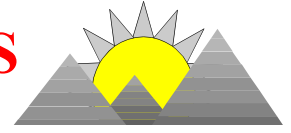


# GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children



## 31 MONTHS

### Your Child Enjoys Special Adults

Have you noticed how much your child enjoys other special adults—grandparents, aunts, uncles, older friends, and neighbors? While parents are always the most important people, young children learn from other caring adults that they can trust, love, and enjoy. Other adults make your child's world more varied, interesting, and exciting. Each one has something important and different to share and to teach.

Your toddler needs these adult relationships. Do all you can to encourage them. They are a precious part of your child's life.

### Homemade Toys that Teach

#### *Egg Carton Fun*

This toy can help toddlers learn about shapes and colors, and teach them to understand similarities and differences.

#### **Materials:**

- Cardboard egg carton (don't use styrofoam; children can easily break off and swallow pieces)
- Poster paint or crayons
- Magazine pictures

**Making the Toy:** Color the inside cups of an egg carton different colors with crayon or with watercolor paints. Use bright colors—red, blue, green, yellow. Cut circles out of cardboard small enough to fit into the cups. Color the circles with colors that match the painted cups.

**Playing:** Place the circles on the table or floor. Ask your toddler to put the circles in the cup of the same color: the red circle in the red cup, the blue circle in the blue cup, and so on.

#### *Practice Naming*

Children can learn the names of objects with a different egg carton game. Put pictures of things cut out of magazines into each egg carton cup. Choose pictures of things familiar to your child such as a dog, house, car, cup, ball, or tree. Be sure your child knows the name of each item. Ask him to find them and take them out as you name them.

#### *Teach Shapes*

To teach shapes, you can paste or color a triangle, a square, a circle, a diamond, and a star inside different cups. Hand your toddler a set of these shapes and ask him to match the shapes to those in the cups. For an older toddler, you can print numbers or letters in each egg carton cup. Hand him a set of numbers or letters on cards for matching.

## What's It Like to Be 2 1/2 Years Old?

### *How I Grow*

- I can walk on tiptoe pretty well now.
- I can stand on one foot for about 2 seconds.
- I can run pretty well, but I'm not able to start and stop very quickly.
- I'm really unpredictable and have to be watched constantly.

### *How I Talk*

- I can say my full name easily.
- I am learning lots of words, about 50 new words a month.
- I make four- or five-word sentences like "get some for me," "get out of my way."
- I use "I" instead of my name when I refer to myself.
- I can understand cold, tired, and hungry.
- I get angry and unhappy when adults don't understand my words.

### *What I Have Learned*

- I'm good at matching shapes on a form board.
- I can match some colors.
- I love to learn and I ask questions almost constantly.

### *How I Get Along with Others*

- I like doing things for others.
- I may order others around or threaten to hit them if they don't do what I say.
- Once in a while, I can be kind and polite with other children.
- I love to give orders.
- I have trouble getting along with my brothers and sisters.

### *What I Can Do for Myself*

- I am beginning to control my bowel and bladder movements during the day. I probably won't be able to control them at night until I am 3 or 4 years old.

- I can feed myself at least part of a meal without spilling but when I get tired, I want help.

### *Play I Enjoy*

- I like to hear stories read just as they are written and I don't like it when you skip parts.
- I like pretend play, like feeding my toy bear or sweeping the floor.
- I like to play with clay; I can make long snakes.

## Games for Growing

### *Surprise Path*

**Purpose of the Game:** To encourage your child's physical development and to help her learn how to follow a path.

**How to Play:** This game can be played indoors or out. When your child isn't looking, make a path marked out in some way by a rope, chalk, garden hose, or ribbon. Be creative. Layout the path so it goes around in circles, over rocks, upstairs, under boards and tables, through tunnels, and so on. Let your child follow the path alone, or you and she can take turns leading each other.

### *Copy Cat*

**Purpose of the Game:** To help your child learn and practice body movements and increase her ability to observe.

**How to Play:** This game can be played indoors or out. Stand facing your child and make different body movements for her to imitate, such as jumping, bending, turning, stretching, hopping. Take turns leading the game. Other family members can join in to add to the fun.

## Health: Developmental Assessments

How do we know if our toddlers are learning what they need to become healthy and normal children? A developmental assessment measures the progress of toddlers as they learn to walk, feed themselves,

listen to stories and understand them, say words, ask for toys, and follow directions.

The purpose of a developmental assessment is to review the toddler's developmental achievement. The assessment compares this achievement with the developmental achievement of children of similar ages and backgrounds. This helps in identifying possible developmental delays. Even though there are normal variations in children's development, infants and toddlers tend to learn similar tasks at similar ages. If a toddler lags behind, she may have a problem that requires special help.

Parents know the most about their child. Doctors or nurses do an initial developmental assessment as part of the physical examination and health history. They will observe and talk to the toddlers. Information provided by the parents is especially important, since the parents have the most complete knowledge of the children and are better able to comment on their growth and development.

If problems arise, ask for help. If developmental lags or delays are identified as part of the health assessment, additional developmental testing should be done by experts in child growth and development. Parents should ask for this service.

This is what a typical toddler could be doing at about 2 years of age.

- Gross Motor Development: Stands on one foot with slight support.
- Fine Motor Development: Attempts to turn pages of a book or magazine on own initiative or after demonstration.
- Self-Help Skills Development: Uses cup and spoon.
- Social-Emotional Development: Asserts feelings with negative behavior such as tantrums, kicking, holding breath, running away.
- Cognitive Development: Responds by pointing, touching, or looking when asked to indicate a familiar object such as shoes, own toy, clothing.

- Language Development: Expressive—initiates simple words or sounds. Receptive—after being given a block, he follows two out of four instructions, such as “put on table,” “put on chair,” “give to mama,” “give to me.”

## Discipline Is Not Punishment

When children misbehave we need to stop them, let them know what they have done wrong, and tell them why it is wrong. Most important, we need to teach them the right thing to do. When we punish children, we expect to make them suffer physically or emotionally in *payment* for doing something wrong.

**Punishment has many disadvantages.** Punishment usually does stop the unwanted behavior for a while, but it tends to have other effects that can cause problems. Punishment may cause children to fight back with aggressive or more naughty behavior. It may teach them that they can do what they want as long as they are willing to *pay the price* of punishment. They could come to feel like *bad* children, unloved and unlovable and give up trying to please you.

Most important, punishment usually does not help children know what they should do, only what they should not do. It does not guide or teach. It does not build a sense of personal responsibility.

Punishment doesn't help children learn what to do. A young child who has done something wrong may simply not know what he should have done differently. If Johnny throws a toy truck at his sister because she won't let him play with her ball, he needs to learn why he should not throw trucks. He also needs to learn how to manage without having the ball. This calls for guidance, not punishment. Of course you need to keep Johnny from throwing trucks.

You also need to tell him in simple words why he should not throw the truck and how he can play with other toys until it is his turn to play with the ball. If you are patient and persistent, Johnny will learn

eventually to cooperate. Punishment alone could not have taught him this.

## Questions

**Q:** “My little boy sometimes lies to me, and yesterday he stole a toy from his cousin’s room. What should I do?”

**A:** Children your son’s age do not understand about lying or stealing. It is common for them to say things that may not be true and to take things they want even if these things do not belong to them.

Your child is ready to learn. Your son is not trying to misbehave. What he needs from you now is gentle teaching, not punishment.

“I want you to tell me the truth.”

Tell him you do not want him saying things that are not true or taking things that are not his. Explain why this is so. Let your son return the toy he took. Do what you can to keep him from taking other things. When he lies to you, remind him that you want him to be truthful.

Do not call your child a liar or a thief. He could come to believe these labels and feel there is nothing he can do to change. Moreover, he might begin to feel special and decide he does not want to change.

Learning takes a long time. Your child is learning about right and wrong. He is finding out the difference between make believe (which may become lying) and reality. He is learning that he cannot get what he wants by taking it. This kind of learning and self-control takes time. You will probably find you are helping him with it for the next couple of years.

Be a good role model. Be patient, firm, and loving. Show him that you do not lie or steal. In time, your son will come to imitate you, not because he’s afraid of punishment, but because he wants to do what is right.

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