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26 Months

Dorothea Cudaback

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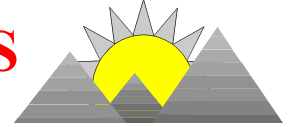
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GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children



26 MONTHS

Watch Out: Prevent Cuts and Scrapes

Small children get minor cuts and scrapes very often. These injuries happen when children fall, run into things, or step on sharp objects.

- ◆ Do not let your child play where there is sharp-edged furniture.
- ◆ Do not let your child play where she can climb to high places.
- ◆ Close doors to rooms that are not safe and doors that go out to your yard.
- ◆ Put shoes on your child when she runs outdoors.

Games for Growing

What's Your Name?

Purpose of the Game: To give your child practice saying his first and last name and to help him feel good about himself.

How to Play: When you are with your child, say his name to him in songs and stories, using his last name too. Make up games where he tells his name. Show him how much you enjoy it when he names himself in his photographs.

Fun Drummer

Purpose of the Game: To help your child learn about different sounds and rhythms and to build coordination.

How to Play: Show your child how to make different drumming sounds by hitting things with a spoon or a fork. He can hit a pan, a chair, the floor, his shoe, a bottle, and so forth. You can take turns leading the game, with one of you hitting one thing after another in sequence. You can also try drumming or singing to music, or you can mix fast and slow drumming sounds.

What's It Like to Be 26 Months-Old?

How I Grow

- ◆ I can balance on one foot for about a second.
- ◆ I'm interested in lots of things but usually just for a few minutes.
- ◆ I get into things and make messes.
- ◆ I can take lids off jars. Be sure things you don't want me to open have safety caps.
- ◆ I may have learned from adults to fear snakes, mice, and spiders.

How I Talk

- ◆ I'm learning what *front*, *back*, *side*, and *under* mean.
- ◆ I am paying more attention now to what people say.
- ◆ I can use plurals like dogs, books, cups.

- ◆ I can imitate my parents' voices.
- ◆ I talk mostly to myself and adults, not much to other children.

What I Have Learned

- ◆ I can sometimes understand "today" and "pretty soon," but I can't understand "yesterday."
- ◆ I'm beginning to understand the difference between one and two.
- ◆ I can sort silverware in a drawer.

How I Get Along with Others

- ◆ I am now more willing to be away from you.
- ◆ I want to do things my own way by myself.
- ◆ I say "no" a lot and often do what you want me not to do just to show you how independent I am.
- ◆ It helps me to feel important if you admire what I have learned to do.
- ◆ I like our routines, like the story and hug you give me before I go to sleep.

What I Can Do for Myself

- ◆ I'm ready to learn to brush my teeth but you will need to help me until I am older and better coordinated.
- ◆ I'm still better at undressing than dressing.
- ◆ I like to help you put things away and clean things up.

Play I Enjoy

- ◆ I like to run, gallop, and sway to music.
- ◆ I like toys that I can pile up or nest or sort by color or size.
- ◆ I like to hear favorite songs over and over again.
- ◆ I sometimes act silly just to make you laugh.
- ◆ I like to paint with large paint brushes and finger paint; I'm pretty messy.

Children can be very different from each other. Don't worry if your child is *early* or *late* in growth. Look for your child's growth in each area. Encourage each new ability. If you are concerned about your child's development, talk with your doctor.

Be Good to Yourself: When You're All Tied Up in Knots

Stress can make your body feel bad. Over the long term, stress can cause physical damage. Over the short term, you may feel headaches, tight muscles, backaches, or a stiff neck. Here are some exercises you can do any time to relieve the physical effects of stress.

Sometimes stress makes us breathe poorly and we don't get enough oxygen. Deep breathing can make you feel better and it can give you a sort of **time-out** to help you handle whatever is causing the stress. Close your eyes and sit up straight. Breathe in, slowly and deeply. Count silently to two—hold the air in for another count—then let the air out slowly. Repeat this slow, deep breathing for 5 or 10 minutes if you can. You should be more relaxed when you finish.

When your muscles are sore but you don't have time to go swimming or walking, try these exercises wherever you are. Try to raise your shoulders up to your ears. Hold for a few seconds, then drop your shoulders back down. Repeat a few times. Try rotating your shoulders around, one at a time, then together. With your shoulders relaxed, move your head slowly from side to side, then around in a circle. Make sure to keep breathing deeply while you exercise.

Nutrition: Television Tells Toddlers About Cereals

Has this happened to you yet? You are pushing your grocery cart down the aisle of the supermarket. All of a sudden, your toddler sees a certain brand of

breakfast cereal. He begins calling out the name of the cereal. He wants you to buy it. You are amazed. You've never bought that kind of cereal, and he's never eaten it. How did he find out about it? Probably from television.

Toddlers don't seem to pay much attention to television, but they are often aware of what is happening on the screen. Commercials are very appealing because of the action and the noise. The food most often advertised during children's television programs is cereal. Some of these cereals are nutritious, others are not. In fact, some of these cereals have more sugar than cereal in them. They are more like candy than cereal.

How can you tell if a cereal is high in sugar? Look for the list of ingredients on the cereal box. They are listed in order of amounts. The first ingredient is what there is most of in the cereal. The last ingredient is what there is least of in the cereal. If the first ingredient in the list is sugar, there is more sugar in the cereal than anything else. You will want to choose another cereal lower in sugar.

What do you tell your child when you decide not to buy the cereal? Say, "This is not a *good for you cereal*. We want to buy a *good for you cereal* to help you grow healthy and strong." Check labels on other cereals and let him choose from the cereals that are low in sugar. If your child is unhappy because you aren't going to buy the cereal he wants, move away from the cereal display. Go on and do the rest of your shopping. You can spend time reading cereal labels when you are shopping alone.

Homemade Toys that Teach: Feelie Bag

Children learn by touching things around them. They learn that some things are soft and some are hard, some cool and others warm. Some things are rough and some smooth, some light and some heavy. This toy can help your toddler learn to tell one kind of feel from another.

Materials:

- ◆ Paper bag
- ◆ Assorted small objects to feel
- ◆ Crayon

Making the Toy: Write your child's name in large letters with crayon on the paper bag. This lets her know that the bag is hers and gives her the idea of writing.

Choose some things she might enjoy feeling, and put them in a bag. Examples would be a smooth rock, a rough rock, a piece of wood, a piece of paper egg carton, some pieces of cloth, a feather, and so on. Be sure the things you put in the bag are not sharp or dangerous.

Playing: Close the top of the bag, leaving a hole just big enough for the child's hand. Ask your toddler to reach in and to find something soft or hard or smooth or rough. Ask her what she has found and help her learn to say, "I have found something hard" or "I have found something rough."

You can turn this into a guessing game. Have your toddler reach in and touch something. Have her say, "I have found something soft. What is it?" or "I have found something hard. What is it?" Then you guess what it is. You can take turns guessing. This is a good game for two or three children to play together. Your toddler can help you change the game by putting different things in the bag.

Guidance and Self-Esteem

We all want our children to grow up feeling they are capable and lovable. One of the trickiest and most important skills parents must learn is guiding their children in ways that control naughty behavior and help the children feel good about themselves. This is hard to do when you are angry or upset because your child is causing a problem. You need practice and a lot of patience at these times not to be critical or accusing.

Unfortunately, a young child who lives with criticism can come to feel hopeless, and may stop trying to cooperate. When your child misbehaves,

she needs “help-outs” instead of “put-downs.” “Help-outs” make her feel you love her and you know she can learn to do better. “Put-downs” do just the opposite.

The following are *help-out* comments:

- ◆ Here’s a sponge. I’ll help you clean it up.
- ◆ That’s hard to do. Let me do it with you.
- ◆ I’m proud of you for trying that. Hold it with both hands next time and it may not fall.
- ◆ That is a dangerous thing to do. You could fall. Let me hold your hand.

The following are destructive *put-downs*:

- ◆ I knew that would happen if I let you do it alone.
- ◆ Can’t you do anything right?
- ◆ You’re being a brat.
- ◆ Why do you always drop things?
- ◆ You never pick up your clothes.
- ◆ Won’t you ever learn?
- ◆ Can’t you see that’s dangerous?

Listen to yourself. Try to use *help-outs*, not *put-downs*.

Toddler Talk: I Like Learning New Words

You can help me learn words.

- ◆ When we go for walks, take along a bag to collect treasures like leaves, rocks, flowers, pieces of wood. We can look at these treasures and name them when we get back home.
- ◆ Repeat the names of things over and over again, using simple words and short sentences. Talk to me about what I am doing and what you are doing. Don’t use baby talk.

- ◆ Let me get things for you. Name what you want and I will even go to other rooms to find it.

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