



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

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

In this issue:

- **I Feel Great! (part 1)**
- **Fussy Eaters**
- **Blocks: Great for All Ages (part 2)**
- **Book Review**
- **MyPyramid – The New Food Pyramid**
- **25 Ways to Say “NO”**

I Feel Great! (part 1)
Cynthia Pollich, MEd
Lancaster County

Language and literacy can build a child's self-esteem. **A solid introduction to language and literacy will academically and emotionally prepare your child to be successful in school and life.**

Family routines and activities make a strong foundation for your child. **One study concludes that the most important aspect of family/child time was the amount parents talked to and with their child.**

Talk exposes children to 1000-2000 words every hour and has a lasting impact on how children perform in later years. **Reading books to children is also a powerful way of introducing them to literacy and makes a difference in learning to read in school.**



Early literacy development is part of a social process embedded in the child's relationships with parents, siblings and all the other people in their lives. Think about:

- ✓ What do you do together?
- ✓ How do you play?
- ✓ What stores do you visit?
- ✓ What exposure to “print” do you have in your home?

Books, newspaper, magazines, letters on the fridge, pens, pencils, paper and art supplies all count as print. **Provide your child with exposure to many varied experiences for a better chance at future success.**

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I Feel Great! (part 1) (Continued)

If your child has a speech or language delay, they are 25 to 90% more likely to have a reading disorder and are at a greater risk for social and emotional adjustment problems. If you or your child's teacher or caregivers are concerned about their language development, don't hesitate to have your child evaluated.

It's free and painless and may be the best thing you can do for your child. **The earlier your child receives special support, the greater the possibility that all will be well with your child's future success in school and life.**



Your child can be successful. This success is based on the relationships between early experiences and the child's interests, temperament, personality, opportunities at home and in the neighborhood for reading and writing, as well as the nature and quality of the instruction the child encounters. **You can make a difference by talking to your children, reading to them and playing with them.** Go have some fun!

See the next issue of Toddler Topics Plus... for some easy fun things you can do with your child to support their early social-emotional development through language and literacy.



Fussy Eaters

Fran Alloway, Family Living and Nutrition Educator, Delaware County

As babies develop into toddlers, one of the major advances is their diet. Bottles and baby food progress to "real people" food. Pediatricians recommend that most of these changes happen when babies are nine months to a year old. Children are still learning to eat, however, for many years. As they move into the toddler years, they often refuse foods that were well eaten as babies. This is a safe arena for babies to exert a little independence and see how parents will react.

Toddlers are also skeptical of new foods and parents need to be patient and keep giving foods to their children that are healthy. Many one to two-year old children do not eat meat and prefer softer protein sources. As their teeth come in and they become more aware of adult meal content, they generally include meat and chicken more readily. In the meantime, offer cheese, peanut butter, lunchmeat and beans to get protein sources in their diet.



Some children will get on a "food jag" where they will only eat one or two selected items for days. Research has shown that children's nutritional status is not affected if their "food jag" does not continue more than several weeks.

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Fussy Eaters (Continued)

Some children will never outgrow being fussy eaters, but most learn to eat a diverse selection of food. If dealing with a fussy eater, remember:

- Provide healthy choices for your toddler.
- Show your child how to eat a variety of healthy foods by eating them yourself.
- Try not to let an independent streak take over your mealtime.
- Don't prepare separate meals.
- If your child doesn't eat much of what is presented at a meal, they will be hungry for the next one.

Block Play: Great for All Ages (part 2)
Angela Spratt, IUP Child Development Intern, Indiana County

Block Play with Preschoolers Your preschooler will build blocks with a purpose in mind. A tall block tower may be a school or a fire house. Older preschoolers use blocks like a fence to close in toys or other blocks. Blocks are great for preschoolers to use for pretending because they help expand your preschooler's imagination.



Benefits:

- Use physical skills when lifting, building, and moving blocks around.
- Use math skills as they are counting, matching, grouping, adding, and subtracting.
- Learn how to work with other children as they listen to other ideas and share.
- Learn to come up with and try new ideas as they are building things with the blocks.

Types of Blocks to use with Preschoolers:

Your young preschooler will love to play with small cube-shaped wooden building blocks, often with letters or numbers. So you can always use these blocks to introduce alphabets and numbers. As your child spends more time in block play, introduce other types of blocks.

Not all building blocks have to be purchased. Small sturdy packing boxes, shoe boxes or oatmeal containers make great blocks for tall skyscrapers or fences or whatever. Clean and dry wax milk cartons, cut off the tops and force one inside the other for an economical, tough large building block. If dad or grandpa has extra wood and want to make blocks, be sure that the wood is sanded smooth (enlist your child's help) with no splinters and rounded at the edges so there are no sharp edges. **Never use pressure treated wood - it is treated with toxic chemicals.**

References:

<http://www.naeyc.org/ece/1997/04.asp>

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.

Do-It-Yourself Early Learning - Easy and Fun Activities and Toys from Everyday Home Center Materials by Jeff A. Johnson & Tasha A. Johnson, 2006, Redleaf Press

I wish I had read this book back when I had my child care home! As owner/operators of a family child care program, it seems to me that the Johnsons are extremely qualified to share what they have played with and tested out on an everyday basis. The beginning chapters discuss why you should make your own learning toys, what children learn while playing, and how to get started. These supply vital information - I think every parent and caregiver should read them.

The 12 chapters of activities are developmentally appropriate for children from ages 6 weeks to 6 years (and beyond in my opinion). There is even an Index of Activities by Age for those who may need a little help deciding on what to do first.

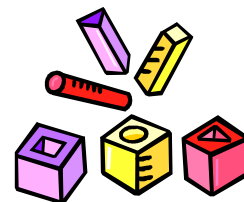
Each project includes:

- A list of materials and tools
- Estimated building costs
- Easy-to-read directions
- Storage ideas
- Learning goals
- Variations for each activity

The Johnsons fill the book with quotes about play and learning and other little tips that are motivating. I think this book would be an amazing gift for a father or grandfather that wonders what he can do with his children on a rainy or even a sunny day!

It was truly difficult to select a few activities to highlight – I wanted to mention them all. Try making Baby Catapults from sponges to explore gravity, or Play with Pulleys to discover motion. Make a Simple Matching Game with free paint samples or let your child learn by Matching Nuts, Washers, and Bolts in the chapter on Matching, Sorting and Estimating. The Problem Solving chapter includes fun like Sink the Cork and Copying Patterns. Expand manipulative play when you use peg board and 1/8 inch rope for a durable lacing activity to introduce letters and build small-muscle skills. From the Kids in Motion chapter discover Flexible Conduit Rhythm Stick while Ring Around the Child lets your child make a hoop guaranteed to last and keep them moving.

This book will be a hit with boys and girls as well as adults. I think it will teach children that they don't have to buy a toy for it to be fun and that they have the ability to create something that lasts. These are just a few of the valuable lessons - important in creating a positive self-esteem - that are a side effect of the activities the Johnsons are sharing.
ENJOY!



MyPyramid – The New Food Pyramid

Fran Alloway, Family Living and Nutrition Educator, Delaware County

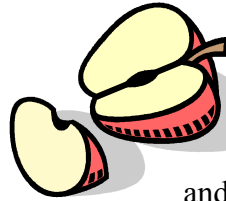
Almost 2 years ago, USDA released a new food guide pyramid - the dietary guidance graphic that illustrates the types and quantities of food that we should eat each day to stay healthy. This pyramid has stripes that run from the point to the base, a change from the previous pyramid that looked like building blocks. However, the same food groups are represented: grains, vegetables, fruits, dairy and meat/beans. There is also a thin stripe to represent oils.

Named MyPyramid, USDA has a wonderful website, mypyramid.gov that allows users to personalize this pyramid to see how much food from each food group is appropriate for their age, gender and activity level. Advice is given for Americans from age two to over fifty-one.



One of the most obvious changes in MyPyramid is the addition of a person running up the side of the pyramid. This is to emphasize that physical activity needs to be part of a healthy lifestyle. Sixty minutes each day is recommended for all of us. The graphic, MyPyramid for Kids, includes tips for families to eat right and exercise. We've listed several here. Visit the site with your child for the full list of suggestions.

Eat Right:



Focus on fruits. Eat them at meals, and at snack time, too. Choose fresh, frozen, canned, or dried, and go easy on the fruit juice.

Change your oil. We all need oil. Get yours from fish, nuts, and liquid oils such as corn, soybean, canola and olive oil.

Exercise:

Have an activity party. Make the next birthday party centered on physical activity. Try backyard Olympics, or relay races. Have a bowling or skating party.



Give activity gifts. Give gifts that encourage physical activity - active games or sporting equipment.

MyPyramid for Kids, as well as the adult version, can be downloaded and printed from mypyramid.gov. On this website, there are also worksheets for children emphasizing healthy eating, links to other websites that have activities for children and even an interactive link that older preschoolers might enjoy.



Eating healthy is so important for toddlers and parents. Take a look at how our government is guiding us in the right direction.

25 Ways to Say “NO”

Ellen Meanix Helfrick, Youth Services
York County Library System



No parent wants to address issues with their child that they themselves find scary, but in order to protect our children we must. The sentence below is from Lesson

Eleven Sometimes I say “NO” from **A Leader’s Guide to Just Because I Am - A Child’s book of Affirmation** by Laruen Murphy Payne, MSW and Claudia Rohling. (1994 Free Spirit Publishing)

Children know what things feel “right” and “wrong” to them. It is important to recognize and support their feelings and decisions. As adults, we must empower children to set their own limits regarding who can and cannot touch them and what they will and will not do.

There are many resources available to educate yourself about protecting your child. Investigate and prepare yourself to address this issue with your child. This list will help parents to increase their child’s vocabulary and preparedness for occasions when they may need to say “No” whether it’s on the playground with a friend or under other circumstances.

- 1) Stop it.
- 2) I don’t like that.
- 3) That hurts me/my feelings.
- 4) NO
- 5) That doesn’t feel good.
- 6) I hate that.

- 7) I mean it.
- 8) I don’t feel like doing that right now.
- 9) I don’t want to.
- 10) No, thank you.
- 11) That makes me mad.
- 12) I don’t need that.
- 13) That makes me uncomfortable.
- 14) Please don’t.
- 15) Not me!
- 16) It’s not what I want to do.
- 17) I feel angry about that.
- 18) I’m going to do something else now.
- 19) I don’t want to play like that.
- 20) I don’t have to do that.
- 21) I don’t think so.
- 22) No way!
- 23) I’m not going to do that.
- 24) That’s not my style.
- 25) I won’t.

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