

# EMPOWERING YOU TO ENRICH BABIES' CRITICAL EARLY YEARS

By Michelle Mintz, MS, CCC-SLP



Babies' learning journeys begin the day they are born, not their first day of school. The experiences babies have and their interactions during their first five years will determine their emotional, physical, intellectual, and social development along with their self-confidence, personality, adaptability, and ability to relate with others. The person who spends the most amount of time with the baby, which often is you, has the opportunity to make the most impact on this young one's life.

Nannies love the feeling of having successfully encouraged their baby or toddler client to reach new developmental milestones. They are so vested into their little clients that they get the same feelings of excitement and pride as the parents when they see new growth. But, often, they do not know exactly how to stimulate that brain development or how to turn everyday care into an easy avenue for greater communication and capturing learning moments. They are aware of the stigma of too much "screen time" but do not know how to turn screen time into limited value time. Nannies have shared with me how they have strong skills in taking care of their "littles'" needs (e.g., bathing, diapering, feeding, and safety measures), but they either do not have the background or are not aware of the necessity to "build that little brain."

Communicating is the key to connecting, and it begins from the moment a baby is born. The first communication we often hear is crying, that sweet sound when newborns arrive to let everyone know "I am here!" As crying is one of the first of many ways babies communicate, true smiling does not appear until around six to twelve weeks. From birth, each person that comes in contact with that infant (who then grows to become a baby, who grows to become a toddler, who grows to become a child, etc.) needs to know what that baby is communicating and how best to communicate back with them. Communication abilities change and grow as babies develop, and their ability to grow depends upon the experiences they have.

### Baby's Blooming Brain

Studies reveal that 90% of brain development happens before age five. When babies are born, neurons in their brain are still forming and continue to make neural connections through around age three. Babies' sweet little heads are born with billions of brain cells that can be stimulated to grow based on early and enriching experiences. These brain cells are ready for you to nurture so they can form the connections needed for babies to bloom and grow to their greatest potential.

While many factors influence brain development, your early interactions have the most significant impact. It is important for you to stimulate the baby's brain and plant the seeds for their life successes much earlier than you may be aware. Some newborns are actually able to imitate you sticking your tongue out, and that act of repetition has just stimulated a new brain connection!

Listening, understanding, stimulating, and forming strong attachments with love and security are essential for babies' brain as well as their social and emotional development. You want the time spent to be the most enriching and inspiring. Babies' blooming journeys strongly depend upon your continuous participation and strong active involvement.

There is no extra time needed in your day to be able to help stimulate babies' young brains. You can learn to provide engaging, fun, interactive experiences throughout your natural daily routines such as dressing, feeding, bathing, riding in the car, and grocery shopping, which will increase brain stimulation so you can help that child bloom all the time!

It's not just what you do with your baby, but how you do it that makes the greatest impact!

Through my research, I have discovered that nannies find their days more productive and satisfying if they have a repertoire of meaningful activities to help create brain connections as well as emotional connections with babies in their care.

**Michelle Mintz, MS, CCC-SLP, The Early Development Expert**, is the creator of Baby Blooming Moments™, a unique, one-on-one parent coaching experience, virtual or in person, empowering parents, siblings, grandparents, and nannies to enrich the way they interact with their babies and toddlers. Michelle develops personalized, proactive strategies helping families transform everyday, in-the-moment interactions into valuable, teachable opportunities. Implementing her strategies and hands-on activities throughout the day helps increase communication, brain connections, learning, and social development during those crucial early formative years when the most impactful brain development occurs—which helps all babies and toddlers bloom!

Michelle, who earned her BA in Speech and Hearing Sciences from UC Santa Barbara and her MS in Speech-Language Pathology from Boston University before establishing her private practice in Santa Monica, CA, in 1995, has decades of experience working with families. She is also the author of *All Done Binky!*, a book to help support families with babies and toddlers weaning off pacifiers.

To learn more, visit <https://babybloomingmoments.com/>.