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34 Months

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GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children



34 MONTHS

Guidance and Discipline: Being Strict and Being Loving

Many parents are afraid to be strict with their children. They fear that if they are strict, their children will love them less and will feel less loved by them. This is simply not true.

Good discipline is fair, sensitive, and consistent, and it is guided by the parents' love and desire to help the child grow. With this kind of discipline, the child will feel loved and valued.

The child can easily understand limits imposed for her own safety such as not playing with knives. She can also come to understand and accept limits set to keep her from disturbing others or destroying property.

Children need to learn that their rights are important, but no more important than the rights of others. If she doesn't learn this now, your toddler may become the kind of child who actually is less lovable.

Games for Growing: Where Is It?

Purpose of the Game: To help a child learn the very important words for position—such as in, under, beside, on top of, behind, and so on.

How to Play: Ask your child to move something to a different position. For example, using a ball and a basket, ask him to put the ball in the basket or

behind it or under it or on top of it. You can ask him to put his hat on his head, beside his head, under his foot, behind his back, and so forth.

Help Your Child Reduce Stress

As your child grows, she will encounter more and more situations that cause stress. It is not too early to help her learn to recognize and manage stress. Show your child how to relax by sitting quietly and paying attention to her breathing. Most children like to use their imaginations.

Encourage your toddler to think about something calm and pleasant when she is tense—soft rain, a sleeping kitten, a quiet meadow. Help her picture a place she especially likes—a park or a beach—and tell her to think about that place. Suggest she can go to that place in her imagination when she is upset.

By teaching your child to relax, you'll be giving her a skill that will help her all her life. Try some of these ideas yourself—they work for everybody.

A 3-Year-Old's Birthday Party

As your child's third birthday approaches, you may be thinking about planning a party. Your child is old enough to enjoy having friends over for a celebration, but how fancy should a 3-year-old's party be?

The basic rule for a young child's birthday party is **KEEP IT SIMPLE**. Children at this age can easily

become overexcited at their own parties. Too much activity can turn a fun event into a disaster.

Some child development experts recommend inviting the same number of children as your child's age. Sometimes parents try to combine a toddler's party with an adult party. Remember that gives you twice the work of preparation and cleanup. It's also hard to supervise toddlers when you are talking to other adults.

Keep food and party games simple. Plan games in which everyone wins or at least gets some kind of prize. Three-year-olds aren't very skilled at entertaining themselves, so plan 1 1/2 to 2 hours of structured activity.

Alternate quiet activities, such as a story time, with active games like a peanut hunt, balloon chase, or beanbag toss. Plan a quiet activity like drawing or guessing game just before serving the cake and ice cream. This way, the children aren't overexcited when they eat. Children don't always understand that presents are meant for the birthday child, so it's a good idea to have a small, inexpensive party favor wrapped for each child to open.

Finally, be prepared for the possibility that your child will be overwhelmed by the whole thing. Try to keep your sense of humor if your child bursts into tears or hides in the closet.

Kitchens Are Great for Learning!

Make your little one a pretend stove by drawing burners on the bottom of a large cardboard carton. Your toddler will especially like to play at cooking if you play with him. He'll take your orders for food, cook the food, hand it to you, and hope you enjoy eating it.

When you are feeling rested and energetic, you can help your child have some **real cooking** experiences. One of the most time-honored activities is the cupboard shelf set aside for toddlers who want to be near mommy and/or daddy as they cook. These cupboard shelves have traditionally been set aside in a part of the kitchen that is away

from the range and heavy traffic. Not only pots and pans are included, but also wooden spoons for banging, soft and hard plastic containers and measuring spoons for shaking.

Kitchens are also great places for older pre-schoolers to learn. Many of the ideas that follow have been suggested by the Home and School Institute, Inc., in Washington, D.C.

Reading. The kitchen offers special opportunities for your child to learn how to follow directions. Even before your child has learned to read, you can read aloud the ingredients and instructions step-by-step. Having your child help locate the ingredients and put them back when you're done is a helpful pre-reading activity.

Looking for hidden letters or words is a game you can play any time. See how many "e's" you can find on the oatmeal box or how many "the's" you can find on the egg carton. The variations of this game are endless.

If you are a coupon clipper, you may enjoy the **coupon game** in the grocery store, where you hand your child a coupon and ask her to bring back the item pictured.

Dialing the telephone helps children learn the sequence of reading from left to right. Talking on the telephone can increase their language skills. The only thing you need for this game is a telephone and the number of an understanding friend or relative. If you are lucky enough to have a "Dial-A-Story" service at your local library, this can be a special treat for young learners to dial.

Language. Talking with the child as you do your activities can make nearly everything a learning activity. As you cook, you can say things like "Get me the blue can with the red stars on the front." Talk about your favorite parts of the day at the dinner table.

Writing. Children can help you make up the grocery list. Older children who are learning how to

write can add items to the list when you run out of them during the week.

Some children enjoy keeping track of events on the kitchen **calendar**. Sunshiney faces, snowflakes, raindrops and ferocious clouds have been drawn in to record the daily weather patterns on many a family calendar.

Science. Make ice cubes and let them melt. Talk about how a liquid becomes solid and back to liquid again; cook macaroni (the hard pieces get soft when surrounded by water and heat); etc.

Listen to the sounds a kitchen offers—from singing teakettles and popping corn to the quiet noises of simmering soup.

Math. A great way to learn to categorize is to help put away the silverware in trays that have separate locations for forks, spoons and knives. When you bring groceries home, ask your child to help sort out the cans that look alike and then help to put them away.

You can count nearly everything from salt shakers to apples in the fruit bowl.

Many children will enjoy playing with empty containers and soapy water in the sink. Of course, this activity can tend to get sloppy, so clear guidelines ahead of time will save a lot of trouble. Water play is often soothing, almost therapeutic to young children.

Safety. Of course, anytime children are in the kitchen, parents will need to be extra careful about accidents that could occur around heat and/or electrical equipment. Be extra watchful, and reinforce through your words and actions solid rules for safety.

Kitchens aren't the only rooms in the house where learning takes place. Every room is packed with possible learning activities.

From counting tissue squares in the bathroom to cutting out pictures from old newspapers and

catalogs in the garage, learning opportunities abound.

Put your imagination to work. You'll think of many ways to capitalize on learning possibilities in your home.

Questions

Q: “My little girl is 33 months old and uses a lot of words now, but, I’ve noticed that when she is tense, she stutters. What can I do about this?”

A: Your daughter, like all toddlers her age, is learning language fast. She is learning about 10 to 15 new words each week, but she may not be learning words as fast as she wants to use them.

She wants to make herself understood but sometimes she simply doesn't know all the words she needs to do this. This can cause her to stutter, especially when she is upset or excited or when those she is talking to try to rush her.

The best thing you can do to help your daughter overcome her stuttering is to be patient and relaxed with her. Don't rush her speech or criticize her stuttering. It is not easy to learn language. If her stuttering persists in spite of your patience and help, discuss it with her doctor.

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