

Playing for Attention: How Babies Learn to Focus

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Research assistant Shanae Venter sets up a camera to record a baby and his mother, who are participants in a study with Tulane's Learning and Brain Development Lab. Photos by Kenny Lass

Eight-month-old Joseph sits in a high chair, his tray filled with toys. He reaches for one and looks over at his mother beside him who is smiling and talking softly. He turns back to his toys, unfazed by the camera pointed at him or the researcher sitting behind him.

Joseph is too young to realize this seemingly normal afternoon spent playing with his mother is helping researchers understand how babies pay attention, how they learn and how their relationships shape that process. The information, gleaned from small moments like this, could help children and their caregivers around the world. What researchers learn could influence how caregivers, clinicians and educators support children during one of the fastest periods of brain development in their lives.

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