

THE ART OF PARENTING YOUNGER KIDS

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Thank you again for joining us today for our presentation The Art of Parenting Younger Kids. I would like to introduce our presenter. Dawn Eichin is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the Commonwealth of Virginia and works as a Field Consultant and Counselor for Federal Occupation Health's Employee Assistance Program. In Dawn's former career, she worked for many years providing disaster response and emergency management in the private sector and for the federal government, serving local, state, national, and international communities in the aftermath of dozens of natural and man-made disasters. Dawn's experience with disaster response has made a profound impact on her clinical practice as a Certified Clinical Trauma Professional (CCTP). Dawn hails from Lancaster, Pennsylvania but has lived in the Washington, DC metro area for the past 16 years. She earned her graduate degree from Boston University, and has diverse clinical experience working in schools, hospitals, outpatient settings, and federal agencies. In addition to trauma work, Dawn's areas of specialization are pediatrics and women's wellness. So, with that, I welcome Dawn to begin the presentation.

Hi everybody. Welcome to The Art of Parenting Younger Kids. I'm very excited to be here. This is a topic very close to my heart and I'm excited to present to you today. So let's begin. By saying parenting and child rearing is the process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development of a child from infancy all the way through adulthood. Parenting young children in their formative years is a challenging, often baffling time of lightning fast transitions and growth from cradle to kindergarten sometimes leaving us as parents breathless and frustrated which is why we are here today. We want to support you. So our objectives as you see in front of you, today, we will cover basic childhood development. We will discuss best practices to support your little one at each critical stage. We will troubleshoot common challenges that many parents face. We will also cover positive and effective parenting strategies to help your child develop social skills and healthy habits and review communication techniques that work best with younger children. Finally, we will discuss self-care because we know that care giving in general can be depleting, especially while you are working and trying to juggle multiple tasks and everyday stressors. So, these are our orders today. So, we will begin with child development. So, why is early childhood development important for us to know? It is a time of tremendous physical, cognitive, emotional, early childhood influences their future development, impacts school readiness and successes in a career or personal relationships. During early childhood, the human brain, believe it or not, grows to 90% of its adult size by age three. We cannot overstate the importance of early childhood support. We can see how milestones and development could be significantly delayed when young children experience inadequate care giving, environmental stressing and other negative risk factors. So, in order to understand growth and development, we will start by exploring milestone competencies, motor

skills, cognitive processing, speech, language, social interaction. And we will examine ecological development, the impact of environment and biology on child development. Then we will look at social emotional development which involves the growth of self and temperament and the relationship to others which is attachment. Okay, so, we will begin with milestone competencies. Early childhood development milestones are really important because they help care givers know that children are developing skills at an appropriate pace. Understanding these milestones can help us manage our own expectations of care givers, of what our children are truly capable of comprehending and doing. Of course, children will always differ in how and when they develop some of these skills. But for the most part, milestones mark important aspects of growth and development. So, for this presentation today, we are focusing on early childhood in three unique developmental stages. Stage one, infant, birth to 18 months. Stage two, toddler, which is age two to three, and stage three is pre-K. Preschool. Ages four and five. As you can see displayed in the chart in front of you, a stage of development is defined as an age period when certain needs, behaviors, experiences, and capabilities are both common and distinct from other stages. So let's review the chart and take a look at focus, tasks, and behavioral expectations for each stage. We will start with stage one, our babies. Birth to 18 months. The focus is really what the goal is for this stage. And, for a baby, the focus in this time period is simply developing trust with a care giver and forming attachments. Okay? The task to accomplish, everything they need to accomplish in this stage, is communicating and engaging with others, they will first roll, then crawl, then walk. They will learn to eat with a spoon. Drink from a cup, say small single words, they learn to shake their head to say no, and maybe handing items to others. These are some of the tasks they will accomplish. And what you will notice, the behavioral expectation you notice as the tasks are accomplished, you will see this child smiling, reacting positively to the care giver they form the attachment with. They will also develop stranger anxiety, and they will have attachment to comfort objects like a toy or a favorite blanket. You will find them imitating adults and other children. So that's the baby stage.

Moving onto toddlers, age two to three, their focus is establishing a distinct self, separate from their care giver or parent. Okay? The tasks in the toddler stage, feeding, toileting or potty training, unfortunately, but developmentally necessary, testing limits. That is necessary. Physical growth, of course. And following simple instructions. And our behavioral expectation, we absolutely will and can expect to hear the word no. There is a lot of defiance in the toddler stage. They become easily frustrated. We can expect some mood volatility. What seems to be very irrational demands and of course, tantrums. This is toddler years. Moving onto pre-schoolers, ages four to five. The focus for pre-schoolers is independently exploring their world. The tasks involve developing a degree of self-control as well as impulse control. Notice, this is developing. Children are not born with this. They are discovering. They are playing with other children and they are asking many, many questions such as why. This is the why stage. And, they are making connections as they gain knowledge. They make connections to the world. Behavior expectations as they complete their tasks, you will notice the beginnings of empathy and compassion. A strong desire to help. Emotional attachment to their toys. A rapidly developing vocabulary. Vivid imagination. Very poor understanding of time. Development of fine and gross motor skills and intense body curiosity. So, these are the ages and stages and some competencies these kids are going to develop as they grow. All right. So, we will look at how our environment shapes our kids.

Eco-biological development is how they are affected by their care givers. This chart is for those of you studying pediatrics but it is helpful to get a sense of how aspects of biology and ecology which relates to the child's environment, as well as development, come together. We will talk later about optimal conditions and expectations but it is important to know that there are very strong associations between childhood adversities such as abuse, neglect, care giver mental illness or substance abuse, as well as adult physical and mental health. For example, children who were exposed to high levels of chronic or sustained stress or even chaos in the home, they are at a higher risk of developing anxiety or depression themselves as they grow. The American academy of pediatrics emphasizes that chronic stress can have an enormous impact on child development and health. Under prolonged stress, stress hormone levels become excessively high for long periods of time leading to wear and tear on the brain and body and inhibit normal brain and physical development and metabolic processes among children. It could make them more susceptible to learning and behavioral impairments and mental illness in life. 90% of brain development occurs before age three. This is a critical time.

The national institutes of health or NIH tell us the children of alcoholics and other drug abusing parents are especially vulnerable to the risk of mal-adapted behaviors. The most potent risk factor is parent substance abuse. We are here to talk child development and I'm talking extreme risks in childhood. A child environment has a big impact on growth and it is important for us as well intentioned parents and care givers to make sure early childhood experiences lay a sturdy foundation for a lifetime of learning, healthy habits, behaviors, and wellness. Okay? So, we are going to move onto social, emotional development. Which has to do with how children start to understand who they are, what they are feeling, and what to expect when they interact with others. So, this is the development of being able to form and sustain positive relationships as well as being able to experience, manage, and express their emotions. Did you know that healthy development can come from something as simple as bedtime stories? Children who regularly spend time reading books with their care giver develop close emotional connections while expanding their language and listening skills. Reading will boost their focus and concentration and stimulates young imaginations. Taking it one step further, talking with your child about the story, making connections, and exploring meanings helps develop emotional language and compassion and a deeper understanding of their world. Positive social and emotional development is really important. It influences a child's self-confidence, their empathy, the ability to develop meaningful and lasting friendships and partnerships, and, a sense of importance and value to those around them. Children's social and emotional development influences all the other areas of development. Day care and pre-school has a strong impact on emotional and social development. Children are born with a need and a desire for connection. When teachers and providers establish positive relationships with children, when they value a classroom's diverse cultures and needs and personalities and languages, children feel safe and secure. And this lays the foundation for healthy development. This experience affects how children experience the world, express themselves, manage their emotions, and establish positive relationships with others. When children are seen and valued and accepted, their self-confidence blossoms. So, two key components that influence how a child develops and who they are going to become include the quality of bond or attachment that a child has developed with

their care giver or parent in addition to basic personality qualities that they bring with them into the world.

We will start first with attachment. Parents and care givers play the biggest role in social emotional development because they offer the most consistent relationships for their child to create these healthy attachments. Consistent experiences with family members, teachers, and other adults help kids learn about relationships and explore emotions in predictable interactions. Social, emotional development, or attachment, begins with parental bonding. Initial bonding occurs through timely response to a newborn's needs such as soothing and having close contact. Consistent and timely available care giver allows the infant to develop basic trust and confidence in the first year of life. This lays the foundation for a child's sense of security, self-esteem, emotional regulation, and self-control skills. These are building blocks.

Now, we have something called temperament. These are some elements of a child's development that are unique qualities or characteristics of their inner essential nature that are present from birth. While we can influence and guide many developmental factors in our kids, it is also important to recognize that there are elements of your child's personality that were present right from the beginning. Temperament is also referred to as personality. And it is an innate attribute that defines a child's interactions and approach to the world about them. The attributes include their activity level, their distractibility. The intensity of their emotions, regularity, their sensory threshold, their adaptability, their persistence, mood quality, and the tendency to approach versus withdraw. Temperament is intrinsic to a child and influences their behavior and interactions. The three main categories, we have easy and flexible, we have active and feisty. And we have slow to warm up, cautious, those thinking kids who are more reserved. Have you ever noticed how some kids are really active and bold while other kids are more cautious? It is important as a parent to pay attention to how your child naturally responds and handles things because then, you can better support them while also balancing the need to coach them toward more appropriate responses as the situation might warrant. There are pluses and minuses to every personality. We seek to respect who our kids are and always strive to work with their strength and inherent ability versus what we might perceive as a limitation. Sometimes, a parent's temperament clashes with their child's. An extroverted parent might have trouble relating to an introverted child. But if we can focus on respect and understanding, you as a parent can understand how to support the terrific qualities that introversion brings. A more introverted parent might find themselves frustrated dealing with an extroverted child. Each temperament brings its own set of strengths in addition to challenges so we owe it to ourselves as parents, care givers and to our children, focusing on strengths rather than lamenting the differences. For example, a stubborn child you label as stubborn could be viewed and nurtured as a determined, persistent future leader. A child who is reserved, shy, cautious, can be reviewed as a deep thinker, someone who can be an effective problem solver. A scientist, an engineer. We have focused on the tasks of each age group. Hopefully, you have a better understanding of some of the challenges our little ones face on this journey from cradle to kindergarten. Trusting people, navigating speech development. Mastery of their own bodies and their wild impulses. Our kids deserve compassion and understanding in addition to guidance.

So we are going to shift gears now and we are going to take a closer look at how we as parents and care givers can better support our growing kids, stage by stage. All right, so we are going to look at beginning with babies. What are babies' needs? We have prompt response to needs. Maintaining a presence. Maybe a physical presence or even just an audio connection where we are talking to them from the next room. We are maintaining connection. Eye contact is important. Getting down on their level. Babies make connections to us with their eyes. Communication and allowing time for response. Did you know that you can actually have a two-way conversation with an infant? You may not understand their replies but they absolutely have things to say to you. You have to allow time for that response. Physical contact and affection, of course. And a calm home environment. Pay attention to overstimulation. Think about bright lights and loud noises as well as your own energy level. That is important. Switching gears to toddlers. What do toddlers need? A calm safe presence during their storm and by storm, we have it in quotes. We are referring of course to tantrums. Compassion and respect. Physical contact and affection. Instruction on how to calm and regulate emotions. We can't just tell them to calm down, we have to show them how to calm down, we are talking deep breathing, maybe counting. We want to validate their feelings. Reflect their feelings with language though they don't understand what those words mean. Boundaries, structure and predictability. That is a big one. Children feel secure when there is predictability in their life. Abundant physical activity is necessary. And of course, a calm home environment. That is what toddlers need. And then we have our preschoolers. Encouragement to use emotional language for expression rather than behaviors. Recognize this is a skill that needs to be taught and learned. You might say use your words. Right? Or hey, maybe, you are showing me how you feel, can you tell me how you feel? They need to learn emotional vocabulary. Of course, physical contact and affection. Cooperative play with peers. Play dates, opportunities to interact with others and build relationships. This is especially important if your child is not in day care. Maybe they are an only child. They don't have a lot of peer interactions. They don't have it naturally in their home or school, we have to figure out play dates and find opportunities to make connections. Age appropriate tasks and chores. This is how a child learns to be a part of a community. Abundant physical activity for that growing body and the calm home environment. You may have noticed that in addition to physical contact and affection, the calm home environment is repeated for each age and stage because it cannot be overstated that a child's early home environment has a profound effect on their overall well being and development. Beginning in infancy, a chaotic and difficult home environment can disrupt the brain's stress response system, reducing the quality of care giving that a child receives interferes with how they develop. Calm interactions. So, we have some additional guidelines. These are some common critical areas that are important for children. That parent should consider and absolutely prioritize sleep and physical activity are foundational needs that impact all areas of development and wellness. And additionally, it is crucial to be mindful of how you will handle screen time. Right? Proper sleep is important at any age and developmental stage. Did you know that infants ages four to 12 months should be sleeping 12 to 16 hours in a 24 hour cycle. Which includes naps. On a regular basis to promote optimal health. Children one to two years of age should be sleeping 11 to 14 hours in a 24 hour period including the naps. And, preschoolers need about 11 to 12 hours of sleep per day which may not include the nap. That depends on the child. And what do we mean by sleep hygiene? Sleep hygiene refers to healthy sleep habits. Good sleep hygiene is important because of how crucial getting

good sleep is for mental and physical health as well as overall quality of life. It is important to stick to the same bedtime and wake time every day, even on the weekends. Children and adults sleep better when they have the same bedtime and wake time every day. Staying up late during the weekend and then trying to catch up on sleep by sleeping in can throw off a child's sleep schedule for several days. And I would imagine anyone who has navigated daylight saving time with small children can attest to the importance of consistency with sleep. So just reviewing some good tips for laying the ground for your child's sleep hygiene, reinforcing that beds are for sleeping, not for trampoline use before bed, having a quiet comfy sleeping space. Think about lighting, white noise, room darkening shades, many, many tools available to support good sleep. Having a predictable bedtime routine. Quiet calming activities before bedtime like reading. Talking and connecting. Reviewing the day. We want you to put your kids to sleep drowsy and awake. That allows them to settle in and fall asleep. Moving onto physical activity. Childhood and adolescence are critical periods for developing movement skills. They develop healthy habits and establish a firm foundation for lifelong health and well being. We are setting up building blocks for a lifetime arc. Regular physical activity promotes health and fitness. The CDC recommends young children should be physically active throughout the day for growth and development. And the department of health and human services encourages a reasonable factor of three hours of activity a day. Light, moderate, or vigorous intensity. Adult care givers should encourage preschool aged children to be active when they play and engage in structured activities. Riding a bicycle, a tricycle, strengthen bones. Young children should run, hop, skip, and jump and tumble. And if a playground is not readily available due to weather or any other factors, there is no need to accept a sedentary day. Don't underestimate the power of a dance party, a homemade obstacle course, a scavenger hunt or fort building.

Now, we want to talk about screen time. With screens virtually everywhere, controlling your child's screen time can be a challenge. To complicate matters, some screen time can be educational for children and it does support their social development. However, ensuring adequate unstructured play time is even more valuable for a young child's developing game. More so than electronic media. According to the Mayo Clinic, children under two, this is under two, are more likely to learn and remember information from a live presentation than they are from a video. By age two, children might benefit from some types of screen time like entertainment and educational programs with music, movement, and stories. This is contingent upon circumstances, however, and not about just leaving a young child in front of a TV or a computer screen. For toddlers, it is really helpful to watch programs together. When you do this, you can help your child understand what he or she is seeing and make some connections and apply it in real life. Passive screen time should not replace reading and playing and creative expression. The American Academy of Pediatrics encourages media use other than video chatting to children under 18 months. If you introduce digital media 18 to 24 months, make sure it is high quality and avoid solo independent media use. For kids ages two to five, limit screen time to one hour a day of high-quality programming. Some parents find that it is helpful to limit the time. Maybe 30 minutes for a two-year-old increasing gradually up to 60 minutes for a five-year-old. Another thing that parents can do is limit watching to just one or two programs. So it is not just about engaging in screen time, it is about engaging with a program with a natural beginning and an ending. Organizations like Common Sense Media or Internet Matters.org can

help you determine what will be appropriate. Recognize that more screen time equals less movement. Excessive screen time means excessive sitting time which is just the opposite of what growing children need. Kids are meant to move. And movement increases blood flow to the body and brain. Better blood flow, a better brain. So, to ensure quality screen time, please do preview the programs, games, and apps before you allow your child to view or play with them. And seek out interactive options that are going to engage your child rather than something that requires pushing and swiping or simply staring at the screen. Use the power of parental controls to block and filter internet content. And make sure your child is close by during screen time so you can supervise activities. And talk about what you are watching. Educate him or her about what they are seeing and maybe advertising and commercials that they come across.

So, screen time, we will shift gears to limit setting, discipline, and taming the tantrums. Okay? So, in order to follow rules and understand limits, children need to develop self-control. Notice the word develop. This is not something they are born with. Self-control and self-regulation are complex skills that begin to emerge in the early months of life and are more consistently apparent between four and five years of age. So that said, in the long run, self-regulation takes many years to fully develop. So, this is an important area where parents need to manage their expectations of what their child is able to do. So, let's talk about limit setting and discipline. Birth to toddler. It is pretty simple. We combine birth. Birth through toddler. It is pretty straightforward and focused. That is always supervise your child. We will stop difficult behavior with a clear and firm voice and be consistent. So, this is about supervision. And very, very consistent and firm redirects. Pre-schoolers, however, would want to very continually explain rules, expect behaviors with consistency. We will give one word or very short commands with a very calm and clear voice. We will ignore behaviors that are not dangerous. You are essentially choosing your battles. You can ignore and redirect annoying or super silly behaviors but behaviors that are unsafe require a different level of response. A response to a behavior like running onto a street. That is a different matter. For all children, distracting and redirecting children with a toy or activity related to their development level. Please do avoid using threats to manage behavior. In general, if you are using a time-out, you can allow one minute for each year of age. It is really important as parents and care givers to manage our own expectations of what our kids' capabilities are rather than what we think they should be or what we wish they were. We have to meet them where they are at and support them there. And we must strive to model the behavior that we expect. We need to meet chaos and emotionally charged behaviors with calm response. The goal is to bring them into our calm presence. Kids learn by example and observation, not by our words and grown-ups need to be leaders. Especially when we are tired, grumpy, and busy. We may be a mess inside, but we need to portray stability and calm. That can be a very tall order at times. As such, we need to be extremely mindful of our own limitations. We will talk a little more on that in a few minutes. We will put it all together. Beginning with the recognition that all children want to succeed. They all want to please their parents and do the right thing. The kids are doing the best they can at any given moment. We need to meet them where they are at with understanding and compassion.

So let's look at the tantrum. We will turn our attention now to the most common. One of the most common sources of parental frustration. This may be the exact scenario that inspired you

to join us for a presentation today. Toddlers are by nature contrary beings. Remember, this is a little person who is learning how to be a separate, unique individual. We invite you to avoid focusing on toddler logic. Just know that it is important to them and it is a hill they are generally willing to die on. You don't have to understand it to be able to work with it. Asking a toddler why to explain their reasons for a behavior is an exercise in futility. A toddler is unlikely able to answer the question of why or even what's wrong at this age because they are biologically unable to regulate their own emotions. It is our job to teach that skill. In addition, a toddler may not possess the language ability to express themselves. It is our job to teach them how to use their words. And remember, that toddlers can become easily overloaded by sensory stimulation and emotion and will eventually melt down, unable to control themselves. Though tantrums are incredibly frustrating to a parent, remember that losing control can be very scary for a toddler. We invite you to put yourself in their shoes. Can you remember a time as an adolescent or an adult when you felt so overloaded that all you could do was express intense emotions with rage and tears? It doesn't feel good. And when we are in that state, we lose some of our cognitive capacity and we are not able to think things through. While the instinct of many parents in the moment of a child's tantrum may be to control the behavior or punish them, what that child immediately needs is safety and comfort along with containment. Punishment and control on top of a scary melt down amplifies the problem. Toddlers need to feel safe, validated and reassured always. So offer comfort in that moment. It may seem baffling that your child is lashing out in front of you while in desperate need of cuddling or counterintuitive to try to hug them while they are kicking and flailing and that's a fair point. What can you do? Remain calm. Wait it out. Just allow it. You can stay close and be present. Be very present. You can validate their feelings. Speak in a gentle tone and say something like you are really sad right now. Or, you wanted that toy and it was taken! That's not fair. Or more basic, you are mad! Saying the words your child is unable to say in the moment can quickly defuse the situation. You can offer them a hug. And if it is not welcome, do not take it personally. Respect their boundary and say okay, you don't want a hug right now. That's okay. Just sit next to you and when you are ready to hug, I'm right here. Big one is hold the line. Throughout the tantrum, hold the line. If your child is yelling and screaming because you won't buy a toy for them, do not give in. It is hard to do, but remember, if you continually give in to what they want because they are upset or out of control, they quickly learn this is the behavior they need to apply to get what they want. You might have to endure the discomfort of taking them out of a situation. Getting them out of a store, but continue to maintain your calm, but you have to hold the line. Then, we simply watch what happens. You may be very surprised to see how a tantrum ultimately abates not only because it is exhausting, but because you haven't matched the child's angry intensity. The child finds there is no one to rail against. No one to push back. So, slowly, their rage peters out. And certainly, we are not suggesting you walk away and abandon your child. They need your calm loving presence and your gentle validation and you reap your reward by letting it abate. Several things occur in this common tantrum scenario that will have a really big impact on a child's development. So, that calm gentle reaction teaches your child that the care giver, the parent, is safe. And that they are accepted and loved, not rejected and punished for having difficult feelings. This boosts their self-esteem. Their self-confidence, and their emotional regulation. Validating their feelings by reflecting or voicing them in that moment affirms the child is a respected person who is seen and matters. They learn their feelings are allowed and they are normal and not so scary. This is

another check in the box of self-esteem and self-confidence. And this method teaches children emotional language that they can deploy at a later stage as a skill. Finally, meeting aggression with calm teaches a child to employ a similar response when they are met with aggression. Maybe with a peer. Ideally, this experience will prevent future retaliation when a classmate is having a bad day and delivers a shove on the playground. As a parent or a care giver, it is your job to seek answers to the behavior puzzle. Try to remain calm and curious when you are faced with challenging behaviors. Your job is to love, support, and guide your child, but it is also your job to understand them and discover what is getting in the way of their success.

So, minimizing their stress is a big way to do that. We will pinpoint stressors and look to reduce them. Are you dealing with crankiness? Look for the stressors. Is it too loud? Is it too hot? Is there a sibling standing by causing distress? Is there a scratchy tag on a shirt they can't reach? Maybe they can put words to it or maybe they can't. Maybe they are just pointing and gesturing. Maybe they need to take a break in the shade and get a cold drink of water. A change of activity or environment. We identify unmet needs and meet them. Are they hungry? Are they thirsty? Exhausted? Sad? Try to meet those needs with a snack, a drink, a comfort toy, a bear hug. Maybe they need to be picked up and held. Sometimes an unmet need is your child simply needing to make a connection with you. And of course, sometimes, little ones ask for that connection at the most inconvenient times. Maybe you are in a toy store or a store rather rushing around trying to complete a shopping list and your child discovers a toy. And, it is tempting to tell your child to put the toy back without further explanation because you have to keep things moving. Often, the assumption parents make is the child wants you to buy the toy and you don't want to do that. We need to remember again, this is a developmental age of making connections, pointing out things that are fascinating and exploring their world. So given that, another way to handle this situation, take a quick break from shopping and talk to your child about that toy. Get on their level and tell them how neat it is and how much you wish you had one too. You might be surprised to see how quickly a situation shifts away from a power struggle to a happy kid who has been validated because they were able to build an interest and share a connection with you. Skill deficits. Teach them how. Kids get frustrated when they can't do things by themselves. Is there a deficit you can close? Maybe they can't close a snap. Close Velcro. Reach a cup, open a bag. In this situation, teach them to pause first and take a breath. And we want to focus on the need and not the behavior. Children ask for love in the most unloving of ways at times so taking a minute takes time to understand the situation and address the unmet need. It teaches your child they are important.

Speaking of important, we are going to shift gears to take care of the other parent child duo, that is you. Children do well if they can do well. It is important for parents to flip the script away from my child won't to my child can't yet. Can you see how the word won't implies willful disobedience. Alternatively, seeing a child through the lens of their ability by using the word can't, that allows for some grace and understanding, and adding the word yet is ever more hopeful and it gives us something to work toward. Healthy discipline at this age means supporting the age and ability level and then teaching skills to ensure successful outcomes. So, remember, too, their development is an ever changing constantly evolving process. What your child can or cannot do today is difficult from what tomorrow brings so it takes patience and

support rather than criticism. So speaking of patience, recognize, also, that child development is a marathon, not a sprint. You will not often receive immediate gratification of lessons learned. We need to be patient and plant the seeds. Our actions need to be consistent and enduring. And we can trust the process and have faith that the more work we put into the earliest years, the stronger their foundation and chances are for success and adulthood. That can be hard to remember when you are reading a book out loud to a child racing around the room maybe pausing to peek at a picture. It may feel pointless, but it will absolutely be worth it.

Handling the demands of work and parenting can seem overwhelming at times. It can be important to have realistic expectation and realize nobody can do it all. Nobody can. And using coping skills we become good role models for our children because it shows them we need to be connected to our communities, ask for help. Make tough decisions. We all make mistakes and we need relaxation and down time. And so, we offer some tips that will help you keep your own well being in balance at the top of mind. As you navigate your child's early and even later years. Prioritize. And don't do it all yourself. Look at the things you need to do. And decide what is most important. The world will not end if the house doesn't get cleaned but early childhood moments are fleeting. So think about how you can prioritize your time.

Okay? I want you to practice honest self-awareness and recognize when it is time to ask for help. Use your support team, if you have a partner, share household and parenting duties. Remember that it is okay to have less patience some days, feel tired, have a bad day. Don't try to force yourself into activities that you are not able to support in the moment without having a negative impact to your health or your emotional health. Develop a list of people that you can count on. Maybe it is a neighbor who can pick something up for you at the store. Maybe there is another parent to help with car pooling. Maybe there is a young teen in the neighborhood who could be a parent's helper kind of like a babysitter in training. So while you are cooking dinner, the helper can modify your child's screen time or play a game with them. Build a community and talk to other parents. You can share your victories as well as your frustrations. You may find that other parents have experienced many of the same things and they have really good advice to give. Schedule time to relax. You will have a happier, you will be a happier more effective parent and a role model for your children if you take time to do things that matter to you. Your hobbies. Things that bring you joy, rest, relaxation. And be very intentional about scheduling down time. You know? For the family, schedule it into your daily routine. In addition to self-preservation, you are modeling healthy behavior for your children by teaching them rest and relaxation is an equally important activity. It helps everyone have healthy balance in our lives. Down time also known as quiet time can be taking a nap. Or reading. Or just simply quiet play. Maybe it could be a night where dinner is really simple and effortless like having breakfast for dinner. Maybe it is a silent family walk outside where you are just focusing on observation. You are just listening to sounds. Looking at colors, wildlife, smelling flowers. Resist the urge to overschedule outside the home and plan pajama days on the weekends. Recognize when you need to step away. Go to bed early. Or turn off the screen. Parenting yourself is just as important as parenting your child. Manage realistic expectations of yourself and your child. Do not compare yourself to other parents or your child to other children. Accept that you are going to make mistakes as a parent, and please do use humor as a coping skill. And of course, make time every single day for fun.

And, above all of these things, if you find that you are overwhelmed and you need support, do not forget that EAP is a valuable source of support and resources. You can call us for counseling services. You can call us for parenting strategies. That is what we are here for.

Okay. So, we have covered quite a bit of ground today. Starting with exploring the stages of early child development and what we might expect along the way. Reviewed critical support. We talked discipline with a particular focus on navigating inevitable tantrums. And finally, we went through the importance of remembering to prioritize our own wellness as care givers and rely on the full power of our resources to achieve balance in our lives and in our homes. And finally, if you get nothing else from this presentation, it is our hope that you will support, accept, and enjoy your child for who they are throughout their growing up years and beyond. Now, we have, these are some of the resources available to you. You are going to have a handout that will be sent to you at the close of this webinar. And, it has a very large list of resources. Books, websites, TV programming. Podcasts that are all there to guide and support you as a parent. And, that is the art of parenting younger kids and I just want to thank you so much for your kind attention.

Thank you so much, Dawn, I want to remind you, Dawn touched on this a bit. If you want more information on this or other health and wellness topics, give us a call. Visit us online. The EAP is available 24/7 to help you work through work or personal related issues. The recording and transcripts, a copy of the slide, hand out and certificate of attendance will be emailed to you 24 hours after today's webinar and all of today's content will be available online in about two weeks. So, before we get to your questions, I want to mention that when you exit, you will see a satisfaction survey. So please let us know how we did today. We do actually read all of your comments after each webinar. We truly appreciate you filling out that survey.

So, we do have a few more minutes for questions. If you have something to ask, type it in the Q and A panel. We have gotten a lot of questions and some of them are a bit specific to things your child's pediatrician or child development specialist might be suited to answer. So if you don't hear your question answered, that might be why. Okay Dawn. The first question is about discipline. It says I think we have all heard this at some point. My parents used to spank me when I was little and it worked and I turned out fine. Why not choose what works?

Good question. I will say, because, we know more than we used to know. We know now more than ever what children need to grow up in the best way possible. Forming attachments is the most important part of child development. Violence hinders attachment. Every child is different. You don't know in advance how spanking can negatively impact your child. We are learning as we go, and we certainly know more about children that our parents, at least from pediatric standpoints. I think Maya Angelou said you do the best you can until you know better. When you know better, you do better. We know better now. Spanking is not the best way to manage things.

Great. Thank you.

The next question says I count to five all the time to warn my child about behavior to try to get him to stop. I'm constantly counting and counting then I give up because he is not listening to me any way. Why doesn't he listen?

Well, first and foremost, we only want to count once. We want to set that level of expectation. This goes back to talking about holding the line. Right? We need to stay what we mean and mean what we say. We only want to count once. And we want to explain clearly what it is we are looking for. What behavior we want to stop. But first, I would ask, are you sure you have his or her attention. Right? Are they looking at you? Have they noticed, I would consider engaging them before you are counting by moving close to them. Maybe touching a hand or arm to get attention. Give the warning, state the consequence and start the count. If it is I'm going to take this toy, it is maybe time to hand over the tablet. If it is taking the tablet, then you need to take the tablet when you get to the end of the number. This isn't something to negotiate. You keep it very simple. You will only count once. Then you follow through. Eventually, he or she will catch up and it is effective.

The next question says, I get that we are supposed to be calm during meltdowns but there are days when I have my stuff to do too and I'm exhausted and it is too much. I want to go and hide. So I can cry so I don't freak out my daughter. What else can I do?

You know, I think that real emotions are an important teaching point, truly. It is okay to say to your child that you are feeling sad or tired or whatever. You know. It is okay to acknowledge your feelings. I guarantee your child notices when you are sad and when you are overwhelmed. It is okay to voice that. It is okay to cry about it. And, you can say I'm just really not feeling great right now. I'm just really sad. Mommy is really sad. I will try to make myself feel better and sometimes we cry. And that is okay. What else can we do to feel better? Maybe you can model deep breathing. I will breathe and count. And that will help. You model a behavior and your child will learn a life skill. If your child says what's wrong you can say what is wrong. You are not going to freak her out.

This next one is one that I imagine several people probably are thinking about right now. Do you have any tips on how to best transition a five-year-old back to in-person schooling and socializing in person again? This past year, we did virtual school and didn't connect with friends because of the pandemic. She is now apprehensive of socializing and returning to in-person schooling this fall. With kids, more information is best. Talking through what it is going to look like, maybe visiting the school and playing on the playground and getting used to that environment could be useful. Walking around the property, maybe you will encounter other kids on that playground. Maybe you will get lucky and meet a child who is the same age. And grade. And you may be able to make a connection there. But, really talking through what it is going to feel like. And, ask them what they think it might feel like. And talk through the fears and come up with some solutions together. Talk about it all summer. You know, just here and there. As you can bring it up. And make sure that they are comfortable. And, I'm afraid somebody won't play with me. If you go on the playground, and nobody offer to play, you can offer to play with someone else. Find a child who is not playing and engage them. Instead of waiting for someone to be your friend, you can

be the friend. Have them help you problem solve. I really do think visiting the school can be useful. And hanging out on the playground to get some real time connection done.

Great. Thank you. I know you are a parent and also have dogs. This one is interesting. Any tips for preventing by 14 month old from feeding the dog at dinner time. We are not sure whether to physically stop her or tell her no and keep the dog out of the dining room.

If you want the behavior to stop, you will have to physically stop her. And you can, you are sitting right next and close. And the dog is going to dog. So, if you can't control the dog, you can simply put your hands over the baby's hands and prevent the feeding of the dog. You just simply say uh-uh, or no, or what have you. Don't make it a game. This isn't something to kind of bark at them over and be real stern and strict, but you need to be consistent. If you don't want the dog to beg at the table, never ever give it people food because they will never give up hoping after the one time especially if you have dogs like mine. You have to manage everyone's expectation. Nip it in the bud now!

Yes. I have that same issue. The next question says my husband's parenting style is very different from mine and he is not interested in changing. Should I let it be?

Absolutely important for parent to be on the same page. When kids get older, they learn a technique called divide and conquer. It is complicated. I would recommend taking a parenting class together and discussing what you have learned together. Certainly not everything presented will be the best thing for your family, but you can talk about it and talk about what makes sense for you, your parenting style and your kids. I do mind when you understand, again, child development and why kids are doing what they are doing and the method behind all of this which was the inspiration for this today, actually, if you understand why kids are behaving a certain way, it makes discipline and parental involvement different if you can come to a common understanding of what the goal would be, and what the outcome needs to be. It definitely lessens the friction. But a parenting class is a good place to start.

Okay. Thank you. We will do one more question. We are almost to the top of the hour. This one says my son is a year-and-a-half old and I lost my patience with him or haven't been calm during a tantrum. Is it possible to reverse any damage done?

Absolutely. Absolutely. Again, their brains are developing. They are valuable. You can undo it. Of course you can. You simply take the steps. And you know, I really truly have found with little ones, just speaking what they are feeling in that moment can instantly, almost instantly defuse a tantrum. Simply saying whatever his name is, you know, man, you are so mad at mommy. You are so frustrated. You want this thing. It is almost like talking to a cave person. It feels really silly. But, this child more than likely will stop in his tracks and start nodding his head. Because what tantrums come from is an inability to express a need. They don't have the language and that's the frustration. You are not understanding. They are trying to tell you, you know, that they have a need. Every behavior is a response to an unmet need. So, just voicing it in the moment, and just being very calm. Don't take it personally. Do your own breathing first, mom. And get yourself

in line and just simply narrate the situation and see how quickly you find a mutual understanding. It is magical how quickly that works.

Awesome. Thank you so much, Dawn. We are at the top of the hour so I will conclude our webinar for the day. If we didn't get to your questions, call the EAP for your specific situation. I want to thank Dawn for presenting and you for taking the time to be here with us. Have a wonderful rest of your week!

[Event concluded]