSCO Behavioral Sciences Collection, EBSCO Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Social Sciences, Google & Google Scholar
Specific authors and their works were also sought on request, i.e. Dr. Shiner and his work on temperament.

Search terms
Evidence In-Sight used the following terms or combination of terms to find literature for this report: healthy development, childhood, early childhood, social, emotional, development, key factors, brain, executive function, resilience, play, temperament, parenting, caregiving, attachment theory, culture.

Culture

Cultural considerations have been discussed throughout the paper where applicable.

Culture refers to the distinct beliefs and values shared by a group of people that shapes how they think and behave (Ungar, Ghazinour, & Richter, 2013; Bornstein, 2012)

Culture is not something that can be altered to be 'optimal' for development, but it is important to understand that culture provides the context for an individual child's social and emotional development (Grusec, 2011). For example, a family's culture affects decisions such as when and how children are fed, where they sleep, acceptable childcare arrangements, response to stressful situations, rules for discipline, and role expectations for the child and family members (Grusec, 2011).

Cultural differences should be anticipated, understood and respected within the healthy socio-emotional development of young children. Therefore throughout the Common Message paper, cultural considerations have been discussed where applicable.

Common Messages for Healthy Social-Emotional Development of Young Children

Brain Development & the Environment

Nurturing environments help to shape the developing brain.
The foundation for healthy brain development starts prenatally and is influenced by genes, experiences and the child's environment. Positive caring relationships and healthy, stimulating environments help to shape the developing brain and influence gene expression with positive outcomes seen through to adulthood.

Stress & Brain Development

Toxic stress interferes with healthy brain development.
Stress is a normal part of healthy development. However toxic stress in childhood has the potential to interfere with healthy brain development. Supportive and caring relationships help to buffer the effects of stress for children.

Executive Function

Executive function and self-regulation are a child's 'air traffic' control systems.
Executive function and self-regulation helps children to manage emotions, control impulses, plan and prioritize, stay on task, problem solve and master new skills such as numeracy and literary skills. A child's capacity to develop these 'systems' is dependent upon caregivers who can model these skills within safe and supportive environments.

Temperament

A child's 'temperament' can change over time.
A child's emerging dispositions such as their activity level, emotional expression, attention and self-regulation are the result of complex interactions between genes, biology and environmental factors. It is important for caregivers to understand their child's natural strengths and adopt caregiving strategies that build on those strengths so they can thrive in different environments.

Resilience

Resilience in infants/young children is fostered through healthy relationships, supportive communities and the prevention of adversity.
Resilience is not a 'fixed trait'; it can be promoted, strengthened and compromised throughout the lifespan. A person's ability to remain resilient in the face of adversity is dependent upon the presence of protective factors within themselves, their relationships and the society in which they live.

Positive Caring Relationships

Positive, caring relationships in the early years are the 'building blocks' for a child's social-emotional development.
In the early years, responsive adult relationships affect brain architecture through reciprocal *serve and return* interactions. Warm and responsive caregiving leads to greater social competence, fewer behavioural problems and enhanced thinking and reasoning in a young child.

Attachment

Consistent and responsive caregiving fosters secure attachment in infants/young children and sets the stage for healthy child development.
An infant/child who is securely attached to their caregiver(s) feels safe, secure, and confident, promoting their exploration of the environment and ability to take on new challenges and experiences necessary for healthy development.

Play

Play is the work of children. Learning happens through play.
Play positively supports children's social/emotional, fine motor, gross motor, cognitive, language and literacy skills. Play has an essential role in building children's resilience across adaptive systems; pleasure, emotion regulation, stress response systems, peer and place attachments, learning and creativity. Integrating play into everyday moments fosters these critical skills for learning.

A Summary of the Findings

Brain Development & the Environment

How brains are built: The architecture of the developing brain
During the early years, the brain is most flexible with the ability to adapt, learn and grow with relative ease. These years therefore provide an important opportunity for development but can also be a time of great vulnerability (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007). While learning and development continue throughout the lifespan, early experiences, and the environments in which they take place, shape the brain's architecture by reinforcing or pruning neural circuits.

Sensitive and critical periods
Sensitive periods are times when certain neural circuits are particularly responsive to experiences (Tottenham, 2014; Fox, Levitt, & Nelson III, 2010). These periods, which can affect different skills and abilities, start and finish at different times and take place in different parts of the brain (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016). Critical periods are times where the presence or absence of an experience results in irreversible change. For example, studies have shown how vision deprivation early in life can lead to lasting impairment. These critical periods help explain why it can be difficult to restore normal function once development has been altered (Fox, Levitt, & Nelson III, 2010).

Interactive influences of genes and experiences
During the early years, the foundation of the brain's architecture is established through dynamic interactions between genes, experiences and the environment (Fox, Levitt, & Nelson III, 2010). Epigenetics and the discovery of the epigenome help to explain how both positive and negative early experiences and environments can leave a temporary or permanent chemical *signature* on genes. This *signature* then influences how easily genes are turned on or off or whether they are expressed at all, impacting lifelong development (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2010).

Epigenetics

Epigenetics is the term frequently used to describe the interaction between genes and environment. Insults to the developing nervous system of a fetus or child may have adverse consequences for later competence. The developing nervous system is vulnerable to a wide range of risks. Factors that are present in the parents prior to conception can influence reproductive health and future pregnancy outcomes. During the prenatal and perinatal period, the nervous system of the fetus is particularly vulnerable. After delivery, factors related to the child's immediate social environment are additional concerns. (Ontario College of Family Physicians, 2010)

Growth promoting environments
Children's experiences begin before birth, in the womb, and continue in the world as they interact with their environment and those around them (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007b). A rich, growth promoting environment provides adequate nutrients, is free of chemical toxins and full of positive social interactions with responsive caregivers (Centre

of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016). Healthy experiences and environments help the brain develop to its full genetic potential while negative experiences and unhealthy, adverse environments can lead to weak brain architecture and impaired development and capabilities (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007b; Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016).

Brains are built over time and from the bottom up with early learning and experiences providing the scaffolding for the development of more complex perceptual, cognitive, behavioural and emotional capabilities (Fox, Levitt, & Nelson III, 2010; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007a). Building high-level skills on a weak foundation is far more difficult than developing a strong foundation in the first place. So even though brains have the capacity to change and adapt throughout the lifespan, it is easier and much more cost effective for society to intervene, before sensitive periods when neural circuits become more established and difficult to modify (Fox, Levitt, & Nelson III, 2010).

"When we are talking about how the environment affects young children, what we're really talking about most importantly is the human environment; we're talking about relationships." Dr. Jack P. Shonkoff, Harvard University

 Community Model of Care: The Halton FASD Collaborative

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a diagnostic term that describes the range of effects that can occur in an individual who was prenatally exposed to alcohol. These effects can include lifelong physical, mental, and behavioural difficulties, as well as learning disabilities. This brain-based disorder is permanent and irreversible with varying symptoms. FASD is the leading known cause of preventable disability among Canadians.

The Halton community has responded to the unique needs of children, youth, adults and the families affected by FASD by establishing the Halton FASD Collaborative. This collaboration consists of multiple organizations representing mental health, child and youth services, developmental services, justice, school boards, addiction services, public health and parents/guardians. Halton's FASD collaborative works to prevent FASD and promote a system of care for the well-being of individuals at-risk or living with the effects of FASD. The collaborative strives to identify and support the unique needs of these individuals and families to live satisfying lives.

Learn more about Brain Development & the Environment

No one is immune to stress or adversity. Learning how to cope with stress is therefore an important part of healthy child development (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016).

There are three categories of stress and stress responses:

1. **Positive stress** is normal stress that is essential for development. It is characterized by a brief increase in heart rate, blood pressure and hormone levels (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016). Positive stress such learning a new skill promotes growth by helping children understand and cope with life's inevitable challenges and hardships (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015).
2. **Tolerable stress** is more severe or long lasting and activates the body's alert system to a greater degree. If the response is time-limited and buffered by supportive relationships, the brain and organs can quickly recover (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016). Tolerable stress such as losing a favourite toy or pet helps children develop coping skills needed to respond to adversity (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015) .
3. **Toxic stress** results from major, frequent or prolonged adversity such as extreme poverty, repeated abuse or severe maternal depression. The absence of a supportive adult is a key feature of toxic stress. Supportive adults can help buffer the physiological and emotional response and bring children back to baseline. Toxic stress can disrupt brain architecture and other developing organs and puts individuals at increased risk for stress related diseases, cognitive impairment, behaviour problems and physical and mental health challenges (Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007; Centre on the Developing Child Harvard University, 2011; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007a).

Buffering children from toxic stress
As mentioned, supportive and caring adult relationships can buffer the effects of stress and shift potentially toxic stress to a more tolerable, manageable level. Adults can prevent a child's physiological stress response system from activating or they can help to lower a child's heart rate, blood pressure and hormone levels, returning them to baseline more quickly afterwards (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016). Without the buffering protection of caring adults, long-lasting stress responses can lead to a system that is set to fear; rapidly shifting into defensive mode with little provocation, overreacting or shutting down completely (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016). Early interventions should target the causes of excessive stress and support caring adult relationships to protect children from developing harmful epigenetic changes and lifelong problems (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2010).

"Extensive research has documented the adverse impacts on young children of parental mental illness (particularly maternal depression), substance abuse, and recurrent violence. The prevalence of such problems is high, the extent to which they are overlooked problematic, and the relatively limited availability of specialized expertise to address them reflects an urgent unmet need. Although these conditions are more common among families living in poverty, they are found in all social classes." (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000, p 390)

A Community Model of Care: Parenting with Love
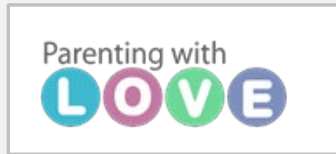
Research has confirmed that the early years present an unparalleled window of opportunity to effectively intervene with at-risk children (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). To address the unique needs of our community's most vulnerable children whose families are involved with child welfare services Halton service providers collaborated to develop an evidence informed program, Parenting with Love.

Parenting with Love is an attachment based parenting program that promotes adult emotional well-being and in turn, a child's emotional well- being through self- compassion, mindfulness and self- regulation. This 8 week series is delivered in partnership by Halton Region Health Department, Reach Out Centre for Kids, Halton's Early ON Child and Family Centres, Hope Place Centres and The Halton Children's Aid Society. Through this partnership, Parenting with Love is made available throughout the year to caregivers working with Halton Children's Aid Society. In addition, some of the partner agencies are currently piloting the delivery of Parenting with Love to a broader audience of caregivers as it was recognized that the program could benefit all families.

[Learn More about Stress & Brain Development](#)

Executive Function & Self-regulation

Executive function encompasses a number of high-level cognitive skills such as inhibitory control, working memory and cognitive flexibility. These foundational skills are essential for regulating more advanced emotions and skills such as focus and attention, planning and goal setting, rule following, problem solving, impulse control and delaying gratification (Obradovic, 2016; Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016; Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015).

Foundational Skills for Executive Function

Inhibitory Control is the ability to stop and choose whether to act on the desire to take action e.g. I need to finish my book before I can go out and play. Controlling impulses helps children finish what they set out to do and plan for the future. Impulse control is also the ability to delay gratification. Inhibitory control and emotional regulation are closely related. We can help young children develop impulse control by modeling it ourselves and acknowledging their achievements when they control their impulses (Pearson & Kordich, 2006).

Working memory refers to the capacity to hold and manipulate information in our minds over short periods of time. For example it enables children to follow multiple-step instructions without reminders e.g. remembering to hang up my coat, unpack my back-pack and wash my hands when I come home from school (Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Develoment & Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Developmen, 2011).

Cognitive and/or Mental Flexibility is the capacity to nimbly switch gears and adjust to changing demands, priorities or perspectives. It is what enables children to apply different rules in different settings (Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Develoment & Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Development, 2011).

Executive Function: the brain's "air traffic control" system

Executive function is described as the brain's *air traffic control system* as it helps to simultaneously plan, monitor and manage multiple streams of information allowing individuals to identify mistakes, make decisions, resist frustration, switch gears, revise and prioritize (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015; Centre on the Developing Child Harvard University, 2011). These 'systems' are important for developing literacy and numeracy skills, working well with others and applying different rules in different settings (Centre on the Developing Child Harvard University, 2011). Toxic stress can redirect the brain's focus towards rapid stress responses instead of planning and impulse control, negatively impacting executive function (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016).

Supporting the development of executive function skills

Infants and young children need caregivers to help manage their emotions and behaviours (e.g. acknowledge children's feelings and help them to label emotions). From three- to six-years old, there is a shift with children assuming greater control. To facilitate this transition, children need opportunities to practise and strengthen their executive function skills in a safe and supportive environment, where responsive caregivers are modelling the skills and providing the framework

for their development (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016; Centre on the Developing Child Harvard University, 2011).

Promoting self-regulation

Dr. Stuart Shanker (2013) discusses how self-regulation is not a matter of compliance, but rather an issue of how efficiently and effectively a child can handle and recover from stress. The sympathetic nervous system produces energy to deal with stressors, and then the parasympathetic nervous system helps with recovery. There are different types and levels of stress facing children and youth including: biological, emotional, cognitive, social and prosocial. Each type can influence and be influenced by the others. When supporting self-regulation in children, it is therefore important to consider all potential stresses. It is important to understand and address the causes of problematic behaviour, rather than simply deal with the behaviour itself.

Five levels of stress in children impacting self-regulation

1. Biological regulation refers to how well the child regulates her arousal states including hunger, awake/sleep, bowel/bladder.
2. Emotional regulation refers to how well the child monitors and modifies her emotional responses. A child who manages emotions well has the ability to cope with strong emotions and express them in socially acceptable ways (Pearson & Kordich, 2006).
3. Cognitive regulation refers to how well the child can sustain and switch her attention; inhibit impulses, deal with frustration, delay, distractions, sequence her thoughts.
4. Social regulation refers to how a child engages with other children and masters of rules of appropriate behaviour e.g. turn taking.
5. Pro-social regulation (reflective thinking) refers to how well a child can think about other people's feelings separate from their own (Shanker, (n.d)).

Supporting children and youth to develop and enhance their self-regulation by:

1. **Reduce overall stress level.** Ensure that a child sleeps well, eats well, and is active. Limit or remove stressors and stimulation such television, radio, video games.
2. **Help children develop self-awareness** of what it feels like to be calm, focused and alert versus hypo- or hyper-aroused. This can be done by helping children to acknowledge and label their feelings.
3. **Provide tools, and teach skills** to help children regain a sense of calm and be focused and alert. Assist children in understanding when they need to take a break and how to use mindfulness strategies to help them to return to feeling calm and alert. Calming tools can include sparkle jars to help them re-focus, play dough for reducing tension or bubbles for deep breathing. (Shanker, Calm, Alert and Happy, 2013).

Critical life skills for learning

"The capacities that develop in the earliest years may be harder to measure than abilities like number and letter recognition, but they are precisely the skills, closely related to executive functions, that researchers have recently determined to be so valuable in kindergarten and beyond: the ability to focus on a single activity for an extended period, the ability to understand and follow directions, the ability to cope with disappointment and frustration, the ability to interact capably with other students." (Tough, 2016)

[Learn More about Executive Function and Self-regulation](#)

Temperament

New research is changing how temperament is understood and measured. Temperament traits were initially believed to be innate or set very early in life, but evidence now shows that some traits only become consistent and stable during the preschool years. There is also an emerging interest in attention and self-regulation as important temperament traits and moderators of more common traits such as activity, reactivity, emotionality and sociability.

Historically, biology was believed to strongly influence temperament with environmental factors becoming more influential over time. A more common understanding now suggests that temperament results from both biological and environmental factors working *together throughout* development.

Based on these new findings, an adapted definition of temperament traits is: early emerging basic dispositions in the domains of activity, affectivity, attention, and self-regulation, that are the product of complex interactions among genetic, biological, and environmental factors across time (Shiner, Buss, McClowry, Saudino, & Zentner, 2012)

Thomas Boyce - The Orchid Child and the Science of Kindness
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_mSrc0GFpJw

Temperament is influenced by both affective (e.g. emotional responses) and cognitive (e.g. attention and inhibitory control) processing 'systems' which are highly integrated and dependent upon one another.

By the preschool years, as these two 'systems' develop and 'stabilize', they change the expression of more reactive temperament traits e.g. as children develop more complex executive function and self-regulation skills, they are better able to modify their activity level, manage emotions and stay on task.

Research has shown that there is a strong connection between temperament and a wide variety of critical life outcomes—relationships, academic achievement, health, and psychopathology.

Revisiting the concept of 'goodness of fit'

Previously experts in the field had recommended that caregivers enhance compatibility with their child by adjusting 'caregiving practices' and temper their own temperament to better support their child's unique way of responding to the world which was referred to as a 'goodness of fit'.

However, today's research suggests that we would better serve children by helping them accommodate and adjust to different 'environments', including relationships, by scaffolding them (providing guidance and support vs. avoiding stress triggering experiences) rather than changing the 'environment' itself.

"See a child differently, you see a different child." (Shanker & Burgess, 2017)

Community Model of Care: The F-words Framework

Halton developmental service providers; Community Living North Halton, Community Living Burlington, and Halton Region Children's Developmental Services, have partnered together to integrate and apply the F-words Framework into their Family Service Plan. The F-words focus on six key areas of child development, recognizing that no one factor is more important than another and remind us to focus on what a child CAN do. (Rosenbaum & Gorter, 2012)

FUNCTION	Refers to what people do - For children, 'play' is their 'work'
FAMILY	Represents the essential 'environment' of all children
FITNESS	Refers to how children stay physically active, including exercise and other recreational opportunities
FUN	Includes the activities that children enjoy participating in
FRIENDS	Refers to the friendships with peers
FUTURE	Refers to parents and children's expectations and dreams for their future

Based on Rosenbaum, P. & Gorter, J.W (2012), The 'F-words' in childhood disability: I swear this is how we should think! Child: Care, Health and Development, (38) 4. Visit https://www.canchild.ca/en/ research-in-practice/f-words-in-childhood-disability for more resources. *CanChild* **Centre for Childhood Disability Research:** www.canchild.ca

Learn More about Temperament

The word resilience stems from the Latin verb, resilire, i.e. to rebound (Masten, Global Perspectives on Resilience in Children and Youth, 2014), and is used to describe why and how some children do well or even thrive despite experiencing significant adversity (Obradovic, 2016; Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016; Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015).

For someone to be resilient, there is an inherent judgement that they:
• are doing well with regards to developmental milestones or outcomes such as academic achievement, peer acceptance, happiness or life satisfaction, and have an absence of mental illness, emotional distress, criminal behaviour or risk-taking
• have had significant exposure to adversity such as premature birth, divorce, maltreatment, violence, caregiver illness, poverty, homelessness or war and natural disaster, that would otherwise have put them at risk for negative outcomes (Masten, Cutuli, Herbers, & Reed, 2009)

Resilience is not an innate or fixed trait and often arises from ordinary yet powerful processes and protective factors at the individual, relationship and societal levels. At the individual level, resilience is linked to strong executive function, self-regulation, adaptability, positive self-perception and self-efficacy all of which foster a sense of control over one's life and a belief that adversity can be overcome (Masten, Cutuli, Herbers, & Reed, 2009; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015; Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015; Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016).

Relationships are key
At the relationship level, most resilient individuals have at least one stable and responsive caregiver or other caring adults who buffered some of the stress and adversity, provided support, and encouraged trust, autonomy, initiative and connection to others (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016; Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015; Goldstein & Brooks, 2008).

External supports at the neighbourhood or societal level that reinforce self-esteem and self-efficacy are also important protective factors (Goldstein & Brooks, 2008). These include effective schools, pro-social organizations, neighbourhoods with high *collective efficacy* and public safety, good emergency social services as well as quality public health and health care (Masten, Cutuli, Herbers, & Reed, 2009).

Influence of culture
There is strong criticism within resilience research and studies for the lack of attention to culture and cultural practices, including religion, and how they influence individuals and communities. For example, judging resilience by how well someone is adapting or whether they are successfully achieving developmental milestones is inherently culturally based, yet rarely examined in this context (Masten, 2014). Additionally, the value of faith and other cultural traditions in providing hope and stability in the face of adversity (Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015) or of cultural rituals in promoting acceptance and recovery of individuals struggling with adversity, have been undermined (Masten, 2014). A social ecological model of resilience is therefore encouraged to highlight the role of culture and context in shaping exposures, responses and expectations of children experiencing adversity (Masten, 2014; Ungar, Ghazinour, & Richter, 2013).

Promoting resiliency

Resilience can be promoted and strengthened at any age with programs and practices that help children cope and adapt (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016; Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015; Masten, 2009; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015). Rather than focusing on the individual, however, the primary goal should be promoting relationships and societal supports and preventing severe hardship and adversity in the first place. Programs and policies that support children and families by reducing risk exposure, increasing resources and assets and mobilizing powerful protective systems should be prioritized (Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2015; Masten, 2009).

"For the child, the interactions and relationships with caregivers are the most crucial elements in the environment. If these relationships are dysfunctional, even the most biologically resilient child will be at risk for later problems. When these relationships are supportive of adaptation, the child with severe neurological vulnerabilities may have the opportunity to thrive." (Shonkoff & Marshall, 2000)

A Community Model of Care: Developmental Assets®

Meaningful relationships are the foundation of healthy social and emotional development of young children. Halton Our Kids Network has been taking collective action in building healthy relationships with children and families through the development and dissemination of an Asset Building Toolkit.

Learn More about Resiliency

Serve and return
Strong, supportive and responsive adult relationships are linked to a number of positive outcomes including; resilience, self-confidence, positive mental health, motivation to learn, impulse control, conflict resolution, knowing right from wrong and the ability to develop and sustain friendships. In the early years, responsive adult relationships affect brain architecture through reciprocal *serve and return* interactions. These interactions are similar to a game of tennis where babies serve by reaching out, babbling and making facial expressions and gestures with adults returning the interaction by responding in ways that are tailored to the baby's personality and interests. By returning these interactions, the baby's experiences are affirmed and new abilities are nurtured (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2007a; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004).

Toxic stress
Severe neglect, inconsistent experiences and frequent disruptions to serve and return interactions activate children's stress response systems and appears to be one of the greatest threats to their health and development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2015; Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016). Issues such as maternal depression, family violence, and other family stressors can affect these interactions and may have lasting effects on young children and their development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004).

The caregiver relationship
One of the most significant and impactful relationship is between the caregiver and their child. Society therefore not only has a role to play, in detecting and preventing harmful practices, but also in supporting positive caregiving (Mullin, 2012). Caregivers should have access to programs, services and trainings. Additionally, caregiving environments, such as the home and childcare settings, should be rich in language, warm and responsive, and physically safe with a high adult to child ratio (Centre of the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2016).

Warm and supportive caregivers lead to greater social competence, fewer behavioural problems and enhanced thinking and reasoning at school age. The influence of parent and caregiver relationships spans the life course, but the nature of their impact varies by age and developmental status. Other relationships such as those with peers become increasingly important in later childhood and adolescence (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004).

Influence of culture
Culture plays a significant role in shaping caregivers and how they care for their children (Ungar, Ghazinour, & Richter, 2013; Bornstein, 2012) and, in turn, culture is maintained and transmitted through caregiving practices (Bornstein, 2012). All children are born into families with certain beliefs, values and expectations related to child behaviour and development. Early childhood caregiving practices differ across cultures and influence how children are raised. While caregiving practices can differ there are key common themes across all cultures (Bornstein, 2012). It is also important to note that despite the strong influence of an individual family's culture on caregiving practices the dominant culture can also create a bias regarding roles and expectations that are considered appropriate to caregiving.

It is important to note that common caregiving beliefs and issues, including what roles and expectations are considered *appropriate* for male and female caregivers and their children, are influenced by a western bias (Ungar, Ghazinour, & Richter, 2013; Bornstein, 2012).

"…in order to develop normally, a child requires progressively more complex joint activity with one or more adults who have an irrational emotional relationship with the child. Somebody's got to be crazy about that kid. That's number one. First, last and always." Urie Bronfenbrenner (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2004, p. 1)

A Community Model of Care: Halton's Neighbourhood Groups

It is widely accepted that children develop in the context of their family and culture and that early childhood is an important time to influence a child's physical, social, emotional and developmental health. Recognizing that families have the most influence in setting the stage for a child's successful development, providers in Halton have implemented a multi-sectorial program targeted at families experiencing social inequities in health such as social isolation, language barriers, financial disadvantages or challenges accessing programs due to location.

The Halton Neighbourhood Group model brings together professionals from Early ON Child and Family Centres, YMCA, Municipal Libraries, Halton Multicultural Connections, Halton Region Health Department Early Years Program and numerous community host sites to support families by: linking to positive parenting initiatives, promoting healthy transitions to school through physical and early literacy skill development, early identification of developmental concerns, facilitating access to social supports.

Neighbourhood groups can be accessed in all four Halton municipalities with a total of 10 groups running each week across the region. The groups are delivered in a drop-in style, are well attended and provide a welcoming setting for young children and their caregivers.

Learn more about Attachment and Positive Caring Relationships

Attachment is the foundation of positive caregiving and strong, responsive relationships. The postnatal period is critical when it comes to long-term attachment, caregiving behaviour and the emotional and behavioural development of children (Giallo, Cooklin, Wade, D'Espposito, & Nicholson, 2013).

Attachment theory, developed by John Bowlby, highlights that to ensure survival, children are biologically wired from the beginning to seek physical proximity to their caregivers and form close emotional bonds. In return, caregivers are equipped to instinctually respond to their children both verbally and non-verbally and provide a secure base for them to return to for comfort and support (Cooke, Stuart-Parrigon, Movahed-Abtahi, Koehn, & Kerns, 2016; Palm, 2014; Zilberstein, 2014). Having a strong sense of security allows children to explore more comfortably and confidently and develop a positive internal working model of care and protection (Zilberstein, 2014). This in turn leads to a child's greater understanding of emotions promoting their emotional competence (Cooke, Stuart-Parrigon, Movahed-Abtahi, Koehn, & Kerns, 2016).

Attachment relationships remain important over the lifespan but look different with age. For example, while infants, toddlers and young children seek physical proximity and comfort from caregivers when distressed, older children tend to use more verbal strategies and internalized representations of comfort and security, and teenagers may look to their peers or cope independently (Zilberstein, 2014).

Types of attachment relationships

There are four common types of attachment relationships. While one type typically dominates, children may demonstrate different styles depending on the caregiver or situation (Zilberstein, 2014).

- In *secure* **attachment relationships**, caregivers consistently respond to the child's range of expressions and needs. As such, children feel safe to openly express their emotions since they can reliably predict their caregivers' responses.
- With **insecure attachments**, caregiver attention and responses are selective and inconsistent leading to three different potential responses:
    1. In *insecure/anxious-avoidant* **attachment** relationships children actively hide or cover-up their emotions after experiencing consistent rejection during times of stress or sadness.
    2. In *insecure/anxious-ambivalent* attachment relationships, caregivers inconsistently respond so children may learn to exaggerate their distress to increase the chances of a caregiver response.
    3. In *insecure-disorganized* attachment relationships, caregivers are a source of security and comfort but also distress resulting in confusing, contradictory or incoherent emotional patterns and responses (Cooke, Stuart-Parrigon, Movahed-Abtahi, Koehn, & Kerns, 2016; Zilberstein, 2014).

Mental health challenges can affect a caregiver's ability to respond with warmth and promote healthy development. Contextual variables such as poverty can also contribute to caregiver and family stress and negatively affect attachment relationships (Giallo, Cooklin, Wade, D'Espposito, & Nicholson, 2013).

Attachment from a family perspective
Attachment literature tends to focus on the mother-child relationship as mothers typically spend more time with children, particularly during the infancy. Historically, fathers were also seen more as playmates than primary attachment figures. Fathers were believed to be sought out during

times of exploration and play, while mothers provided the comfort and security. Now, it is better understood that both male and female caregivers play an important role in developing secure attachment relationships, but that these relationships may look and function differently. A family perspective where caregivers support each other's roles and contributions is important (Palm, 2014).

"Relationships drive development. For a young child, a supportive relationship is as important as good nutrition – the absence of either can negatively impact development" Chaya Kulkarni, IMHP Community Training, 2018

A Community Model of Care: Circle of Security®

In recognition of the importance of secure attachment for infants and young children's social emotional wellbeing, Reach Out Centre for Kids (ROCK), Halton's lead mental health agency, has invested in the Circle of Security – Parenting (COS-P) program. COS-P is an evidence informed program which has been extensively researched across cultures and is based on attachment theory and current affective neuroscience. It provides both a process and visual template for helping parents become attuned and responsive to their infant/young child's social and emotional needs.

ROCK is offering COS-P to Halton families in a group format to promote, enhance and protect the primary contributor to an infant/young child's mental health, the parent-child relationship.

Learn more about Attachment and Positive Caring Relationships

There is a strong belief in the power of play, with organizations, such as the United Nations, recognizing it as a fundamental right of every child (White, 2012). Play is introduced at a very young age to babies through *serve and return* interactions where they quickly learn that it is something joyful and different from *real life* (Kenney, 2012). As children grow, they are introduced to, and engage in various types of play. Regardless of the form it takes, play is pleasurable, intrinsically motivated, process oriented, freely chosen, actively engaged and non-literal (White, 2012; Lillard, et al., 2013).

Attributes of play

Symbolic, imaginary or pretend play begins in the second year of life, dominates the play of three to five-year olds, and then declines for older children (Gilmore, 2011). Pretend play often begins with children mimicking actions such as sleeping or eating then becomes more social involving other people and objects and more decontextualized with imaginary characters and settings (Lillard, et al., 2013; White, 2012).

Parallel play involves children playing side by side, each child engrossed in their own play. This type of play is often seen from ages one to about three or four.

Social play then begins to emerge along with theory of mind where children learn to consider how others think and feel and begin to understand that not everyone has the same intentions or desires as them (Gilmore, 2011; White, 2012). During social play, children invite adults and peers into their play and learn to collaborate effectively, integrate objects and narratives and create shared meaning (Gilmore, 2011).

Object play begins at a young age but changes over time with how objects and toys are manipulated and used (Gilmore, 2011). It often starts out as exploratory, i.e. banging two objects together, and then becomes more symbolic or construction/building based (White, 2012).

Physical play follows an inverted U trajectory gradually increasing from infancy through childhood then declining during adolescence. Physical play is considered one of the most endangered types of play (White, 2012). The overall decline of physical play across childhood is linked to increases in single parent-headed households, two-parent working schedules, passive entertainment (screen time) and perceptions that neighbourhoods are unsafe and children require close outdoor supervision (Kenney, 2012)

Media play however is on the rise. Many are leery of this type of play and its impact on physical and social play, however there is evidence demonstrating that interactive technology such as video and computer games can promote playful learning, exploration, creativity, experimentation, control, decision making and self-direction. Media play serves many different learning styles and can be social by involving multiple players. While media play should never replace more traditional forms of play, there is a growing acceptance of its place and potential value (White, 2012).

Play and Culture
Play is influenced by culture. It is a form of socialization where children learn about their cultural realities and expectations and develop internal scripts for how to act (White, 2012). Pretend play is seen across cultures with all children creating individualized worlds that mirror their own mental organization and internal conflicts (Gilmore, 2011). Not all cultures view play as important, and as such children from these cultures tend to play much less (Lillard, et al., 2013).

Benefits of Play

The benefits of play depend on the type of play and the field of study in which it's being discussed. For example, child analysts see play as promoting development, whereas psychoanalysts see it as a form of therapy (Gilmore, 2011). Nevertheless, researchers agree that play supports essential cognitive, emotional, social and physical skills. Cognitive skills include language development, creativity, the creation of narratives, problem-solving, mastery, divergent thinking, self-regulation, attention, working memory and planning (Kenney, 2012; White, 2012).

Play is also believed to foster a lasting disposition to learn. Through play, children are encouraged to take ownership of knowledge seeking, exploration, hypothesis testing and discovery, all within a safe environment. Through social or peer play children learn to compromise, negotiate, resolve conflicts and manage their emotions.

In later years, socio-dramatic play encourages children to take on different roles and storylines helping them navigate complex emotions and relationships (White, 2012).

Finally, physical play helps to develop fine and gross motor skills, promote a healthy lifestyle, and provide physical benefits such as increased aerobic capacity, strength, endurance and coordination (Kenney, 2012; White, 2012).

"The playing adult steps sideward into another reality; the playing child advances forward to new stages of mastery." Erik H. Erikson

A Community Model of Care: Connect, Play and Learn, Every Day

Connect **Play & Learn Every Day!**

Connect
A strong connection leads to happier, healthier children.

Play and Learn
When children are playing, they are learning.

Every Day
Make time for play, every day.

The Halton Our Kids Network Early Years Initiative has developed common messages entitled 'Connect, Play and Learn, Every Day'. These messages are intended to reflect the importance of play as a catalyst for strengthening the caregiver-child relationship while promoting early childhood development through the creation of nurturing, safe learning environments.

The messages are evidence-based and intentionally align with key frameworks and practices supported across Halton such as Developmental Assets®, play-based learning, attachment theory as well as the work of the Halton EYMH committee.
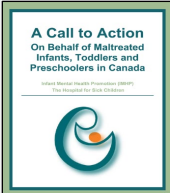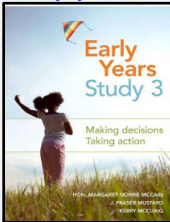
Halton service providers working with infants/young children and their families are encouraged to draw upon these messages when developing resources and/or delivering programming. Moreover, a Halton wide campaign highlighting each of the three messages is being piloted.
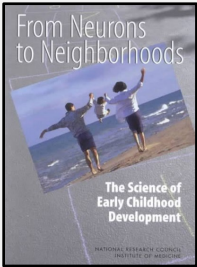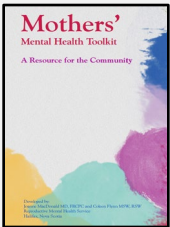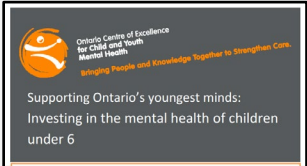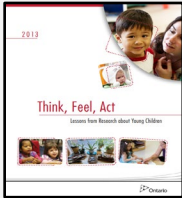

[Learn more about Play](#)

To Learn More

Practice, Policy & Reports

A Call to Action On Behalf of Maltreated Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers in Canada (IMHP) https://www.imhpromotion.ca/Resources/A-Call-to-Action	In this document you will find evidence-based information about the unique vulnerability of maltreated infants. This resource also includes policy recommendations which are informed by strong scientific evidence.
Competencies For Practice In The Field Of Infant Mental Health (IMHP) http://www.imhpromotion.ca/Resources/BestPracticeGuidelines.aspx	In this document IMHP has described the knowledge and skills needed by infant mental health practitioners from a broad range of disciplines in order to provide competent care specific to each infant and family. There is also an **Interactive Learning Module** that can be used for training. *Halton's Early Years Mental Health Committee strongly encourages organizations to review the list of Competencies for Practice in the Field of Infant Mental Health.*
Early Childhood Development (RSC/CAHS) https://rsc-src.ca/sites/default/files/images/ECD Report_2.pdf	A report from a panel of experts: Royal Society of Canada/Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, on early adversity and its impact on development/mental health of children.
Early Years Study 3 https://earlyyearsstudy.ca/early-years-study-3/	The *Early Years Study 3* documents the social, economic and scientific rationale for increased investments in early childhood education. It also introduces the Early Childhood Education Report to monitor the funding, policy, access and quality of early education programming.
Embedding the Science of Infant Mental Health in Practice and Policy – Executive Summary http://www.eccdc.org/infant-mental-health/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Embedding-the-Science_Executive-Summary_Final.pdf	In this document IMHP has summarized their key findings, identifying existing gaps, barriers, opportunities for improved service delivery, and potential solutions for inter-systemic supports.

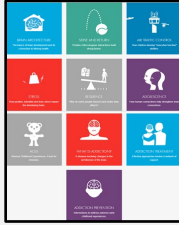|	
From Neurons to Neighbourhoods. The Science of Early Child Development http://www.nap.edu/openbook.php?record_id=9824&page=R1	The study shaped policy agendas in the USA and intervention efforts. It has helped to foster a highly dynamic and increasingly visible science of early childhood development and contributed to a growing public understanding of the foundational importance of the early childhood years. To learn more: From Neurons to Neighborhoods: Anniversary Workshop [Video]
Growing Together. Support the mental health and wellness of young children, mothers, and their families https://www.bccf.ca/media/uploads/resources_pdf/growing-together_toolkit.pdf	The module explores strategies to support women and their families to build healthy relationships with their babies and toddlers. They also discuss ways to do this with women who are also dealing with the stressors of depression, anxiety, substance use, trauma, or other challenging life circumstances.
How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/HowLearningHappens.pdf	How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years is a professional learning resource for those working in child care and child and family programs. It builds on foundational knowledge about children and is grounded in new research and leading-edge practice from around the world
Mothers' Mental Health Toolkit: A Resource for the Community http://www.iwk.nshealth.ca/mmh	This 'workbook' is intended to support those who work with vulnerable mothers and families. It aims to enhance mental health literacy for support providers, provide a guide for the promotion of mental wellness for mothers and promote practices that build resiliency and a strong network of community supports.
Organizational Policies And Practices To Support High Quality Services In The Field Of Infant And Young Child Mental Health https://www.imhpromotion.ca/Resources/Best-Practice-Guidelines/Organizational-Policies-Practices.aspx	Infant Mental Health Promotion has developed guidelines for practitioners who work with young families in various disciplines and settings (e.g., hospitals, public health, child welfare, childcare, children's mental health) to ensure appropriate training and support for staff. There is an accompanying **Interactive**

	Learning Module that can be used for trainings and individual learning.
Supporting Ontario's Youngest Minds: Investing in the mental health of children under 6 https://www.cymh.ca/Modules/ResourceHub/?id=AF13E20F-F63B-40B8-A2E4-84C98FF479DF	This key policy paper focuses on infant and early childhood mental health availability and accessibility in Ontario, with the purpose of advancing evidence-informed policy recommendations to strengthen infant and early childhood mental health services in the province.
Think, Feel, Act. Lessons from Research about Young Children http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/research.html	This brief describes the latest research in early child development, strategies to put key ideas into practice and reflective questions for educators. The briefs present the view of the child as competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential. Key points are supported by short video clips.

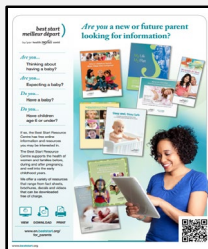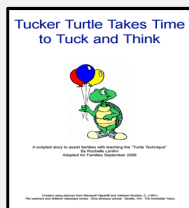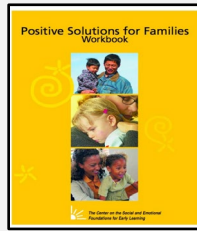|	**Overview of Social-Emotional Development**
Alberta Family Wellness http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources/learning-modules	A series of online learning modules discussing early brain development and the factors influencing healthy brain development which include: • The Frameworks of Early Brain Development • Stress & the Biology of Development • Addressing the Enduring Challenges of Toxic Stress • The Foundations of Life Long Health • Clinical Implications
BC Healthy Child Development Alliance, Social and Emotional Development in the Early Years http://www.childhealthbc.ca/initiatives/bc-healthy-child-development-alliance#block-views-block-resource-documents-block-1	A series of training materials on 'Social and Emotional Development in the Early Years'. Content includes: • Typical social emotional development in the early years (0-3) • Signs that additional support may be needed • Strategies and resources for promoting healthy social emotional development
Best Start Resource Centre http://en.beststart.org/resources-and-research	The Best Start Resource Centre produces multi-media resources in multiple languages on a broad range of topics related to preconception health, prenatal health, and early child development. Many of their resources can be downloaded free of charge.
Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (CECMHC) https://www.ecmhc.org/index.html	The **CECMHC** has a developed a number of tool to promote social-emotional development & reduce challenging behaviour: • Strategies for managing stress • Interactive temperament tool • Tutorial series designed to enhance staff skills and knowledge including

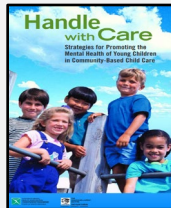|	
Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/index.html *Positive Solutions for Families Workbook* *The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning*	**CSEFEL**: • Resource center for disseminating research and evidence-based practices to early childhood programs across the US • Focus: promote social-emotional development and school readiness of children birth to age 5 • Provide resources & links for families • Developed 'Training Manuals' for both staff and parents supporting social-emotional development of young children
Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development (EECD) http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/alphabetical-index *Why does mental health in young children matter?*	**EECD** It brings together articles written by experts on topics having to do with the development of young children, from conception to the age of five. The syntheses and information sheets (Eyes on...) provide summaries of the most essential knowledge suited to various readers. Topic areas include: • Behaviour • Education and learning • Health and nutrition • Pregnancy • Family • Service and policy
Handle with Care: Strategies for Promoting the Mental Health of Young Children in Community-Based Child Care https://www.hincksdellcrest.org/Home/Resources-And-Publications/Handle-With-Care.aspx *Handle with Care: Strategies for Promoting the Mental Health of Young Children in Community-Based Child Care*	An evidence-based resource that describes strategies for promoting the mental health of young children in community-based childcare centres.
Infant Mental Health Promotion (IMHP) http://www.imhpromotion.ca/HOME.aspx *Infant Mental Health Promotion (IMHP)*	IMHP has developed resources that include: • HELP ME GROW – Social and Emotional Milestones • Hand in Hand Developmental Support Model • Comfort, Play & Teach tip sheets for parents • A Simple Gift Series of videos and handouts on infant development, attachment and parent-child relationships • 'Parenting' moments – a variety of topics focused on social and emotional development • Best practice and policy guidelines • Interactive learning modules • Ongoing professional development

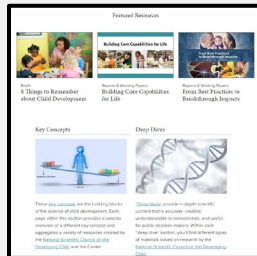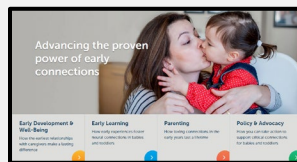|	
Be You. Beyond Blue. https://www.kidsmatter.edu.au/mental-health-matters/social-and-emotional-learning 	KidsMatter is an Australian mental health and well-being initiative set in primary schools and early childhood education and care services. This website provides tools for parents and professionals working with young children to promote social and emotional learning.
The Centre on the Developing Child Harvard University http://developingchild.harvard.edu/ 	Supports evidence-based research to inform strategies to improve life outcomes for children facing adversity. Online access to: • Reports, Working Papers & Briefs • Presentations • Tools, Guides & Multi-media Key concepts include: • Brain Architecture • Serve and Return • Toxic Stress • Executive Function and Self-regulation • Resiliency
The Dali Lama Centre for Peace + Education https://dalailamacenter.org/learn 	The Center promotes Heart-Mind well-being Programs and resources: • Focus on the development of social- emotional strengths that help children thrive • Designed to raise awareness of the science that supports a Heart-Mind balance in learning, and to translate that research into action • Access to videos, recordings and resources from experts in the field of children/youth's mental health
Zero to Three http://www.zerotothree.org/ 	ZERO TO THREE supports the healthy development of infants/young children by providing: • Parents with practical resources that help them connect more positively with their children • Professionals with the knowledge and tools that help them support healthy, early development • Policy makers in advancing comprehensive and coherent polices which support and strengthen families, caregivers and infant-toddler professionals

Topic specific

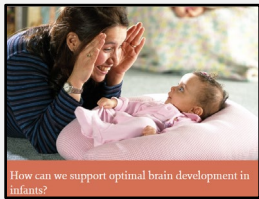|	Brain Development & the Environment
Alberta Family Wellness Initiative http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources 	Included on this website is a series of online learning modules, resources discussing early brain development and the factors influencing healthy brain development which include: • The Frameworks of Early Brain Development • Stress & the Biology of Development • Addressing the Enduring Challenges of Toxic Stress • The Foundations of Life Long Health • Clinical Implications
Best Start Resource Centre http://en.beststart.org/resources-and-research 	Key topics of interest: • Alcohol, tobacco and drug use during pregnancy • Early Brain Development - Parent Knowledge in Ontario • Healthy Baby Healthy Brain • Improving the Odds: Healthy Child Development • My Reproductive Life Plan \ • On Track. Supporting Healthy Development and Early Identification in the Early Years. • Playing it Safe. Strategies to Reduce Environmental Risks to Preconception, Prenatal & Child Health
Caring For Kids http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/ 	This site is developed by the Canadian Paediatric Society. Key topics of interest: • Your baby's brain: How parents can support healthy development • Your child's development: What to expect • Growing and learning: A series of 'articles' on growth, development, and literacy • Behaviour and parenting • Screen time and young children
Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University: Brain Architecture https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture/ 	This website provides an overview of key concepts related to the architecture of the developing brain and healthy development. A variety of related resources have been developed on this topic such as: • Frameworks • Working papers • Briefs • Multimedia resources

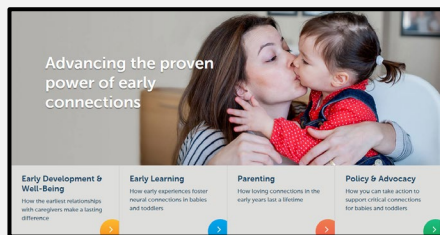|	
Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/en-ca/list-of-topics.html How can we support optimal brain development in infants? Why are the early years so important to children's later development?	Topics of interest: • Brain maturation • The Importance of Early Childhood Development
Looksee Checklist by NDDS http://ndds.ca/ontario 	A free developmental screening tool for infants and children up to 6 years of age. The following areas of a child's skills are explored in the NDDS: vision, hearing, speech, language, fine motor, gross motor, cognitive, social, emotional and self-help.
The Search Institute http://www.search-institute.org/research/developmental-assets 	A body of research that has led to the development of a framework for healthy development that includes a set of skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviors that enable young people to develop into successful and contributing adults called Developmental Assets®. On this site you will find the list of assets for: • Early childhood (ages 3 – 5) • Grades K-3 (ages 5-9) • Middle Childhood (ages 8 – 12) • Adolescents (ages 12 – 18) The also offer a 'parent-friendly' site found at: http://www.parentfurther.com/
Zero to Three http://www.zerotothree.org/ 	Provides developmental-age specific activities for parents to support healthy child development. Such as: • *Little Kids, Big Questions*- podcast series • *Healthy Minds* – set of seven, age-based handouts linking child and brain development • *Magic of Everyday Moments* – set of eight, age-based booklets highlighting developmental milestones from birth to three • An interactive Baby Brain Map demonstrates how early care enriches development.

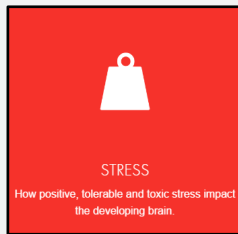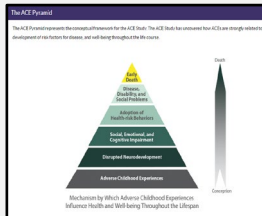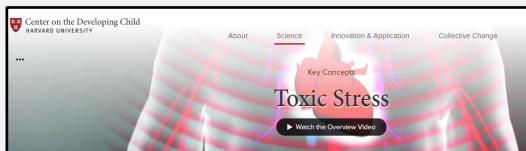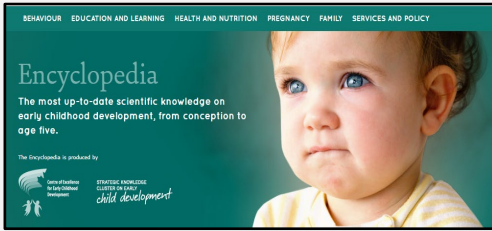|	Stress & Brain Development
ACES Too High https://acestoohigh.com/	Reports on research about adverse childhood experiences, including developments in epidemiology, neurobiology, and the biomedical and epigenetic consequences of toxic stress.
Alberta Family Wellness Initiative: Stress http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/what-we-know/stress	The Alberta Family Wellness Initiative (AFWI) mobilizes knowledge about early brain development and the impact of stress its to lifelong physical and mental health, including addiction.
Centre of Disease Control – Adverse Childhood Experiences https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/index.html	The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study is one of the largest investigations ever conducted to assess associations between childhood maltreatment and later-life health and well-being. Check out the following resource supported by this website: Essentials for Childhood. Steps to Create Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments
Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University: Toxic Stress https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/	This organization brings together leading experts in the field to discuss the extensive research on the biology of stress and its impact on healthy development. Includes; key concepts, briefs, working papers and multimedia resources.

Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/en-ca/list-of-topics.html 	This website provides summaries of the evidence on the impact of stress on healthy development and includes information sheets on each topic. Examples include: • Anxiety and Depression • Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders • Low income and pregnancy [Complete • Maltreatment (Child) • Maternal depression • Stress (prenatal and perinatal)
Kids Have Stress Too! https://psychologyfoundation.org/Public/Resources/Public/Resources/Material_Order_Forms/Resources.aspx?hkey=dd3ae1e1-877b-4eb4-a69c-06552878dd7f 	The Psychology Foundation of Canada provides free, practical downloadable tip sheets promoting stress management in young children.
Beacon House https://beaconhouse.org.uk/useful-resources/	Free resources focused on the impact of trauma and building resiliency.

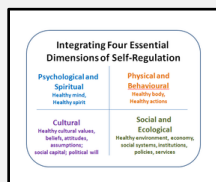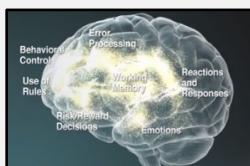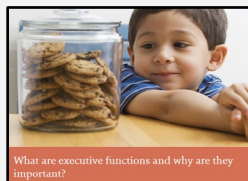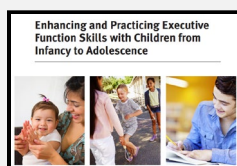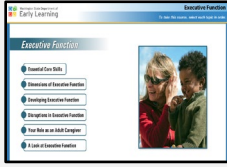|	Executive Function & Self-regulation
Alberta Family Wellness Initiative: Executive Function http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/what-we-know/air-traffic-control 	The Alberta Family Wellness Initiative (AFWI) mobilizes knowledge about early brain development and its connection to lifelong physical and mental health, including addiction. Included on this website is a series of online learning modules, resources discussing early brain development and the factors influencing healthy brain development and highlight the development of executive functioning.
Canadian Self-Regulation Initiative http://www.self-regulation.ca/ 	Integrating insights from neuroscience, health, education and developmental psychology, this website provides a platform for learning and engagement of educators, allied professionals, parents and communities who want to promote higher levels of learning, self-regulation and healthy development in kids and in the adults in their lives.
Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University: Executive Function and Self-Regulation https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/executive-function/ 	This website summarizes the evidence and provides an overview of key concepts related to the development of executive function and self-regulation and the impact on healthy development. Resources on this topic include: • Frameworks • Working papers • Briefs • Multimedia resources
Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/en-ca/list-of-topics.html 	This topic aims to increase our understanding about how executive function develops its role and impact on a person's social, emotional and intellectual life, from early childhood to adulthood.
Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children from Infancy to Adolescence https://children.wi.gov/Documents/Harvard%20Parenting%20Resource.pdf 	Each chapter of this downloadable guide contains activities suitable for a different age group, from infants to teenagers to support and strengthen various components of executive function and self-regulation in children. The guide may be read in its entirety (which includes the introduction and references) or in discrete sections geared to specific age groups.

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Executive Function Online training module http://deltraining.com/courses/Executive_Function/content-frame.htm 	This online training module was produced by the Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL) to help providers better understand and support the development of executive function skills. The module includes video of researchers, teachers, and children to both explain and demonstrate how these critical skills form and what they look like in the early learning classroom.
Mind in the Making http://www.mindinthemaking.org/ 	This website provides evidence-based tips and strategies for promoting 'essential life skills' in children that include: • Focus and Self Control • Perspective Taking • Communicating • Making Connections • Critical Thinking • Taking on Challenges • Self-Directed, Engaged Learning
The Merhit Centre https://self-reg.ca/learn/online-courses-with-dr-shanker/level-1-certification-self-reg-foundations/ 	The Merhit Centre provides information based on self-regulation and includes: • Online learning modules • Information sheets, infographics & blogs • Links to resources for parents • Links to multi-media resources
Mindful Parenting http://www.kidscount.com.au/en/find-help 	A resource for parents filled with ideas and strategies to support them in being mindful and reflective in their parenting.
OPRE https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource-library/search?sort=recent#?keyword%5B0%5D=self-regulation&sort=recent&ajax=1 	OPRE has developed a number of research and practice briefs focused on promoting self-regulation in young children and adults.
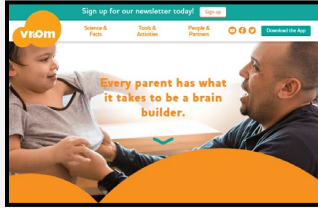
Vroom! http://joinvroom.org/ 	Vroom provides caregivers with creative tools and ideas to turn everyday moments into brain building moments…they have even developed a free downloadable app that makes it easy to access fun Vroom activities any time to make the most of these precious years when the foundation for all future learning is happening!

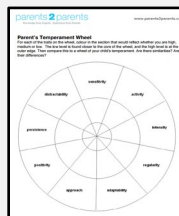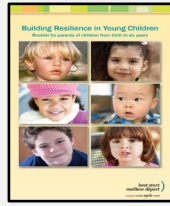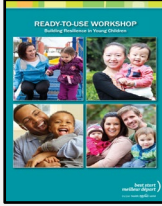|	Temperament
Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/en-ca/list-of-topics.html How can parenting styles influence children's temperament?	This topic discusses how temperament shapes children's outcomes and influences the way they interact with their environment and how adults and children respond to them.
Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation http://www.ecmhc.org/temperament/index.html Infant Toddler Temperament Tool (IT³) IT³ Supporting a "Goodness of Fit"	Interactive Infant Toddler Temperament Tool (IT³) includes a short online survey that allows caregivers of infants and toddlers to recognize and explore their own temperament traits and those of a child for which they provide care. The IT³ generates tips that adults can use to foster the unique temperament of each child within their care.
Kera – Ready for Life: Temperament http://readyforlife.kera.org/ready-for-life/teachers/temperament/ who is my child? A Guide to Temperament	This interactive website supports caregivers and teachers of young children to better understand the concept of temperament through the provision of videos, tips and tools. In addition they developed 'workshop' which includes a facilitator and activity guide which incorporates the 'tools' they have developed on this topic.
Parents 2 Parents http://www.parents2parents.ca/parents/149 Parent's Temperament Wheel	This caregiver friendly website has a series of tips, tools and videos focused on raising awareness of differing temperament traits that include the following worksheets: • Goodness of fit worksheet • The Temperament Wheel • Temperament Worksheet

	Resilience
Best Start Resource Centre https://resources.beststart.org/?s=resilience	Best Start has developed a ready-to-use workshop designed for service providers. It provides practical tips for caregivers on simple messages about how to build resilience from infancy to age 6. In addition they have developed a complimentary book on resiliency targeted to caregivers.
Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/en-ca/list-of-topics.html	This topic aims to discuss the factors that impact a child's development in the face of adversity and identifies areas of focus to foster their resiliency.
Reaching In…Reaching Out (RIRO) http://www.reachinginreachingout.com/	RIRO has created evidence-based programs that teach resiliency thinking and coping skills to adults and young children under the age of 8 years. Under the 'Resource Tab' you will find the following that may be of interest: • Reaching In Reaching Out Guidebook - an evidence-based skills training program designed to promote resilience in young children. • Skill building videos, newsletters etc. In addition there is a link to a caregiver friendly resource.
Resilience Research Centre http://resilienceresearch.org/	The Resilience Research Centre have a number of related publications, tools and multimedia products which can be accessed online and in addition offer a number of workshops on this subject.
Beacon House https://beaconhouse.org.uk/useful-resources/	Free resources focused on the impact of trauma and building resiliency.

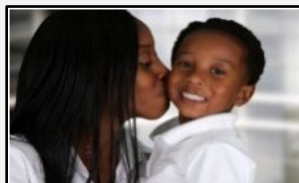|	**Attachment & Positive Caring Relationships**
Alberta Family Wellness Initiative: Serve & Return http://www.albertafamilywellness.org/what-we-know/serve-and-return 	Included on this website is a series of online learning modules, resources discussing early brain development and the factors influencing healthy brain development e.g. attachment and positive relationships.
Attachment Across Cultures http://www.attachmentacrosscultures.org/about/index.html 	A research project, conducted as a qualitative study of parents, with children aged 0-5 years, across Canada. The research is intended to assist organizations in promoting and maintaining positive cross-cultural attachment practices among program participants, by creating practical resources for them.
Attachment Network of Manitoba http://attachmentnetwork.ca/ 	This multi-organizational network develops and supports best practices for enhancing secure attachment across the life span. They provide a list of resources for parents/professionals related to healthy attachment.
Caring for Kids: **Attachment: A connection for life** http://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/attachment 	This site is developed by the Canadian Paediatric Society (CPS). Provides a brief overview of key messages related to healthy attachment that can be shared with parents/caregivers.
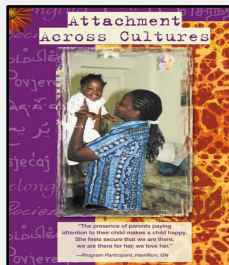
Centre on the Developing Child at Harvard University: Serve & Return https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/serve-and-return/ 	This website summarizes the evidence and provides an overview of key concepts related to the development of attachment and positive relationships and the impact on healthy development.
Circle of Security International®(COS) http://circleofsecurity.net/ 	The Circle of Security (COS) is a relationship based early intervention program designed to enhance attachment security between parents and children. A number of handouts are available for downloading under the 'Resource' tab that include: • COS 25 Words or Less • COS Attachment for Baby • COS Attachment Theory • COS In a Chaotic World • COS Original Circle • COS Circle of Repair • COS In Relationship to Adults • Note to Parents • Travelling around COS • COS Time In COS has very specific guidelines regarding the use of their material. Please see the link below for their user agreement: https://www.circleofsecurityinternational.com/handouts
Kera. Ready for Life: Attachment & Socialization http://readyforlife.kera.org/ready-for-life/parents/attachment-socialization/ 	This interactive website supports teachers and parents of young children in understanding the theory of attachment through the provision of videos, tips and tools.
The Search Institute http://www.search-institute.org/research/developmental-assets 	The Search Institute has developed a framework, Developmental Assets®, which describes the skills, experiences, relationships, and behaviors that enable young people to develop into successful and contributing adults. On this site you will find the list of assets for: • Early childhood (ages 3 – 5) • Grades K-3 (ages 5-9) • Middle Childhood (ages 8 – 12) • Adolescents (ages 12 – 18) The Search Institute has also developed complementary frameworks that include:

	• Family Strengths • Developmental Relationships • Developmental Communities They also have a 'parent-friendly' site found at: http://www.parentfurther.com/
S.K.I.P. **Strategies with Kids / Information for Parents** https://skip.org.nz/ 	This website provides videos, tips and strategies to help parents raise socially and emotionally resilient children.

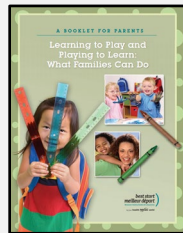|	**Play**
Active for Life http://activeforlife.com/about/ 	Active for Life is a website that identifies activities that promote physical literacy in young children. Activities are organized by age and gender, so parents can find fun and engaging ways of making sure their children get the recommended daily amount of physical activity.
Best Start Resource Centre: Learning to Play and Playing to Learn: What Families Can Do https://resources.beststart.org/?s=play 	This resource helps caregivers support play-based learning at home, in child care and preschool settings and in kindergarten. Particular attention is given to attachment, self-regulation and play.
Early Childhood News http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/default.aspx 	An online resource for teachers and parents of children, from infants to age 8 years and offers tips/strategies on a number of topics supporting healthy development. For example: For Parents Only: Teaching Your Child Through Play.
Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/en-ca/list-of-topics.html 	This topic describes the benefits of play and why it should be an integral part of young children's education.
Infant Mental Health Promotion (IMHP): Comfort, Play, Teach https://www.imhpromotion.ca/Resources/Comfort,-Play-Teach 	Comfort, Play & Teach, is a series of resources that embeds the science of early childhood development and is translated into activities and experiences that are practical, easy-to-understand and easy to do.
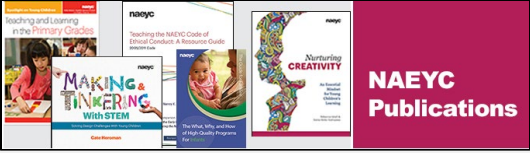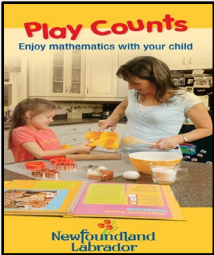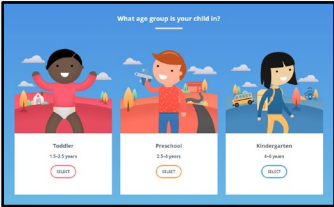
National Association for the Education of Young Children http://www.naeyc.org/ 	NAEYC has a number of articles/resources supporting both professionals and families that can be accessed online by non-members. Of interest: • Assessing and Scaffolding Make-believe Play • Play for all Young Children.
Newfoundland Department of Education http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/earlychildhood/power.html 	The Newfoundland Department of Education has published a number of articles and resources on the power of play in early childhood based on research prepared by the Early Childhood Learning Division, Department of Education, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.
Parents 2 Parents http://parents2parents.ca/node/9 	Parents 2 Parents is a web community built especially for expectant parents, new parents and parents with young children. They provide information and resources about healthy child development and how to parent effectively. They have developed an 'Activity Centre' that provides a number of engaging activities based on the 'Comfort, Play & Teach' model.
Play & Learn https://playandlearn.healthhq.ca/about-us/ 	Play & Learn provides games and for 3 different age groups: toddler (1.5-2.5 years); preschool (over 2.5 years - 4 years); and kindergarten (over 4 years-6 years). The games and activities support the following areas of child development: • Thinking & Learning • Social & Emotional • Movement • Language

44

	Culture
Attachment Across Cultures http://www.attachmentacrosscultures.org/about/index.html 	A research project, conducted as a qualitative study of parents, with children aged 0-5 years, across Canada. The research is intended to assist organizations in promoting and maintaining positive cross-cultural attachment practices among program participants, by creating practical resources for them.
Best Start Resource Centre http://en.beststart.org/for_parents/are-you-looking-newcomers-parenting-resources 	Resources of interest: Growing up in a new land When Children Speak More Than One Language
Caring for Kids New to Canada: http://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca/ 	A guide for health professionals working with immigrant and refugee children and youth to support the provision of culturally competent care.
The Centre for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation: Cultural and Linguistic Competence in Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation https://www.ecmhc.org/tutorials/competence/mod1_0.html 	A tutorial series focused on the bio-social context of culture and its influence on the values, beliefs, child rearing practices and expectations of families and the relationship to child development, and social-emotional health and well-being.
Cross-Cultural Lessons: Early Childhood Developmental Screening and Approaches to Research and Practice http://www.cup.ualberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Crosscultural_Handbook.pdf	A handbook of cross-cultural approaches to relationship building when working with immigrant and refugee families with young children with respect to developmental screening.
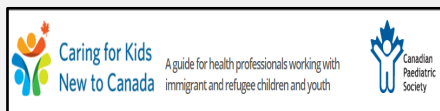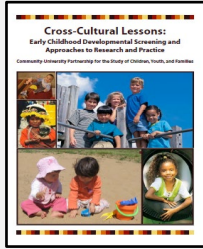
Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development: Culture http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/culture/introduction 	This topic discusses how child development and culture are connected, how these influences manifest themselves, and the effects of cultural differences on children of immigrant families.
Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development: Immigration http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/immigration/complete-topic 	This summary of the research discusses factors influencing the acculturation process and outcomes of newcomer families.
Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development: Second Language http://www.child-encyclopedia.com/second-language/complete-topic 	This topic discusses the impacts of bilingualism on children's cognitive development and suggests the most favourable learning contexts.

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Acknowledgements

The Early Years Mental Health Committee would like to thank Evidence In-Sight, Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health for conducting the research to identify the factors contributing to the healthy social and emotional development of young children which provided the foundation for the development of the common messages.

The committee also gratefully acknowledges the support that the Our Kids Network has provided and its willingness to share information with our professional community. Working together, we can enhance the knowledge and understanding of the experiences, resources and protective factors that foster healthy social and emotional development in children and effectively plan and implement supports for families and children.

We thank the following committee members for their contribution to the writing and development of the Social-Emotional Development in the Early Years: A Common Message Paper 2nd Ed.

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