Significance

- Brain development for emotional and social competence provides for a strong brain formation beginning at birth.
- Low circuitry synapses in the brain are responsible for language skills.
- A brief opportunity of time to capture these low circuitry formations:
  - Prematally:
    - During years two and three.
  - If this window of opportunity is missed it is never recaptured.
- The child’s life trajectory is altered.

What is Language Nutrition?

- “Language Nutrition” is described as the quality and quantity of words spoken to children beginning prenatally to 3 years old.
- Language competency is crucial for academic success.
  - Children who have the appropriate language skills are more likely to graduate college, own homes, participate in 401(k) savings, and have their own family. Interactions with peers and adults.
- In contrast, children who are not exposed to “Language Nutrition” are more likely to be high school drop-outs, be incarcerated, be on public assistance and earn an average of $18,000 less a year.
- Vocabulary size when entering kindergarten is predictive of their future success along with their ability to interact with peers and adults.

Socioeconomic Status

- By age 3, there is a 30-million-word gap from higher to lower socioeconomic status.
- 34% of kindergarteners are lacking the basic language skills needed to learn how to read.
- 65% of fourth graders are not reading at the expected level in the United States.
  - They will not catch up to their peers in academics.
  - 93 million adults in United States read at or below a basic reading level.
- Caregiver communication directly relates to a child’s language skills.

Nurses as Educators

- Nurses are primary contacts despite Socioeconomic Status
- Most trusted profession
  - Pediatric Offices
  - Prenatal Appointments
  - Woman and Children Offices (WIC)
  - Hospitals
  - Health Departments
  - Caregivers value the Nurse/patient/caregiver triad

Feed the Brain

- Quality not quantity of words matter.
  - Instead of “get your shoes” Say: “get me your brown boots”
  - Instead of “do you want grapes”? Say: “do you want purple grapes?”
  - Instead of letting the child sit in the grocery cart: engage them in conversations:
    - talk to them about green peppers, yellow bananas, red apples, and oranges. The brown jacket or the pretty bowl.
- Expand their vocabulary – feed their brain, not just their body with

“Language Nutrition”

TALK TO THEM!

Talk to them every day, about everything, every moment you have. Make time to speak to them in meaningful words, colors, shapes and sizes. They will absorb each and every word you speak promoting healthier minds for the future.

References

Fernald, A., Marchman, V. & Weisshar, A. (2013) SES difference in language processing skill and vocabulary are evident at 18 months. Developmental Science, 16(2), 234-246.


