



# Building Early Emotional Skills

Enhancing development through loving relationships.

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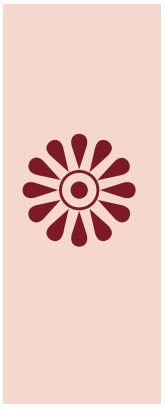
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## The Building Early Emotion Skills (BEES) Curriculum

Positive social emotional development, in the context of secure, responsive relationships, provides an important foundation for later learning. However, there are virtually no curricula on social and emotional development that specifically focus on infants and toddlers and their families. Many existing curricula available for home visitors address parts of social emotional development, but very few approach social emotional development in a systematic way. This is problematic because studies have shown that curricular interventions are more likely to have a positive impact when they are specific, targeted efforts. The development of such curricula is a critical next step in increasing opportunities for infants and toddlers to reach their full potentials.



The BEES curriculum is designed to address these gaps in available materials. The BEES curriculum is designed to be administered in the home with parents and infants/toddlers, ages birth to 3 years. There are select activities specifically for pregnant parents, and many of the BEES activities can be easily adapted for pregnant parents. The BEES curriculum focuses on four main areas of social emotional development.

- Building Parental Awareness
- Listening to and Interacting with Child
- Identifying and Labeling Emotions
- Developing Self Regulation Strategies Over Time

**Building Parental Awareness.** Activities in this section are designed to enhance parents' awareness of their own emotions. We see parental awareness as critical to optimal parenting. Parents who are tuned into their own emotions are better able to support and facilitate baby's emotional development.

**Listening to and Interacting with Baby/Toddler.** Activities in this section are designed to encourage sensitive parenting in support of a warm, secure relationship between parent and baby. Through sensitive interactions, the parent sends the message to baby that her feelings are valued and respected.

**Identifying and Labeling Emotions.** Activities in this section are designed to support baby's awareness and understanding of his feelings. For infants, toddlers, and young children, emotions are new and sometimes overwhelming. By identifying and labeling emotions, parents can help baby better understand feelings, making them more manageable and less overwhelming (for both positive and negative feelings).



### **Developing Self Regulation Strategies Over Time.**

Activities in this section are designed to demonstrate, teach, and support baby’s strategies to manage feelings and behaviors. Learning to manage strong feelings (both positive and negative feelings) takes much time and practice. Babies and toddler certainly won’t master self regulation in these early years, but by toddlerhood, many children have learned some basic regulation techniques with the support of a parent.

### **Theoretical Foundation of the BEES Curriculum**

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The BEES curriculum draws from an Infant Mental Health (IMH) model. The IMH model emphasizes that optimal development of infants and toddlers occurs in the context of nurturing and secure parent-child relationships. In the context of positive parent-child relationships, infants and toddlers are nurtured to grow and to reach their fullest potential.

There are several guiding principles within the IMH model. A primary principle is that the relationship between parent and child is reciprocal, mutual, and shared. Within the IMH framework, the parent holds the primary responsibility towards facilitating a secure and healthy relationship. Through these positive relationships, children are provided a secure base from which to develop physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally. Children with secure attachments can more effectively manage their emotions, are more persistent, are more resilient to frustration, are better problem solvers, have more successful and satisfying social relationships and tend to perform better academically than children with insecure attachments.

Because early development takes place within the context of the parent-child relationship, parents are viewed as their infants’ and toddlers’ first teachers. The parent-child relationship serves as a model for future relationships. The parental role may be influenced by painful or traumatic parental histories, compromising the parent’s capacity to attend sensitively and responsively to the baby’s emotional needs. As a result of the impaired parent-child relationship, the child may later experience difficulties in school, display withdrawn or acting out behaviors, and/or exhibit a hampered capacity to learn, trust and relate to others. The goal of IMH strategies is to nurture the parent and child in relationship together, in order to enhance the parent’s capacities to engage in sensitive, responsive parenting in loving relationship with the child.

The relationship between the parent and the home visitor is also a key context for development, primarily the parent’s development. In the context of a trusting, open, and supportive relationship with the home visitor, the parent is supported and encouraged to process painful past experiences that otherwise have the potential to damage the parent-child relationship. The table following summarizes key IMH strategies to support the parent and child. Many of these strategies are imbedded in the BEES activities.

We recognize that an IMH model is not typically conducive to a semi-structured curriculum. Likewise, not all practitioners who use the BEES curriculum will be trained Infant Mental Health Specialists. However, we hope that the inclusion of the IMH model and IMH strategies will provide a rich conceptual context for practitioners, many of whom already utilize relationships as vehicles for growth and development.



## Key Infant Mental Health Based Skills and Strategies

1. Building relationships and using them as instruments of change
2. Meeting with the infant and parent together during service delivery
3. Sharing in the observation of the infant's growth and development with the parent
4. Offering anticipatory guidance to the parent that is specific to the infant
5. Alerting the parent to the infant's individual accomplishments and needs
6. Helping the parent to find pleasure in the relationship with the infant
7. Creating opportunities for interaction and exchange between parent(s) and infant or parent(s) and home visitor
8. Allowing the parent to take the lead in interacting with the infant or in determining the "agenda" or "topic for discussion"
9. Identifying and enhancing the capacities that each parent brings to the care of the infant
10. Wondering about the parent's thoughts and feelings related to the presence and care of the infant and the changing responsibilities of parenthood
11. Wondering about the infant's experiences and feelings in interaction with and relationship to the caregiving parent
12. Listening for the past as it is expressed in the present, inquiring and talking
13. Allowing core relational conflicts and emotions to be expressed by the parent; holding, containing and talking about them as the parent is able
14. Attending and responding to parental histories of abandonment, separation and unresolved loss as they affect the care of the infant, the infant's development, the parent's emotional health and the early developing relationship
15. Attending and responding to the infant's history of early care within the developing parent-infant relationship
16. Identifying, treating and/or collaborating with others if needed, in the treatment of disorders of infancy, delays and disabilities, parental mental illness and family dysfunction
17. Remaining open, curious and reflective

Reprinted with permission from: Weatherston, D. (2000). The infant mental health specialist. *Zero to Three*, 21, 3-10.

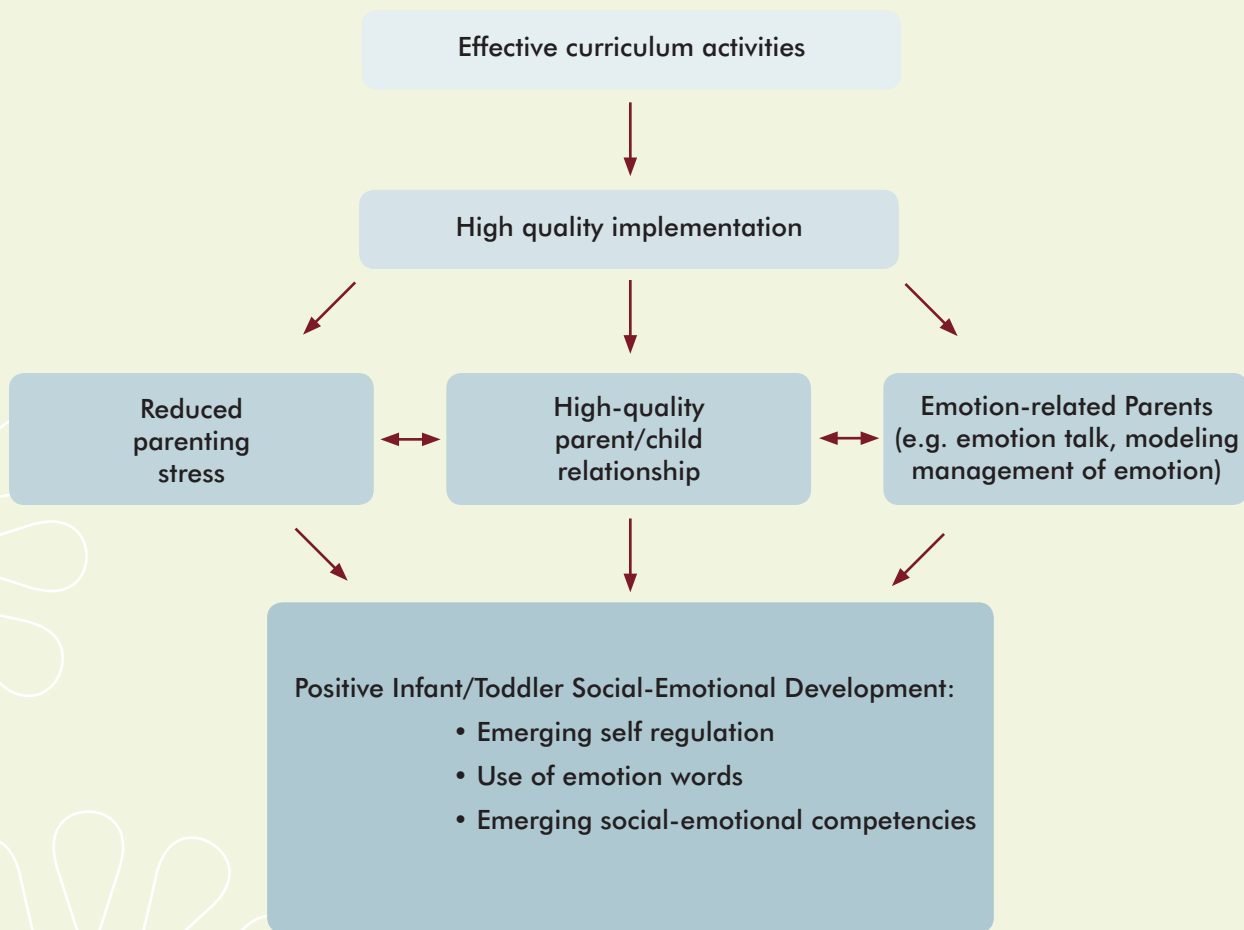
We are all interested in what leads to healthy social and emotional development in infants and toddlers. Curricular activities, used regularly and implemented according to guidelines, are much more effective in promoting growth and change. The BEES curriculum is designed to create change in several ways. First, we expect that well-implemented activities will support a high quality parent-child relationship, the key context for development, which, in turn, leads to positive social and emotional outcomes for infants and toddlers. We also expect that the BEES curriculum will promote

parents' management of their own emotions. Moreover, we anticipate that the BEES curriculum, paired with a supportive parent-home visitor relationship, will contribute to parents' perceptions of less parenting stress. Both parental self regulation and reduced parenting stress are also expected to enhance the parent-child relationship.

**The figure on the following page illustrates the pathways to positive outcomes:**



## What leads to positive social-emotional outcomes?







## Organization of the Curriculum

The BEES curriculum is organized into four primary curricular sections: Building Parental Awareness, Listening to and Interacting with the Baby/Toddler, Labeling and Identifying Emotions, and Developing Self Regulation Strategies Over Time. Activities within each section are organized by topic area and are arranged in order of complexity so simpler, more concrete activities are presented first. For instance, the Building Parental Awareness section includes topics with activities on perceptions of parenting, parent and child temperament, stress awareness and management, and past relationship experiences. The four curricular sections and subtopics are summarized below.

### BEES Curricular Sections and Subtopics

- I. Building Parental Emotional Awareness
  1. Perceptions of Parenting
    - Getting to know my baby
    - Thinking about being a parent
  2. Temperament
    - Understanding Temperament
    - Discovering my own temperament style
    - Identifying my baby's temperament
    - Learning ways to increase fit between my temperament and my baby's temperament
  3. Parenting and Family Stress
    - Identifying stressful things in my life
    - Dealing with stressful things in my life
    - Understanding how stress can effect my baby or toddler
  4. Past Relationships and Experiences
    - Exploring how my past relationships and experiences might impact how I parent
- II. Listening to and Interacting with Baby/Toddler
  1. Baby and Toddler Communication
    - Understanding what my baby is telling me
  2. Modeling Emotional Expression
    - Teaching my baby to express feelings
    - Showing my baby positive ways to express feelings
  3. Interacting with Babies and Toddlers
    - Building a close relationship with my baby
    - Playing with my baby
    - Using baby and toddler massage
    - Making mealtimes important opportunities
  4. Setting positive limits
    - Understanding the importance of managing feelings
    - Setting positive limits/positive discipline
- III. Labeling and Identifying Emotions
  1. Recognizing my baby's feelings
    - Recognizing how my baby expresses emotion
    - Identifying my baby's emotions
    - Labeling my baby's emotions
  2. Accepting emotions and feelings
    - Positively displaying my own emotions
    - Supporting my baby's feelings
- IV. Developing Self Regulation Strategies Over Time
  1. Noticing and Accepting Baby's Feelings
    - Describing how my baby or toddler deals with feelings
    - Welcoming my baby's or toddler's feelings
  2. Managing Feelings
    - Helping my baby or toddler feel calm
    - Reducing conflict
    - Helping my toddler manage frustration
  3. Challenging Behaviors
    - Understanding ways to handle biting
    - Understanding ways to handle tantrums
    - Helping my child manage transitions



Each activity has an appropriate age range noted. Because the curriculum emphasizes the parent-child relationship as the core context for development, many of the activities are appropriate for children of varying ages. Activities are easily adaptable.

Each activity typically involves some discussion, some hands-on experiences and handouts for parents to keep.

### Notes on terms in the curriculum

**Terms for Activity Goals and Objectives.** Because changes in parental behaviors, and parenting itself, are ongoing developmental processes, the term “The parent working towards X” is used to define the goals of activities. Likewise, we have used the term “Learning Steps” to define the objectives in support of the activity goal.

**Terms for Infants and Toddlers.** Activities for infants typically include the term “infant” or “baby” in the text. Activities for toddlers typically use the term “toddler.” Activities designed for children birth to three years often use the term “child.” Because of the fluid nature of these activities, feel free to use whatever term you feel is most appropriate and comfortable.

**Terms for Parents.** The term “parent” is used throughout the text. For the purposes of the curriculum, “parent” refers to the legal guardian. If “parent” is not the appropriate term to use, please use the most appropriate term when implementing the activities. We have alternated between using masculine and feminine pronouns in the text, as well, since we expect that mothers, fathers or other caregivers will participate in the BEES activities. Again, use whatever term is most appropriate for the context.

### How to Use the BEES Curriculum

**Choosing activities.** The four curricular sections are organized in a sequential order. For instance, we expect that parents must attain some awareness of their own feelings before interacting with baby in an optimal manner. Optimal interactions provide a rich context for identifying and labeling interactions with baby. In turn, growth in this area enhances the likelihood of attaining basic behavior regulation strategies.

Because parental awareness is such an important concept in the BEES curriculum, please plan to begin the curriculum with this section. Plan to move through each activity as appropriate for individual children and families. For example, the prenatal activities may be skipped if the parent has already delivered.

There is a great deal of flexibility in the BEES curriculum. As mentioned, the curricular areas are organized in an informal sequence. However, home visitors know best what activities are a good fit for parents, and you may select activities with the parent that you feel are most suitable to meet the parents needs. Likewise, you may not complete all of the BEES activities. Parents function at varying developmental levels. More advanced concepts and supporting activities may not be appropriate for parents with developmental challenges. On the other hand, parents ready for more advanced concepts in parenting may not need to complete some of the more basic activities in the curriculum. Choose the activities that best meet parents’ goals.

One of the key ideas in the IMH model and in Early Head Start is for parents to take an active part in defining their own parenting goals. In support of this, we have developed Parent Goal index cards (see page xvii). These colorful, laminated cards may be used during home visits with parents to identify parent goals.



Identification of these goals should guide the selection of BEES activities.

**Implementing activities.** BEES activities are designed to be implemented during home visits as often as possible. Research shows that targeted curricula, frequently used, are more likely to lead to change than curricula that are used infrequently or less methodically. Many of the BEES activities are short and take only a few minutes to implement. This should leave enough time in the home visit to address other issues or carry out activities from other curricula in support of other developmental areas.

**Using workbooks.** One way to document growth and change is through the use of scrapbooking. In the BEES curriculum, the term “workbook” is used since learning and parenting is work! Optimal parenting takes deliberate thinking and decision making, and the workbook reflects the purposeful work of parents and parenting infants and toddlers. The workbook is used to hold handouts and materials the parent completes during the activity. These formatted pages are decorative and ready to be added to the workbook. Children’s photographs may also be added to the workbook pages.

**Involving other people in activities.** Many of the activities may be adapted easily to include older children or others in the home during the visit.

**Families and Children with Special Needs.** Because of the wide range of special needs and children’s age ranges, adaptations for each lesson were not created. Home visiting professional have a great deal of expertise and experience in adapting materials for children and families. In support of this, we have provided guidelines

for working with families, signs of common delays and accommodations, and available state resources (see page 331). Home visitors should adapt activities as needed to suit the developmental needs of children.

**Fathers.** Fathers play a very important role in facilitating their children’s well being and development. For instance, fathers’ involvement with their children predicts higher school achievement and fewer behavioral problems. Fathers are encouraged to participate in the BEES curriculum. As noted, lessons are suitable for any adult important to the child.

**Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health (MI-AIMH) Endorsement.** Many EHS home visitors use strategies consistent with the IMH model. These strategies reflect professional competencies within the IMH field. Of additional interest, the competencies are recognized as fundamental to best practice through the award of a professional endorsement in the infant and family field (MI-AIMH, 2002; Weatherston, Moss & Harris, 2006). This endorsement is called the MI-AIMH Endorsement for Culturally Sensitive, Relationship-Based Practice Promoting Infant Mental Health (MI-AIMH, 2002). Individuals who would like to receive more information about the competencies leading to best practice and the endorsement may contact the MI-AIMH Central Office (734-785-7700 or [www.mi-aimh.msu.edu](http://www.mi-aimh.msu.edu)). The MI-AIMH Endorsement offers a pathway to professional development and recognition of ability within an organized system of learning and work experiences. Staff training in the manualized BEES curriculum will be recognized by MI-AIMH as a qualifying activity towards attainment of competency and the Endorsement. However, it is important to note that the MI-AIMH Endorsement is not required for use of the BEES curriculum. Rather, it is a resource



available to home visiting professionals interested in developing additional skills that promote social and emotional health.

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## Overview of Curricular Goals and Themes

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| <b>Building Parental Awareness</b><br>Goal: Develop self awareness about one's own emotions and ways of handling emotions as a foundation for sensitive parenting. Self awareness of one's own emotions and regulation strategies is needed before these skills can be fostered, over time, in infants and toddlers. | <b>1.1</b> Baby Kicks and Wiggles   | • Getting to know my baby   | 3    |
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|  | <b>1.4</b> Other Parents  | • Thinking about being a parent   | 15   |
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| <b>Listening and Interacting with Baby/Toddler</b><br>Goal: Engage in sensitive, responsive interactions and exchanges with infants and toddlers. | <b>2.1</b> Getting close to my baby               | • Building a relationship with baby   | 119  |
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| Curricular Theme  | Lesson                               | Parent Goals   | Page |
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| <b>Identifying and Labeling Emotions</b><br>Goal: Understand the common emotions experienced by infants, toddlers and young children; identify how these emotions may be expressed. The more emotions are discussed and their feeling and behavioral components identified, the more emotionally competent young children become. | <b>3.1</b> How do you feel?          | • Positively displaying my own emotions<br>• Recognizing how my baby expresses emotion | 205  |
|   | <b>3.2</b> Feeling Books: Baby Faces | • Labeling my baby’s emotions<br>• Identifying my baby’s emotions                      | 211  |
|   | <b>3.3</b> Coffee Can Nesting        | • Supporting my baby’s feelings  | 215  |
|   | <b>3.4</b> Feeling Card Sort         | • Supporting my baby’s feelings  | 217  |
|   | <b>3.5</b> Lots of Feelings          | • Identifying my baby’s emotions<br>• Labeling my baby’s emotions                      | 221  |
|   | <b>3.6</b> Hug                       | • Identifying my baby’s emotions<br>• Labeling my baby’s emotions                      | 225  |
|   | <b>3.7</b> Making Feelings Books     | • Identifying my baby’s emotions<br>• Labeling my baby’s emotions                      | 229  |
|   | <b>3.8</b> How Do I Love You         | • Identifying my baby’s emotions<br>• Labeling my baby’s emotions                      | 233  |
|   | <b>3.9</b> Feelings game bingo       | • Supporting my baby’s feelings  | 235  |
|   | <b>3.10</b> Go Fish For Feelings     | • Supporting my baby’s feelings  | 239  |
|   | <b>3.11</b> Showing Feelings in Play | • Supporting my baby’s feelings<br>• Identifying my baby’s emotions                    | 243  |
|   | <b>3.12</b> Moody Bear Puzzle        | • Supporting my baby’s feelings<br>• Labeling my baby’s emotions                       | 247  |



| Curricular Theme   | Lesson  | Parent Goals                                       | Page |
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| <p><b>Developing Self Regulation Strategies Over Time</b></p> <p>Goal: Understand and identify common motivations for challenging behaviors in infancy and toddlerhood. Model and teach infants and toddlers about safe ways to express and manage their feelings and behaviors; understand that learning to manage feelings and behaviors is a long-term process, lasting throughout adulthood.</p> | <b>4.1</b> Baby’s Regulating Behaviors, part 1                | • Describing how my child deals feelings           | 253  |
|  | <b>4.2</b> Baby’s Regulating Behaviors, part 2                | • Describing how my child deals feelings           | 261  |
|  | <b>4.3</b> Helping Baby Feel Calm                             | • Helping my baby or toddler feel calm             | 265  |
|  | <b>4.4</b> Eat Together, Eat Better I                         | • Reducing conflict                                | 269  |
|  | <b>4.5</b> Baby Signs   | • Describing how my child deals feelings           | 273  |
|  | <b>4.6</b> What to Do About Biting                            | • Understanding ways to handle biting              | 277  |
|  | <b>4.7</b> What To Do If Your Child Is Bitten                 | • Understanding ways to handle biting              | 283  |
|  | <b>4.8</b> Eat Together, Eat Better II                        | • Reducing conflict                                | 287  |
|  | <b>4.9</b> Help! I’m Feeling Frustrated                       | • Helping my toddler manage frustration            | 291  |
|  | <b>4.10</b> What To Do About Tantrums                         | • Understanding ways to handle tantrums            | 295  |
|  | <b>4.11</b> Mellow Mealtimes                                  | • Reducing conflict                                | 301  |
|  | <b>4.12</b> Mealtimes and Temperament                         | • Describing how my baby or toddler deals feelings | 305  |
|  | <b>4.13</b> Managing Mealtimes                                | • Reducing conflict                                | 309  |
|  | <b>4.14</b> I Need it Now!                                    | • Helping my toddler manage transitions            | 315  |
|  | <b>4.15</b> Getting from Here to There (Managing Transitions) | • Helping my child manage transitions              | 319  |
|  | <b>4.16</b> Social Stories                                    | • Helping my child manage transitions              | 325  |





## BEES Parent Goal Index

These goals are written in parent-friendly language and may be used to identify areas of focus with the parent.

### Thinking about Parenting

(Building Parental Emotional Awareness)

- Getting to know my baby (prenatal)
- Thinking about being a parent (prenatal)
- Understanding temperament
- Discovering my own temperament style
- Identifying my baby's temperament style
- Learning ways to increase the fit between my temperament and my baby's temperament
- Identifying stressful things in my life
- Dealing with stressful things in my life
- Understanding how stress can effect my baby or toddler
- Exploring how my past relationships and experiences might impact how I parent

### Helping My Baby Learn about Feelings

(Labeling and Identifying Feelings)

- Recognizing how my baby expresses emotion
- Identifying my baby's emotions
- Labeling my baby's emotions
- Positively displaying my own emotions
- Supporting my baby's feelings

# BEES Parent Goal Index

These goals are written in parent-friendly language and may be used to identify areas of focus with the parent.



## Playing with My Baby

(Listening to and Interacting with My Child)

- Building a close relationship with my baby
- Understanding what my baby is telling me
- Teaching my baby to express feelings
- Showing my baby positive ways to express feelings
- Playing with my baby
- Using baby and toddler massage
- Identifying my baby or toddler's special strengths
- Making mealtimes important learning opportunities
- Understanding the importance of managing feelings
- Setting positive limits/ positive discipline

## Helping My Baby Learn To Deal with Feelings

(Developing Behavior Regulation Strategies)

- Describing how my baby or toddler deals feelings
- Welcoming my baby's or toddler's feelings
- Helping my baby or toddler feel calm
- Reducing conflict
- Helping my toddler manage frustration
- Understanding ways to handle biting
- Understanding ways to handle tantrums
- Helping my toddler manage transitions

