Every child is unique. Every child develops at his own pace. Every child relates to the world in his own way. Every child has his own style of communication.

Research tells us:

- The first three years of life lay the foundations for healthy brain development and healthy social-emotional development.
- Every child needs a special bond with a consistent caregiver.
- Every child needs a predictable, responsive, nurturing and sensory-rich environment.

Crucial for bonding:

- Time together
- Face-to-face interactions
- Eye contact
- Physical proximity
- Touch
- Sensory experiences

Some developmental milestones to watch for:

A newborn’s eyes can only track a distance of 9-12 inches. Hold your baby this distance from your face so that he can see you. By two months, infants like to look directly at your face, especially if you widen your eyes and move your mouth.

Crying is the only way an infant can communicate with you. You cannot spoil a baby! When they cry, they are telling you that they need something. Responding promptly tells them that they are safe, and the world will meet their needs.
Research tells us that babies gain more weight, and are more confident and less demanding when they are responded to promptly, their cues are read and addressed, and they receive plenty of nurturing touch.

Between 6-12 months, babies learn to sit alone, crawl, pull up to stand and eventually take their first steps alone. Infants need to practice these budding motor skills by exploring freely throughout the day. Baby-proof your home and create safe areas for fun and exploration. Pillows and cushions are great obstacle courses. Babies love to move to music!

Children learn balance and coordination by moving about, carrying, dumping, climbing and pushing objects. Safe open spaces allow your toddler to practice these important developing skills.

Between 12-15 months, most toddlers are really growing in their ability to communicate. They will use gestures before they learn to use words for what they want. Read lots of story books, identify their feelings, and provide vocabulary words by describing whatever is happening.

What your child needs most is YOU! Feeding, bathing and diapering are perfect times to talk to, sing to and play with your baby.

This material has been adapted from content found on the “Zero to Three” website: www.zerotothree.org

For more information, check out:

Child Development Institute  www.cdidpage.com
American Academy of Pediatrics www.aap.org

Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development Project, Emory West Campus, 1256 Briarcliff Rd. NE, Atlanta, GA 30306  (404) 712-9800

http://www.psychiatry.emory.edu/PROGRAMS/GADrug/