

Handout 3B1: Infant Development  
(The First Year of Life) By Gail Conway  
Fast Facts:

Attachment relationships between infants and caregivers are the basis from which all learning, growth, development, and views of the world are formulated.

These attachment relationships begin with the day-to-day interactions of the caretaking routine as infants are fed, changed, bathed, and put to bed.

Infants learn—as their needs are consistently met—how to trust, build relationships with others and view the world as a loving and nurturing place.

In the first year of life, infants need a loving, consistent, appropriate, and responsive caregiver(s), to protect their mental health and grow into emotionally healthy adults.

Typical Infant Behavior:

- Infants and families learn about one another's habits, needs, likes, and dislikes.
- Infants learn the rhythm of their families' routines and begin to anticipate: feeding time, play time, bath-time, story time, and nighttime.
- Infants learn how to communicate from the words that are spoken, the tone of the voices and facial expressions on loved ones faces, gestures, body movements, and touch.
- Infants communicate their likes, dislikes, joys, and fears through their head turns, cries, smiles, arm and leg movements; feeding, sleeping, and elimination routines.
- Infants learn about the world as they take in their surroundings with all of their senses:  
hearing, touching, tasting, seeing, and smelling.
- Infants' early learning is optimized when they have time and safe spaces to explore their natural curiosities and when loved ones are there to describe, interpret, and encourage these explorations.
- Infants' physical development unfolds quickly from birth.
- Newborns come into this world as fragile bundles in need of gentle handling, holding, and head and neck support. Within three months' time, infants' necks and upper torsos strengthen to support their heavy heads.
- Infants continue to strengthen and develop throughout their first year from their heads to their feet as they go from prone to upright to standing; from uncontrolled large arm movements to deliberate reaching to picking up small bits of food with their finger tips.
- Infants' perspective of the world changes dramatically with their advancing physical abilities. Infants see ceilings, faces, and the scenes in front of them as they are held and carried. This view changes as they are placed on the Floor where they may see carpets, chair legs, and shoes. In 12 months time, this view changes again as they are able to hold themselves upright, pull themselves up to standing, cruise holding on, and finally walk—it is now truly a room with a whole new view to a curious infant.

Possible Behaviors of Infants Exposed to Violence:

- Infants know something is wrong by the sounds they hear, and the pitch, tone, and intensity of the voices in their environment.

- Infants know something is wrong from those that hold and care for them—from caregiver's quickened heartbeats, rapid breaths, perspiration, and abrupt or rough handling.
- Infants know something is wrong when they are not fed, changed, helped, or their sleep is disrupted.

Infants who witness violence cannot talk about their feelings, ask about disrupted routines, or verbally express their fears. Instead they may tell us through their actions. In the short term, you may see infants:

- Cry more
- Sleep more/sleep less
- Withdraw
- Stop eating
- Head bang/rock to self-soothe or show distress
- Startle easily
- Stop vocalizing or practicing the sounds of language or screech to imitate the yells they hear
- Throw things (instrumental aggression)
- Stop practicing lifting their heads, looking for objects, rolling over and all the many developmental tasks infants practice their first year of life because they become disorganized and fearful, and are not given time to explore in a safe space on the floor (constantly held or restrained to keep out of harm's way)
- Fail to thrive (do not physically grow or develop)

Infants who are exposed to violence may not learn how to trust, form relationships with others, or believe the world is a good place. They may stop exploring, learning, and growing. They are at risk for arrested development.

### Handout 3B2: Toddler Development (Age 2—3 Years) By Gail Conway

#### Fast Facts:

These are the seeds of fears and budding independence. Like infants, toddlers continue to learn about the world from those who care for them. There are so many firsts, so many new objects, pets, people and places to name, describe, and learn about. A toddler's natural curiosity fuels her energy to endlessly touch and experiment with everything around her.

Toddlers learn their value and how to treat others well (with respect) from caregivers who listen, answer their questions honestly, offer choices, honor toddlers' decisions, and have patience for toddlers to do things for themselves, in their own way, and in their own time.

#### Typical Toddler Behavior:

- Toddlers' natural curiosity drives them to separate from those who care for them and explore on their own but remain dependent on loved ones to foster their learning.
- Toddlers want to please their loved ones. As toddlers learn, caregivers learn to change the environment and remove breakables and untouchables out of reach to keep toddlers safe and provide the best first learning environment.
- Toddlers fear what they do not understand and depend on caregivers to make sense of what they see, hear, feel, and smell.

- Toddlers across cultures, typically around 18 months, use play as a vehicle to make sense of what they experience. Toddlers can be seen playing the simple routines that are a part of their life such as feeding the baby or putting the baby to bed.
- Toddlers practice doing things for themselves such as feeding, dressing, and toileting. Toddlers take their time as they study and experiment with the nuances of these day-to-day activities over and over again until they become more expert and they have committed these routines to memory.
- Toddlers fluctuate between doing things on their own and wanting others to care for them and their needs. This is a natural conflict and negotiation between toddlers' dependent and independent needs.
- Toddlers practice language and their limited vocabulary by pointing, naming, and talking a lot. As toddlers are exposed to more people, places, and things, and are given words and phrases to communicate about those people, places, and things, their vocabularies flourish.
- Toddlers learn about cause and effect by asking, "Why?" questions, sometimes over and over again.

#### Possible Behaviors of Toddlers Exposed to Violence:

Toddlers, like infants, know something is wrong by what they see, hear, and know. Toddlers may regress and exhibit some of the same behaviors as infants. In addition, in the short term you might see toddlers:

- Throw tantrums
- Hit
- Bite
- Kick
- Be clingy and have increased anxiety about separation from caregivers
- Be extra good
- Experience nightmares/night terrors
- Avoid people, places, and things that serve as reminders to incidents
- Stop playing
- Stop exploring
- Stop self-help skills such as dressing, toileting, and feeding
- Regress: talk "baby talk," wet pants, and suck thumb.

Toddlers who are exposed to violence may not feel safe to explore and gain their independence. Their movements may be restricted around their homes or in their communities by their caregivers to keep them out of harm's way. These restrictions limit their freedom to explore, learn, and grow independent, and may place them behind other typically developing children. They are at risk for arrested development.

#### Handout 3B3: Preschooler Development (Age 3-5 Years) By Gail Conway

##### Fast Facts:

Years 3-5 are the years children are continuing to develop their vocabularies, physical abilities, knowledge about themselves and their capabilities as they spend many hours at play in rich stimulating environments which offer new learning opportunities. Typically, young children 3-5 years old are in the midst of formulating their self-concept. Preschoolers see themselves as others see them.

Preschoolers' play; now, also includes more exploration into different roles and occupations.

They experiment with their sense of themselves as a boy or a girl and the concepts of power, heroes, and the morality of right and wrong.

Preschoolers' knowledge base about reality cause and effect, problem solving of situations is still developing. Consequently, preschoolers are literal in their translations of what they see, hear, taste, touch, and smell.

Typical Preschool Behavior:

- Preschoolers do not understand the double meanings behind teasing, sarcasm, jokes, or feelings.
- Preschoolers show growth in their ability to distinguish appearance from reality but still depend on ego-centered thinking and magical beliefs to explain events for which they have no existing script, limited life experience, or seemingly no plausible explanation. Therefore, they rely on their rich imaginations to solve problems.
- Preschoolers think the world is connected directly to them. They believe if they wished it or thought about it then they somehow made it happen. Consequently, preschoolers feel responsible for what happens to the people, places, and things in their lives.
- Preschoolers depend on wishes and heroes to exert power over their world and foster the change they hope to see.
- Preschoolers who are given words and time to ask for what they need are much more cooperative.
- Preschoolers are carefully watching the grown-ups around them and are learning what it means to be a boy or a girl, to hold a book and read, to communicate using words, a greeting card, a phone call, a touch; to know right from wrong.

Possible Behaviors of Preschoolers Exposed to Violence:

Preschoolers, like toddlers and infants, know something is wrong by what they see, hear, and know. Preschoolers may regress and exhibit some of the same behaviors as infants and toddlers. In addition, in the short term you might see preschoolers:

- Hurt themselves and others
- Mimic intense aggression, often frightening even adult caretakers
- Engage in risky behavior (the child seems accident prone)- an indicator of depression
- Increase withdrawal and apathy behaviors
- Have extreme fear (out of proportion to the situation)
- Have difficulty tending to one task or toy at a time
- Be hyper-vigilant
- Stare into space—seem void of emotion or absent
- Play what they see: preschoolers may demand, intimidate, do "put-downs," and bully
- Play stuck in a repetitive theme
- Complain of headaches, stomachaches, or other somatic problems
- Regress to an earlier period of developmental behaviors
- Ask to stay where they feel safe and want not go home

Preschoolers are learning about self-regulation and their abilities to interpret and express emotions. Still, preschoolers do not think like adults and are limited in their capacity to understand and interpret events and life experiences without the help of an adult. Therefore,

preschoolers who are exposed to violence may be overwhelmed by their feelings of shame, fear, and guilt and feel responsible for the violence around them but limited in their abilities to talk about it. Instead they act out about it through their behaviors. They are at risk for arrested development.