



# CAREGIVER CONNECTIONS

## Mental Health for Infants, Toddlers and Preschool Children

Early childhood mental health is not the absence of mental illness, but rather the presence of:

- A feeling of safety and security
- Comfort in connecting with trusted others
- Confidence in one's developmental trajectory
- An expectation that dependency needs will be met
- An assumption of one's right to move, explore and communicate

(NAEYC, November 2007, The Program for Infant Toddler Care, WestEd. J. Ronald Lally, Peter L. Mangione & Catherine Tsao)

**Mental health is the social, emotional and behavioral well-being of young children and their families. Children are developing the capacity to:**

- Experience, regulate and express **emotions**
- Form close, secure **relationships**
- **Explore** the environment and **learn**

(adapted from *Zero to Three*)

These capacities establish the foundation for pre-schoolers' continuing social-emotional development and mental health, and include school readiness skills:

- Emotional and behavioral self-regulation
- Empathy and perspective taking
- Cooperation and ability to resolve peer conflicts
- Communicating needs, desires and interests in a pro-social way
- Motivation to succeed linked to feeling competent and loved
- Persistence and self-direction in learning situations

(Early Childhood Resource Center, RTI; National Research Council)



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