



Indiana Association for Infant and Toddler Mental Health

Infant and Toddler Mental Health is about the emotional and social life of the very young child.

The most important determinant of infant mental health is the relationship between the infant and the parent or other regular caregiver.

Biological and environmental risk factors such as prematurity or poverty can be either reduced or magnified through the infant-parent relationship.



Infants and young children can experience mental suffering such as:

- pain and distress from trauma, abuse, or loss of a caregiver
- misery from neglect
- suffering from cumulative stress
- suffering from lack of opportunity

This suffering can impede the child's physical, intellectual, and emotional development.
(adapted from Zero to Three, Aug/Sept. 2001.)

Emotionally and socially healthy infants and toddlers:

- trust their parents/caregivers to take care of them and protect them
- feel valued because they are safe and cared for
- learn to self-regulate their emotions and behavior
- want to please their parents/caregivers
- learn to care about others
- learn to follow the rules
- are ready and motivated to learn
- are more resilient to environmental risks
- are more likely to grow up to be parents of mentally healthy children

Public policy can affect the conditions for improved infant mental health and reduce later social services costs by creating happier, more successful children.

The Indiana Association for Infant and Toddler Mental Health is a group of professionals and parents who are concerned about the mental health of young children. We are working to promote programs and practices that will prevent or alleviate mental suffering of young children and enhance mental health among infants and toddlers.

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