



Radio Stations : **All Community Radio Stations**  
Subject : **Early Childhood Development**  
Audience : **Parents, caregivers and educators**  
Program Topic : **You are your Child's First Teacher (LOVE)**

#### **Guidelines to the presenter**

- Presenter – please familiarize yourself with the brief and the use the facts effectively by referring to them from time to time during the show.
- You should be seen as a peer rather than an authority.
- Offer guidance or opinion rather than telling people what to do.
- Encourage people to seek further information
- Always keep the objectives and outcomes in mind and drive these.

#### **Topic:**

You are your child's first teacher

#### **Objectives**

- Awareness of the parent being the child's first teacher
- Highlight the critical importance of the early years in relation to future potential.
- Explain stimulating environments
- Encourage responsive relationships to children, with love and warmth

- Build understanding of the importance of allowing children time to learn and explore

### Introduction

On this show, we celebrate the fact that you are the most important person in your child's life. You have the power to give your child the best possible start in life and it doesn't have to cost you a cent. All it takes is your love, play and talk.

Children's brains start developing before birth. The most rapid period of brain growth is before they turn **five** – therefore supporting your baby's development is essential for their lifelong achievement. While your child's brain is developing, you are its first teacher, because your child will only get to school at 5, 6 or 7 when the brain is already mostly developed. So parents and caregivers are perhaps the most important teachers that a child can encounter in its whole life.

Questions	Facts/Information
<p>1. <i>Last week we discussed how, amazingly babies brains are developing and growing already in the womb and that experiences (like nutrition and stimulation) that we expose them to, has an impact on their brain and future development. Why is early development so important?</i></p>	<p>Early development is the foundation and scaffolding for later learning: International evidence shows that poor early childhood development has lasting negative impacts on brain infrastructure and function that are difficult to reverse. Cognitive ability becomes harder and harder to change as children get older. In the first few years of life, when the brain is developing rapidly and basic brain 'architecture' is formed, the foundations are laid for later development and learning. 'Circuits' and skills both develop from the 'bottom up' – simple circuits and skills need to be in place so that more complex circuits and skills can be built successfully on the foundation that already exists (NSCDC, 2007). For example, for a child to learn to say the</p>

<p>2. <i>What is happening in the brain in these early years?</i></p>	<p>names of objects, she must already have developed the ability to differentiate and reproduce the sounds of her home language (NSCDC, 2007)</p> <p>Brain architecture develops early: The basic ‘circuits of the brain’ develop early in life (Irwin et al, 2007). By age three, 85% of the brain’s core structure is formed. Although brain development continues into adulthood, this core structure is like the foundations of a house – once the basics are in place, later development may give the building its unique character and atmosphere, but it is very difficult to alter the original structure. Early development sets the foundation for later learning behaviour and physical and mental health (NSCDC, 2007). Small disturbances in early development can have long-term, lasting effects on the brain’s structure and the way it functions (Grantham-McGregor et al, 2007).</p>
<p>3. <i>How can parent’s support the development of their children’s brains and encourage early learning?</i></p>	<p>Good nutrition is essential. Malnutrition affects not only energy and physical development, but brain development too. Talk to your child from birth. Create stimulating environments for children to be in.</p> <p>Early childhood is the most intensive period of brain development during the lifespan. Adequate stimulation and nutrition are essential for development during the first three years of life. It is during these years that a child's brain is most sensitive to the influences of the</p>

<p>4. <i>I guess that makes our role as a parent really important. Can you tell me a bit about the role of the parent in the first years of a child's life?</i></p> <p>5. <i>What is the most important thing a parent needs to do as a teacher in these early years?</i></p> <p>6. <i>I guess in today's world, children need more than just food and shelter to meet the worlds challenges. What can we do children to help children learn?</i></p>	<p>external environment. Rapid brain development affects cognitive, social and emotional growth. Such development helps to ensure that each child reaches his or her potential and is a productive part of a rapidly changing, global society.</p> <p>Children learn more in the first 5 years of live than at any another time. This means that caregivers of small babies and children have a very important role to play. Small children are like sponges soaking up water and they learn from everything they see, hear, feel, taste and smell around them. Therefore as our child's first teachers, we need to think carefully about EVERYTHING we say and do and ask ourselves, are we a good example for our children to learn from?</p> <p>The most important role that parents have to play is to build a good loving relationship with their children. How something is taught at this age is as important as what it taught. Therefore providing a loving, caring environment for your child is the most important thing you can do to help them learn. We need to therefore think very carefully about everything we say and do and ask ourselves is this a good example for our children to learn from.</p> <p>Well firstly as mentioned above, children need adults they can trust. They need to know that they are loved and that someone will help them when they are</p>
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sad, angry or frightened. This helps them feel safe enough to develop. From birth that means that they need to be held close to the warmth of your body and to be shown that you love them by rocking, holding and stroking them, and using your voice to calm and comfort them.

Remember that a crying baby is telling you that something is wrong – hold them to comfort them while you find out what they need. When you answer their call, they will learn to trust in your love and caring, and thereby learn to trust the world.

7. *But what if my baby cries a lot?*

If there is no health reason that your baby cries, then they are crying because they want to communicate with you. You can't spoil a baby by answering his cries. He'll just cry less over the first couple of months if you do so. In fact, experts say that responding to your baby when he's upset (as well as when he's happy) helps build trust and a strong emotional bond.

8. *And what else?*

Secondly children need to feel free to explore and try new things. This is how they learn about the world. Make sure that your baby has the chance to move freely every day. To make these learning experiences successful, give your child help when they need it while at the same time encouraging them to learn to do things for themselves. When they are older you can encourage them to ask questions and to ask for help

<p><i>9. And what about discipline – don't all children need this?</i></p>	<p>All children need clear rules so that they know when to stop before there is trouble or danger. Rules make children feel safe and help them to learn to take responsibility for their own behavior. However remember if you child does something wrong, explain why it is wrong – do not hurt them or make them feel small. In this way you can help them learn from their mistakes, instead of just making them afraid of you. Remember children are seldom bad – it is just their behavior that needs to change.</p>
<p><i>10. Do children have different needs at different ages? I imagine that babies are different to toddlers?</i></p>	<p>Yes obviously children have different needs at different ages, however the three basic ones still fit for all ages – they need adults they can trust, need to feel free to explore new things and have clear rules to keep them safe. For babies that means that they need someone to hold them in a loving way, make eye contact with them and respond to their coos babbles and cries with love and warmth. Remember that this kinds of interactions – serve and return – are essential for building your child's brain!</p>
<p><i>11. They then start growing in toddlers – how can we support their learning then?</i></p>	<p>In the first three years of life children learn about trust and doing things on their own. Children learn to sit, stand, walk, talk and learns to trust you. To do this, they need to know that you will help them when they are hungry or we or that when they are afraid or angry that you will love and comfort them. It is important to talk, to sing to children from</p>

<p>12. <i>And after three?</i></p>	<p>the time they are born – for example even before they can talk, describe to your child what is around them, what they are doing and what you are seeing and doing.</p> <p>From four to six children are learning to do things on their own. They have a lot of energy, ask a lot of questions are busy learning all the time. Encourage children to do things on their own, to talk about their feelings and to ask for support. Many of the things you can do, we will be discussing in more detail over the next few months. All of them you can start from birth like: – reading aloud to children as soon as they are born, Allowing children to play freely and joining in their play, giving children lots of time to explore and play outside, making reading fun and singing and talking to your child from birth.</p>

<p><b>Conclusion</b></p>
<p>Remember that you are your child’s first teacher and perhaps the most important one. The most important thing a child needs is to feel safe and loved and to have an adult they can trust. Responding to your babies cues and babbles not only makes them feel loved, but also positively supports early brain development</p>

## **Learning outcomes**

After listening to this show the audience should:

- Understand the critical importance of the early years in future potential, and focus on providing caring and stimulating environments for their children.
- Know to respond to children's cues with love and warmth
- Understand that talking and singing to their children from birth aids teaching and development