

Toddler Topics 2005

A series to help you parent your toddler

ISSUE FOUR

Welcome to the **2005 Toddler Topics**, a newsletter for parents of young children. Toddler Topics is created by Penn State Cooperative Extension Family Living Educators and colleagues.

Once again, we are offering Toddler Topics as an electronic newsletter. Camera ready copies are available for individuals who make the request. You may use portions of this newsletter in your own publications as long as the material is not changed and credit is given to the author.

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Contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension Office in your county for additional educational programs of interest to you and your family.

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PARENTING PRINCIPLES

Jeannine Ruth Richlin, Extension Educator
Sullivan County

Below we continue to highlight principles from the must-read book for all parents: The Ten Basic Principles of Good Parenting by Laurence Steinberg, Ph.D. Future issues will contain two more principles. Dr. Steinberg condenses the essentials of good parenting into ten basic principles, which apply no matter what the age of your child.

Principle 7: Be Consistent. The single greatest contributor to children's disciplinary problems is inconsistent parenting. If your rules vary from day to day in an unpredictable fashion, or if you enforce them only intermittently, your child's misbehavior is your fault, not his. Dr. Steinberg addresses the significance of routines, maintaining a united front, how to be consistent without being rigid, and how to identify nonnegotiable items.

Principle 8: Avoid Harsh Discipline. There is no truth to the idea that punishment is inherently bad for children. The important question about punishment is not whether it should be used, but when and how. Parents should never use physical punishment or be verbally abusive. Instead, they need to control their anger and learn the right way to punish.

FUN WAYS TO ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN TO READ

Cheryl Miller, Extension Educator
Perry County
Source: University of Illinois Ext.



Reading can be the key that unlocks a whole world of information. Parents are teachers; they set an example by reading every day. Listen to what your children have to say and answer their questions. Read aloud to your children everyday. There are many fun activities that you can do with your children to encourage them to read. Try a few of these:

ABC Book. Use the blank side of old papers. Write one upper and lower case letter (A, a) on each page. Have the children look at the letters and help them sound out the letter. This book can be stapled or placed in a notebook. Use this book when to go on a 'letter hunt' in books, newspapers, or magazines.

The Match Game. Create a game by drawing duplicate shapes, patterns, letters, or words on cards, have the child match the cards.



Create a Story. Make up stories with your children. Take turns between parent and child and add lines to the story. Use familiar people, places or names to keep it fun and interesting.

Repetition. Read books more than once. After your child is familiar with a story, ask them to fill in the blanks when you pause. Then have your child tell the story to you. Encourage them to 'read' the story to others, even their pets or stuffed animals.

Safety Walk. Take your children on a walk around the neighborhood or to a park. Point

out signs and identify the letters and numbers, then read what is on the signs. (House numbers, stop sign, and street names or business names). Have children name the pieces of play equipment at the park. This game can be adapted and used when traveling.

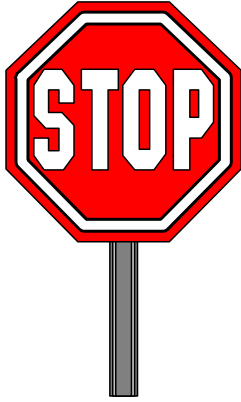
Time spent together with your children is important. Make reading a fun activity and your child will be learning without any pressure or stress. There isn't a much more worthwhile activity than pre-reading fun and reading – they are setting the foundation for learning.

WORDLESS BOOKS

Ellen Meanix Helfrick
Better Kid Care Coordinator,
York County

Wordless books can encourage a child to tell you the story. Check with your local librarian for a suggestion of wordless books you can borrow. Check on-line: simply 'google' wordless books and see what you get. If you don't want to borrow or buy these books, you can convert a new book by covering the text before the first reading or turn your favorite stories into wordless books by covering the text with your hand and asking questions. Soon your toddler will be showing you how much they remember.

Better yet, make your own wordless book starring your child. Take a photo of each event during their day and place them on paper and into a notebook. (You can leave room for eventually adding text later.) Title this book: "MY DAY" and have your toddler 'read' this book to your spouse or a grandparent. These books can start out simple with only four pictures and then grow into a chapter book as you add more details. This activity lends itself to introducing sequencing as you put the pictures in order – did we eat breakfast before we got dressed?



PREVENTING TEMPER TANTRUMS

Nancy B. Stevens, County Extension Director
Montgomery County

There are many reasons why a child may have a temper tantrum. They usually occur when a child's emotional and physical needs are not being met. These instances include hunger, and being overly tired. You might also see a child erupt when they are frustrated and unable to complete a task such as putting a puzzle together or dressing themselves. Sometimes new situations or lots of activity are more than a toddler can handle and they can't always express their feelings in words. Some children react when they are moved abruptly from one activity to another or when they are told "no."

The frequency of tantrums usually decreases as the child gets older and is able to talk about feelings and ask for help. Until that time comes, you may want to look for patterns of when tantrums occur most frequently. Do they happen at a certain time of day - perhaps right before meals or when you are shopping? If so, look for ways to go shopping alone or avoid letting your child get too tired or too hungry if these are triggers.

Try to give your child a few minutes warning before ending an activity. For example, say, "In five minutes it will be time to put the blocks away."

Parents need to be firm with toddlers, but offer choices whenever possible. You might say, "It is time for dinner. Would you like to wash your hands by yourself or would you like me to help you wash before you come to the table?"

Don't offer choices when there really isn't one. Some parents set themselves up for trouble by saying things like "Would you like to go to bed now?" or "It's time for bed, okay?" If you are guilty of this, don't be surprised if your child answers you with a big, "NO!"



Don't overreact when your child does say "No." You might try saying, "I know you don't want to go to bed, but it's time. Would you like me to sing you a song or read you a book after you're in your crib?"

Provide alternatives. For example if your child can't have a cookie, offer him a cracker or a piece of fruit instead. Choices give a child a feeling of control and may head off a confrontation.

Finally, don't make your shopping trips or other outings too long. Children have a limited amount of patience and react when pushed beyond that point. Before leaving home, explain to your child the behavior you expect from him at the store, playground, etc. Make sure he is rested and give him a healthy snack before you go so you know he is not hungry. You might also bring along some favorite activities to distract him along the way and to possibly prevent the dreaded temper tantrum.

SAVING FOR THE FUTURE

Robin Kuleck, MSED, CFCS Extension
Educator – Resource Management
Elk County

Americans are skilled spenders and poor savers. To develop the savings habit and achieve future goals, hold a family meeting to develop a “wish list” of the family’s dreams. Next, turn these dreams into goals – **SMART** goals. Take each dream and rewrite it to be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound.

If your dream is “Someday, Suzy will go to college”. Then your SMART goal could be “Beginning with our next payday, we will buy \$50 U.S. Savings Bonds each month for the next 16 years toward Suzy’s college expenses.

To determine your SMART goal you need cost factors as a starting point. Saving for more than one goal simultaneously is a challenge, but it can be done. People spend money on what is important to them. If family goals are more important than what you are usually spending money on, you need to trade off spending today to achieve tomorrow’s goals.

OUTSIDE FUN!

Mary Ann Oyler, Extension Educator, Franklin County

Outside playtime is a great way to ensure that each and every child experiences the type of early environment – at home, at child care or preschool, and in the community – that will promote their early learning. The early childhood years, birth through eight, lay the foundation for children’s success in school and later life. There is no better time than now to introduce your toddler to engaging experiences with you outside in order to promote their early learning.

Why not try some of these activities with your toddler next time you head outside:

Gardening fun: have children plant seeds in paper cups. Beans, radishes, and lettuce all sprout quickly. Water gently and place in a sunny spot and check daily to see if the seeds have
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OUTSIDE FUN!

Have all family members track their spending for a week. At the end of the week – see where the money was “frittered” and make plans to “save” toward those SMART goals, rather than fritter it away! Periodically review your progress and revise your goals as necessary.

Savings Bonds were used in the example, because they are a very flexible savings instrument. Education IRA and 529-college savings plan impose penalties if the money invested in them is not used for post-secondary education purposes.

- Savings Bonds grow tax-deferred for 30 years.
- Savings Bonds are tax-free if used for educational expenses as long as the child is not an owner and the parent was over age 24 when the bond was purchased.
- Savings Bonds are considered parental assets (if titled properly) and thus don’t factor as heavily in financial aid formulas as they would if the student owned them.
- To learn more check this website.
www.savingsbonds.gov



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sprouted. Go one step further and let them plant their plants in a pot or in a real garden and enjoy the vegetables. Many plants are designed for planting during a time other than spring – get creative!

Start Painting: Give your children a paint brush and plastic bucket filled with water. Let your child paint away on sidewalks, wall, etc. When you have snow, paint with colored water in squirt or spray bottles.

Outside Drawing: Secure a safe area and allow your child to draw with sidewalk chalk to their heart's content. This is a great place to practice shapes and colors and letters. When done, let them help clean up during water fun or save their art and watch how the weather effects it.

Hammer Away: What child doesn't love to pound? Have young children pound golf tees into solid chunks of packing Styrofoam.



Dig for Treasures: Bury small toys in the sandbox and let toddlers hunt for treasures.

Leaf Bracelets: Wrap a piece of masking tape (sticky side out) around your child's wrist. Collect different kinds of leaves by sticking them on the tape to make a bracelet.

PLAY -- IT'S CHILD'S WORK!

Denise H. Continenza, Extension Educator
Family Living, Lehigh County

At first glance, it is easy to think of play as a way to keep children occupied and out of trouble. But play is such a fascinating experience for the children who do it and the parents who observe them.

Infants play by exploring. They like playthings that stimulate their senses such as rattles or objects that they can track with their eyes. And how they squeal with glee when a toy makes a sound in response to touching it! This is called **sensorimotor play**.



Toddlers move from exploring qualities of objects to exploring how toys or objects can be used for other purposes. For example, a

child might try to sing into a paper towel roll, as if it were the microphone. This kind of play is called **dramatic play**.

Pre-schoolers are fascinated with **fantasy play**. Children this age learn about the world around them by pretending to be different people such as Mommy, a doctor, or a firefighter. They may do this with puppets, with dolls, or by dressing up in garb suited for that role.



Play is indeed a child's work. It is the way they develop skills that are essential for life. Problem-solving, language, motor skills, development of their senses, social skills are just a few of the things that children learn when they play with toys, with playmates, and especially with their parents!

NEW BABY

Marg Malehorn, Family and Consumer
Sciences Extension Educator
Cumberland County

When there is a new baby in the house, sharing in the family's joy and learning how to be the big brother or sister, can have its ups and downs. Some siblings feel loving, and tender one moment, angry and jealous the next. How could such a little person make the older child feel so mixed-up?

Research says all these feelings are normal in adjusting to the new baby. Visitors and grandparents may walk right past the toddler to see the new baby, take pictures and make funny sounds, while the toddler wonders, "What's all the fuss?"

Introductions are important to give the toddler a role in the baby's care like feeding, bathing, diaper changing and entertaining. Although baby can't "play", show the older sibling how baby can follow an object with her eyes or hold on to the toddler's finger.

Prepare the toddler for changes to their routine ahead of the baby's arrival, if possible. Talk about the short-term separation while mother is in the hospital and about the arrangements made for him.

Teach positive and gentle ways with the baby. As the infant becomes mobile,

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balance opportunities to protect the toddler's toys and space, and show them how to include the baby in games and distract her with a different toy or activity.

Toddlers need regular times alone with both parents; time when they are the center of attention and love. They need help from parents to control their aggression toward the baby and a chance to express sad and angry feelings without having the parents trying to explain them away.

Most of all toddlers need reassurance through words and actions that the arrival of the baby does not mean they have been replaced. Explain that the toddler is an important, unique person in the family. Choose a variety of library books to read to your toddler and explain about the new baby's arrival. Some titles include:



Getting to Know the New Baby

By Bob Graham

The New Baby at Your House

By Joanna Cole

Just Me and My Little Brother

By Mercer Mayer

Berenstain Bears' New Baby

By Stan and Jan Berenstain

That New Baby

By Patricia Relf

Angelina's Baby Sister

By Katharine Holabird

Looking for more parenting
and childcare information?
Visit the Better Kid Care website.
www.betterkidcare.psu.edu

