

# Developmental Observation Topic Plan

## What Makes Me Laugh

(Experiencing, Expressing & Understanding Emotions)

Age Range: Birth—36 months



### What parents will be observing



- What kinds of “things” (materials, people, actions) make their child laugh
- How what they do and say can help their child experience fun interactions and develop a sense of humor



### Environment



Put out a generally interesting environment using objects and activities that parents and children have enjoyed during past sessions. Be sure to include objects and activities appropriate to the range of ages in your group.

For this DOT, it is important to include a range of materials and activities including some that have an element of surprise. Things that infants and toddlers might find funny! Some suggestions are:

- Toys that have an element of surprise such as a jack-in-the-box
- mirrors (to make funny faces or use the sheet included in this DOT taped to a mirror)
- Fun dress up materials like hats, scarves, boas, feathers
- Homemade puppet box with puppets
- Scarves, small blankets or pieces of material that parents can hide behind to play peek-a-boo
- Music area with a variety of songs, so parents and children can do silly dances, sing, etc.
- Sheet hanging on a door or streamers on a cardboard box to play peek-a-boo



### Opening Discussion



#### A. Hello Song (with names of each child and parent)

Hello (child's name), Hello (parent's name), How are you? How are you?  
We're so glad to see you! We're so glad to see you! Come and play! Come and play!



**Note to facilitator:** As children become familiar with the song, they will begin to show their recognition. You will see them become still. They will start waiting to hear their name, and some will show smiles and other signs of pleasure when they hear it - be sure and point this out to the parents!

## B. Introducing the Topic

### 1. Providing information on the DOT

Today we are going to talk about what makes your children laugh! As babies and toddlers develop, they begin to use humor to apply and expand their understanding of existing concepts, to start to define themselves, and to establish relationships. Your child's sense of humor is constantly developing and as his language and understanding of the world becomes more sophisticated, he will find more and more things funny and amusing!

When children are very young, they don't have enough images in their heads that something can be unexpected or surprising. Instead, they usually smile or laugh when you are doing something physical to them, like singing a silly song while moving their legs up and down or playing tickling games. They also like auditory stimulation, like when you make popping noises or say "ah-choo!" Pretty soon they also begin to laugh at games like peek-a-boo or "I'm gonna get you!" Once you play these games a few times, most children will come to expect a tickle at the end and will show their anticipation by smiling or laughing (especially if you delay your tickle!).

They might then begin to think it is really funny when they deliberately drop a toy from their high chair or the grocery cart and wait for you to pick it up for them so they can do it all over again! How much fun!! They might also think it's funny when you do something silly, like put on a silly hat or walk in a funny way. And pretty soon they laugh at what they think is going to happen next! Often, these situations involve an adult or older child who is intent on making them laugh. For example, a game of chase can cause many giggles! As they begin to develop language, they enjoy hearing and making rhymes and words and will laugh when you point to your nose and say it's your mouth! They will then become very interested in hearing and telling simple jokes. As children get older, they also begin to initiate their own "funnies"; for example, they will make up words for things, and then go into gales of laughter. They begin to notice things going on around them, and to laugh at these as well. As they get even older, they are thinking about what they see, and begin to see humor in ideas, just as we do as adults.

**BE SURE TO  
SMILE AND  
LAUGH AS YOU  
ENGAGE IN  
THESE GAMES !**



**HAVE FUN AND  
ENJOY  
YOURSELF!!**

### 2. Sharing what we already know

Ask parents to think back over the past week or so – what can they think of that made their children laugh? Some possible conversation starters are:



When your child thought something was funny, were you interacting with them or was it an object that was funny to them?







Did you intentionally do something that you knew your child would think was funny?



**Note to Facilitator: this is a good topic for making a list – record the “laughing” situations on a big piece of paper that you can refer back to during the closing discussion.**

### 3. Summarizing the main points

-  Babies and Toddlers use humor as a way to learn about the world and build relationships.
-  When children are very young, they don't have enough images in their heads that something can be unexpected or surprising. They usually smile or laugh when YOU are doing something physical and auditory like moving their legs up and down while making popping noises.
-  As children get older, they also begin to initiate their own "funnies."
-  It is important for you to provide playful opportunities for babies and toddlers to be funny!

## C. Describing the Environment

Today, we are going to see what kinds of objects/actions make your children laugh. We are going to have several "laugh stations" scattered around the room. For example, we have a puppet box that you or your child can go behind and use the puppets to put on a fun show! We also have scarves and material set up for playing peek-a-boo or other fun games that your child might like! There are some mirrors with a fun game attached so you can hold your child in your lap and look in the mirror together and make funny faces!






## D. Suggesting things to try

Being playful with your children is one of the ways that you can encourage humor in babies and toddlers. Here are some ideas that you might try!

1. Use funny voices with your child (high and low sounds; unusual sounds).
2. Play with your child at the puppet box. Talk in funny voices using the puppets.
3. Get face to face with your child, hold up a small blanket and play peek-a-boo.
4. Hide your face behind a box or chair, then pop out on different sides and say "peek-a-boo".
5. Put something unexpected like a shirt or a toy on top of your head & act silly.
6. Play an "I'm gonna get you" game.
7. Put a scarf over your face, say "Where's Mommy?" and then take the scarf off.
8. Put a cloth in your mouth, growl and shake your head like a puppy
9. Do silly dances/movements to music

## E. Making Predictions

-  What do you think will make your child laugh?
-  Which materials/objects will he/she find funny?
-  What do you think you will have to do to make things funny for your child... to make you child laugh?



## Parent-Child Observation Time



As you interact with each dyad:

- **join in the fun**, commenting and supporting competence and confidence
- if you see a parent using one of the “things to try,” **comment** on it and its effect on the child
- if you need to **model** an interaction or activity, do it and then encourage the parent to try



## Transitions



### A. From Activity to Snack

Could use crackers or fruit with peanut butter and raisins to have parents and children make funny faces, etc.



### B. From Snack to Songs & Games

Use bubbles or sheet to swing children in to entice them from the snack table back to the central rug area.



## Parent-Child Songs & Games



Try this rhyme, even the youngest children will laugh as they get “tickled” after 4-5 times, the older children will begin to laugh even before the tickle.

You can also take socks and sew bumblebees on the end and have parents put the sock on their hand and do the motions/tickle as above! Any song or game that contains elements of surprise can be used in the same way.

**“The bumble bee went around the tree”**  
(moving fingers slowly in a circle just above the child’s tummy)

**“buzz-zoom, buzz-zoom”**

(with lots of intonation, still moving the hand in circles, but closer in to the belly)

**“buzz-zoom”**

(swooping down for the tickle)



## Closing Discussion



### A. Reviewing Predictions

- What did your child like best?
- What made your child smile or laugh?
- Was it what you predicted?
- What were some of the things that you did that caused your child to laugh?

### B. Main Points

When children are very young, they don't yet have enough images in their heads that something can be unexpected or surprising. Instead, they laugh at physical stimulation (like tickling) and auditory stimulation (like making popping noises or growling). Pretty soon they begin to laugh at games like "I'm gonna get you" because they begin to expect that tickle at the end. They also think it's funny when you do something silly. Eventually, as they begin to develop language, they will become very interested in hearing and telling simple jokes. As children get older, they initiate their own funnies and make up words for things. They love to make you laugh!

For us as adults, what children laugh at provides a window into their brains, into how they are understanding the world. Humor is very much related to children's current ways of thinking. But laughter is also good for development! It feels good to laugh. Laughter connects us to other people, and makes us feel good about ourselves. It also is very motivating. For example, humor keeps us interested. And things like jokes can help to develop thinking skills. Laughing also relieves tension. So one of the things we can do to support children's development is to help them develop a sense of humor!

**Most of all, laughing together and just enjoying your child will make your child feel loved and special!**

### C. Carry-over to Home

How can we help children develop a sense of humor? Are there situations you can think of at home where you already do things that make your child laugh? Are there new things that you thought of as we were going through today's activities and discussion that you might try at home? One of the most important things we can do is to give children plenty of opportunities to experience the kinds of things we have tried today. And, as they get older, join in their laughter when they do something they think is funny!

Remember you might have to pick up that toy dropped from the high chair a million times or laugh at the same jokes over and over—but it is really important for us to help respond with enthusiasm as we help our children develop a sense of humor!



**Note to Facilitators:** Parents might enjoy a handout of today's "things to try" to take home. You might also want to find one or two "beginner jokes" to write out for them to take home – these should be very much at the beginning stage for children in this age range.)

### D. Good-Bye Song

Example - Good-bye (child's name), Good-bye (parent's name), Good-bye (next child's name), We're glad you came to play! (Keep repeating until everyone's name has been used.)

1. Stick out your tongue  2. Try to touch your nose with your tongue  3. Try to touch your chin with our tongue  4. Show your teeth  5. Click your teeth together  6. Puff your cheeks out 
7. Pucker your lips  8. Wag your tongue from side to side  9. Cough  10. Whistle  11. Smile 
12. Make "kissy" sounds while kissing your child 
13. Lick your lips  14. Say "I see you!" and point to your child  15. Hug your child 

Try these activities with your child in front of a mirror!

