

**BRIGHT TOMORROWS  
START TODAY**



# **5 TOP TIPS TO BUILD YOUNG BRAINS**

from **Professor Donna Cross**

# 1

## CONNECT

Show your baby each day how much you love them by talking to them and listening to them. Do this from the day they are born. It doesn't matter if they can't understand you yet, it still makes their brain grow.

- ▶ Your baby learns by looking at your face, hearing your voice and working out what will happen next – feeding, bath time or bed time.
- ▶ Listen to the sounds they make back at you. Answer with a smile, words or hug.
- ▶ At bed time, read a story and sing a song before kissing them goodnight.

# 2

## PLAY

Your baby learns about the world and how to solve problems by playing. Give them time to play and explore and join in on the fun. This will make their brain grow.

- ▶ Sing songs to your baby. They like your voice best.
- ▶ Count fingers and toes or anything else.
- ▶ Only give them two or three toys to play with at a time. This helps them learn to concentrate.
- ▶ Get toddlers to play “stop and start” running games.

# 3

## HEALTHY HOME

Keep your baby safe and healthy to protect their brain and help it grow.

- ▶ Don't drink alcohol if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- ▶ Keep the air clean by not smoking near your baby.
- ▶ Help toddlers to try lots of different healthy foods.

# 4

## TALK

Talk all the time to your baby. Talk about how they are feeling – happy, sad, angry, excited – and how to deal with feelings.

- ▶ When your baby is hurt or upset, show that you understand. Use words to explain what is happening - “Oh, you fell over. Is your knee sore? Let me kiss it better. Does that feel better now?”
- ▶ Turn off the TV and loud music. Babies and toddlers can't take in what you are saying when there is too much going on.
- ▶ Tell them what you are doing - even if it is just boring jobs like cleaning the house

# 5

## JOIN YOUR COMMUNITY

When you have support and feel you belong, it's good for your brain and your baby's brain. Asking for help and asking questions helps you be the best parent you can be.

- ▶ Join a Mums & Bubs, or Dads' group or a playgroup. Ask your Child Health Nurse or check at your local community centre or library.
- ▶ Ask family members what they learnt about being a parent.
- ▶ Have playdates with other families.