

Training Module 1: *Experiences Shape Brain Development*

Key Points:

- The brain pathways underlying communication skills are being built early in life, from the pre-natal period to about 7 years of age. Active participation in communicating (both talking and listening) during the period of plasticity will provide the child with strong brain pathways for communication skills for the rest of their lives.
- The type of communication that will be most effective in building brain pathways is communication that is directed right to the child and is accompanied by facial expressions, gestures and back and forth interaction to get the attention of the child.
- Once a child has built strong brain pathways for a skill during the plastic period, they will have them for the rest of their lives. With strong brain pathways, the skill will be much easier for the child and they will be much more likely to use it. This principal holds for all skills; we use language as an example that people find easy to grasp.

Summary of Lesson:

- Using the ***Mother's Speech and Child Vocabulary*** poster, tell the story of 2 young boys learning to talk. *Remember that stories are much easier for people to remember than just hearing information about child development.*

- In this story, Dwayne's mother is a hair dresser and she is very talkative so Dwayne hears a lot of speech directed right to him starting at birth. By 2 years of age he is expected to have 600 words in

in his vocabulary. His neighbor, Jayden, has a less talkative mother who is a dental hygenist so he has much less exposure to verbal communication in the first 2 years of his life. He is expected to have about 150 words in his vocabulary at age 2. Although both Dwayne and Jayden will keep adding words to their vocabulary, because Dwayne built stronger brain circuits, speaking will always be easier for him.

- Use of brain circuits after the plastic period continues to build the circuits but the process is much slower and never as effective in terms of building circuits as during the plastic period.

