

NUTRITION

What is the skill?

Nutrition provides the energy and building blocks children need for brain development, physical growth, immune function, and learning.

What does normal development look like?

Children gradually learn to recognize hunger and fullness, try a variety of foods, and eat regular meals with caregivers who provide structure and encouragement.

How does neglect interfere?

Children who have experienced food insecurity may not trust that food will continue to be available. Others may have experienced poor nutrition, irregular meals, or limited exposure to healthy foods.

What might this look like?

Children may overeat, hide food, eat very quickly, become distressed when food is unavailable, or have limited food preferences.

Parenting implications

Regular meal routines, patient exposure to new foods, and avoiding shame around eating help children rebuild trust that their nutritional needs will consistently be met.

From Understanding to Attunement

For some children, eating is not simply about hunger—it is about safety and survival.