

Stimulation Practices For All Round Development Of The Baby

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Stimulation should be provided to the babies as soon as possible. If from the early age all the stimulation activities are provided to the babies then, the chances of all-round development is enhanced. That's why parents should be very careful about the stimulation practices to provide their babies without thinking that in the process of development the babies will be developed automatically. The different domain in which stimulation activities are provided is discussed one-by-one below.

VISION

In infants vision begins with an interest in light. People attracts infant's attention. Later, black and white patterns, bright colours, high colours contrast presentation are attractive. Initially, children visually attend to stationary targets and then follow movements and moving objects. Awareness begins with interest in large, simple items that are nearby and then later they seek out more details and complexity and examine what is beyond their immediate reach. Initially, they show preference to familiar faces and objects and later develop interest in what is new and different.

Stages in visual development

During 1-3 months the child begins to reach for visual stimuli or visually attends to hand movements. By 3-6 months, visual attention, tracking and discrimination are increased. Approximately by 6-12 months the child begins to hold objects longer for visual inspection. Thereby increasing visual perception.

Principles of Promote Visual development

- The best time to provide visual stimulation is during the normal routine of the day's activities like bathing, eating, dressing, bedtime, games and outings.
- It is better to help an infant learn to use vision whenever a need naturally arises so that it is beneficial, motivating and reinforcing.
- This helps to integrate vision into infant's functional routines.
- Make sure to assist the child to see and make use of visual information throughout the activities in a day.
- Parents should always be consistent in teaching through proper cues and prompts.
- Parents should always have a positive approach and provide regular opportunities to encourage the use of vision.
- For children with visual impairment use tactile prompts and verbal prompts. Even physical prompts and guidance will be very helpful in discrimination and identification.

Materials for Developing Vision

- Slow moving objects with dark and light contrasting edges.
- Torch, Lamp and Candle
- Fluorescent objects
- Black and white stripped objects
- Toys made with decorative and shining paper

- Dangling toys

SPEECH & LANGUAGE

Language is acquired with amazing rapidity, particularly after children speak their first words, usually around the end of the first year. However in order to talk and communicate, children first need to listen to adult speech and be given opportunities to produce the particular sounds in their language as adults do. The baby is exposed to a variety of sounds including the human voice, within a few days and at one month she is able to discriminate among different kinds of sounds.

Principles for Promoting Language development

- Imitate the baby's facial expressions, gestures and sounds. Maintain eye contact and talk to the baby during diapering, feeding and other routines.
- Engage in turn taking with the infant. Imitate the cycle when the baby is quiet and alert by making a series of sounds.
- Always try to communicate with the child with noises (at first not too loud and sudden), songs, smiles, praise but do not fuss about the child's attempt to speak and give him time to express himself. Do not finish sentences for him if he can do so in his own time. Do not answer for him if he can say something.
- Play records with soothing sounds for the baby. Sing lullabies while rocking the baby.
- When talking to the infant frequently keep your face about 12-18 inches from the baby, so that the baby can watch face and lips.
- Play peek-a-boo. Vary by attaching a cloth to the top of a mirror.
- Carry the child around the house or other places and point to objects of interest.
- Listen carefully to what the child is trying to say.
- Repeat and expand the child's one or two word utterances into complete sentences.
- Raise or lower your voice from time to time to make sounds more interesting.

Materials for auditory stimulation

- Rattles
- Musical instruments
- Bells
- Shaken
- Bear bugs

Materials for language stimulation

- Puppets
- Picture books

TACTILE

Tactile stimulation (the sensation of touch) begins to develop in the uterus, is the most predominant sensation at birth. Though it is not refined in terms of discrimination, the awareness of touch, pressure and temperature allows the child to respond to his or her environment on a reflexive basis by orienting towards or avoiding stimuli (self-protective and withdrawal in pain).

Tactile stimulation affecting other areas

Tactile stimulation given during caring for children enhances their awareness of themselves and their bodies. It also helps them reach and explore the environment through touching. As the visual and motor development takes place, tactile exploration and discrimination are enhanced. In the early months, the focus

of tactile stimulation is to explore self (face and feet), surface and textures. For most children the sense of touch and active exploration of objects by hand play a joint or secondary role with visual perception in the development of object recognition and discrimination. For the blind, however tactile stimulation assumes a leading role.

Principle to promote Tactile Stimulation

- Help the child explore his body. This will help him to identify his body parts.
- During activities like bathing, feeding or playing when the care giver maintains physical contact with the baby, it provides security and confidence to the child.
- Help the child in exploring the environment.
- Provide the child opportunities to touch and feel different surfaces in and around the house.
- Provide the child with a variety of toys with different textures and surfaces. This will help in discrimination and identification of objects.
- Provide them variety of play materials for providing tactile stimulation like
 - Soft toys
 - Wooden toys
 - Toys made of different materials like cotton, wool, coir and fur.

VESTIBULAR

The vestibular system acts as complex relay centre that influences many systems of the body. Thus vestibular stimulation has a profound influence on the development of the nervous system.

Functions of Vestibular System

- To stabilize the position of the head in space.
- To stabilize the position of the eyes in space during head movements.
- To regulate posture and movement.
- Contributes to physical and emotional security

Materials used to provide vestibular stimulation are

- Equilibrium board
- Rocking board
- Stakeboard
- Sand, Water, Clay etc.

The vestibular system is supposed to have a role, along with the usual system and sensations originating during body movements. The three major functions of the vestibular system are to help in maintaining the body posture, equilibrium and stabilizing the position of the eyes in space during head movements.

MOTOR

As soon as an infant is born or perhaps even before the struggle to establish control over the body begins. The changes that occurs in the infants ability to control the movements of the muscles of the body are referred to as motor development. During the first 3 years of life, the child's progress from a relatively helpless infant state of motor activity to a state of independence and mobility. The development of basic motor skills during infancy forms the foundation for the more elaborate and refined motor acts of later childhood.

Principles recommended for promoting motor development

- To promote motor development, activities and materials used should be developmentally appropriate (in accordance with age) within the various stages of motor development.
- Caregivers should not try to hurry development.
- Stimulating activities, such as games and exercises should be provided in each area and stage of development.
- A variety of toys and materials designed to facilitate motor development should be made available to the child.
- Infants should frequently wear as little clothing as temperature and social settings allow, in order to facilitate maximum freedom of movement.
- Model and demonstrate activities for infants to imitate such as banging two blocks and putting objects in containers.

Materials promoting Motor Development

- To enhance gross motor activity materials like, small wheelbarrow, swing, floor patterns, climbing chairs, balancing boards and tunnels can be used.
- For fine motor activities use hollow building blocks, large heads, paper balls, rollers, nesting and stacking toys can be used.
- Material prepared for motor activities include: baby walker, wheel and sticks, mud corner chair and cardboard chair.
- The stimulation materials prepared for fine motor activities are: blocks, picture cards, letter box, finger board, finger ladder, peg board, paper mache bowl and bowl with beads.

EMOTIONAL

Babies are emotional beings from birth. The newborn's expressions elicit responses from parents, siblings and strangers. Their interactions with other people are punctuated with various nuances of emotional moods and expressions. These emotions play a pioneering role not only in the infant's social expressions, but also in every area of development. The emotions of the toddler and preschool children are limited by inexperience and incomplete knowledge of the world.

Principles to promote Emotional Development

- Set aside time for learning and pleasant interchanges, including rocking, hugging, cuddling, smiling, touching, eye contact, talking and singing.
- Carefully observe and interpret the baby's cues and signals for attention and distress.
- Reassure distressed infants with caressing, calming voice tones and facial expressions. Massage or gently rock tense babies to induce body relaxation and reduce tension.
- Some infants need to have a stuffed animal, blanket or her 'security' object to help make the transition from parental dependency to personal independence easier.
- In so far as possible and appropriate, control the stimuli that evoke negative feelings such as anger and fear (e.g. a night light can be provided for the infant who is afraid of the dark). However, the infant should not be overprotected.
- Never use fear and guilt to control infants behaviour. Avoid statements such as "there is a ghost in the closet that will come out and get you if you don't stop crying".
- Provide everyday experiences that are predictable and reassuring (e.g. bathing and naptime) so that the baby gets a secure sense of what to expect and in what sequence.

Materials for promoting emotional development

- **Soft toys**
- **Musical toys**
- **Rattles**
- **Blocks**
- **Pegboards**
- **Puzzles**
- **Sand activities**
- **Water activities**

COGNITIVE

Cognition means knowing. It is a process of learning and understanding. It encompasses all mental life and includes attention, perception, thought, reasoning, imaginary and reflection and problem solving. Cognitive development, therefore, refers to the development of intellectual skills.

Principles to promote cognitive development

- Simplify the activity.
- Point to and touch the important parts of a new activity, such as the space on a puzzle board that matches the piece of puzzle the baby is holding.
- Show the infant how to do an activity or solve a problem.
- Allow infants to use self teaching as much as possible. Avoiding interfering in activities when help is not needed or wanted.

Interrelations between cognitive development and other areas of development

Cognitive development helps in the overall development of the child. For example when the child has learnt the skill of holding a rattle he will also learn that by shaking the rattle sound is produced. By this it is evident that development of motor areas also help in the cognitive development.

Materials required for promoting cognitive development

- Rattles and mobiles
- Balls
- Pull toys
- Cubes
- Riding equipment
- Vehicles
- Sand and earth
- Puzzles
- Building blocks
- Manipulative toys

Stimulation materials prepared for cognitive development

- Finger puppets
- Stick puppets
- Glove puppets
- Paper mask facemasks
- Paper mask blocks
- Peg board

SOCIAL

Infants respond to other people from the very beginning. By the age of one month, they react to voices and are particularly attentive to faces. Sometimes between two and three they begin to smile at other people. By the time the infants are around six months, they show clear attachment to a particular person in the environment, usually the mother. Within a month or two after this they show attachment to other people in the family, such as father, brothers, sisters and grandparents. This development of attachment creates a feeling of safety and security in the child particularly when the child explores the world and experiences unexpected events. This can be seen when the child comfortably plays with a stranger, as long as the parent is present, but as soon as the child feels threatened or experiences uncertainty, the child quickly turns to the mother or father. By learning to love and trust their parents, infants are able to form other social attachments and relationships.

Principles to promote Social Development

- Allow babies to have moments of peace. However, the infants cries for help should never be ignored.
- Encourage independency and self-sufficiency. In general, avoid doing things for infants that they can do for themselves.
- Provide a variety of culturally and developmentally appropriate toys and materials, but do not substitute toys for personal interaction.
- Play interactive games with infants such as peek-a-boo, and pat-a-cake as they can reciprocate such interactions. Increase the complexity of games (eg.pretend play) as infants get older.
- Provide opportunities for toddlers to play in carefully supervised situations.

Materials to provide Social Development

- Dolls
- Animal toys
- Soft toys
- Toys for make-believe play such as play pen, kitchen toys