

Early Learning Parents' Pages

May 2016

Celebrate Mother's Day, become "screen free" and learn how to keep your baby safe around water and at home.

Celebrating a Mother's Love

Nurturing a child begins at birth when parents respond to an infant's cries and the sounds she makes. Soothing a crying child helps build trust and an attachment to her parents. As the child grows and develops, a parent's nurturing supports her as she learns new ideas and begins to discover independence.

In Joseph Castro's article, [A Mother's Love Changes a Child's Brain](#), research studies confirm that the relationship between a mother's ability to nurture and show love for her child directly affects the child's brain development. Also, a mother's nurturing leads to a positive impact on a child's overall development and shows that learning, memory and stress responses increase due to nurturing.



A nurturing mother will console and encourage her child when there are problems to be solved or when her child is scared or hurt. As a result, the child is better at problem solving and more resilient when experiencing failure. As a baby attempts to crawl, a nurturing mother will smile and coax her child to crawl towards her. This encourages a child to keep trying to crawl even when she falls.

Knowing that a parent is there to support and encourage development will make your child more willing to try new ideas and approach unfamiliar tasks with more confidence in her abilities.

Mother's Day is Sunday, May 8, 2016 and preschoolers and toddlers love creating special gifts for their moms. There are many ideas available on the internet and Pinterest that are age appropriate. With help from a family member, caregiver, teacher or friend, young children can create a special, personalized gift for their mom using footprints or handprints that their mom will treasure for years to come.

Trace your child's forearms and hands and cut them out to form a hug for mom. Write, "I am sending you a big hug" on the top of the card and "Happy Mother's Day, 2016" on the bottom.



A child's fingerprint is a precious tool in creating a card for mom. Have your child make fingerprints on a piece of paper as if they were blowing off the stem of a dandelion similar to the one shown to the left.

On the card, help your child write, "I know you wipe some away, but these prints are meant to stay. So keep them forever, a treasure they'll be. A special 'I love you' for you from me."

Mother's Day is a very special holiday for both your child and her mother. Make the most of it by creating a fun card and do something extra sweet on Sunday to show how much she is appreciated.

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Practicing Safe Swimming

As part of National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, parents are encouraged to celebrate Safe Swimming Week from May 23 through 29. Swimming and participating in other water-related activities are great ways to get your children interested in exercising and can promote a healthy lifestyle. Here in Florida, it is the perfect time to get out in the warm water and participate in water activities with family and friends.

Many communities may offer "mommy and me" or "daddy and me" swimming lessons to help teach parents and children about pool safety and help children get used to the water. Teaching children to be safe around water and helping them learn how to swim will be valuable for their future health and safety.

Activities during these classes can also help parents exercise as they help their children with swimming. Lifting your child out of the water or holding on to him as he kicks his legs and moves his arms helps with your endurance, while providing a fun bonding and learning time with your child.



"The moment a child stops breathing there is a small, precious window of time in which resuscitation may occur, but only if someone knows what to do." – Waterproof FL



The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) provides information to help keep your family safe and healthy around pools, hot tubs, lakes, rivers and the ocean. It is important to learn ways to prevent illnesses and accidents related to swimming and water sports. The [CDC Healthy Swimming Program](#) contains information about physical activities and health benefits related to swimming, in addition to preventing recreational water illnesses, sunburns and drowning that can occur while swimming.

Drowning can happen in the small amount of time it takes to start a load of laundry and is considered a silent catastrophe. The [Waterproof FL](#) website offers steps you can take to prevent an accidental drowning, including providing constant supervision, putting up barriers around the pool and preparing for emergencies by learning CPR and having a phone nearby should you need to call 911.

According to [Kids Health](#), there are many ways to keep your child safe in the water by teaching safety habits and practicing close supervision when your child is in or around water.



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Gain Knowledge on Museum Day

For nearly 40 years, countries around the world have celebrated International Museum Day. Museums can be an integral part of learning, while providing a chance to participate in hands-on learning, along with science, technology, engineering and mathematic or STEM-related activities.

On Wednesday, May 18, 2016, families, classrooms and students are encouraged to visit a museum to learn more about different educational subjects. This day is an occasion to raise awareness of how important museums are in the development of society.

Florida is home to more than 400 museums that include various collections, exhibits and programs for all ages.



Many museums throughout Florida, including Glazer Children's Museum and Schoolhouse Children's Museum & Learning Center, provide interesting, hands-on activities to get your children interested in learning, while having fun.

Take time out of your busy schedule on May 18 to discover just one of Florida's 400 amazing museums. Find a full list from the [Florida Association of Museums](#) and choose "Children's" as your museum type to find great museums to visit.

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Safe Baby Play Spaces

When you bring your new baby home for the first time, there should be separate safe sleeping and playing spaces for your newborn. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) provides tips and information on [creating a safe sleep environment](#) for your infant, designed to keep your baby safe and give you ease of mind.

Early childhood researchers discovered it is important to keep your baby's sleeping space separate from the play space, if possible. By maintaining separate spaces for sleep and play, it will become easier to teach your child that it is time to sleep when you put her in a crib for naptime or for the night. Additionally, it separates your baby's play space, equipped with toys and objects to stimulate her senses, and creates a [safe place to sleep](#).

A play space for your baby is great for [tummy time](#) and may be a play pen or simply a space on the floor that is clean and has room for age-appropriate toys. Create a play space that is convenient for you to interact with your baby as she plays. Babies are very inquisitive and begin using their [senses](#) at birth to learn about the world around them. Make your baby's play space as inviting as possible so she can learn from the environment and interactions with others.

Use a soft rug or mat for your baby to lay on with enough room for her to roll around. Place interesting toys or objects around the edges of the play space for her to see and touch to encourage curiosity and movement. If you are using a play pen for your baby's play space, place a mirror or acrylic mirror tiles along one side. Babies love to look at human faces and will spend a lot of time looking at themselves in mirrors. Soft dolls can be included for your baby to offer new faces to look at and touch. Remember to have dolls that are safe for your baby to put in her mouth. Your child will use her mouth, hands, feet and eyes to explore everything in her play space.

Parents can also hang a mobile over their child's play space to give their baby interesting shapes, colors, faces and images to look at. Some mobiles have interchangeable image discs with high contrast colors and bright complementary colors to keep your baby interested.

Cloth books, soft blocks and a variety of shakers and rattles made from different materials that make different sounds can be added to your baby's play space. Most importantly, parents should interact with their baby to help with bonding, learning language and stimulating the brain. Talking and singing with your child as she plays and turning pages in books as you tell her about pictures, will help her learn more about words and the meaning of language.

Remember, your baby's play space is your baby's [learning space](#) as she grows. Make it safe and as interesting as possible.

Learn How to be Screen Free

Everywhere you go, you see children and adults using smart phones and tablets in their car, at restaurants, in grocery stores and even at sporting events. The time of talking among family members and observing the world around you seems to be slowly slipping away.

Many studies show that too much screen time can cause harmful effects to one's health and negatively affect a child's development. In an attempt to encourage children and adults to take time away from their screens and interact with each other on a personal basis, cities and communities across the country are coming together to combat the ever-rising use of technology within families during [Screen Free Week](#) from May 2 through 8.

Although Screen Free Week is coming to an end, it is important to always take time out of your day to enjoy the outdoors away from the distraction of television, computers and phones. Unplug yourself and family members from digital entertainment and [connect](#) with family and friends face-to-face.

Spend time reading to your child, playing games with your family and exploring new places and hobbies together. Ask your child to help wash the car by holding the hose or spraying water or do laundry together by letting your child help with folding while singing songs together. Playing games outside can help you and your child discover birds, flowers, and other plants and animals and will offer a teaching and learning moment for both of you. Spending time in nature is important for healthy child development, and without an electronic device, your child will be able to discover and learn more about the world around him.

Being screen free does not require your family to go outside. Spending time together planning special meals, cooking and setting the table offers the chance to talk about favorite foods or special things that happened during the week.

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Learn How to be Screen Free

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Many researchers recommend discouraging any screen time for children under the age of 2. For older children, less than two hours of educational televised programming is suggested. Time with screens is rapidly increasing each year and at earlier ages. It is important to limit your child's electronic use because [time with screens](#) can be all consuming and can negatively affect his health.



It is important to limit your personal screen time in the presence of your child. When your child sees you using the phone or computer, he knows you are not giving him your full attention. Research shows that children learn screen-time habits from their parents and caregivers. Parents report that their child's behavior improved when they were not using electronics as they interacted with their child. By keeping your phone in your pocket or purse, you and your child will have a better day.

Practicing Safe Swimming

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The [Kids' Corner](#) from Pool Safely has a great app for parents, songs and videos, interactive video games for children and a coloring poster to keep your child interested in learning about water safety, while having fun.



Home to many pools, lakes and rivers, in addition to access to the Atlantic Ocean and Gulf of Mexico, Florida's waters are a great resource for families to enjoy, but it is important to always be aware of any accidents that could happen. So get outside, keep fit and have fun in the water this summer, but remember to follow safety guidelines to keep your family safe.

Look for These Events and More in June

- June is Great Outdoors Month. Get outside and discover Florida throughout the month and stay tuned for fun ways to get active and interested in the environment with your children.
- June 19 is Father's Day. Discover awesome ideas to help your children celebrate their father.
- June 20 is the first official day of summer. Learn how to beat the heat and stay safe in the Florida sun, while enjoying time outside.



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