

Creating Consistency

We had a nice surprise at Christmas time, a visit from our grandson who was born in September, oh, and his parents. Being a first time grandparent has sparked my interest in the K-State Research & Extension publication series “Building Baby’s Brain.”

Besides the KSRE logo you will see a University of Georgia Extension logo on these as they were authored by Diane Bales and adapted in Kansas. The fact sheets are available at Extension Offices and also can be found on-line. One of the topics is creating consistency.

The developing brain thrives on repetition. When a baby experiences the same things over and over, the pathways of connections in her brain become stronger and more complex.

One of the best ways to provide repetition for the developing brain is to create consistency in the child’s world. When a child has experiences in a positive and predictable environment, her brain becomes wired to relate to others, regulate behavior, and learn. When a child experiences consistent care, she feels more secure because her basic needs are being met, and she has more energy to explore and learn.

What is consistency? Children develop emotional security when their world is nurturing, consistent, and predictable. As children experience the same routines over and over, the brain strengthens connections that will lead to trust and secure attachments. Children who live in consistent environment also learn to regulate their own emotions and behavior better, because they know that to expect of the world around them.

Consistency may include any or all of the following components:

Predictability. Doing things in predictable ways builds a baby’s trust of adults. It is important to give infants the security that comes from meeting her needs when she is hungry, sleepy, or in the mood to play.

Routines. Keeping the same general routine every day helps make the child’s world feel stable and predictable. Doing certain things in the same order at about the same time every day helps strengthen brain connections and builds the baby’s confidence because she knows what to expect in a situation. Even though young children cannot tell time, they remember the order in which things occur.

Keep the child environment in order. Order helps a child know what to expect which helps him feel secure and in control. He knows this toothbrush will be in the cup by the sink. He can find the blocks in the building center. He learns where to put things when he is finished with them so he can find them again later. Keeping the environment organized can reduce frustration and stress for children as well as adults.

Setting and enforcing rules. Rules help children learn acceptable and unacceptable behavior, practice self-control, and strengthen brain connections that will enable good decision-making as children grow. Rules need to be appropriate to the child’s age, and adults need to enforce rules consistently.