

## My Parents, My Teachers

(links for viewing and download at end of transcript)

Narrator: My Parents, My Teachers was funded by the Robert R. McCormick Tribune Foundation. [Music] Long before they go to school, our children come to us ready to learn. Their education does not begin in first grade or kindergarten; it begins in the home at birth.

Mom 1: [Spanish] Mom 2: How are you? [inaudible] Mom 3: [Laughing] Baby: [Laughing] Mom 4 and Dad 1: [Singing in Spanish]

Narrator: As parents, we are their first teachers. From the very beginning, we learn from each other and from every new experience. Yet few of us realize that these simple daily experiences are the most important of all.

Dad 2: Have found that the little babies can understand everything. And they can hear. And it's very important to communicate with them in different aspects...ah...like in some music, ah...talking to them, or hugging, kissing. All of the little things that...are very little things, but are very important in our lives.

Narrator: Today parents are learning that there is one more step beyond loving our children and caring for their physical needs. You may have heard about it in the news or from your doctor. The human brain develops most during the first three years of life. A child's experiences during this critical time literally shape the brain, setting the foundation for all future learning. That's why our babies need us now more than ever to be their first and best teachers. [Baby crying]

Narrator: What every new parent needs to know is that the first three years of life are the most critical because that is when the brain develops the most and the way it develops is through experiences. Doctor Gustavo Oroza helps parents understand why even newborn babies need lots of positive experiences.

Dr. Oroza: You see, he's already moving around. He looks at you. He can... Mom 5: Hi baby. Dr. Oroza: ...actually listen to you. And every time you play with him, every time he...he gets stimulus his brain makes little connections. Mom 5: mmhm

Dr. Oroza: And...uh...they have demonstrated that during the first months of life and during the first years is when these connections are most active. Every time he listens to something, or every time he looks at something he...he gets stimulus. You touch him, the cells touch each other and make more branches between each other and that helps them...uh...manipulate information better, which makes them more intelligent.

Mom 5: So in...in other words, the sooner you start, it's...it's better. Dr. Oroza: Absolutely. You have that absolutely right.

Narrator: What we do or don't do during the first three years will make a big difference in the way our children develop, so what can we do? What should we do? Every child is different, but there are some experiences that all babies need. During the first three years we can help our children the most just by sharing the experience of playing, reading, and music.

These are the kind of experiences that will give our children the best chance for a successful life, and it all starts with communication. Since ninety percent of the time that we spend with our babies is during typical routines, this is when babies learn the most from us. What they need to learn most of all is that they are the love of our life.

Mom 6: Before I had a baby, well...I just..well babies just...just feed them, change their diaper...um...bathe them...here go back to sleep. Some more sleep, you know, they don't know nothing. They just...they don't...they don't talk, they

don't understand nothing, I guess. But now I see...now that I have my own child, you know, it's very important...you got to communicate with your baby. They're smarter than what you think you've just got to really focus and look at them in order to understand them.

Mom 7: [Spanish] Narrator: Doctor Alicia Lieberman helps parents understand how communication can change their baby's life for better or worse.

Dr. Lieberman: This is the time when the child is learning, "Am I lovable? Am I good? Am I cherished? Do people pay attention to what I need?" Or conversely, he is worrying, "I am not good enough. People don't pay enough attention. People don't give me what I want, what I need." And depending on the messages that the child is getting from those around him, the development is going to change so that the child can become confident, competent, able to achieve what he is capable of or he can feel very unsure of himself -- scared and unable to take the initiative.

Mom 6: Now that I'm a working parent, I s...I see how important it is when you do som...an activity i½ even if it is change a diaper, how important it is to...to really enjoy that with your baby. Even though it's something you have to do, but why make it so uninteresting when you can make it interesting?

Dr. Lieberman: Routines are very important because it is really the most intimate time between the parents and the baby. The more you talk to them, the more you explain to them what's happening, the better they will be able to master language when they learn to talk.

Mom 6: Mommy's so proud of you. Look at you. You're growing so fast. [Parents talking to children in Spanish.]

Narrator: There is a reason why children need to play and why they have more curiosity than adults. It is because they need experiences in order to develop. Experience is what builds the connections that form your child's brain. So, it is the baby's job to gather experiences. Our job as parents is to provide lots of positive experiences and to help them make meaningful connections for themselves.

Dad 2: I love showing her...um...anything that...that I can. And I love watching her experience things for the first time -- things that to us seem so simple and...and unimportant, that...that she's fascinated by and in a way it...it allows me to rediscover those kinds of things. Um...you realize how much you take for granted.

Mom 8: This is...uh...amazing changes that give you day by day sometimes hour by hour, especially in the first three years of life. And...uh...I mean they're like sponges. So you really, you...you get pleasure playing with them when you see the way they want to do all the things. She knows that there is a lot of things out there she can reach and she can enjoy and she can get things like...uh...from in the world in her hands.

Dr. Lieberman: Playing and learning go together. They make a very nice connection in the brain. Children are the bosses of their own play. They don't need you to teach them how to play. They know how to play. They need you to be their assistant. You need to be there ready to help, ready to follow their directions, and then play will be much more fun, both for the baby and for you.

Narrator: Reading to babies stimulates them in profound ways. The tone of your voice, the warmth of your body, the peaceful feeling between you and your baby. This forms a connection between love and literacy that can last a lifetime. Grandma: Okay. Okay. Let's go to next...

Narrator: There is a wonderful consistency to the words and pictures in a book. As we repeat them over and over, our children develop a sense of security and confidence that is a critical part of learning.

Grandma: My father did not know how to read and he taught me how to read -- to him it was very important. Not knowing, he taught me. He would sit with me and he would help me to pronounce the words. I was eleven when I was...when I knew how to read and doing this with my dad, I learned how important it was to learn to read and I hope that someday my great grandson will be able to read to me the same as I used to read to my dad. And I know and I realize that as adults, as parents, and uncles and aunts, and family can encourage a child to go on and to learn to read.

Dad 2: Maybe especially in the...in the Latino culture...uh...there is often too much the...uh...the feeling that...um...you know, that...that Daddy will take...um...you know, the kids out for ice cream or for this or that and that Mommy is responsible for a lot of the time. But I find it incredibly rewarding and enriching to see her reaction is what makes it worth it. And it's...you know, it doesn't take that much time.

Dr. Lieberman: Reading to a baby becomes a bridge between the home and the school. If you read to a young child, to a baby, the child will learn from early on that reading is important -- that books are important that there are fun things to learn that can be found in books.

Mom 9: And what's her name? Girl: Alice in Wonderland. Dr. Lieberman: And then learning to read will become a natural extension of the pleasure that they experienced with the parent when the parent was reading to them.

[Music] Mom 9: Uno dos tres...uno dos tres Dad 2: [Singing in Spanish] Mom 1: [Singing in Spanish] Kids: All the fish are swimming in the ocean...Bubble, bubble, bubble, bubble clap Boy: Cap!

[Family singing in Spanish] Narrator: If there is one form of art that we can all enjoy with our children, it is music. Music does so much more for a baby than most of us realize. Songs and melodies bring comfort and joy. [Baby crying] [Music begins] Dad 1: She was uh...uncomfortable. She was crying and as soon as she listen to the music she just stop and calm down and relax.

Narrator: This is just the beginning. As children get a little older, music inspires them to move, to dance, and to create their own forms of expression. It can build a child's self confidence as well as his vocabulary. Boy: [Singing in Spanish] Mom 8: [Talking in Spanish] Well we listen to the music. We like to...uh...dance and also we like to play instruments. When you see her mastering something, I mean like playing the harmonic, you see, I mean, how proud she feels of herself.

[Harmonica sound] Mom 8: Woah!

Dr. Lieberman: Music gives a wonderful way of conveying feeling, rhythm, pleasure to a baby and to a young child, and it can be conveyed in many ways. Parents can teach children the words of a song, and then that will be an intimate experience that parents and children have together of singing this song together. The music can be a way of learning about the child's heritage in a way that gives pleasure and pride to the child.

Grandma: [Singing in Spanish] Narrator: Every child is unique. Each has a different way of seeing the world and something different to offer, but all children need the same basic things. They need to feel loved, and they need the ones who love them the most to become their first and best teachers.

Dr. Lieberman: Even children that have the most difficult starts in life need the parents' attention and love. They thrive from being talked to, from being sang to, from being read to, and from being played with. It's important to know that even if a child has a difficult start, all these principles about how to be with a child still apply.

Grandma: I think that at times parents...uh...feel so guilty about being out there working hard and trying to keep a beautiful home for their children, or their beautiful cars and...and all these kind of beautiful things that everybody would like to have, but the most beautiful thing is the children -- the babies.

Dr. Oroza: So don't forget that the earlier you start, the better because his brain is growing the fastest now. It grows every minute that he's alive at this point and the first three years of life are the time when it grows most.

Narrator: What every child needs, every parent can give. What does it take to become the first and best teacher for your child? Simple, everyday experiences. Communicate with each other. Share their love of play, reading, and music, and let others know that all of us have what it takes to give our children a better future.

[Music, credits]

-- End of Video --

-- Premalink for viewing (requires Flash and javascript)

<http://videos.sorensonmedia.com/HEAD+START/000180-My+Parents%2C+My+Teachers+revised+-+English-2006/90d7c5a2Kf42bk41f6ga851Jfe7fc2030469>