

September 8, 2017

Wildcat Extension Family & Consumer Sciences Report

Title: Parenting Consistently

By: Chuckie Hessong, Wildcat Extension District



The developing brain thrives on repetition. When a baby experiences the same things repeatedly, the pathways of connections in her brain become stronger and more complex. One of the best ways to provide repetition for the developing brain is to create consistency in the child's world. When a child has experiences in a positive and predictable environment, her brain becomes wired to relate to others, regulate behavior, and learn.

What Is Consistency?

Children develop emotional security when their world is nurturing, consistent, and predictable. As children experience the same routines over and over, the brain strengthens connections that will lead to trust and secure attachments. Children who live in consistent environments also learn to regulate their own emotions and behavior better, because they know what to expect of the world around them. Consistency may include any or all of the following components:

Predictability.

Doing things in predictable ways builds a baby's trust of adults. When adults respond every time a baby cries, he learns that that adult will be there to take care of his needs. It is important to give infants the security that comes from meeting her needs when she is hungry, sleepy, or in the mood to play. An older child can wait longer to have her needs met, but a hungry infant cannot be expected to wait until a specific time for another feeding. In fact, a baby who is hungry and is regularly forced to wait for her feeding learns that adults cannot be trusted to meet her basic needs.

Routines.

Keeping the same general routine every day helps make the child's world feel stable and predictable. Doing certain things in the same order at about the same time every day helps strengthen brain connections and builds the baby's confidence because she knows what to expect in a situation. A child also learns to be more self-sufficient when the routine is the same every day, because she can anticipate what comes next. Even though young children cannot tell time, they remember the order in which things occur.

Keeping the child environment in order.

Order helps a child know what to expect, which helps him feel secure and in control. He knows his toothbrush will be in the cup by the sink. He can find the blocks in the building center. He learns where to put things when he is finished with them so he

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can find them again later. Keeping the environment organized can reduce frustration and stress for children as well as adults.

Setting and enforcing rules.

Rules help children learn acceptable and unacceptable behavior, practice self-control, and strengthen brain connections that will enable good decision-making as children grow. Rules need to be appropriate to the child's age, and adults need to enforce rules consistently. Adults need to agree on a small number of simple rules for their child. Keep rules short enough to remember, and phrase them positively whenever possible (e.g., "walk in the hallway" instead of "don't run"). Remind your child of the rules regularly, and gently redirect him whenever he is not following a rule.

When a child experiences consistent care, she feels more secure because her basic needs are being met, and she has more energy to explore, learn and grow.

Join us for Crawford County Parent's University, Tuesday, September 26^h, from 5:30-7:30 PM at Meadowbrook Mall in Pittsburg. Area agencies will host Play and Learn Stations, car seat checks and loads of family fun!

For questions or additional information, please call:

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