

1-Identify and describe each of the 5 steps of the "serve and return" interaction and explain the significance of each step on brain development.

- Share the child's focus of attention- *By noticing serves, you'll learn a lot about children's abilities, interests, and needs. You'll encourage them to explore and you'll strengthen the bond between you. By noticing serves you build curiosity and strengthen relationships.*
- Return the serve by supporting and encouraging- *Supporting and encouraging rewards a child's interests and curiosity. Never getting a return can be stressful for a child. When you return a serve, children know that their thoughts and feelings are heard and understood.*
- Give it a name- *When you name what children are focused on, you help them understand the world around them and know what to expect. Naming also gives children words to use and lets them know you care and understand them. When you return a serve by naming what a child is seeing, doing, or feeling, you make important language connections in their brain*
- Take turns back and forth and wait- *Keep the interaction going back and forth- Taking turns helps children learn self-control and how to get along with others. By waiting, you give children time to develop their own ideas and build their confidence and independence. Waiting also helps you understand their needs. A child's brain needs time to form their response.*
- Practice endings and beginnings- *This allows you to find moments for children to take the lead and give you the ability to support them in exploring their world and make more serve and return interactions possible.*

Some concerns for children who don't have the opportunity to experience "serve and return" interactions. The back-and-forth exchanges of serve and return are building blocks of children's early brain development. They help children learn how to control their emotions, cope with stress, and learn skills that will serve as a foundation for later development. When a child does not have the opportunity to experience this, they lack the ability to learn healthy interaction skills. Some of the concerns include Over time, failing to respond when a child reaches out will weaken the child's brain construction and impair the development of skills, abilities, behavior, and health. Serve and return interactions are important for all children, but especially critical for infants. When children "serve" with no "return" they do not get the reinforcement they need to adequately learn and grow.

Some possible ways for social workers to intervene is by building a sense of safety and security to encourage vulnerable children to build healthy relationships and connections. In addition, they can assist by teaching the caregiver the necessary skills. Social workers are key helpers, because their role as advocates for children can reassure them that they have someone who is genuinely looking out for the child and making sure that the caregiver has the skills necessary to help that child grow physically, socially, and psychologically.

Policies that could be implemented to help families with children at this stage could be training hospital, educators, caretakers, and any person in daily contacts with children the essentials and importance of serve and return. Serve and return can be a helpful skill for good practice and purpose among early childhood education. Focusing on doing the simple actions of serve and return can be of immediate benefit to children and help teachers and caregivers to

notice and think about what matters to the child and help the child's brain to develop and mature. Policies and programs that address the needs of adult caregivers and help them to engage in serve and return interactions will in turn help support the healthy development of children.

Further research could be done to increase knowledge in this area to prove how this interaction between a child and an adult can assist in the development of the child's brain. In addition, it can help teachers and caregivers to take concrete action and notice things that make a significant difference to the lifelong wellbeing of children.