Helping Babies Think

- **Make It Social**
  - Young children learn best from back-and-forth interactions with other people.
  - When an adult responds to a child in a way that is tailored exactly to what the child did or said, children tend to learn more from the interaction.

- **Exaggerate Sounds**
  - The amount of language children hear is important, but having a chance to talk too is equally important. Asking questions, making observations, and pausing to give children a chance to respond (even if it is just a grunt or a squeal) builds language skills.

- **Have a Conversation**
  - Using "parentese" or infant-directed speech, the sing-song style of speech adults tend to use with infants, helps children identify speech sounds and learn language patterns.

- **Keep it Positive**
  - Responding in a warm and responsive way helps children feel more secure, both in the context of the relationship and as they explore the world around them.

- **Be a Regulator**
  - Babies aren't very good at self-regulation. Babies learn better when they have help regulating the levels of stimulation in their environment. Being able to recognize when it is time to take a break or have a nap helps too!

- **Model Persistence**
  - Trying and failing multiple times, instead of succeeding on the first try, helps toddlers understand that sometimes you have to try multiple times before you get it right!

- **Prioritize Play**
  - Play helps children to contextualize their world and provides an opportunity to understand a concept better.

- **Follow Their Lead**
  - Sometimes it can be hard not to take over! But letting children lead and paying attention to their interests helps tailor the learning experience to their unique needs and curiosities.

- **Work as a Team**
  - Children tend to do better on tasks and are more motivated if they feel like they are part of a group. Using language like "we are going to work on this project together" helps children feel included.

- **Make it Predictable**
  - Consistent daily routines help children sift through the sometimes messy reality of life and order their experience of the world.

- **Respond in Kind**
  - It's hard to tell what someone is thinking unless you share it. Narrating what you're doing, for example, saying "Hmmm... I want a glass of water" as you open the cabinet to reach for a cup helps children begin to connect your actions with the mental states guiding them.

Source: Amelia R. Bachleda (I-LABS, University of Washington) and Ross A. Thompson (University of California, Davis)