



I Mandikiki

For Guam Families with Children Birth To Eight



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Project Bisita I Familia: Families Praise Program

I had the opportunity to interview three women who are enrolled in Project Bisita I Familia. Project Bisita is a Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program funded by the Human Resources and Services Administration and administered on Guam by the Department of Public Health and Social Services. Home Visitors provide FREE services using strategies that support women during pregnancy and after birth by promoting the importance of prenatal care, well-baby check-ups, help parents with positive parenting skills, and provide information about child development, health, and safety.

Families are given an eligibility screen. If the screen is positive, a parent assessment survey is completed. If the assessment survey is positive, the family is offered home visiting services.

Each woman I interviewed had a different life story. But, they shared many commonalities—at rock bottom or close to it, family issues, single parenthood, needing a listening ear, struggles with everyday life activities, just to name a few. Each said yes to joining for different reasons and all were surprised when the visits continued. They had expected that they would be visited once or twice.

Erika Cepeda

I first visited with Erika Cepeda, mother of two-year-old Koilynnrose Rose Cepeda. Erika is 17 and is currently in high school. She had Koilynnrose when she was 15 and everything about being a first time mom was hard for her. She juggled being a teen, a student, and a mother all at once. Erika started with Bisita when Koilynnrose was just two months old. At first, her home visitor would come once a week. After a while, it tapered to twice a month and now, once a month. Erika said, "Because of Bisita, I know how to be a mom and take care of myself."

Some things Erika has learned are how to handle situations when Koilynnrose throws a temper tantrum, how to help her daughter deal with her emotions, the benefits of interacting with her child, and understanding the responsibility of being a parent. She also learned that



being a mother isn't just about taking care of your child, it's also about learning how to take care of yourself. She said, "Because of Bisita I know how to be a mom and take care of myself."

Erika uses the strategies she learned when interacting with other people. Her nephews kept us company most of the time I was visiting with Erika. There has been a change in the way she talks to them or disciplines them. She said, "Before I used to get mad at them right away, tell them to stop. I would just automatically get mad, tell them to face the wall, yell at them to keep still. Now I try to talk to them first." She likes that she is able to use what she's learned with others, not just her daughter.

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Project Bisita Families Praise Program *cont...*



Bisita has taught Erika how to ask for help. She said, "Before I wouldn't ask for help. I would always want to do it on my own." She's always felt the need to do everything by herself. If she has a question about something, she is not afraid to ask her home visitor for help. Most of the time, Erika's questions are about Koilynnrose's health and development. Her home visitor has been very hands-on and accommodating to Erika's and Koilynnrose's needs.

People have noticed positive changes in Erika. She is complimented on how she parents her daughter, which she credits to her experience in the program. She has also noticed changes in herself. The program has helped her understand her role as a parent and the responsibility it entails. But she has also learned that she doesn't have to give up everything for her child. She said, "I can continue to go to school and graduate and become something."

While Erika attends classes to finish high school, her daughter attends child care with assistance from the Child Care and Development Fun Block Grant Program. When Erika graduates next year, she would like to go to college and aspires to be a Pediatrician. She said, "Something about the kids...I really like to be around them. Watching television and seeing pediatricians helping children in other countries and changing their lives, that made me want to become one."

Jomilyn Mendiola

Jomilyn Mendiola, mother of four-year-old Cyrus Mendiola, was 17 when she gave birth. Her son had health issues that required off-island care in Michigan. Her home visitor also worked at Guam Memorial Hospital Authority and told her about the program. The home visitor would visit him in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and when the program opened its doors to service delivery, Jomilyn said yes to services. It was helpful for Jomilyn that her home visitor was a familiar face. Being pregnant and then giving birth to a baby with a heart

condition was hard both emotionally and physically. Her home visitor was a good support system, especially when Jomilyn was not getting along with her own mother. Her home visitor was able to help her get comfortable with the different medical items that were attached to Cyrus as well as teach her how to be a mother. She started out with twice weekly visits to twice a month and now once a month.

Jomilyn has learned a lot by being in the program. She said, "I learned a lot. They taught me how to be a better parent, how to deal with stressful moments, anger moments." She has a better outlook on life. She would panic about so many things about being a parent, but now she knows what to do in those situations. She has learned how to discipline Cyrus, how to talk to him, how to feed him when he was still hooked up to medical equipment, what she was looking at when she changed his diaper, to name a few.

She also feels like she can call her home visitor when she needs someone to talk to and no one is around. The program has helped her have better relationships with others. When she had Cyrus, her relationship with her family was not good. She said she was a typical stubborn teen. Bisita made her see a different perspective on how to accept things and how to stay true to herself. The program has helped her look forward and be more open-minded.

Jomilyn has not finished high school since she's focused all her energies on raising Cyrus and attending to his needs. She is hoping that once Cyrus is in school full-time, she will be able to return to school. Cyrus is attending Head Start this school year.

When asked what she would say to a family who was thinking about joining the program she said, "It will help you grow. It will help you become a better parent. They help with health issues and they're one of the most amazing support I've ever had in my life. It's an exciting feeling when they come to my house. It's not just to you... me and Cyrus and my mom. If my sister is here, they're checking up on her too. It's really all about family."

Leocardia Palacios

Leocardia Palacios, mother of two-year-old Liam, was already five months along when she found out she was pregnant. She doesn't know how Bisita found her, but she is glad they did! She started in Bisita when she was six months pregnant. She also has a 13-year-old daughter. Her home visitor gave her the support she could not get anywhere else. She said, "I was going through so much

Project Bisita Families Praise Program *cont...*

at the time and I pretty much had no one to talk to, so when she started coming around she was the one person I could vent to and let everything out to. She wasn't there to judge me. She was there to sometimes give me advice and to listen. And that's what I needed the most." Her home visitor came every Wednesday in the beginning. Then twice a month and now once a month.

Leocardia was unemployed, but had child support for her older child. She struggled with being pregnant and not being with her unborn baby's father. She said, "I can say I pretty much hit rock bottom. Not really, but I think I was at a low point, and being able to talk to my home visitor helped me put some sense into my head, to help me be strong enough for me and my kids and get back on my feet."

It was hard for her in the beginning to parent a baby. Her daughter was 11 years old when Liam was born so she didn't have very much patience with him. They taught her how to be patient and taught her strategies to cope.

She wanted to stay home and take care of Liam because she felt she missed out on her daughter's growth. She said, "My daughter was in daycare since she was one month old. I lost out on watching her grow like most moms could. I had to work, I had to put her in day care. With my baby, I decided I'm not going to work. I'm not going to lose this. This might be my last baby so I'm going to stay home and enjoy every single minute with him. I'm going to watch him grow. So I stayed home."

Leocardia wanted to throw her son a birthday party. When she realized the money she had saved wasn't going to be enough, she found a job. With the help of her home visitor, she applied for child care assistance through the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) block grant program. Having the assistance to pay for child care helped her to make sure that her son was cared for properly. Her intent was to work only to earn enough money for the birthday party, but she really enjoyed her job so she stayed. She left her position in May of this year due to management issues.

One of the things she has noticed in herself is having more self-respect and being able to put her needs before

others every once in a while. She said, "Before it was never about me. It was about pleasing my other half, giving my kids everything and anything they want. I would just forget about me." It wasn't until she felt so overwhelmed with having a baby, her daughter starting a new school year, and the stress from her job that she finally asked someone to watch her baby so she could do something for herself.

Bisita has helped her with her parenting skills. The age difference between her children was so big that it was just like starting over. She said, "I learn something new every day from them, especially the parent handouts. This is one thing I really liked, that if your child is doing something wrong, don't say, 'Bad baby' you just have to let them know that it's wrong and explain to them. They may not be able to talk but of course they'll understand. I really liked that because before I had my son, whenever other kids would be around, after the third time of telling them, 'Don't do that,' you just say, 'Bad boy or bad girl!' I didn't realize until I got that handout that I wasn't supposed to say 'bad baby.' So now I know. I even told my mom, because sometimes when my son gives his attitude, she'll tell him, 'you're a bad boy.' I'd say, 'Mom, you're not supposed to say that,' and I'll let her read the handout, too. We're supposed to let them know what they did was wrong or even what they did was bad, but not to call them bad."

When asked what she would say to a family who was thinking about joining the program she said, "I've actually had three people self-refer to the program. Most of the people I know are under the Medicaid program and it's so hard to schedule appointments,

the home visitor will schedule it for you. You get incentives for things you have to do because it's part of being a parent like taking your kids to their appointments. The home visitor will meet us there. There are family functions, events where you and your family can go and enjoy. If they're going through so much, like my situation where I needed someone to vent to, and not be judgmental and at the same time help me with giving me the handouts about my baby. I didn't join because of the incentives and I don't stay because of the incentives. I joined because it was voluntary and they check on me once a week when I was pregnant. They helped me get stuff that I needed to get. The incentives are a plus, a bonus for us."



What do our faces say?

Our faces tell a great story. At first glance, someone can tell if we're happy or sad, frustrated or victorious. How so? We have facial expressions that convey our feelings. The facial expressions for happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, and disgust are the same across cultures and across age spans. That is why a child can tell that his or her parent is upset or why a parent knows when his or her child is happy. But, sometimes children don't know how to express their feelings appropriately.

Understanding feelings and being able to communicate them in healthy ways are important foundational communication and social emotional skills for infants and toddlers. This is called "emotional literacy." Emotional literacy is "the ability to identify, understand, and respond to emotions in oneself and others in a healthy manner" (The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, 2009). In order to demonstrate emotional literacy, children must be able to identify, understand, and respond to their own emotions and the emotions of others. Infants and toddlers learn emotional literacy through their interactions with family members and other caregivers during everyday routines and activities.

There are factors that impact children's ability to understand emotions. The factors are body language, tone of voice, facial expression, and physiological response such as crying or sweating.

There are several key concepts about emotions that are important: 1) We know that emotions change; 2) You can have more than one emotion about something; 3) You can feel differently than someone else about something; and 4) All emotions are valid, but it's what we do with them that counts.

Children often copy what adults do. It is important for adults to model emotional literacy. How good are you at reading emotions? We must be able to identify and understand emotions. The most common emotions are happy, sad, embarrassed, scared, nervous, and mad. Some clues that can tell you that children are experiencing their emotions are happy - smiling, sad - frowning, embarrassed - cheeks, lips, or eyes rolled; scared - mouth open and eyes wide; nervous - sweating; mad - tight mouth and eyebrows.

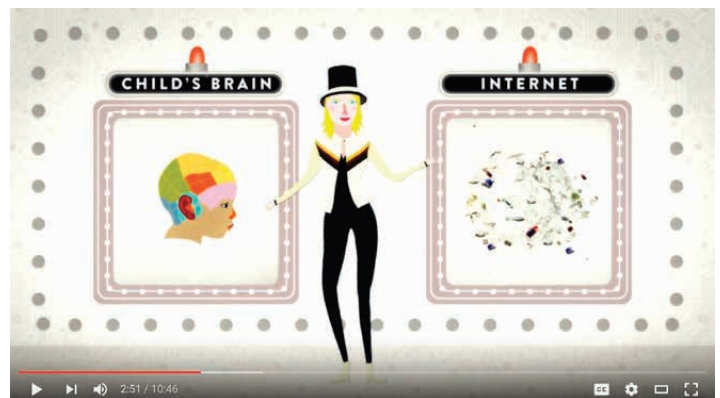
Understanding these 4 concepts about emotions as an adult can help us model how to express feelings appropriately for our children. Children who can express their feelings appropriately benefit by being able to tolerate frustrations better, get in fewer fights once they reach school age, exhibit less destructive behavior, are healthier, are less lonely, are more focused and less impulsive, and demonstrate greater academic achievement.

So what can adults do? 1) Express your own feelings. Modeling and naming our own emotions consistently helps to improve our emotional vocabulary. 2) Label children's feelings. If a child is sad about not getting a turn at the swings, you label their feelings by saying, "You look sad that you didn't get a turn." 3) Play games, sing songs, or read stories with feelings. You can have a container of cut out feeling faces and have the child pick out a piece and identify the feeling. Sing songs like, "If You're Happy and You Know It." Read stories that talk about feelings such as "Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day."

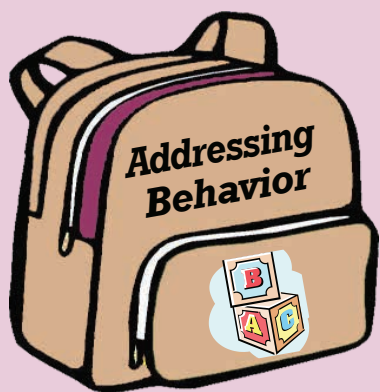
Brain Power: From Neurons to Networks

Brain Power: From Neurons to Networks is a 10-minute film and accompanying TED Book from award-winning filmmaker Tiffany Shlain and her team at the Let it Ripple Cloud Filmmaking Studio. Based on new research on how to best nurture children's brains from Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child and University of Washington's I-LABS, the film explores the parallels between a child's brain development and the development of the global brain of Internet, offering insights into the best ways to shape both.

Synopsis taken from www.letitripple.org/brain_power



Watch this short film at
www.letitripple.org/films/brain-power/

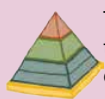


Backpack Connection Series

About this Series

The *Backpack Connection Series* was created by TACSEI to provide a way for teachers and parents/caregivers to work together to help young children develop social emotional skills and reduce challenging behavior. Teachers may choose to send a handout home in each child's backpack when a new strategy or skill is introduced to the class. Each *Backpack Connection* handout provides information that helps parents stay informed about what their child is learning at school and specific ideas on how to use the strategy or skill at home.

The Pyramid Model



The Pyramid Model is a framework that provides programs with guidance on how to promote social emotional competence in all children and design effective interventions that support young children who might have persistent challenging behavior. It also provides practices to ensure that children with social emotional delays receive intentional teaching. Programs that implement the Pyramid Model are eager to work together with families to meet every child's individualized learning and support needs. To learn more about the Pyramid Model, please visit challengingbehavior.org.

More Information

For more information about this topic, visit TACSEI's website at www.challengingbehavior.org and type "understand behavior" in the Search Box in the upper-right corner of the screen.



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How to Understand the Meaning of Your Child's Challenging Behavior

Alyson Jiron, Brooke Brogle & Jill Giacomini

As a parent or caregiver, you may see your child behave in a way that doesn't make sense and ask yourself, "Why does she keep doing that?" It can be very frustrating, especially when it seems like it should be easy for your child to figure out on her own a more appropriate way to behave. In moments like this, it is important to remember that children continue to use a behavior because it works! Your child's behavior is a powerful communication tool that she uses to tell you what she needs or wants. Sometimes, when a child does not know the appropriate way (such as words, sign language or pointing to pictures) to express her needs or wants she may use challenging behavior (such as hitting, screaming or spitting) to communicate. Challenging behavior gives children the ability to send a message in a fast and powerful way. Children will use challenging behavior to communicate until they learn new, more appropriate ways to express their wants and needs. To change the behavior, it is important for you to first discover what is causing the behavior. If you know why your child is choosing a behavior, you can then teach her to communicate her wants and needs in a new way that everyone feels good about.

Children use challenging behavior to either:

- 1) get something, such as attention, a toy or a nap, or
- 2) get out of doing something, such as going to bed, eating a new food or getting buckled in the car seat.

The first step you must take to help your child learn a new behavior is to determine if she wants something or wants to avoid doing something.



Try This at Home

- **Observe.** Pay careful attention to what is happening when your child displays challenging behavior. Keep a chart to see repeated patterns in behavior. What happens before the behavior starts? What happens after?
- **Track.** Keep track of when the behavior occurs. Do you always see the behaviors just before nap time? Perhaps your child is tired and you can change your routine to include errands in the morning and quiet, at-home activities before nap time.
- **List.** Brainstorm ideas about what your child is trying to get, or avoid doing, by using challenging behavior. The more you watch your child, the more you will be able to narrow your list down to a few possible reasons why the behavior is occurring.
- **Teach.** Once you have an understanding of why your child chooses to use a challenging behavior, you can teach him a new way to behave in that situation. Pick a time outside of the situation when you can:

» **Role play:** Use puppets, trains, dolls or other toys to act out the new skill with your child. For example, you can make the doll say, "I really want to play outside. I want to open the door and run, but Mommy says I need to wait for her. I won't scream. I will say 'Hurry up Mommy. I am ready to play.'"



» **Read books:** Children often tell you how they are feeling when they are trying to guess how others are feeling. Ask your child questions about a character in a book as a way to start to talk about your child's own behavior. For example, "That little girl doesn't want to go to bed. I wonder why?"

» **Talk about the situation ahead of time:** Sometimes, children simply want to know about what is planned ahead of time or to be included in the planning. Parent schedules are busy and you often need to get things done quickly. However, quick transitions can feel overwhelming to young children. If you take a few minutes to include your child in the plan, you will likely see a dramatic decrease in challenging behavior. For example, you could say, "We are going to get in the car and go to the store when you finish this puzzle. Would you like to pick a special toy to bring with you to the grocery store?"

Practice at School



Teachers are detectives too! When a child uses challenging behavior at school, teachers watch to see what caused the behavior and then teach the child a new way to communicate. For example, Ethan is playing with cars alone when Jacob tries to grab a car from him. Ethan hits Jacob and grabs his toy back. Jacob cries. Ethan was frustrated that a friend was taking a toy from him before he was done and used hitting as a way to tell Jacob that he wanted his toy back. The teacher might say to Ethan, "You looked frustrated when Jacob took your toy. Next time, you can use your words and tell him 'It's busy. I'm still using this toy.'" Teachers can also use puppets to reinforce the skill of saying "it's busy" during circle time or during other activities throughout the day.



The Bottom Line

It can be fun and rewarding to figure out what your child is thinking and why! The more familiar you are with how your child reacts to everyday situations, the easier it is for you to teach him appropriate ways to deal with challenges like frustration, stress and fatigue. Children who learn how to manage these situations feel more confident and are less likely to use challenging behavior to communicate their needs.



www.challengingbehavior.org

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More Information

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How to Use Positive Language to Improve Your Child's Behavior

Brooke Brogle, Alyson Jiron & Jill Giacomini

"Stop it." "No." "Don't do that!" As a parent, you might find yourself using these words and phrases more often when your child begins to make his own choices. Now, stop for a moment and consider how the conversation might feel if you couldn't use these words? What if, rather than telling your child what he can't do, you instead chose words to tell him what he can do? While this shift in language might seem small, it actually provides a powerful positive change to the tone of the conversation. When you focus on using positive language with your child, you will likely find that he has fewer tantrums, whines less and overall experiences fewer challenging behaviors.

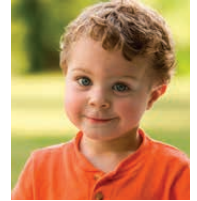
How can such a small change make such a big difference? While it is obvious to adults, young children are not able to make the logical connection that when they are told not to do something, what they actually should do is the opposite. For example, the directions, "Don't climb on the counter" can be very confusing to a child. However, "Please keep your feet on the floor" tells the child exactly what the expectation is and how he can change what he is doing. Using positive language also empowers a child to make an appropriate choice on his own, which can boost his self-esteem. When you are specific in your directions by telling your child exactly what he can do and when, it is easier for him to comply and he is more likely to cooperate with the request.



Try This at Home

- **Replace "don't" with "do."** Tell your child what she can do! If you saw her cutting the leaves of a plant, rather than saying "Don't cut that!" you could say, "Scissors are for cutting paper or play dough. Which one do you want to cut?" It is more likely that your child will make an appropriate choice when you help her to understand exactly what appropriate options are available.
- **Offer a choice.** When you provide your child with a choice of things that he can do, wear or go, he is more likely to select one of the options you have offered because it makes him feel like he is in control. This strategy also works for you as a parent because you approve of either choice.
- **Tell your child "when."** When your child asks to do something, rather than saying no, acknowledge her wish and tell her when she might be able to do it. This answer feels more like a "yes" to a child. For example, if your child asks to go to the park, but you are on the computer finishing up a work project, you could say, "The park sounds like a great idea! I need to finish this letter for work right now. Would you like to go after your nap today or tomorrow morning after breakfast?"
- **Use "first-then" language.** Another way to tell a child when he can do something in a positive way is to use a "first-then" statement. For example, if he wants to watch TV but you would like for him to pick up his toys, you could say "First, pick up your toys and then you may watch a TV show."

- **Give your child time to think.** Sometimes, you may feel frustrated when your child does not respond quickly to requests and feel tempted to use demands and raise your voice. When that happens, remember that your child is learning language and how to use it. She needs time to think about what you said and how she is going to respond. It can take her several seconds, or even minutes, longer than you to process the information. If you remain calm and patiently repeat the statement again, you will see fewer challenging behaviors and enjoy more quality time with your child.
- **Help your child to remember.** Children are easily distracted. Sometimes your child may need you to help him remember what you asked him to do in order to do it. "I remember" statements are very useful in these situations. For example, imagine you have asked your child to put on his shoes so that he can go outside, and he comes over to you without his shoes on and is trying to go outside. You can say, "I remember you need to put your shoes on before you can go outside." Stating the information as a simple fact, rather than a command, gives him the information he needs to make the right choice on his own without blaming him or making him feel like he has failed.



Practice at School

Teachers use positive language at school to help children become more confident and independent. When teachers tell children what they can do, children begin to manage themselves, classroom routines and interactions with peers by themselves. For example, a child who is throwing sand on the playground can be shown that, instead, she can use a shovel to put the sand in a bucket. The teacher might say, "If you want to play with the sand, you can fill this bucket. Would you like a blue bucket or this red one?" In this way, the teacher honors the child's interest, but directs it to a more appropriate play choice.



The Bottom Line

Positive relationships with parents, teachers and other caregivers provide the foundation for a successful and happy child, are the building blocks for your child's self-esteem and ability to empathize and predict future positive behavior choices. The manner in which you talk to your child has a significant impact on his behavior. Making positive changes to your communication style can be hard work, but with a little practice, you will see a big difference in your relationship with your child. Your child will feel more encouraged, positive and independent and, as a result, you will enjoy better overall cooperation.



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‘The Best Invention in the World is the Mind of a Child.’

Albert Einstein

Tips to Promote Language Development

1. Narrate action. Describe, comment praise, serve, return.
2. Follow child’s lead - be responsive.
3. Demonstrate - Initiate routines.
4. Use conversational voice.
5. Every interaction counts.

For more information go to www.hearingfirst.org



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Alternative formats (e.g., Braille, large print, or audio tapes) of *I Mandikiki* may be made available by sending a request to jenika.ballesta@guamcedders.org or 735-2438.

NEW Physical Developmental Delay:
What to Look For Tool

Is Your Baby Developing Normally?

Physical developmental delays are when children aren’t doing activities (like rolling over, sitting without support, or walking) that other children their age are doing. Developmental delays can be a sign of a serious health condition, so it’s important to talk with your child’s pediatrician about them.

For more information, go to www.motordelay.aap.org



PROJECT BISITA I FAMILIA

Home visiting services for pregnant women, moms, and babies.



Services provided to residents of Mangilao, Dededo, and Yigo

Valuing Children. Strengthening Families. Engaging Communities.

Starting early is starting on time.

For more information, contact Project Bisita I Familia

Telephone: 671-735-7104/634-7408 • Fax: 635-7457 • Website: www.projectbisita.org



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