

Training Child Development Analysts

By The Observant Mom

Benefits to You as a Parent

- Sitting down to document and study your child will help you parent intentionally.
- It will create the space and let you focus on your child.
- You can mine for your child's unique potential.
- It keeps you focused on your parenting goal: growing a dynamic, happy child.
- Keep fear and frustration at bay!

Create the Space

- To start studying child development—you basically have to start!
- **“Create the space”**—create some area where you are going to work.
- This might be opening a Word document and writing notes. Or whatever space works for you.
- Set yourself up for success by labeling and numbering everything. If you sense a new milestone happening, label it in bold letters and give it a heading level (Home->Paragraph->Outline Level->Level [x]). Then use the “Navigation Pane” to quickly go from one milestone to the next. In Word, View -> Navigation Pane.
- Write down dates, down to the week, if not day. Don’t stress your mind by doing it in your head constantly. Write it down: make it easy on yourself. Online “difference in date” calculators can help.
- Your space should feel comfortable. It should feel like “ahhhhh.” When you open it, you should want to write in it.

What to Record

- Please study and record what interests **you**. If it interests you, it likely interests others, too. Follow a passion or a spark!
- When recording, record with a purpose. If you just record data as a stream, you will burn out.
- Recording with a purpose means you want to record it for some reason, for use later or now. Maybe you want to write down their new interests so you can later look up educational activities for them. Maybe you write down what problems you are having, so you can work through them. A great way to record is to tell it in story format. Pretend you are going to tell someone the story, or actually tell them, and write down every interesting detail: the emotions involved, the problems, and how you resolved it.
- Above all: RECORD FIRST, ANALYZE SECOND. It's so easy to start analyzing right away. I accidentally do this more than I'd like to admit. But you lose detail if you don't write it down first, just as is.
- However, when writing, if you notice something or have a gut feel about what is developing, write that down. That is very useful information.

How This Might Work

- I don't entirely know how this might work but I'll throw out some ideas.
- Perhaps you, an analyst, take a specific skill over a specific time period and follow it. As an example, maybe, "The development of pretend play from 18 to 24 months."
- After you do your work, you write a paper on it.
- I then include it at the website, attached to perhaps the first relevant milestone.
- A great way to know what to study is to read *Misbehavior is Growth* and take note of the hills. Each hill has 1 or more milestones in it and lasts 2-4 months. A specific skill set develops in this time. Follow a particular skill set, adding more insight into how it develops.
- Another way is when someone says they are seeing skills from one milestone mixed in with another, starting earlier than expected, etc. This often means nuance or subtlety is missing from the milestone.
- If this grows big enough, I'll add a ticketing system to keep track of work, maybe get a new website, etc. For now, I start small and see what builds.

Analyzing: Bundling and Unbundling

- Eventually, we want to get the analysis down to a nearly day-by-day analysis with tremendous nuance. Trying to start here, however, would quickly burn a person out.
- Typically, I start out analyzing a larger block of time, usually about one month. I might collect several examples of behavior in that time and decide a pattern is forming. I then put this into a milestone.
- Typically it becomes clear that I was too broad. An entire month typically needs sectioned into two-week chunks. I then have to separate the behaviors that were actually the first two-weeks and which were the second two-weeks in the month. I then see what is different in the two sets of behavior.
- I call this **Bundling and Unbundling**. I bundled it up into a milestone, and then I have to unbundle it into more nuance.
- This is one of the most frustrating parts of analysis, but also one of the best. You bundled it, so you know about where you are and what you are looking at. And then when you separate the lists, although it's annoying to re-do work, many new insights, subtlety and nuance develop.
- I expect this process to continue and continue, until we see the nuance in development down to the day. Down to the *day* might not apply in all cases, but I've found it applies in many cases. One particular day shows shocking new awareness, a sudden head shape change, distinct behavior, etc., and it's something fairly predictable across children.

Photo Analysis

- Photo analysis is powerful but it's intense. It can be a lot to look through photos, decide what to keep, keep track of them, etc.
- I recommend adding photos after you've recorded behavior. Recording the behavior should feel like "ahhhh." Doing a brain dump daily is work in and of itself. Adding photo analysis on top of this is a lot for me—but may not be for you.
- I have a rule to separate myself from the photos for 2 months before looking at them again. Often, something pops out at me that didn't before. I find my objectivity improves if I wait for a bit to look at photos.
- When I look at photos, I am looking for things that show something unique. Maybe an intense interest in an activity, a facial expression, etc. After doing intense analysis, sometimes I again notice more than I did before in the photos. I try to look at more than one child in the same time frame, and just see what I see. Is anything at all similar?
- I look at candid photos and look for spontaneous activity, facial expressions, etc. If looking at photos for head shape itself, it would require a more dedicated effort, and one that I sometimes worry interrupts the research itself. Somehow you would have to get photos of children in good light, routinely, without upsetting them too much.
- I put the photos right in my journals. It's ideal to have the exact number of days since due date marking the photo.

Analysis by Day

- If you have lots of recorded data that you've analyzed and simmered on, analysis by day becomes possible.
- For this, I recommend getting formal about it. Use Excel or some other spreadsheet and create a table.
- Match behavior child to child. In one column, write down the exact behavior of one child. In another, write down the exact behavior of another that matches. Then in another column, write down the exact day of development these things happened.

Hill	Milestone	Henry description	John description	Henry	John
Magical Metamorphosis	What If and Watch This	rocket had a hole in it	sell focus for \$14	1463	1455
	What If and Watch This	intense 1A	was difficult for weeks	1470	1459
	What If and Watch This	went on riding horse; tow truck story	went on motorcycle	1468	1467
	What If and Watch This	blew a dandelion; enamored with walle	plays with golf clubs	1472	1467

Child Development Database

- Eventually, some behavior will become so predictable and well-defined that we just ask parents to type in the date they saw it.
- A great way to do this is with the “shock awareness” that starts off each hill. “Intentional Imaging” is a good one, when they can willfully imagine something not there.

Behavior	Child 1	Child 2
Treats fake things as if real	813	815
Intentional Imaging	1169	1172
Thinks they can shrink	1211	1211

Just Ideas

- These are just some ideas, notes, and best practices so far to get you started.
- You might analyze differently. Maybe you can slice the behavior day by day right away. Maybe digesting lots of photos at once is actually your thing.
- If you have ideas and interest, contact me at helloamber@gmail.com .