

Working with Young Children, Infants, and Families

Troy Pinkney-Ragsdale, MA CCLS
Director of Child Life Program
Bank Street College of Education



Outline of presentation

Developmental considerations of children with special health care needs.

The importance of play as a healing modality

Supporting the child and their family

Small Group Activity

- Discuss in small groups a challenging experience that you have had with a child with health care needs and their family?
- What questions/concerns do you have about children and families that you would like addressed today?

How does illness affect the development of infants and toddlers?

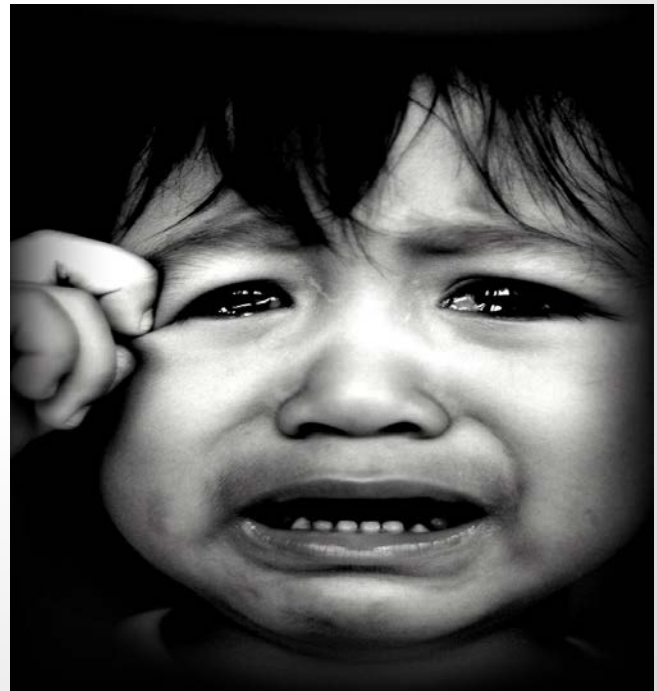
- Difficulties with bonding to primary caretaker
- Attachment issues (protest, despair, detachment)
- Regression in developmental stages
- Learned helplessness
- Disruption of activities of daily living i.e.. sleeping, eating, elimination patterns

How does illness affect the development of preschoolers

Susceptible to issues of separation, and to regression in developmental stages, specifically newly acquired skills.

Themes of punishment and bodily harm are prevalent.

- Difficulty separating fantasy (magical thinking) from reality. "I was bad and this is why this is happening to me". Children of this age are very egocentric.
- Fear of being abandoned.



What do we know about children and health care experiences?

- With information we can better support the needs of children and their family.
- By providing developmentally appropriate materials for children and their families we can support optimal growth and development.

What do we know about primary caregivers?

- Infant and toddlers who have a responsive and attentive caregiver do better in their overall development.
- Acknowledgment and understanding of a child's health care experience by all caregivers will assist the young child with coping.

So why is play important?

Providing the infant/toddler with an opportunity to play out their healthcare experience, in the hospital, school and home leads to increased positive coping.

When play is directed by the child, they can express emotions and ideas non verbally.

- Play offers the child with a unique opportunity to experiment with ideas, and materials that may have particular meaning to them.



Having the right materials is important: doctor's kits



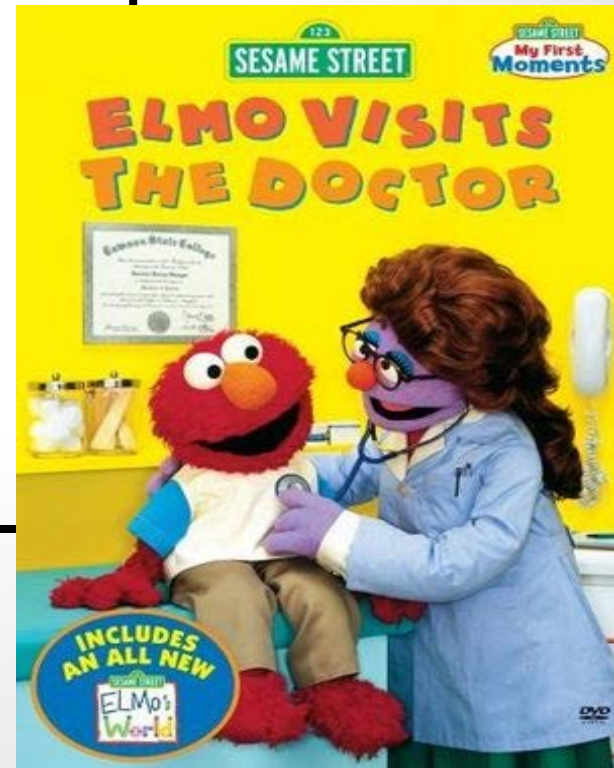
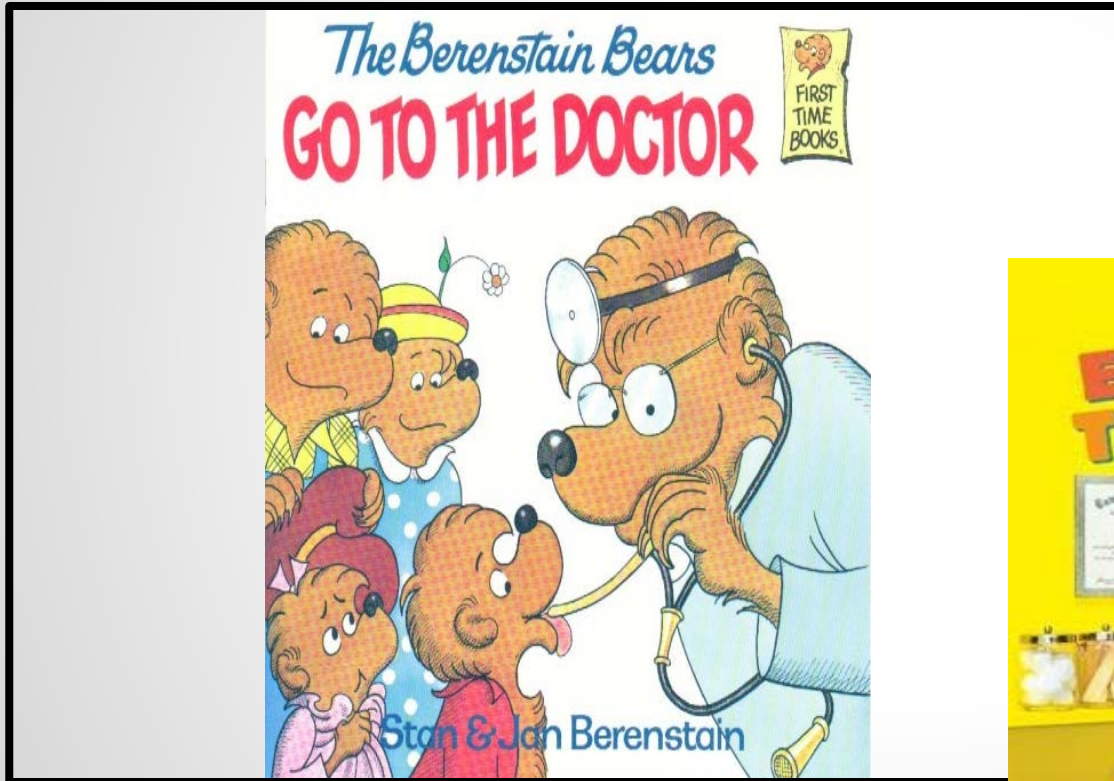
Dolls: that look like the child



Playing doctor



Providing books and videos with healthcare themes



Supporting the child and family

- What are the family's, concerns, priorities and resources (family centered care)?



- What does the family want you to share with their child, in the context of the class? (developmentally appropriate language)

Further suggestions

- Parents are partners and the expert on their child and family.
- Listen to their concerns, priorities and needs.



If a child is out sick and out of childcare or school for an extended period of time. There are things you can do to support optimal growth and development



Last but not least...

- Caregivers need your support, understanding and patience.
- **Knowledge is power.** Providing materials that are accessible and available for the family is critical.



Dowling, C., Nicoll, N., & Thomas, B. (2006). *A different kind of perfect*. Boston, Massachusetts: Trumpeter Books.

Rollins, J., Bolig, R., Mahan, C. (2005) *Meeting children's psychological needs: Across the healthcare continuum*. Texas: Pro-ed

Spector, R. (2004) *Cultural diversity in Health and Illness*. New Jersey: Pearson

Webb, N. (2009). *Helping children and adolescents with chronic and serious medical conditions*. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons

Websites

- **American Academy of Pediatrics**
<http://www.aap.org/>
- **Child Life Council** <http://www.childlife.org/>
- **Kid's Health** <http://kidshealth.org/>
- **NYU Child Study Center**
<http://www.aboutourkids.org/>
- **Parenting Special Needs Magazine**
<http://parentingspecialneeds.org/>
- **Include nyc** <http://www.resourcesnyc.org/>
- **Touchpoints** <http://www.touchpoints.org/>

My contact information

Troy Pinkney-Ragsdale, MA, CCLS

Director, Child Life Program

Bank Street College of Education

(Office) 212-875-4473

(email) tpinkney@bankstreet.edu