

GROW YOUR KIDS: TREE (Talk Read Engage Encourage)

Basic Principles and Getting Started (Ages < 2 Years)

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- Hand out toy/ book (can begin at 4 month well child visit)/ clean toys between patients
- Informally observe:
 - ◆ Child Development (see Observing and Conveying Child Development Template, video #2 and page 3 of this handout)
 - ◆ Parent infant interactions (take the room temperature: *warm and nurturing/ red hot and angry/ steamy and anxious/ cold and devoid of emotion*) (see Parent Infant Observation Template and video #3)
- Ask “What kinds of things do you enjoy doing with your baby/child?” (see video #7) (this question asked during developmental portion of well child visit)
 - ◆ *Teach basic TREE concepts (page 2) using elicit-provide- elicit approach*
 - Elicit: “Can I tell you about some additional things that are very effective with babies?”
 - Provide: “Bathing babies with language by talking and reading to them can really stimulate their brain development”
 - Elicit: “What do you think?”
 - ◆ *ActiviTREE form and parent handouts (optional)*
 - ◆ *Model if appropriate (“parentese”, commenting like a radio announcer, reading, playing, cheerleading: “yeah”)*
 - ◆ *Provide positive feedback: give a TREET (page 4)*
- Ask “What kinds of things would you like to do with your baby/child between now and our next visit?”
 - ◆ *Teach portions of the Developmental Narrative page 3 (e.g. “Over the next few months your baby will be going from “doing things with objects” to “doing things to objects” so you may want to have a toy like a rattle”)*
 - ◆ *Encourage parents to practice between office visits- consider having parents videotape a positive interaction to briefly share at the next well child visit*
- Provide positive feedback (see below)

Basic TREE Concepts to Teach Parents

TALK: *Bathe your baby in language*

- speak in “parentese” (using high pitch sounds to engage young infants)
- radio or sports announcer *narrative* approach (e.g. “you are rolling the red ball”)
- use gestures, label objects, give directions, play “show me” or “tell me” games
- talk during daily routines such as cooking, meals, driving, shopping, etc.
- sing or use finger games with young children

READ: *Read regularly and enthusiastically*

- let young infants handle books and older infants select books
- read in a lively engaging manner
- label pictures or play “show me” or “tell me” games

ENGAGE: *Have fun together*

- observe and follow infant cues
- stimulate motor skills by using tummy time or placing objects just out of reach to encourage rolling or crawling
- provide warm physical contact and consolation when children are upset
- review the transition of play from “*doing with objects*” to “*doing to objects*” to *purposeful play to imaginary play*
- remain enthusiastically engaged when playing with children
- position child to easily access toys
- allow young children to *take the lead and to problem solve* before jumping in to help

ENCOURAGE: *Be your baby’s cheerleader*

- use positive comments (Yeah!! You did it!)
- *praise effort rather than results* (“You really worked hard on that” vs “You painted the most amazing picture”)

Effectively Teaching and Motivating Parents to Adopt TREE Concepts:

- Use *clear concepts*
- Actively engage parents in dialogue using *open ended questions* (“participatory guidance”) that touch on *feelings* and elicit *self-reflection*
- *Model* behaviors for parents when appropriate
- Provide *positive feedback*
- Encourage parents to *practice* between office visits

Developmental Narrative for Children Age 0-2 Years: Basic Concepts to Teach Parents

Motor:

- Head, neck and upper extremities
- Trunk
- Lower Extremities

Communication:

- Vocalization: Coos/ Babbles
- Pre-verbal: gestures and imitation (“hi”, “bye”, “pick me up”, “peek a boo”)
- Verbalization: Receptive Language/ Expressive Language (single words, jargon, telegraphic speech)

Cognitive: Play and Learning

- Does “with” objects
- Does “to” objects
- Objects have *function*
- Imaginary play

Social-Emotional:

Attachment in first year: transition from “dating to a committed relationship”

Serve and Return: sequential back and forth “you then me”- taking turns

- Infant mirrors smiling/ laughing/ vocalization

Dance and Duet: synchronous “you and me”- engaging together

- Initiates social interactions (“Hey, check *me* out”)
- Shared social interactions using gaze and gestures (joint attention) (“Hey, check *this* out”)
- Stranger discrimination and anxiety (“you and me and *them*”)

Separation and Exploration/ Autonomy in second year:

Separation anxiety/ Oppositional behaviors

Providing Positive Feedback (TREET):

Examples: “I noticed that your baby really liked when...”

- **Talk:** “You used lots of words with your baby which is important even though he is too little to really understand what you are saying”
- **Read:** “You were reading to your baby in an excited tone and she really responded”
- **Engage:**
 - ◆ “You held her and cuddled her when she was upset... that helps her feel secure and loved”
 - ◆ “You smiled so beautifully at him”
 - ◆ “Your baby just lit up when you sang to her”
 - ◆ “You let her take the lead and let her try before helping her”
- **Encourage:** “You said yeah!! and good job!! when he completed the puzzle and that makes children feel good about themselves”

Addressing common parent pushback:

- “I don’t have the time” (response: only a few minutes per day is all that is needed)
- “Parents are in charge not children” (response: babies learn best when play is child led)
- “Too much holding spoils babies” (response: physical comfort is vital for all babies including boys and holding children does not spoil them)

Motivating parents to try:

- “What fun things have you seen other relatives or friends do with their children?”
- “What kinds of things *might* you try?”
- “What do you think are the *pros and cons* of doing these types of activities with your baby?”
- “What would it take to get you to go from *no to maybe* or *maybe to yes*?”
- “On a scale from 1-10, how willing are you to try something different?”

Difficult Situations: Raising Concerns With Parents: when you note a parent to be overly angry, anxious or withdrawn

- ***Ask permission:*** “Can I share some observations and thoughts with you? It seems like his behaviors make you want to yell at him. Tell me more about his behaviors at home”
- ***Third person technique:*** “A lot of parents have difficulty with..... Is this something that you are struggling with?”
- ***Reflective listening:*** “From what you are saying, it *sounds* like your child can be difficult to handle... Tell me what it is like at home with your child”
- ***Empathic information gathering:*** “You seem frustrated/ tired/ stressed...Is it like this a lot of the time?”

If advising referral:

- **If advising referral based on the prior discussion - state:** “I am concerned about you and your child” Ask: “Would you be willing to meet with someone to talk about this some more?”

It is best to provide the parents with a name and telephone number to facilitate follow through or perform a warm handoff if a mental health consultant is available at the medical office. (Note: Summon the appropriate authorities if you suspect child abuse or neglect)

When to Refer:

- **Parental mental health issues, domestic violence, substance abuse, significantly negative/neglectful parent child interactions, emerging child mental health needs and developmental/ behavior problems (Stay attuned to how parents handle *crying, sleep problems* and *oppositional behaviors/temper tantrums*)**
- **First line primary care interventions have not been effective or you are not comfortable handling the situation**
- **Parent requests referral**