5 TOP TIPS TO BUILD YOUNG BRAINS

from Professor Donna Cross
### LOVE

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### PLAY

Your child is born ready to learn. Provide opportunities for them to read, play and explore the world.

- **Play together with your children’s favourite bath toys or build castles out of the bubbles and have fun blowing them down.**
- **Snuggle up together to read a story.**
- **End each day with a goodnight kiss.**

### NURTURE

Help your child grow strong, healthy and safe. Create safe and predictable environments that help protect and improve your child’s health and wellbeing.

- **Copy your child’s facial expressions, hearing your voice and anticipating what comes next.**
- **Just like you can hear your tummy grumble, a baby has been listening to your voice before he or she was born.**
- **Your baby knows your voice!**
- **Sing songs to your baby – it doesn’t matter how good your voice is.**
- **Make up silly songs about what’s happening around you both.**
- **Turn waiting in line into a game. You can play round and round the garden with babies and toddlers or eye spy with older children.**
- **Point out the colours of objects around you or pictures in a book. Ask older children to find an object of a certain colour when you’re reading a book.**
- **Count their fingers and toes. Help older children to count yours. This is the beginning of maths!**
- **Children will let you know when they want to be put down. They need to explore the world.**
- **If it’s safe, let them go then welcome them back when they are ready for a hug.**
- **Children’s little bodies need a healthy home environment so they can grow up strong.**
  - Keep the air clean by not smoking around them and avoid alcohol if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
  - Encourage children to sample lots of different types of food. If they want to feed themselves they are learning to take responsibility for themselves. It’s messy but worth it!
  - If you have access to a garden, grow veggies, pick them and cook them together. Playing in the dirt is good for our microbiome (the good bugs in our tummies) which can help to keep colds away and reduce the risk of allergies developing later on.
  - Let your yes be yes and your no be no. Children need to know the boundaries and to know that these are set – it makes them feel safe.

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### CONNECT

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- **Have playdates with other families of young children.**
- **Ask your family members about their experiences and what they have learnt.**
- **Have a simple street party to get to know your neighbours.**

We all need to feel like we belong – babies, children and adults. There are lots of people who have been there before us. Some suggestions include:

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