



TODDLER TOPICS *PLUS*... A Parent Newsletter for Toddlers, Preschoolers and beyond! *2007 Issue Four*

TODDLER TOPICS *PLUS*... a learn-at-home parent newsletter created by Penn State Cooperative Extension welcomes you. This newsletter is designed to assist parents, grandparents, caregivers and all adults who care about and for children in all their interactions with children. We will continue to make these issues available on-line as well as in hard copy format.

We hope you will find helpful tips and techniques to improve your family's time together while providing you with information that will enrich your children's learning process. **Contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension office in your county for information on other educational programs of interest to you and your family.**

Ellen Meanix Helfrick, Editor

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Terrific Toddler Snacks

Jennifer Himes, Student Dietitian, Edinboro University of PA, Erie County

Incorporating a complete, balanced, and healthy diet into three meals is difficult with small children. **Snacks are an important supplement to your child's diet.** Snack times are an ideal opportunity to provide wholesome foods to even the pickiest eaters.

Below are several tips to follow when offering wholesome snacks to a toddler.

- Try to incorporate fruits, vegetables, and whole grains rather than juices, cookies, or crackers.
- Allow your child to choose between two different snacks, such as celery and cream cheese or apples and peanut butter. Make sure that both choices are acceptable to you.
- Involve your child in the preparation of snacks. This fun parent and child activity may increase your child's receptiveness to the snack.
- Set a good example. Your child will learn about good snacks and healthy eating habits by seeing what you choose for snacks and at meal times.

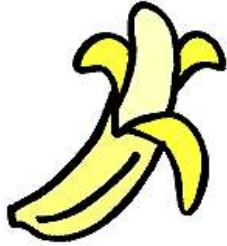
The parent is responsible for presenting a variety of healthy foods to the child and for the manner in which the foods are presented. The child ultimately decides if they will eat the food and how much to eat.

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Terrific Toddler Snacks (Continued)

Banana Bug

- 1 small, not too ripe banana
- 8 pretzel sticks
- 1 teaspoon creamy peanut butter
- 2 teaspoons raisins



Poke the pretzel sticks into the banana for the legs and antennae. Use peanut butter to make the eyes and to glue on the raisin spine. Each recipe makes one bug.

One bug provides 140 calories, 3 grams protein, 3 grams fiber, and 6 grams fat.

Happy Trail Mix

- 2 cups honey graham cereal
- 1 cup tiny marshmallows
- 1 cup peanuts
- ½ cup semisweet chocolate chips or butterscotch pieces
- ½ cup raisins

Combine all ingredients. Store in a closed plastic bag or a covered container. Makes about 5 cups or 10 servings. One serving provides 260 calories, 7 grams protein, 3 grams fiber, and 15 grams fat.

You may substitute or add any of the items: dried fruit, other cereals, mini pretzels, goldfish, sunflower seeds, sesame sticks, graham crackers, and any other finger foods to this trail mix. This is an ideal snack for a quick math lesson in sorting and counting!

Youth Resiliency Starts at Home

Denise H. Continenza, Family Living Educator, Lehigh County

One of the biggest hopes that parents have -- even when their children are very young -- is that their child will stay on the right track, make good decisions, and stay away from drugs, alcohol and crime.

In the last issue, we addressed what resiliency is and the role it plays in helping kids deal with the every day struggles, disappointments, and temptations in the big, wide world. **Resiliency is developed when children and youth are equipped with certain attributes and experiences -- internally and externally -- that help them to cope.** We determined that parents and caregivers have much to do with how these assets or supports play out in their homes and communities.

So, what are these assets, and what are parents to do? More extensive information on the developmental assets can be found online (www.search-institute.org). Here are some suggestions for parents and caregivers to assist children towards resiliency:

- **Communicate** This means listening, not just talking.
- **Provide support** Help your child to be a problem-solver.
- **Get involved** Attend school events and parent-teacher conferences.
- **Have set rules and consequences** Children feel safe and secure when there are boundaries.

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Youth Resiliency Starts at Home
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- **Role Model** Demonstrate the behaviors you want to see in your child; avoid those you do not.
- **Provide a safe environment** Keep it secure and violence-free.
- **Monitor** Be aware of how your child spends their time and who they are with.
- **Show interest** Ask your child about their day and activities, and listen attentively.
- **Provide structure** Decide together on times for homework, studying, reading, and leisure. Have a quiet area where homework can be done.
- **Engage** Get your child involved in community, religious, or extra-curricular activities. But be careful - too many activities can be stressful for the whole family.
- **Share** Discuss your family's values. Don't lecture. Allow older youth to share their perspectives, too.
- **Teach empathy** Help your child to see things from another's point of view or by walking in their shoes.
- **Interact** Have your child spend more time in family activities and less time in front of the TV or video games.



Furthermore, we can take a look at our communities and get involved for the sake of our kids. **We can advocate, volunteer, and share what we know is good for youth. It really does take a village!**



Blocks: Great for All Ages

(part 1)

Angela Spratt, IUP Child Development Intern, Indiana County

Blocks are more than colorful shapes. **Blocks help children learn socially, physically, creatively, and intellectually.** Blocks, especially unit blocks*, are a good investment because children will continue to use them as they grow. You may think that blocks are “too much trouble”, always all over the place and hard to put away. Instead, **think of blocks as your child's key to discovering a world where he can explore and create the space around him.**

*Unit blocks are based on proportions 1:2:4. These blocks must be sturdy and accurately cut so that children of all different ages and levels of learning may use them to create, solve problems, and challenge themselves.

Block Play with Toddlers Your toddler will pick up blocks, move them from place to place, carry them around, or put them in something. Older toddlers may begin to stack blocks or gather them on the floor.

Benefits:

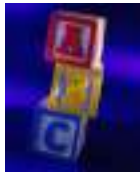
- Increase hand-eye coordination
- Enhance logical thinking
- Enhance understanding about space
- Improve social capability by building 'something' with friends and siblings
- Enhance language skills, for instance by talking about the end product.

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Blocks: Great for All Ages (part 1)
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Types of Blocks to Use with Toddlers:

Very young toddlers (between 12-15 months) will love soft blocks. They, of course, will be able to stack the soft blocks more readily than infants will. If your child still ‘tastes’ everything he plays with, avoid the soft foam blocks.



At around 15 months, your toddler should be ready for smaller wooden building blocks which are often cube-shaped. The cubed shape blocks with letters, numbers and colors are a great way to combine fun and learning.

Saving, Sharing and Spending

Jeannine Richlin, Extension Educator
Sullivan County

There are only three things we can do with money: save it, share it, and spend it. We use other terms when talking about money such as investing (a form of savings) and giving (another word for sharing).

Financial experts tell us to save about thirty percent of what we earn for things we want in the future. This includes 20% for long-term goals (over 10 years) such as sending kids to college or retirement; the other 10% is needed for short and intermediate term goals such as vehicles or new furniture. The reality of this seems overwhelming because in fact, with high petroleum prices last year, the average American saved nothing and in fact dipped into savings. On a good year, savings for Americans is around 2%. We save best when we are saving for a particular goal. Try starting small such as saving 1% and then working your way up to 30%.

How much money we share varies greatly from person to person. We share in the form of gifts to family and friends. We give to non-profit groups such as churches, charities, and other groups. Sharing can easily take 10% or more of your money.

Saving and sharing this way means adjusting to living on about 60% or less of your paycheck. **A money plan that accounts for monthly bills plus money to live on is essential. Request the newly revised publication “The Build-A-Budget Book” from your local Penn State Cooperative Extension Office to help you plan your family finances.**

Children need to be taught about money from an early age. Set them up with a system such as three containers marked with save, spend, and share labels. Divide their allowance accordingly (30% savings, 10% sharing, and 60% spending). There are some age appropriate lessons for children about money management found on-line.



Activities for kids K-12 in math, money, geography, language, social studies.
www.edu4kids.com/

Banking activities and quiz game
www.kidsbank.com/

Money lessons on saving, sharing, and spending www.learntosave.com/lessons

Book Review

Ellen Meanix Helfrick, Youth Services
York County Library System

Most public Libraries have a Parent/Teacher section. Toddler Topics Plus... 2007 issues feature a book review designed to send you in search of a great resource that will help make learning fun for the whole family.

Learning Games: Exploring Senses Through Play by Jackie Silberg
2006, Gryphon House

Simply reading the back cover of one of Silberg's books is usually all I need to know I want to check it out. This book is no exception; I think it will hook you too. I am thrilled that each activity also suggests a companion book.



How do children learn about the world around them? They touch, taste, see, smell and hear it, of course!

With over 200 activities, Learning Games will delight children as they expand their learning by engaging all of their senses. The chapters are organized by each of the five senses, with a bonus chapter of multi-sensory activities. The games and activities are designed to help children identify and use their senses – essential tools for understanding the world.

Try **Pretzel Art** to explore taste, sight and touch as you teach creativity.



- Put different shapes of pretzels in a bowl.
- Suggest ways your child can make designs, people, and letters with the pretzels.
- Give him a clean piece of paper on which to make a pretzel design.

- When he is finished, he can eat his design.
- Talk about how the pretzels taste. Ask, “Are they salty and crunchy?”
- Read Where Are You Going? By Kimberlee Graves and Tozanne Lanczak Williams



Raising a Writer
Office of
Commonwealth
Libraries. Pennsylvania
Department of
Education.

In this issue, we will list tips from the flip side of the bookmark publication: **Easy Things You Can Do At Home to Raise Readers...** tips designed to **Raise Writers!**

Be sure your child has different types of writing implements such as pencils, crayons, markers and lots of paper to use them on.

Encourage your child to tell you stories. Write them down and have your child illustrate them.

Create labels so your child can match them to objects throughout your home.

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Raising a Writer (Continued)

Before you go to the grocery store write a shopping list together. Have your child cross items off the list after you select them.



Create scrapbooks about your family, special occasions and trips.

Keep a journal with your child and have him/her summarize what happens each day while you write it down.

When you are writing notes or emailing, ask your child what he/she would like you to tell a relative or friend.

Write a list as your child dictates to you. It could be a wish list, a 'to do' list, etc.



Encourage print recognition in everyday situations such as street signs and local businesses.



After a trip to a park, zoo or other special place have your child dictate what you did, what you saw as you write it down. Have your child add pictures to complete the story.

Central Penn Parent

Ellen Meanix Helfrick, Youth Services
York County Library System

Each month parents have access to a free publication called Central Penn Parent full of information of interest to parents. The February issue helps parents know what to expect from their preschool. Are the terms NAEYC accredited and Keystone STARS new to you? (Both indicate a measure of quality care.) Here are 4 tips, visit www.centralpennparent.com for more:

- Children spend most of their time playing and working with materials or other children. They aren't wandering, nor are they sitting for long periods of time.
- Teachers work with individual children, small groups and the whole group at different times during the day.
- Children have an opportunity to play outside everyday.
- Teachers read books to children individually or in small groups throughout the day.



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