

Up And Moving, Now The Fun Begins!

by Marilyn Spaw Krock

After six months, infants really come alive! By their first birthday a miraculous transformation takes place. That helpless newborn you so carefully brought home from the hospital suddenly is a rough and tumble toddler!

During this period use of hand coordination improves dramatically. Now infants learn to “let go.” This fascinating new ability enables them to play a wonderful game - “hold something out, open your hand, and watch it fall.” If parents don’t understand that this learning process is necessary for developing hand-eye coordination, they may feel frustrated as “retrievers.” Who decides when the game is over? During this time, also, they learn to transfer objects from hand to hand. This dexterity enables them to play with toys more effectively. Didn’t God create marvelous creatures when creating human beings?

Be aware that the ability (and desire) to CLIMB develops now, as does the pull-to-standing skill. No telling what they will reach! Putting everything into the mouth is normal activity for this age. Learning through the use of all our God-given senses is part of our nature.

As solids are introduced, a high chair becomes the place to eat meals. Babies may struggle to participate in the feeding process. Keeping hands occupied with utensils or crackers is the best diversion. Finger foods and feeding themselves must be encouraged. Gaining autonomy, independence, is what the developmental process is all about. Mealtime should be a pleasant time, not a battleground. Feeding patterns established now may become problems later. Keep in mind that small stomachs need to eat small amounts, more than three times a day. Not hungry now, try again later.

Bedtime should not become another time to do battle. The time for going to bed IS a parent’s decision. This matter should be handled firmly from an early age because this is when discipline patterns are set. Establish bedtimes rituals. Young children are comfortable with routine. Decide about bathing procedures, song or story time, rocking and cuddling time. Start now saying a simple, spontaneous bedtime prayer of thanks to God. Consistency is security to young children.

Trust is the foundational psychological trait that must be developed during the first year of life. Infants decide whether the world is basically good or bad, and whether or not they can trust parents and caregivers, on the basis of how their needs are met. These needs include more than food and cleanliness; also necessary are nurturing items, such as love, caring, touch, comfort, encouragement, stimulation and exploration. Many developmental psychologists indicate that if the trait of trust is not successfully acquired very early, each subsequent developmental task will be detrimentally affected.

In a recent class, it was pointed out that trust in God is the cornerstone of spiritual development, also. Trust is the foundation of hope. Just as infants learn to trust their parents, we need to cultivate trust in God if we are to develop into the fully alive Christians that Jesus calls us to be.

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