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35 Months

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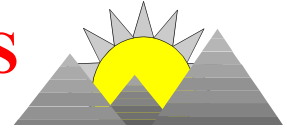
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GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children



35 MONTHS

Isn't It Amazing How Fast Your Child Grows?

Your child is almost 3 years old and growing more independent and capable every day. Your child can do many things by himself at this age. He can sort and put away forks and spoons; he can carry piles of clean clothes to the bedroom; he can set the table with napkins and silverware. It takes time and energy for you to show him how to do a new job, but it's worth the effort. He loves to help.

Children often say, "Me do it" as they strongly promote their right to become their own person. "Let's do it together" or "I will help too" usually helps better than "You can't do that" or "No, I'll do it," or "You're too little."

Encourage your child's cooperation; it will build his confidence and help him grow into a helpful, responsible person.

Some Guidance Ideas: A Reminder

- Have a few simple rules, explain them to your child, and stick to them.
- Try to keep calm when disciplining your child.
- Praise your child's good behavior.
- Tell your child what to do, rather than what not to do.
- Give your child reasonable, limited choices.
- Prepare your child for new situations.

- Save your "no's" for times when your child is in personal danger or is in danger of hurting other people or damaging property.
- Change the situation whenever possible rather than trying to change your child's behavior.
- Remember, discipline is teaching; it's one way to show love to your child.

Nutrition: A Daily Food Guide

Use this daily food guide to plan a balanced day's diet for your toddler:

Meats, Poultry, Fish, Beans, Nuts, or Peanut Butter—2 servings

One child may eat: 1 hard-cooked egg, 2 ounces hamburger.

Another child may eat: 1/3 cup beans, 1 small chicken leg.

Milk or Cheese—3 servings

Some milk may be in cream soups, custard, pudding, flan, ice cream, or foods made with lots of milk.

One child may eat: 1 slice cheese, 2 6-ounce glasses milk.

Another child may eat: 1/4 cup milk on cereal, 1/2 cup cream of tomato soup, 1/4 cup cottage cheese, 3/4 cup cocoa, 1 6-ounce glass milk.

Fruits (2 servings) and Vegetables (3 servings)

One serving should be high in vitamin C, such as oranges, grapefruit, tomato, green peppers, or greens. At least every other day, give your child one serving high in vitamin A, such as broccoli, sweet potatoes, carrots, greens, cantaloupe, winter squash, or pumpkin.

One child may eat: 1/2 cup orange juice and 1/2 apple; 1/2 cup baked potato, 1/2 cup greens, and carrot sticks.

Another child may eat: 1/2 orange and 1/2 canned peach; 1/2 cup cooked carrots, lettuce and tomato salad, 1/2 cup green beans.

Bread, Tortillas, Cereals, Rice, Macaroni, Spaghetti, Grits, Cornbread, or Biscuits—6 servings

These are made from whole grain or enriched flour or meal.

One child may eat: 1/2 cup cooked oatmeal, 1/2 slice bread, 1 piece cornbread; 3/4 cup prepared cereal, 3 saltine crackers, 1/2 cup pasta.

Another child may eat: 1 pancake, 1/2 tortilla, 1/4 cup rice, 1/2 slice bread, 2 graham crackers, 1/2 cup cream of wheat.

Homemade Toys that Teach: Sound Match

Sound match is an entertaining learning game toddlers can play with you or with an older friend. The game helps toddlers learn to match sounds and tell one sound from another. It requires only simple, no-cost supplies, and it's very easy to make.

Materials:

- Six plastic 35 mm film containers. (You can get these free at stores that develop film or you can save them yourself if you are a photographer.)

- Fillings (such as rice, coffee grounds, beans, small pebbles, and so forth) to make the containers rattle.

Making The Toy: Partly fill two containers with something hard and rattly like beans. Be sure each container sounds like the other when you shake it. Then partly fill two more containers with grains of rice. Check to see that they sound the same. Partly fill the last two containers with coffee grounds or some other filler. Coffee grounds will make a soft, swishy sound. When you shake the three kinds of containers you will discover that each pair sounds different.

Remember, do not put anything in the containers that will hurt your toddler. If you think your toddler will be playing with the containers alone, be sure to tape on the tops so that they cannot be removed.

Playing: Sit down with your toddler and give him three of the film cans, one with each kind of filling. Keep the other three for yourself. Take turns rattling one of the containers, having the other person find the matching sound in their own set.

Another way to play this game is to put all six film containers between you. Pick them up one at a time and shake them. Encourage your toddler to do the same. Together, pick up and shake, pick up and shake—until you have a sound match for each. Point out that these are the same sounds. Point out when the sounds are different. Your child will want to see what it is inside the containers making the noise.

The two of you can think of other sound making items to put into pairs of containers. In this way, you can work together in changing and enjoying this simple toy.

Games for Growing: Silly Questions

Purpose of the Game: To encourage your child's imagination and use of words.

How to Play: Ask your child to imagine what would happen if something silly occurred, such as

what would happen if I put on my glasses upside down, or candy bars grew on trees, or people walked on their hands instead of their feet? Let your child make up some silly questions for you, too. Have fun guessing and acting out these silly questions. You might be pleased and surprised with your child's imagination.

Toddler Talk: Help Me Learn in Lots of Different Ways

- Share your interests with me. If you enjoy fishing, include me. If you like cooking or gardening, I'd like to help.
- Give me simple instructions such as, "Please put the paper in the trash can." After I do it, let me know how pleased you are by saying, "Thank you." I'll learn to be polite if you are.
- Show me how to take things apart and put them together. Give me an old coffee percolator or pieces of pipe with connecting joints to screw on and off.
- Make or buy me a small backpack. I'll wear it around the house and on walks. I will put my own special treasures in it. Wearing it makes me feel very grown up.
- Let me choose magazine pictures and help me make my own picture book. Let me change the pictures from time to time. I will like looking at the book and talking about the pictures.

Questions

Q: "My almost 3-year-old son is dry during the day, but still wets the bed at night. This worries me and besides, it's a real bother. What should I do about it?"

A: Your toddler is right on schedule. Most 3-year-olds are dry during the day, but they usually continue to wet at night until they have passed their third birthday. Your little one doesn't want to wet his bed. He is simply not yet able to hold his urine, wake up, and get to the toilet at night. Don't scold or punish him for bed-wetting. That could make him nervous and upset and then it would be even harder for him to become dry at night.

If your child is more than 3 years old and you are concerned about bed-wetting, put your child in training pants covered by waterproof pants. Use a plastic sheet on the bed and leave the light on so he can find the bathroom. Be sure he goes to the toilet before going to bed.

Meanwhile, try to be relaxed and understanding about his nighttime wetting. Praise his successes and calmly accept his failures. In the long run, this will be the best way to help him become dry at night.

You and Your Child Feeling Good About Yourselves

Being a good parent takes a lot of energy! In our good moments we can be strong and supportive of children. But nobody is perfect. Sometimes we don't have the time and energy to be an *ideal* parent. When that happens, we may feel like failures.

It's not easy to do all the things a parent is expected to do and still feel energetic. What does this mean for children? Many times they interpret our lack of enthusiasm and energy as a reflection on them.

A child's self-confidence and feeling of self-esteem are based partly on the messages we send. We may think we appear interested but, in fact, we may be sending negative messages. Children may not understand that we are tired. Instead, they may decide they are not worth the attention.

How often do we play with our children when we would rather be doing something else? Often we send to children verbal and non-verbal signals—such as a sharp tone of voice—that hint at our real feelings.

Children need a lot of attention to grow and thrive. They need caring adults who will set limits and offer guidance. If they are to be happy, healthy adults, they need to feel loved, competent and secure.

Provide a loving environment. Emphasize *quality time*. Short periods of being attentive and close

mean more than hours of empty togetherness. It isn't the activity, but the quality of time together that matters.

Closeness is a characteristic of quality time. It can occur during everyday family routines, and can involve conversation, physical nearness, eye contact and touching. A parent who sits on the bed for a friendly chat, then tucks a child in with a kiss, is providing closeness. On the other hand, a parent who yells goodnight to a child while going downstairs is achieving little closeness. Quality time can't be forced, but with effort we can become more aware of opportunities for closeness. A game of cards, a chat while doing the dishes, a shared cup of cocoa are ordinary activities that can be meaningful if we focus on the quality of time spent together.

Use your energy effectively. Think about the energy you have available. Remember, it's quality, not quantity, that counts.

Tell your children how you feel, especially when you're tired, cranky, sad or worried. Let them know what you're willing or unwilling to do, so they will know what to expect. You might say something like, "I'm feeling very tired now and can't play with you, but I'll be glad to watch you play."

When you run out of energy, let your child know. Perhaps you can say, "I'm feeling rushed right now; let's finish the game after dinner." Be sure to keep your promise. Try to stop playing with your children before anybody gets bored or tired, so that time together will end on a positive note.

Set aside time every day to spend with each of your children. The time may be short, but it can be special. This special time is very important for children, and it's also a bonus for parents because it gives us a chance to notice and cherish how our children are growing and developing.

Tune in to "Where Your Child Is." Nothing makes you feel better than knowing you're valued just because you're you. Your ideas and feelings are important. Parents boost their child's self-esteem when they show that they recognize that their child is special and unique.

It's tempting to compare your child's capabilities with those of other children the same age. But remember, children differ markedly in their rate of development. We need to help them feel successful in whatever they can do well, rather than push them into tasks they're not ready for.

Self-esteem soars when people can meet their own needs and do things themselves; so support your children's efforts at independence and initiative. Let them try to solve problems on their own, when possible.

It's natural for children to feel inferior to adults who seem to do everything well. Parents can see that children have many opportunities to do well also. In everything you say and do, help your child have a good self-image. Show that you love and support your child regardless of his or her behavior. Young children lack our experience about right and wrong behavior, and they're bound to make many mistakes. We can show them their mistakes without humiliating them.

Words that shatter a child's self-esteem come so easily to us! Since children are so dependent on us, they are usually eager to please. Knowing they have done something wrong is very upsetting to them. We don't need to add to their sense of shame and guilt.

Be a good role model. It makes sense to nurture positive feelings about ourselves. We are good role models for our children when we are happy and feel competent and enthusiastic. When we take good care of ourselves, we can cope more easily with the normal hassles that parenting involves.

It is important for busy parents to recognize signs of stress in themselves. Our bodies use headaches, backaches, crying spells and grouchiness to tell us we're under stress. Stress can be managed if we learn to accept it and develop ways to cope with it.

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