

Talking Tips FOR PARENTS

For the October 2015 issue of **Talking Tips for Parents**, the topic will be **“It Must Be Meaningful!”** This month, we will learn how to create fall and/or daily topics meaningful to your infants or young children.

But what is “meaningful” to a young child? A child needs to know all about the routines of his or her daily life—his parents and other family members, mealtime, diapering and dressing, playing with his toys and things, the family pets, doing things with family, bath time and bedtime. This is the foundation of his concepts, his vocabulary, and his understanding and speaking of language. He or she needs to eventually know how to get the things he wants, to have his needs met, and to learn the rules associated with things around his house. Then when new events, activities, and objects are introduced, these make more sense in relationship to the things he already learned about his own life.

It must be meaningful.” Why? Babies are born with most of the brain cells or neurons that they will ever have. One way to develop the potential of these brain cells is to provide stimulation so the cells communicate with one another and form connections called synapses. Parents can develop these connections by providing experiences that tie together what the baby is hearing, seeing, and doing in a way that helps their child make sense of it all. As the child’s brain forms these connections or synapses, his “brain power” increases, and parents are potentially building their child’s future.

The following are a few **autumn activities** you can do with your infant or young child to create meaning.

- In all of the following activities, **talk to your child about what you are doing and about what he or she is seeing**, such as, “Mommy is cutting the pumpkin. Look! The pumpkin has an eye! (Show your child your own eye and his or her eye.) Or another idea, “Look at Daddy. Daddy is raking the leaves. Uh-oh. More leaves are falling. Down, down, down.”
- **Remember that young children have fleeting attention spans**, so when carving a pumpkin with your young child, do some prep ahead of time. Cut around the top for the “lid,” the eyes, the nose, and the mouth but leave the cutout pieces in place. Loosen the gunk inside the pumpkin so it will be easy for your child to take out. When you bring your child to the table to “carve” the pumpkin, you pretend to cut it and then have your child push out the eyes, nose and mouth, take off the top and pull out the gunk inside the pumpkin.
- When you are selecting a Halloween costume for an infant or toddler, choose—something he or she sees frequently in life or books, such as a puppy or cat, characters he or she may have seen in a book, or a character from a favorite story or nursery rhyme.
- **Rake leaves with your young child either participating or watching (for babies).** If your child is old enough to participate, get a small, child-sized rake, and rake leaves into a pile, and then put them in the large leaf bags.
- If you want to create even more meaning, **take photos of activities, with your child participating**, and create an experience story.

