

Especially for parents of infants!

Tell Me More, Tell Me More

Stories and Listening

Infants delight in hearing the same story over and over. Hearing the same story over and over helps a child become familiar with words, phrases, and sayings.

What is the practice?

Storytelling is simply a way of making something a fun, interesting, and enjoyable activity for your child. Infants tell us they want us to “tell me more” by getting excited when they hear a familiar story. Phrases such as “once upon a time” let your child know she is about to hear a story. Children like to hear the same story a lot! The more she likes the story, the more she will try to get you to tell the story again.

What does the practice look like?

Storytelling with infants involves short “stories” or phrases that are very repetitive. They can be made-up stories like telling your child about they day her or she was born. They can also be stories in books you read to your child. Use exaggerated facial and body movements and highly expressive sounds and words to bring the story to life! Ham it up. Your child will love it.



How do you do the practice?

Here are some ideas for introducing stories to your child:

- Pick a story that is about something familiar and interesting to your child. Children like stories about family members, pets, favorite foods, or toys.
- Keep the story simple, short, and repetitive. Your child's first stories should be only about three or four sentences.
- Make your child the star of the story! Make up stories about your child. When using a book to tell a story, pretend the story is about her.
- Use funny gestures, silly voices, and exaggerated facial expressions when telling the story. Make the story entertaining.
- Look for signs that your child wants you to tell her the story again. If your child wants to hear the story again, say “Do you want me to tell you the story again?” Repeat the story as many times as your child seems interested.
- Encourage your child to become part of the storytelling. Ask simple questions and answer them for the child. “Did you like the story about [child's name]? You are a superstar!”
- Your child does not need to understand the story to be part of the storytelling. The idea is to use storytelling to make “talking” and listening fun. Hearing the same words and phrases over and over will get your child's attention.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Does your child get excited when you are about to tell a story?
- Is your child especially attentive to the words and your movements?
- Does your child smile and vocalize as part of hearing the story?

Take a look at more storytelling with infants

All About Me!

Six-month-old Ananda's mother is holding her in her arms in a cuddling position so she can see Mom's face. This has become a favorite position for Ananda to listen to her special story. Mom starts by asking in an exaggerated tone, "How is my big girl doing today?" She continues in lively *Parentese*, "Ananda is so big and so, so strong! Ananda is also sooooo, sooooo, cute!" Mom laughs and asks, "You like your story, don't you?" Then she repeats the story in a sing-song manner with exaggerated facial expressions, "Ananda is so-big, so-strong, and sooooo cute!" Ananda "hangs onto" every word by listening, smiling, vocalizing, and moving about showing how much she likes *her* story.



A Touch of Parentese



Lauren is 8 months old. Her father tells her a story about how much he and Lauren's mom wanted a little girl. "Once upon a time, Mommy and Daddy decided to have a baby." (Lauren looks intently.) "They so hoped it would be a little girl. And guess what?" (He waits for Lauren to respond.) Then Dad continues in *Parentese*, "We got our little Lauren! You are just what we wanted. We are sooooo, sooooo very lucky!" Dad tells the story, but waits at the end of each sentence. He does this so that Lauren can say or do something like vocalize or smile. Whenever she does, Dad responds, "You like your story, don't you?" Lauren has become more and more involved in the story the more she hears it.

Listen Up!

Jamie was diagnosed with a visual impairment when she was 2 months old. She has learned to listen intently to sounds as a way of knowing what is going on around her. Jamie's mother uses her daughter's keen listening skills as part of a storytelling game they play together. Mom holds Jamie on her lap facing her. She starts the story by saying "Once upon a time, Jamie went for a ride with her mommy." Mom holds her daughter on her legs and moves her about. "Jamie listens to everything around her," Mom continues. "What did she hear? A dog?" (Mom says, "Woof.") "A cat?" (Mom says, "Meow.") "A cow?" (Mom asks, "What does the cow say?"). The story continues while Jamie responds to her mom's questions by smiling, vocalizing, and wiggling.

