

What I Am Like



This handout provides caregivers an overview of the needs, communication abilities, basic understandings, and feelings for a child at each stage in development during the first 36 months.

I Am Trying to...

Feel competent and effective

Develop my abilities and senses

Learn about people and relationships

Learn about my affect on people

Learn about my self worth and value

Learn about my affect on the world

Learn about my environment

Learn about the routines of my world

Discover what my action will let me accomplish

Adjusting Myself to the World

My Feelings...

- I don't yet know that I am separate from my mother
- I feel pain when I am hurt
- I feel contentment when I am loved and cared for

How I Understand...

- My energy goes toward growing and getting everything about me to work
- I'm using my senses: I look, I hear, I taste, I feel
- I'm practicing my innate motor patterns so that they will help me get what I need (sucking, crying)
- I'm trying to regulate my biological responses to this new world (sleep/wake cycles, eating, shutting out too much sound and visual stimulation)

How I Communicate...

- I respond to things in the environment that I come in contact with
- I cry to let my caregiver know that I need help (eating, comforting, changing)
- I show when I am sleepy, drowsy, or alert; these tell my caregiver what I want to do
- I show my interest by watching and listening
- I show my distress by sucking on my hand, turning away, or sucking on my fist
- I can be soothed

My Needs...

- To be held, gently rocked, comforted
- To be comfortable: to be moved to different positions, to be kept warm and dry
- For my caregivers to answer my cry
- To be protected from too much stimulation
- To hear soft sounds (singing, soft talking) – no loud noises



Becoming Interested, Responding

My Feelings...

- I show pleasure when I see my caregivers
- I become excited during social interactions with others
- I laugh when I am tickled or move around
- I may seem wary of unpleasant or confusing situations

How I Understand...

- I am getting interested in learning more about my world
- I watch, I listen, I touch, I hold; I understand through my actions
- I recognize familiar people
- I reach for objects
- I look at bright, shiny colors
- I lift my head and chest to look around
- I use actions (move, scratch, reach, hold, bang) to learn about the world
- I am beginning to recognize familiar routines (ex. bath time routines, play routines)

How I Communicate...

- I turn toward faces and voices
- I smile for special people
- I respond to social initiations from other people
- I gurgle and coo
- I reach toward my caregiver's face
- I turn away from interactions with others when they do too much or too little

My Needs...

- Predictable routines
- Lots of sleep
- To be played with
- To be taken for walks
- Caregivers who responds to my signals and needs
- Caregivers who talk to me
- Things to look at (mobiles, faces, my hands), listen to and touch
- Safe objects to hold and look at
- Freedom to kick and wiggle
- To be held upright so that I can see better
- Social play with people who act as if they know what I am trying to tell them
- Social play with lots of repetition and contingency
- Opportunities to practice my motor abilities (ex. head control)

I-4 Months

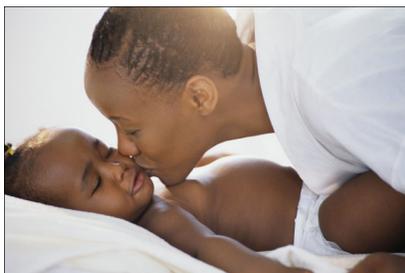
Initiating and Practicing

My Feelings...

- I'm interested in what is out there beyond my caregiver
- I love to repeat my actions over and over
- I'm delighted when people or things respond to my efforts, disappointed when they don't
- I may laugh at events that don't fit what I expected (ex. my mother in a silly mask)
- I want interesting things to last
- I'm frustrated and sometimes angry when I can't make things happen and don't know why
- I may be hesitant with strangers

How I Communicate...

- I take an active role in turn-taking games (peek-a-boo)
- I practice lots of new sounds
- I do things to get other people's attention (ex. tug on)
- I imitate sounds that I already know
- I show excitement when I want things to continue
- I respond to my name
- I protest when an object is taken away
- I stop crying when someone talks to me quietly
- I respond to pleasant speech by smiling or laughing



How I Understand...

- I recognize familiar objects
- I'm learning that things that are out of sight still exist
- I repeat actions that have an interesting effect
- I'm learning that I can have an effect on other people and on objects
- I may recognize sounds that always signal familiar events (ex. pots banging/mealtime)
- I anticipate when things are about to happen

My Needs...

- Consistent daily routines
- Ritualized game and routines with lots of turn-taking opportunities
- Adults who respond to my initiations
- Adults who play nursery rhymes and sing to me
- Adults who pay close attention to me and figure out my intentions
- Adults who don't get tired of playing games like give/take, drop/pick-up
- To be talked to as I go through my daily events
- For unexpected events to be added into repetitive ones
- Chances to practice my new motor abilities (rolling, sitting with support)
- Opportunities to play with a variety of materials that are fun to examine
- Objects that I can safely put in my mouth
- Opportunities for supported sitting and rolling

4-8 Months

Developing Attachments

8-12 Months

My Feelings...

- I feel secure when near a familiar caregiver, may show anxiety or fear with others
- I have conflicts between my need for security and my need to explore the world, but the more secure I feel, the more I am able to explore
- I show anger by stomping my feet, hitting
- I may get distressed or fearful when things are not as usual
- I show affection to my caregivers and other familiar people
- I am generally happy and self-assured
- I look to my caregivers to see their responses to unfamiliar events, then do the same

How I Communicate...

- I am beginning to understand social gestures
- I imitate sounds, especially if they are ones I already know how to make
- I wave bye-bye
- I understand “no” and may shake my head “no”
- I say “dada” and “mama” to refer to specific people
- I look at what others are looking at
- I use non-verbal requests (ex. hand object to adult, raise arms to be picked up)
- I point to comment on things I see or hear

How I Understand...

- I like to explore the qualities of objects, to try one of my actions and see what happens
- I sit without support; now I can see better and use my hands to pick things up
- I bang things together
- I use some objects as intended (ex. throw ball)
- I put things in containers and take them out
- I search for hidden objects
- I anticipate what is coming next
- I direct my actions toward accomplishing goals
- I know I can cause things to happen, and I know things can happen to me
- I am beginning to be a good imitator, especially if the action is close to one I already do
- I think of other children as interesting objects
- I walk, holding on to support

My Needs...

- Security and familiarity in my daily routines, consistent caregivers
- Talking that describes my activities and names properties of things I see, hear or touch
- Chances to do things for myself (ex. feeding, fetching the diaper)
- Surprises
- Objects to explore
- Opportunities to practice crawling and standing
- To have my requests responded to

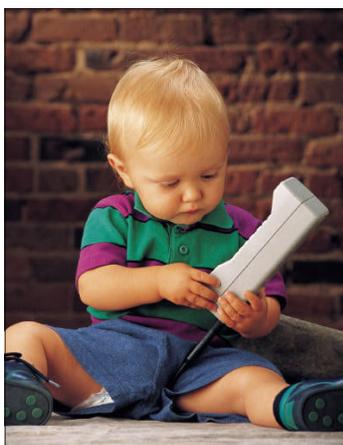
Branching Out: Exploring and Experimenting

My Feelings...

- I show delight in my own achievements
- I have a sense of accomplishments when I master a new task
- I feel fear and anger, but may try to hold back my tears

How I Communicate...

- I combine people and objects into the same interaction (use object to get attention, use adults to get object)
- I am beginning to talk; I use familiar names and action words for lots of situations, I learn new words



- I use pointing to direct others' attention to something I want
- With gestures or words, I request attention, play and other actions from my caregivers
- I understand simple verbal commands
- I point to some of my body parts
- I initiate routines/games

How I Understand...

- I move everywhere and explore everything
- I think of new things to try to see what will happen; I use a "trial and error" approach, and will keep changing my approach to find something that works
- I change part of an unsuccessful sequence if it doesn't work
- I try to categorize things (ex. 4-legged creatures as "doggie" – all women as "mommy")
- I can imitate complicated actions even if I don't understand their meaning (ex. imitate my sister playing house)
- I use social actions (ex. smile, touch toy they are playing with) with other children
- I combine toy pieces appropriately (ex. stack blocks, 1-piece puzzle)
- I activate a switch on a toy
- I try to involve others in my toy play

My Needs...

- Freedom and things to explore
- Caregivers who clearly express their pleasure and affection
- Clear routines
- Consistent expectations and discipline
- Objects and environments to explore
- Caregivers who let me "help" with their routines
- To hear words for household items and events

Power and Conflict

My Feelings...

- I am becoming aware of myself and my abilities
- I experience pride, but I also experience doubt
- I am sometimes defiant and negative as I try out “who I am” and “how I can influence”
- I may show fear of imagined events (ex. monsters)
- I am becoming independent and want to “do it myself”
- I may separate willingly from my caregiver if it is my idea, but not if it isn’t; I do better if I am prepared ahead of time
- I have a true “personality”



How I Understand...

- I am beginning to think before I act, to plan what I am going to do
- I am beginning to pretend; I can imitate actions that are self-related (ex. sleep, eat)
- I represent daily experiences in play (ex. sweeping)
- I may use one object to symbolize another (ex. block for a comb)
- I can play cooperatively with my caregiver
- I invent new ways to do things (ex. climb on chair to obtain objects)
- I search for absent objects

My Needs...

- To be told I am loved, special, good
- To play and play, both indoors and out; to try new things
- Other people to converse with me
- Opportunities to engage in pretend play
- Caregivers who join and expand on my play with objects and words
- Caregivers who understand my feelings
- Caregivers who talk to me about what is happening and what I am doing
- Caregivers who understand my reactions but are firm in their discipline
- Rituals to guide my behavior in common situations (ex. crossing streets)
- Opportunities to make choices
- Opportunities to play with other children
- Opportunities to be independent in my meal time skills
- Opportunities to climb

How I Communicate...

- I use words to signify objects or events that are not in front of me
- I have some understanding of grammar
- I name things; I respond to “what’s this?”
- I use words to request what I want

Own My Own and Gaining Confidence

My Feelings...

- I am aware of myself and of my actions with others; I know when I am the same as and different from others
- I show empathy with how others feel
- I sometimes hurt others intentionally
- I evaluate others in comparison to myself (ex. boy/girl)
- I am learning to share

How I Understand...

- I can delay my behavior when asked to
- I am developing insight into others' feelings and goals
- I can play cooperatively with partners more advanced than I am (parent, brother)
- I focus my thinking on one aspect of a situation
- I treat objects as if they had human properties
- I can see things only from my own perspective
- In my play, I pretend about non-daily events (ex. hospital)
- I use appropriate sounds and motions with my toys

How I Communicate...

- I ask questions
- I use sentences
- I engage in short conversations
- I initiate conversations



My Needs...

- Explanations
- Conversations
- Other children to play with

24-36 Months