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PACIFIC PARENTING TOOLKIT

MODULE 0: FOUNDATIONAL PARENTING KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE

1. Introduction

Module 0 is a cross-cutting, foundational module that provides a shared starting point for parenting support across all thematic areas of the Pacific Parenting Toolkit. It is designed for implementing partners, government counterparts, and other stakeholders who plan and deliver parenting support programmes and activities. The module helps ensure that parent support initiatives are designed, sequenced, and integrated in a consistent way across sectors such as child protection, health, nutrition, hygiene, and education.

The module was developed in response to consistent feedback from stakeholders across the Pacific. Many noted the need for a common foundation before introducing more specialised parenting content. Stakeholders also highlighted that parents and caregivers often need support to understand children’s development across different stages of life. They may also need guidance on establishing healthy daily routines and responding to challenges such as children’s behaviour, mental health concerns, and the growing influence of digital environments, especially as children grow beyond early childhood.

Module 0 is organised into four interrelated sub-topics:

- **Child Development:** Including developmental stages, age-appropriate parenting and adolescent development.
- **Supporting Gender Equality in Caregiving Responsibilities:** Including why male engagement matters and evidence informed approaches.
- **Healthy Daily Routines and Behaviours:** Including routines, physical activity, and sleep.
- **Social, Emotional, and Digital well-being:** Including mental health, emotional support, and managing screen time.

After these topics, there are 2 supporting sections:

- **Facilitator Activities:** Includes example activities that facilitators can use with parents and caregivers to support some of the skills covered in this module.
- **Annexes:**
 - **Programmes from the Region:** A table listing programmes from the Pacific and other parts of the world that can be reviewed and adapted to further support the development of skills for parents and caregivers.
 - **Facilitator Checklist:** A simple checklist per skill designed to support facilitators in preparing for and delivering the content related to foundational parenting knowledge and practice.

Module 0 is designed to be delivered first, before the other thematic modules in the Pacific Parenting Toolkit. It introduces core parenting concepts and skills that are

relevant across different programme areas. This helps reduce duplication, reinforce consistent messages, and strengthen the impact of later sector-specific interventions.

The module follows a **life-course approach** to parenting. This means recognising that children’s developmental needs change as they grow. It also recognises that the roles of parents and caregivers, and the environments in which children grow up, change over time. Parent support programmes and activities should pull the relevant content applicable to the parents and caregivers they are supporting and the age of the children they would like support with.

2. Child Development

Background

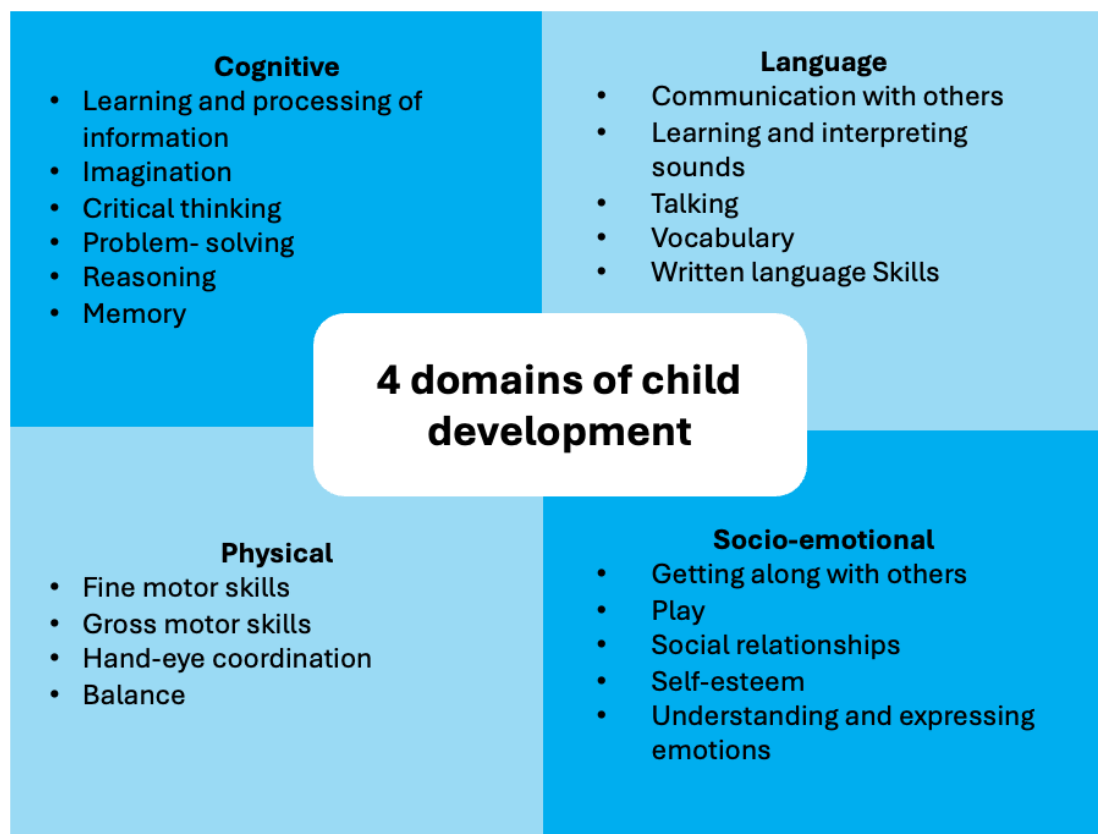


Figure 1. Four domains of child development. *Adapted from: Yale University. (1)*

Child development refers to the process through which children acquire **physical, cognitive, language, and socio-emotional capacities** from conception through adolescence. It is a dynamic and cumulative process shaped by children's interactions with their parents and caregivers, environments, and broader systems over time.

In line with the Nurturing Care Framework, child development is understood as continuous, holistic, and highly sensitive to experience, particularly in the early years, but extending across the full life course. Early brain development lays the foundation for children's learning, behaviour, emotional regulation, and social relationships. As children grow into later childhood and adolescence, development continues to build on these early foundations. During these stages, children keep learning, develop their sense of identity, and gain greater independence. (2)

Development across domains is interconnected. Children's physical health supports learning and participation; responsive caregiving supports emotional regulation and social competence; and opportunities for learning strengthen cognitive and language development. When nurturing care is consistent across these domains, children are more likely to survive, thrive, and reach their full potential. (2)

When does Child Development start?

Child development starts from conception, and the prenatal period is one of high vulnerability for unborn babies. (3) Early brain development begins during pregnancy. This means that maternal well-being is very important. Good nutrition, access to health care, and adequate rest during pregnancy all support healthy development. Preparing for the care of a newborn is also an important part of this stage.

Early attachment is also critical for positive child development. This is especially important during the first two years of life, but strong and supportive relationships between parents and caregivers and children continue to matter throughout childhood and beyond. (4) During the early years children develop internal models of safety, trust, and relationships based on parent and caregiver responsiveness and emotional availability. (2) Certain factors can reduce emotional availability, including exposure to violence, parent/caregiver stress, parent/caregiver distraction due to mobile phone use or other demands.

Understanding child development helps parents and caregivers, service providers, and systems respond to children's changing needs. It also helps them recognise developmental concerns early and connect families to timely support. Early action is important, as many developmental delays and risks can be reduced when support is provided quickly.

Box 1. Perinatal Maternal Depression:

Mothers may suffer from perinatal depression either during pregnancy (antenatal) or after birth (postnatal). Perinatal depression can affect both the mother and the baby. A mother experiencing depression may struggle to care for herself, including basic tasks such as eating well or bathing. (5) This can create risks for both the mother and the baby. During pregnancy, depression is linked to outcomes such as low birth weight and pre-term birth. After birth, it can affect bonding and attachment between the mother and the baby. This may increase the risk of developmental delays, lower cognitive development, and emotional or behavioural difficulties later in childhood. Supporting mothers during pregnancy and after birth is therefore very important. Recognising early signs of depression and ensuring that the mother receives support as soon as possible can reduce risks and improve outcomes for both the mother and the baby. (6)

Key Developmental Stages

According to the Nurturing Care Framework and in line with UNICEF Parenting Guidance, for programming and planning purposes, child development is commonly described across three broad stages:

- **Early Childhood (approximately 0–5 years):** From pregnancy or birth through entry into primary school. This period includes infancy (0–2 years) and the preschool years (2–5 years) and is characterised by rapid brain development and high sensitivity to caregiving, nutrition, health, stimulation, and protection.
- **Middle Childhood (approximately 6–10 years):** A critical, often overlooked period that marks a transition from early childhood to adolescence, focusing on school-aged development, social skill refinement, and physical growth. Children develop increased abilities in planning, self-regulation, and establishing social relationships outside the family unit.
- **Adolescence (approximately 11–18 years):** A phase of accelerated physical, cognitive, and socio-emotional development associated with puberty, identity formation, and the transition to adulthood. Adolescence is often divided into early (11–14 years) and late (15–18 years) stages to reflect differing developmental needs and risks.

These age ranges are indicative. Children may experience developmental changes earlier or later than peers. (6) What is most important is that parents and caregivers are supported to understand their child's individual development, recognise signs of concern, and access appropriate advice and services when needed.

Understanding Developmental Stages

Understanding developmental stages enables parents and caregivers to respond to children in ways that are appropriate to their age, abilities, and level of development. Because children grow at different rates, knowledge of typical developmental patterns and milestones helps parents and caregivers set realistic expectations, provide age-appropriate stimulation and guidance, and recognise when additional support may be needed. This, in turn, supports positive learning, behaviour, and well-being from early childhood through adolescence.

This understanding also helps them notice developmental concerns early and seek support. Early referral to services is important, as many developmental challenges can be reduced with timely and coordinated support.

Box 2. Programming across the Pacific:

Several initiatives already integrate developmental-stage guidance into parenting and early childhood support across Pacific countries. For example, Parents as Educators in the Republic of the Marshall Islands uses home visits to help parents and caregivers monitor milestones and support learning at home. In Vanuatu, the Parenting Support Programme (PSP) incorporates disability-sensitive developmental screening and referral, and Tonga's Early Intervention Programme supports parents and caregivers of young children with physical disabilities through home-based services.



See Activity 1 at the end of this module for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on developmental stages

Developmental Milestones: A Quick Guide

Developmental milestones describe the skills and behaviours that most children develop at different ages. Children grow and learn at their own pace, but milestones help parents and caregivers understand what is generally expected and notice when a child may need additional support.

Most children reach milestones naturally, often with encouragement and support. When delays occur, early identification and timely support through appropriate intervention programmes are critical and can significantly improve outcomes. Below are milestones

drawn from UNICEF guidance to support awareness and help parents and caregivers know when to seek advice. (7)

Table M0.1: Child Development Milestones

Age Stage	Physical Development	Cognitive & Language	Social & Emotional	Key Caregiver Supports
Under 2 years	Rolling, crawling, standing, walking	Babbles, first words, pointing, exploration	Smiles, responds to parents and caregivers, shows affection	Talk, sing, play, nutritious feeding, safety
Up to 5 years	Running, jumping, climbing, drawing	Simple speech, questions, pretend play	Plays with others, understands emotions	Play-based learning, routines, encouragement, safety
Middle Childhood (6-11)	Strength, coordination, early puberty for some	Reading, planning, problem-solving	Friendships, emotional awareness	Support learning, listen, guide behaviour, safety
Adolescence (11-18)	Puberty, growth spurts, body changes	Abstract thinking, decision-making	Identity formation, peer bonds	Open communication, guidance, safety

What this Means for Parenting Support

To ensure parenting programmes respond to children’s needs at different stages of development and support early identification and referral when concerns arise, programmes should:

- **Take a Life-Course Focus**
 - Parenting content addresses early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence
 - Developmental stages are presented as indicative, recognising individual variation
 - Programming avoids an exclusive focus on early childhood
- **Improve Parent and Caregiver Knowledge and Skills**

- Parents and caregivers are supported to set age-appropriate expectations
- Guidance promotes responsive caregiving, play, communication, and daily routines
- Activities are practical, low-cost, and adaptable to home and community contexts
- **Encourage Early Identification and Referral**
 - Parents and caregivers are supported to recognise signs of developmental delay or concern as early as possible, to help children reach their full potential
 - Clear referral pathways to health, education, disability, or specialist services are included
 - Approaches are disability-inclusive and reduce stigma
- **Integrate Delivery and System Integration**
 - Messages are reinforced across health, education, community, and faith-based platforms
 - Facilitators are trained to provide consistent developmental guidance and referrals
 - Parenting content is aligned with existing services and national systems

Programme principle: Parenting programmes are most effective when they help parents and caregivers understand *how children develop, what to expect at different stages, and when and how to seek support* across the entire life course.

Adolescent Development

Adolescence is a period of rapid physical, cognitive, emotional, and social change, marked by puberty, growing independence, and the formation of identity. During this stage, young people develop more advanced problem-solving and decision-making skills, place greater importance on peer relationships, and begin to negotiate new roles within their families and communities. During this stage adolescents also go through normative changes. These may include seeking more independence, stronger emotions, questioning rules, and sometimes behaving in ways that seem out of character. Understanding adolescent development helps parents and caregivers interpret these behaviours more constructively, respond with patience, and support young people in ways that balance guidance with increasing autonomy. (8,9)

Supportive caregiving during adolescence is critical for building resilience, self-confidence, and healthy relationships. When parents and caregivers are equipped to understand developmental changes and respond with empathy, clear communication, and consistent boundaries, adolescents are better able to manage emotions, navigate risks, and remain engaged in learning and community life. This support lays the foundation for positive transitions into adulthood. (8)

Box 3. Across the Pacific:

Several parenting and youth-focused programmes integrate adolescent development into their design. Yut Rise Up in Vanuatu strengthens life skills, leadership, and positive relationships among adolescents, while Hametin Familia in Timor-Leste supports parents and caregivers to communicate effectively with their teenage children. Beyond the Pacific, Parenting for Lifelong Health (PLH) Teens, implemented in multiple countries, demonstrates improvements in caregiver-adolescent communication, reductions in harsh discipline, and strengthened family relationships. These programmes highlight the importance of addressing adolescent development as part of broader parenting support.

In practice, parenting programmes can support adolescent development by helping parents and caregivers understand the physical, emotional, and social changes associated with puberty and identity formation, and by strengthening skills for positive communication, guidance, and shared decision-making. Programmes should support parents and caregivers to balance autonomy and boundaries, reinforce non-violent and supportive responses to risk-taking behaviour, and encourage adolescents' participation in family and community life. (10)

Effective implementation requires coordination across sectors. Women and children's centres, child protection and social services can support families to address safety concerns and guide parents and caregivers in responding to risks in supportive, non-punitive ways. Health and adolescent friendly health services, including youth-friendly clinics and community health workers, play a key role in supporting parents and caregivers with information on puberty, mental health, nutrition, and sexual and reproductive health, as well as providing referral pathways when additional support is needed.

Box 4. Teenage Mothers

Given the high rates of teenage pregnancy, exploring opportunities to support adolescent mothers is critical to address stigma and discrimination, and ensure that teenage mothers have the support needed for themselves and their baby. The Programme for Young Parents in Tuvalu and the Bright Futures for Young Mothers Programme in Nauru are two programmes specifically designed to support adolescent mothers, offering support and guidance for themselves and the care of their young children.

What this Means for Parent Support Programmes

To effectively support parents and caregivers of adolescents, where applicable to the delivery pathways, parent support programmes should:

- Include adolescence explicitly, rather than ending support in early or middle childhood
- Strengthen the skills of parents and caregivers in communication, listening, and empathy, and recognising adolescents' growing need for autonomy
- Support parents and caregivers to balance guidance and boundaries, particularly around risk-taking behaviours, peer relationships, and digital environments
- Promote non-violent, collaborative responses to conflict and behaviour challenges
- Reinforce adolescents' positive identity, self-worth, and resilience, including respect for culture, gender, and diversity
- Link parents and caregivers to youth-friendly health, protection, and social services, with clear referral pathways
- Encourage cross-sector collaboration between parenting programmes, schools, health services, and child protection systems

Programme principle: Parenting support during adolescence is most effective when it equips parents and caregivers to stay connected, guide positively, and support young people's safe transition to adulthood.

3. Supporting Gender Equality and Sharing of Caregiving Responsibilities

Background

Engaging male caregivers, including fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, and other male guardians, is critical to improving child well-being and strengthening family relationships. Evidence consistently shows that when men are positively involved in caregiving, children experience better developmental, educational, and health outcomes, and families report stronger relationships and reduced levels of violence.(11) In the Pacific, caregiving roles are often shaped by gender norms. Women are usually seen as the main caregivers, while men are often expected to be authority figures or economic providers. While many men are deeply committed to their families, social expectations, work patterns, and limited exposure to parenting support can constrain their involvement in daily caregiving. As a result, parenting interventions that do not intentionally engage men risk reinforcing existing gender roles and missing a key opportunity for change.

Parenting support initiatives that actively include male caregivers can contribute to:

- More equitable sharing of caregiving responsibilities
- Improved caregiver communication and co-parenting
- Reduced use of violent discipline and greater emotional support for children
- Positive shifts in gender norms that benefit both women and men and children

Evidence-Informed Resources and Approaches

A growing body of global and regional programming provides practical guidance on engaging male caregivers effectively:

- **UNICEF & WHO parenting and violence-prevention guidance** emphasises fathers' involvement as a protective factor for children and women. (12,13)
- **Men's behaviour change and fatherhood programmes** in the Pacific and comparable contexts show that safe, facilitated spaces for men can support reflection on masculinity, caregiving, and non-violent relationships. (15,16).
- **Faith-based and community-led initiatives** across the Pacific highlight the effectiveness of working with trusted male leaders to model positive caregiving. Effective approaches share common features: culturally grounded, non-judgemental, practical, framed around men's roles as caregivers, protectors, and positive role models.



See Activity 2 at the end of this module for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on engaging male caregivers.

4. Healthy Daily Routines and Behaviours

Background

Healthy daily routines and behaviours are foundational to children’s physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development across the life course. Consistent routines, regular physical activity, and adequate, good-quality sleep contribute to children’s sense of safety and predictability, which in turn supports learning, emotional regulation, and positive behaviour. (2)

In early childhood, stable routines and responsive caregiving support rapid brain development and help establish patterns that influence health and development over time.

During middle childhood, daily routines such as regular sleep, active play, and structured time for learning support concentration, school engagement, and the development of self-regulation. (2)

In adolescence, healthy routines play a critical role in promoting mental well-being, managing stress, and reducing risks associated with poor sleep, physical inactivity, and unhealthy behaviours. (8)



Disability Considerations: Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

In some cases where children display non-typical behaviours or behaviours of concern, especially in children with ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder), constancy of routine is crucial to support the child’s development, or to regulate/deescalate behaviours of concern. Seeking additional specialised support for parents and caregivers is important, including identifying local support networks.

From a nurturing care perspective, daily routines provide a practical entry point for parents and caregivers to support children’s development through everyday interactions. When parents and caregivers are supported to establish routines that are realistic, culturally appropriate, and responsive to children’s changing needs, they are better able to promote healthy habits, strengthen parent/caregiver–child relationships, and support children’s growing independence.

This section of Module 0 provides guidance and practical skills to help implementers strengthen the ability of parents and caregivers to support healthy daily routines at

different stages of a child's development. It focuses on routines, physical activity, and sleep as connected parts of children's daily lives. Together, these behaviours support children's well-being and healthy development into adolescence and adulthood.

What this Means for Parent Support Programmes and Activities

To effectively support healthy daily routines and behaviours for children and families, parenting programmes and activities should:

- Involve children in discussing and agreeing on establishing daily routines and household guidelines in a developmentally appropriate way and engage them in progressively taking on more responsibility for following them
- Promote consistent, predictable routines that support children's sense of safety and emotional regulation
- Link routines to rule setting
- Recognise that routines evolve as children grow
- Support parents and caregivers to encourage regular physical activity that is age-appropriate, inclusive, and culturally relevant
- Emphasise the importance of bedtime routines and adequate, good-quality sleep for learning, behaviour, and mental well-being
- Reinforce routines as opportunities for positive parent/caregiver-child interaction, relationship-building, and reinforcing safety
- Address common barriers such as time constraints, household stress, and changing work patterns with practical, realistic strategies
- Support parents and caregivers to help children with disabilities, such as ASD, to navigate through the day

Programme principle: Parent support programmes and activities are most effective when they support parents and caregivers to build routines with their children through everyday practices that are achievable, culturally grounded, and responsive to children's changing needs across the life course.

Establishing Healthy Daily Routines

Parents and caregivers play a central role in shaping daily routines. Through modelling behaviours, reinforcing consistent patterns, and gradually encouraging autonomy, parents and caregivers help children develop habits that contribute to lifelong health. Engaging and agreeing daily routines with children in a developmentally appropriate way promotes communication and encourages ownership of the agreed routines.

Box 5. Family time

In many households across the Pacific, family prayer or devotion time and shared meals are important traditions. These moments give children a chance to talk and share openly with their families. Sustaining and strengthening this time, especially in today's busy world, is an important part of family routines.

Across the Pacific, a range of programmes and activities already integrate routine-setting into parenting, health, and education initiatives. Nutrition-focused programmes, such as the ANCP Nutrition Project in Solomon Islands and Kiribati, support parents and caregivers to reinforce healthy eating practices in the household. In Fiji, Health Promotion in Schools encourages collaboration between teachers and parents/caregivers to promote healthy lifestyles, including nutritious meals. Physical activity is supported through school-based physical education and community sports initiatives, such as Get Into Rugby Now in Vanuatu and Samoa, and Physical Education in Schools in the Republic of the Marshall Islands. Community-based initiatives, including Health Champions in Kiribati, promote healthy routines as part of broader efforts to prevent non-communicable diseases and strengthen community well-being.

In practice, parent support programmes and activities can support healthy routines by helping parents and caregivers plan and structure daily activities in ways that are realistic, culturally appropriate, and responsive to children's developmental stages. This includes guidance on planning meals and active play, establishing consistent sleep and hygiene routines, and integrating healthy habits into everyday family life. Routines help children understand what is expected of them during the day. They help children feel prepared and supported and give them a chance to share any worries or concerns before situations arise. Programmes and other parent support activities should reinforce positive, non-punitive approaches to guidance and discipline, linking routine-setting with skills covered in the child protection and safety module, and align with sector-specific guidance in the nutrition and hygiene modules.

Effective implementation benefits from multi-sectoral collaboration. Schools, early childhood centres, youth groups, parent-teacher associations, community groups, and faith-based organisations all provide entry points to reinforce routine-related messages and support parents and caregivers in applying them consistently across settings.



See Activity 3 at the end of this module for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on building healthy daily routines.

Routines for Learning

Children learn best when daily life is predictable and supportive. Consistent routines help children feel safe, reduce stress, and improve concentration, behaviour, and engagement in learning. Clear routines also support regular school attendance, which is essential for learning progress, confidence, and social development. (16)

Routines for learning are important across the life course:

In early childhood, regular nap and awake times, predictable meals and regular activities help children know what to expect and be ready for engaging activities as they learn through play and adult interaction.

In middle childhood, predictable schedules for waking, meals, play, and rest help children arrive at school calm and ready to learn.

During adolescence, routines continue to support learning by providing structure, clear expectations, and stability as young people navigate increasing academic demands and independence. Routines are particularly important during periods of change or disruption, such as school transitions, family stress, or emergencies, when children may struggle to stay engaged in learning. (17)

Parent support programmes and activities can strengthen routines for learning by supporting parents and caregivers to establish calm morning and bedtime routines, plan ahead for school days, and create structured but flexible home environments. Simple strategies, like preparing uniforms and school materials in advance and keeping consistent wake-up times, help children understand what is expected and take part more independently. Programmes and activities should also help parents and caregivers deal with common challenges to attendance and learning, such as tiredness, stress, weather or transport problems, and low motivation.

Coordination across sectors strengthens implementation. Health workers can reinforce guidance on sleep, nutrition, and daily routines that support concentration and behaviour, while disaster and resilience actors can support families in re-establishing routines and school attendance following disruptions.



See Activity 4 at the end of this module for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on involving children in building daily learning routines.

Encouraging Regular Physical Activity

Regular physical activity is essential for healthy growth, development, and well-being across the life course. (18) Movement supports children's physical health, brain development, emotional well-being, and social skills, while also contributing to healthy weight and the prevention of non-communicable diseases. (19) During pregnancy, safe and appropriate physical activity supports maternal health, energy, and preparation for childbirth.



For more information on exercise and pregnancy see Module 2: Health and well-being: Pregnancy: Skill 6: Maintaining Safe and Moderate Physical Activity During Pregnancy

Physical activity plays an important role at every developmental stage:

In early childhood, active play supports motor development, coordination, learning, and social interaction.

During middle childhood, regular movement improves concentration, memory, emotional regulation, and confidence, while participation in games and sports strengthens peer relationships.

Adolescence represents a second critical window for growth; physical activity supports mental health, healthy weight, resilience, and the development of lifelong healthy habits. (20)

Box 6. Physical Activity vs Sports

Physical activity is not just sports. In many Pacific contexts, parents and caregivers may think it only includes games like football or rugby. But physical activity also means playing and moving together with children, like jumping, skipping, dancing or throwing and catching a ball. These activities help children develop social, emotional, and communication skills.

Parents and caregivers strongly influence children's activity patterns through role modelling, encouragement, and by making movement a regular part of daily routines. When physical activity is enjoyable and integrated into everyday family life, children and adolescents are more likely to remain active as they grow.

Across the Pacific, schools, communities, and sports programmes already promote physical activity among children and adolescents. Initiatives such as Get Into Rugby Now in Vanuatu and Samoa demonstrate how organised sport can build physical health, teamwork, and confidence. Traditional games, dances, fishing, gardening, and community activities also provide accessible and culturally meaningful opportunities for regular movement.

Parent support programmes and activities can support physical engagement by encouraging daily movement alongside healthy eating, promoting age-appropriate and inclusive activities, and reinforcing that physical activity does not require special equipment. Linking physical activity to family routines and community life helps parents and caregivers sustain active behaviours across childhood and adolescence.



See Activity 5 at the end of this module for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on the Family “Move-It” Challenge.

Supporting Children to Get Enough Good-Quality Sleep

Sleep is essential for children’s physical health, brain development, emotional well-being, and learning across the life course. (19) During sleep, children’s brains consolidate learning, regulate emotions, and restore energy, while the body supports growth, immune function, and overall health. When children do not get enough good-quality sleep, they are more likely to experience irritability, difficulty concentrating, behaviour challenges, and poorer school performance. (21)

Sleep needs and patterns change as children grow:

Babies and young children require the most sleep, often including daytime naps, which support both resting and recovering energy as well as supporting healthy brain development. (22)

By middle childhood, children will sleep through the night, sometimes up to 10 or 12 hours depending on the child and no longer require day-time naps. (23)

Adolescents experience a natural shift in their body clock that makes falling asleep earlier more difficult; however, adequate sleep remains critical for mental health, attention, and academic engagement. (24) Understanding these developmental changes helps parents and caregivers respond with realistic expectations and supportive routines.

Across the Pacific, health and education services commonly identify sleep as a concern linked to learning, behaviour, and well-being. Guidance on sleep is routinely provided through maternal and child health services, early childhood programmes, and school

health initiatives, and is increasingly recognised as important for adolescents. Parent support programmes and activities that address sleep complement broader efforts related to nutrition, mental health, and positive discipline.

In practice, parent support programmes and activities can support good-quality sleep by helping parents and caregivers establish calm, predictable bedtime routines, maintain regular sleep and wake times, and reduce stimulating activities – particularly screen use – before bedtime. Consistent messaging across health, education, and community platforms reinforces sleep as a foundation for children’s development and well-being.



See Activity 6 at the end of this module for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on creating a calm bedtime routine.

5. Social, Emotional & Digital well-being

Background

Supporting children's social, emotional, and digital well-being is essential for their overall development and lifelong resilience. Helping children manage emotions, build positive relationships, and develop coping skills lays the foundation for mental health and healthy social interactions across the life course. In today's digital world, guiding children to use screens safely and setting clear boundaries helps them balance online activities with physical play, rest, and family time.

This section of Module 0 provides practical strategies to support emotional well-being and manage digital use in ways that promote healthy child development, positive routines, and strong, nurturing relationships.

Supporting Mental Health and Emotional well-being

When children feel safe, supported, and valued, they are better able to regulate emotions, engage with peers, and cope with challenges. Emotional well-being is closely linked to identity, belonging, and self-confidence, which are factors that are particularly important during middle childhood and adolescence. (25).

In early childhood, consistent, loving interactions with parents and caregivers, safe and nurturing environments, and opportunities for early learning and play, young children build secure attachments and emotional regulation. (26)

During middle childhood, safe and supportive environments, positive relationships with caregivers and peers, and opportunities to build social and emotional skills such as coping, problem-solving, and self-esteem help children develop resilience and emotional well-being during these years. (27)

Adolescents need continued support that builds on the foundations from middle childhood, including safe and supportive relationships environments, positive and nurturing relationships with parents and caregivers respecting their growing independence while always being there to support and guide, and positive interactions with peers. (28)

Parents and caregivers play a central role in supporting children's mental health and social and emotional development. Positive communication, active listening, and consistent, caring guidance help children recognise and express emotions, manage stress, and solve problems. Parenting approaches that promote emotional regulation and open dialogue are associated with improved psychosocial outcomes, reduced risk of mental health difficulties, and stronger family relationships, especially during adolescence and periods of stress or change. (8)

Across the Pacific, social and emotional learning is increasingly integrated into parenting, education, and family support initiatives. Early childhood curricula such as Te Kura Api'i Tamariki Potiki in the Cook Islands emphasise emotional development from an early age. In Vanuatu, programmes such as Blossom Family Life Education and Yut Rise Up support parents and caregivers to strengthen communication and emotional connection with children and adolescents. In Fiji, counselling and family support services delivered through NGOs, churches, and health providers, including initiatives linked to Vuli Taumada Shishak, provide psychosocial support to families facing stress, trauma, or additional needs.

Parent support programmes and activities can strengthen the capacity of parents and caregivers to provide safe, nurturing relationships that support emotional awareness, coping skills, and positive identity development. Programmes and activities should also support parents and caregivers to recognise early signs of emotional distress and know when and how to seek additional support.



See Activity 7 at the end of this module for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on talking about feelings.

Managing Screen Time and Setting Boundaries

Digital technology is now part of everyday life for children and families. Screens can support learning, communication, and connection, but excessive or unregulated screen use can undermine children's development, well-being, and relationships. Evidence shows (29, 30) that when screen time replaces face-to-face interaction, play, sleep, and daily routines, children are at increased risk of delayed language development, attention difficulties, reduced physical activity, and challenges in social and emotional learning. For older children and adolescents, unmonitored online use can expose them to misinformation, cyberbullying, harmful content, and social pressure that affect mental health and behaviour.

The impact of screen use differs across the life course:

In early childhood, learning depends on direct interaction with parents and caregivers; screens should not replace responsive caregiving, play, or conversation. (23)

In middle childhood, children increasingly use screens for learning and entertainment, making clear boundaries is essential to balance screen use with physical activity, creativity, and social interaction. (19)

During adolescence, young people spend more time online and make more independent choices; supportive guidance, shared expectations, and open

conversations are critical to promote safe, responsible, and balanced digital engagement. (31)

The effects of social media on adolescent mental health and safety are an ongoing discussion amongst policy makers and legislators globally. While no legislation currently exists in the Pacific, or elsewhere, on social media use for children under 16 and there are ongoing discussions around the effectiveness of age restrictions, (32) parents and caregivers can support their adolescents by monitoring the amount of time spent on social media, maintaining open communication about what adolescents are seeing online, and who they might be ‘following’ or engaging with. For further guidance on managing online risks see below.



For more information see Module 1: Child Protection and Safety: Adolescence: Skill 2: Managing Risk and Online Safety and Activity 15.

WHO guidance (33) provides a clear foundation for age-appropriate screen use:

- Under 2 years: No screen time recommended
- 2–4 years: No more than 1 hour per day, less is better
- 5 years and older: Emphasis on balancing screen use with sleep, physical activity, learning, and relationships.

Parents and caregivers play a central role in shaping children’s digital habits. Setting clear, age-appropriate limits; choosing high-quality, interactive content; and talking with children about what they see online help reduce risks and strengthen learning. Modelling balanced technology use is especially important, as children learn digital habits by observing adults. Managing screen time is not only about limits, but also about building healthy routines, self-regulation, digital literacy, and social-emotional skills that support well-being across childhood and adolescence.

Parent support activities and programmes can help parents and caregivers by reinforcing screen-time guidance alongside alternatives that strengthen connection and cultural identity. In Pacific contexts, family meals, storytelling, fishing, farming, traditional games, sports, celebrations, and shared responsibilities provide meaningful, developmentally rich alternatives to screen use.

Key principle: Healthy screen use supports children best when it is balanced, guided, and grounded in strong relationships and daily routines.



See Activity 8 at the end of this module for a facilitator-led activity to do with parents and caregivers on setting family screen rules.



Activities for Facilitators

Activity 1: Understanding Child Development

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers understand how children develop over time, recognise age-appropriate skills, and identify simple ways to support development at home.

Who this is for: Parents and caregivers of children of different ages. Suitable for community groups, churches, and home visits.

Time: 15–20 minutes

How to run the activity

1. **Ask parents and caregivers to share their aspirations for their children (5 minutes)**

Briefly ask parents and caregivers to share what they dream for their children's future. Most parents and caregivers want the best for their children. Reminding them of this can help set the stage for a discussion on how to support positive child development.

2. **Explain child development (5 minutes)**

Briefly explain that children develop across different but connected areas – movement, thinking, language, and emotions – and that every child develops at their own pace.

3. **Explain how the brain grows (10 Minutes)**

Use pictures and diagrams (see below) of brain development to show how the brain develops in the early years, emphasising that the brain grows well with positive experiences. Use the diagram below to show how the brain grows and ask them to guess how old the middle balloon/ball is. Explain that the brain grows most quickly in the first 5 years of life.

4. **Understand child development (5–10 minutes)**

Ask parents and caregivers to:

- Find their child's age group (early childhood, middle childhood, adolescence)
- Identify one skill their child is already learning
- Notice one area they would like to support more



Disability adaptation considerations

Children with disabilities may not follow the same development trajectory or timeline. Parents and caregivers should identify as soon as possible if their children are not reaching key developmental milestones and be referred to specialised support services.

5. Choose one activity to try (5 minutes)

Parents and caregivers choose one simple activity to practise at home this week (e.g. talking, playing, reading, helping with chores).

6. Observe and seek support

Encourage parents and caregivers to observe their child and to talk with a facilitator, health worker, or teacher if they have concerns.

Key message: Everyday interactions such as play, talking, routines, and relationships support child development.

How the brain grows

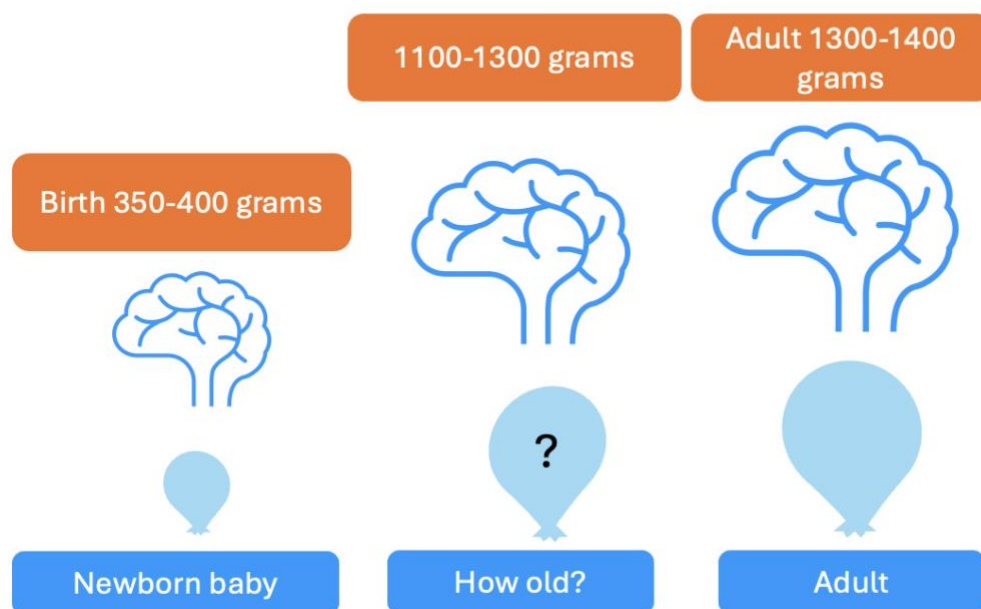


Figure 2. How the Brain Goes? *Adapted from:* Parenting for Child Development (P4CD) programme, Papua New Guinea (UNICEF and ELC-PNG) (34).

Activity 2: Engaging Male Caregivers in Positive Parenting

Purpose: To strengthen father and male caregivers' understanding of their role in children's development and encourage practical, positive involvement in everyday caregiving.

Who this is for: Fathers, stepfathers, grandfathers, uncles, and other male caregivers. This activity will need to be delivered to male-only groups to support open communication and reflection. Male facilitators are also better placed to lead this activity. For further information on how to engage male caregivers see **chapter 3 section 3.4** and **chapter 4, section 4.6**.

Time: 60–90 minutes

How to run the activity

- 1. Reflect on caregiving roles (15 minutes)**
Invite participants to reflect on the role men played in their own childhoods and how expectations of men's caregiving roles are changing.
- 2. Why male caregivers matter (15 minutes)**
Discuss how men's involvement supports children's emotional well-being, learning, behaviour, and safety across different developmental stages.
- 3. Practical actions men can take (20 minutes)**
Identify everyday caregiving actions such as play, talking, helping with routines, attending school or health visits, and using calm, non-violent guidance.
- 4. Barriers and solutions (15 minutes)**
Explore common barriers to male involvement (e.g. time, norms, confidence) and practical ways to overcome them.
- 5. Commitment to action (5 minutes)**
Each participant identifies one caregiving action they will try before the next session.

Key messages

- Positive caregiving by men benefits children, partners, and families
- Care, protection, and guidance are strengths
- Small, consistent actions make a difference

Implementation tips

- Use respected male facilitators or role models where possible
- Schedule sessions to fit work patterns
- Keep discussions practical, non-judgemental, inclusive and culturally grounded

Activity 3: Building Healthy Daily Routines

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers establish healthy daily routines with their children by breaking routines into manageable steps and by using positive, age-appropriate guidance.

Time: 30–45 minutes

How to run the activity

1. **Choose a routine:** Parents and caregivers select a routine from everyday family life (e.g. mealtimes, getting ready for school, hygiene, bedtime).
2. **Break it down:** Support parents and caregivers to break the routine into small, clear steps that match their child’s age and abilities.
3. **Guide positively:** Practise involving children in establishing routines and using encouragement, reassurance, and praise rather than correction or punishment.
4. **Adapt to the family:** Discuss how the routine can fit the child’s pace, household schedule, and cultural practices.

Key messages to reinforce

- Focus on learning, not perfection
- Include your child in creating the routine in a way that fits their age.
- Go at the child’s pace and repeat steps as needed
- Praise effort and participation
- Start with one routine and build gradually



Disability adaptation considerations

For parents of children with disabilities, explore different ways to engage children in establishing routines that meet children’s needs and align with evolving capacities. For some children, especially those with ASD, routines are often essential components for managing behaviour and reducing stress.

Implementation tips

- Use locally relevant examples
- Link routines to guidance on nutrition, hygiene, and positive discipline
- Encourage parents and caregivers to practise the routine at home before the next session

Activity 4: Our Daily Learning Routine

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers strengthen simple daily routines that support learning, calm transitions, and regular school attendance.

Time: 20–30 minutes

Steps

1. **Map the routine**

Parents and caregivers briefly draw or list their child's typical weekday routine, focusing on mornings and evenings.

2. **Spot the stress**

Identify one or two moments that feel rushed or difficult (e.g. getting ready for school, homework time, bedtime).

3. **Choose one small change**

Parents and caregivers select one simple adjustment to try (e.g. preparing uniforms the night before, setting a regular bedtime, creating a short homework routine).

4. **Create a visual reminder**

Parents and caregivers develop a simple visual cue (drawing, symbols, or words) to help children follow the routine more independently.

5. **Try it at home**

Parents and caregivers commit to practising the routine consistently for one week. Encourage parents and caregivers to involve their children in the proposed adjustment, discussing how they will apply it and maintain it together.

Key messages for caregivers

- Small, realistic changes matter
- Predictable routines support learning and behaviour
- Progress is more important than perfection

Follow-up: At the next session or visit, discuss what worked, what was challenging, and whether the routine needs adjusting.

Activity 5: Family “Move-It” Challenge

Purpose: To support parents and caregivers to promote regular physical activity for children and adolescents while modelling active behaviour themselves.



Disability adaptation considerations

Parents and caregivers of children with disabilities should adapt physical activities in line with their children’s abilities, remembering that time spent outside is important for children’s health, even for children with physical disabilities and observing other children play and move can be part of their daily routine.

Time: 30–45 minutes

How to run the activity

- 1. Discuss why movement matters**
Briefly highlight how physical activity supports children’s health, learning, confidence, and emotional well-being at different ages.
- 2. Identify enjoyable activities**
Parents and caregivers share activities their children enjoy, including sports, outdoor play, traditional games, dancing, fishing, or household tasks. Encourage parents and caregivers to discuss this at home with their children.
- 3. Address barriers**
Discuss common challenges (time, space, motivation) and practical solutions.
- 4. Create a simple activity plan**
Parents and caregivers develop a basic weekly plan that includes daily movement, age-appropriate activities, and ways to integrate activity into routines (e.g. walking, active chores, family play).
- 5. Encourage shared participation**
Emphasise involving fathers and other male caregivers, and making activity a shared family experience. Encourage involving children to identify regular physical activities to practice together as a family and how to make them a regular routine.

Key messages

- Active play supports healthy bodies and minds
- Small, regular activities add up
- Cultural and everyday activities count as physical activity

Activity 6: Creating a Calm Bedtime Routine

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers establish a simple, consistent bedtime routine that supports good-quality sleep.

Time: 15–20 minutes

Steps:

1. Ask parents and caregivers to briefly describe their child’s current bedtime routine.
2. Guide parents and caregivers to identify what helps their child calm down, and what may disrupt sleep (e.g. noise, screens, late meals).
3. Remind parents that offering children transitional warnings that bedtime routines are starting are an important part of the bedtime routine. Adapting these to the ages of children is important:
 - a. For younger children, offering a 5 minute warning that playing will stop and bedtime routine will start, given them time to prepare and reduces misbehaviours
 - b. For older children, agreeing on bedtimes and offering reminders of when these start can support children and adolescents to respect the routine and reduce the chance of arguments when the time comes.
4. Ask parents and caregivers to choose three simple steps for a calm routine (e.g. wash, quiet talk or story, lights off).
5. Ask parents and caregivers to agree on a regular bedtime appropriate for the child’s age.
6. Encourage parents and caregivers to try the routine consistently for one week.

Key message:

- Calm, predictable routines help children’s bodies and brains prepare for sleep.
- Remind parents that transitional warnings are a critical part of bedtime routines.

Activity 7: Talking About Feelings

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers talk with children and adolescents about feelings in ways that strengthen family connection, respect cultural and faith values, and support emotional well-being.

Who this activity is for: Parents and caregivers of children and adolescents. Suitable for community groups, church or faith-based sessions, and home visits.



Disability Considerations

Some children with disabilities may find it more difficult to express themselves and how they are feeling. Parents and caregivers can learn to read the non-verbal signs that children may be using to express their feelings.

Time: 20–25 minutes

Steps:

1. Begin with connection (5 minutes)

Invite parents and caregivers to share a word, image, scripture, proverb, or story from their culture or faith that represents care, strength, or togetherness (e.g. family, village, church, canoe, land, ocean).

2. Naming feelings in respectful ways (5 minutes)

Introduce a few common feelings (e.g. happy, sad, angry, worried, proud).

Ask parents and caregivers how children in their community usually show these feelings, through behaviour, silence, stories, or actions.

Reinforce that talking about feelings can happen through words, stories, prayer, shared activities, or time together.

3. Practising listening with care (10 minutes)

In pairs or small groups, parents and caregivers practise listening to a short example (e.g. a child feeling left out, worried about school, or upset after a fight with a friend).

The listener responds with calm, supportive phrases. Emphasise listening first, without judging or interrupting.

4. Guiding gently (5 minutes)

Discuss how parents and caregivers can guide children after listening, by reassuring them, sharing values, and helping them think about next steps, rather than blaming or dismissing feelings.

Key messages for parents and caregivers

- Listening builds trust
- Feelings are part of growing and learning
- Guidance works best when children feel heard and respected

Implementation tips

- Use local language and culturally familiar examples
- Adapt for age (play and storytelling for younger children, discussion for adolescents)

Activity 8: Setting Family Screen Rules

Purpose: To help parents and caregivers set clear, age-appropriate screen rules that support children's well-being, learning, and family connection.

Time: 10–15 minutes

How to run the activity

1. **Reflect briefly**

Ask parents and caregivers when screens are most used and what concerns them (sleep, behaviour, learning, safety).

2. **Agree on 3–5 rules**

Support parents and caregivers to choose a small number of clear rules (e.g. no screens before bed, screen-free meals, shared spaces only, limiting social media use).

3. **Link to values**

Invite parents and caregivers to connect rules to family or faith values such as respect, health, learning, and togetherness.

4. **Model and replace**

Emphasise adult role-modelling and identify screen-free alternatives (play, chores, stories, sports, cultural activities).

Key message: Clear, consistent screen rules work best when they protect routines, relationships, and learning.

The **Handout** below can be adapted and shared with parents and caregivers to help them set clear screen time rules with their children.

Handout: Family Screen Rules

Our Family Values

(What matters most to us as a family?)

Respect Health Learning Faith Togetherness Other:

Our Family Screen Rules

When screens are allowed in our home:

(e.g. after homework, weekends only, shared viewing)

When screens are NOT allowed in our home:

- During meals
- Before bedtime
- During family time
- In bedrooms
- Other: _____

Screen-Free Activities We Will Do Instead

- Family meals
- Storytelling
- Sports or games
- Fishing / farming / gardening
- Traditional dance or music
- Chores together
- Church or community activities

Other ideas: _____

Where screens can be used in our home:

- Shared family spaces only
- Not in bedrooms
- With an adult present (for younger children)

Time limits (by age)

- Young children (under 5 years): _____
- School-aged children (6-10 years): _____
- Adolescents: _____

Online safety rules (older children & teens)

- Talk to an adult if something feels wrong
- No sharing personal information
- Respect others online
- What Social Media sites are not allowed
- Phones/screens off at night

Our Commitment: We will try these rules for one week, talk together about what worked, and adjust if needed.

Parent/caregivers' role: We will model the same screen rules we expect from our children.

ANNEXES

1. Programmes for Foundational Parenting Knowledge and Practice

This annex highlights programmes, tools, and resources that support the parenting and caregiving skills presented in this module. Many organisations and initiatives have already developed materials that address similar topics related to child and adolescent development, male engagement, healthy routines and mental health and well-being.

The table below lists programmes and resources that facilitators can use to learn more, access training materials, or find ideas for activities. These resources provide additional guidance, examples, and evidence-based approaches that support the skills promoted in this Toolkit. Facilitators can use and adapt these resources to fit local contexts, while keeping key messages on caregiving consistent. These messages support safe environments, open communication, and strong relationships between caregivers, children, and adolescents. Where links are not available, programme managers and facilitators are encouraged to reach out to the relevant organisation directly to get more information.

Table M0.2: Parenting Programmes and Guidance

Programme	Skill
Name: Bebbo Parenting App Organisation: UNICEF Country or Countries: Pacific wide Date of Programme: going live in 2026 Short Description or link: https://www.bebbopacific.app/	Child Development
Name: The Parent Support Programme (PSP) Organisation: Vanuatu Ministry of Education and Training Country or Countries: Vanuatu Date of programme (since when is it running): 2022 Short description or link: <a href="https://education.gov.vu/docs/ecce-
psp/PARENT%20SUPPORT%20PROGRAM%20HANDBOOK%20-%20English.pdf">https://education.gov.vu/docs/ecce- psp/PARENT%20SUPPORT%20PROGRAM%20HANDBOOK%20-%20English.pdf	Child Development
Name: ECE Curriculum Organisation: Ministry of Education Country or Countries: Tonga	Child Development

Programme	Skill
<p>Date of Programme: 2022</p> <p>Short Description or link: https://www.education.gov.to/media/attachments/2025/05/22/tonga---ece-curriculum-_18.10.2022-english.pdf</p>	
<p>Name: Parenting for Child Development (P4CD)</p> <p>Organisation: UNICEF</p> <p>Country or Countries: Papua New Guinea</p> <p>Date of Programme: 2022</p> <p>Short Description or link: https://www.unicef.org/png/stories/positive-parenting-program-preventing-violence-and-creating-positive-change-households</p>	Child Development
<p>Name: Yut Rise Up</p> <p>Organisation: Save the Children</p> <p>Country or Countries: Vanuatu</p> <p>Date of Programme: 2023</p> <p>Short Description or link: Targets adolescents directly (10–19) and parents; covers life skills, SRHR, positive discipline, online safety, and parental stress management.</p>	Adolescent Development Supporting Mental Health and Emotional well-being
<p>Name: Hametin Familia</p> <p>Organisation: Ministry of Social Solidarity and UNICEF</p> <p>Country or Countries: Timor-Leste</p> <p>Date of Programme: 2014</p> <p>Short Description or link: https://www.uil.unesco.org/en/litbase/hametin-familia-timor-leste</p>	Adolescent Development
<p>Name: Nuangan Kasih - Positive Parenting Programme Facilitator Manual</p> <p>Organisation: Parenting for Lifelong Health</p> <p>Country or Countries: Malaysia - Global</p> <p>Date of Programme: 2021</p> <p>Short Description or link: https://parentingforlifelonghealth.canto.com/v/PLHProducts/s/TVOSB?viewIndex=1&column=document&id=eqp8jk1dg16fb414vdqo33gr6j&origin=classic</p>	Child Development Adolescent Development
<p>Name: Parenting for Lifelong Health (PLH) Teens</p> <p>Organisation: PLH</p> <p>Country or Countries: Global</p>	Adolescent Development

Programme	Skill
<p>Date of Programme: 2014</p> <p>Short Description or link: Evidence-based programme for caregivers and adolescents that strengthens positive communication, non-violent discipline, and family well-being.</p> <p>https://parentingforlifelonghealth.canto.com/b/QE2CE</p>	
<p>Name: Programme for Young Parents</p> <p>Organisation: UNICEF and Social Welfare Department</p> <p>Country or Countries: Tuvalu</p> <p>Date of Programme: 2017</p> <p>Short Description or link: Community-based training sessions for young mothers and expectant mothers</p>	Adolescent Development
<p>Name: Bright Futures for Young Mothers Programme</p> <p>Organisation: WASDA</p> <p>Country or Countries: Nauru</p> <p>Date of Programme: 2021</p> <p>Short Description or link: This programme is specifically designed to support young teenage mothers as they become parents, delivered through the Zero to Three centres.</p>	Adolescent Development
<p>Name: Health Promotion in Schools</p> <p>Organisation: WHO and Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health</p> <p>Country or Countries: Fiji</p> <p>Date of Programme: 2019</p> <p>Short Description or link: https://www.georgeinstitute.org/sites/default/files/documents/health-promoting-schools-in-fiji-12082024.pdf</p>	Healthy Daily Routines and Exercise
<p>Name: Get Into Rugby Plus</p> <p>Organisation: Oceania Rugby and UNICEF</p> <p>Country or Countries: Fiji and Samoa</p> <p>Date of Programme: 2019-2021</p> <p>Short Description or link: Combines rugby with life skills, focusing on gender equality, positive behaviour, and, as part of its holistic approach to health, includes modules on nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices for participants</p>	Healthy Daily Routines and Exercise

Programme	Skill
<p>https://www.teamup.gov.au/programs/get-rugby-plus-samoa</p> <p>Name: Te Kura Api'i Tamariki Potiki Organisation: Ministry of Education Country or Countries: Cook Islands Date of Programme: 2011 Short Description or link: Early childhood curricula that emphasises emotional development from an early age.</p>	<p>Supporting Mental Health and Emotional well-being</p>
<p>Name: Blossom Family Life Education Organisation: ADRA Country or Countries: Vanuatu Date of Programme: Short Description or link: Holistic, values-based parenting using faith/traditional frameworks. Includes manuals, counselling, radio programmes, and prison-based parenting education, targeting parents of children 0-18</p>	<p>Supporting Mental Health and Emotional well-being</p>
<p>Name: Famili i Redi Organisation: IOM and World Vision Country or Countries: Various Countries in the Region Date of Programme: 2021 Short Description or link: Famili i Redi is focused on preparing families who will be separated due to labour migration programmes. https://roasiapacific.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1671/files/documents/2023-10/famili-i-redi-rapid-review-report-digital.pdf</p>	<p>Engaging Male Caregivers in Parenting Support from the Beginning</p>
<p>Name: Parenting Together Organisation: UNICEF Country or Countries: Pacific wide Date of Programme: 2025 Short Description or link: 'Parenting together.' Various videos supporting positive parenting of young children</p>	<p>Engaging Male Caregivers in Parenting Support from the Beginning</p>

2. Facilitator Checklists

Facilitator checklists help ensure that parenting support content is delivered with fidelity and in the correct sequence. The checklists below outline the key skills and practices facilitators should demonstrate when leading parenting support sessions. They highlight important messages and approaches that support parents and caregivers to strengthen positive parenting and support children’s development and well-being. Facilitators can use them to guide preparation, delivery, and reflection on each session.

Table M0.3: Facilitator Checklist for Foundational Parenting Knowledge and Practice

Skill: Supporting Child Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explain the main stages of child development from early childhood through adolescence, including physical, emotional, social, and learning changes.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explain to parents and caregivers what developmental milestones are and how to recognise if a child may need extra support.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Emphasise that children develop at different rates, and that variation in the timing of developmental milestones is normal.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Highlight how responsive caregiving, play, learning opportunities, and safe environments support healthy development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Encourage parents and caregivers to reflect on how children’s needs and behaviours change as they grow and why parenting approaches should adapt at different ages.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Discuss age-appropriate expectations, helping parents and caregivers respond to children’s abilities, independence, and behaviour in supportive ways.

Skill: Supporting Adolescent Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Provide information on key developmental changes during adolescence, including emotional, social, cognitive, and identity development, and how these changes influence behaviour and decision-making.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Guide parents and caregivers to reflect on and practise showing empathy and respect for their teen’s growing need for independence.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Support parents and caregivers in identifying and communicating clear rules and boundaries using guidance and open discussion.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Explain strategies for parents and caregivers to respond to conflict or challenging behaviour using non-violent, non-harsh approaches, including modelling and role-play where appropriate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Lead activities that help parents and caregivers encourage their teen’s positive identity, self-worth, and respect for culture and diversity.

- Provide information on referral services and support. Encourage parents and caregivers to seek support from trusted health, school, or community services when additional support is needed.

Skill: Engaging Male Caregivers

- Invite fathers and other male caregivers to participate in parenting activities from the start.
- Identify and address barriers that may prevent men from participating, such as work schedules, social expectations, or discomfort with parent support programmes and activities.
- Encourage men to share daily caregiving tasks such as feeding, play, routines, and school involvement
- Encourage positive co-parenting and communication between male caregivers and other caregivers in the child's life.
- Create safe, respectful spaces for men to reflect on fatherhood, masculinity, and non-violent parenting.
- Promote positive male role models who show care, respect, and emotional support
- Work with community and faith leaders to champion men's involvement in caregiving.

Skill: Create Routines for Learning

- Explain to parents and caregivers how consistent daily routines support children's concentration, organisation, and readiness to learn.
- Support parents and caregivers in developing and maintaining consistent wake-up, meal, homework, and bedtime routines that support learning.
- Encourage parents and caregivers to plan ahead by preparing school materials, uniforms, and bags the night before.
- Facilitate discussion and problem-solving around creating a calm, structured space for homework, reading, or study.
- Help parents and caregivers identify and address barriers to school attendance (e.g., fatigue, transport challenges, low motivation) early and proactively.
- Encourage parents and caregivers to show interest in their child's learning and progress and reinforce positive attitudes toward education.
- Model and reinforce the importance of punctuality, organisation, and positive attitudes toward learning during sessions.

Skill: Encourage Regular Physical Activity

- Clarify that physical activity includes everyday movement and play, not only organised sports.

- Guide parents and caregivers to understand why regular physical activity supports children’s physical health, brain development, emotional well-being, and social skills.
- Encourage parents and caregivers to engage in active family activities (e.g., walking, dancing, gardening, traditional games) and explore locally appropriate options.
- Facilitate discussion on reducing long periods of sitting and increasing movement throughout the day.
- Support parents and caregivers in identifying and accessing school, community, or cultural sports and physical activities.
- Model and reinforce positive messaging about movement, enjoyment of activity, and healthy lifestyles during sessions.

Skill: Supporting Healthy Sleep

- Explain why sleep matters for learning, behaviour, growth, and mental well-being.
- Discuss age-appropriate sleep needs, noting that sleep requirements change as children grow.
- Normalise sleep challenges, particularly during periods such as adolescence.
- Help parents and caregivers assess whether their child is getting enough sleep.
- Support parents and caregivers to establish calm, consistent bedtime routines.
- Encourage regular sleep and wake times, particularly on school days.
- Facilitate discussion on reducing screen use and stimulating activities before bedtime. Help parents and caregivers solve problems with practical strategies.
- Encourage parents and caregivers to seek support from trusted health or school services if sleep problems persist.

Skill: Support Emotional well-being

- Explain to parents and caregivers how safe, supportive relationships help children develop emotional regulation, confidence, and resilience.
- Guide parents and caregivers in creating a safe, caring environment where their child feels valued, respected, and heard.
- Model and teach active listening skills and encourage parents and caregivers to support their child in expressing feelings openly.
- Facilitate activities that help parents and caregivers teach children to recognise, express, and manage emotions in healthy ways.
- Support parents and caregivers in strengthening their child’s problem-solving and coping skills during times of stress or change.

- Explain to parents and caregivers the early signs of emotional distress and understand when additional support may be needed.
- Encourage parents and caregivers to seek support from trusted adults, health providers, school staff, or community services if emotional distress persists.

Skill: Managing Screen Time

- Explain to parents and caregivers why managing screen time matters for brain development, learning, sleep, and well-being.
- Share WHO's age-appropriate screen-time guidance.
- Reinforce to parents and caregivers that screens should not replace play, interaction, or routines.
- Explain and discuss online risks for older children and adolescents with parents and caregivers.
- Guide parents and caregivers in setting clear, consistent screen time limits that are appropriate for their child's age and developmental stage.
- Promote daily routines that balance screen use with play, learning, sleep, and family interaction.
- Support parents and caregivers to establish screen-free times (e.g., during meals, homework, and before bedtime).
- Encourage parents and caregivers to engage in shared screen use when possible and to have conversations with their child about what they are watching or doing.
- Explain to parents and caregivers the importance of modelling and reinforcing healthy screen habits and promoting screen-free family activities during sessions.
- Discuss culturally meaningful screen-free activities with parents and caregivers.
- Encourage parents and caregivers to discuss social media use with adolescents and agree on which sites are allowed, which are not and any time restrictions.

