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36 Months

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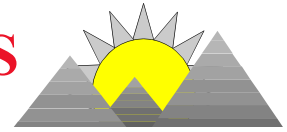
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GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children



36 MONTHS

Hearing Testing

A hearing test is an important part of your child's regular medical checkup. When a child is under 3 years of age, hearing is tested by observing your child's response to sound and her ability to learn new words.

Three-year-old children can learn how to take formal audiometric hearing screening tests. Be patient with them until they understand what to do and can cooperate fully.

Language is an essential tool for learning. It allows the toddler to store information, exchange ideas, and express feelings. A hearing problem interferes with the development of normal language and learning. Infants and toddlers frequently have colds that can lead to ear infections. If ear infections are not detected and treated, the toddler may have hearing problems.

Early discovery of possible hearing problems is the key to successful treatment and the prevention of hearing loss. Parents can protect their child's hearing by making sure that infections are identified and treated and that hearing is routinely tested by their doctors or health care providers.

From Discipline to Abuse

Cooperative, well behaved and responsible children get that way because they are taught and guided by

their parents. Studies show that physical punishment does not teach children well; it usually hurts the child more than it instructs.

Physical punishment such as pinching, hitting, spanking, or shaking can seriously hurt a child. This is abuse. Depriving a child of food or care, or keeping a child tied up or locked in a room is, of course, abusive.

It is abusive to threaten that scary things will happen to the child if he doesn't behave—that the bogeyman will take him, that loved ones will stop loving him or leave him or die. It is abusive to make a child believe he is unloved, stupid, wicked, or hopeless.

Almost all parents want to do what is best for their child. Some may abuse their child thinking that this is the best way to help him learn. They may be copying what they learned from their own parents.

Other parents may abuse their child because they lose control of their feelings. Some parents who abuse have such stressful and difficult lives that they do not have the will or patience to discipline their child without abuse.

Our suggestions on discipline are written to help parents learn to discipline effectively without abuse. Our stress management suggestions are to help parents control their tensions so that they do not take out their anger and frustration on their child.

Children who are abused or unfairly or harmfully punished are more likely to become uncooperative than children who are guided and disciplined more gently and patiently.

Are You Listening?

Are you really listening to your toddler? Sometimes young children feel that instead of listening to them, their parents mostly interrupt, instruct, advise, or criticize. They are often right! This can lead to misunderstanding, stress, and anger. Children whose parents don't listen well can feel that they and their ideas are not very important.

Check yourself: do you talk back before you listen? If so, try active listening.

Active listening is trying hard to hear and understand the other person without interrupting, jumping to conclusions, judging, preaching, or getting mad. It means showing respect for the other person and her ideas, even if you don't agree with them. It means waiting until others have finished before responding.

Listening is a vital part of the good communication you want to have with your child. It takes patience and practice to develop good listening skills, but try it. You may find your conversations with your child easier and less stressful. As an extra reward, your child may imitate your good example and start listening more to what you have to say.

Homemade Toys that Teach: Big Bag Blocks

Bag blocks can be used for jumping on, tossing, or hiding under. They can make houses, mountains, and castles. To make each block, crumple sheets of newspaper and stuff them into a bag. Large grocery bags make the best blocks. Keep stuffing until the bag is nearly full. Then fold over the bottom end and tape it shut securely. Make at least 10 bag blocks—the more the better!

Games for Growing: What Is It?

Purpose of the Game: To help your child observe and understand the things in her world.

How to Play: Sitting in a familiar room with your child, look around the room and pick out something you can describe in two ways—what it looks like and what it does. Then giving these two descriptions, ask your child to guess what you are thinking of. For example, I can see something that is red and rolls along the floor, or I can see something that is white and you drink from, or I see something that is tall and you sit on. Remember to let your child have a turn at asking you to guess, too.

Research in Brief: Talking TO Children and Talking WITH Children

The way parents talk to their child influences their child's development. Some parents talk almost always **to** children. Talking **to** a child means using a lot of **directions** such as **do's** (Let's take the dishes off the table now), **don'ts** (Don't pull the cat's tail), and refusals (Not now). It also includes a lot of teaching, mainly in providing new knowledge (This cat is black), and asking questions (What shape is this block?). Talking to children is okay; all good parents talk to their children some. Studies show, however, that when parents almost always talk **to** and not **with** their child, the child's language learning is limited.

Parents talk **with** their child when they match their comments and discussion to the child's questions and activities. This may mean continuing the topic the child has introduced or introducing a new topic based on what appears to be the child's interests.

In talking with the child, you show you care about your child's interest, experiences, and needs, and that you want to learn more about them. You have a conversation in which each of you talks and listens to the other. Such comments as "What do you want to do with that box?" "Tell me about your visit to Grandma," and "You seem to be sleepy" may start these kinds of conversations.

Talking with children and listening to them increases their confidence and helps them feel important. It means to them they have something to say that is worth being listened to and responded to. As children get more pleasure from their talking, they want to work harder at learning to do it well.

Toys Can Help Your Child Learn

The more a child learns from a toy, the longer he or she will enjoy playing with it. Play materials can also help build a good self-image, making a child feel confident (“I can do it!”). When children feel good about themselves and believe they can do things well, they’ll find different and creative ways to play with their toys. They will also be receptive to other learning opportunities that come along.

The trick in choosing toys is to match the toy with the child’s **interests** and **level of ability**. The best toy provides a challenge but is not so difficult that the child becomes repeatedly frustrated.

To avoid boredom, toys should provide a framework for **balanced** play. Remember, a child’s play is his work. It teaches basic skills that will help him develop to his full potential. Balanced play stimulates physical, intellectual, emotional and social growth. Interestingly enough, growth in one area often influences growth in another. For example, the more fit we are, the better we feel emotionally about ourselves. The more finely coordinated our bodies and minds, the more receptive we are to learning.

Here are a few activities and materials that can foster growth in each area of development.

Physical Development: Children need to play vigorously outdoors every day—to jump, climb, swing, walk a plank, ride a tricycle, play in the sand. This promotes large muscle development.

Small muscle development involves getting finger muscles coordinated with eye movement so that a child can learn to read and write later. Provide child-size blunt scissors, old magazines, catalogs, and glue for cutting and pasting. Drawing also

promotes small muscle development. Children can trace around small toys, puzzle pieces, cans, cookie cutters, or they can draw from their imaginations. Puzzles, snap blocks, tinkertoys, and nesting cups also help children develop in this way.

Intellectual Development: Children often learn more by playing with safe household items—such as measuring spoons, or by participating in grown-up work, than they do from expensive educational toys. Take advantage of learning opportunities that occur while you go about your daily routine.

Social Development: Learning how to get along with others takes practice and experience, so it’s important that children have many opportunities to play with youngsters their age. While it is desirable for them to learn how to settle their differences, parents should be handy to offer guidance and suggestions when physical or psychological harm seems likely. Role-playing props, such as empty food containers for playing grocery store, or old adult clothing for playing dress-up, can encourage social development.

Emotional development: A child’s play experiences can encourage a good self-image. Parents can help by being supportive when a child wants to carry out a reasonable project on his own.

Safety Tips

Car Safety

Car crashes are the biggest danger to your child’s life and health. The crushing forces to your child’s brain and body in an accident or sudden stop, even at low speeds, are likely to kill or severely injure him. The **ONLY** way you can prevent these injuries or deaths is to **USE** a car safety seat and seatbelt **EVERY TIME** your child is in the car.

Burns

Do not smoke in bed. Smoking in bed or improper disposal of ashes or butts endangers children sleeping in adjacent rooms who may be trapped in case of fire. Eight percent of home fires and 32

percent of fire-related deaths are associated with smoking.

Looking Ahead

Your child is 3 years old—no longer a toddler. You may wonder what’s ahead and what you can do to help your child grow up healthy, happy, and responsible. Your toddler is off to a good start already. During these first 3 years, you have helped your child feel important and successful. You have helped him learn about himself and his surroundings, and you have taught him to trust, respect, and enjoy others. This foundation has prepared him to become the kind of person you want him to become. The good relationship you have will help you continue to support and guide him, as he faces future decisions about school, friends, drugs, sex, and other important issues.

Building your child’s self-esteem now will help him resist the negative pressures of other teens later on. Keeping the lines of communication open now will help him feel he can talk to you about difficult and confusing questions in the years to come. Encouraging your child’s enjoyment of language and learning now will help him succeed in school.

Parenthood is a rich, exciting opportunity for you to grow with your child. Trust yourself. You can offer your child the support, values, and skills to handle whatever comes along in the future.

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