



BEST BEGINNINGS

Alaska's Early Childhood Investment

Oct. 1 – Dec. 31, 2011

1. Family gatherings (:30)

These shorter days and falling temperatures bring more family gatherings. Whether yours is a small family or a large extended one, the holidays of fall and winter are wonderful opportunities to teach children about your family traditions. Tell them about your childhood memories. Let them help prepare traditional foods. Sing the songs you grew up with. These kinds of interactions are what childhood memories – and healthy brains – are made of.

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2. Family stories (:30)

Kids love family stories – both factual and fanciful. They love to hear about Dad's childhood adventures and how Mom had to trudge five miles through the snow barefoot to get to school every day. Show them photos of your own childhood, their grandparents and great grandparents. Family stories are more than just fun. By sharing stories and your own memories, you help children build a sense of who they are and how they fit in the world.

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3. Music & language (:28)

Music may be a lot more important to children's brain development than most of us realize. Researchers say language and music are much more closely related than previously thought. The neural networks dedicated to speech and song overlap. So music may even be **critical** to language development. Music and speech seem to be mirror images, with each playing an important role in the development of the other.

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4. Nature vs. Nurture (:30)

People used to argue whether children were more influenced by genetics or by their parents' nurturing. Neuroscience has solved the riddle. Genetics are the hardware of the brain. Essential, yes, but not of much use without experiences. It's the combination of genetics and early experience that lay the foundation for who we become. That's why a child's earliest experiences matter so much.

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5. Winter activities (:28)

Winter in Alaska means less time outdoors. But there's lots more to do with kids – inside and outside – than sit around the TV. Check your local recreation department for organized activities. Bundle up and go for walks. Point out the signs of the coming winter. When the snow flies, help your toddler build a snowman. Early experiences with their parents help children's brains grow.

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