

Infant Activities

Birth-12 months

Mei| May

Social-Emotional Support: Entering the Moana



Entering the moana (ocean) with good intentions is a way our kūpuna showed how to mālama i ke kai (to care for the ocean). Share your good intentions with your infant as you head in the water. Hold your infant close to your chest. Say softly, "Mahalo i ka moana! Mahalo for the waves. Mahalo for the sand." Take three cleansing hanu (breaths) in rhythm with the movement of the moana. Your infant will sense your calmness as they feel the splashes of kai (salt water) on their toes.

Cognitive Development: I'a Sock Puppet Play



Puppets are a fun way to engage your infant when you play together. Repurpose your infant's old socks to make an i'a (fish) sock puppet. Fill the sock with cotton balls to create an i'a body. Tie a rubber band close to the top of the sock so the end looks like a floppy fishtail. Use permanent markers to draw an i'a face. Have your i'a dive and swim while you sing, "I'm a little i'a, I can swim. Here is my tail, here is my fin. When I want to have fun with my friends, I swish my tail and dive right in!"

Sung to: "Little Teapot"

Playful Parenting: Wāwae off the Coral Reef



Hawai'i's coral reefs provide protection to many living things in the moana. Keeping your wāwae (feet) off the reef helps keep it healthy. Make this reminder playful by drawing a colorful coral reef on your driveway using sidewalk chalk. Create a pathway in between your drawings and infant's scribbles. Then help your infant along the path together, trying to keep from stepping on the coral. Say, "Here we go in the moana! Wāwae off the coral!" If you step on the coral, ho'omau (persevere) and try again!

Social-Emotional Support: Nānā ka Maka



Teaching your toddler how to be observant near the moana (ocean) helps build a sense of security with their surroundings. When you notice a swell in the kai (salt water), point it out to your toddler and say, "Nānā ka maka" (Eyes observe/pay attention). Use this phrase with repetition when you observe rain clouds shifting the weather or when you notice the pokey spines of a wana (sea urchin) in the rocks. "Nānā ka maka" cues your toddler to pay attention and stay safe when enjoying the moana.

Cognitive Development: Big and Small in the Tidepools



Toddlers are beginning to learn the difference between something big and small. Visit the moana coastline during low tide and point out small and big things nestled in the tidepools. Hold your toddler's hands to support them on the slippery rocks. Tidepools are an important place for small i'a (fish) to grow. As your toddler points to i'a, notice and say, "The i'a is small!" Then point out something big like a loli (sea cucumber). Mālama i ke kai and look with your maka (eyes) only.

Playful Parenting: Throw Net like the Lawai'a



Lawai'a (fishermen) use throw nets to catch i'a like the aholehole. Draw various sized i'a on paper. Let your toddler color the i'a with crayons Cut out the i'a and scatter them on the floor. Build a coastline with pillows then use a lightweight blanket as a pretend throw net. Crouch behind the pillows and take turns tossing your throw net to catch the i'a! Model counting in both English and Hawaiian as you remove the i'a from your net. Ho'omau (persevere) as your toddler learns to throw net.

Social-Emotional Support: Plastic 'Ōpala Hunt



Teaching your preschooler to mālama i ke kai (to care for the ocean) builds kindness and empathy. Next time you visit the beach, go on a plastic 'ōpala (trash) hunt. Notice the pieces of plastic 'ōpala you gather. Explain to your preschooler that plastic 'ōpala hurts living things like the koholā (whale), our state mammal. Say, "When the koholā eats this, it makes them sick. Let's throw it away so we can take care of the koholā and ho'omau (persevere) to keep our moana clean."

Cognitive Development: What Floats in Kai?



Make beach time science time. Next time you head to the beach, add a lemon to your bag of snacks. Ask your preschooler to guess whether the lemon will sink or float in the kai (salt water). The lemon should float. When you go home, bring the lemon to bath time. Before your preschooler gets in the tub, ask if they think the lemon will sink or float in the wai (fresh water). The lemon should sink. Before you explain the "why" behind this experiment, enjoy listening to your preschooler's creative ideas.

Playful Parenting: Watercolor Uhu



The uhu keeps reefs healthy by eating algae off coral and replenishing sand back into the moana. Paint watercolor uhu with your preschooler. Make watercolor paint by blending 3/4c. water, 1/4c. light corn syrup, and 1 tsp. corn starch. Pour the mixture into each section of an ice cube tray. In a different section, add blue, green or yellow food coloring and mix. Blend the three colors as you paint a piece of cardstock. After the paint dries, cut out the shape of an uhu.