

Toddler Topics 2005

A series to help you parent your toddler

ISSUE TWO

Welcome to the **2005 Toddler Topics**, a newsletter for parents of young children. Toddler Topics is created by Penn State Cooperative Extension Family Living Educators and colleagues.

Once again, we are offering Toddler Topics as an electronic newsletter. Camera ready copies are available for individuals who make the request. You may use portions of this newsletter in your own publications as long as the material is not changed and credit is given to the author.

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Contact the Penn State Cooperative Extension Office in your county for additional educational programs of interest to you and your family.

In this issue:

- ◆ Parenting Principles (article 2 of 5)
- ◆ Get Ready; Get Set, Go... To school
- ◆ Is My Child Developing "Normally"?
- ◆ Dole Versus Allowance
- ◆ Controlling Those Temper Tantrums
- ◆ Read-aloud Tips
- ◆ Discipline 101; Age, Stage & Gauge

PARENTING PRINCIPLES

Jeannine Ruth Richlin, Extension Educator
Sullivan County

Below we continue to highlight principles from the must-read book for all parents: *The Ten Basic Principles of Good Parenting* by Laurence Steinberg, Ph.D. Future issues will contain two more principles. Dr. Steinberg condenses the essentials of good parenting into ten basic principles, which apply no matter what the age of your child.

Principle 3: Be Involved in Your Child's Life. Dr. Steinberg gives a quiz to determine if you are involved enough in your child's life, and tells how to fix things if you are not. He talks about quality time, taking an interest in your child's interests, the importance of school involvement, and how to avoid being an overly intrusive parent.

Principle 4: Adapt Your Parenting to Fit Your Child. Remember that as your child grows and matures, that his or her abilities, concerns, and needs change. Your parenting needs to change over time, too. Dr. Steinberg discusses how to keep pace with your child's development, how to adjust your parenting to your child's temperament, recognizing that your child is unique, how to have patience during developmental transitions, and how to accept your changing role as a parent.

GET READY; GET SET, GO... TO SCHOOL

Cheryl Miller, Extension Educator,
Perry County

Source: National Association for the
Education of Young Children

Young children have the desire to learn and understand their world and to feel competent in their world. Preschool children have varying rates of development, with unique personalities. They are inquisitive. They learn best by actively figuring things out for themselves, they are developing their language skills, they are learning to control their behavior, and they have greater control over their muscles.

Take the time to look incorporate these Tips for School Success into your children's day.

TODDLERS (12 to 30 months)

- Create an environment in which your child can safely explore and manipulate objects.
- Teach your child about the world, including things and actions.
- Respond to developing language by extending your child's one-or-two-word sentences. For example, when he says, "Outside," you might say, "You want to go outside and play?"
- Provide lots of opportunities to develop and explore language. Surround your child with picture books to read together or alone, sing songs and fingerplays, and play games such as Simon Says or Ring-Around-the-Rosy.
- Give your child opportunities to play with other children.



YOUNGER PRESCHOOLERS

(2 ½ to 3 ½ years)

- Encourage independence by allowing your child to dress herself, fix a simple snack, or choose between options ("Would you like apple juice or milk?").
- Talk with your child as you go about your daily activities together.
- Help develop coordination by providing simple puzzles, beads for stringing, and chunky crayons for scribbling and drawing.
- Continue to explore language and build vocabulary by reading picture books, singing favorite songs, telling riddles, and playing simple games.
- Encourage and extend pretend play (Let's have a tea party; I'll pour you a cup of tea.)
- Point out colors and the names of objects; point out meaningful letters, such as "Look, a *D* for Danny."

IS MY CHILD DEVELOPING "NORMALLY"?

Sue Giachero, Extension Educator,
Berks County

As a parent it can be frightening to think your child may not be at the same developmental level as their peers. Knowing what "normal" is can be a mystery, especially for the first time parent.

Children grow and develop in many different areas. They are developing language skills; learning to socialize; learning to move; learning to think as well as learning their physical limits. Remember that developmental charts of expected milestones reflect a process and a range. Not every child hits those targeted milestones at the same time.

(continued)

DOLE VERSUS ALLOWANCE

Jeannine Richlin, Extension Educator,
Sullivan County

Parents need to examine their own feelings and attitudes about money and decide as a couple if they will give their children an allowance or not. Children can receive money in different ways. Often children receive cash gifts for birthdays and other special occasions. They can earn money for completing a specific task at home or for family members. Limits need to be set so that work does not interfere with family time or other important activities.

The dole system refers to parents giving children money upon request. Parents can then decide to give children the money or not. Allowances are best given on a regular basis and can be tied to chores or given as entitlement to family members. The amount of allowances usually varies with the age of the child and the resources available to the family.



Should you use the dole system or the allowance system? There are advantages and disadvantages to both. In the dole system, parents can more easily control the kinds and amounts of children's purchases. Parents can give or withhold money as they wish. Children can get more expensive items if they can justify it or time their request well. This system works well for expenses like activity fees and parents don't have to plan ahead in order to give their children money. The dole system tends to lead children to believe that there is an inexhaustible supply of money for the asking.

Basically children need to learn that money is for saving, spending, and sharing. Giving children an allowance would allow them this opportunity. Parents should determine what percentage of an allowance would go for each category. When children have some

money to spend then they can make choices and learn from these decisions. Gifts to charities, churches, and friends for special occasions need to be part of the money children share. Parental input and values will effect this as well. Saving is a learned behavior and is best done at the same rate each time period. If savings are tied to something larger that a child wants and is willing to wait for, it becomes a goal to work towards.



Some parents do a combination of these two methods. They dole out money for activities and other things they feel their children need. They also give them an allowance that they can spend pretty much as they wish.

Money lessons for parents and children on saving, sharing, and spending can be found at the following website:

http://www.learntosave.com/for_kids.htm

There are also lesson plans based on children's books that teach about finances at <http://www.mmintl.org/resource/teachers/bears/default.htm>

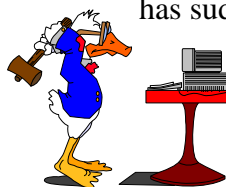
Source: Kids as Consumers, Cornell University

CONTROLLING THOSE TEMPER TANTRUMS

Nancy B. Stevens, Extension Director
Montgomery County

Nothing brings a feeling of dread to a parent like the temper tantrum of a two-year-old!

That toddler that was always a perfect angel has suddenly turned into an



unrecognizable angry little person. Tantrums are a normal part of growing up and parents can avoid a lot of

frustration if they learn what brings on tantrums and how to deal with one once it occurs.

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READ-ALOUD TIPS

Ellen Meanix Helfrick

Better Kid Care Coordinator, York County

All adults have their favorite stories that they love so much that they have read them too many times to count. These same adults have times when they can't hold a book and read to their child – diaper-changing time, driving, cooking, caring for a sibling, etc. With a little bit of confidence and just a little practice, you too can be a storyteller. Truth be told, we are all storytellers – remember relating how your co-worker spilt coffee on the new boss or informing others exactly how it was for us as kids –**THOSE ARE STORIES!** Perhaps you are among the majority of adults that just haven't reached your comfort level with telling stories without a book and pictures in front of you.

As a professional storyteller, I could share my process from story selection to presentation but its more likely that some simple tips to help you liven up a your read-aloud skills when you have the book in your hands will be more useful. Start with a familiar story and follow these simple tips to make it fun and memorable for both the reader and the listener.



ANIMATE – you can animate with your voice. Jack and the giant don't have the same voice. Rather than giving each character their own distinctive voice, pick just one or two and leave the rest of them normal – that way you don't need to worry about mixing up your voices. Animate your expressions, if the character is surprised or sad or tired, your body language will reflect that. Don't just sit there: jump if the frog does, skip if the little girl does and get the children involved in the actions as well.

PERSONALIZE – use your child's name for the character's name, use the name of your town and add in family or pet names. This is a sure way to keep your audiences attention. Give the children a chance to decide on some names in the story.

PARTICIPATE – Expecting a toddler to sit still and listen without responding is asking too much. Give your child a chance to move with the story, to respond to your story related questions, to make connections, and to create sound effects. Let your child decide which sound the dog makes.

ADAPT – Try simply to change a word or two and see if the children notice. You may need to make it a drastic change at first. Eventually they will notice simple changes and begin to want to make them on their own. Demonstrate how you can change the story and still enjoy it. Ask the children for ways to make the story different. Perhaps Old Mac Donald doesn't have a farm but lives in a Zoo or in the city - how would the story change then?

EDUCATE – if you are going to visit an aquarium – read about travel and fish, and water and crowds. If you just had a family vacation, read about relatives and writing letters. Talk about how these stories tie in to what is happening or about to happen.

HAVE FUN – see that your story time does not contain “sit still” or “Shhhhh” or “not now I am reading”. Make sure you pick age appropriate books that are of interest to your child. If you are not having fun or if you have lost their attention, go to plan “B” or add a surprise ending and shift gears.

One way to enhance your read-aloud skills is to watch and participate with your child and a professional. Visit your local library for story time and watch and mimic. Then go home and continue to have fun with books.

CONTROLLING THOSE TEMPER TANTRUMS

(continued)

When tantrums occur, parents need to **stay calm and in control**. Getting involved in the tantrum is likely to make it worse. You might say, “When you calm down, I’ll try to help you.” Don’t change your “no” to a “yes” just to get the child to stop his behavior. This will make it more difficult to enforce rules later. Children need parents who enforce rules and need to know who is in charge.

If your child has a tantrum in a public place, **remove him to a quiet safe place**. You may have to sit outside in the car until your child settles down or go to a grassy area. Without an audience, he is likely to calm down more quickly and realize that acting out is a waste of his time.

Tantrums are frightening for parents and children and children can hurt themselves by hitting arms or legs on furniture or walls. Make sure your child is in a safe place such as on carpet in the middle of a room. If your child is in a safe place, step back from the scene for a few minutes to give him **time to calm down**.

If your child begins to hurt himself during the tantrum, you should intervene as calmly as possible. **Hold him and reassure him** by saying you know he is angry now but you won’t let him hurt himself or you.

It is useless to try to talk to a child about his behavior while he is still upset. **Wait until the tantrum is over and then discuss it with him**. You might say, “You really felt angry, I’m glad you were able to calm down.” After a tantrum is over, **praise the child for regaining control**. Hug and express affection toward your child to show that you still love him. Later your child will learn to tell you when he feels angry, tired or frustrated.

Dealing with tantrums is difficult for parents. It leaves you feeling guilty, frustrated and angry. As hard as it is,



KEEP CALM. Your child needs you to teach them to understand and control their feelings.

IS MY CHILD DEVELOPING “NORMALLY”?

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If your child does have developmental delays, the sooner they get help, the quicker they will improve. If your child attends childcare or preschool, you can discuss your concerns with the teacher and director. The experiences they’ve had with other children your child’s age will help offer some perspective. They can share their observations from when your child is in their care. The Teacher can be a vital partner for both you and your child if developmental support is recommended. Your pediatrician is another person that can be of help when you have concerns.

There are many resources available to you as a parent if you suspect a delay in your child’s development. Your pediatrician and/or your child’s teachers can put you in touch with resources locally. Contact your school district or the local Intermediate Unit for an evaluation. Resources are available even if your child has not yet started school. Your child may be referred to the Early Intervention program in your area.

Taking the first step to get help may be the most difficult part of the process. Once you have, both you and your child will be glad you did.



DISCIPLINE 101: AGE, STAGE AND GAUGE

Denise H. Continenza, Extension Educator
Family Living, Lehigh County

Let's face it, parents do not need their Ph.D. in child development to do their job. But sometimes, parents feel completely ignorant of how to handle discipline issues with their children. One strategy I share with parents when I do parenting workshops is the one I call "Age, Stage, and Gauge." When parents are dealing with misbehavior or a recurring issue with their child, looking at these three things will help you decide how to respond.

1-AGE

How old is this child?

Is the behavior I'm seeing typical of most children I know of this age?

2-STAGE

What stage of development is my child at?

What behavior is typical for this stage?



3-GAUGE

What do I know about my child's unique personality or temperament?

Are there things in the environment or in our interactions that work better with her than others?

To find this all out, talk with other parents and others who share in the care of your child. Read books, ask your doctor, attend parenting workshops, do research on what children are like at different ages and stages. But remember these are only guidelines. The range of "normal" is quite broad. Most importantly, get to know your own child. Only when you know what makes him tick will you be able to discipline in the way that works for both of you.

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