

# Channels of Communication with Families

- Parent Information Board
- Newsletters
- Social Media
- Blogs
- Discussion Boards
- Texts
- Emails
- Phone Calls
- Journals
- Notes



- Sign-in Books
- Family Engagement Activities
- Special Events
- Calendar of Events
- Home Visits
- Orientation
- Secure Web Cameras
- Parent Support Meetings
- Parent Trainings
- Book Clubs

VIRGINIA  
INFANT & TODDLER SPECIALIST

NETWORK

“Achieving Excellence in Early Care”  
[www.va-itsnetwork.org](http://www.va-itsnetwork.org)

The Virginia Infant and Toddler Specialist Network is supported by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$5,350,000 with 100% funded by ACF/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by ACF/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

Child Development Resources P.O. Box 280, Norge VA 23127  
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# THINGS FAMILIES CAN DO TO REDUCE STRESS



Eat one daily meal together

Hold family meetings

Assign responsibilities & deadlines



## Help

Ask for help



Involve extended family

## Faith

Access faith community



Laugh together



Create memories



Make health care a priority



Attend parenting classes and read parenting books

Prioritize and find work-life balance

Set goals together as a family



Pray together 

 Set boundaries

Develop time management skills

Do family activities together

Take a vacation/ staycation

 Budget



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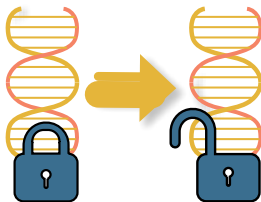
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# WHAT IS EPIGENETICS?

## AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO CHILD DEVELOPMENT?

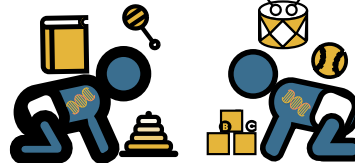
“Epigenetics” is an emerging area of scientific research that shows how environmental influences—children’s experiences—actually affect the expression of their genes.



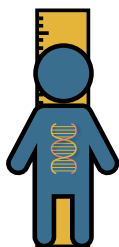
During development, the DNA that makes up our genes accumulates chemical marks that determine how much or little of the genes is expressed. This collection of chemical marks is known as the “epigenome.” The different experiences children have rearrange those chemical marks. This explains why genetically identical twins can exhibit different behaviors, skills, health, and achievement.



This means the old idea that genes are “set in stone” has been disproven. Nature vs. Nurture is no longer a debate. It’s nearly always both!



## EPIGENETICS EXPLAINS HOW EARLY EXPERIENCES CAN HAVE LIFELONG IMPACTS.



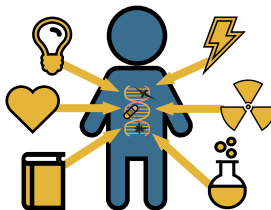
The genes children inherit from their biological parents provide information that guides their development. For example, how tall they could eventually become or the kind of temperament they could have.



**EXPERIENCES** during development rearrange the epigenetic marks that govern gene expression, they can change whether and how genes release the information they carry.



Thus, the epigenome can be affected by positive experiences, such as supportive relationships and opportunities for learning...

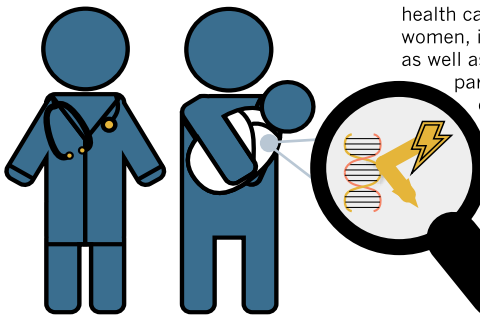


... or negative influences, such as environmental toxins or stressful life circumstances ...

... which leave a unique epigenetic “signature” on the genes. These signatures can be temporary or permanent and both types affect how easily the genes are switched on or off. Recent research demonstrates that there may be ways to reverse certain negative changes and restore healthy functioning. But the very best strategy is to support responsive relationships and reduce stress to build strong brains from the beginning.

## YOUNG BRAINS ARE PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO EPIGENETIC CHANGES.

Experiences very early in life, when the brain is developing most rapidly, cause epigenetic adaptations that influence whether, when, and how genes release their instructions for building future capacity for health, skills, and resilience. That’s why it’s crucial to provide supportive and nurturing experiences for young children in the earliest years.



Services such as high-quality health care for all pregnant women, infants, and toddlers, as well as support for new parents and caregivers can—quite literally— affect the chemistry around children’s genes. Supportive relationships and rich learning experiences generate positive epigenetic signatures that activate genetic potential.