



**BabyRead Columns
In
The Journal
Seneca, SC
(Chronological Order)**

**2021
(January-June)**

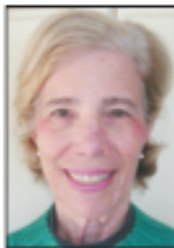
**2021 Journal Column
Table of Contents**

January	<i>Bedtime routines that work</i>	Bedtime Routines
February	<i>Reading aloud and brain development in infants and toddlers</i>	Reading Aloud Benefits
March	<i>Talking, reading and singing to babies</i>	Talking to Babies
April	<i>Six scientific reasons to read</i>	Scientific Reasons to Read
May	<i>The importance of nursery rhymes</i>	Importance of Rhyming
June	<i>The importance of imitation for babies</i>	Importance of Imitation
July	No column	
August	<i>Early communication with infants</i>	Early Reading/Communication
September	<i>Johanna, David, Maria, Kathleen and Alex: A BabyRead family</i>	BabyRead Family Profile
October	No column	
November	<i>Simple interactions with babies forecast Success</i>	Some Learning Tips
December	<i>Do masks delay speech and language Development?</i>	Impact of Masks

Bedtime routines that work

I found an interesting article in “Positive Parenting” that I want to share with you.

“For many families, bedtime is a challenge. Studies have found that having a nightly routine is one way to help kids catch zzzs, but what exactly should parents be doing each night?



BABYREAD

CAREN
VON HIPPEL

“A good night’s rest is important for a child’s health and well-being.”

Keep in mind that the mom/caregiver is in charge, and not their baby or toddler.

“How can you help your little one develop good sleep habits? Research find that bedtime routines are vital for getting adequate sleep. Yet, only about 65 percent of families in the United

States report engaging in a routine five or more times a week.

“In a new article, scientists reviewed literature on nightly habits that suggest that certain activities can help children with sleep, including (1) providing children a healthy snack; (2) hygiene practices, such as bathing and brushing teeth; (3) reading, singing and physical contact, such as massaging or cuddling, before bed. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that infants under the age of 1 get 12-16 hours of sleep each day; children ages 1-2 get 11-14 hours of sleep each day; children ages 3-5 get between 10-13 hours; and kids 6-12 should get between 9-12 hours of sleep each night.

“Studies find that kids who don’t get enough sleep may be more likely to develop high blood pressure, obesity and even depression.”

Certainly, children who do not get enough sleep have a difficult time paying attention when they are being read to. If your child is having trouble paying attention while you are reading to him/her, ask why. There can be multiple reasons, including just needing more sleep.

“Some other tips to help your kids fall asleep: limit caffeine consumption (remember sodas, e.g. Coke or Pepsi, have a great deal of caffeine in them), stop the use of electronics at least one hour (or more) before bedtime, and dim the lights to help them wind down.”

(All quotes from Positive Parenting, Nov. 12, 2020)

As an adult, what helps me fall asleep easily is: (1) maintaining the same bedtime each night; (2) not talking on the telephone for at least two hours before bedtime; (3) soft music; (4) reading a book or something else I really enjoy and that is cheerful; (5) sleeping in a very dark room, except for a low night light. It helps me forget any upsets that happened during my day.

BABYREAD’S GOAL is to read with children and their moms starting at birth. To find out what BabyRead is doing during COVID-19, contact director Caren von Hippel, Ph.D., at babyread@charter.net or (864) 643-8083, babyread.org. We need readers! Some readers are reading face to face, outside or in libraries, with masks and social distancing; others drop off books monthly to participating moms and phone/text them weekly.

Reading aloud and brain development in infants and toddlers

BabyRead, a nonprofit in Oconee County, focuses on encouraging moms to read to children from birth. Why is this so important?

“Our health and well-being prenatally and during the first three years of life affect all future learning, behavior and health. This time period is most sensitive for a child’s developing brain and body.” Many families face substantial challenges during those years, challenges which we cannot cover in this short column.



BABYREAD |

CAREN
VON HIPPEL

“The most rapid period of growth for the human brain occurs in the earliest years of life.” Are you surprised by this? “The structure and functioning of the human brain are determined not only by our genetics, but also by the interactions with other people and our environment ...” Again, there are many factors that contribute to a healthy physical and mental development for a young child. We will discuss the importance of reading aloud daily to your child and talking to your infant and toddler about the world around him/her. “A child’s developing brain depends on secure attachments (to parents and other caregivers) and serve-and-return interactions, in which adults reliably and appropriately respond to baby’s cries, babbles and other bids for connection.” Research stresses that “daily reading, playing and talking

with a child can support early child development, as can other nurturing behaviors. These interactions shape brain architecture, both providing the positive stimulation children need for typical development and acting as a buffer to stress, protecting the developmental process from disruption.” (Quotes from Child and Family Research Partnership, the University of Texas at Austin, January 2021)

Your child is communicating from birth. “Serve and return” means your baby or toddler does something — a serve — and you return the communication with some words or physical contact that indicates that you are listening and then responding in one of many appropriate ways to what your child is doing.

For example, when you are changing diapers and your baby is kicking, that kicking is communicating for an infant. In return, you might touch or hold gently each of his feet and talk to your baby or sing a nursery rhyme or something you just made up. Later, when you take your infant or toddler to the supermarket, your child is noticing many of the items on display in the supermarket, even though she doesn’t yet talk. E.g. As you are putting a banana in your cart, you might say, “Look at this banana. It is long and yellow. Do we like bananas?”

BABYREAD’S GOAL is to read with children and their moms starting at birth. To find out what BabyRead is doing during COVID-19, contact director Caren von Hippel, Ph.D., at babyread@charter.net or (864) 643-8083, babyread.org. We need readers! Some readers are reading face to face, outside or in libraries, with masks and social distancing; others drop off books monthly to participating moms and phone/text them weekly.

Talking, singing and reading to babies

“Verbal development is the way in which children begin to both understand and produce language as a form of communication. ... Many parents help to promote their child’s development by talking, singing and reading (the right thing to do!). ... Children develop their oral language skills



BABYREAD |

CAREN
VON HIPPEL

through conversations with others and will always learn more by talking with real people than by watching television or interacting with other media.”

What can parents do now?

- Your child wants to communicate with you even before she can use words. When your child hands you a book, your child wants you to read her this book.

Keep on talking (singing and reading) with your baby! This strengthens your connection to your child and gets her started on the path to more complex conversations.

Follow your child’s lead and respond to his interests. Use his focus as an opportunity to build language skills. Add details to the words he already knows.

Research shows that children whose parents talk more tend to have larger vocabularies (at any income level). The 30 million-word gap of what children hear between birth and five years can be closed by talking, singing, reading and always responding to what your child is doing.

The brain of a child grows more between birth and 18 months than at any other time. Seize this opportunity to talk, sing and read to your baby to

stimulate the development of neural connections in your child’s brain.

Reading to your child can expose her to a wide range of sounds and words. Books for a young child may contain words (Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water) parents don’t use in everyday life (e.g. fetch and pail). Find books that you and your child enjoy. Read the words in the book or make up a story to introduce new words and spark conversation as your child grows.

Babies and toddlers need to become comfortable with books and learn how they work — which way to hold a book and that the words under the pictures describe the pictures. These are part of the pre-literacy skills your child needs before learning how to read in school.

Turn off the television. Children learn language best when they interact with a live person, not a TV or computer.

Putting away your cellphone for a while. Babies think they are toys, but importantly, want to imitate what you are doing. Unless critical, your child needs and wants your attention. (See Baby Talk, University of North Carolina).

BABYREAD’S GOAL is to read with children and their moms/caregivers starting at birth. To find out what BabyRead is doing during COVID-19, contact our president, Caren von Hippel, Ph.D., at babyread@charter.net, (864) 643-8083 or babyread.org. We need readers! Some readers are reading face to face, outside or in libraries, with masks and social distancing; others drop off books monthly to participating moms/caregivers and phone/text them weekly.

Six scientific reasons to read

There are many reasons why reading, at any age, is good for you. "Reading transports us to worlds we would never see, introduces us to people we would never meet and instills emotions we might never otherwise feel." Scientific studies identify six reasons why reading is good for you. (University of Suffolk, UK)

1: Reading reduces stress

Reading a book or newspaper for just six minutes lowered people's stress levels by 68 percent — a stronger effect than going for a walk (42 percent), drinking a cup of tea or coffee (54 percent) or listening to music (61 percent). The ability to be fully immersed and distracted is what makes reading the perfect way to relieve stress. (University of Sussex, UK, 2009)



BABYREAD

CAREN
VON HIPPEL

2: Reading books may add years to your life

"A daily dose of reading may lengthen your lifespan," according to a team at Yale University. They report that people who read books for 30 minutes each day, over magazines and newspapers, lived nearly two years longer.

3: Reading improves your language skills and knowledge of the world

"Avid readers had around a 50 percent larger vocabulary and 50 percent more fact-based knowledge." "It's a snowball effect. ... The better you are at reading, the more words you learn. The more words you learn, the better you are at reading and comprehending — especially things that would have been outside your domain of expertise." (University of Maryland)

4: Reading enhances empathy

According to a 2013 Harvard study, "those who read literary fiction performed better ... predicting how characters would act and identifying the emotion encoded in facial expressions." "If we engage with characters who are nuanced, unpredictable and difficult to understand ... we're more likely to approach people in the real world with an interest and humility necessary for dealing with complex individuals." You learn about people outside your town and around the world whom you will never meet. You learn how they are similar they are to people you know.

5: Reading boosts creativity and flexibility

"In our real lives, we often feel like we have to make a decision, and therefore we close our mind to information that could eventually help us. ... When we read fiction, we practice keeping our minds open because we can afford uncertainty." (University of Toronto)

6: Reading can help transform you as a person

"As you identify with another person ... you enter into a piece of life that you wouldn't otherwise have known. You have emotions or circumstances that you wouldn't have otherwise understood. ... Imagining new experiences creates a space in which readers can grow and change." (University of Toronto)

BABYREAD'S GOAL is to read with children and their moms/caregivers starting at birth to prepare children for success in school. We need readers! During COVID-19, some readers are reading face to face, outside or in libraries, with masks and social distancing; others drop off books monthly to participating moms/caregivers and phone/text them weekly. For more information, contact our president, Caren von Hippel, Ph.D., at babyread@charter.net or (864) 643-8083, babyread.org.

The importance of nursery rhymes

You would be surprised how much brain development is happening as we repeat these repetitive nursery rhymes like *This Little Piggy* and *The Itsy Bitsy Spider* (get a book or go to internet for nursery rhymes).

“The biggest benefit of nursery rhymes is that they develop language and the skills needed to learn how to read. This is critical for preschoolers so that they are ready and successful in kindergarten. Below are some of the many benefits that reading nursery rhymes to your baby/toddler provide:



BABYREAD

CAREN
VON HIPPEL

- Develops language: As your child listens to nursery rhymes they hear the sounds in the words that are spoken to them. They start to figure out how to put sounds, and then words, together. They also pick up on pitch, rhythm and voice inflection. They may also pick up new vocabulary and sentences that they don't otherwise hear in everyday conversation. E.g. “to fetch a pail of water” (*Jack & Jill*). (“whose fleece was white as snow” (*Mary Had a Little Lamb*). They will also feel less pressure as they learn how to get their words out while singing along.

Experts have founds that if your child knows 8 nursery rhymes by heart by the time they are 4 years of age, they tend to be at the top of their class as far as reading and spelling goes when they are in first grade.

- Learns basic math: Many nursery rhymes will recite basic math skills such as counting forwards or backwards. E.g. *Five Little Monkeys*, *One Little Piggy Went to Market*.

- Develops literacy skills: Children learn sequence, vocabulary, sentence structure and more as they listen to and recite nursery rhymes.

- Sparks the creative mind: Nursery rhymes encourage acting out via dramatic play. Children develop a strong sense of self and confidence as they express themselves without pressure. They help babies/children explore the world around them and thereby become more imaginative. They learn about different facial expressions, what they mean, look for emotional cues, and much more (so make sure you fake cry as you sing about the babies crying along with *Wheels on the Bus!*)

- Builds memory: As children learn the songs and the movements that go along with them (*Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes*, *Rock a Bye Baby*), they are developing memory. Everything from what happens in the rhyme to what words come next. The repeated phrases and rhythmic pattern of nursery rhymes make them easy for toddlers and preschoolers to remember.” (Taken, with modifications, from messylittlemonster.com/2020/11/nursery-rhymes.html)

BABYREAD'S GOAL is to read with children and their moms/caregivers starting at birth to prepare children for success in school. We need readers! Many readers read in person at town or school libraries or outside; others only drop off books monthly and phone/text the moms/caregivers weekly. For more information, contact our president, Caren von Hippel, Ph.D., at babyread@charter.net or (864) 643-8083, babyread.org.

The importance of imitation for babies

What is imitation? “Cognitive development is the process through which the brain takes in information to “make meaning,” something our brains do naturally. The way your baby’s brain makes meaning is through experience, which is made up mostly of interaction with the important people in their life. “Moms report that when they smile at their babies, their babies often



BABYREAD

CAREN
VON HIPPEL

smile back at them.” My niece tells me this about her one-year-old baby, who has been smiling at her when she smiles, imitating her for months now.

Moms, dads, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and friends; you are all naturally modeling behavior that your baby will imitate, negative and positive. Parent and caregiver behavior presents powerful lessons to a child and leaves impressions on the developing mind. Imitation provides children with the opportunity to practice and master new skills.” This is a part of why parents are their children’s first teachers. “Imitation also serves as a basis for the development of empathy, or the ability to experience what another person is feeling.”

For many years, studies suggested that human babies were born with the ability to imitate facial gestures, hand gestures, facial expressions or vocal sounds. Whether babies are born with this ability or learn it at a very early age (Indiana University, Philosophical Transactions, 2009) is being researched now. (Cell Press, Current Biology, Science Daily, May 2016). We will not discuss this debate. Importantly, babies are

imitating people close to them very early in their lives. In one study, reported again in Cell Press, 2016, “parents imitate their babies once every two minutes on average; this is a powerful means by which infants can learn to link their gestures with that of another person.”

Imitation games like pat-a-cake build on the skills of copying another person’s actions and identifying body parts.

Imitation matters because it helps children learn. Even at a young age, children imitate their parents’ behavior. Did you know?

Imitation in Infants:

- Infants in every culture show the same ability to imitate.
- An infant’s ability to imitate simple actions, such as sticking out his tongue, comes from the same part of the brain that allows young children to develop empathy.

Imitation in Toddlers and Preschoolers:

- Children pay attention to what other children do.
- Younger children look up to older children.
- Games that involve imitation and other social interaction help children feel a social connection with other children.
- Parents may notice how much their children “pick up things” from other children.”

(Quotes taken from a parent website)

BABYREAD’S GOAL is to raise the literacy level in Oconee County by reading. We encourage moms/caregivers to read every day to their babies, starting at birth, to prepare children for success in school and in life. Many readers read in person at town or school libraries or outside; others only drop off books monthly and phone/text the moms/caregivers weekly. For more information, contact our president, Caren von Hippel, Ph.D., at babyread@charter.net or (864) 643-8083, www.babyread.org.