What is mental health?

Mental health means that young children are growing in their ability to:
- understand and share feelings
- have close and positive relationships
- explore and learn

Why Is It Important?

Having Positive Mental Health Makes It Easier for Children to:
- Have close relationships with family and friends
- Do well in school
- Learn new things
- Solve tough problems
- Develop patience (or not give up)
- Focus on a task
- Ask for help

When Young Children Are Worried, Sad, or Angry, It Can Be Hard To:
- Make friends
- Follow directions
- Express feelings or wishes
- Follow simple directions
- Pay attention in class
- Solve problems in positive ways
- Do well in school

Things You Can Do and Say to Help Your Child

- **For Your Infant**
  - Hold your baby during feedings.
  - "I love cuddling when I feed you."
  - Look at your baby and smile, smile, smile!
  - "Hey, when I smile, you smile back."
  - Talk about what you are doing.
  - "I'm going to change your diaper now."
  - Try to relax and have fun.
  - "When I am happy, you are less fussy."
  - Read and sing to your baby every day.
  - "It is bedtime. Time for a story and favorite song."
  - Take care of yourself.
  - "When I am rested, I take better care of you."

- **For Your Toddler/Preschooler**
  - Make sure they always feel safe.
  - "I know loud noises can be scary, but it's OK."
  - Offer choices.
  - "Do you want the blue shirt or the red shirt?"
  - Practice patience.
  - "Let's wait until the song is over and then we'll go outside."
  - Show understanding.
  - "You REALLY want another cookie! It is hard when you can only have one."
  - Leave extra time.
  - "I see you don't want to leave the playground. One more time on the slide, then we need to leave."
  - Play together at least 15 minutes a day.
  - "There is so much to do but it is important for us to play together."
  - Follow her interest.
  - "I see you want to play with the blocks. What are you going to build?"
  - Praise your child when she keeps trying.
  - "I love the way you keep trying to find the right piece for the puzzle."
  - Practice following directions.
  - "First pick up the blocks, then take out the cars."