

Infant Activities

Birth-12 months

Malaki| March

Social-Emotional Support: The Sounds of Animals



Infants listen to the tone of your voice to distinguish safety and security. Next time you le'ale'a (play) with your infant, have fun connecting the tones of your voice to animal sounds! Hold up an animal toy for your infant and make its sound. Experiment with your voice to see what catches your infant's attention. If you have a lion, make a quiet, low-pitched roar. Then roar again with a higher, softer tone of voice. Notice your infant's reactions as you change the tones in your voice.

Cognitive Development: "Ma Hea Ia?"



Infants are beginning to understand that objects can exist even when they disappear. Peek-A-Boo is a wonderful way to encourage curiosity and exploration. Show your infant a few animal figurines and then place a towel over them. Hold up your hands and ask your infant in a playful tone, "Ma hea ia (Where is it)?" If your infant looks to you for help, gently lift a corner of the towel for a "peek" then encourage your infant to lift the towel off all by themselves.

Playful Parenting: Bang Bang Blocks!



Infants find joy by holding a block in each hand and banging them together. This playful act gives your infant practice developing fine motor and coordination skills! Print out images of adult and baby animals such as a koholā (whale). Use clear packaging tape to cover and adhere the images securely to the blocks. Offer your infant the block with an adult koholā and the block with a baby koholā to hold in each hand. As your infant bangs them together, say, "You brought the mama koholā to her baby!"

Toddler Activities

12-24 months
Malaki| March

Social-Emotional Support: Meeting a New Animal



As toddlers master walking, they also gain newfound independence to explore the world around them. Coach your toddler on lokomaika'i (kindness) towards unfamiliar animals that approach them in the neighborhood or at a local park. Say, "The doggie ran right up to you! Let's stay still until the owner comes. Then we can ask to pet doggie or throw the ball for him." The book, "Tails are Not For Pulling" by Elizabeth Verdick also points out ways toddlers can show lokomaika'i towards furry friends.

Cognitive Development: Choices at Art Time



(Photo: NRCS)

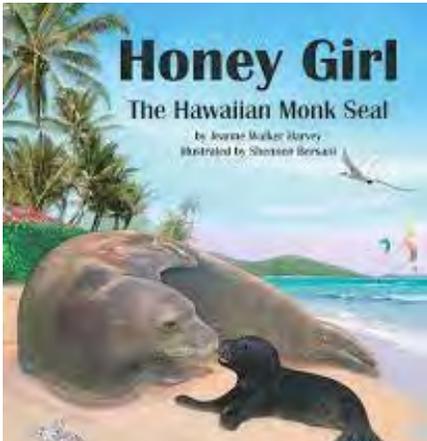
Offering toddlers choices helps to develop their brain. Make animals masks together using paper plates, popsicle sticks and other craft materials. Give your toddler a choice and say, "What animal do you want to be? A pueo (owl)? A kao (goat)?" As your toddler creates their mask, be mindful of offering other choices. Say, "Do you want to use the chalk or crayons to color your animal?" Offering choices during playful moments will help your toddler make choices during frustrating moments.

Playful Parenting: Nēnē Playdough Fun



The nēnē goose is a treasured bird in Hawai'i and is part of the ancient Kumulipo (Hawaiian Creation Chant). The nēnē is named after its soft, gentle call which is often compared to the "moo" of a cow. Next time you enjoy playdough with your toddler, mold a nēnē nest. Roll small balls to make eggs for the nest. Say to your toddler, "This nest is for a nēnē goose!" Your toddler will enjoy your le'ale'a (fun) presence and will giggle with delight when you mimic the call of a nēnē!

Social-Emotional Support: Lokomaika'i For Animals



Showing lokomaika'i (kindness) towards animals develops empathy in preschoolers. Borrow the book, "Honey Girl: The Hawaiian Monk Seal" by Jeanne Harvey and learn how the community nursed an injured ilio holo i ka uau (Hawaiian Monk Seal) back to good health. After you read the book, ask your preschooler for ideas on how they can show lokomaika'i towards animals. Perhaps it's brushing your dog after a bath or respecting a ilio holo i ka uau's space if spotted on the beach.

Cognitive Development: Tracing the 'Ōpe'ape'a



The 'ōpe'ape'a is a rare native mammal in Hawai'i whose name means "half leaf" because its spread wings resemble half of a kalo (taro) leaf. Head into your yard with your preschooler and find a large, heart shaped leaf. Cut it in half length-wise then have your preschooler trace the leaf onto a paper to create 'ōpe'ape'a wings. Help your preschooler draw in the rest of the 'ōpe'ape'a on their own. Then write 'ōpe'ape'a on the paper and encourage your preschooler to trace over the letters.

Playful Parenting: Animal Card Game



Repurpose an old deck of cards into a fun animal matching game for your preschooler. Go through magazines together and cut out pairs of animals. Find animals you see in Hawai'i like the pua'a (pig), mo'o (lizard), and the nai'a (dolphin). After you cut the images out, glue them on matching numbered cards (e.g. the nai'a goes on the number 2 cards). Turn the cards face down and challenge your preschooler's memory. Take turns flipping the cards over to match the animals and the numbers!