

# Stimulating Approaches for Optimising Development

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The growth and development of the young child from birth to 3 years is a fascinating story. It is the story of the making of a human being. From a helpless, tiny bundle with no control over his/her limbs, in one year he learns to control his body movements to get his needs fulfilled, to understand his environment, to manipulate it, to use tools and many more things. The child is born with genetic potential for learning and intelligence. But the potential cannot be realized unless it is challenged by the environment. These challenges stimulate the child to develop and learn.

## What is Stimulation?

Stimulation involves efforts to activate the child's development. The nurturing experiences the child receives in the early years of life, serves as a foundation for his subsequent learning. To help children grow and develop, we must provide the appropriate stimulation at every period of growth. In fact, the child learns comparatively more in the first year of life, than during any given year of life. If the child does not get appropriate stimulation or is under stimulated in the early years, it will have an adverse effect on development and intelligence.

## Importance of Stimulation

There are different indicators for each kind of development like physical, motor, sensory, cognitive, emotional and social. Development in each of these areas takes place simultaneously. All these areas are interrelated. Each affect and is in turn affected by the others. A set back or weakness in one area will affect the other. Even if the child has a potential to develop normally and is not provided a congenial and stimulating environment, the child is at a risk of delayed development. An under stimulated child may have developmental delay. A child having a disability may not be able to interact, with the environment and develop. Therefore, the environment should be stimulating and challenging, whereby, he interacts with the environment and learns. The early years are

very malleable, impressionable and formative for the growth and development of the child. Therefore, deprivation during the early years of life may lead to developmental delay.

## Stimulation through play

Play is an important aspect of stimulation. Play is most natural and spontaneous for the child's physical and psychological development, through play, the child learns to relate to other children, develop language and social skills and form concepts. Play provides opportunities for the child's self-expression, creativity and a mode of employment. The children in the age group of 0-3 years generally spend most of their time at home. The onus of providing the child with necessary stimulation therefore rests on the parents. This is given mostly through the most enjoyable mode which is play. Play is children's way of growing and learning, of coming to terms with life and discovering themselves and their environment. Children derive deep satisfaction and intense delight out of play, which should be sufficient justification in itself.

## Materials required for Stimulation

Parents normally begin to play with the infant from the moment he or she is a few days old by cooing, singing, tickling and vocalizing. Rattles, mobiles, balls, dolls, and such similar things instinctively draw the child's attention. Watching, chewing, pushing and grasping things are children's environment.

These activities enhance the attention. The materials need not be expensive, what is important is to go in for material that has high educational value, like homemade mobiles and rattles. Materials that foster manipulative skills should include activities like, fitting, assembling, taking apart, pushing and pulling. Play with natural materials such as sand, water, leaves, seeds and stones help the children in their concept development.

### **The type of material used should be**

- Appropriate to the age of the child
- As the child grows older the requirement will change, hence the material has to be modified to suit his needs or provide new material.
- Each material must serve many purposes (one toy for various areas and stages of stimulation).
- Prepared from material which is easily available.
- Prepared by simple and easy procedures.

### **Important aspects to be considered while selecting stimulation material for children**

- Play material should be inexpensive and easy to replace
- Material should not be injurious to the child

- Material should be made of non-toxic substances
- The toy should be attractive and the edges rounded
- There should be a variety of materials
- The material should not be too heavy which on falling may hurt the child
- The toys and objects should not be so small that the child can swallow

If from the early age all these stimulation activities are provided to the babies then, the chances of all-round development is enhanced. That's why parents should be very careful about the stimulation practices to provide their babies without thinking that in the process of development the babies will be developed automatically.

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