

Early Development & Learning Lab Newsletter

Fall, 2013

WELCOME!

Welcome to the first ever Early Development and Learning Lab newsletter! We would like to share information with you on all the great things we are doing in the Early Development and Learning Lab or EDLL. We hope that your family will enjoy the information and resources in this newsletter. In this issue, you will find an update about the current status of our Toddler Sleep Study, short articles written by students working in our EDLL, family-friendly activities around Lincoln, and even a game for you and your child to complete together. Enjoy!

SLEEP STUDY UPDATE

By Amanda Prokasky

We have been busy this summer collecting data from our toddlers and their families. So far, 21 2 ½-year-olds have participated, and now 3-year-olds are returning their second round of testing. To date, we've recruited 40 families, and we are aiming for 40 new participants each year for the next several years. Much of our time is spent on interacting with toddlers and their families and preparing the data we have collected for entry into computer programs so that we can analyze it. Because we are still in the data-collection phase of our study, we do not currently have any publish from our findings. Most likely, it will be a few years until we reach that stage. We will keep you updated as we have findings we can share with you. We are very grateful to all the families who are participating or have agreed to participate – our study could not be a success without your help!

Amanda is the EDLL project coordinator and a graduate student in Child, Youth, and Family Studies.

TRAINING WHEELS

By Paul Kwiatkowski

“Where do I find the time?” is a question I hear from some of my clients in the Campus Recreation Center who are seeking advice about physical activity and nutrition. The key is not to focus on lack of time, but how to use time to your advantage. Making the decision to exercise is the toughest hurdle

to clear when, after a long day at work, you come home and the only thing you want to do is sit on the couch. But exercising does not have to involve a long trip to the gym or running several miles. Simply putting on your sneakers and walking with your children and family dog or going on a bike ride can be relaxing and enjoyable exercise for everyone. You can track the distance you travel with free smart phone apps, such as Endomondo Sports Tracker, or Map My Run. Keeping record of your exercise is helpful for setting goals, tracking progress, and pushing yourself to improve. Staying active with exercise is healthy and can even boost your energy levels. Now that's something everyone in your family can appreciate!

Paul is a graduate student in Educational Psychology and a GA in Wellness Services at the UNL Campus Recreation Center.

INTERNATIONAL SPOTLIGHT: FAMILY STRUCTURES IN CHINA

By Xiaoqing Tu

U.S. children are considered “preschool age” between the ages of 3 and 5. In China, this range sometimes extends from birth to age 6. Some children attend preschool before age 3, and most attend between ages 3 and 6. Children begin attending school at age 6 years. In urban China, most couples have only one child who quickly becomes the center of the family. This phenomenon is popularly referred to as a “4-2-1” family structure, meaning 4 grandparents and 2 parents all focusing on nurturing the 1 child in the family.

Since most young couples are working parents, many grandparents help with caring of the child by either living with the family, or taking the grandchild to their home while the parents work. The grandparents' presence and participation with child rearing may create an “elephant in the room”, as they often rely on their own rearing experiences and ideas that may conflict with the younger generation's “modern” child-rearing ideas. This is a new challenging social issue many families are now facing.

Xiaoqing is a graduate student in Child, Youth, and Family Studies



Early Development and Learning Lab

RECENT RESEARCH IN DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

By Scott Frohn

Theory of mind is a concept frequently studied in young children, and refers to a child's understanding of their own thoughts and the thoughts of others. For instance, infants and newborns are not considered to possess a "theory of mind;" they do not yet understand that they are a separate entity from other people or objects, or that others have their own thoughts. From age 2 and 6, however, young children develop "theory of mind." How do we know that?

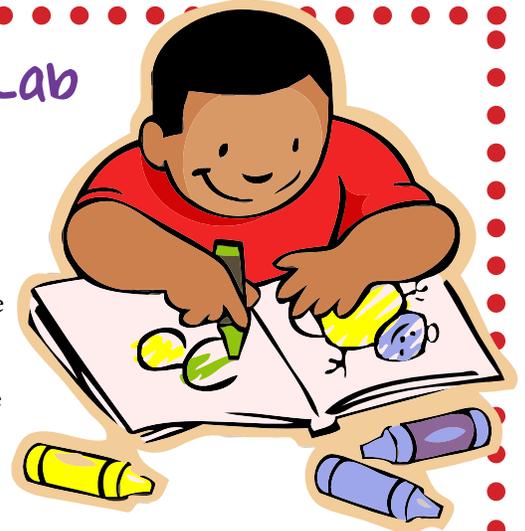
One common task used to assess "theory of mind" is the false belief task. In this task, the child is shown a short video cartoon of Sally and Anne. It starts with Sally hiding her ball in the basket while Anne is in the room. After Sally leaves the room, Anne moves the ball to the box. When asked "where will Sally look for her ball?" most 3-year olds will say "in the box" because they saw Anne move it. However, older children will recognize that Sally didn't see what we saw, and she should still think the ball is in the basket. These difference responses are used as evidence of "theory of mind."

McAlister and Peterson (2013) looked at how theory of mind is related to executive function skills in pre-school children. Executive function skills are used in activities such as planning, inhibiting, focusing, and paying attention. The researchers found that theory of mind and executive function skills are related and that children with siblings had slightly higher theory of mind and executive function skills than children without siblings. Why would this be?

Children learn from interacting with siblings as well as other children, and through interactions with parents, grandparents, and other caregivers. These interactions influence how children think about activities they are involved in as well as how others think – such as in make-believe, conversations, and problem solving activities. Because the preschool period is a time when a lot of social skills are learned and thinking skills are developing, the preschool years are a good time for encouraging children to have interactions with other people. At home, conversations between children and between children and adults are very important for building language skills, introducing new ideas, and talking

about thoughts and experiences so that children can express their ideas. The findings from this article illustrate the importance of social interactions at a young age. The findings do not, however, mean that having more siblings will make a child smarter, but rather they may present more frequent opportunities for social interactions.

Scott is a graduate student in Educational Psychology.



Source Article:

McAlister, A. R. & Peterson, C. C. (2013). Siblings, Theory of Mind, and Executive Functioning in Children Aged 3-6 Years: New Longitudinal Evidence. *Child Development*, 84 (4) 1442-1458.

MYTH BUSTING

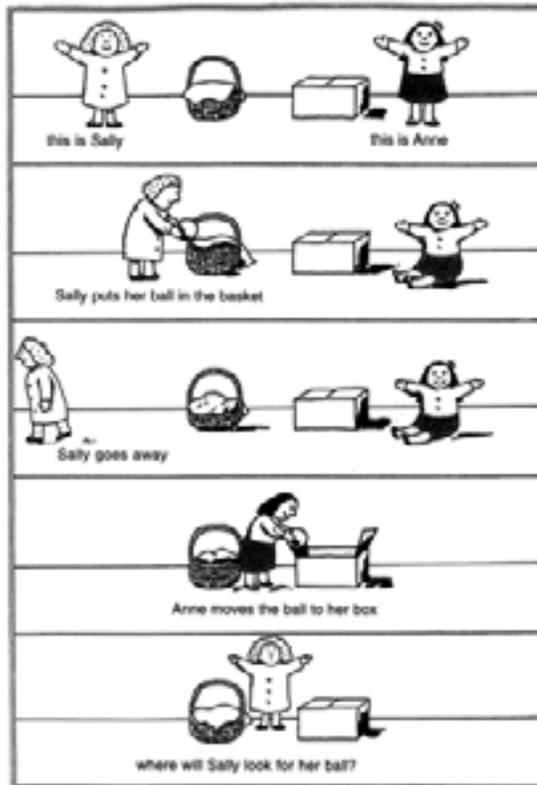
By Dr. Victoria Molfese

Myth #1: You only use 10% of your brain. This is a commonly believed myth, but the fact is that many brain areas are involved in everything we do. Even when a simple word is heard, many areas in the brain become active and are needed to identify the name of the word is that we heard.

Myth #2: You need 8 hours of sleep at night. This is another common myth. The fact is that different people have different sleep needs – some people need more sleep, and some people need less. This is also true for children and teenagers. It is also true that

children need more sleep than teens and adults, and that most children, teens, and adults need more sleep than they are getting on most nights. So – the amount of sleep we get should be based on how rested we feel in the morning. If we get up feeling tired, then more sleep is needed. Setting regular sleep schedules (bedtime and rise time) also help us to feel more rested.

Dr. Molfese is Chancellor's Professor of Child, Youth, & Family Studies.



The Toddler Sleep Study needs more participants!!

The EDLL needs your help! If you know of any families with toddlers younger than 2½, please pass along our information to the parents:

Early Development and Learning Lab

www.cehs.unl.edu/edl | 402.472.8982

KIDS EVENTS IN LINCOLN - FALL 2013

By Mary Kralemann

Grandparent's Nature Fun Day

What: A scavenger hunt, meeting live animals, and exploring artifacts.

When: Sept 8 from 2pm-4pm

Where: Prairie Building in Pioneers Park

Price: \$5 per person, Register by Sept 5

For more info call 402.441.7895 or visit lincoln.ne.gov/city/parks/naturecenter

Streets Alive!

What: A FREE 3-mile outdoor event promoting physical activity and healthy eating.

When: September 29 from 1-5 PM

Where: 3-mile route located in the Near South and Everett Neighborhoods (near the Capital)

For more info contact Carol Jess at 402.310.9997 or cjess@healthylincoln.org, or visit www.healthylincoln.org/communityevents/streetsalive2013.html

JKS Pumpkin Patch and Fall Family Fun Farm

What: A 3-acre corn maze, barnyard petting zoo, Hayrack Ride to the pumpkin patch, bounce houses, hay slides, combine slide, giant family chair and more!

When: Every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday between Sept 20 and Oct 27 from 10am-7pm

Where: 757 Bluff Road Lincoln, NE 68531

Price: \$6 per person – includes all activity and a pumpkin!

For more info call 402.430.9135, email jkspumpkinpatch@yahoo.com or visit www.jkspumpkinpatch.com

STAFF PROFILE: HANNAH MALCOLM

Hello. My name is Hannah, and I am a UNL undergraduate majoring in Nutrition and Health Science. After I graduate in 2015, I plan on attending medical school to continue my journey of becoming a doctor. I began working as a research assistant in the EDLL on the Toddler Sleep Study in June, 2013. As a research assistant, I do data entry, video coding, and take part in home and lab visits. My favorite part of working in the lab is seeing how differently children of the same age behave. Participating in this research project has been a valuable experience, and experience working with children and families will be useful in my undergraduate studies and to my future career in medicine.

THE STAFF

Dr. Victoria Molfese – Co-Lab Director

Dr. Kathleen Rudasill – Co-Lab Director

Amanda Prokasky – Project Coordinator

Xiaoqing Tu – Graduate Research Assistant

Scott Frohn – Graduate Research Assistant

Mary Kralemann – Graduate Research Assistant

Kenji Madison – Graduate Research Assistant

Paul Kwiatkowski – Graduate Research Assistant

Elaina Montague – Graduate Research Assistant

Jayden Nord – Undergraduate Research Assistant

Hannah Malcolm – Undergraduate Research Assistant

Kevan Reardon – Undergraduate Research Assistant



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Research Opportunity: Infant Research Study

How does the social brain develop in babies? We are recruiting infants around 6 months of age for an EEG study! Electroencephalography (EEG) is safe and painless. Babies wear a hat while watching videos and listening to sounds. The hat has electrodes to record brain activity. We may also use a device to record where babies look.

Study involvement - Between 5.5 months to 8.5 months of age, infants would participate in 4 visits to the Developmental Brain Laboratory at University of Nebraska-Lincoln. There is the option to complete 2 of the visits at home instead of at UNL. Parents will also be asked to do some home training (~20 minutes a day for ~3 days). Participants can earn up to \$75 in Walmart gift cards.

Interested in participating? Contact Caitlin Hudac by phone at (402) 472-3720 or by email (caitlin.hudac@huskers.unl.edu) for more information.

