



Child Development Reference Guide

For All

Child Development Reference Guide 0-7 years

INFANCY (Birth – 12 months)

TODDLER (1-3 years)

YOUNGER CHILDREN (4-7 years)

Developmental Considerations	Developmental Considerations	Developmental Considerations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing trust • Stranger awareness (6-8 months) Stranger Anxiety (8-10 months) and may continue through preschool age) • Object permanence- objects and people continue to exist even when they are no longer visible • Development of gross/fine motor skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egocentric- hard to see any point of view other than their own • Ability to imitate routine tasks (by 14 months) • Utilizes play to learn and understand tasks and experiences • Increasing independence and autonomy • Social development: engages with others purposely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Egocentric- difficulty seeing any point of view other than their own • Concrete and symbolic thinking, learning to use words and pictures to represent objects • Magical thinking (blurred boundaries between fantasy and reality, may believe they “wished” or willed something into happening) • Developing mastery over movement and play • Learn through pretend play but struggle with logic and viewpoint of others
Potential Stressors	Potential Stressors	Potential Stressors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation from caregivers • Unfamiliar environment • Disruption of routine • Stranger anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation anxiety • Reduced autonomy • Disruption of routine • Lack of opportunities for self-control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separation from parents/caregivers • Guilt, misunderstanding, and believing that they caused or are responsible for events • Fear of both real and imagined threats • Disruption of routine
What YOU Can Do	What YOU Can Do	What YOU Can Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence (as much as possible) of familiar adult/caregiver • Use calming voice when talking • Sing (ABC’s, twinkle twinkle, wheels on the bus, row your boat) • Comfort/familiar objects • Rocking/Holding • Play peek-a-boo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage parent involvement • Sing songs (ABCs, twinkle twinkle, wheels on the bus, row your boat) • Play head, shoulders, knees and toes • I Spy objects in area (trees, cars, dogs etc for distraction) • Provide simple choices & opportunities for free play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, simple explanations of event • Presence (as much as possible) of familiar adult/caregiver • Provide opportunities for child-led independent and group play • Chalk/bubbles/use stick and sand/dirt to play tic tac toe • I spy (around neighborhood/indoors) • Hide object and play “hot or cold” to find object • Play tag/Duck Duck Goose or Red light Green Light (in controlled area) • Make up a story with topics chosen by the children, have each child add to the story



Child Development Reference Guide 8-18 years

OLDER CHILDREN (8-12 years)

TEENS (13- 18 years)

Neurodiverse Children

Developmental Considerations

- Likes to feel mastery over a task
- Begins to think logically about concrete events
- Better understanding of their bodies
- Socialization with peers becomes more important
- Starts comparing themselves to others
- Can take on more complex tasks (Household or other)

Developmental Considerations

- Begins to think abstractly and reason about hypothetical problems
- Wants to be included in decision making
- Personal identity and sense of self developing
- Better understands their bodies and the effects of healthy living
- Socialization and peer acceptance is most important

Considerations

- Neurodiverse children often have a higher sensitivity and are at a greater risk for dysregulation with disruptions in routine and changes in stimuli
- Their specific neurodiversity may be invisible to others, at least initially
- Neurodiversity can be difficult to distinguish from trauma behaviors

Potential Stressors

- Lack of information/explanations causes anxiety
- Unexpected separation from family or primary caregivers
- Separation from normal activities, home, school, peers
- Reduced self-esteem
- Fear of feeling different from peers (social stigma)

Potential Stressors

- Lack of information/explanations causes anxiety
- Limitations related to privacy, peer relationships, decision making
- Concern with perspective of others/body image
- Fear of feeling different from peers (social stigma)
- Unable to socialize with peers

Potential Stressors

- When minimal preparation is given for transitions
- Loss of routine
- Loss of adaptive equipment (communication device, medications, sensory equipment, wheel chair, hearing aids, glasses, etc.)
- Heightened stimulation from new or chaotic environments and people

What YOU Can Do

- Promote opportunities for peer interaction, parental support & play led by children
- Provide space to talk about feelings (understand they may not feel like talking or sharing)
- Charades/ tic tac toe, games & art with objects from nature
- Outdoor games & big movement activities to expend energy
- Help make up stories/play verbal mad libs/fill in the blanks
- Write a song together
- Make up a dance/play freeze dance

What YOU Can Do

- Clear explanations of what they can do (may benefit from helping roles)
- Provide opportunities for self-initiated activities & interactions
- Provide opportunities for free choice/self expression
- Provide encouragement
- Provide space to talk about feelings (understand they may not feel like talking or sharing)
- Validate their feelings
- Provide opportunities for peer interaction/group support

What YOU Can Do

- Ensure the locations where children and families are staying have someone who is comfortable working with neurodiverse children present for each staff shift to support these families and act as a resource to other staff
- Use visual aids (pictures, photos, actual items, etc.) along with instructions
- Minimize environmental stimulation (options include: noise cancelling headphones, sleep mask, extra blankets for over the head, etc.)
- Identify a specific calming area where children can take breaks if needed to self-regulate (optional items to add to the calming area, and make available to children as they need them: weighted blankets/ weighted lap mats of various weights, oral chew items, variety of fidget sensory toys)