



Birth–12 Months

Self-Regulation: Self-Control, Concentration, Executive Function

WHEN INTRODUCED: Block 1

BEHAVIORS TO OBSERVE

- Self-control
 - Shows a sign(s) of calming down¹ with caregiver support²
- Concentration
 - Pays attention to an object, person, or activity emphasized by a caregiver
- Executive function
 - Shows a sign(s) of persistent focus in watching, securing, or manipulating an object³

EXAMPLES OF OBSERVATION OPPORTUNITIES

Behaviors may be observed during a care routine, such as a mealtime or a diaper change; playtime; or during a guided activity, including a book sharing. Pertinent ELM activities (Self-Regulation) are cited in parentheses.

Self-control

Shows a sign(s) of calming down with caregiver support⁴

- after engaging in a mildly stimulating activity with a caregiver, such as
 - “Rig-a-Jig-Jig” song (Block 2, Options 1–3) or listening and/or moving to some other lively music (Block 23, Options 1 and 2)
 - *Little Mousie* game (Block 8, Options 1–3)
 - “Pat-a-Cake” rhyme (Block 14, Options 1 and 2)
 - “Itsy Bitsy Spider” rhyme (Block 20, Options 1 and 2)
 - listening to and/or manipulating a sound-making object, such as a rattle (Block 5, Options 1–3)
- after a period of active participation in a playtime or care routine



Concentration

Pays attention to an object, person, or activity emphasized by a caregiver

- an item pointed to or shown and named by a caregiver during a care routine, such as an infant looking at diaper when a caregiver shows and names it. Example: “Here’s your fresh diaper!”
- watching, touching, and/or manipulating an object a caregiver draws attention to, such as a
 - textured toy fish (Block 1, Options 1–3)
 - puppet (Block 7, Options 1 and 2)
 - cup and ball (Block 9, Option 1)
 - toy car (Block 13, Options 1 and 2)
 - soft block(s) (Block 19, Options 1 and 2)
- watching a caregiver make and describe a facial expression (Block 4, Options 1 and 2); imitating the caregiver’s facial expression is also a sign of paying attention
- listening to a novel sound made and described by a caregiver (Block 10, Options 1 and 2); imitating the sound made by the caregiver is also a sign of paying attention
- watching actions shown and described by a caregiver, such as hand clapping (Block 16, Options 1 and 2) or finger play (Block 22, Options 1 and 2); imitating the actions is also a sign of paying attention

Executive function

Shows a sign(s) of persistent focus in watching, securing, or manipulating an object

- moving toward and/or reaching for an appealing toy(s) (Block 6, Option 1 and 2; Block 18, Options 1 and 2; Block 12, Options 1 and 2)
- grasping and/or manipulating a novel toy(s) (Block 12, Option 2), such as small toys in a bucket (Block 15, Options 1 and 2)
- removing small toys from a bucket (Block 15, Option 2) or box (Block 24, Options 1 and 2)
- pulling a scrunchie from a cup (Block 21, Option 2)



EXAMPLES OF FOLLOW-UP LEARNING SUPPORTS

Reintroduce

Self-control

Calming down with caregiver support

- Offer opportunities for an infant to calm down by holding the infant, using a soft voice to indicate it is time to calm down, patting him/her on the back, and/or singing quietly after a mildly stimulating activity. Offer different types of stimulation (one at a time). Possibilities include:
 - singing a song (Block 2, Options 1–3)
 - providing a sound-making object for an infant to explore, such as hand and foot rattles, shakers, and/or bells (Block 17, Options 1 and 2)
 - offering a familiar nursery rhyme with or without finger actions, such as “Itsy Bitsy Spider” (Block 20, Options 1 and 2)

Concentration

Paying attention to an object, person, or activity emphasized by a caregiver

- Provide an appealing object for the infant to hold or a mobile for the infant to look at during a care routine, such as a diaper change.
- Encourage the infant to watch you move an object of interest to the infant. Some possibilities include a toy fish (Block 1), puppet (Block 7), and toy car (Block 13).
- Invite the infant to listen to a silly noise you make (Block 10, Option 1), look at a novel facial expression you make and describe (Block 10, Options 1 and 2), or watch you clap your hands (Block 16, Options 1 and 2). Encourage the infant to imitate the sound, facial expression, or hand actions.

Executive function

Persistent focus in watching, securing, or manipulating an object

- Secure a familiar toy of interest to the infant. Encourage the infant to reach for, move toward, and/or grasp the toy by enthusiastically describing and manipulating the toy (Block 12).
- Repeat an activity option from Block 15 with small toys for the infant to grasp and remove from a container. Provide extra support for this activity by using a see-through and/or larger container.



Reinforce

Self-control

Calming down with caregiver support

- Offer opportunities for an infant to calm down by holding the infant, using a soft voice to indicate it is time to calm down, patting him/her on the back, and/or singing quietly after a mildly stimulating activity. Offer different types of stimulation (one at a time). Possibilities include:
 - a lap song/rhyme or joint play with a stimulating toy of interest to the infant that follows the infant's lead.
 - guided play with a simple musical instrument, such as a small toy piano or drum. You may wish to sing a made up song while the instrument is being played and/or encourage the infant to move to the music. Wind down the activity by phasing in quieter use of the instrument and then transitioning to a calm-down time.

Concentration

Paying attention to an object, person, or activity emphasized by a caregiver

- Engage the infant in a game of imitation during a care routine, such as diaper changing. Example: Make a facial expression and noise in response to a stinky diaper and encourage the infant to also make a face and/or sound.
- Create a mobile with 2–3 items that are of special interest to infants in your room. Hang the mobile in different parts of your room, such as the diaper changing area or play area. Encourage an infant to look at the mobile and make it move by touching it gently. Describe how the infant is looking at the mobile and how the infant made it move.

Executive function

Persistent focus in watching, securing, or manipulating an object

- Offer a basket of appealing toys for an infant to remove from the basket. Describe each toy as the infant removes it from the basket. The infant may wish to play with some of the toys he/she removes from the basket or watch you return the toys to the basket for a repeat of removing the toys.
- Repeat Block 18, Option 2 to provide an older infant with practice in scooting or crawling to reach a desired object.



EXAMPLES OF PORTFOLIO ENTRIES

Josie enjoys all kinds of music in our room. She gets appropriately excited. I have been helping Josie calm down after listening to music by holding her in my arms and quietly humming a song to her. She responds well to these supports. She breathes slower and relaxes her muscles. I will continue to offer comfort to Josie so she learns how to calm down after getting excited.

Samuel is having fun imitating a facial expression I make. This is good practice in learning to pay attention. He watches my face carefully and then moves his own face when I ask him to "make a face!" I will provide more opportunities for Samuel to pay attention to and imitate facial expressions. When he seems ready, I will make a silly sound that he might want to imitate.

Endnotes

- 1 Signs of calming down include: (1) breathing slower, (2) relaxing muscles, (3) moving arms or legs or other part of body at a slower pace, and (4) reducing the frequency and/or volume of excited utterances.
- 2 Caregiver support may include holding the infant, patting the infant on the back, or using a soothing voice to tell the infant it is time to calm down and/or to quietly sing a familiar song.
- 3 Signs of persistent focus may include: (1) keeping eyes focused on an object(s), including watching a caregiver manipulate an object(s); (2) moving toward, reaching for, or grasping an object(s), including a repeated move, reach, or grasp if an initial attempt to secure an object(s) does not work; or (3) moving an object(s) in a way that suggests the infant has a plan, such as removing toys from a bucket.
- 4 Infants are not expected to calm down on their own; caregiver help is needed. See Endnote 1 for signs of calming down and Endnote 2 for types of caregiver help in calming down.