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Achieving Resilient and Inspiring Families

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WELCOME TO THE ARIF TIMES!

With the theme 'Nurturing Growth : Maximising Child Development' in this bulletin, we explore the crucial journey of fostering healthy growth of our children. As parents, caregivers and members of the society, we hold a collective responsibility to ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive and reach their fullest potential.

Childhood is a period of rapid growth and development, characterized by a multitude of physical, cognitive, emotional and social milestones. Here, we delve into various aspects of child development, shedding light on strategies and practices that promote healthy development. We emphasize the importance of early intervention, nurturing relationships, and creating enriching environments that foster curiosity, exploration, and learning.

For parents and caregivers, recognizing the signs of healthy development and understanding developmental milestones can alleviate concerns and guide efforts in supporting their child's growth. Equipped with knowledge and resources, they can actively engage in activities that stimulate cognitive development, nurture emotional resilience and foster positive social connections.

Join us on this journey of discovery and empowerment as we navigate the intricacies of child development and work towards maximizing the potential of every child.

Is My Child Developing Normally?

by Dr Nur Adila Ahmad Hatib

The early years of a child's life are a very important period of rapid brain growth and development. During this period, children learn and master many new skills as they interact with their environment. We should nurture our children well to allow them to reach their fullest potential.



Keeping up with your child's developmental milestones and knowing when to seek help are essential to ensure your child receives appropriate stimulation and intervention early. A very useful guide that you can refer to is your child's Health Booklet. You are encouraged to fill up the developmental checklists at the different ages so that you can keep track of your child's development.



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Log in to
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for other Project ARIF Resources.

Here are some developmental red flags to look out for in the first 3 years.
If you notice these features in your child, do bring them to see a doctor:

By 3 months

- ☐ Not smiling or looking at you
- ☐ Not making sounds or vocalising (e.g. “ah”, “uh”)
- ☐ Not moving the arms or legs equally when lying on the back

By 6 months

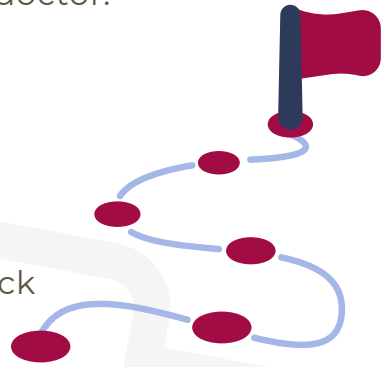
- ☐ Not showing excitement at toys, or not laughing/giggling when interacting with you or others
- ☐ Not able to reach out for, or grab a toy/object with the hands
- ☐ Not able to hold the head steady when held in a sitting position
- ☐ Not able to roll over from stomach to back or back to stomach

By 12 months

- ☐ Not able to babble (e.g. “gagaga”, “bababa”)
- ☐ Not responding readily to affection
- ☐ Has poor eye contact
- ☐ Not able to pick up small objects (e.g. raisin) with the thumb and finger(s)
- ☐ Not able to pull him/herself to a standing position without help

By 18 months

- ☐ No single words with meaning (e.g. Mama specifically to refer to Mummy)
- ☐ Not using gestures or not being able to point to show something he/she is interested in
- ☐ Not responding readily to affection
- ☐ Has poor eye contact
- ☐ Not able to scribble or pick up small objects with a pincer grip (using the end of the thumb and index finger)
- ☐ Not able to walk independently





By 24 months

- ☐ Not able to say at least 3 words other than Mama/Papa
- ☐ Not able to follow when someone is pointing something out to him/her
- ☐ Not able to climb up stairs
- ☐ Has poor eye contact
- ☐ Prefers to play alone or seems to be “in their own world”



By 36 months

- ☐ Not able to combine 2 words together to form 2-word phrases (e.g. go there, Mummy come)
- ☐ Not able to play imaginatively e.g. pretending to cook food, or dressing up a doll
- ☐ Prefers to play alone or seem to be “in their own world”
- ☐ Has poor eye contact
- ☐ Not able to completely remove his/her clothing or help with dressing him/herself
- ☐ Not able to walk up and down stairs with minimal support



Losing skills that they previously achieved (e.g. previously could babble or crawl but not anymore) is a red flag at any age.

I hope you find this checklist useful!
If in doubt about your child's development, do check with your doctor or healthcare professional.





Maximising my Child's Development

by Sister Nazimah bte Mohd Sani

The toddler years are a crucial time for a child's development. It is essential to maximise this period to ensure they have the best possible start in life. During these years, children learn essential physical, cognitive and social skills. As parents, you can provide an environment conducive to learning by engaging our toddlers in activities that stimulate their brains and bodies. Fostering independence in early childhood **is important for their long-term development and growth.**

Here are some ways to help foster independence in your child:

Give them choice



Providing choice can help develop a child's decision-making skills, autonomy, and self-esteem. This allows parents to give their children a sense of control while maintaining authority by allowing toddlers to choose between two acceptable options: what cereal to eat or what shirt to wear.

It is important to limit choices, however, as too many choices can overwhelm a young child. Parents can help their children develop important cognitive and emotional skills by giving choices while promoting a positive and healthy parent-child relationship.



Teach self-care tasks

Teaching self-care to toddlers is critical to their overall growth and development. It is more than a singular task but the culmination of multiple essential life skills. By equipping children with the ability to perform these tasks independently, they are empowered and learn to take responsibility for their well-being.

Maximising their development involves being patient and giving clear and concise instructions. Running through the task step-by-step is essential, reinforcing the child's efforts and allowing them ample time to practice. Note that these self-care tasks will be beneficial in the toddler years and as they grow up.



Involve them in simple household tasks

Involving the child in household tasks effectively encourages their independence and sense of responsibility as they grow up. This means giving them age-appropriate tasks like putting away their toys after each play or placing their dirty clothes in the basket.

By involving them in the daily operations of the household, you are giving them a sense of ownership and contribution to the family, which fosters a stronger sense of self-esteem and self-worth.

Tasks such as sorting laundry or organizing a closet can also help develop their coordination and fine motor skills. With proper guidance and patience, involving your child in household tasks can be a positive and rewarding experience for both parent and child.



Encourage Imaginative Play

Encouraging imaginative play is one of the most crucial aspects of a child's development during their toddler years. It allows children to explore the world around them and develop their creativity and problem-solving skills. It also promotes cognitive, social, emotional and motor development.

As parents, it is essential to provide a supportive environment that fosters imaginative play. This can be achieved by encouraging storytelling, role-playing, pretending and allowing your child to take the lead in their playtime activities.

Remember, every child is unique and develops at their own pace.

Be patient and supportive, and enjoy watching your child grows and learns.





Child Development - From the Islamic Perspective

by Ustaz Ahmad Khushairi bin Abidin

In Islam, children are seen as a gift from Allah, and their upbringing is a sacred responsibility.

Children are Primarily Explorers in the First Seven Years

The first seven years of a child's life are considered crucial for laying the foundation for a whole life. It is important to provide a **loving** and **nurturing environment** for **children**. Parents are encouraged to show affection, provide proper nutrition and ensure the child's physical well-being.



According to an authentic Hadith narrated in the Saheeh Al-Bukhari, the Prophet PBUH kissed Al-Hassan ibn Ali, his beloved grandson, while Al-Aqra bin Habis Al-Tamim was sitting with him. Al-Aqra said, "I have 10 children and have never kissed one of them." The Prophet cast a look at him and said, "Whoever is not merciful to others will not be treated mercifully."



This hadith highlights the Prophet's encouragement to express love and affection towards children. It is also important to note that affection for children must be expressed within appropriate boundaries and cultural norms.

Secondly, Islam recognises **children's rights to play** and encourages parents to **spend time playing with them**.

Saiyidina Ali once said, "Play with them for the first seven years (of their life); then teach them for the next seven years; then advise them for the next seven years (and after that)."



As parents, it is important to understand the concept of *fitrah*, the innate nature of every child. Parents are entrusted with nurturing their child physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. Islam encourages a holistic approach that encompasses both worldly and spiritual development.

Positive reinforcement, encouragement and support from parents can help children thrive and reach their full potential. It is essential to remember that each child is unique and may have different learning styles, so tailoring your approach to meet their individual needs with respect and dignity is key.

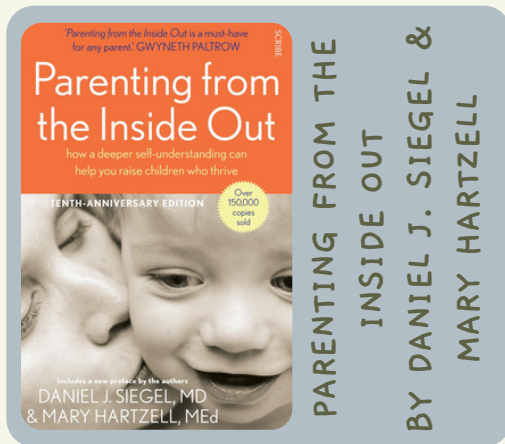
BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW PARENTS



by Siti Nurzakiah Binte Zar'an



Parenting is a continuous learning journey filled with challenges that can test our skills and patience. Some parents seek tips and guidance from parenting books that may dispense some wisdom and perspectives to expand theirs. In this edition, we are featuring two of Dan Siegel's literary works that approach parenting and understanding child development from the neurobiological perspective.

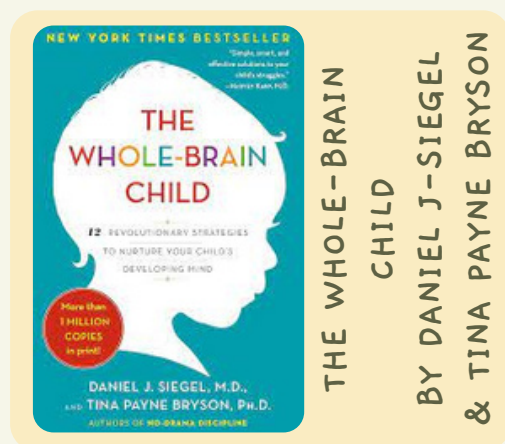


Dan Siegel is a renowned author and psychiatrist known for his work on the developing mind and interpersonal neurobiology.

In "Parenting from the Inside Out," Siegel explores how our childhood experiences and attachments to parents can influence the way we parent our children. This book invites readers to embark on a self-reflection journey of understanding our own emotions so as to build healthier relationships with our children.

If you are fascinated by how our brain works like I am, prepare to be blown away by the significant connections between emotional health and brain development. Here's my favourite quote from the book:

"How we treat our children changes who they are and how they will develop. Their brains need our parental involvement. Nature needs nurture." - Dan Siegel



I highly recommend reading this book as a follow-up to the earlier piece. This easy read offers strategies for nurturing a child's developing brain. The purpose is not to develop the child's academic intelligence per se. In fact, this book expands the definition of intelligence. It invites its readers to understand that the different parts of the brain can help parents support their children's emotional and intellectual growth. As a result of reading this book, I view discipline differently.

Discipline is not merely about correcting behaviour, but an opportunity to connect with the child to understand him/her better.

"Parents who speak with their children about their feelings have children who develop emotional intelligence and can understand their own and other people's feelings more fully." - Dan Siegel

Happy Reading and continue to inspire growth!