

S.K.I.P

Child Development and Behaviour

A RESOURCE FOR SUPPORTERS OF PARENTS

Module Two



Module Two: This is one of a series of SKIP modules which introduce supporters of parents and caregivers to key findings from recent research on parenting practices in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

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Introduction to SKIP

VISION

All children in New Zealand are raised in a positive way, with parents and caregivers who feel confident about managing children's behaviour as part of a loving, nurturing relationship.

VALUES

SKIP will:

- be positive and non-judgmental
- affirm parents and caregivers' expertise and experience
- be sensitive to the complexity and stress of family life
- emphasise links between child development and behaviour
- focus on the whole child, including where they live, who they live with and their environment.

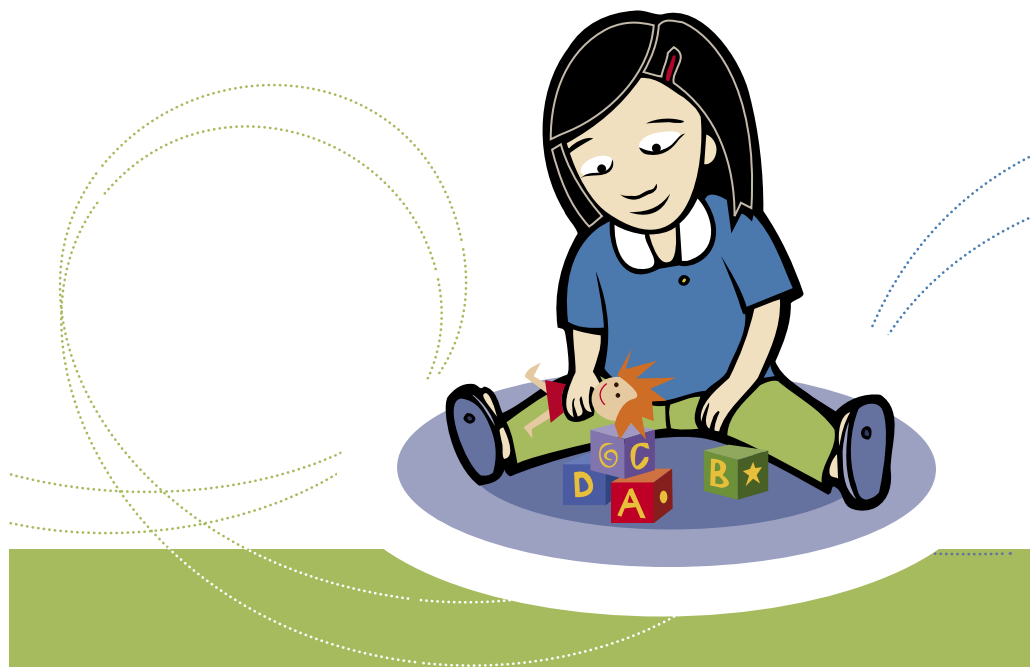
OBJECTIVES

- Increase the opportunities for communities to provide positive parenting.
- Increase the consistency and application of knowledge about effective non-physical discipline within organisations working with parents, caregivers and children.
- Increase the number of parents and caregivers who are confident, skilled and knowledgeable about using effective non-physical discipline.

SKIP supports parents and caregivers to raise children in a positive way, using effective non-physical discipline that includes love and nurture and limits and boundaries.

SKIP is doing this in three ways:

- By supporting local community groups to promote positive parenting through a Local Initiatives Fund.
- By working with national organisations to build capacity to support parents and caregivers.
- Through developing national resources for parents and caregivers and the organisations working with them.



Introduction to SKIP Modules

Components



Research says...



Reflective questions



Tips for exercises



Resources

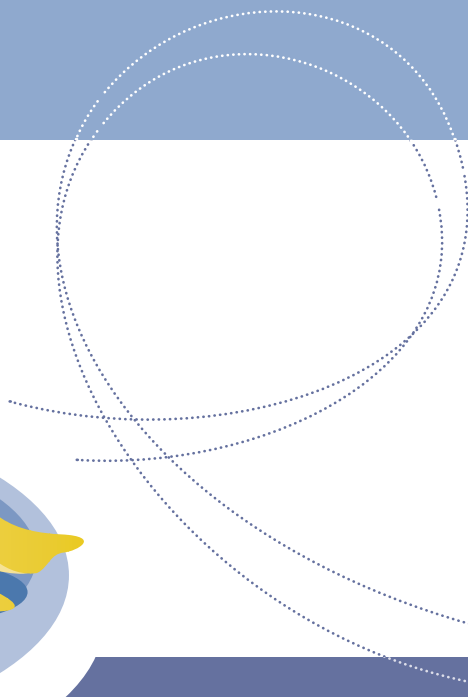
The SKIP modules have been developed for organisations supporting parents and caregivers.

This module is split into several sections so it can be used in a number of ways. For example:

- it can form the basis of staff training
- it can be used to inform or train parents
- it can be used alongside the SKIP parent pamphlets, in particular Ages and Stages, to further explain the links between development and behaviour
- sections can be used as handouts in existing training programmes
- it can be used to develop local resources.

Thank you to Claire Rumble and Marie Ellis for their work in developing this module.

Child Development and Behaviour: Overview of Three Key Ideas



Key Idea 1

Children's development follows an orderly and predictable pattern. As children develop their behaviour changes – just as their bodies change. The challenge for parents and caregivers is to recognise and adapt to these changes.

Key Idea 2

Understanding and responding positively to developmental changes can help parents and caregivers to:

- understand that the way children behave is part of growing up
- enjoy changes and adapt to them
- have realistic expectations
- provide opportunities and experiences to support children's development
- parent in a way where everyone's dignity stays intact.

Key Idea 3

Each child is unique and will respond differently to each development. Relationships between each parent and each child are also unique.

When interacting with parents

- Reinforce parental competence and help them find strategies that suit each family's unique needs.
- Use listening skills and reflective questions to identify problems for the parent.
- Provide information on effective discipline techniques according to the child's developmental level, the parent-child relationship and cultural issues.
- Provide resources such as handouts or leaflets from this kit, or referral to other appropriate professionals.
- Refer to positive parenting strategies.



Key Idea 1

Children's development follows an orderly and predictable pattern. Behaviours change to match development patterns. When children's behaviour changes, parental responses need to change too.

Stages of growth and development

All children go through stages of growth and development in certain sequences, and at similar ages. For example babies start crawling when their muscles are ready to perform the movements required. When children are about nine months old they begin to realise that an object that they cannot see still exists. At this stage, they love playing peek-a-boo, but a younger baby will lose interest when a person or object disappears from sight.

Some knowledge of these predictable changes can give parents great pleasure as well as helping them prepare for the changing behaviours that accompany development. We all know that children progress from crawling to walking and how exciting that first step is. But crawling and walking allow children to explore wider patch of their environment and there is a need to ensure that they are safe, for example by covering electric plugs and fencing off steps until they have learned to use them safely.

A child's brain is not complete at birth. All the parts are there and the child's experiences help the parts to connect together, making the brain grow. At six months the baby's brain is 50 percent of its adult size. By three years it is 80 percent of its adult size.

A loving, nurturing adult-child relationship provides security for the child. This sense of security and trust is known as attachment. Secure attachment results in a child who is self-confident, curious, cooperative, tolerant, and able to handle conflicts and anger.

This section provides basic information about:

- major stages of development from birth to five-years-old
- some behaviour changes that could accompany each stage
- ideas for parental/caregiver responses that allow children to continue their development while at the same time maintaining warm, constructive relationships, and ensuring the safety of the children, their homes and others.

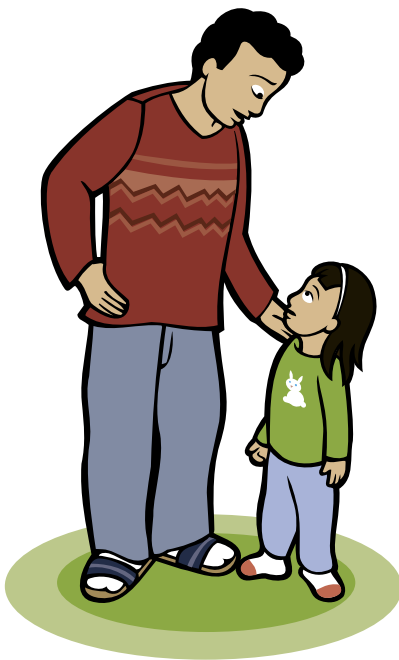


Chart One: Summary of General Development

Age	Developmental Changes	Possible Behaviour Challenges	Positive Responses
0-12 months	Emotionally, babies develop by learning to trust. This happens – through attachment to familiar caregivers and appropriate responses to their needs.	Wariness of strangers and separation anxieties.	Notice when babies are no longer happy to be left with an unknown person or are wary of strangers. Ensure they are left with familiar trusted faces where possible.
	Cognitively, babies develop by exploring the world that is within their reach – often using their mouths.	Putting small, dangerous or dirty objects in their mouths.	Prevention – ensure such objects are not within reach.
	Physically, babies become more mobile giving them greater ability to actively explore objects or places. Their capacity to consider potential hazards is limited.	Rolling or crawling towards stairs; pulling themselves up higher; exploring electrical equipment etc.	Provide safe experiences. Simple objects can be really interesting for example plastic containers. Be one step ahead by safeguarding potential hazards.
1-3 years	Emotionally, children move towards independence.	Children want to do things for themselves, for example walking, eating, dressing themselves.	Allow opportunities to make simple, real choices (for example “Do you want to walk or go in the pushchair?”). Allow time for them to try things themselves for example putting shoes on.
	Socially, there is greater awareness of other children.	Conflict may now arise as they begin to play with others.	Help children learn to meet needs in socially acceptable ways, eg taking turns. Encourage them to use words to get what they want and express themselves.
	Cognitively, language develops rapidly. Vocabulary expands and single words become phrases. Children are now able to express more of what they understand. Pronunciation may not be clear.	Communication becomes more verbal. There is often frustration at not being understood. May use physical means to get what they want instead of talking for example hitting, biting, snatching.	Take time to listen. Check understanding. Model language rather than correcting their speech. Give appropriate words to say in conflict situations.

Age	Developmental Changes	Possible Behaviour Challenges	Positive Responses
3-5 years	Socially, friendships become very important.	Awareness of others increases. May struggle to join groups or be bossy etc.	Encourage children to consider how others feel and to express their feelings verbally. Encourage them to sort out their own problems. Be reasonable and respectful when addressing issues.
	Cognitively, language skills enable communication with adults and children.	May explore new concepts and reactions. Lots of "why" questions. Might try out toilet words or swearing.	Explain "why". Be clear about words that are unacceptable but avoid strong over-reactions.
	Physically, fine motor skills develop.	Become able to use scissors, do fine art work, build blocks etc. May try these skills in unacceptable ways, for example cutting hair; drawing on walls.	Encourage creativity in acceptable ways and places. Make clear boundaries and give clear, simple explanations.
	Enjoy using their gross motor skills to do a lot of different physical activities.	Running, jumping, climbing, throwing in unacceptable places.	Provide lots of opportunity for physical play. Explain why something may be unsafe or inappropriate.

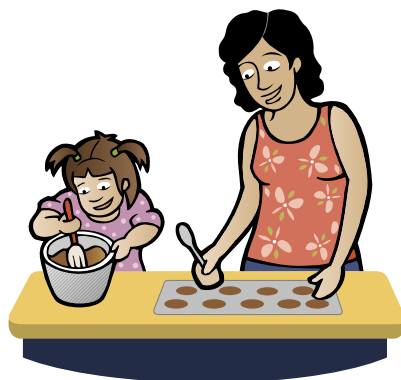


Chart Two: Emotional and Social Development

Age	Developmental Changes	Possible Behaviour Challenges	Positive Responses
0-12 months	Attachment with a caregiver develops as the caregiver warmly responds to the baby's needs.	Respond to smiles and cuddles. Develop attachment to regular caregiver/s.	Give lots of cuddles and smiles. Meet needs promptly. Ensure babies who have become wary of strangers are left with familiar people wherever possible.
	Learn the difference between familiar people and strangers.	Become wary of strangers. A child may stay close to you in strange situations.	Let them explore at their own pace. Don't make them go to strangers if avoidable.
	Awareness of others begins.	Start to recognise the meaning of others' expressions.	Respond supportively to their reactions.
1-2 years	May start to show some empathy for others.	May try and comfort a crying baby.	Encourage signs of empathy but guide actions to ensure appropriateness eg a child may try to comfort a baby with an overly affectionate hug. Talk about emotions that they notice ... "The baby is crying – I think he might be hungry."
	Can be impulsive and want their needs to be met immediately.	May start throwing tantrums.	Anticipate their needs before they get too great eg hunger, tiredness.
2-3 years	Begin to develop self-concept and ideas such as ownership – for example "mine".	Begin to say "that's mine". Spend time observing other children.	Children need to be able to be able to "own" things before they can really share with others. Consider ways to protect children's ownership while helping them learn to share with others.
	Show an interest in other children.	Try ways of interacting for example verbal expression, hitting, biting.	Encourage use of language, turn taking, sharing and other non-aggressive ways of playing with others.

Age	Developmental Changes	Possible Behaviour Challenges	Positive Responses
3-4 years	Able to recognise and express different emotions. Has more control over emotions.	Will use a range of tactics to communicate emotions.	Talk about feelings and experiences with your child. As they understand more, talk to them about everyday things such as self-care and safety for example crossing the road, washing hands.
	Interest in others increases.	Can wait longer for things they want.	If keeping them waiting, give a time frame eg tell them you will address their needs after you have finished dishes or after you've put the baby to bed.
	May start to show some self-conscious emotions.	Are often quite helpful and willing to co-operate with others. Can get embarrassed, express pride or guilt.	Show enthusiasm and appreciation when they help you even if the jobs they do are not up to your standards – they will pick up on your approval or disapproval.
4-5 years	Will play co-operatively with other children.	Friendships become very important.	Provide opportunities for your child to develop friendships with other children.
	May be very energetic and appear to be overly confident, displaying a sense of humour and adventure. Often willing to try new things and to persevere even when things are difficult.	Test boundaries.	Energetic children need to use up their energy – be realistic about your expectations for example if they are jumping on furniture a visit to the park might be a good solution.
	May try to get reactions from adults.	Use 'silly' talk.	Try and to make few rules but be consistent in enforcing them. Try not to react to things that might seem silly – they will grow out of it. Ignore!

Chart Three: Physical Development

The physical development of children usually occurs in the same general pattern. The development of control starts with the head, then the trunk and arms followed by the legs. Control of arms and legs develops before coordination of hands and fingers. Although the sequence of development is the same for most children the rate of progress is often different.

Age	Developmental Changes	Possible Behaviour Challenges	Positive Responses
0-12 months	Sitting.	Begin exploring their own fingers and toes. Begin exploring others' faces. Begin exploring objects in their reach by looking, listening, smelling and tasting.	Provide safe experiences for your child to explore – simple objects can be really interesting boxes, containers, clothes pegs. Be one step ahead by thinking of potential hazards put up stair barriers before your child can roll. Encourage your child's efforts when they try new things.
	Crawling.		
	Pulling to stand holding onto furniture, people.		
	Stand holding on.		
	Can walk around things holding on.		
	Can clap hands.		
1-2 years	Can pick up small things like crumbs.		
	Can walk steadily.	Will explore further afield.	Make the environment safe but fun. Be aware of the child's limitations and help when needed. For example a child may be able to walk up stairs but may need to be taught a safe way for coming down again.
	Walk up stairs.		
	Can jump on the floor.		Provide paper and chunky pens for scribbling.
Scribble vigorously.		Encourage them to find solutions to their own problems.	
	Able to build towers.		



Age	Developmental Changes	Possible Behaviour Challenges	Positive Responses
2-3 years	Walking expands to running, jumping, hopping, throwing and catching balls.	Like parks and outdoor spaces.	Provide lots of physical experiences. Children love simple obstacle course, playing with large balls or balloons, dancing to music or using ride-on toys.
	Can push ride-on toys with feet.	Want to ride on trikes and similar toys.	
	Put on and remove simple clothing – can undo zips and large buttons.	Can demand to dress themselves – this can take some time.	Make time for children to develop independence in dressing and undressing themselves.
	Use a spoon effectively.	Want to feed themselves.	Let them feed themselves and expect mess!
3-4 years	Alternate feet when climbing stairs.	Climb anything possible.	Encourage simple games such as follow the leader. Provide climbing opportunities such as tree stumps, gates or jungle gyms.
	Enjoy climbing objects and jumping off.	Play wider range of games.	
	Throw and catch balls.		
	Can pedal and steer tricycles.		Provide experiences where they can use various tools such as spreading butter on toast, using a hammer and nails, painting and drawing.
	Can use scissors.	Cut up everything in sight.	
	Copy vertical lines and circles.	Will draw on anything including walls.	
Can serve their own food and drink.		Let them help with real jobs.	

Age	Developmental Changes	Possible Behaviour Challenges	Positive Responses
4-5 years	Gallop and skip. Play confidently with balls – can throw, catch, kick and bounce. Enjoy learning new skills such as swinging themselves, swimming, riding a small 2-wheeler, gymnastics.	Like to play in open spaces. Like climbing higher.	Provide opportunities for them to try new skills and expand current ones such as swinging, forward rolls, bouncing a ball. Be patient and encouraging with their efforts.
	Can button small buttons. Cut with scissors following lines.	Will spend hours buttoning buttons.	Involve them in everyday opportunities which use their fine motor skills – cooking, dressing themselves, drawing pictures, decorating objects etc.
	Use fine motor skills to produce pictures and symbols.	Like painting, making things out of collage.	



Chart Four: Cognitive Development

Cognitive development involves developing mental abilities. One aspect of this is the development of language. As this is a distinct area, we provide a separate chart for it on page 16.

Age	Developmental Changes	Positive Responses
0-12 months	Learn by watching things happening around them.	Position babies so they can see interesting happenings around them.
	Love to explore and will often use their mouths to explore different objects.	Children can make a mess as they try experiments such as tipping things out of containers, pulling pots out of a cupboard, splashing in the bath. Provide your child with lots of opportunities to safely explore objects.
	Interested in cause and effect and experiment with different items.	
	Copy facial expressions.	Respond to their expressions. Play games.
1-2 years	Very curious about things, may use chairs to climb up and get objects out of reach.	Be careful where you leave potentially dangerous items for example medicine, cleaning materials etc – children may think of ways to access more difficult places.
	Like to try and help do “real” jobs such as housework, gardening etc.	Involve your child in simple household jobs such as dusting or watering the garden.
	Can follow simple instructions.	Play simple games like “where’s your nose?”, lift the flap books etc.
	Will look for objects they want when they are out of sight.	
	Like experimenting with different things for example putting lids on containers, water play.	Water play is enjoyed by this age — provide different shapes and sizes of containers for filling and emptying.
2-3 years	Can match objects for example shoes, animal pictures.	Include information such as colours, numbers and names of animals in your talk with children.
	Can remember people, places and books.	Avoid testing children on what they know for example “Would you like to wear your blue socks or your purple socks?” is better than “What colour socks have you got on?”.
	Like to pretend to be in other roles.	Give simple objects to let them pretend they are driving cars, making dinner etc.
	Enjoy making things happen and the effect they can have.	Remember that the child may be more interested in the process of making something than in the final product for example building a tower of blocks and demolishing it
	Sense of humour is developing – know when something is ridiculous.	Appreciate their sense of humour.

Age	Developmental Changes	Positive Responses
3-4 years	Can categorise objects into groups eg sorting shells or coloured pegs.	Talk about how they have sorted them for example "Oh you've put all the big ones together and the little ones together." Think of fun ways to do activities like counting together.
	Like to play pretend games such as families, hospitals etc.	Provide simple materials for such games.
	Able to copy or follow instructions for simple tasks.	It may take longer to achieve a task when involving your young child but consider the learning they are getting as they help you bake, plant seeds, set the table or sort clothes.
	Can understand the rules of simple games like hide and seek.	Play simple games with them after clearly explaining the rules.
4-5 years	Know the names of primary colours and can match them.	Provide paper, pens, crayons and books with a range of colours.
	Play with other children in complex dramatic or pretend games – can solve their own problems.	Provide dress up clothes and props for the children to use in their dramatic play. Ask the children what they could use for their games – at this age they are able to imagine an object as being something else for example a stick could be used as a magic wand.
	Have a developing sense of time and can accurately retell a story.	When counting days ahead, tell children how many nights sleep is involved. Listen to their stories.
	Can become very involved in an activity they enjoy doing and display a good deal of concentration.	Praise for the time and effort spent on an activity for example "Wow you have worked on that puzzle for a long time and you did it all by yourself."



Chart Five: Language Development

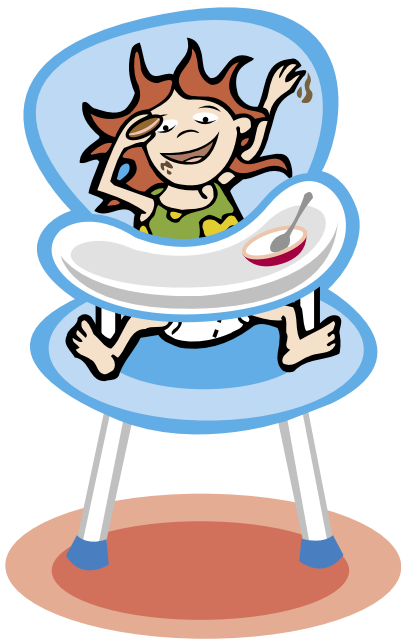
To learn to communicate with other people children need to understand what other people are saying, be able to make the sounds of the language and be able to put the sounds together to make meaningful sentences. These skills develop gradually from birth. By the age of five children usually have a vocabulary of about 2000 words.

Age	Developmental Changes	Positive Responses
0-12 months	Develop different crying sounds to express needs.	Babies enjoy music and rhymes especially if accompanied by actions.
	Smile and laughs to communicate feelings.	Respond to a baby's efforts to communicate.
	Turn to find source of sounds.	Name the source of the sound.
	Copy sounds for example ba ba, ma ma.	Respond to sounds they make.
	Use gestures such as pointing to communicate.	Respond to pre-verbal gestures by naming objects for example "Yes, it's an aeroplane."
1-2 years	Respond to simple instructions.	Enjoy games such as pat-a-cake and peek-a-boo with them.
	Look for familiar objects when named.	Ask children to find objects they know.
	Use words like "Mummy" and "dog".	Respond to a child's single word by repeating it back in simple sentences.
	Repeat words and may start to combine two words.	Read lots of stories.
	Point to parts of body when asked.	Teach them appropriate names for body parts.
2-3 years	Speak in 2-3 word sentences.	The correct formation of sounds is developed gradually. At this stage a child will substitute many sounds with other easier sounds. Model the correct sound rather than correcting the child for example "Yes – it is Sally" rather than "No, it's not Dally. It's Sally".
	Ask simple questions.	Answer their questions.
	Know their full name and gender.	Encourage them to give their own name if you are asked for their name.
	Understands concepts such as on, under; big etc.	Use full sentences.
	Follow 2-step instructions.	Give clear, two-step instructions.

Age	Developmental Changes	Positive Responses
3-4 years	Familiar people can understand child's speech most of the time.	Talk in full sentences to children. Be prepared to read their favourite books over and over. They may start to memorise the words or repeated phrases this is a great pre-reading skill. Try telling stories about real or imaginary things.
	Will talk with other children when playing.	
	Can recite nursery rhymes or simple songs.	
	Will ask lots of questions.	Answer their questions accurately and appropriately for their age.
4-5 years	Tell stories that mix real and unreal facts.	Don't believe everything they say! But appreciate their imagination.
	Speech is usually understood by most people but sounds such as 's' and 'th' may still be developing.	When reading books together, talk about what is happening in the story and in the pictures.
	Can answer lots of questions sensibly and can accurately retell past events.	Listen.
	Can tell you about an upcoming event.	Listen.
	Can retell stories and describe pictures accurately. Knows familiar songs and rhymes.	Show an interest when your child has something they want to tell you – even if it takes a while for them to get the story out!
Can follow more complex instructions.	Make sure you have their attention when you give them instructions. If they are focused on something else they may not hear you.	



Chart Six: Social Play Stages



Increasing conflict ...

Often as a child becomes more interested in other children they are more likely to end up in conflict. Working and playing with others is a complex task and at first children may try inappropriate ways to start friendships. Try as much as possible to help children to solve conflicts for themselves. This will give them very valuable skills to use throughout life when you are no longer there to solve their problems for them.

Many parents and caregivers are concerned about their children's ability to develop and maintain friendships with other children. Research shows there is a pattern of social progression that children follow as their social skills increase.

From the age of about two years, children make the transition to being socially aware and then interacting with others. Most of this development occurs in the preschool years so that most 5 – 6 year old children are able to play cooperatively with others of their age.

Children's social development shows in how they play with others. There are six categories of play.

Uninvolved play:	Occupied by watching anything what may be of interest. They might play with their own body or be involved in seemingly aimless activities.
Onlooker play:	Spend most of their time watching other children play. They may talk to the other children and even give suggestions but do not become actively involved in the play.
Solitary play:	Play independently with toys that are different from those playing around them. They are involved in their own activity without paying much attention to those around them.
Parallel play:	Play near other children but all are engaged in independent activities.
Associative play:	May share and talk about materials and activities but each will explore and use the materials in individual ways. One child may imitate another child's play but will be involved in her or his own activity.
Co-operative play:	Acknowledge ideas of others. There is a common goal among the children involved. Children take roles in negotiating the rules and objectives of the common goals.

LOOKING CLOSER

The Mystery of Play Uncovered

Children may repeatedly play in the same way, sometimes in a very annoying or destructive way. Often they are using schema to explore new learning. A schema is a repeated pattern of play that children sometimes have to compulsively explore.

For example a child may continually take all the cushions off the furniture and make a nest and then fill it with objects. You may also see them tip all the washing out of your laundry basket and sit in it. This means they are exploring a “containing schema” and are exploring ideas about size, area and volume.

Some other examples are:

- Separation schema – child may cut everything in sight with scissors and tear pieces of sellotape endlessly
- Connecting schema – child may assemble string, ribbons, shoe laces and tie them together
- Vertical schema – child may want to endlessly slide down slides, jump on trampolines, draw vertical lines on paper, flick light switches up and down (and watch the effect they are having on the light), build towers of blocks
- Enveloping schema – child may paint a picture then paint over the whole thing in black paint, wrap up parcels, bury toys in sandpit
- Circular schema – child may turn the volume knob up and down on your stereo, sit behind the steering wheel of the car and turn it; run round and round in circles.

These are just a few of the schema children sometimes explore while they are developing their thinking skills. If you notice a child exploring a schema (and sometimes they explore more than one at a time), given them the opportunity to pursue it in a way that is acceptable for you.

Example: A child is compulsively cutting paper, the curtains, her own hair and even her little sister's hair despite being told not to and the parent hiding the scissors.

Strategy: Assemble a big range of materials (paper, cardboard, cotton, silk, Hessian) and cutting implements (scissors and pinking shears). Sit with her and help her explore cutting. Explain the things she can cut and those she can't. Keep giving her similar opportunities until she moves on to something else.



Key Idea 2

Understanding and responding positively to developmental changes can help parents and caregivers to:

- understand that the way children behave is part of growing up
- enjoy the changes and adapt to them
- have realistic expectations for children
- provide the best opportunities and experiences to support children’s development
- parent in a way where everyone’s dignity stays intact.

A. Understand that the way children behave is part of growing up

All children’s behaviour has a reason and a purpose. When very young children (or those with special needs) are unable to communicate verbally, we can often work out what they want from the behaviour they show. For example babies cry to express their needs. They may cry because they want to be fed or need to be changed. Toddlers’ behaviour may show us that they want to assert their new-found independence.

All young children want to belong, to be heard and to be actively involved. These needs and the ability to express them emerge as children progress through different development stages.

Sometimes, problems arise when parents or other adults don’t know how to interpret the child’s behaviour. Behaviours can also become problematic for parents when children express their needs or wants in ways adults view as unacceptable. Some examples of these are:



Behaviour	The child could be saying
Whining	“I want Dad to buy me an icecream.”
Snatching a toy from another child	“That dinosaur looks great, I must have it!”
Hitting or biting another child	“They won’t let me have a turn.”
Having a tantrum	“I can’t cope with this long hot busy day for a minute longer.”
Giving up easily	“I don’t want to try that, I might fail and someone could get cross with me.”

In these cases children have not yet learned how to achieve or express their needs in a way that can be understood or that is seen by the adult world as acceptable.

When we understand that children behave in certain ways because they have not developed skills to handle situations, it is easier for us to see ourselves as guides, teaching children how to express their needs and feelings in a socially acceptable way.

Understanding why a child is doing something helps us decide how to respond and also helps us realise that children's behaviour is not personally directed against us. This helps us to stand back and respond in a constructive way rather than in a reactive way.





B. Enjoy the changes children go through and adapt to them

If we adapt our parenting to children's developmental changes, we assist their development, avoid problematic behaviours and are in a strong position to maintain loving and nurturing relationships.

By watching for and responding to developmental changes we can really help them to learn and to grow. When we are actively conscious of these changes we will be better prepared to meet new parenting challenges.

We can better provide guidance and support when we know what children are capable of doing and when we understand the developmental tasks they face. When we know the predictable stages of development, we can recognise changes and choose our responses. This in turn allows us to feel less stressed and more able to enjoy our children. It also helps us develop supportive and loving relationships with our children.



- 1 You are trying to feed a child but he keeps trying to grab the spoon. Use the development charts to help you identify how old this child is likely to be.

One response to this situation that would support the child's learning would be to tie a towel or bib around the child's neck to protect his clothes and make sure the floor under the high chair can be easily cleaned – or is protected. Then allow the child to feed himself, assisting as necessary.

Think of other options and the likely consequences of each option for the child and yourself.
- 2 Now think of two stages a child goes through and practical ways you can assist their development while maintaining appropriate behaviours.
- 3 Think of how you adapt to changes in your body or mind or emotions. How do others support you to adjust to these changes – or make adjustment more difficult for you?

C. Have realistic expectations for children

What should we expect of our children? It is often hard to know. Expect too little and children may not want to try to learn new things. Expect too much and they may learn failure.

What we can realistically expect is determined by the child's stage of development and the context.

We expect quite different behaviour at meal times from a toddler and a seven-year-old. The toddler is likely to make a mess, use her hands if she finds a spoon difficult and be unable to sit still long. Most seven-year-olds can be expected to take part in family rituals and conversations while eating with knife and fork.

The context also affects what it is realistic to expect of children. If you take children to the supermarket when they are tired and hungry you can expect tantrums, "I want ..." messages and other difficult behaviours.

Many of our difficulties with our children, incidents that lead us to act in ways we are not comfortable with, or to have negative interactions with children, arise from having unrealistic expectations of them. Parents can evaluate the reasonableness of their expectations by asking themselves:

- Is the child mature enough to understand what is wanted?
- Has the expectation been explained in a way the child can understand?
- Does the child have the necessary physical skills?
- Has the child had the opportunity to learn the skill expected?

Tips for exercises

Think of five situations where children have "misbehaved" while in your care. Combine your knowledge of the child with the information in the developmental charts above to assist you to work out what it was realistic to expect in the situations you identified.



D. Provide the best opportunities and experiences to support children's development

Parents are the most important educators of their children and can have a positive influence on their children's development. With an understanding of child development, parents can provide experiences, toys and activities which are right for their children at the right time.

Here are some ideas that you can explore, alongside the developmental charts.

Creativity

- Provide an environment where children's curiosity and creativity is encouraged.
- Place young babies where they can see interesting things.
- Give children a range of objects to explore – clothes pegs, containers of different shapes and sizes, boxes, etc.
- Let toddlers explore the pot and plastics cupboards.
- Provide art materials – paper, pens, glue, scissors, etc.
- Give children access to a range of dress-ups.
- Take them into different environments that stimulate their learning.

Language

- Talk to children about anything and everything right from the start using an appropriate level of language.
- Take time to listen and respond to children's ideas and questions.
- Books – read lots with your child. Enjoy the book together as you talk about what is happening in the story.
- Tell stories, recite simple poems, sing nursery rhymes and other songs.

Physical Skills

- Give babies the opportunity to use their muscles, for example let them have time lying on the floor to kick and roll.
- Give time to practice crawling.
- Give children opportunities for lots of big muscle play – running, playing with balls, balancing, climbing, jumping.
- Let children help out with jobs where they can use both physical and thinking skills – but remember to allow extra time!

Problem Solving

- Give children opportunities to solve everyday problems themselves.
- Support them when they need to achieve a task and let them do the bits they can do by themselves.
- Ask open questions.
- Provide toys that encourage problems solving – shape sorters, hammer and ball games, marble runs, puzzles.
- Show excitement and praise children when they achieve something – they will really want to try and please.

Social Skills

- Give children opportunities to relate to other adults and children.
- Encourage independence in everyday skills such as feeding themselves, choosing clothes and dressing themselves, washing hands and toileting.
- Support children as they become more socially aware – don't expect too much too soon. Remember learning how to be a friend is quite a complex business.
- Discuss social relationships and values with children.
- Give children the skills and opportunities to solve conflicts and negotiate with others.



Think of times you remember from your childhood that stimulated an interest in you that you have maintained. What experience or thing was provided that stimulated this interest?



LOOKING CLOSER

Language and Early Literacy Development

Children have to learn to sit and then pull themselves up to stand before they can contemplate learning to walk. There is a similar analogy with learning to read and write.

The most important thing a child can be given to support later literacy is a love of language. Stories, rhymes, songs, jokes, jingles and conversation are the riches a whānau can give a child.

There is no point in trying to force children to read or write until they have learned early literacy skills. The biggest understanding for a pre-literate child is realising that symbols (letters and words) can have meaning. They also have to know how a book 'works'.

When read to, children, in addition to hearing a story, almost automatically learn about written language as well. They learn that the words in a particular written story are always in the same order and on the same page. They may also learn that print goes from left to right and that there are spaces between words. These understandings, which will be important when a child begins formal schooling, develop very naturally when the child sits on the reader's lap and follows their finger across the print while they point to the words they say.

Here are some of the stages in early literacy.

Babies: Even tiny babies will look over the pictures of a book with their eyes. By 7 to 10 months, babies may make sounds while looking at books. Later in babyhood they will point to familiar objects in a book (dog, cat, baby). Babies may babble with a book in a way that sounds like they are reading in a foreign language.

Toddlers: Children may notice the print on the pages. They might pretend to read to their dolls or stuffed animals and will remember and repeat familiar words in a book. They will also begin to explore what it is like to make marks on paper.

Two-year-olds: Around 2 years of age, children start to recognise when a book is upside down. They enjoy stories that relate to their lives (books about eating, going to bed, going to grandma's, etc.) and will command an adult to read to them. Their marks on paper become more purposeful.

Three-year-olds: Children may be noticing specific letters on the page (such as letters in their names). They may move their finger along a line in the story and recite the words from memory. They may recognize the difference between writing and drawing and will "write" pretend messages on the paper.

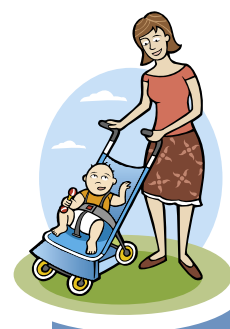
Four-year-olds: Children recognise that words on paper serve different purposes (a grocery list, a menu, a newspaper). They pay attention to rhyming sounds and now appreciate funny rhyming books (Dr. Seuss). During story reading, they ask questions and make comments that indicate they understand the entire story. They write or scribble many messages and integrate the scribbling into their play.

Five-year-olds: Children may demonstrate many of the skills that will help them learn to read and write fluently. They know the parts of a book and how a book works. They “read” books and enjoy reading books aloud and to their friends. They can recognize a few words by sight (names, “the”, “is”, “you”). They can often write their own names and can write some other letters and words if an adult tells them how to do it.

Parents who are concerned about children learning to read and write can watch for these stages and be reassured that their children are on the road to becoming literate.

We help children to develop language and literacy when we:

- read and tell them stories
- read the same books over and over again
- give them books to explore
- let them see parents using printed material
- talk to them – they need to hear language to discover how it works and add to their vocabulary
- sing children songs and tell them rhymes
- give children paper and pens to practice drawing and pretend writing.



E. Parent in a way where everyone's dignity stays intact

Guiding children's behaviour is a process where adults help children

- learn how to manage their basic impulses
- express their feelings
- channel their frustrations
- solve their own problems.

Guidance has both short and long term goals. Short term goals deal with the current crisis or new behaviour which requires immediate action. The long term goal is to use strategies which will help children become independent, self-disciplined, happy and self-reliant adults. It is often hard in the heat of a crisis to keep the long term goal in mind.

The emphasis should be on guiding and teaching with a strong problem-solving component. The aim is to be able to trust children to solve their own problems, to learn to monitor their own behaviour and to make judgments based on the inner controls they learn as they interact with others. Ultimately they should be able to carry these skills through life when parents are not present to help them.

This learning takes place over a period of time. It cannot be achieved through a single act but is developed slowly during the life of the child, step-by-step. There are no quick fixes. Every interaction counts!

Using positive parenting strategies will:

- provide win-win solutions for everyone
- achieve short and long term development goals for children
- build children's self-esteem and maintain the parents' self-esteem as well
- build and maintain warm relationships between children and their parents or caregivers
- make parenting a pleasurable and rewarding experience.

Children need love, respect, encouragement, praise, warmth, fun, support, positivity, understanding, challenges, a variety of experiences, being allowed to make mistakes, choices, boundaries, explanations, chances to solve their own problems.

Children do not need impatience, over-structure, negativity, control, power struggles, repression, punishment, pressure, to feel disappointment or shame, criticism for mistakes or having their problems solved for them.

F. Coping with change

Developmental changes in children with special needs may happen at a slower pace.

Children change constantly. Some changes, such as growing taller, can be easily seen. Others can be seen in changing behaviour or seeing children doing something new. Some social and emotional changes are not so easy to spot and may take parents by surprise.

Stages of growth build one upon another. As they grow, children switch back and forth between “comfortable” stages and “uncomfortable” stages.

The comfortable stages come when they take in all they have learned – all the new and old pieces seem to fit together well. Uncomfortable stages are times of rapid growth and change.

Think of a young child you know and reflect on the child’s eating patterns. You may notice that the child will have times when he is hungry all the time and other times when you become concerned because he will eat so little. A major cause of these changes is physical growth. Children will often eat as much as possible just before a growth ‘spurt’. Then they will have a ‘lull’ period.



Think of other changing patterns in children and what may cause them.

Change, for most of us, causes stress and anxiety, or discomfort. A child in a time of discomfort may have trouble coping with day-to-day life and may seem extra-sensitive or argue more. Children change very quickly, especially in the years before they start school. Strategies that work at one age may not work at another. A child of 2 ½ years is very different from a child of 3 years.

Be prepared for a major change every six months.

The amount a child learns and changes in the first five years of its life is enormous. All these changes take place gradually and together. The pace at which each child develops in each area can vary greatly.

The different areas of development also affect each other. For example once a child is able to walk, they can view the world from a different perspective. They can take part in different social situations, make more choices and explore a wider range of materials and objects.

Here are examples of the developments happening with a new baby, contrasted with a typical five-year-old.

New baby	Typical five-year-old
Totally dependent	Relatively independent
Food	Can feed self
Basic reflex movements	Good physical skills
Communicates needs through crying	Communicates needs and ideas through spoken language
Focused on self	Developing empathy for how others might feel
Wants needs met immediately	Able to wait longer to satisfy needs
Need for predictability	Need for challenge
Unaware of others socially	Able to play cooperatively with other children
Lack of physical co-ordination	Growing control of body
Plays with simple objects or own body	Complex dramatic play involving big muscles, fine motor skills, abstract thinking, language

New developments can be positive but can also create challenges for parents.

- A child who has learned to walk relieves their parents of carrying them but there are now new safety issues the parent has to adjust to.
- A child who has learned to feed themselves relieves their parent of spending time at each meal feeding them. However until practised, the child will create a mess.
- A child who has developed language skills will be able to easily communicate their needs but parents may not like what they hear!

Key Idea 3

Each child is unique and will respond differently to each development. Relationships between each parent and each child are also unique.

Children are unique individuals. They are different from each other. They are different at different ages. And they are different in different circumstances. They may also be different from what parents expect. Why is Jack so mean these days when he used to be such a nice child? Why is Tommy so messy when Lucy is so tidy? Why is Sara so happy at home but so shy at kindergarten? Every child is a unique blend of genes, the environment they are raised in and the experiences they encounter.

Although children develop in the same general pattern they will each develop at different rates and have different strengths and challenges. The ages given in the charts above are indicative. Children commonly do develop particular abilities at these ages. However, there is also considerable variability. The child with special needs may develop at a quite different pace. A child may not learn to read until he is 8 but this supposed "late" development does not in any way hamper his future. As long as the time is "right" for the child, the outcome will be satisfactory.

In New Zealand children are generally expected to be walking soon after their first birthday. In some cultures early mobility is actively discouraged and may not happen until they are nearer two.

Society's expectations can cause difficulties for parents of children who develop in ways that are not "textbook". If new parents are constantly asked "does your baby sleep through the night yet?", they may begin to feel anxious about how they are managing the baby or about the child's wellbeing.



Think about judgements you have made about your own, or other people's children because of your expectation that children should be acting or developing in particular ways at particular ages. Think about ways you can support development rather than judging it.

Temperaments

From a very early age, children will start to display their different temperaments. These differences may affect how active they are, how they respond to new situations, how long their attention span is and even the moods they display. Although each child is born with a particular temperament, parenting practices can have a big impact on helping children develop healthy emotions. A good match between the parenting style and a child's temperament can help the child's development whereas if there is a poor fit parents need to be more understanding and adaptable to their child to encourage their development.

The continuum on page 33 can be used by parents to compare their own and their child's temperaments.

Easy children are calm, happy, regular in sleeping and eating habits, adaptable and not easily upset.

Challenging children are often fussy, irregular in feeding and sleeping habits, fearful of new people and situations, easily upset, highly strung and intense in their reactions.

Slow to warm up children are relatively inactive and fussy, tend to withdraw or to react negatively to novelty, but their reactions gradually become more positive with experience.

If we understand the temperament of our children, we can respond more appropriately and supportively to their particular needs.

Likewise, it is helpful to understand our own temperaments. We each have different strengths and different weaknesses. If we are very caring we may need to learn how to be strong and set limits. If we are strong, we may need to practice being understanding and sending messages of love.

Example: A child who is naturally wary of new people and experiences may stay close to his parents in new situations. Parents may feel frustrated by this behaviour, especially if temperamentally they are naturally social. They may try to force the child to join in and enjoy the new experiences. This may make the child feel even more insecure. The child will develop better social skills if the parent supports them and patiently encourages them to join in.

LOOKING CLOSER

Charting Temperament

How would you describe your own temperament? Your children's? Use copies of this chart to make comparisons.



Perspectives on Different Behaviours

Example 1

When Heni drops Thomas off at crèche in the morning he seems excited to be there but as soon as she begins to leave he starts screaming and tries to cling to her. The staff says he settles in about 5 minutes but she hates leaving him so distressed.

I have to go now otherwise I'll be late but should I be leaving him – he seems so unhappy..."

I don't want Mum to go, I like her being close.



Behaviour

Separation anxiety. The child is attached to a parent and notices when they leave.

Learning

- People can leave but they will come back.
- Other people can also meet my needs.

Strategies

- Start with short separations so they learn that you will return.
- Show confidence in the person looking after your child and leave confidently.

Example 2

Mary is helping Helen get dressed. She tries to pull a red dress over her head. Helen shrieks, pulls it off and says "I don't want to wear that, I want to do it myself." She starts to put a summer nightie on.

We're running late, I just wish she'd co-operate so we could be on time ... People will think I can't manage if they see her wearing a lightweight nightie in the middle of winter ... I'm losing control here."

I can choose myself – I don't like that dress!



Behaviour

The child is learning autonomy and wants to be independent.

Learning

- Short-term – self help-skills and beginning of independence.
- Ability to make choices.
- Long-term – confident, independent person who can make good choices.

Strategies

- Allow time for children to try things out themselves.
- Give simple choices ("Would you like the red dress or blue dress?").
- Set simple boundaries ("You can't wear summer clothes on cold days!").

Example 3

Emily has come to play at Vicky's house. She is crying because she wants to play with the doll's pram. Vicky, who received the pram as a birthday present that day, is firmly holding on to it saying "it's mine – she can't play with it!"

Vicky:

"This pram is special to me ... it's mine and I want it for myself. If she takes it, when will I get it back?"

Emily:

"That pram is so neat. I really want a turn with it."



Behaviour

Child does not want to share possessions. Exploring the concept of ownership, possessions and what this means when relating to others.

Learning

- Ways to relate happily with other people.
- Maintaining own rights.
- Rules around possessions.

Strategies

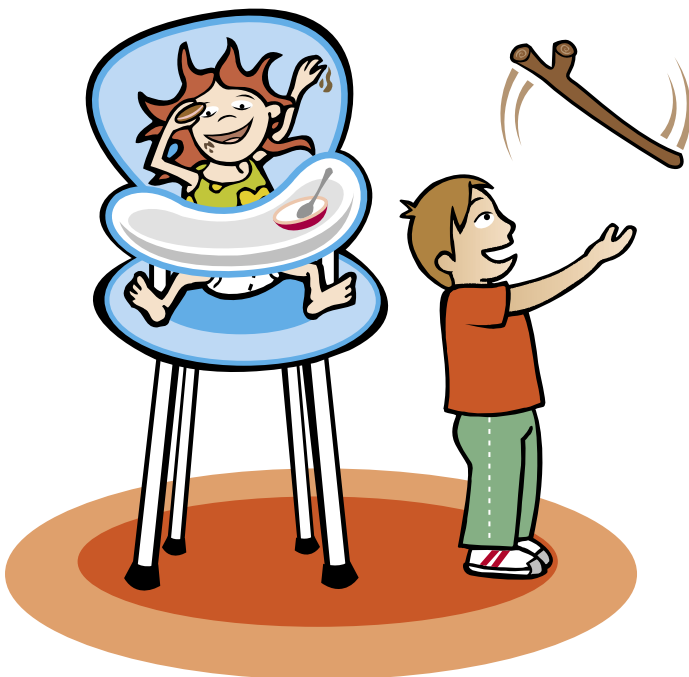
- Allow your child to have special things they don't have to share.
- Verbally recognize each child's feelings.
- With younger children suggest strategies such as turn-taking.
- With older children help them to think of ways to solve the problem.

Example 4

Jake picks up a stick. He looks at it, smiles and then tosses it high in the air. It lands close to his baby sister who is sitting near by.

I wish he would stop throwing things. He's going to break something or hurt someone.

This is so cool. I can make this object fly across the room – look at the shape it makes – wow!



Behaviour

Child is able to use refined gross motor skills to explore new ideas, abstract concepts and his own physical capabilities.

Learning

- New knowledge about the physical world – for example, how objects behave when dropped or thrown.
- Exploration of trajectories.
- Thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills

Strategies

- Provide safe opportunities to explore throwing different objects.
- Set realistic limits on where and what they can throw.
- Explain in simple language the possible consequences of throwing objects.

Practice Template

Use this template and copies of page 39 to look at developmental behaviours from other different aspects.

Behaviour

What is the developmental reason for the behaviour?

Learning

When the child does this, what were they learning?

How will this learning benefit the child in the short-term and the long-term?

Strategies

What positive parenting strategies could parents use to ensure a win/win solution for everyone in this situation?

What did the child do?

Describe what the child was doing and saying.

Child's Voice

What was the child thinking when they did this? What was the reason for the behaviour?

Parent's Voice

What was the parent thinking and what anxieties did they have when this happened?

What did the child do?

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Child's Voice

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Parent's Voice

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Behaviour

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Strategies

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Ideas to Try With Parents

Warm-ups

- Share with one other person a behaviour of your child you are currently finding challenging.
- Picture your child grown-up. Share your vision with one other person.

Discussion questions for parents

- What issues are currently a challenge for you with your child?
- Why do you think your child is behaving like this?
- What makes this a problem for you?
- What could you do to help your child and reduce the problem for yourself?

Exercises for working with parents

- 1 Ask parents to brainstorm ways that understanding children's development will help them be better parents. Write up their ideas.
- 2 Imagine you are a child – your child. Do you think that you would see your home as a safe and predictable place? Close your eyes and imagine a day at your house as a child. Are you given many opportunities to explore? Are reasonable rules made? Are they enforced kindly and consistently?
- 3 Write up some examples of developmentally challenging behaviour. Ask parents what impact this behaviour might have on them (the parent's voice). Discuss what the needs of the child might be in each example (the child's voice). Discuss strategies for coping with these challenges.
- 4 Using the 'ages and stages' information in this module prepare slips of paper with the ages on and slips of paper with developmental stages. Form parents into small groups and ask them to put the developmental stages under the ages they think they might occur. Finish by discussing the advantages of parents being realistic about what their child can and can't do yet.
- 5 Ask parents to brainstorm all the developments they can think of that children are going through. Write up their ideas.
- 6 Form into small groups. Ask each group to choose either creativity, language, physical skills, problem-solving (thinking) skills and social skills. Ask them to write down as many ideas as they can for ways parents can help their children's development in these areas. Form into large group for feedback.
- 7 Use the temperament continuum in the module for parents to assess their own and their children's temperaments. Discuss what changes they could make to their parenting to take any differences into account.

Contacts, Resources and References

Contacts

SKIP has a range of pamphlets for parents and resources for trainers. For more information email skipinfo@msd.govt.nz

Resources

- *SKIP resources – for example, height chart, SKIP pamphlets on supermarket survival or children with special needs, SKIP fridge magnets.*
- *Parenting magazines e.g. Parents Inc, Treasures.*
- *'Kids are worth it' by Barbara Coloroso.*
- *'Of course I love you, NOW GO TO YOUR ROOM!' by Diane Levy.*
- *'Toddler Taming' by Dr Christopher Green.*

Different parenting courses are available in different areas. Examples are Toolbox Parenting Groups, new mothers support groups, Barnardos and Parent Centre courses, Playcentre.

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