

WTNS Radio OSU Extension Update for April 11, 2022
Healthy People. Healthy Finances. Healthy Relationships.

On today's OSU Extension update for Healthy People, Healthy Finances, & Healthy Relationships we'll talk about parenting at different ages and stages, and as always look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension.

This week I was posed a challenging question from a new parent. He was thinking about all the time they will have with their children- from the day they brought them home from the hospital until they enter adulthood and leave their home. His question: "Are there certain stages in a child's development that are more critical to invest time than others?"

Now that is a tough question. I certainly have my own life experiences with that as a parent, but that is only my experience and would only be my limited opinion. So, what does research say about this?

I found a study from 2016 that asked parents and caregivers at what age or stage can they have the most influence on a child's development. The researchers compared what they identified as "expert knowledge" with perceived local realities of these parents in South Africa. The researchers pointed to the evidence that conditions impacting a child's development very early (in fact the first 1,000 days from conception to age 2) have long-term impact. This study looked at whether parents shared this same opinion about the age or stage when they could have the most influence on a child's development.

Interestingly, parents felt that the early adolescent years were the most important for their influence, because of the risks that emerge during adolescence like early pregnancy, substance use, violence, and more. Meeting the needs of young children seemed more manageable and controllable than in later years of child development.

According to UNICEF, at least 200 million children living in developing countries fail to meet their developmental potential. Along with undernutrition, there are other influences of infectious disease, environmental hazards, and societal and household violence that all contribute to this loss of potential. Nutrition is the easiest to influence.

Many countries around the world focus on the first 1,000 days of life as most critical for ensuring a child will have greater opportunities as they grow up. I immediately thought of my time in

Haiti last summer. Our youth ministry worked alongside “Many Hands for Haiti” during our stay. One focus of this ministry is called “Mil Jou” which in Haitian creole means “First 1,000 days.”

That program provides health checks, medical support, nutrition, childbirth education classes, and community support for the babies and their mothers. While we were there, we helped serve lunch to the moms and their toddlers. They host this program in several local communities. The mothers come for a free lunch five days a week, until their children reach 2-years-old. Before the meal, they receive of lesson about health or hygiene or parenting or spiritual encouragement and develop close relationships with other parents.

I wonder what a study around here would reveal about what parents view as the most critical years of child development. Would we say the first few years in a child’s life are the most critical to put them on a positive track for the rest of their life?

Locally, we have the Help Me Grow program for pregnant women or new parents. It is an evidence-based program that promotes healthy growth and development for babies and young children. Help Me Grow provides parenting education and child development resources to families that allow them to maximize this critical period of development in their child’s life, providing a foundation for lasting success. This program is open to anyone, so you are encouraged to reach out to Help Me Grow with any questions about infants and young children. (coshdd.org/help-me-grow)

And now let’s look at some upcoming programs from OSU Extension. Do you enjoy cooking? Would you also like to know time-saving tips to maximize your efforts in the kitchen? Join OSU Extension for “Kitchen Gadgets and Gizmos” on Monday evening, May 2 from 6:30-7:30 PM at the Clary Garden Pavilion. I’ll be sharing tips collected from OSU Extension educators, focusing on affordability, food safety, and convenience. Bring along your favorite kitchen tool or cooking hack and we’ll learn from one another. You can find details about future programs related to financial wellness, food preservation, diabetes, and more at our website coshocton.osu.edu.

In closing, at OSU Extension, we are proud to work for Coshocton County to help educate and improve our families, farms, and businesses. Please feel free to contact OSU Extension for more information at 740-622-2265 or visit our website at coshocton.osu.edu. Make it a healthy day!