

Parents' guide to five to thrive

Five to Thrive

Five to Thrive, which are the building blocks for a healthy brain. Five to Thrive was developed by Kate Cairns Associates and it promotes positive parenting skills to help understand the things you do every day to help your child's growing brain.

Five to thrive complements our established practice ensuring babies and young children are offered a wide range of activities and given opportunities to develop strong relationships with their key person to ensure they are **RESPONDED** to, **CUDDLED** when needed, enjoy quiet times to **RELAX**, **PLAY** with a variety of stimulating activities and **TALKED** to using high quality communication. The Brain is amazing.....In the first year of life the brain doubles in size. By the first years, the brain is two-thirds the size of an adult brain. If babies grew in height like this, they could be four feet tall when they were one year old. The brain is not like any other part of the body. Nearly all the cells of the brain are in place when we are born -about a hundred billion of them. But they are not yet working. The brain grows when connections are made between the cells in response to what is happening to us. These connections are forming all the time through our lives. What happens to us shapes our brains. In the first three years of life the brain is growing and changing faster than it ever will again. At times during the first year of life a million connections are forming every single second in your baby's brain. So what happens to your baby shapes their brain. And the most important thing that happens to your baby is YOU! Everything you do when you are with your baby sparks connections in their brain turning connections into pathways that the child can use again.

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Your child's body grows better when you give the child good food. Your child's brain grows better when you do five simple things that feed the growing brain: Respond . Cuddle. Relax. Play. Talk These are your child's daily 'five to thrive' -the building blocks for a healthy brain. A healthy brain will help your child be happy in themselves, make friends and enjoy their family life, as well as being the best start for learning once they go to school. And every day will bring many opportunities to give your baby's brain what it needs to grow well. (Kate Cairns Associates 2014)

RESPOND

My brain grows better when you respond to me....."From the moment I was born I needed you. If you hadn't made sure I was looked after I would not have survived. I couldn't do much, but everything I did, the sounds and the movements I made, were for you. I was asking you to respond to me so that I could live. I feel very scared if I get no response from you. When you look at me with love in your eyes I feel safe. Being close to you helps me to feel safe. When you look at me I am interested in your face, and I look at you. This helps my eyes work together. My brain builds connections for looking at other people and understanding them. When you copy the expression on my face, this helps me to understand what I am feeling. Then I copy you, and this builds connections in my brain for understanding and managing my feelings. When you move I copy your movements. This helps my brain to grow connections that make it possible for me to manage my own body, and to use my body to communicate with other people. My brain works very slowly at first. But when you respond to me in the same way over and over again the connections you are helping to build grow strong. Then they can carry messages between the different parts of my brain more quickly."

Some Suggestions

- **Try to guess what your baby's crying means and meet their basic needs warmth and comfort, food, a clean nappy, sleep. Copy the sounds or facial expressions your baby makes and see how they react.**
- **Help your baby to see something if they show you they want to look at it.**
- **Remember - Everyone takes time to learn how their baby communicates**
- **Crying doesn't always mean your baby is 'upset'. It's the only noise they know how to make to get your attention. Sometimes they may just be singing or talking to you!**
- **When your baby has your full attention, their whole brain is working. When you are watching TV, texting or talking on the phone, they don't get the benefit.**
- **As children get older they begin to sort out their own problems as well as asking you for help. So sometimes 'wait and see' is a good response for older children.**