

《爱最重要：关爱有助于儿童大脑成长》

导读:不要因为孩子小就不关心他们，小心会影响他们的大脑发育



Over that period, the number of infant deaths has dropped sharply -- from about 12 million to six million worldwide. Infant child mortality has been cut thanks to billions of dollars in aid and the work of many countries.

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However, a group of experts say that is not enough. For children to grow and develop fully, they need more than a nutritious diet and access to medicine.

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That is the opinion of a team of social scientists and public health experts. They found that about 200 million children are failing to meet their developmental potential each year. What is lacking, the experts say, is social interaction with the children and involvement by their caretakers.

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The U.S. National Academy of Medicine set up the group of 32 academic experts. They provide strong evidence that just as a poor diet can harm children, violence and lack of care can damage a child's brain.

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And that, they say, leads to physical and social stunting, even when aid programs are available. Stunting is when a person fails to grow and develop normally.

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Neil Boothby is with the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University in New York. He likens social interaction to "investing in young children." He adds that "it's vital to ensuring international peace and security."

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Boothby says that providing good, positive social interactions is as big a part of development as providing food and water. And these positive social interactions must be consistent and not, what he calls, episodic.

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He calls the wiring in the brain, circuitry. And he calls the structure of the brain, 'brain architecture.' Here is Boothby. This becomes part of actually strengthening the circuitry in the brain. When the response isn't there, or it's episodically there, then (that) same circuitry, that same brain architecture is weakened. So it is not just micronutrient, it is also social care.

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Boothby says studies have shown that international aid programs alone are not enough to help children reach their full ability. The Columbia University researcher just returned from Uganda. In that country, he says, more than a third of the population suffers from stunting. Signs of stunting include smaller physical growth and lower than average scores on intelligence tests.

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For example, I met with some parents on this last trip. Fathers were saying, 'Ah, you know I don't really engage with the child until she or he is three months old because they're too little.' I mean that's counter to what they should be doing because holding, talking, you know, caressing, etc., is all part of brain health.

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The paper, says Boothby, is a call for social interaction to be added to the list of health and nutrition assistance programs and concerns. You know, we teach parents when they go to clinics about water and sanitation. We teach them about the kinds of foods children should eat. Why aren't we teaching them the things that make brains grow?

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