

Week 2 Reading Assignment

Toddler Components of Daily Routine



Toddler Components of Daily Routine

Schedules and Routines

Toddler schedules should be developed with consideration to children's home schedules and common patterns of sleeping, eating, and playing for this age group. For example, many toddlers eat meals and snack frequently so it is important that regular mealtimes such as breakfast, morning snack, lunch and afternoon snack are regular components in the daily routine. Some toddlers might still nap twice each day while others nap only once. In addition, for the toddler age group, the length of naptime can vary from very short to very long. Developing a routine that plans for these biological needs as well as incorporating choice time, outside time, and group times will be essential for creating a balanced and comforting schedule for toddlers that meets all of their needs.

Mixed-age programs that provide care in one space for children ranging in age from birth to three years



Active learning involves children's access to a wide variety of age-appropriate materials they can use in different ways.

old will need to be intentional about maintaining and supporting individual schedules for infants while simultaneously supporting toddlers following a group routine. This may require a sleep area that is separate from the play space and accessible throughout the day to accommodate various nap schedules. Similarly, while toddlers may have regular mealtimes, infants may eat at times that fall outside of that schedule.

Toddler Components of Daily Routine (continued)

Components of the Daily Routine

For toddler programs, the basic parts of the daily routine include arrival/greeting; snacks and meals; bodily care; naptime; choice time; group times (including music and movement); outside time; and departure. Transitions (the interval between components, including cleanup) are also part of the day and should be kept to a minimum.

Arrival/Greeting Time

At arrival time, warm, leisurely greetings from caregivers help to assure infants and toddlers that even though their parents must leave, they are in the hands of trustworthy people who will respect them and keep them safe until their parents return. Even when a child care setting has a greeting area, there is no definite place where greetings and good-byes must take place. Where they occur depends on the needs and preferences of the child and parent.



At arrival times, it is important to give children and families a warm welcome and to acknowledge and support their feelings about separation.

Toddler Components of Daily Routine (continued)

Snacks and Meals

Mealtimes for young children go beyond fulfilling a basic need for nourishing food. For the toddler, mealtime becomes increasingly sociable. As toddlers eat, they usually enjoy interacting with others and being part of the mealtime conversation. They also continue to explore and try new foods and gain skill at feeding themselves. According to early childhood expert Peter Mangione (1990), “Young children are in the process of developing lifelong attitudes toward food and the experience of eating. In a relaxed setting they form positive attitudes and learn vital social skills” (p. 11). In short, feedings and mealtimes are social interludes based around eating and enjoying food.

Where a feeding or a mealtime takes place depends on the stage of the child involved. Toddlers eat together with their caregivers in small groups at low tables. Toddlers can also enjoy mealtimes outdoors in pleasant weather.

Caregivers in HighScope programs approach mealtimes as daily opportunities to build relationships with children by supporting their conversation, exploration, and repetition, and by providing assistance as needed as children continue their journey toward independent eating within a social context. By taking part in meals with children, caregivers send a positive message not only about eating but also about social relationships at the child care center: *We can do all sorts of enjoyable things together — play, take walks, read books, talk, and share food and food experiences!*

Toddler Components of Daily Routine (continued)

Toddler-initiated mealtime conversation tends to focus around children's observations and musings about the materials at hand — “Who make [lunch]?” “You like eggs?” “Oranges at our house too!” “Look! Bread broke!” “Dripping!” “More milky!” “No ‘nanas. No!” “Dog cookie!” “He gots more!” Because caregivers come to know each child, they can help carry on the conversation by filling in the missing parts of children's often very brief statements.

Include older toddlers in mealtime setup and cleanup. Mealtimes present routine tasks older toddlers can easily carry out and take great satisfaction from — passing out plates, bowls, cups, and napkins; pouring their own juice and milk from small pitchers; serving themselves food from plates and serving dishes; throwing napkins into the wastebasket; scraping leftover food from plates; putting used dishes in dish tubs for clearing; and wiping the table with soapy water and a sponge.



Mealtimes are an opportunity for caregivers to build their relationships with children.

Toddler Components of Daily Routine (continued)

Bodily Care

In an active learning setting, caregivers approach bodily care routines from a child's perspective. This means, first of all, respecting whatever the child is already doing at the time bodily care becomes necessary. Instead of swooping down and briskly carrying a child off to the changing table for an efficient diaper change and hand washing, for example, caregivers first try to enter the child's current experience. Although bodily care will disrupt that experience, it is possible to lessen the impact of this disruption by giving children some advance indication of their need for a diaper change or potty break and then allowing them some time to come to a stopping point in their play.

In a child care setting, bodily care consistently takes place in the diapering and dressing areas and the

child-friendly bathrooms. For infants and toddlers, the brief routines of bodily care — diaper changes, dressing, washing, and using the potty or toilet — occur frequently and fairly regularly throughout the day. This means these routines happen whenever children are wet or soiled and before and/or after eating and napping — generally every hour or so, depending on the age, health, and habits of the child. At the most basic level, these routines promote cleanliness, physical comfort, and health by minimizing children's exposure to infection and diaper rash, but they can also contribute to children's emotional well-being. Through the gentle, one-on-one interactions involved in bodily care, children have an opportunity to build trusting relationships with caregivers and gain a sense of security in the care setting. Also, during the process of washing, diapering, dressing, and undressing, infants and toddlers begin to sense how their own bodies can bend and move.

Toddler Components of Daily Routine (continued)

Naptime

Naptime in an infant-toddler program occurs both on demand, when children are tired, and as a regularly scheduled part of the day. Naps provide the sleep and rest that are necessary for children's growth and development. Like adults, tired children are often cranky and irritable; sleep helps to restore their good nature. It also provides a quiet retreat from the intensely social demands of the child care setting. In short, napping allows children to reenergize physically and emotionally for the next part of the day.

Although an infant or toddler may fall asleep anywhere in the center — in a caregiver's arms, in a cozy armchair, under the climber — caregivers usually move the child to continue and complete the nap in a cradle, basket, crib, or cot. This practice



As they move toward independence, children assert their desire to do things for themselves. This young girl folds her blanket after naptime.

Toddler Components of Daily Routine (continued)

frees caregivers to attend to other wakeful children; protects the sleeping child from being stepped on by peers at play; and consistently provides each child with a personal, familiar sleeping place.

Choice Time

Choice time is a sustained block of time when infants and toddlers can investigate and explore materials and actions and interact with their peers and caregivers. In a supportive and safe environment that affords interesting materials and opportunities as well as open space to move freely in various ways, each child chooses what to do based on their personal interests, inclinations, and level of devel-

opment and ability. Choice time provides children with a virtually uninterrupted period of exploration and play. A great deal of learning occurs at choice time. Through their self-chosen sensory-motor explorations, infants and toddlers engage in experiences that support learning in all the key content areas (see “Child Development and Learning Content”, p. 9).

Choice time takes place in the thoughtfully equipped and arranged infant and toddler indoor play spaces. Throughout choice time, infants and toddlers move about, explore materials and actions, and play near and with peers and caregivers. They do all of this at their own pace, according to their individual interests and abilities.

Toddler Components of Daily Routine (continued)

Group Times

Group times are caregiver-initiated parts of the day that include opportunities for children to engage in active learning. *Caregiver-initiated* means the caregiver has an idea for the activity and plans what might happen based on mobile infants' and toddlers' interests and development. The purpose of group time is *not* to instruct children in some area of knowledge or have them practice a skill, nor is it intended to enforce social interaction. Rather, group time allows children who are interested to explore materials and actions, and if they choose, to observe, imitate, or play alongside others. A child's participation in group time is wholly voluntary.

Group times generally focus on either exploring and using materials or enjoying songs, nursery rhymes, and movement and music activities. During a typical group time, one or two caregivers gather with the



During group times, toddlers explore materials and actions and engage in active learning.

older infants and toddlers. The group is small — generally with no more than four children per caregiver and no more than eight children altogether. The adult gets the activity started and encourages children to use materials or move their bodies in their own way.

Toddler Components of Daily Routine (continued)

Typically, smaller groups engage in exploring materials while larger groups join in a music or movement activity. However, there are no hard and fast rules. There may even be as few as two children in a group, depending on how many choose to participate. This small group

size makes it easier for even quiet or withdrawn children to join in, enables children to have close physical contact with their caregiver, and allows the caregiver to pay close attention to each child while monitoring the tenor of the group as a whole. It is a daily opportunity for children and caregivers to communicate in an intimate social setting as they share or use common materials or enjoy moving together to music.

Outside Time

Outside time allows infants and toddlers to extend their exploration and play to an outdoor setting. As at choice time indoors, children make choices about what to do outdoors. Children find the outdoors rich in sensory-motor experiences for constructing new knowledge. During outside time, infants and toddlers observe, explore, and play on their own or with others at their own pace and level of interest and development. They can freely move, throw things, and play in water and snow. Overall, spending daily time outdoors in all seasons positively affects the way even very young children eat, sleep, and feel.

Toddler Components of Daily Routine (continued)

Remember to be consistent yet flexible in your daily routine! Children thrive on knowing what is coming next and knowing when they will be able to eat, play outside, reunite with family members, and so on. This consistency and familiarity can be established by having the same components of the daily routine each day and in the same order. Flexibility in the schedule is established by following the children's lead in determining the length of each component of the daily routine and recognizing that it can vary from day to day. Because toddlers are so young, it is important that schedules remain flexible to allow time for extra naps, longer meals, and transitions at the individual pace of the children. Consistent yet flexible schedules can minimize stress for young children while increasing their comfort level, enjoyment, and learning outcomes in group care.

Sample plans for half-day toddler programs and full-day toddler programs are available in appendixes G and H of this book.



Spending time in the outdoors presents toddlers with new opportunities for play and exploration.



Toddler Components of Daily Routine (continued)

Departure

At departure time, the caregivers' pleasant, friendly good-byes, and warm wishes for return allow children to reunite with their parents. Children are relieved to see their parents and, at the same time, know that the adults saying good-bye care about them, which makes them feel comfortable with returning to the center the next day. Even when a setting has a greeting area, there is no definite place where greetings and good-byes must take place. Where they occur depends on the needs and preferences of the child and parent. Children's responses to rejoining a parent at the end of the day may vary widely, including delight at being reunited, anger at having been abandoned earlier in the day, or a reluctance to stop the ongoing activities and go home. Furthermore, these responses may change

from day to day and from one stage of development to the next, with unpredictability in between. This is an important time for caregivers to acknowledge the feelings of children and parents in addition to exchanging information and child observations with the parent.

Transitions

Even in classrooms with flexible and predictable routines, transitions will occur periodically between parts of the day as well as between play or bodily care routines. While some children handle transitions more easily than others, any shift in tempo or focus can be stressful on young bodies and minds already deeply engrossed with everything around them. Caregivers can ease transitions by minimizing the number of transitions and planning short, pre-

Toddler Components of Daily Routine (continued)

dictable transitional activities. Transitional activities are active, include choices, and avoid having children line up or sit and wait. To support children in transitions, caregivers give advanced notice about what is coming next in the routine, take cues from children about the beginning and end of events, and provide ample time for transitions.

