

HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Quick Confidence Builds are brief activities that practitioners can use when working with dads in face-to-face or virtual group-based or one-on-one settings. (The group-based version is described first.) These activities help build fathering confidence, a vital factor influencing dads' involvement in their children's lives.

Dads only need pen and paper to write down information when instructed. The practitioner needs only something to record on when instructed, such as a flip chart or whiteboard when working with dads face-to-face or a virtual whiteboard or chat when working with them virtually. Estimated times include reflection, discussion, and facilitator feedback. The exact timing will depend on many factors, such as facilitator experience and skill, the size of a group, how comfortable dads are in sharing their experiences and ideas, and their commitment to growing in their fathering.



Source: The activities are inspired by *The 24:7 Dad: 12 Habits of Confident Fathers* by NFI President Christopher A. Brown. Visit confidentfathers.com to learn more about the book released on June 2, 2026!

Quick Confidence Build: Trustworthy Child Development Resources

Time: 10-15 minutes (group-based); 5-10 minutes (one-on-one)

The Goal: Help dads identify trustworthy, research-informed sources for understanding healthy child development and knowing when to seek guidance.

Why This Matters: Dads want their children to grow and thrive, but it's not always easy to know what healthy development looks like at different ages. When dads know where to find trustworthy, research-informed guidance, they're better equipped to support their children's development—and that builds confidence in their fathering.

The Activity (Group-Based)

Step 1: What is Child Development? (4 minutes)

(Write the term “Child Development” on a flip chart or whiteboard.)

ASK: When you see or hear the term “child development,” what comes to mind?

(Record their responses. If you hear any words, phrases, or meanings that are part of or similar to the following meaning, acknowledge that as you share the meaning.)

SAY: Child development refers to the stages children go through from birth to adulthood. It includes the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social changes they experience.

(Write “Milestones” on the flip chart or whiteboard.)

SAY: These stages include “milestones” that most children should reach at each age, such as when they should start walking, talking, counting, and sharing. These milestones are guidelines parents can use to know whether their children are developing well. Even doctors use them to advise parents on whether to be concerned about their children’s development. But they’re only guidelines. Children develop at their own pace. Some children reach the milestones earlier, while others reach them later.

Step 2: Child Development Concerns (5 minutes)

ASK: Has anyone experienced a time when you weren’t sure your child was developing the way you expected? Raise your hand if you have.

(If any raise a hand, ask each of them the following two questions. If no one raises a hand, skip to Step 3. Don’t be surprised if no one raises a hand.)

ASK: What did you notice in your child’s development, and why did it concern you?

(Pause for their response.)

ASK: Did you ask anyone for their input or advice on whether you should have been concerned?

(Pause for their answer and record their response.)

ASK: Was their input or advice helpful?

(The questions in this step will identify whether they turned to authoritative, research-informed sources. Don’t be surprised if those who had a child development concern didn’t consult such a source.)

Step 3: Consulting Authoritative Sources (3 minutes)

SAY: Parents turn to a variety of sources when they want child development information. The sources include websites, friends and family, and medical professionals. Friends and family can be helpful sources of support, but when it comes to child development concerns, it’s best to confirm what you hear with trained professionals or research-based sources. There are individuals and organizations that provide research-based guidance.

(Write “Pediatricians” and “Child Psychologists” on the flip chart or whiteboard.)

These include pediatricians, child psychologists, and the websites of:

- The American Academy of Pediatrics (aap.org)
- The Mayo Clinic (mayoclinic.org)
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cdc.gov)
- Zero to Three (zerotothree.org)
- The Child Mind Institute (childmind.org)
- Children's Hospital of Orange County (choc.org)

Search for “developmental milestones” or “child development” on any of these websites.

(Encourage them to write down the website addresses. Repeat the website URLs slowly and twice.)

Step 4: Wrap Up (1 minute)

SAY: If you have a specific concern about your children's development, start with their pediatrician or family doctor. You can also consult a child psychologist, especially for emotional and intellectual milestones. Use the websites I mentioned to increase your child development knowledge. Before our time ends, write down one website or professional source you'll use the next time you have a question about your child's development.

The Activity (One-on-One)

Step 1: What is Child Development? (2 minutes)

(Write the term “Child Development” on a flip chart or whiteboard.)

ASK: When you see or hear the term “child development,” what comes to mind?

(Record his responses. If you hear any words, phrases, or meanings that are part of or similar to the following meaning, acknowledge that as you share the meaning.)

SAY: Child development refers to the stages children go through from birth to adulthood. It includes the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social changes they experience.

(Write “Milestones” on the flip chart or whiteboard.)

SAY: These stages include “milestones” that most children should reach at each age, such as when they should start walking, talking, counting, and sharing. These milestones are guidelines parents can use to know whether their children are developing well. Even doctors use them to advise parents on whether to be concerned about their children's development. But they're only guidelines. Children develop at their own pace. Some children reach the milestones earlier, while others reach them later.

Step 2: Child Development Concerns (2 minutes)

ASK: Have you experienced a time when you weren't sure your child was developing the way you expected?

(If he has, ask the following two questions. If he hasn't, skip to Step 3. Don't be surprised if he hasn't.)

ASK: What did you notice in your child's development, and why did it concern you?

(Pause for his response.)

ASK: Did you ask anyone for their input or advice on whether you should have been concerned?

(Pause for his answer.)

ASK: Was their input or advice helpful?

(The questions in this step will identify whether he turned to authoritative, research-informed sources. If he's had a child development concern, don't be surprised if he didn't consult such a source.)

Step 3: Consulting Authoritative Sources (3 minutes)

SAY: Parents turn to a variety of sources when they want child development information. The sources include websites, friends and family, and medical professionals. Friends and family can be helpful sources of support, but when it comes to child development concerns, it's best to confirm what you hear with trained professionals or research-based sources. There are individuals and organizations that provide research-based guidance.

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