

Strategies to Promote Cognitive Self-regulation

Roselia Ramirez: Hi, everyone and welcome. We'd like to welcome you to the Home Visiting Webinar Series. Our session today is titled "Strategies to Promote Cognitive Self-Regulation." We're from the National Center on Early Childhood Development Teaching and Learning.

Let's get started with meeting your host for today's session. My name is Roselia Ramirez, and I'm coming to you from my home in Arizona, and we're very excited to be here. I am one of your facilitators for the Home Visiting Webinar Series.

Joyce Escorcia: Hi, I am Joyce Escorcia, and I work with the wonderful Roselia joining you from Louisiana. Today, we are excited to welcome our colleague, Amelia Bachleda. Amelia, thanks so much for joining us. Would you like to say hello to our Home Visiting audience and just tell them a little bit about yourself and your work?

Amelia Bachleda: Sure. Hi, I'm so glad to be here with you and everyone. My name is Amelia, I'm based at the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences at the University of Washington. We study early childhood learning and brain development, and I'm coming to you from Seattle. I'm so excited to spend some time together today.

Roselia: All right, if you've not already done so, we do encourage you to visit that teal resource widget and download or print the Participant's Guide. We will be referencing this document throughout the session. We are offering this to you as a way to engage, to take some notes, to jot down some reflections, and then also plan how you might use some of the resources that we're going to be sharing in our session today.

Joyce: For those of you guys that were with us in October, we introduced an integrated approach for our webinar series that we're trying out this year in which we're threading the same topic across a few of our webinar series. It's Teacher Time, the Ed Manager, and Coaching Corner Webinar Series, along with our webinar. We're going to continue that same format today. Each of the series is going to make connections as the topic applies to those different roles that those webinars serve and support. We hope that this approach really provides an opportunity for learning and collaboration across all those different roles.

Roselia: Awesome. Let's keep moving forward. Joyce talked a little bit about this integrated approach with several of our webinar series. The topic that we're going to be focusing on is that of the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, or ELOF, the Approaches to Learning domain. Today's session is the second of four. These sessions are intended to explore each of those four subdomains. Don't worry if you've missed our first session, which aired in October. You can always go back and watch it on demand. We're going to be sharing more about how to do that before our session ends today.

Our approach for the sessions will be to provide a brief overview as well as some research to set the stage. We want to spend most of our time together exploring some strategies and resources to support your work with children and families.

Joyce: Today, we are going to be focusing in on one specific domain – Approaches to Learning. Approaches to Learning is made up of those four subdomains – Emotional and Behavioral Self-Regulation, Cognitive Self-Regulation, also Initiative and Curiosity, and Creativity, which ... We're going to get to those later on different webinars. Today, we are going to focus in on that Cognitive Self-Regulation.

Roselia: All right, well thanks, Joyce, for that. Before we go any further, let's take a moment to highlight our learning objectives for our session today. By the end of our session, we want you to be able to not only have a better understanding of cognitive – oh, excuse me, my words are getting kind of mumbled today – not only to understand what cognitive self-regulation is, which is also known as executive functioning, but we also want you to be able to describe it to others. We also want for you to identify home visiting practices and connect to resources that you can use in your work with children and families in this area of development.

What is cognitive self-regulation? Research tells us that those first five years of life are critical for brain development, because the brain is growing faster than it ever will again. We know that children's brains, they're built to learn new things, and through this learning process, the brain is developing new connections. We also know that early experiences shape brain development and they set that foundation for a lifetime of learning.

The science of early brain development could really be a session all on its own, because there's a lot of information there. But for the purposes of our session today, we just want to point out a few key components to develop an understanding of what we mean by cognitive self-regulation. We have included several resources in your Participant's Guide to help really expand and extend your learning in this area.

Joyce: Now we want to welcome Amelia, who's going to introduce our topic of Executive Function and Self-Regulation, by starting us out with a game that many of us could be pretty familiar with.

Amelia: Yeah, thanks so much. I think it's always fun to get started with a game. I'm going to invite you to play along with me. You can either stand up or remain seated. Joyce and Roselia are going to play along too, so we have some buddies in this. This is a play on Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes. Normally, when you sing the song or play this game, when we say touch your head, you touch your head. When I say touch your shoulders, you touch your shoulders. But this game has a twist. We've changed up the rules a little bit. What I'm going to ask you to do is when I say touch your head, I want you to touch your toes. And when I say touch your shoulders, I want you to touch your knees. When I say touch your knees, touch your shoulders. When I say touch your toes, touch your head. It's all sorts of mixed up. Joyce and Roselia, are you ready to try this along with me?

Roselia: All right.

Amelia: All right, please touch your toes. All righty, touch your shoulders. Touch your knees. Touch your head. Touch your toes. Touch your knees. OK, great job. All right. How did that activity feel? How did it feel to do this in a totally different way that you've never done before?

Joyce: I was bad, I'm just going to tell you that.

Amelia: Yeah, it's pretty tricky. And researchers actually use this to look at young children's executive functioning skills or self-regulation skills, because you have to use a lot of them when you're doing this tricky version of the game. For example, you have to inhibit your impulses, you have to do the opposite of what I'm telling you to do. You have to practice your working memory or short-term memory. You have to remember the rules, these new rules of a game. And you really have to pay attention and focus. And this is challenging. I think it's also a great example that executive functioning skills, they're tricky. We build them over the course of our life. But what the researchers found when they looked at this particular game with young children is that how well children performed in this task in preschool actually predicted growth in all academic areas later on. These skills are really non-trivial. We'll talk a little bit more about them.

“Executive Functioning Skill” is this umbrella term for this whole host of skills. We talked about some of them in, focused attention, motivation, decision making, planning, problem solving, switching between tasks, organization, self-regulation, and that working or short-term memory. The foundation of these skills are set very early in development. They're super important for success in school and learning across many different domains. And self-regulation and executive function, like we were just talking about, are really strong predictors of academic achievement. For example, another study found that – and they followed children for the course of their entire education – how well children were able to pay attention at age four and complete a task was one of the greatest predictors of whether or not they completed college by age 25. Now, nothing is ever set in stone. I think it can be sort of dangerous to say, like, do some sort of tests that say this is going to predict the rest of your life. But again, I think it goes to show how important helping to support these early executive functioning skills are. And we can do that through supportive interactions with children. Education staff and parents can really help children build these fundamental skills.

What I like to say is, the good news is, is that there's really no secret to building executive functioning skills. There's all sorts of products on the market that say they'll help you build executive functioning skills, but you don't need fancy toys or games or some sort of special program. What children really do need are those responsive caregivers who can help children build these skills during their everyday interactions. Responsive caregiving requires caring adults, whether that's a family member, education staff, to really carefully observe the child, really be with them to learn from them, respond to their actions and their behaviors, and provide communication in this really supportive way.

Children who are cared for by adults who respond to their emotional and physical cues learn to self-regulate in a couple of different ways. This responsive caregiving is really key. First, really young children are – they're not yet able to regulate their emotions or their big feelings by themselves yet. And I'm sure we've probably all had experiences, right? They have such big feelings, and they just can't quite do it by themselves yet. They need those responsive adults in their lives to help them regulate their emotions. And with this consistent and responsive comfort and care, children are able to learn and internalize those methods that adults are using to comfort them as they work to build those self-regulation skills. One of the things we want to do is invite you to go back and watch the first session of the series about emotional and behavioral self-regulation on demand. You can learn more there.

Another thing that I think is really important to talk about, and we'll talk about more later, is that children also look to adults as models, right? The way that adults deal with their emotions, the way that we deal with our emotions really serves as a model for children who are learning to regulate their emotions.

Roselia: Absolutely, they're always looking up to those adults in their in their lives. We'd like to invite you now to take a moment, and in your Participant's Guide, we want you to jot down some notes about what attentive, responsive care looks like for you. Think about the families that you serve, and what are some things that you look for? What are some cues? Kind of, again, just a moment for reflection, and jot down some notes about what that attentive responsive care looks like for you. Amelia, while folks are jotting down their ideas, can we explore a bit more why responsive care is important for children's executive functioning skill development, including that emotional and behavioral self-regulation?

Amelia: Yeah, absolutely. Responsive caregiving is key not only for building successful emotional and social skills, but it also is really setting the stage for cognition, problem solving, resilience, and really learning throughout our lives. Strong relationships early on also build resilience to stress later, which is so important. You know, in fact, research shows that the quality of interactions between an infant and a parent are predictive of a child's executive functioning skills. And remember, that includes this whole host of different things, right, the ability to think flexibly, to solve problems, to pay attention, to focus, remember rules, even control our impulses – a whole host of different things.

I think it's always kind of fun to talk about the brain, so let's do that for a minute. A region of the brain called the prefrontal cortex, it's right here at the very front of your brain, plays this really critical role in our executive functioning ability. But it's important to know that while that part of the brain is there when we're born, the connections and the networks that form in this part of the brain are really developed over the course of our entire childhood. There's a lot of refinement that happens in this portion of the brain, and it takes years of experience to build these connections and response networks. Young children, for example, they're not yet able to control their emotions or their impulses – we talked about this earlier – and the reason is because they simply do not yet have the neural structures, those neural connections in place to do so. I think this is a good reminder – we quite literally cannot and should not expect a child under five to be able to control any of their impulses on their own yet. Their brains just aren't ready.

Joyce: Yeah, Amelia, that's really great information to be able to help parents support and know what they can expect, because it'll help them develop some realistic expectations for their children, right.

We want to take a moment again and invite you to go back to your Participant's Guide and just think about how you engage with families during those home visits to support their child's developing executive functioning skills through responsive caregiving. What are some things that you can think of that you're already doing in your current practice? Jot some of those ideas down in your Participant's Guide. Again, you can find that in the resource widget. And just as a reminder when you go back, if you want to share some of those in the Q&A as well, we would love to see some of those ideas pop up there.

Amelia, can you tell us about some strategies that home visitors can use to support parents with responsive caregiving?

Amelia: Yeah, absolutely. And I'm excited to hear all of the amazing strategies that I'm sure folks are using already. Responsive caregiving given by adults can include support through a variety of things. One of the things that we talk about a lot is scaffolding. And if you haven't heard the term scaffolding yet, it's basically offering children the right level of learning support to take the child's knowledge to the next level. It helps them get at that thing that they're maybe not quite able to do on their own yet. And this is a great way to build those executive functioning skills. Adults can scaffold children's learning by providing cueing, prompting, questioning, modeling, discussing, and telling. There's a lot of different things that you can do. And these tools can really help adults stretch children's learning to that next level.

And another way that adults can help children scaffold their emotional and behavioral self-regulation is by describing their emotions and the emotions – so the adult's own emotions – and those emotions that they think the child might be feeling. This can be really helpful to talk through what those big feelings are. They can also model productive behaviors for children and talk them through those challenging situations. I know this can be really tricky in the moment, but this is a really great way to help children learn.

Roselia: Yeah, as you were saying that, Amelia, there's an example that kind of came to my mind from my home visiting days, and it's parents feeling frustrated with siblings not getting along and sharing. As you're talking through some of those strategies, in those situations, home visitors can work with the parent to first describe the children's emotions, as well as helping them to talk about their feelings and frustrations – kind of putting words to what it is that they're feeling. Parents can model how they can play together and then demonstrate some turn-taking, because again, they don't have those connections yet. We want to be able to model and help them make those connections. The parent could also perhaps help one child find something else to play with, modeling a self-regulatory technique of finding another activity when a situation is frustrating for them.

Home visitors can really support parents in understanding that as children are puzzling through these new experiences, that it's important to wait, that waiting can be very difficult. Giving children that opportunity to respond, or to try a new strategy on their own – giving children that time to process really helps them to focus on the task, and it gives them the opportunity to develop their own unique strategies and how they're going to approach and solve problems as they come about for them.

Amelia: Absolutely. I think there's so many great ideas there. Waiting is really key. It's so hard, but it really is great to help give space for children to think through those things.

I want to pop back to something we were talking about just a few moments ago and to remind everybody that executive skills really develop over the course of a child's life. As home visitors, we have this unique opportunity to support families not only in understanding what this means, but how they can support that development over time. We're going to take a closer look at this together. We have a little poll for you. When do you think that executive function skills fully develop? When do you think they're sort of fully developed? Do you think it's A, 3 to 6 years; B,

6 to 12 years; C, 12 to 18 years; Or D, 18 to 25 years. We'll give you a little bit of time to think about that.

Roselia: Yeah, I'll be interested to see what folks think about this.

Amelia: Yeah.

Joyce: You know, sometimes I feel like my executive function skills are still building.

Roselia: Right.

Joyce: I feel it even more after our little game earlier.

Amelia: It's good to practice them throughout the course of our life. We always need some practice, you know?

Joyce: We do.

Roselia: All right, so what does our poll say for us, Amelia?

Amelia: Let's see here. OK, yeah, most people think that it is D, 18 to 25 years. And you're right, these executive functioning skills develop over the course of our life. Let's take a look at a graph that shows this in a little more detail. Age is on the bottom of the graph there, and then on the left is executive functioning skills. As we can see, babies and young children really don't have very strong executive functioning skills yet. Just like we talked about a few minutes ago, children are really still building that network of connections in their brain that's going to be required to control their impulses, regulate emotions, and so much more. But you can see how quickly that period develops. Our executive functioning skills really don't fully develop until late into our teens, our early 20s, and possibly even beyond that.

While we can't expect a two-year-old to be able to regulate their emotions on their own yet, we are setting the foundation for those skills, right? There's that really rapid period of growth. And this means that during the first five years or so, adults – including parents, family members, home visitors – they're really supporting a crucial and important time in a child's life as they develop these early executive functioning skills. But, of course, development doesn't stop there. Parents, home visitors, and others can continue to work with children and help them progressively build more and more skills as they grow and learn. And as we were just talking about, the good news is, we can too. As adults, we can always strengthen our executive functioning skills.

Joyce: Yes, and I will just say, I am very thankful for that, that I can still grow and be better.

Amelia: It's not over.

Joyce: I know, it's not over, there's still time. As you've been talking, it really got me to thinking about the work of home visitors. What we do really is about supporting the parent, right? So, what are some things to consider when it comes to executive function skills in parents?

Amelia: Yeah, you know, I'm so glad you asked that question. We so often think about helping children build their executive functioning skills, and we forget about our own. If you think about it, providing scaffolding and responsive care really takes a lot of our own executive

functioning. For example, let's imagine that a parent is helping their young child put together a puzzle.

OK, in order to do this as the parent, you have to stay focused on that activity, and follow the child's lead, and help the child focus on which pieces are important. The parent has to think flexibly, maybe switch approaches to guide the child and help keep them engaged in the task. For example, asking the question – asking the child questions, right, to help them remember what piece they're looking for. And the parent has to remember the best strategies to use to support the child, like providing those choices or options, all those things that we talked about earlier. And – this one is really tricky – we have to control our impulse to solve the puzzle for the child, even if it's taking a while. That piece that we were talking about earlier, waiting, we really have to spend some time waiting and control our impulse to just get it done.

Roselia: Yeah, those are really, really great points, and it makes me think about how important it is as home visitors to model and help guide parents through these strategies. In essence, we're supporting the parents in building their own functioning skills as they're modeling and working through these things.

Amelia: Yeah, absolutely. It's so important to support the parents, help them build their own executive functioning skills. The stronger their executive functioning skills, the better they're going to be able to support their children as they develop these skills.

The other thing that I think it's really important to remember is that stress can really impact executive functioning skills, both in children and adults. We all have very likely experienced times when we are just too stressed to focus, and everything seems overwhelming. I know I have. Executive functioning skills, it's like the first thing to go when we're feeling really stressed. And of course, we know that being a parent or a caregiver, that's really stressful. As a home visitor, you are this huge support to parents and families. Your presence in their life and the care that you provide, the support, the strategies, really go a long way toward reducing their stress.

Before we wrap up this portion of the presentation, it's important to note that we really only provided a short introduction to the topic of executive functioning skills. And as was mentioned before, there are several resources in your guide where you can further explore this topic. But as we wrap up this session – or this portion of the session, I want to end with this quote, thinking about what builds executive functioning skills. 'All successful programs involve repeated practice and progressively increase the challenge to executive functioning skills.' That's one part. 'To improve executive functioning skills, focusing narrowly on them may not be as effective as also addressing emotional and social development and physical development.' What this means is that building executive skills means supporting children's social and emotional and physical development along with their cognitive development. It's really across all these domains. And like I mentioned earlier, we really don't need fancy toys or games. Instead, children build executive functioning skills through those every day, back and forth interactions with adults who are responsive, and environments that are meaningful to them.

Roselia: Thanks, Amelia, that was a lot of information. And again, there's a lot of great resources to take a look at. This might be a great place to pause and take a look at a video clip of a home visitor who's working on a stacking and counting activity with the family – you mentioned not needing fancy toys and whatnot. So, take a look at this video, and as you're watching, we invite you to jot down some notes in your Participant's Guide, and then see if you can identify how this activity is helping the child to build some of those early executive functioning skills. Look for things such as maintaining focus, persisting in the activity, and then demonstrating flexibility. Take a look now.

[Video begins]

Parent: One, two ... Three. Uh-oh.

Natalie: One, two, three.

Parent: Three ... Four.

Home visitor: Hmm, one left. One box left. Going to put it on top?

Parent: Five.

Visitor: You did it. Natalie did it. This activity encourages kids in four different ways – counting, to take opportunities to play with other kids, and when mom and dad need to play, taking turns, and to solve the problem. If she's unable to place them all on top, we can help motivate her to persist and continue doing it.

[Video ends]

Roselia: All right. What do you think? Joyce, what are some things that you found that you liked in this video?

Joyce: Oh, my gosh, there was so ... You know, there was just so much to see and do there. I loved the support that the home visitor provided the parents there to bring them together.

Roselia: Yeah. No, I agree. I really liked how she took the time to explain afterwards what the activity was doing and how it was helping her with that persistence. Just a little clip to give you an idea of how home visitors are engaged in this work.

Joyce: Definitely, and with that being said, we're going to switch gears just a bit and start exploring some of the home visiting practices and resources that can support cognitive self-regulation. We want to look at some of those practices. And first, we want to remind you one of our favorite resources, the Effective Practice Guides that you can find on the ECLKC. And here you can find specific practices for home visitors, like brainstorming with parents about different activities and household routines that maybe can support following directions and completing tasks. Practices like that, that you can use to support parents and families. Again, we're going to be sharing additional practices with you today. If you're not familiar with the Effective Practice Guides, please, we invite you to check them out on the ECLKC. You're going to be able to find a link for that in the Participant's Guide. We've got that there for you as well.

Roselia: Great. For our session today, there is one resource that we want to highlight, and that is Supporting Early Brain Development: Building the Brain. It's part of a series called Connecting Research to Practice: Tips for Working with Infants, Toddlers, and the Families. We've included this link to the series in your Participant's Guide.

Joyce: This resource is laid out nicely into two parts, so you can share with families or you can use it to start or just expand a conversation about a parent's important role in early brain development. The first part is really written for the home visitor and has sections like, what does the research say? What does it look like? Things to try out, and just opportunities to learn more. And then the second part is written more for families. It has topics like brain development, playful and fun learning environments, social and emotional development. It's got all those other different pieces in that part. It's really nice to be able to either help develop your own practice event, or just to walk parent or family through.

Roselia: Yeah, so the part that we're going to be diving into is that Connecting at Home piece that Joyce was talking about. There are four main buckets that are highlighted when it comes to supporting early brain development at home. These research-based practices, they really help support all children, regardless of a child's unique abilities, their strengths, or challenges. It can be tailored to the individual child, supporting and affirming the knowledge and the skills that each child has, including their cultural background, as well as their personal identities.

Joyce: The first bucket that we're going to talk about just a bit is that Make It Social. One thing we can do to support families in this area is really to help them understand, to Amelia's point that she made earlier, is that they really don't need fancy toys or programs to support their child's brain development. My little girl, she loves Tupperware and a spatula, those are her favorite things. As home visitors, we want parents just to understand that children are going to learn their best just by interacting with them, that time to interact together.

We also want to support parents in thinking about how they can include children in as many everyday activities as possible. That's another way. And most importantly, we really want to support parents in understanding that children just learn through play. They just learn by doing and playing and being in the moment, don't you think, Amelia?

Amelia: Yeah, absolutely. Play is really a fantastic way to help support children's self-regulation and executive functioning skill building. Play provides this amazing context for social growth, and it offers just a variety of opportunities to practice social skills and communications, to build relationships, to really try out ideas in this safe and protected way that children are also feeling really motivated for. If we think about dramatic play, for example, during dramatic play, parents can provide their children opportunities to learn how to see each other's perspective and to practice communicating their thoughts and feelings. That's a great way to use dramatic play. And then if we think about maybe cooperative play, like building with blocks or trains, children are really learning how to coordinate their actions with others, which is super important. And learning how to navigate social exchanges and solve social problems, like having different opinions. Who doesn't need extra practice with that?

And then, of course, infants and toddlers, they're not quite ready for dramatic play yet, but families can help support them in developing self-regulation through play by setting up a

supportive environment, following their lead, giving them opportunities for pretend or symbolic play. The next webinar that's coming up in February is going to explore this very topic, so stay tuned for that.

Roselia: Absolutely, we're really looking forward to that. Because I mean, we know that children learn best through play.

In addition to providing many opportunities for dramatic or pretend play, we can also support parents by encouraging them to play some of those role-based games. One example was the game that you led us in earlier. Some other examples are like Simon Says, Red Light/Green Light, or again, that Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes. These are all terrific ways to help young children practice their cognitive self-regulation skills, because if we really think about it, all of these games require behavioral control. For example, children must use their working memory, they must remember those rules. What are the rules of the game? And then they require attention to what the instructor or the game leader is saying and doing. And then there's that inhibitory control. For games like Red Light/Green Light and Simon Says, children have to inhibit their impulse to run or to do something that Simon didn't tell them to do. They really have to have that control.

Amelia: Yeah, absolutely. These are great activities to suggest to families. We know that early period is really helpful to help build children's executive functioning skills to set them up for that lifetime of learning and growth. You can even think about using these games to practice mental flexibility, so being able to switch between tasks. And that requires both emotional and cognitive self-regulation, so these games really have a lot to offer.

Joyce: Definitely. We know it can be really hard to remember all of these different strategies and practices we've been talking about, right? Like we have them now, they're great and they're wonderful. But once we get maybe into a home visit, or getting ready for a specialization, it's like, "Man, what was that? What was that great thing?" Well, we want to highlight a resource here that can help you in the moment. It could be the ELOF At Home app, and also the ELOF To Go app. With the ELOF At Home app, you really have ... You can go there and look at approaches to learning and really hone in and see practices, ideas, strategies there, right there at your fingertips and in the moment. We just wanted to put that out there for you.

And also, just a little curious, you're going to see a pulse check coming your way. We wanted to see how many of you have used one of the ELOF mobile apps, whether it's ELOF To Go or the ELOF At Home. You're simply going to give a thumbs up if you have used one of the ELOF mobile apps, or thumbs down if you say no, I haven't had a chance to use it yet. We've got that up there, and we see responses starting to come in. Again, just that thumbs up for yes, I use them, I have used them. Thumbs down for no, I haven't used them. And no worries, all of this is anonymous. We're not going to be filling your inbox with like, "Hey, come check us out." And let's see, we've got responses coming in, coming up to that 50% mark. But again, just something to try out. All of these ideas are things for you to be able to use when you need them, and maybe take one thing and say, "OK, I'm going to try it out after our webinar today." Maybe say, "OK, I'm going to have to come back."

Roselia: I'm really wondering if some of the thumbs downs that we're getting, is it because they were not aware of the resource, perhaps, that they have this great app at their fingertips to use?

Joyce: Yeah, definitely. And if this is your first time to hear about the ELOF mobile apps, then we've got a link in the resource list. And I just highlighted that for you, where you can find in your Participant's Guide there, where you can go and download either one of those apps and just check it out, play around with it, you can't break it. Get in there and just explore a little bit when you have a moment. I'm going to end our pulse check. And we said, you know, we had a majority that hadn't seen it. We had some that weren't as familiar. Again, we just invite you to check it out.

Now we're going to move on to our second bucket from our resource that we were highlighting. And that second bucket for supporting cognitive and self-regulation at home is just about building routines. We spent some time talking about responsive caregiving and how it really provides children and their developing brains with the support they really need to grow and thrive. Another way to do that and to provide that support is through flexible and individualized schedules and routines. I love consistency and schedules and routines. Children just thrive off of that, and they really need that in their lives. As home visitors, we can support parents in developing those consistent routines and schedules that really can create a predictable structure in a world that everything may seem a little crazy, and they're just trying to figure out how things work. Scheduled routines can really provide some of that stability.

Amelia: Yeah, absolutely. They really support all children, and it can be especially helpful for children with suspected or identified disabilities or delays too. All children typically feel more comfortable and secure when they know what's going to happen next. I think that's probably true for us as well. Creating these predictable routines gives children the opportunity to repeat and experience things over and over and learn from it. Children love to repeat things. I'm sure we've all had this experience, you know, "Again, again, again." The consistency of the pattern of activities within a particular routine – basically the order that you do something within a routine – that is particularly key for creating flexible, yet reliable approaches instead of worrying about doing something at exactly the same time. And this is an area where home visitors, we can really look for opportunities to help families build and improve their routines to support that consistency. For example, if a child is often struggling with nap time, we might suggest starting nap time with a predictable, cozy, quiet time that includes reading from some of their favorite books or telling the child a favorite story. Based on what we've learned today about the brain, why do you think that predictable routines help support children's brain development? Go ahead and jot that down in your Participant's Guide. And what are some ways that those particular routines might help brain development?

Roselia: Yeah. And while folks are doing that, we did ask this question of home visitors – here are a couple of those key responses. What we found was that many of the responses were related to predictable routines as being critical to supporting children's social and emotional development. Establishing those predictable and flexible routines, they really help children to feel more comfortable and secure. As adults, we draw on our life experiences to help us get through some of those tough times or some of those big feelings that we experience. But for

infants and toddlers, they don't have those experiences yet to draw on. Although predictable ... Through those predictable routines, children really have a chance to repeat something again and again and learn from it. Just as you mentioned, Amelia.

Joyce: Yeah, so here's a resource that home visitors can share, that you can share with families to really help them think through a daily schedule that would work. You could share this with parents and families, and this would be something that they could take and look at, and say, "OK, you know, I could take pieces of this," or "This would work for me." The really great thing about this resource is it's set up with three different sample schedules, divided up by age group. You can see there they're listed for children under 12 months, for 12 to 18 months of age, and for two to four years of age. And again, this isn't meant for them to take and follow. This is more of a sample to show them this is what it could look like. And there may be some things from there that they want to take and use.

Another thing that could be useful is, if a family has multiple children, that resources like this can really help them be intentional in thinking about the individual needs of the different aged children within the house. It's just something else to think about. And again, you do have a link for this resource within your Participant's Guide. I want to highlight that. If you haven't caught on, check out that Participant's Guide. It's got a lot of great stuff in it.

Roselia: All right, so moving right along. The next bucket from our resource that we want to talk about is Following Their Lead. This really includes understanding what the child is interested in to help create those intentional learning environments as well as opportunities where children are able to not only engage in the learning, but to actively direct that learning as well.

Amelia: Yeah, and you know what? In a recent study, researchers found that even babies learned more about toys that they were interested in. Really young children, they have preferences. Even young children learn better when they have a chance to learn about things that interest them, and it's probably true for you as well. Thinking back to that Participant's Guide, take a moment to reflect and share something that you really enjoy learning about, that you find easy to learn, and then something that's harder for you to learn, or maybe takes more time and concentration. And as you're thinking about this, we hope that you make this connection between what you're interested in. When you're interested in something, no matter how hard it may be, you're more likely to persevere and practice, rather than something that you're not interested in. And also think about what this might mean for a 12-month-old baby. How would you support a parent to allow the baby to actually direct some of their own learning, and what supports or practices might we do to help with that?

Joyce: Definitely. While everyone is jotting down their ideas, that one practice that kind of comes to mind, we all know from our work with children and from years of research that children just learn best during those back-and-forth interactions, right? We talked about that today. Amelia, can you share highlights maybe from one of those great studies that really speaks to the power that those types of interactions have on children's development?

Amelia: Yeah, this is one of my favorite studies. They were thinking about ... Researchers asked caregivers to respond immediately to their infants' babbling using full words and full vowel sounds. And what the researchers found is that when the caregivers did this, when they

responded directly to those ... Their babies' babbles, infants really dramatically changed the way they were babbling, even in the course of 20 minutes. And they started making new sounds based on what the caregiver was saying. For example, if an infant was maybe saying, "Ba, ba" and holding a doll, that caregiver might say, "Oh, yes, you have a doll. What a nice doll you have." And in the course of that 20 minutes, that infant might go from saying "Ba" to a "Da," which is a little closer to what that language pattern is.

Joyce: Yeah, definitely. You know, Amelia, it's important to note too here that, while we've been talking and we're focusing in on approaches to learning, that ability to learn and engage in those early back-and-forth interactions is also described nicely by one of the other early learning outcome frameworks by one of the ELOF other domains, that Language and Communication. Again, just noting that connection across domains, right, that really by focusing on one thing, we're really kind of connecting with other things as well. Just as a reminder, again, that you can dig into that even more by using that ELOF At Home app or the ELOF To Go app there to help support parents in understanding that progression as well. And as we mentioned earlier, we've included the links to the resource that we've highlighted in your Participant's Guide for today, so we invite you just to check that out as well as those mobile ELOF apps.

Roselia: Let's think a little bit about how this strategy of back-and-forth interactions might support children who are dual language learners. By responding to what a child is interested in and engaging a child in conversation, we can support children who are dual language learners by building on their interest and knowledge, and then by being good role models for that language development. We can use these opportunities to really encourage the use of words rather than gestures, and then by repeating what children say, it can really help to expand. And also asking those open-ended questions. We want to encourage parents to look for opportunities for both that self-talk as well as parallel talk.

Let's look at an example from a resource called Supporting English Language Development when Children have Little Experience with English. You can find this resource on your – it's on your resource list in your Participant's Guide. And we have also included a vignette in your Participant's Guide so you can follow along. This vignette is from that resource. What we have here is Maya, who is a three-year-old, and she does not use English words yet, but she brings a crayon to Thomas. Thomas names the crayon and shares in her delight that she's seeing this crayon. Maya says "Crun." Thomas then acknowledges her attempt by saying yes and repeating the whole word crayon. Then they explore this new tool together. Thomas asks open-ended questions like, "What would you like to draw?" He knows that she may not respond with English words but takes her scribbles and gestures as her response. This is just one example. You can see more of Maya and Thomas, as well as other examples that you can share with families, or perhaps try some of these out with some of the families that you – that you work with.

Joyce: Yes, and we wanted to quickly share just another kind of easy technique called the CAR method. And this is from a resource called Tips for Engaging Children in Conversation, it's included in your resource list. First, thinking about the CAR method, first you comment on what the child is doing or appears to be interested in. And then you wait, and based on that

response, you ask a question. And then you wait, and then you respond by adding more to the conversation. And then again, you wait. To know to learn more about the CAR method, check it out in your Resource Guide.

Roselia: Yeah, I really like that CAR technique. It's easy to remember – you've got the Comment, Ask, and Respond. Although I will say that the waiting is the part that we really need to reinforce with parents, because that can be difficult.

The last bucket from our resource that we want to introduce is Be A Regulator. We know that children can experience big feelings, as we've mentioned, and those emotions, just like we do as adults. For the most part, we have learned to regulate our feelings and impulses, but children are still working on building those networks in their brains. Being a regulator is something that we can help to kind of support this process. I'm going to invite our guest, Amelia, and have her share some things that we can do as adults to help support this.

Amelia: Yeah, absolutely. Children – it's impossible to miss the fact that children are really interested in learning from what we're doing and modeling from us. This is a really powerful tool that we can use, thinking about modeling through our actions and what we're saying. We often encourage parents to talk about what a child is doing, or what they're looking at, which is wonderful. But it can also be very helpful for young children if we encourage parents to explain what they're doing and why they're doing it. For example, if they're feeling a little too warm, they might say, "I'm feeling too warm right now. I'm going to take off my sweater or my jacket so I feel cooler. I wonder if you're feeling warm in your sweater or jacket too." Really modeling that internal process, what we're feeling, what we're doing, can be super helpful for children. And if parents use this technique routinely, it's easier when feelings of frustration are involved. Parents need to know that it's OK to be frustrated, we all get frustrating. But modeling, managing those feelings, that is a really powerful tool, and it can really help children start to regulate and learn how to manage their own emotions. Think about how you might model this for a parent during your visit, thinking about modeling frustrations, talking about frustrations, for example.

Roselia: Absolutely, Amelia. I think modeling persistence is really a great strategy that we can really support parents with. Every day, we run into situations where something doesn't work or work the way that we expected. Think back to the last time that something did not work as you expected the first time that you tried it, and what did you do? You probably tried again and tried again, or tried something else. But how did you learn to try again? Young children are constantly faced with challenges. Often, we work with and we care for young children, you know, we demonstrate things working, but we don't always necessarily demonstrate when things aren't working, and then how we work through that process. Doing that, taking the time to do that is really a great way to help them learn that persistence.

Amelia: Yeah, absolutely. And there's research to show that if we model persistence through a difficult task, children are more likely to do that as well. Learning to persist is one of those goals of cognitive self-regulation that's in the subdomain of the ELOF. By about 36 months, we want to see children persisting and learning new skills or solving problems, continuing in their efforts to finish a challenging activity or task with support of an adult.

Roselia: We really have covered a lot of information in our in our session today. We're quickly getting to the end of our time together. There's just a couple of things – again, we just want to remind you that we do have a lot of resources that we've included for you in the Participant's Guide, so please be sure to check those out. We just wanted to remind you that we do have an institute that's coming up, our National Center DTL is hosting the 2022 Disability Service Coordinator Institute. We encourage you to save the date and share this with your colleagues, as well as your disability service coordinators for your programs. Again, that is coming up really quickly in January. And just again, a reminder of those resources that we have included for you in your Resource Guide – take some time to explore those as well as sharing those out.

And then lastly, we've mentioned if you did not get the opportunity to see that first home visiting webinar, we do have this PUSHPLAY On Demand, and you've got the link here. This is a great opportunity to be able to go back and watch those. And the good news is that you will receive a certificate of participation for going back and watching those. We're excited to be able to offer that because we know that home visitors are out in the field. And then also, we want to remind you, if you're not already a member of the MyPeers Home Visiting Community, we do encourage you to join this networking opportunity. Any questions that we did not get to today, we're going to try to continue that conversation on MyPeers, so be sure and get connected.

And then lastly, the ECLKC – this is a great library of resources for you. Just about anything that you can imagine is there, and so we do encourage you to explore. Resources that we shared today are from the ECLKC.

And then there's also the IPD. If you're not familiar with this, this is a great resource for you to be able to take some of those professional development courses that are available. We have things such as the Beginning Home Visitor Series, as well as the Leave the Bag Challenge. Those are just some examples of courses that you will find there. And then we do – again, any questions that we did not get to today, we will continue the conversation in MyPeers, so we do hope to see you there. I encourage you to save the date – as Amelia mentioned earlier, our next session, which is slated for February the 9th – we are going to be exploring curiosity and initiative. Some opportunities for play there. And then lastly, we would like to thank our guest speaker Amelia for joining us today and sharing her knowledge and expertise. We really enjoyed working with you and having you as our guest speaker.

Amelia: [Inaudible]

Roselia: Joyce, anything you'd like to add before we end?

Joyce: No. Thanks for joining us, and I'll see you on MyPeers.

Roselia: All right.