

# MOTHERS AND BABIES

FALL 2023 NEWSLETTER



## **INTERESTED IN PARTNERING WITH US?**

### **ENRICH: Early Intervention to Promote Cardiovascular Health of Mothers and Children**

**Northwestern University** is providing an opportunity for HFA or PAT home visiting programs to partner with ENRICH.

**ENRICH** provides a toolkit of behavioral, social, and mindful approaches to promote cardiovascular health among pregnant individuals, new mothers, and their children. To learn more, including involvement and responsibilities, please click the title hyperlink above.

ENRICH activities will begin in early 2024. Agencies and participants will be compensated for their involvement.

**If interested in participating, please contact:**

**Danielle Lorch:** [dmlorch@northwestern.edu](mailto:dmlorch@northwestern.edu)

## **INNOVATION UPDATES:**

### **MB-TXT: Mothers and Babies Text**

**MB-TXT** is a series of texts that complements MB content and focuses on skill reinforcement and practice. All texts are available in English or Spanish.

**If interested in MB-TXT, please contact us at:** [mbtxt@northwestern.edu](mailto:mbtxt@northwestern.edu)

(\*FREE for MIECHV programs in Illinois)

### **FAB: Fathers and Babies**

**FAB** is a 9-session stress management intervention aimed at improving fathers' mental health while equipping them with effective strategies to support their partners' mental health in their shared parenting journey.

FAB can be delivered alongside the MB intervention, or as a standalone intervention. Delivery options include in-person, virtual, text messages, or a mix.

We're excited to collaborate with you to introduce FAB to your families. If you are interested in learning more about FAB and want to be kept up-to-date, please complete our Inquiry form using the QR code.



# DIY FALL PLAY DOUGH

SENSORY PLAY FOR FAMILIES



## Child-Friendly DIY Fall Scented Play Dough

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup baby cereal (oatmeal or rice cereal)
- 1/4 cup unsweetened applesauce
- 2-3 tablespoons water (adjust for desired consistency)
- 2 tsp vegetable/coconut oil
- 1/2 to 1 teaspoon of fall spices (cinnamon, nutmeg, or pumpkin spice)

### Instructions:

1. In a mixing bowl, combine the baby cereal and unsweetened applesauce. Mix them together until they are well combined.
2. Adjust and add water and oil gradually to achieve the desired texture, whilst kneading the dough. You want it to be soft and pliable, but not too sticky.
3. Once you have the dough at the right consistency, add your chosen fall spice for scent and color. Start with a small amount and adjust to your preference. Keep kneading the dough well to evenly distribute the spice.
4. Now, your fall-scented edible playdough is ready for play! You can offer it to your baby in small, supervised portions. Make sure to wash your baby's hands before and after play.

**\*\* Safety Note: Always supervise your child during play dough activities to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience. \*\***

## Play Dough Sensory Play Benefits for Children

### Sensory play benefits for children:

1. Tactile Play: In tactile play, children explore objects using their hands, learning about pressure, temperature, vibrations, and more. It enhances their understanding of different sensations and textures, promoting sensory development.
2. Proprioception Sensory Play: This type of play helps children develop spatial awareness of their bodies. Activities like pushing, pulling, and jumping teach them where they are physically in space and how their limbs relate to their body, fostering motor skills and coordination.
3. Olfactory and Taste Sensory Play: Olfactory play relates to the sense of smell, which is closely tied to taste. Children can develop these senses through activities like smelling flowers or tasting objects, promoting sensory exploration and expanding their sensory perception.

Sensory play offers a wide range of benefits, including improved sensory development, enhanced motor skills, and a deeper understanding of the world around them (Subramani, A).

Elevate your playdough experience with these creative ideas. Encourage your child to use forks, popsicle sticks, or toys to create patterns and shapes in their playdough, fostering imagination and fine motor skills. Explore shapes, colors, and sizes together, describing them to promote language development and strengthen the parent-child bond.

Subramani, A. (2023, February 6). Exploring the Benefits of Sensory Play for Children. Only About Children. <https://www.oac.edu.au/news-views/sensory-play/#:~:text=Sensory%20play%20encourages%20learning%20through,of%20language%20and%20motor%20skills>.

Sacha. (2022, June 22). Baby Rice Cereal & Applesauce Play Dough (Gluten-Free!) . The Craft at Home Family . <https://thecraftathomefamily.com/baby-rice-cereal-applesauce-play-dough/>

Raising Children Network. (2023, May 9). Playdough Activities: Children 3-6 years. Raising Children Network. <https://raisingchildren.net.au/guides/activity-guides/making-and-building/playdough-activities>

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

## Empowering Families through Mothers and Babies: New Mexico, ENMRSH, Inc.

Home visitor Dwan Flen, at ENMRSH, Inc. Clovis Site, has been working to address the transformative impact of Mothers and Babies (MB) on families. Dwan, an experienced home visitor working in Early Childhood Intervention Services, offered valuable insights into the program's unique effectiveness.

Dwan's expertise in behavioral services, coupled with the unwavering support of her supervisor, Roberta, greatly contribute to her success in implementing MB. Dwan's ability to make sessions relatable to individual mothers, understanding their inner and outer thoughts, exemplify the program's effectiveness. An amazing example Dwan shared was highlighting a first-time, 17-year-old mom eager to learn and improve. Dwan's dedication, paired with the support of MB, empowered this young mother to navigate her parenthood journey with confidence and knowledge.

One of the key aspects of how Dwan uses MB, is by applying it more universally. The way they use MB serves a diverse demographic, embracing families from various backgrounds, single-parent households, as well as two-parent, and mixed adult family homes. Notably, the program has been successfully extended to support a single father within her caseload, an initiative that closely ties into our developing program, Fathers and Babies.

A critical component of MB, emphasized by Dwan, was its focus on mental health training. Dwan has mothers in her caseloads that have had prior mental health diagnoses, making MB's mental health training especially impactful. Dwan praised MB for helping parents identify their emotions and providing coping mechanisms, as well as encouraging them to find their once loved hobbies or discover new ones, and fostering a sense of companionship and understanding that they are not alone in their struggles.

Something fruitful that Dwan mentioned is the successful use of mindfulness in MB. Initially, it was easily met with resistance, however, with Dwan's support, mothers gradually embraced mindfulness exercises, finding solace in activities like nature walks and journaling. Dwan passionately encourages her clients to rediscover activities they enjoyed before pregnancy, emphasizing the program's holistic approach to well-being.

Mothers and Babies, as illuminated by Dwan's experiences, stands as a beacon of support for families, regardless of their unique circumstances. Its universal approach, mental health focus, emphasis on mindfulness, and tailored support empower families to embrace parenthood with resilience and joy. Dwan's narrative showcases the program's potential to uplift families, making it an invaluable resource for home visiting sites, fostering stronger, healthier communities.



*Dwan and her children.*