



# Parenting in Every Season

Parenting is a dynamic journey that shifts and evolves as children grow. Each season of childhood—from infancy to adolescence—brings new challenges, joys and opportunities to connect. As children move through these stages, the role of a parent adapts too, requiring patience, flexibility and presence. What works during one season may not in the next, and that's part of the process. Being open to change allows families to grow stronger together.

## **Infants (Birth to 15 Months):**

Infant development is rapid and exciting—by 12 months, babies can triple their birth weight and double their length. While most develop in a similar pattern, each baby is unique in growth and personality. Early milestones include gaining head control, rolling, sitting, crawling and possibly walking by 15 months. Babies learn language through rich interaction, so talking, singing and reading are essential. Crying is their main way of communicating, and responding with care builds trust and emotional security. Each baby has their own sleep and feeding routines, temperament and pace of development. Support learning with simple toys, songs, baby-safe mirrors and colorful board books. Create a predictable routine, respond quickly to cries and always practice safe sleep by placing your baby on their back in a crib free of toys, blankets and other soft objects.

## **Toddlers (15 to 36 Months):**

Toddlers are active, curious, and full of big emotions as they explore and try things on their own. Vocabulary grows quickly, and they often express themselves with phrases like “No,” “Mine” and “I do it!” Physical play like crawling, running and dancing supports their growth. Frustration is common but eases as language and understanding improve. Simple activities like talking on walks, singing through routines and visiting the library support learning. Parents can help by staying patient, acknowledging emotions and redirecting to prevent meltdowns and keep toddlers engaged.

## **Preschoolers (3 and 4 Years):**

Preschoolers are energetic, imaginative and increasingly confident in how they move and interact. They enjoy using their hands for building, drawing, and puzzles and you'll notice big strides in language, creativity and social play. Curiosity leads to endless questions, storytelling, and rich imaginary play. Preschoolers also begin to grasp early reading, math, writing and science concepts through everyday activities. Support their growth with fun routines like cooking together, counting objects, looking at baby photos or having themed indoor picnics. Encourage learning by modeling reading and writing, doing simple chores together and celebrating their accomplishments with enthusiasm and praise.

### Young School-Age (5 to 9 Years):

As children enter the school years, they become more independent, and their world expands through new relationships, experiences and learning opportunities. Physically, they grow stronger, with better coordination and more energy. Their natural curiosity flourishes, leading to more thoughtful questions and deeper problem-solving. They begin to understand the difference between fantasy and reality and often enjoy reading independently. Friendships with peers, teachers and others outside the home become increasingly important, helping them develop key social skills and empathy. This is also a time when creativity and imagination truly thrive, as children explore new ideas and express themselves in diverse ways. Support your child's growing independence by actively participating in school or after-school activities and encouraging exploration. Fun ways to connect include telling stories together, planning scavenger hunts with friends and discussing current events as a family. As a parent, you can help by reinforcing mastered skills, using humor in everyday interactions, and setting consistent, loving limits as your child learns to make thoughtful choices on their own.



Children's early years are a remarkable journey of growth and positive change. Each stage brings unique milestones that shape who children become. Supporting their natural curiosity and growing independence helps build confidence and essential skills. Families who engage in everyday activities—like reading, playing and exploring together—create a strong foundation for lifelong learning. Understanding that every child grows at their own pace encourages patience, love and consistent encouragement to nurture each child's full potential.

### School-Age (10 to 14 Years):

Between ages 10 and 14, children experience important physical, mental and emotional growth that shapes their developing minds and bodies. Proper nutrition, regular exercise and sufficient sleep are all vital during this stage to support their overall health. Their thinking becomes more advanced, allowing them to understand abstract ideas, focus longer and recall more information. Puberty typically begins during these years but varies for each child, bringing new physical and emotional changes. Interests often expand to include sports, arts and social relationships as children work to form their own identity and navigate the challenges of fitting in with peers. Encouraging independence while providing consistent support and positive reinforcement helps them develop responsibility and good judgment. To support learning and bonding, try activities like creating a personalized dictionary, hosting game nights that promote cooperation or sharing family stories to connect your child to their heritage. Promoting safe, responsible internet use, setting up a dedicated homework space and keeping communication open helps your child grow with confidence during this dynamic stage.

As children expand their worlds beyond the family, they develop social skills, empathy and emotional understanding. Parents provide guidance, open communication and safe spaces for self-expression. Setting limits, encouraging responsibility, and celebrating achievements help children make thoughtful choices and build positive self-esteem.

Connection is the heart of parenting during these years. The time families spend nurturing relationships and shared experiences builds a child's sense of security and happiness. Whether through play, conversation, or simply being present, these moments foster trust and growth that prepare children not just for school success but for a balanced and fulfilling life. By actively supporting their child's development and adapting to their needs, parents help raise confident, capable, and compassionate individuals.

**BHS provides referrals to qualified mental health professionals that can help. To speak to your designated Care Coordinator about your benefits and options for support call BHS at 800-245-1150.**