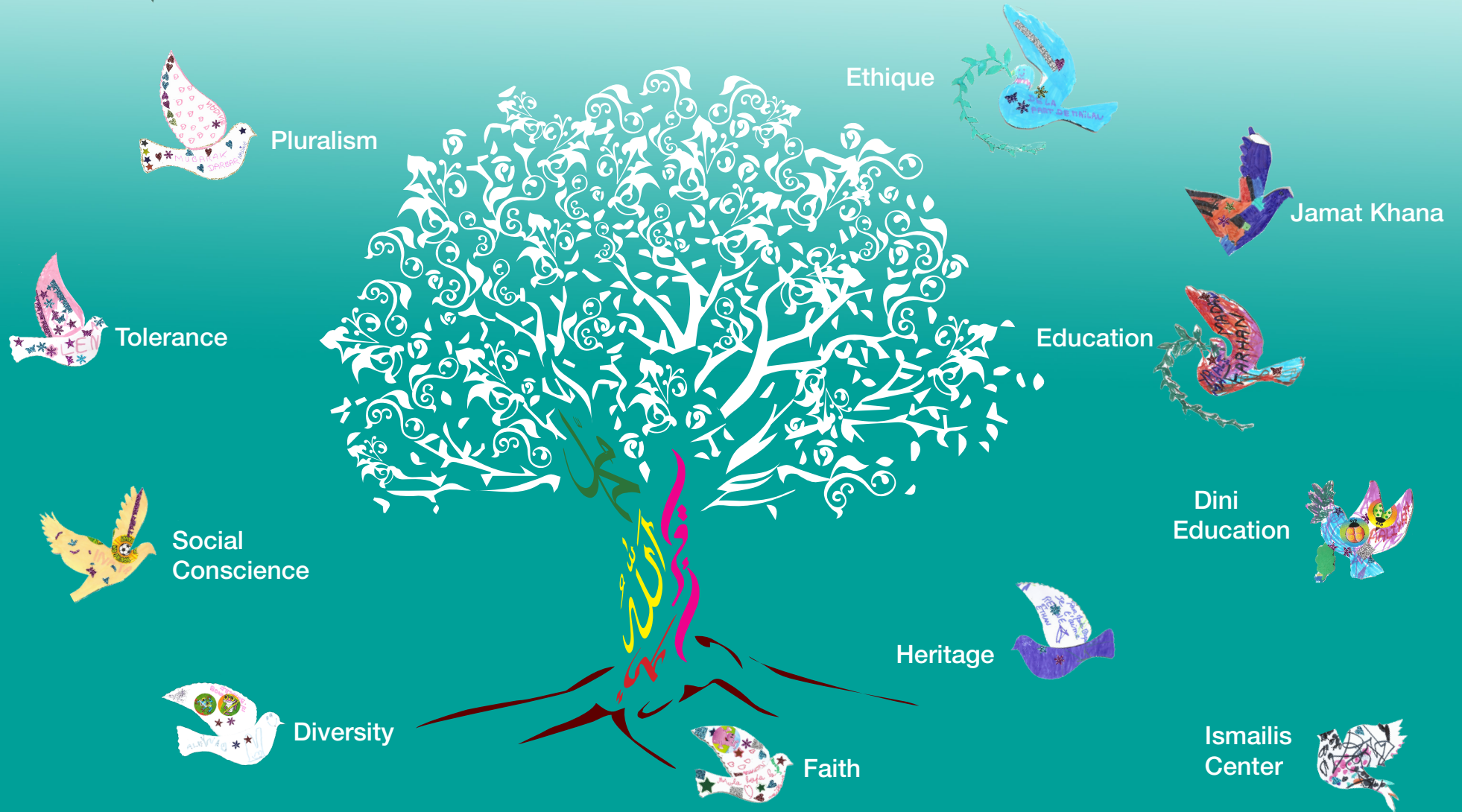
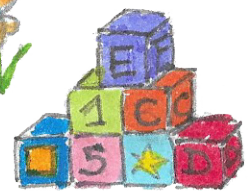
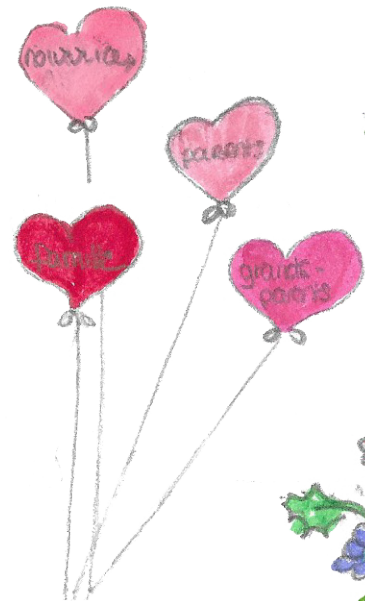


Early Childhood Development

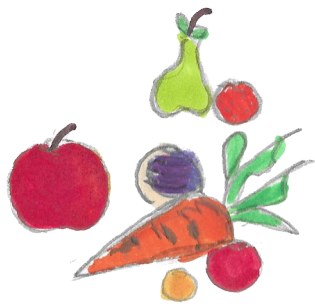




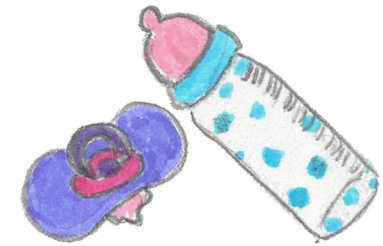
وڪو

Ya ali madad!
hello! BONJOUR!
manaona!
kemtcho? salam!
marhaba!





Welcoming your baby!



The Aga Khan Education Board (AKEB) for France and the Early Childhood Education team congratulate you on the birth of your newborn child.

Being a parent is a blessing. Seeing a baby react to the voice or the touch of their parents is one of the biggest joys that exist in this world.

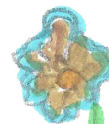
Many families live far away from their close ones, who previously were vital in the support of future generations. Today, many early childhood development studies underline the importance of strong family participation and engagement to ensure a quality education and the maintenance of positive values.

To help you in your role as a parent and give you the best tools to raise your child, the Jamati institutions have prepared this booklet. It that contains information to help you understand and support your child's physical, social, affective and intellectual well being as well as useful tools to ensure a safe, healthy, and vibrant future for your child.

The Jamati institutions will accompany you every step of the way of your child's growth and stays remain at your disposable. Find out more by contacting us at akeb@franceinstitutions.org, joining our Facebook group "ECE (Early Childhood Education) FBSIC", and visiting <https://the.ismaili/france>.

We know your child will be a source of pride and joy for all of us .

All of our best wishes!







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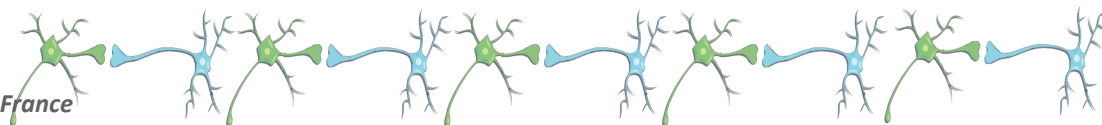


I. Early brain development



■ 90% of the brain develops before the age of 5

■ 10% of the brain develops after the age of the 5





Referring to the first 8 years of life, early childhood is the most critical period of an individual's life. It is often divided into several sub-periods: an intra-partum stage from conception to birth, 0-3 years, 3-6 and 6-8 years.¹ It is in fact, during the first 1000 days (from conception to the age of 2) that most substantial brain development occurs: for example, over a million of neuronal connexions (synapses) are built per second in a child's brain^{2,3}. By the time a child starts formal education, 90% of its brain development is completed. Therefore, it is during these first years of life that the foundations for cognitive, physical, emotional and social development are laid out.^{2,3}

By the time a child starts formal education, 90% of its brain development is completed. Therefore, it is during these first years of life that the foundations for cognitive, physical, emotional and social development are laid out.^{4,5}

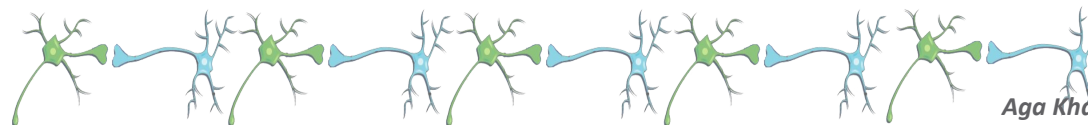
If we compare brain development to the construction of a house, we can observe in both cases you need strong and healthy foundations in order to build the superior parts. If your foundations are weak, you have to continuously strengthen them. This takes time, money and energy. In the case of the house, you can destroy it and start again. This is not possible for the brain. Consequently, it is important to support your child to build strong foundations and a healthy brain. This will enable her later acquire more complex competencies and skills essential for her to become tomorrow's citizens, contribute to the Ismaili community, be a productive member of the society in which they will live.

1. Deep dive into the brain, the “control tower” of the human body

The brain is one of the organs at the centre of child development. But what is it?

Even though it only accounts for 2% of our weight, the brain is one of the most important organs in our body. It contains over 100 billion neurons that allow us to think, plan, move, imagine, while having awareness of our thoughts and actions: therefore it can be seen as the “control tower” of our body.

At its surface, the brain is composed of a cerebellum and a cerebral cortex. The latter encompasses two hemispheres: the left hemisphere controls the right side of our body and vice-versa.





Each hemisphere comprises several distinct parts, also called “lobes”. The **Occipital Lobe** analyses visual information captured by the eyes. The **Temporal Lobe** enables us to perceive sounds and understand words. The **Parietal Lobe**, is associated with different sensorial perceptions, while the **Frontal Lobe** allows individuals to reason, plan and modulate emotions as well as create voluntary movements.

There is also a fifth lobe located in between the two hemispheres: the **Limbic System** heavily involved in **emotions, behaviours**, motivation, **long-term memory**, and olfaction.

Finally, the **Cerebellum** allows us to adjust movements and make precise gestures (see Figure 1).

If we take a closer look inside the brain cortex, we can see that it is composed of various cells, including neurons. The latter are interconnected to each other (creating the grey matter) or to other cells / organs of our body. Such connexions (also called synaptic connexions) convey different types of information with can be an order from the brain to your body (e.g. raise your hand), or to receive information from the external environment (texture of a book) or from inside the body (e.g. pain perception).

2. Laying the foundations for your child’s brain development

Although the human brain develops, matures and modifies itself throughout life, it is during early childhood that the foundation of the nervous system is established, creating the foundations for socio-emotional, cognitive and physical development.

Brain development starts during the first few weeks after conception and continues long after birth. During the two last trimesters of Intrapartum development, and more specifically at birth, the brain quickly gains volume by creating neurons.⁶ However, most of these neurones are not connected together. Only the ones involved in primary/innate functions (e.g. breathing, blood pressure control or crying), enabling the child to survive, are connected. Only after birth, most connexions are created, enabling the acquisition of more complex functions, such as language.⁷

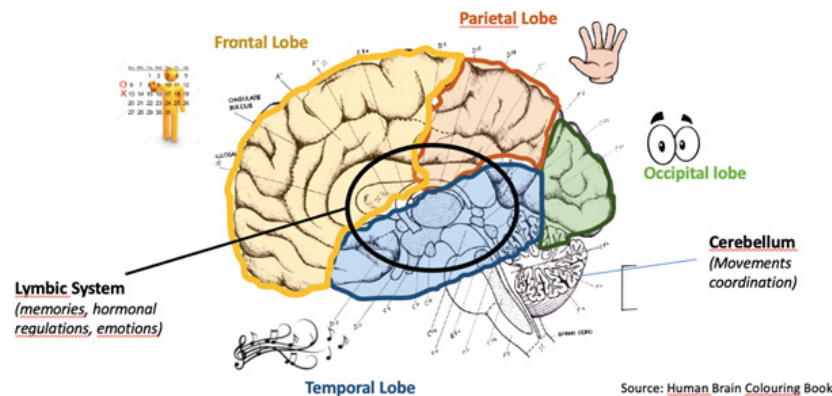
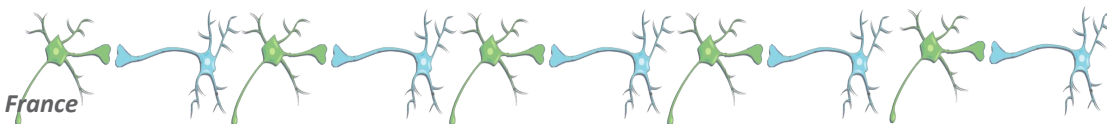


Fig. 1 : Overview of the brain anatomy





During the first years of their life, **more than a million neuronal connexions are produced per second**. We estimate that **at 8 months, the density and number of synapses reaches its peak**, and then diminishes throughout life.⁷

The brain creates so many synapses because it doesn't know yet which ones will be important to keep as the child gets older. However, in order for them to function effectively, it requires too much energy and time: so the brain suppresses all the unnecessary connexions. How does the brain know which connections must be kept and strengthened and which ones can be removed? The rule is simple: every unutilised synapse is determined as non-useful and therefore can be suppressed/removed, making the brain work more efficiently. On the other hand, those synapses that are utilized will be strengthened.⁸

After reaching its peak at 8 months, the number of connections will be reduced during childhood and adolescence, until stabilisation during adulthood. Therefore, unused connections are lost.

2.1 Brain development is influenced by the external environment of the individual

Early childhood is clearly an important period in a person's life, during which connections between neurons are build, reinforced and undone by many specific mechanisms, creating a complex network of synapses.⁸ **But why does “the use” of these connections determine so much of our brain architecture?**

Like any other part of the human body, the development of the brain is directed by the expression of genes that have been inherited from our parents. Nevertheless, research has shown that the environments in which we live in as well as our experiences influence our genes' capacities to express themselves.^{6,10} In other words, our external environment will influence the way our hereditary traits are expressed.¹⁰

Hence, brain development is dependent on external stimulation.^{11,12} In other words, it's the environment and the experiences of the young child that will build, reinforce or remove connections between neurons; consequently making the brain “plastic” and malleable.

Some studies have also shown that these changes in the epigenome can occur during pregnancy and thus influence the development of the child from the prenatal period. Some changes can also be transmitted from one generation to another, impacting not only the well-being and development of a child but also of his descendants^{8,13,14,15} (see Figure 2).

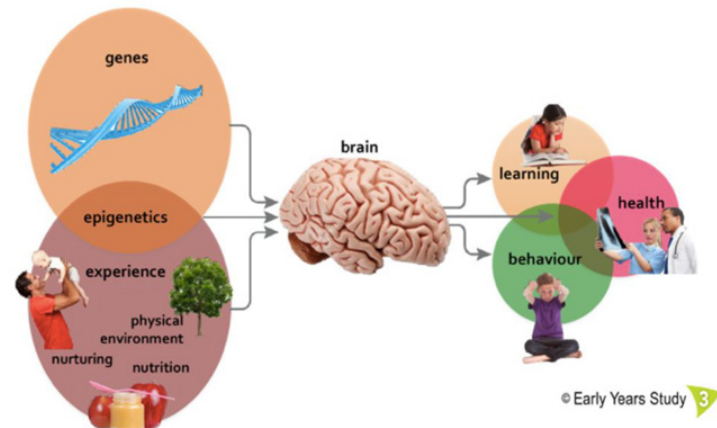
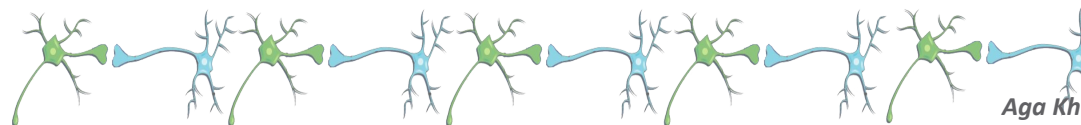


Fig. 2 : Epigenetic





2.1.1 Stress and its impact on child development

What is stress? Are there different types of stress? Can stress be good for child development?

In response to a stressor, our body secretes stress hormones, such as adrenaline and cortisol. This reaction allows us to be alert and saves our lives when facing a danger or to an acute stress. Nevertheless, a prolonged activation of this mechanism can endanger different biological functions, as well as damage the child’s socio-emotional and behavioral development and well-being.⁸

When this response to stress is activated in a protective environment, stable and responsive relationships with those the child is close to, act as an “anti-stress” shield and allow the child to develop capacities to face life’s adversities.⁸

Not all stress is bad. Stress linked to experiences such as falling down whilst running or bumping on something whilst playing are crucial for the development of a child. Thanks to these little injuries, children become more resilient against adversity, gain new competencies as well as learn from their mistakes. These are essential elements in the learning process.⁸

2.1.2 The child’s environment

What are we referring to when we talk about the child’s environment? We consider everything that surrounds the child: whether it be immediate or extended family, their roots, their culture, their traditions, their religion, their neighbourhood, the country where they grew up (see Figure 3).

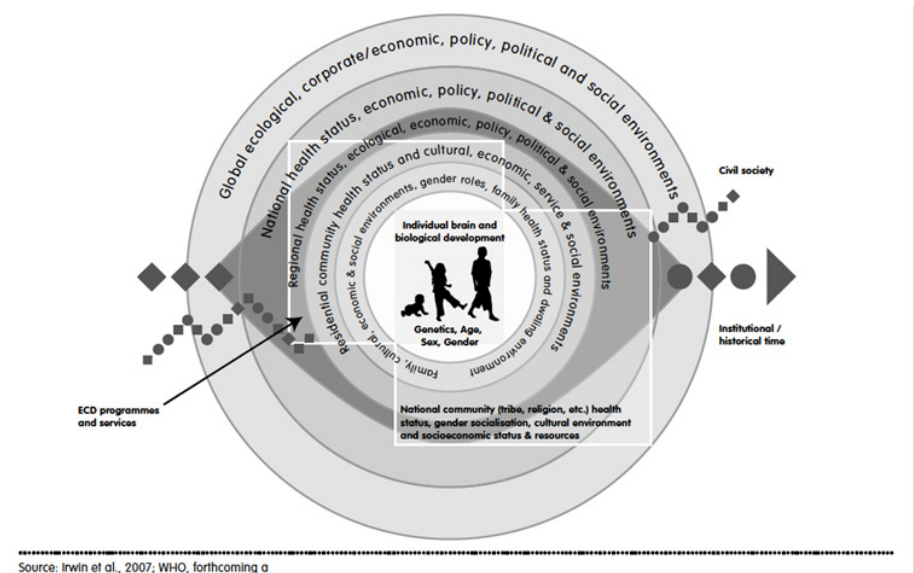
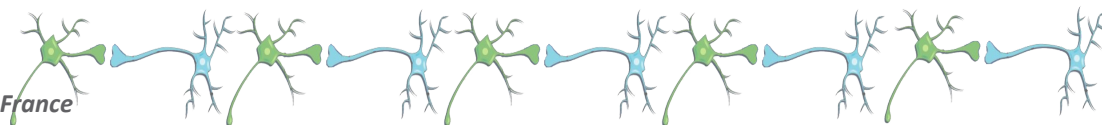


Fig. 3 : The spheres that influence child development

(source: Bernard Van Leer Foundation (2013) Early Childhood Matters (120)





The role of the adult:

Children develop thanks to the relationships they create during the first months and years of life. They rely in particular on the relationships they have developed with their parents in order to flourish. They will also attach themselves to other adults that play an important role in their lives, like other members of their family. Thus, the quality and the stability of the relationships your child has with the people you surround yourself with globally influences your child's development. These relationships also set the foundations for their well-being, learning, the development of their self-esteem, the control of their emotions, their ability to solve conflicts in a peaceful way and create friends as well as their integration into the community.

Parents are the first base upon which children lean on, in order to learn and understand the world: you are your child's first teacher, and the home is your child's first classroom. This means that they will consider as normal, all of the experiences that they have and all that they will see.

For example, a child that is exposed to a screen at a young age will have a higher risk of developing concentration problems linked to exposing themselves to fast-changing images. This lack of concentration can occur because the child will not understand why in "real life", these images don't change as fast as on a screen, which is what they are used to.

2.2 An individual's learning capacity is the highest during early childhood

During early childhood, the human brain can be compared to a sponge that absorbs all the information from the environment around it.

The following diagram illustrates this 'sponge' concept: the younger the child is (under 8 years old), the less effort he will have to make in order to cope with experiences and changes in its environment.

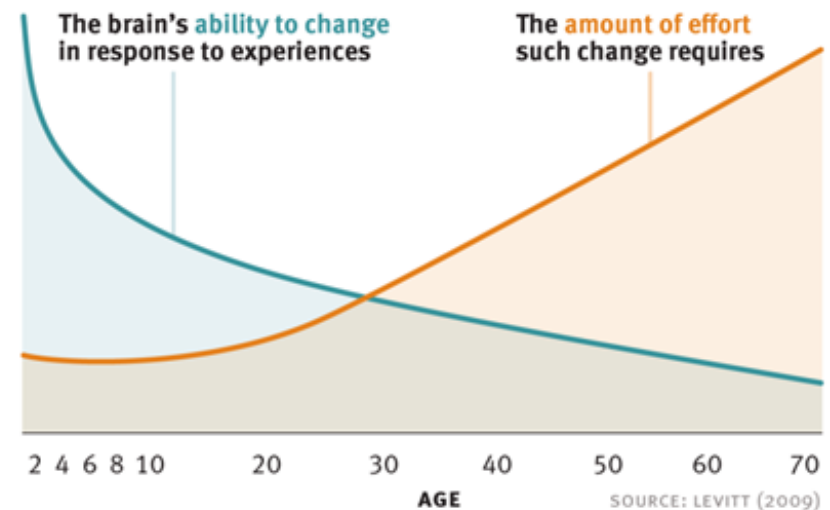
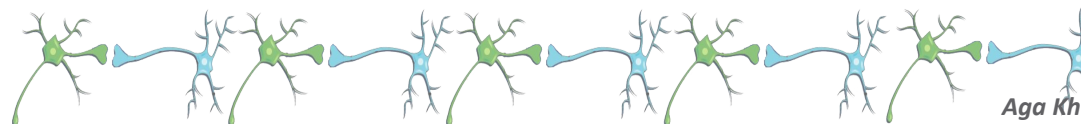


Fig. 4 : Cerebral plasticity over a lifetime
(Source : www.developingchild.harvard.edu)

Therefore, starting from birth, the child is able to learn quickly, absorb and integrate in very little time and very easily new information that will be useful for his future development. The older the child, the more his capacity to learn diminishes.⁸





2.3 Follow the key stages of early childhood development

Brain development in comprehensive manner:

The first few years are particularly important for the child's future well-being because during this period, most parts of the brain are developed. Hence, this enables a child to acquire capacities in all areas of development (physical, cognitive, behavioural, socio-emotional).

The brain develops in an ascending way: first from the back, with the occipital lobe and the temporal and parietal lobes. Then, the prefrontal cortex matures. Thus, the brain's sensorial capacities develop first, then comes the preliminary linguistic competencies, and later the cognitive functions and more complex notions, like depth, awareness of other people, planning and time management

Skills are acquired in an interdependent manner:

Because these competencies are built upon themselves, **the disruption of one of these developmental stages** can impact the acquisition of other competencies depending on the disrupted development stage; thus impacting the overall functioning of the brain³.

Let's take an example to illustrate this: Hearing along with vision occur in the first few months. This is because the child hears sounds and will turn her head to understand where they are coming from. Turning its head over and over will in turn, strengthen the baby's neck muscles, which will later enable the baby to straighten up. This example shows how sensorial capacities can help acquire certain gross motor skills.

Windows of opportunity:

For each aptitude or skill, there is a specific time window during early childhood, called sensitive periods or windows of opportunities. During this specific period of time the brain will be more able to integrate and process external stimuli supporting the development of this competency. After that, it will be harder for the child to integrate them. This is why the foundations of their development are laid during the early years.

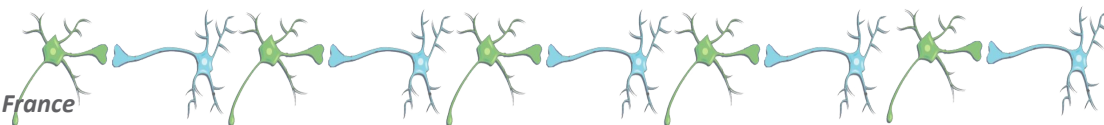
In the early years, it the experiences at home and in other physical and social environments that provide inputs for the child's brain. Whether they be absent, positive, or negative, these experiences are shaping the child's development, personality and behaviour that will take him/her forward for the rest of his/her life.

This is why repeated stimulation can impact the development, the personality and behaviour of a child. Thus, the social and physical environment of a child can impact the child later during its childhood but also throughout his/her life.

2.4 What does the brain need for a healthy development ?

We have learnt how the brain develops. But what does a brain need to be strong and healthy?

The brain needs nutritious and varied foods (starting with breast milk in the first six months) to get energy. It needs different experiences in different environments (the places that are important for your family), interactions with different people





and objects; opportunities to move the body and activate the senses. It needs the child to be in good health and to be free of danger (physical, emotional, environmental). Most importantly it needs you, the parents and caregivers, to love your child, spend time getting to know your child and how your child communicates their needs (e.g., gestures, facial expressions, crying, vocalizations, eye movements), and doing your best to respond to your child's needs, keep her in good health, well-fed, and engaged in different experiences that create joy for you, your child, and your family.



Conclusion

In conclusion, the first few years of an individual's life determine their future well-being as the foundations for their physical, cognitive, behavioural and socio-emotional development are established. Creating these bases strongly depends on the quality of the environment of the experiences and relationships a child has with parents, caregivers, and other loved ones: behaving like a sponge, the brain absorbs and integrates all the information it receives. Helping your child to grow and develop throughout the first few years provides your child with all the skills for a best start in life.

For more information:

<https://www.child-encyclopedia.com>

Video: The beginning of life (Trailer)

<https://youtu.be/Tc8yMoqsPeA>. Full documentary available on Netflix

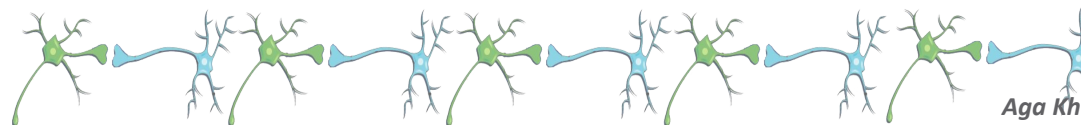
Video: Brain matters https://youtu.be/Rw_aVnlp0JY

Video: How the brains are built: the core story of brain development

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmVWOe1ky8s>

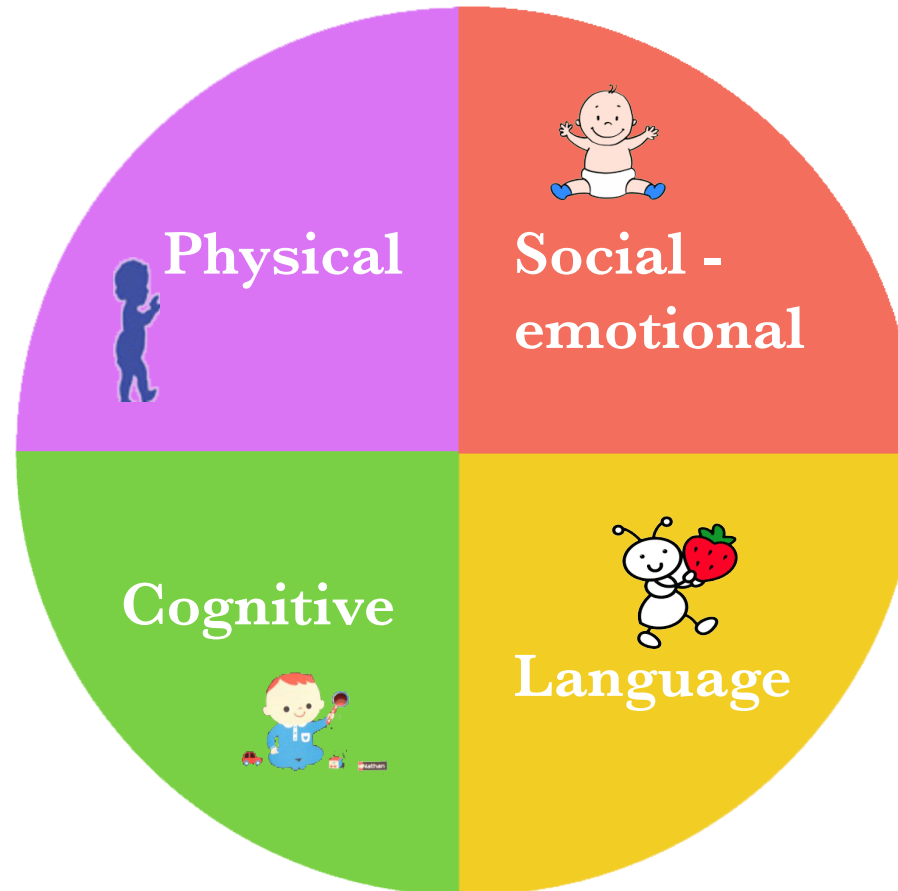
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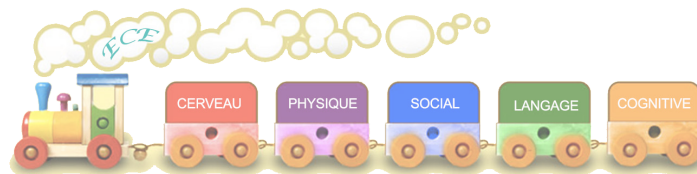




II. The different domains of child development



The information on developmental milestones in this section has been adapted from The Creative Curriculum® for Infants, Toddlers & Twos, by Diane Trister Dodge, Sherrie Rudick et Kai lee Berke. 2011, Teaching Strategies, Inc.





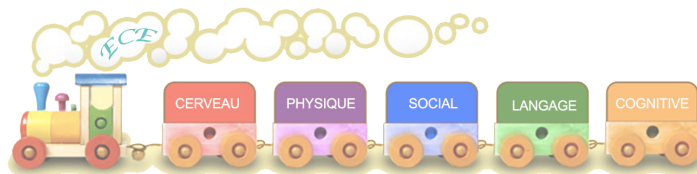
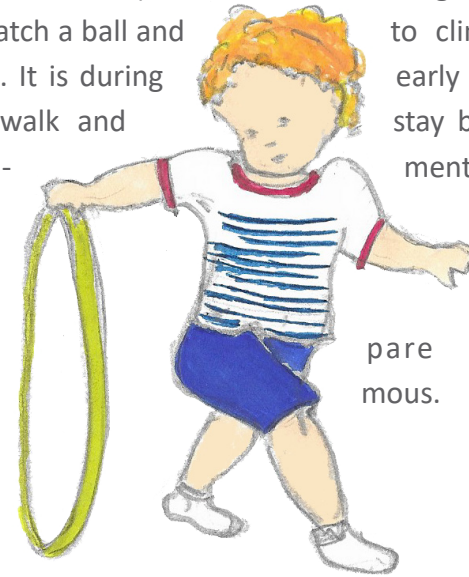
1. Physical development

As we saw in the previous chapter, the first years are particularly important for the child's well-being because during this period, the brain develops holistically, enabling the development of the child's capacities in all domains (physical, cognitive, language, socio-emotional).

In the following sections, we will give you information on child development and hope that this information will be useful to help familiarize your child to you and their new environment.



Physical development is intrinsically linked to the functioning of the body, notoriously mastering movements, balance and motor skills. During the development of gross motor skills (such as big muscles), children learn to throw and catch a ball and stairs without falling. It is during child's aptitude to walk and During the development (meaning the small children learn to build circles and crosses, in order to pre-become autonomous. During the development of fine motor skills (small muscles), children learn to build things, draw and use scissors to prepare them to write and draw.





Key stages of physical development between 0 and 3 years.
This list is indicative.



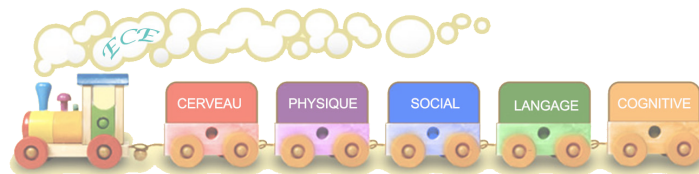


2. Social development

Social development consists of understanding how to communicate, share, make friends and get along with other people, in order to further develop the ability to establish and maintain relationships with others later in life. Babies learn to express themselves through physical expressions by moving their bodies or crying. Babies that are a little older can observe people's faces and start to recognize emotions. The little ones learn to cooperate with others and begin to develop their capacities to resolve conflict. They appreciate attention and can put on a show, all whilst showing empathy to others



As they get older, they learn to understand the concept of playing with others and show interest in imaginative games. Social development and emotional development (discussed in the next section) often go as a pair, because social development helps to develop affect and vice-versa.





Key stages of social development between 0 and 3 years

This list is indicative





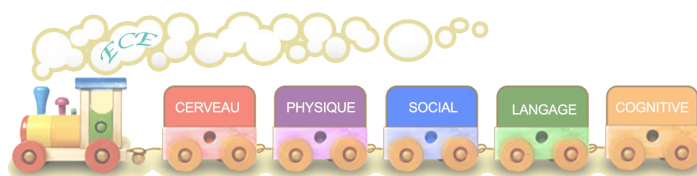
It is important to prioritize the social and emotional development of the child.

One of the main goals is to prioritize healthy social and emotional development in children. Research has shown that children's social and emotional skills are key elements in their cognitive development and in the acquisition of knowledge from a young age. This can seem less evident, but prioritizing children's social and emotional development contributes to improving their capacity to adapt to new situations, whether it be within the family, at school, university or later in life.

You will find a few examples to promote the emotional and social development of your child in the annex.

3. Language development

Language includes the art of communication. It includes the child's aptitude to understand spoken words and to express themselves orally. Throughout early childhood, children evolve from babbling to saying short sentences of more than five words. Older children are able to remember their sense of orientation and can read stories and uses words to speak about their experiences, share these personal experiences and understand the concept of positions such as from above or from below. Children that demonstrate an easy ability to communicate are more likely to be more social and more prepared for school.





- May have a vocabulary of 200 to 300 words
- Listens to adult conversations and intervenes if a subject is familiar
 - Asks questions and responds to simple questions
 - Can speak/understand more than one language

36 MONTHS

- Creates groups of two to three words like “no, mom” or “more cake please”
 - Can point to hair, eyes and nose if asked to do so
 - Obeys more complex instructions

24 MONTHS

- Can name an object
- Imitates sounds or gestures
 - Obeys instructions



21 MONTHS

- Enjoys imitating words or gestures
- Understands simple instructions

18 MONTHS

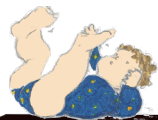


15 MONTHS

- Uses gestures
- Says four to twelve more words
- Understands up to 50 words

12 MONTHS

- Able to say one or two words or sounds such as “ba-ba”, “ma-ma” and “da-da”



9 MONTHS

- Imitates sounds and gestures
- Understands the word “no” because that is the sound most used by parents

6 MONTHS

- Chirps, squeals, and repeats sounds of vowels like “o,” “a” or “e”
- Turns towards the sound of familiar voices

3 MONTHS

- Responds to loud or new sounds

Key stages of language development between 0 and 3 years

This list is indicative.



Parents are their children's first teachers

Learning to read and write does not start at daycare or kindergarten. The development of language and literacy skills starts at birth with affective interactions, like sharing books, telling stories, singing songs and speaking with one another. In this section, you will learn how adults (parents, grandparents and teachers) play a crucial role in young children's preparation for their future successes and how they help them become sure of themselves and motivated.

For babies aged 0 to 6 months

- Simple books with big pictures or bright coloured drawings
- Solid cardboard books that are textured or animated that can be placed in a bed
- Cloth or soft vinyl books with simple pictures of people or familiar objects that can go in the bath or be washed



For babies aged 6 to 12 months

- Photos of other babies on cardboard or other stiff material
- Textured books with bright colours that you can touch or even taste!
- Books with pictures of familiar objects like balls or bottles
- Books with hard pages that can be placed or laid open on a bed or under a blanket
- Books in plastic or vinyl for the bath

- Washable books that can be chewed on
- Little laminated photo albums of friends and family

Promote a love of reading in your child

There are many appropriate (and fun) ways to help your little one learn to love books and stories and as surprising as it may seem, they don't all involve real books.

Use books to create bonds

At this age, children learn to appreciate interactions with mom, dad or their caregivers. When reading, your child is not only appreciating the book but the total attention that she is getting.



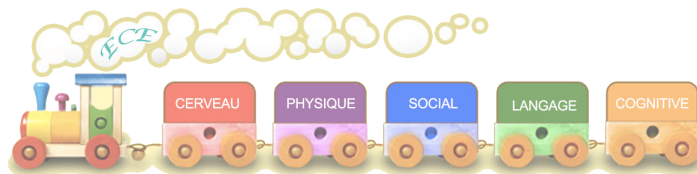
Establish routines

A regular time in the day dedicated to reading establishes a peaceful routine for young children. This is why the bedtime story is an ancestral tradition.

Choose books adapted to the age of your child

Choosing good books adapted to the age of your child is important for their development. Reading books does not only stretch the child's cognitive aptitudes but also the child's emotional, moral and spiritual development.

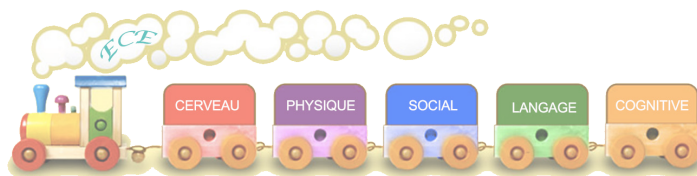
For more ideas on language development, see the annex.





4. Cognitive development

Babies are active learners from birth. They gather, sort and deal with the available information around them, and use it to develop their perception and thoughts. They learn by using their senses. They explore and discover the world by touching and biting objects, listening to voices, music and observing the bright colours around them. By playing, eating, getting dressed and exploring a room, they start to understand how things function and gather information to give a purpose to their lives.





Key stages of cognitive development between 0 and 3 years

This list is indicative.

3 MONTHS

- Appreciates being read to
- Opens hands and uses them to reach for objects
- Does two actions at once (ex: suck and look around)

6 MONTHS

- Shows signs of recognizing familiar adults
- Sends signals when tired (looks away, falls asleep)
- Looks at images in books (and distinguishes bright colours)
- Can focus briefly on elements in nature

9 MONTHS

- Recognizes the faces of family members
- Looks for toys that have fallen or that are partially hidden
- Uses her mouth to discover her surroundings

12 MONTHS

- Responds to her name
- Experiments with the effects of throwing, dropping, shaking and banging objects
- Begins to make simple actions like blowing
- Recognizes familiar images

15 MONTHS

- Examines small objects
- Purposefully drops things to see what will happen

18 MONTHS

- Follows orders with simple instructions
- Can identify up to 4 to 6 parts of his body
 - Can name an object

21 MONTHS

- Can solve simple puzzles if it is made of two or three large pieces
 - Likes to play make believe

24 MONTHS

- Tries to put words to images she sees
- Sorts objects by difference or similarity (colours, animals, people)

36 MONTHS

- Answers simple questions
- Names at least one colour and shape correctly
 - Distinguishes between good and bad
- Tries to draw his portrait or the one of a family member
 - Puts things in their place
- Asks for something to colour or music to listen to for self-entertainment





Conclusion

We now know that a newborn goes through many different developmental stages and the environment – internal or external – can influence development in a significant way.



The development of the child's competences is normally continuous with several steps that start from birth. Embryology, anatomy and physiology help shape the physical aspect and bodily functions. At the level of perception, the baby can already taste and hear before she is born, as we have shown. After birth, the sense organs rapidly develop in response to stimuli in the outside world and her intellectual development is stimulated.

Between children, development varies greatly (a child can walk between 8.5 months and 18 months, and on average 13 months). The development of these different competences is not only influenced by genetics but also by the environment. There are many domains, and stages in the child's life, where the rate of mastering certain domains is stronger or weaker than others, and certain faculties do not appear until a certain age. These elements are explained by differences observed between children of the same age.

Our objective here is to give you a global idea of this development by describing only certain aspects up until the child turns 3. We need to remember that the brain develops up until 22 to 23 years of age and it is always possible to make improvements and new connections at any age.

The child's brain being a sponge in the first years of her life, up until approximately 7 years, obliges us – parents, grandparents and Jamati institutions - to establish different programs to stimulate this awakening.

Would you like to learn more about how we can support you on your parenting journey? Participate in one of our programs? Or just be informed? The Early Childhood Development teams (ECD) is here to listen at akeb@franceinstitutions.org. You can also join our Facebook group "ECE (Early Childhood Education) FBSIC" or find more resources at <https://the.ismaili/france>.

See you soon!





ANNEXES

1. Parental well being

Take care of yourself

During the last nine months, your life has gone through many changes. It's also a phase in which you had to learn to deal with strong and sometimes conflicting feelings; intense and overflowing love alternating with the fear or anxiety of taking care of such a small and fragile being. These feelings are normal during this phase of adaptation. Know that there are people who are there for you, to help you and motivate you. Take the time to recuperate and regain energy by trusting your relatives or people you are close with, with your baby. Once you are energized again, this will be visible in the interactions you have with your child. If you feel overwhelmed, speak to members of your family, your friends or your doctor. If you can't bear hearing your baby cry, leave them safely in their bed and go outside to relax, listen to some music or go get some fresh air on the patio but don't ever shake your baby. The institutions also suggest programs like "On the parenting journey" for parents. For more information, contact AKEB.



Understanding the symptoms

There is no difference between the symptoms of clinical depression or post-partum depression. The only difference is that post-partum depression occurs after the birth of a child.

- Post-partum depression affects 10 to 15% of new mothers, but this percentage could be twice as high for young mothers.
- Women who are affected feel it for at least six months if it is not treated.
- Most of them (60%) manifest symptoms in the first six months following birth.
 - Post-partum depression can provoke a negative attitude or even neglect towards the baby.
 - Post-partum depression is not to be confused with "baby-blues" or "third day syndrome" which occurs in 45 to 85% of births and reaches its peak between the day after birth and the third day after birth, it usually disappears without treatment in 24 to 72 hours.



What to look for....

Women who have previous histories of depression have a higher risk of suffering from post-partum depression. Mothers at risk of suffering from post-partum depression will feel sad and depressed or will show a lack of positive thoughts, almost every day for at least two weeks. She needs to be well-supported!

Understanding post-partum depression

At least four of the following symptoms will also accompany depression

- Problems focusing or making decisions
- Nervous behaviour (feeling agitated)
- Fatigue
- Changes in appetite or sleep
- Persistent thoughts of death or suicide
- Feelings of uselessness or guilt (usually tied to feelings towards motherhood)
- Anxiety
- Frequent worry surrounding the baby's health

What to do?

- Send parents suffering from clinical depression to see a health professional.
- Sign up for a mother-child support group.
- Be patient with the members of your family suffering from depression.
- Minimize sources of stress as much as possible.
- Ensure that the children of a depressed parent are supported by the other parent or by another person looking after them.



The cycle of depression

- Babies of depressed parents often have changing moods and relationship difficulties.
- The negative mood of a depressed mother influences the baby's mood.
- Children of depressed parents are up to two to five times more likely to develop behavioural problems compared with parents who do not suffer from depression.



2. Child well being

being. We are our children's first teachers. By teaching them that being in good health and exercising is important for us, we can raise them so that they can in turn become healthy adults in good physical condition and great shape. Getting babies and young children interested in different physical activities from a young age contributes to instilling healthy habits all throughout their life. Physical activity is a source of many benefits for young children: it can reduce risks of obesity once they are older (and reduce risks associated with diabetes, hypertension and cholesterol). It's even linked to success at school. Practicing a sport can allow children to build their confidence and abilities in different activities. It also helps them develop different competences like teamwork, negotiating and conflict resolution. Physical activities with the family are also a great way to spend quality time with your children. Raising your child is a gratifying task, but it can also be difficult. Physical activity is a great way to relax and wind down; this will help you be calmer and more dynamic parents with your newborn.



Here are a few tips to start a healthy life with your new family.

- 1 Include physical exercise in your daily life. Every day, allocate some time to walk, jog around the neighbourhood or go to the park with your children. Older children can also run, walk, bike or scooter alongside the stroller. A baby, even very little babies, need to go outside for at least an hour a day, even if it is cold, he just needs to be sufficiently covered up.
- 2 Use the time reserved for activities at the weekend to do physical activities! Involve your older children in the choice and the organization of a different activity every week to gather the whole family. For example, find a walking trail near you where the whole family can join! Put your baby in a baby carrier.
- 3 Add a social aspect. Make use of your physical activity time to meet other parents. Organize meetings where the kids can play together in the park, go walk with other parents or sign up for a fitness class with young parents. A regular physical activity will help you get back into shape and the time spent with your new friends will allow you to relax, destress and exchange ideas and plans.
- 4 Make use of the precious moments with all your children. Whilst you walk, bike or go jogging, describe everything you see to your baby, or sing songs. If the older children are accompanying you, ask them how their day was. Discover your neighbourhood together.



Help your baby do exercises. Help him grow with activities adapted to his age. Even if he can't walk or crawl, you can help him reinforce his limbs with tailored massages, stretches and leaving him on his stomach.

5

This can be put in place starting in the first few months, even for a few minutes, when the baby wakes up. Do not miss out on the opportunity to sign your child up for a music, swimming or movement class. These classes typically are available starting at six months.

Make nutrition a family affair. More than a physical activity, healthy food habits should be a part of your family life. Go to local farms with your child. Take her to discover the fruit and vegetables aisles at the supermarket. Invent new recipes for the whole family and make cooking fun and educative. Create a safe space in the kitchen so your baby can play whilst you cook and use this opportunity to speak to her or sing songs. If you are breastfeeding your baby, it is very important to have a nutritional and healthy diet so that your baby can get the nutrients necessary for good development.

6

Every day, opportunities to be healthy are present. Make use of them! Choose the most active itinerary you can. Take the stairs rather than the escalator. Park your car further away from the entrance to stores so that you have a longer walk. If they are old enough, make your children walk rather than take the stroller. Turn tasks into fun activities for the whole family, and get them involved in at home and outdoor chores.

7





3. Keeping your child safe

Parents' serenity is established through the comfort and safety of their child.

Most accidents can be prevented by ensuring the safest possible environment for your child. Below you will find a few safety tips. (Non exhaustive list)

To avoid accidents

- Do not give your child toys with sharp edges or little objects that can be taken apart.
- Do not give her stuffed animals that are not adapted for her age. It is important to follow recommended ages for each toy or stuffed animal.
- Do not let your child run with sharp objects in her mouth, such as forks, spoons or toothbrushes.
- All of your child's equipment, such as beds, high chairs, strollers, car seats need to follow European norms.
- Do not let your child use a baby walker by herself.
- Install safety barriers at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Do not leave your child, even for a second, alone in a high place, like on a changing table, a bed, a couch or a chair. Use safety straps on high chairs.
- Do not leave extremely young children with animals.
- Ensure that the railings of your gate or front porch are well-spaced to ensure that your child cannot go through them. Install window blocks to avoid children falling out the window.
- Always shut the toilet lid.
- Secure big and heavy furniture to the ground or the wall so that they do not fall on the child.
- Protect the furniture's angles.

- Keep all your household products and medication in an closed and inaccessible area away from your children (in a high place if possible).
- Never leave your child unattended in water.
- Do not put toilet tablets in the toilet bowl.



To avoid burns

- Check your child's bath temperature before putting her in the water. The water should not be over 37 degrees Celsius.
- Put all electronic equipment you have in the bathroom out of reach and unplug them.
- Install covers for your plugs if they are not in use.
- Hide or tape your electronic cables.
- Cook with the back plates of your cooker. Turn the pans away so that your child cannot grab the handles.
- Keep matches and lighters out of reach.
- Establish a safety plan in case of a fire and practice it twice a year with the whole family.



Car safety

- The car seat must always be adapted to the weight and age of the child.
- Always secure the child correctly (ensure that the seatbelt is secure, read the instructions on the seat and keep it in the car).
- Always put your seatbelt on to show a good example.
- Keep your car keys out of your child's reach.
- Never leave a child alone in a car.
- Never leave your children unsupervised near a road or car.



Supervision

- Children under the age of 3 need to be constantly supervised.
- Keep in mind that your child's motor skills can evolve from one day to the next.
- Near water, supervise the little ones. Toilets, deep sinks and swimming pools are very attractive to children and present a potential risk of drowning, from 2cm of water.

Changing tables

- Adapt the height of your changing table to avoid back ache and the spread of infectious diseases you could potentially spread to your child (ideally leave one meter between you and your child).

- Do not change your baby directly on the ground. Put something on the floor first.
- Always keep at least one hand on your baby's stomach or torso.
- Constantly keep an eye on your baby.
- When possible, use a changing table with body guards or a recessed tray; this offers a supplementary level of protection against the baby falling. Or use a mattress.

Equipment and toys

Always keep safety in mind when you are buying or using furniture and equipment for children under six years old. The best is to choose tools and toys that are adapted to the child's age.

Baby-walkers

- Only use stationary baby-walkers (ones that allow the child to stand up and turn around) only for short periods of times to help position babies that can't stand up alone. A child should not spend more than 15 minutes in a stationary baby-walker, and not for more than twice a day.
- The use of a baby chair should only be done to protect the child, to provide meals and only for around 30 minutes per day, with the child always secured. The child cannot learn to move correctly or to build muscles. The play mat should be the first option.



Indoor play zones

- Babies who are crawling or taking their first steps need to have enough floor space. The surface should be clean and not have cracks or be too polished.
- Do not walk with shoes that have been used outside on the surfaces where the child is crawling.
- Separate the zones where little children play with those of the older children. This allows the little ones to freely explore their environment without being pushed around by the older ones.
- Prepare a covered surface, easy to clean for less noisy activities and so that children can start experiencing active play.
- Secure heavy furniture like shelves and storage compartments to ensure they don't fall on the child.
- Secure drawers and cupboards so that they are not easy to open.
- Prepare a drawer that the child can use, open and empty like parents do!



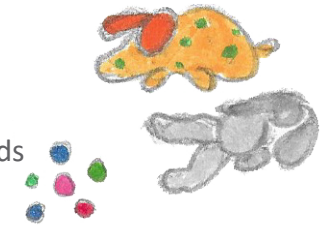
Outdoor play zones

- Inspect play zones every day, in particular the grounds, to see potential dangers.
- Pay attention to the little ones when they are outside with older kids.
- Teach older kids to look after the younger ones and protect them.

Sleeping arrangements

- Beds always need to be placed away from windows that can open, shutters and curtain strings.
- Do not use double or bunk beds.

- Arrange the room in a way that, in the case of an emergency, you can access the children easily.
- Use a sleeping bag.
- Do not use covers before aged 2 years to avoid choking risks.
- To avoid sudden infant death, the baby needs to sleep on its back (See also the document "I sleep on my back" on the next page).
- Do not put too many stuffed toys in the bed to allow the baby to breathe.



Put yourself in the position of your baby!

The best way to ensure your child's safety is visualize your house from her perspective. Get down on all fours and observe the environment as she would.

What is within reach? Is something catching your eye? Where would you go if you could crawl or walk?

These tips are given for general information purposes and do not constitute as medical advice. Always consult a paediatrician or another health professional if you have questions or concerns about your child's health and care.

This can be a good occasion for you, parents, to get first aid training. (Research this through the Red Cross).

**Keep emergency numbers and numbers for anti-poison centres
(on your fridge, in your phone, your wallet in
case of an emergency).**



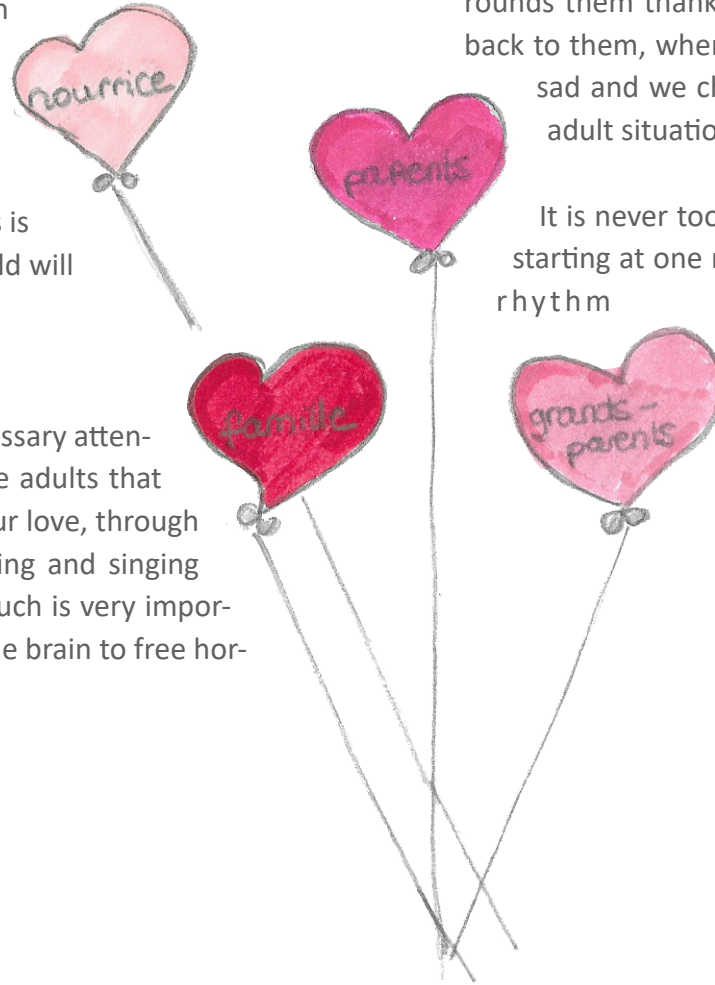
4. Prioritize your child's social and emotional development

Attachment

The child's first attachments will have a vital influence on her cerebral development and every person that takes care of her can make a difference. During this period, the baby learns that she is important and loved. She learns to count on you for reassurance when she is upset. She starts to trust you and to trust others. This is the basis of healthy relationships that your child will develop as she grows up.

Love

When children are pampered and get the necessary attention, they are more likely to feel safe with the adults that take care of them. These manifestations of your love, through touch, rocking them, speaking to them, smiling and singing songs will teach them to build their world. Touch is very important. Touching and stroking your child trains the brain to free hormones that help developmental growth.



Communication

Newborns cannot speak to communicate their feelings or behaviours. By understanding babies signals and responding to them with care, parents allow the child to attach strongly to them. Babies learn to trust the world that surrounds them thanks to different situations: when they smile and we smile back to them, when they are hungry and we feed them and when they are sad and we cheer them up. A baby that feels loved and safe can face adult situations with confidence.

It is never too early to start talking to your baby. Research shows that starting at one month, babies already start getting used to the tone and rhythm of your voice. When you speak, your baby feels reassured by your voice's familiarity (Lamb and Maik, 1986). Furthermore, the more you speak to your child, the more it helps her become familiar with vocabulary, which will be beneficial when her language skills start to develop.



Talk, read, sing!

Newborns do not understand the meaning of words but they can understand your intentions thanks to the tone of your voice. Their language skills develop from a young age, by listening to your conversations. The more they listen to you talk, the more that part of the brain dedicated to language will develop itself. Scientists have documented babies' capacities to distinguish vowels, consonants, rhythmic patterns and inflexions of tone in languages that they do not even speak, even in language that isn't their own, especially when they are exposed to multiple languages at the same time. The act of talking, singing and reading isn't only important for the brain's development but also a wonderful excuse to build a closer relationship with your child. You can read picture books and stories to very young children and even babies. Singing songs, Ginans, Qasidas and nursery rhymes in your language will allow your child to get used to the sounds of the languages of their culture.

Always respond to the needs of your baby

Newborns cry less and sleep better at night if they are quickly attended to and soothed. When the baby shows that she is upset by crying and the mother or caretaker responds by comforting her, her stress reaction system in the brain will be deactivated. If you hold your baby close to you and hug her, she will feel safe and secure. The brain will create a network of cells that will help to aid relaxation. The baby will learn that she is important for somebody and will develop stronger self-esteem.



Remember that you are your child's first role model

Children learn by example. To give the example, parents can integrate the ethics of our faith in their everyday lives. You can live your faith by simple actions such as showing love, kindness and generosity. Show that you know how to put yourself in someone else's shoes and understand their point of view. This form of empathy allows for a more ethical reasoning and action plan. This translates by being kind towards others, respecting them and demonstrating patience, at home but also outside. If your child sees you being kind towards others, it will become natural and normal.



The impact of screens on the child's development (TV, telephone, tablet)

More and more doctors are worried about exposing babies and little ones to television. It could be tempting to put your child in front of the television, in particular if there are shows that are created for children under the age of two. But know that certain shows could mistakenly teach your children incorrect sentence structures. Remember that neurons get stronger with repetition. As a result, repetitive exposure to these types of shows could have an impact on the baby's language and development.

It is also important to note that spending time together during the day makes it possible to anticipate the so-called crying that comes with "winding down" in the evening or at night.



Routines and rituals

Routines and rituals associated with feelings of joy are reassuring to babies and little ones. Repetitive positive experiences that link the brain's neurons give children a sense of security. For this to become natural, get your child involved in everyday tasks. When you are dressing them, talk about the colour of their clothes, outfits or the shoes they will wear. This will create additional vocabulary and the child will start to recognize the different activities and the words used. It is also proven that children with regular and safe interactions with those around them develop better analytical capacities and are more successful at school.

Self-exploration and games

When babies start to crawl, create a space where they can explore the space safely. Playing is also important, because it allows children to learn. Suggest a variety of possibilities to play and problems to solve so that the brain can establish good links.



The quality of day care services is important

If someone, whether it be an outside person or a specialized service, is watching your child, ensure that you trust them. Go visit and observe the childcare or inform yourself of your caregiver's intentions and love for children. Ensure that the environment is safe and ask for references. Stay involved and from time to time visit them without warning them if that is possible. Ask for frequent updates on your child's progress and suggest ways to improve their experience.

5. A few tips on language development

Do not hesitate to repeat yourself: children forget fast so repeat calmly

Children love to listen/read the same stories over and over again, so do not hesitate to reread the same books.

Become an actor

Do not hold back when you are reading to your child. Grunt like Papa Bear in Goldilocks and the Three Bears or grunt like Piglet in Winnie the Pooh. Use different voices for each character and act it out to make the stories come alive.

Go to the library

Try to go to the library as much as possible for reading sessions and register your child so that she can have her own library card or create a library at your home.

Do not make books seem like a reward

If books are linked to reward systems, this is not a positive experience for the child.

Tell stories at any time throughout the day

Tell stories throughout mealtimes, whilst driving and any other time when you get the chance.





Teach your child the name of everything you see

There is no set time to teach.

Talk

According to researchers at Harvard University, children whose families have conversations at the table have a more developed vocabulary. Do not be afraid of using complicated words or speaking in sentences, as you would to an adult.

“Speak positively”, this is less negative for the child to hear. For example, instead of saying “don’t speak so loud, stop shouting”, try calmly saying “speak slowly.”

Show that you love books

Your child wants to do what you do and share your interests. This is how you can spread your values.

The first and surely the best advice we can give you when reading to children, is to have fun. If children are involved and appreciate what they’re doing, they learn better. When we have good relationships with books, they develop a feeling of joy towards reading, which will make them more inclined to actively read books growing up.



Don’t worry if you can only read for short amounts of time, and don’t worry if you don’t finish the book in one go

Young children can only stay seated for a few minutes when reading, but they will grow and so will their capacity to stay still and focused. Let your child decide the length of the reading session. You do not have to read all the pages. Indeed, you might notice that your child has a favourite page or favourite picture. It’s possible that they’ll focus on it and then decide to go to another book or another activity. Some babies are only interested in books to bite them! This isn’t a problem. If you let your child discover books in any way, the experience will be even more enlightening.

Describe the images with words or song

You don’t always have to read the words of a story to tell it. Try to “read” the images to your child from time to time, and when the child grows up, ask her to read it to you.



Let your child turn the pages

Babies can’t turn pages by themselves, but once they are over 18 months, they will try and after 3 years they will do it without help. And remember, it isn’t a problem to skip pages. Let your child follow their hearts desire!

Take time to explore the cover with your child

Explain to your child what the book is about. If they are older, ask them to guess what they think the story is about.



Point out the words to your child

Underline the words from left to right with your finger at the same time you are reading or from right to left if you are reading in Arabic or Dari.

Add a few personal touches

Integrate the members of your family, your pets or members of the community to which you belong in when you're reading a story about other people.

Ask questions about the story to your child and let them ask questions too!

Use reading to engage your child in asking and responding to questions. Talk about activities and familiar objects that you see in the illustrations or the names you read in the story.



Let your child read to you

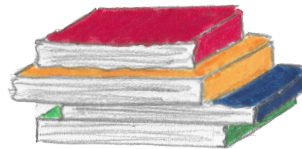
Starting from three years old, children can memorize a story. Furthermore, a lot of them enjoy the creativity that comes from reading a story.

Create books together

Create books with pictures of members of your family. Cut pictures that have words in magazines or in catalogues to create little dictionaries or little vocabulary books.

Have fun with coloured crayons, markers and paint to create books in colour.

When your child is older, ask them to tell you a story and draw pictures that go with their words.



Choose the right books for the little ones

Babies and little ones learn to like books they consider to be an integral part of their world when they have easy access to them and they have the opportunity to discover them. Vinyl books or books in resistant fabric and supple enough to be chewed are designed for little babies, whilst infants prefer thick cardboard books, small books and books with solid covers.

Offer your child a varied library and include songs for children, books on the alphabet, educational books and fairy tales.

Simplicity over complexity

With little ones, simple stories or books with only a few words are the most suitable. In the lead-up to their first birthday, your child will still love picture books but they might start to be able to listen to short and simple stories.



Improvise

Let your imagination flow and create your own fun interpretation with picture or illustrated books.



Touch and sensation are important

Little ones like books that lead to interaction. Babies appreciate old classics like those of “The Wolf” or “Little Brown Bear” that allow them the opportunity to touch and learn the names of different textures or different emotions. In the same way, books that include “peek-a-boo” with animated pages, the ones with little holes for fingers, musical or puppet books will attract your baby’s attention.

Have rhythm in your blood

Babies like rhymes, repetition and books that spread the same message all throughout the book (like Dr. Seuss), because they can also predict what is going to happen. They also like books based on interesting rhymes like “One must not touch a...”



Reuse your books

It can be a good idea to buy a collection of books and first reads. These stories are simple to follow for your baby and you can reuse them, when your child starts learning how to read.

Speaking a second language is highly encouraged

Babies exposed to multiple languages develop more connections in parts of their brain that help them to have more flexible thoughts and solve problems: the capacity to reflect is decoupled, the individual is more able to learn and integrate complicated concepts such as different cultures and ways of thinking.



These competences will later help them solve math and linguistics problems.

The capacity to concentrate (and to listen) is improved. Indeed, the frontal lobe that contains, among other things, thought and concentration, is more active for bilingual individuals. Each time they speak, the two languages are active therefore, the brain needs to work to erase one of the two languages when the individual is speaking. Ideally, we would suggest one

parent per language.

We distinguish two phases of learning:

- Learning before the child is 5 years old, among family or in a day care, that allows the mastery of language in its entirety, including phonemes, without having an accent.

- Learning before the child is 9 years old, in primary school, which remains beneficial given the language abilities continue to evolve and syntax capabilities are developed.





6. The importance of saving right from your child's birth

We always want the best for our children. When a child is born, we are not worrying about their future studies. Yet, this is the time to start thinking about it. We must not take this time for granted.

As the State is getting more and more disengaged with its citizens, the costs for secondary education are increasing and there is severe competition to enter the best courses. It is important to prepare your child well by sending them to good schools (from kindergarten to high school) as well as putting aside money to save for these future costs from an early age.

As an example, creating a savings of 30 000 EUR for when your child comes of age will cost:

- 105 EUR per month from birth
- 275 EUR per month if you start when the child is 10
- 800 EUR per month if you start when the child is 15

The cost of a year of school will strongly depend based on the programme they follow

- 1 year of university (1000 to 6000 EUR / year)
- Private engineering schools (4000 to 10000 EUR / year)
- Commerce and trade schools (9000 to 16000 EUR / year)

The length of higher education varies from 3 to 5 years, the above quick calculations do not include the costs of living and food if your child is far away.

Of course, in order to give your child every opportunity, the possibility of studying abroad should not be neglected (a year in London will cost you on average 35 000 EUR to 50 000 EUR when taking into consideration all expenses).

Currently, 20% of students give up their chances at pursuing a promising programme because of a lack of financial means.

Young parents should start to anticipate these costs.

Saving for your child's schooling is providing them the possibility to choose

their dream job without worrying about the financial aspects.

The whole AKEB Team and the institutions are available to accompany you throughout your reflections planning.

*3% return on a life insurance contract





7. School Quality

Quality education has always been a major concern of parents. It is the duty of the parents to ensure that the child receives a quality education for his personal development and for his future. For this, it is important to choose where to live, to select a good environment and to choose a good school from the start of the child's schooling.

8. School Ranking

Some organizations carry out a ranking of colleges and high schools. We invite you to consult them before choosing a school, especially when your child goes from primary to middle school or from middle school to high school.

9. Learning English

Learning English must be another priority, as it has become the international language. From kindergarten, give your children the opportunity to learn English, either in private lessons, in groups or online.

Explanation of cover illustration

Retrieved from the «dove» frieze prepared on the occasion of our beloved Mawlana Hazar Imam's visit to Paris for the Diamond Jubilee Mulaqat (23 June 2018).

The roots of the tree trunk are represented in calligraphy:

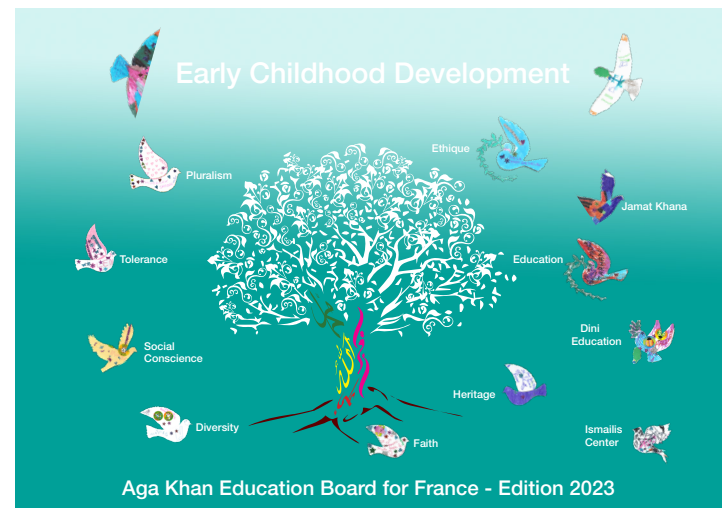
- IQRA: (in pink) which means "Read" is the first revelation that the Prophet Muhammad received. This calligraphy represents here education.

- The other calligraphies are Allah, Ali, Muhammad which remind us of our Mawlana Hazar Imam's wish that faith always be present in our daily lives.

The leaves are made from the Diamond Jubilee logo and represent all of the work Mawlana Hazar Imam has completed over the 60 years of Imamah and remind us of social conscience.

Thus education, faith and values are the foundations that we wish to share and give to our children so that they can fly on their own in peace and harmony with others.

The doves were made by children in the Mini-Baobab programme for the Mulaqat in June 2018.





Notes / Sources / Links

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Images

Images page 12 : drawings reproduced from the book « l'explorateur du nu : plaisir du jeu, découverte du monde » of Jean Epstein and Chloé Radiguet, dessinateur Zaü.

Image page 16 : <https://promotionsante.chusj.org/en/conseils-et-prevention/Prevenir-les-blessures>

Image page 18 : <http://www.yapaka.be/thematique/developpement-de-lenfant>
<https://ensemblepourlesenfants.wordpress.com/2012/10/04/les-porteurs/>

Image page 21 : baby mirror

Image page 28 : <https://www.gazette-d-une-future-maman.com/diversification-alimentaire-de-bebe-tout-ce-qui-faut-savoir/>

Key stages of development - pages : 16, 18, 20 et 23 : The Creative Curriculum® for Infants, Toddlers & Twos, par Diane Trister Dodge, Sherrie Rudick et Kai lee Berke. 2011, Teaching Strategies, Inc.

Figures

Fig 1: Human brain colouring book

Fig 2: EYS3 ou Early Years Study 3 / Adapted by Fields, D. (2011); Kandel, E., Schwartz, J., et Jessel, T. (2000) ; Mc Cain, M., Mustard J.F., et Shanker, S. (2007).

Fig 3: Les sphères d'influence sur le développement de l'enfant / Issu de « Bernard Van Leer Foundation (2013) Early Childhood Matters (120) »

Fig 4: www.developingchild.harvard.edu

Websites and applications for parents

Vroom.org
Zerotothree.org
Raising children.net.au (including resources in Arabic and Dari)



Resources for parents

These websites provide more examples of what to expect as your child develop. Note there is no universally agreed upon list of developmental milestones. This means there are differences with respect to how competencies are classified (might be considered language development on one list and social development on another list) and when they occur (might be sooner or later). What is important to understand is that there are patterns in child development – a child learns to scribble before they learn to draw, for example. Or a child learns to jump with two feet before they learn to jump on one foot. It is perfectly normally that children might be advancing quickly in one developmental domain and not moving as quickly in another domain. As a parent, you can use this information to see how your child is progressing and tailor the activities you do at home accordingly. If you are concerned, please talk to your family doctor.

Arabic	Webteb https://baby.webteb.com/baby-development
English	Help me grow https://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/DevelopMilestone/index.html Centers for disease control and prevention https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html Canadian Paediatric Society https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/behavior-and-development/your_childs_development
French	Naitre et grandir https://naitreetgrandir.com/en/step/0-12-months/family-life/ https://www.hellofamily.ch/content/hfc/fr/conseils-pour-les-familles/developpement-de-l-enfant.html Canadian Paediatric Society https://www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/behavior-and-development/your_childs_development
German	Hello Family https://www.hellofamily.ch/content/hfc/fr/conseils-pour-les-familles/developpement-de-l-enfant.html Stiftungnetz https://www.stiftungnetz.ch/entwicklung-des-kindes/

Thanks

On behalf of the Aga Khan Education Board, I would like to express my gratitude and thanks to all the people who have worked to produce this early childhood guide

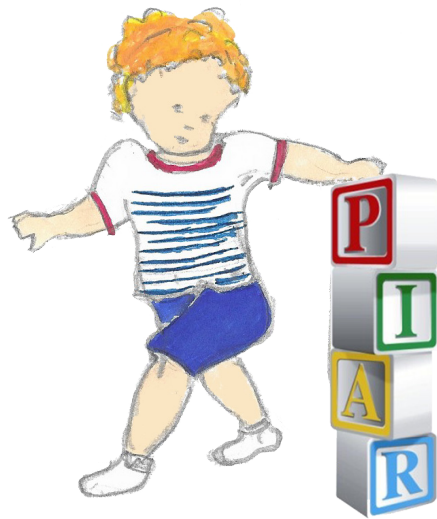
Férid ALIBAY, Chairman AKEB

THANK YOU

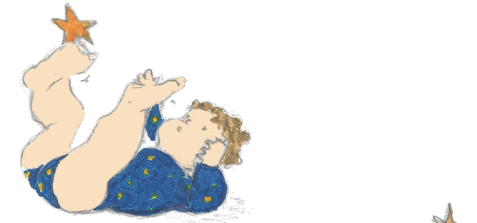


AKEB Members: Sheila Manji, Ivana Satsou
Volontaires: Farzana Alibay, Shala Nourmamode, as well as all the former members and volunteers who contributed to this work.

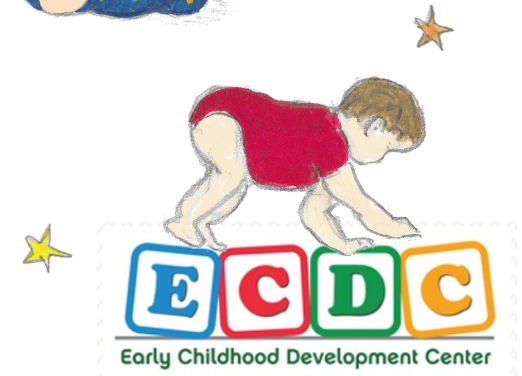
For any registration or information, contact the Aga Khan Education Board (AKEB) for France: akeb@franceinstitutions.org



P Positive
I Inform
A Active
R Régular



Child from birth to 36 months, come and participate in our PIAR program which is held once a month



For more information, contact AKEB : akeb@franceinstitutions.org

On children - Khalil Gibran

Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself. They come through you but not from you. And though they are with you yet they do not belong to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts, for they have their own thoughts. You may house their bodies but not their souls, for their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams. You may strive try to be like them, but seek not to make them like you, for life goes not backwards nor tarries with yesterday .

You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent forth. The archer sees the path upon the infinite, and He bends you His might that His Arrows may go swift and far. Let your bending in the archer's hand be for gladness; for even as He loves the arrow that flies, He loves also the bow that is stable.

Khalil Gibran (extract from The Prophet)

