

## Early Childhood

Dr. Katrina A. Korb  
Jos ECWA Theological Seminary

## Outline

- Physical Development in Early Childhood
- Social Development in Early Childhood
- Emotional Development in Early Childhood
- Cognitive Development in Early Childhood

## Physical Development

- Slow but steady increase in height, weight, and muscle tone
  - Growth rate slows compared to infancy
- Gradual refinement in gross motor skills
  - Climb stairs, Balance, Jump over obstacles, Catch and kick balls
- Remarkable advances in fine motor skills
  - Eat with spoon, Zip and button on clothes, Cut with scissors, Mold clay

## Factors that Influence Height in Preschool Years

| Taller than average if...    | Shorter than average if...        |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Good nutrition               | Poor nutrition or not enough food |
| Few illnesses                | Many illnesses                    |
| African or European ancestry | Asian ancestry                    |
| Mother does not smoke        | Mother smoked during pregnancy    |
| Upper socioeconomic status   | Lower socioeconomic status        |
| Physically active            | Generally inactive                |
| Firstborn                    | Third-born or later               |
| Male                         | Female                            |

### Children's Nutrition

- Good nutrition influences children's health, behavioral development, and educational attainment
- Young children grow at a slower rate than infants, so they tend to eat less.
- Children generally eat more healthy foods when an adult shares the food with them.

From 4 to 5 years, children should take:

| Food Type           | Amount        | Amount        |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Milk or other dairy | 320 grams     | 2.5 cups      |
| Meat or beans       | 80-140 grams  | 3-5 ounces    |
| Fruit               | 130-190 grams | 1-1.5 cups    |
| Vegetables          | 190-250 grams | 1.5-2 cups    |
| Grains              | 110-140 grams | 4-5 ounces    |
| Oils                | 10-20 grams   | 2-4 teaspoons |

### Sleep Patterns among children

"Children who get the sleep they need are more likely to develop in healthy ways" (Patterson, 2008, p. 254).

| Age         | Hours of Sleep per Day |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 1-4 Weeks   | 15-16 hours            |
| 1-4 Months  | 15 hours               |
| 4-12 Months | 14-15 hours            |
| 1-3 Years   | 12-14 hours            |
| 3-6* Years  | 10-12 hours            |
| 7-12 Years  | 10-11 hours            |

\*Around 6 years of age, children generally stop taking naps during the day.

### Safety for Children

- The most common serious injury to young kids is automobile accidents.
  - Number of children's deaths from auto accidents in the US has fallen considerably after mandatory use of car seats
- Burns and drowning are other safety threats
- Other safety concerns:
  - Air pollution
  - Contaminated water
  - Exposure to dangerous chemicals
- Protecting the environment promotes children's health

*Hug your children at home, but belt them in the car.*

## Social Development

- Social skills improve greatly in preschool as they interact with peers and their siblings
- Important social skills:

## Aggression

- **Aggression:** Behavior intended to inflict harm on another person
  - **Physical Aggression:** Behavior intended to inflict bodily pain or injury
  - **Relational Aggression:** Behavior intended to hurt another person by damaging peer relationships

## Responding to Aggression

- Respond quickly to the first act of aggression
- Discuss the misbehavior after the child has calmed down (about 30min to 1 hour later)
- Encourage restitution where the child fixes the wrong and/or apologizes
- Limit exposure to aggressive models

## Prosocial Behavior

- **Prosocial behavior:** Cooperative, friendly, and other socially-approved behavior
  - Sharing
  - Helping
  - Cooperation

## Fostering Prosocial Behavior

- Emphasize cooperation over competition
- Teach games that emphasize cooperation and conflict resolution
- Provide space and materials to facilitate cooperative play
- Use stories/literature to enhance empathy and caring
- Encourage social interactions between children who are different

- A little boy called John is called to eat. He goes into the room. But behind the door there was a chair, and on the chair there was a tray with 15 cups on it. John couldn't have known that there was all this behind the door. He opened the door, the door knocks against the tray, the 15 cups crash to the ground, and they all get broken!
- Once there was a little boy called Henry. One day when his mother was out, he tried to get some sweets out of a top shelf in the kitchen. He climbed onto a chair and stretched out his arm. But the sweets were too high and he couldn't reach it. But while he was trying to get the sweets, he knocked over one cup. The cup fell down and broke.

## Development of Moral Judgment

Piaget

- Children under 6 years usually choose John as being naughtier than Henry
  - He broke more cups
- Piaget concluded:
  - Young children tend to make moral judgments based on the consequences of behavior
  - Older children tend to make moral judgments more based on the intentions of the person

## Development of Self Control

- Young children are in the process of developing strategies for self-control
  - A key strategy is the ability to direct attention in appropriate ways

## Emotional Development

- In the preschool years, children make large improvements in emotional self-regulation
  - **Emotional Self-Regulation:** The ability to control one's emotional reactions to people or events
- Skills necessary to regulate emotions:
  - Recognize and label feelings
  - Accept feelings
  - Appropriate responses to feelings

## Managing Anger

- Managing anger is an important emotional skill for young children
- Young children must learn:
  - That anger can interfere with problem solving
  - How to recognize anger in themselves and their peers
  - How to calm down
  - Appropriate ways to express anger

## Fears

- Nigerian children express more fears than Kenyan and Western children (Ingman, Ollendick, & Akande, 1999)
- Fear and anxiety is a common problem among children
  - Fears can include: Ghosts, bad dreams, injury, death, thieves, getting lost, wild animals, witches, being in the dark

## Fears

- Strategies to help children overcome their fears:
  - **Social support:** Parents provide consistent understanding and reassurances
  - **Objects for support:** Special blanket or doll
  - **Self-instructional techniques:** Remind themselves they have nothing to fear

## Early Childhood Cognitive Abilities

- Children are naturally curious and eager to learn
- **Unidimensional reasoning:** Focus only on one dimension (part) of a problem
  - Piaget's conservation task
- **Private speech:** Use of language to plan and direct their own behavior, particularly in difficult tasks
  - Vygotsky
- **Representational skills:** The ability to represent objects with symbols or models

## Limitations of Early Childhood Cognitive Abilities

- Difficulty focusing attention for an extended period of time
- Difficulty using strategies to recall things from memory
  - Young children can recognize things quite well
- Struggle to systematically apply strategies to solve a problem
- Have not had the experience to develop an extensive knowledge-base
- *Young children are gifted learners, but they should not be expected to learn in the same manner as older children*

## Number Sense

- **Number Sense:** Understanding of number and mathematical operations
  - Counting words
  - Counting objects
  - **Cardinality principle:** Final number represents the number of objects in the set
  - Arabic numerals
  - Compare sets of objects: More/Less
  - Concepts of addition and subtraction (adding means more, subtracting means less)
  - Part/Whole: A whole set of objects is made up of parts

## Mathematics Development

- **Classification:** Putting objects or ideas with similar characteristics into groups
- **Seriation:** Ordering objects from smallest to largest
- **Patterns:** Recognize and create patterns
  - Clapping, Beads, Pieces of cloth
- **Geometry:** Shapes

## Language Development

- **Word Spurt:** 2 year olds know 200 words. By 6 years, children know 10,000 words
  - Young children learn about 5-7 words every day

## Grammar Development

- Begin to learn grammar
  - **2 years:** *Want biscuit.*
  - **3 years:** *I want biscuit.*
  - **4 years:** *Can I have a biscuit?*
- Young children over-generalize grammatical rules
  - *I have two foots.*
  - *I holded a ball.*
- By 5 years, children have mastered most of the grammar in their language.
  - However, a child's grammatical learning is only as good as the grammar they hear in their environment.

## Reading Development

- Readers consists of seven foundational skills:
  - **Oral language:** Ability to listen and speak
  - **Print Awareness:** Know the rules of text
  - **Phonemic awareness:** Ability to recognize and manipulate the sounds (phonemes) in spoken words
  - **Phonics:** Correspondence between letters and sounds
  - **Fluency:** Reading a text quickly, accurately, and with proper expression
  - **Vocabulary knowledge:** Know the meaning of words
  - **Comprehension strategies:** Ability to understand what is read.