

AGES  
4-6



## Understanding your child

Here is some information about how children learn and grow. Remember that each child grows at their own pace and not all children will be learning the same things at the same ages. Use this information to notice where your child is growing at *their* pace, and to support their growth as only you can. If you have questions about your child's development, please bring this information and your questions to your child's next medical appointment.



### WHAT I CAN DO

I am learning to PRETEND! I am still learning the difference between real and pretend, and I can think about things that aren't real, or aren't happening right now. I can be very creative, but I can also have fears that feel very real. I need you to reassure me if I'm afraid. I can focus on tasks and projects that are interesting to me. I have better motor skills which means I can do things like ride bikes and draw pictures.



### WHAT I AM LEARNING

I am learning how to PLAY! Play is so important because it teaches me all sorts of things: imagination, cooperation, rules, relationships, and language! I can learn letters, numbers, and MUSIC! I am interested in science, in the world, and in the difference between genders, like boys and girls. I can help you clean and cook if you're patient with me.



### WHAT I NEED FROM YOU

I need you to help me understand the world. Stay calm when I make up stories, push limits, and try new things. Talk to me about my body, and answer my questions about being a boy or a girl. Set boundaries that keep me safe, and keep a routine for me. I'm ready for you to teach me letters and numbers. Share books with me, sing with me, count with me, and encourage me to learn new things. Help me learn what it means to be part of a family. I need clothes and shoes that I can MOVE in, so that I can explore and build muscle. Help me make friends and let me learn through play. Try not to interrupt my play with other kids, unless someone might get hurt. Remind me all the time that you love me and that I am okay. Be nice to yourself, and remember you are lovable too!



## WHAT THIS TIME MIGHT FEEL LIKE FOR YOU

This is a magical time for your child, and it might be fun for you to play and pretend with them. It might be hard for you to remember how to pretend or play – or it might be brand new for you! You and your child can learn and laugh together! It might be hard for you to be patient when they push limits or take too long while learning, but it's really important to let them feel safe while they explore who they are. This level of independence might be scary for you, because it involves letting go of some control. Your child may not need you to hold them anymore, but they definitely need you close.

*“It was nice to have some time to myself when my son was at school and [the space] made it easier to be a mom when he got home.”*

*“Routine has never been easy for me because I didn't have one as a kid. I needed A LOT of help and I'm so grateful for my mentor.”*



## HOW YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF RIGHT NOW

You can take care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally by making and keeping appointments to keep yourself healthy. You can make time to exercise – including taking your child on walks. Try to find time for yourself, maybe early in the morning, when you can center yourself and prepare for the day. Having a routine will be extremely helpful, but it is also important to plan for change and go with the flow. Trust yourself and your process. Try saying supportive things to yourself throughout the day. You can even say them out loud, like “I'm doing good,” or, “I've got this.” It is good for your child to hear and see you regulate your feelings. You are a good mother and your child is lucky to have a mom in recovery.

