

Topic Summary: LISTEN Topic 4 (p.79) – Tune In Tune Out

Supplemental Topic for NFP during infancy and childhood		
Supports the NCAST keys to Caregiving materials for families who have difficulty reading their child's cues or whose children are not strong cue givers.	Infancy √	Toddler √

Introductory statement: These PIPE topic summaries were developed to support Public Health Nurses (PHNs) facilitate PIPE for clients within a home visiting program context. They are intended to be utilized by PHNs who already have completed PIPE education (either the in-person, 2-day Introduction to PIPE training or the 35-hour, PIPE Comprehensive E-Training).



Conceptual Overview:

- Babies and toddlers are able to tune in and tune out of their surroundings.** Parents who engage in interaction when their child tunes in and disengage from interaction when their child tunes out are strengthening developmental pathways. This kind of response to the child is a sign of respect. It allows a baby or toddler to regain equilibrium and to participate in an interaction for a longer time. When parents respond appropriately as their children engage and disengage, they encourage self-regulation and self-confidence.
- Recognizing how to engage a child – and when to disengage – is sometimes called the “Dance of Love”.** This type of shared understanding is also referred to as the “shared space between mother and child”. Most mother/primary caregiver-baby or mother/primary caregiver-toddler pairs find this “shared space” several times each day. When the primary caregiver gains this level of sensitivity to the child’s signals, the pair becomes “in tune”. Such babies and toddlers are better behaved and show confidence, rhythmicity, and strong development.
- Nonresponse can be useful or devastating.** When babies know that a parent is available or “there” for them, they will look to the parent for everything they are unsure about. “May I touch this?” or “Should I trust this strange person?” This connection allows the child to learn. But as the child gains confidence, they will try testing the limits of behavior. This is when not responding to a child’s demands is a good way to regulate their behavior. For example, a toddler fusses, “cookie, cookie” and their caregiver responds by ignoring the request and walking away to get their keys. Ignoring a child can help parents redirect the child’s behavior without scolding them. However, *general* non-responsiveness (e.g., from a depressed primary caregiver) can be detrimental and can cause depression in the child. Such children will seek their attachment somewhere else. If they do not find an alternative, they may make slower progress; they may even *lose* developmental abilities and/or valuable social skills.
- Structure for success to help babies and toddlers tune in.** The position of the child, the distractions in the room, age-appropriate toys, the time of day, and the child’s state of awareness all make a difference in how well they will engage and learn. Engagement can be loving and calming (such as rocking), quiet learning (such as reading or playing blocks) or active release (such as exercising). Sometimes when a baby or toddler tunes out, it is only for a short time. Help parents learn to wait for their child to regain balance and tune in again.



Step 1: Presentation of concepts – use Inquiry Questions OR suggested activity below to engage client in conversation on “We all *tune in* to our surroundings when we are interested and stimulated and

tune out when we need a break”. See p. 82 for materials & supplies.

- **Inquiry Questions** (PH #79 and p.44)-*can do virtually*:
 - What do we mean by the phrases tune in and tune out?
 - How can a parent structure for successful interactions?
 - How should a parent respond when their baby tunes out?
 - When is nonresponse devastating to a baby? Why?
 - How could parents use nonresponse to set limits?



- **Suggested activity:**
 - *Tuning out* allows our brain time to process information and our neurological systems to restabilize. Explain the concept to parents and have them identify behaviors they have used to tune out. How do they act when they are *tuned in*? Discuss why being able to *tune out* is important and ask how they parents feel when they are not allowed to “take a break.”
 - The length of time a person can *tune in* and a person’s need to *tune out* is related to development and a person’s individual biological rhythms. Discuss how attention span will vary with individuals. Giving examples of different activities, ask parent how long they think they could stay focused on each activity. Discuss how most young babies can *tune in* about 5 seconds before needing a break.



Key Concepts to explore and PIPE Parent Handouts to support discussion - Pick 1 or 2 activities to do with parent to facilitate discussion/provide information. See pp. 84-86 for more information about activities.

- Babies give cues to signal when they are *tuned in* and when they need to *tune out* (Conceptual Overview #1). Use PH #43 to discuss engagement and disengagement cues. Define engagement/disengagement cues and take turns acting out cues on PH#45. As it is acted out, identify cue and determine if it signals engagement or disengagement. Use PH #46 (p. 88) to discuss overstimulation. Which cues indicate overstimulation and how could parents help their baby regain control?
- A parent’s response to engagement and disengagement cues affects a baby’s development (Conceptual Overview #2, #3). Ignoring disengagement builds anxiety in the baby, and nonresponse for engagement discourages a baby’s learning and ability to interact. Explain the *dance of love* and the impact of timely engagement/disengagement. Discuss how this helps parents and babies build close and trusting relationships. Discuss when nonresponse could be useful, and when it’s appropriate to ignore cues as a way to change a child’s behavior.
- Parents can structure for success to have a positive engagement (Conceptual Overview #4). Discuss external factors that affect how well a baby/toddler will engage and learn. Use the information on p.89 to prepare for this discussion. Parents can summarize the techniques you present, using PH #47.



Step 2: Demonstration

Demonstrate how to structure for a successful engagement experience and how to respond appropriately to a baby’s or toddler’s disengagement and re-engagement cues. See suggested *PIPE*

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Activity Cards. See cards for additional *materials and supplies* needed. Follow the points outlined in “Structure for Success” (p.89).



Step 3: Supervised Parent-Child Interaction

The goal of this activity is to focus each parent on the ability of their baby to communicate by *tuning in* or *tuning out*. Parents chooses an age-appropriate PIPE Activity Card to share with their baby while structuring for success and reading and responding to engagement and disengagement cues.



Step 4: Evaluation

Using PH #46 (see p. 88) parent circles the engagement and disengagement cues expressed by their child. Remind parent of times when their baby re-engaged after tuning out. Review PH #48 (p. 88 as a KEY for this).

Resources to support implementation

Parent Handouts:



Outcomes:

- Parents will recognize and respond appropriately to their baby’s or toddler’s engagement and disengagement cues.
- Parents will evaluate the results of non-responsiveness to a baby’s or toddler’s engagement cues.
- Parents will analyze factors that can help structure a successful engagement experience.