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28 Months

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GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children

28 MONTHS

Turn Win-Lose into Win-Win

Your toddler's growing independence may be a big source of stress in your life right now. Sometimes you may feel like you're in a war with your child, trying to win every battle. Some battles end so that you both lose. When you're the one who wins, your child might fight back even harder. When he wins, you might feel angry, defeated, or guilty.

Win-win. One way to reduce this kind of stress is to handle these battles in a way that lets both of you win at least a little. Maybe you can't talk about compromise with a stubborn 2-year old, but you can figure out how to end up with no one feeling like a loser. If you refuse to get caught up in a battle, then your child can't lose and neither can you.

For example: Susie demands that you read her a story and you want her to take a nap. Maybe Susie can pick out the story before nap time, and you can read it when nap is finished. Maybe you can read half the story before and half after the nap.

Or suppose Peter wants to help you frost that special cake and you want to do it alone. Maybe you can give Peter a cupcake or a cookie to frost all by himself while you frost the big cake.

With a little imagination and patience, you can find a way to let both you and your child win. You'll both feel better for it.

Research in Brief: Make-Believe Play

Imagination is a wonderful thing and we can help our children develop it. Children love to pretend they are someone who is important and powerful, like Superman, a doctor, a teacher, a parent. This is a good, healthy part of growing up. It helps children practice for the future. It gives them pleasure and comfort.

Imaginary friends can give a special kind of companionship. Dr. Burton White found in his studies that well-developed young children often pretend they are someone else—usually an adult. He also found that most of these children had received a good deal of encouragement from their parents to engage in fantasy play.

Join your child in fantasy play. You will make this important play even more special for your toddler and will be encouraging her creativity.

Games for Growing

Pretend You Are

Purpose of the Game: To help your child use his body and imagination.
How to Play: Ask your child to imitate familiar things like a flower, a tree, a train, a dog, a boat, daddy driving a car. Take turns being the flower, the tree, and so on.

First Numbers

Purpose of the Game: To help your child learn the difference between one and two.

How to Play: Play a special game with your child, showing her groups of things that have one, two, or many in them. You can use small toys, books, paper cups, flowers, bottle tops, or other small safe things for this game.

Encourage her to pick out the group that is one. Put two objects together and ask her how many. Put one object out and ask her how many. Let her have a turn asking you how many. Remember, play the game only as long as it is fun for both of you.

Homemade Toys that Teach: A Prop for Pretend Play

Isn't it nice to see your child's imagination develop? When your toddler pretends he can be as powerful, as big, and as important as he wants to be, this is a good feeling. He can practice being like members of his family or kings, teachers, or police officers.

Imagination and pretend play are important. They help your child cope with his world and prepare for his future. They help him develop his creativity, and they are just plain fun. You can encourage his imagination and be a part of his pretend play by making a carton play place with him.

For the carton play place you will need:

Large cardboard carton that you might get from grocery or appliance stores. Your carton should be large enough for your toddler to crawl inside. Be sure all open staples are removed so little bodies don't get hurt.

Crayons, colored paper or streamers, balloons, and so forth for decorating the play place.

The play place can be whatever your toddler wants it to be—a house, a spaceship, a boat, a cave, a fort, or all of these. Place the box so the open end is on the floor. Cut windows, portholes, or whatever your toddler wants on the sides and back of the box. Let your toddler decorate the play place however he wants. He may want you to write his name on the box or put a message or sign on it.

Health: Anemia

If your child seems pale and unusually tired, ask your doctor about anemia. Anemia is the most common warning of nutritional deficiency in children.

Anemia can be a sign of disease or of a diet lacking in iron. Some forms of anemia are very serious. They signal a problem with red cell production or serious loss of blood. When you take your child to the doctor, ask about a test for hemoglobin or hematocrit, to check your child for anemia.

Preparing Your Toddler for Special Occasions

Parents are often eager to have their children join in the fun of celebrations. For the young child, these festive occasions may be happy or they may be scary and upsetting.

Your young child may not want to talk to a strange Santa Claus or shake hands with a 5-foot Easter bunny. She may not laugh when she is swooped down upon by a neighborhood child in a witch costume. She might not enjoy meeting new relatives at a family gathering. You can't protect your child from every frightening situation, but here are a few things you can do to prepare her.

- Talk to your child about where you are planning to go. Tell her what she will see and do there.
- Practice ahead of time, if possible. Show your toddler pictures of Santa before visiting him. Let her play with masks in preparation for Halloween. Before the family party, show her photographs and tell her about the relatives she may see.
- Before rushing into a gathering, observe the situation with your child from a safe distance. Let her watch other children meeting Santa or

the Easter bunny, and give her reassurance by hugs and words.

Don't force your little one to get close to unfamiliar or scary people or characters. Let her take her time getting acquainted and don't pressure her to participate.

Be Good to Yourself: When There's Never Enough Time

Stress can be caused by a feeling that you have too much to do and not enough time. You can't even get all the necessary chores done, much less play with your child or take time for yourself. Managing your time better can help prevent this kind of stress.

Here are some ideas:

Make a list of everything you want to get done for one day or one week. Decide which things are most important, and which ones can wait or don't have to be done at all. Be reasonable about the number of things you can do in the time you have.

Write out a schedule for your day so you can aim for time to finish each task. Think about how you'll do the task in the time you've planned.

Group chores together if they need similar tools. Group all the chores that require going out, or the ones that require someone else to care for your child.

Figure out how much you really can do in the time you have. Make sure you build in time for the most important people in your life—your child and yourself.

Choosing Books for Toddlers

When you select books for toddlers, consider these suggestions:

The subject should be familiar to your child. It should involve things the child knows about in his world. The plot should be simple or nonexistent. Some books have only pictures and labels on them. These can be fun for toddlers. Your child will enjoy turning the pages with you, seeing the pictures, and talking to you about them.

The words in the book should be simple and clear, and there should be just a few words on each page. Toddlers enjoy books in which the words are fun to say and are repeated. The pictures should be large, clear, and brightly colored. Toddlers often like drawings better than photographs because they are easier to understand.

See if you can find sturdy cardboard books. These can be purchased inexpensively or borrowed from your library. Your child can turn the pages of these books more easily and the pages will not tear.

Appreciation & Thanks to the Original Authors

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