



Radio Stations : **All Community Radio Stations**
Subject : **Early Childhood Development**
Audience : **Parents, caregivers and educators**
Program Topic : **Developmental milestones: your 3 to 4 year old child (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:

Developmental milestones: your 3 to 4 year old child. What to expect.

Objectives:

- To inform parents about the developmental milestones they can expect to see in their 3 to 4 year old child.
- To encourage them to play a significant role in their young child’s development through spending quality time with them, playing and rich use of language.
- To enable them to identify if their young child is falling behind in any particular area.
- To introduce parents to NELDS (National Early Learning Development Standards) and the importance South Africa places on early learning through the development of policies and programmes.

Introduction

In the last two weeks we have looked at the developmental milestones for babies and toddlers across the various developmental domains, physical, cognitive or intellectual, language, social, emotional and moral development. We learned that while we talk about these developmental domains or areas as if they are separate, they are in fact very interlinked, often the one depends on the other, and together they make up the whole child. We also know that the child develops in all areas all the time, and that she will develop at her own rate, which may differ from development area to development area. So for example, one child may walk very early, while another may be much faster at talking. The range of normal development is large, so there's no need to be concerned if your child does not do things at the same time as your friend's child. However, we are alerting you to some key things that you need to pay attention to and that you do need to be concerned about. We call these signs of developmental delay and if you notice these signs, you are advised to take your child to the clinic or a doctor for an assessment.

Most importantly, we stress every week, what an exciting period of development the early years are, and how important it is for parents to spend quality time with their little ones, and to observe and respond to their rapid development, so that you can support them reach their potential.

Questions	Facts/Information
<p>1. <i>In the last two weeks we have learned so much about the enormous and rapid development that takes place in the first two years of life. Is the development between the ages of 2 to 4 just as rapid?</i></p>	<p>It certainly is, and becomes even more complex and inter-related; each development building on what has gone before. Young children learn through play and actively exploring the world around them. Each child learns in his or her own way and how they grow and develop depends a lot on what is in their environment and their relationships with the important adults in their lives, most especially you, the parent. This means that you need to provide your child with</p>

<p>2. <i>So once again you are emphasizing the important role that Mums and Dads or caregivers play in the young child's development?</i></p>	<p>many opportunities to play with different items, in many different ways and to support them through the language you use.</p> <p>Absolutely! Young children are very curious about their world, and parents need to build on this curiosity. Listen to them, take their interests and questions seriously and help to grow their knowledge and understanding by finding out together the answers to their questions. The relationships with the important adults in his life are the rock on which he builds. If her relationships are stable, loving, encouraging and supportive, she will trust people and develop self-confidence, self-esteem and self-belief in her ability to do things. Just remember that children are unique in every aspect of how, what and when they learn.</p>
<p>3. <i>If Mums and Dads carefully watch their young child's development, what will they see in these years between 2 and 4?</i></p>	<p>Once again, for ease of description, we will look at the developmental milestones in the different domains or areas of development. Let's start by looking at the physical development that becomes apparent between ages 2 to 4.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• In terms of their large muscle movements, by the age of 4, a young child should be able to walk, run, jump and climb confidently and with good coordination. In fact he should also be able to walk backwards. She should be able to stand and hop on one leg, as

<p>4. <i>What else can 3 to 4 year olds manage with their hands?</i></p>	<p>well move rhythmically to music. Our emerging sports stars are now able to kick, throw and sometimes catch a ball. They can bend over and pick something up without over-balancing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the small muscle movements of their hands and fingers, they have far greater control. They may more consistently prefer to use one hand to pick things up, hold a crayon or throw a ball. Let the child choose which hand to use, and never force them to use a particular hand. This choice of a particular hand to use is called hand dominance, and as this becomes established, your child will gain better and better control. She should be using a crayon to draw and by age 4 be able to copy a cross, a circle and a square. Young children love to draw and need lots of opportunities to draw people and things in their world in their own way, or to illustrate stories. It really doesn't matter if you, the adult, can't recognise what the drawing represents. Just show lots of interest, ask questions and give encouragement. It's this control of the hand and its coordination with the eye that will become the ability to write later on. <p>They can throw a small ball and stack a number of blocks one on top of the other. If given the</p>
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5. *What about their language development?*

opportunity and some support they can use scissors to cut on a line. They are able to pick up and place reasonably big jigsaw puzzle pieces and match them to complete a puzzle. And they can thread large beads or buttons. At this age, they can easily manage a spoon to feed themselves, and a cup to drink.

There is an explosion of language in this age group as young children learn and use new words every day. By now they know their names, ages, whether they are a boy or a girl, and can often say where they live. They will talk in full sentences of at least 5 to 6 words, and are able to take turns in conversation. By now their speech should be easily understood by others. They can answer simple questions and carry out a sequence of 2 or 3 instructions.

This is the age of questions! Mums and Dads can be exhausted answering all the 'why?' questions! But they need to be answered! This is how your little one learns about the world. If you don't know the answers, have fun finding out together! Your local library and librarian can be a wonderful way to find answers and you'll be teaching your little one important skills for his schooling and his future learning.

She will love to sit on your lap and look at pictures, books or listen to stories you tell or create together with her. Story time is special

<p>6. <i>I guess parents will also notice this explosion of language in their child's cognitive or intellectual development? What kinds of things can a 3 to 4 year old understand and do now?</i></p> <p>7. <i>Are 3 to 4 year olds able to tell the difference between what is real and what is only imagination or fantasy?</i></p>	<p>time and needs to happen at least once every day. This is a wonderful way of supporting your child's language development and making him feel special. And you can have such fun telling and making up jokes together. Your 4 year old has a great sense of humour! She will also remember the words of familiar songs and rhymes and enjoy singing them with you.</p> <p>Yes certainly. The young child's explosion of language really helps him understand his world. By the age of 4, she can count out at least 5 objects and can remember the sequence of counting words sometimes up to 20. She understands the concepts of more, less, bigger, smaller, all important concepts in the foundation of maths. He is able to recognise and name, as well as sort and match objects according to some basic shapes, colour and size. She understands the concepts of same and different, as well as some concepts of space such as, next to, behind, under and above. All these concepts form the basis of thinking, reasoning and problem solving – all critically important in our ability to learn in school and in life. He will remember many aspects of a story and be able to predict what might happen next, one of the foundations of science thinking.</p> <p>3 to 4 year olds have a lively imagination and love to play pretend games. Playing house and taking the roles of Mum and Dad and imitating</p>
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<p>8. <i>It seems that this age group has become far more social as they develop. Is this true, and how should parents support and encourage their child's social development?</i></p>	<p>what they have watched Mum and Dad do, is a great favourite. So Mum and Dad – watch what you do and how you speak in front of your child! They WILL copy you! Many 3 to 4 year olds have an imaginary friend who is very real to them, and they will carry on long conversations with this invisible person. It's quite normal and nothing to worry about. Children at this age find it hard to tell the difference between what is real and what is fantasy, and can become quite fearful of certain objects or animals that we, as adults, know don't exist. Just be patient and supportive. They love to act out stories or what they have seen on TV, and dressing up in unusual or adult clothes is a great favourite.</p> <p>3 to 4 year olds have most certainly become more aware of themselves and others around them and many become very sociable. They become more independent and want to choose what to wear and what to eat, and parents should encourage this within limits. They are also now more able to obey simple rules and understand limits, as well as follow some social rules like saying 'hello', 'goodbye' and 'thank you'. They also want to be able to do everything you are doing and to help – setting the table, washing up, sweeping, hanging up the washing etc. Although it might seem like little help to you at this stage, if you encourage and support your little helper, you may find you've got help for life!</p>
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<p>9. <i>Do 3 to 4 year olds still struggle to control their emotions?</i></p>	<p>Your little one will now start playing with friends the same age, especially designing imaginative play, sometimes with complex roles. He understands sharing and taking turns and shows sympathy and concern for others when they are hurt or sad. Make sure your little ones have plenty of opportunity to play with other children. If possible, between 3 & 4 is the time to start looking for your child to join a good quality ECD programme at a playgroup or centre near you. If nothing is available – how about joining up with other parents and starting a playgroup.</p> <p>Yes. Although she is better able to name her feelings, she can still struggle to control strong feelings and may seek adult help to resolve conflict. He could be very determined to get or do what he wants and can push parents to the limits of their patience. For parents, it's best to set and explain simple, clear limits and then to be calm and consistent in following through with consequences. Where possible set the limits and give your young child some choice on how they will comply within the limits.</p> <p>Remember to always focus on, support and praise the behaviour you WANT to see, rather than only noticing when your young one is behaving badly.</p>
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<p><i>10. You mentioned that this is the age when parents should consider sending their child to some form of group early childhood development (or ECD) programme like a playgroup or ECD centre. How will they know how to guide my child's development?</i></p>	<p>Since 1994 ECD has been recognised and identified as a critical focus area for South Africa's social and economic transformation. The South African government has developed a number of excellent policies and programmes for young children. Amongst these has been the development of NELDS – the National Early Learning Development Standards, a curriculum related policy initiative focussing on the early learning needs of children from birth to age 4. It describes the various milestones, including all the ones we have discussed in this programme, per age of the child, as well as appropriate activities adults can do to support and enhance early learning in young children. It is available on the government website www.dsd.gov.za.NELDS . Each registered ECD centre should have and be using a copy to guide their ECD learning programme.</p>
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Conclusion

The more one learns about the early years of a child's life, the more fascinating it becomes! I had no idea this was such an important period of growth, development and learning – AND that all this important learning takes place BEFORE the child even goes to school. It really begins to make sense of the statement that 'Parents are their child's first and most important teachers'. It makes us realise what an important role parents have to play and what a high degree of responsibility they have for their little one's development. AND it makes us realise how important it is for parents to invest in their young children's development by spending quality time giving them undivided attention while you listen, play, explain, support them to find out answers to their questions and cuddle them while you tell stories. And all these things don't need to cost money as we've heard in earlier programmes. we can use the things around us.

It's also important for us to realise as parents, that our government takes early childhood development and learning seriously as well and is developing policies and programmes to support ECD and young children. I intend to go and find out more about NELDS – the National Early Learning Development Standards, and I hope you do as well.

Learning outcomes

After listening to this show the audience should:

- Understand that a child's development builds on what has gone before, that the developmental domains are inter-linked and that each child's rate of development differs in different domains and with other children of the same age.
- Realise the important role key adults play in the child's development and the responsibility they have to support optimal development.
- Be aware of the importance of stable, loving, supportive, encouraging relationships with their children in underpinning self- confidence and self-belief.
- Be aware that spoken language underpins the development of literacy, numeracy, scientific thinking and problem solving.
- Gain some ideas on how to support their child's social and emotional development through behaviour management.
- Understand that the South African government takes ECD and the early years seriously and has developed policies such as NELDS to support early learning.