

The Critical Years: Laying the Foundation for Lifelong Success

Parent/Child Vignettes

Marissa is the foster mother of 4 week-old Marcus.

Marcus is hungry and Marissa sits in the rocker with Marcus to give him his bottle. Marissa turns off the TV and her phone. She holds Marcus, looks into his eyes, smiles and gently talks to him until he finishes his bottle. Marcus grips Marissa's finger while drinking and gazes into Marissa's eyes.

Marcus is:

- ❖ Forming a close bond with Marissa**
- ❖ Learning to trust and feeling loved and safe**
- ❖ Practicing his grasp**
- ❖ Enjoying the sound and rhythm of Marissa's voice**

Simon is the adoptive father of 8 month-old Kaley.

Before getting ready for bed, Simon and Kaley play for 15 minutes on the living room floor. Kaley's favorite game is to crawl after a toy car when Simon pushes it across the floor. She laughs and babbles when she gets the car, sits up and pushes it back to Simon, waiting for him to push it again. Simon pushes the car and talks to Kaley in response to her babbling.

Kaley is:

- ❖ Bonding with her father**
- ❖ Experiencing a pleasant routine before getting ready for bed**
- ❖ Practicing crawling and sitting up by herself**
- ❖ Practicing "conversation" with her father**

Darshana is the foster mother of 16 month-old Crystal.

Darshana and Crystal like to play in the yard after dinner. Crystal loves to climb up and slide down the small slide over and over again. If Darshana tries to help her, she pushes her hand away saying "Me go!" Darshana allows Crystal to go up and down by herself but stays close by in case she is needed to assist. Darshana claps and smiles every time Crystal slides down.

When it is time to go inside, Crystal runs away and says "No!" Darshana calmly says "It's time to go in now and take a bath" and begins to put the toys on the porch. Crystal runs to help Darshana carry the toys inside.

Crystal is:

- ❖ Practicing independence
- ❖ Practicing gross motor skills
- ❖ Learning about limits and self-regulation
- ❖ Helping with a simple chore

Kevin and Jessica are the birth parents of 22 month-old Christopher.

Kevin and Jessica are preparing dinner. Kevin puts a basket of toy pots, pans and dishes nearby on the floor and says "Christopher, it's time to make dinner!" Christopher loves to stir, arrange the dishes and give his teddy bear a drink. When it is time to put the toys away and wash hands for dinner, Christopher kicks the plates and throws himself on the floor crying and kicking his feet. Kevin calmly picks up the basket of toys and says "It's time to wash hands for dinner". Kevin waits nearby until Christopher is calmer. Kevin picks Christopher up and says "I know you wanted to keep playing. Let's put the plates away and go wash our hands together."

Christopher is:

- ❖ Practicing pretend play with real life objects
- ❖ Experiencing belonging in his family
- ❖ Practicing self-regulation
- ❖ Learning about limits

David is the foster father of 30 month-old Christian.

David takes Christian to the beach and they bring a bag of favorite toys to play in the sand. A girl about Christian's age comes over and watches David and Christian making a road in the sand. She takes the truck that Christian is using. Christian grabs the truck and yells "It's my truck!". David says "Let's give this car to our friend to use while you finish using the truck and then maybe you can let her play with the truck." David gives the car to the friend, gently takes the truck and gives it to Christian. Christian says "Thank you" in imitation of David and they play. After several minutes, Christian gives the truck to the friend. David smiles and says "You're sharing the truck with your friend and letting her have a turn!"

Christian is:

- ❖ Learning friendship skills - sharing, turn-taking and playing side by side
- ❖ Learning new vocabulary from his father
- ❖ Learning that he can trust his father to care about his needs