



# Toddler Topics 2005

## A series to help you parent your toddler

### ISSUE THREE

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.

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### 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 5: Establish Rules and Set Limits.** The most important thing that children need from their parents is love, but a close second is structure, no matter how old your child is. Dr. Steinberg explains how to be firm but fair, the importance of monitoring, how to handle conflicts over rules, and how to relax limits as your child matures.

**Principle 6: Help Foster Your Child's Independence.** Accepting the fact that it is normal for children to push for autonomy is absolutely vital to effective parenting. Many parents mistakenly equate their child's drive for independence with rebelliousness or disobedience. Dr. Steinberg talks about your child's need for autonomy, how to cope with opposition and argumentativeness, how to give your child psychological space, how not to micromanage your child's life, and how to protect when you must, but permit when you can.

## BRAIN DEVELOPMENT- - WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

Sue Giachero, Extension Educator  
Berks County



Science is finally able to explain how our brains grow and develop in a manner we can understand. Even though it only weighs 3 pounds, the brain is the most vital part of our bodies. When your child was born he had all of the brain cells he would ever have, enough to learn anything. He will not get any new cells, but those that he doesn't use will eventually wither away.

Life shapes your child's brain development. Children who receive warm, nurturing care will take in all that is around him. On the other hand, a child's development can be adversely affected by prolonged stress in their lives. As children are given experiences to learn, their brain sends out signals to other parts and makes connections called synapses between the cells. This is why repetition and hands-on learning are so important for young children. The more opportunities they have to repeat an activity, the stronger and more permanent those synapses become.



Knowing this little bit of information about the developing brain can help to remind us that what we (and the others who care for our child) do in these first ten years of their life will have a lasting impact on the rest of their life.

**Think carefully about all the experiences that you expose your child to as well as the behaviors you and others are modeling for them.**

## FIRST STEPS IN UNDERSTANDING MONEY

Jane A. Landis, CED, Family Living  
and Consumer Science Educator  
Dauphin County

“Mommy, I want!” Sound familiar? Even the very youngest child can figure out that you are the source of every want and need. As children approach the toddler stage, they are developing a number of skills including the ability to manipulate parents into making “special” purchases. As a parent, you soon learn the skill of saying NO.

Children under the age of three have limited ability to understand the true concept of money, but by age four they can learn the basics such as the different denominations, the difference between coin and paper, and how money is used. Credit cards are a separate issue; however, young children are very observant and do recognize it is a method of payment.

The first step to teaching money management is to let the child handle money.

- 1) Let them put money in a piggy bank. Talk about saving for something they want, something simple and easy to save for.



- 2) Open a savings account. Have your child give the money to the teller and talk about saving the money for something special. Many banks have “Children’s Savings” programs that give a child a small trinket when they make a deposit.
- 3) When appropriate, let your child pay for small items at a check out. Have a small change purse with a few coins and let the child help figure out what amount will be needed in order to pay for the item. This may be useful when going to a fast food restaurant.

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## FIRST STEPS IN UNDERSTANDING MONEY

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Another important aspect of money management is that of values. While a child may recognize denominations and how to spend, your next lesson will reveal how values play a role in money management. **Think of how and what you spend money on as your children will often reflect similar choices.**

### BITING! WHAT TO DO?

Beth E. Van Horn, Ph.D., CFLE  
Centre County

Unfortunately, biting is an all too common problem in during the toddler phase. It takes a little detective work to figure out what instigated the action. Discovering what started the situation will provide clues to a solution and a proper reaction.

- You may be able to anticipate a potential situation, such as a tussle over a toy. **Step in and redirect the children.**
- Even though it is normal, you want to make a clear message that **biting is unacceptable**. Use one or two sentences: “Biting hurts. We do not bite.” You may even want to suggest a solution such as “If you want a toy – ask for it or come get me for help.”
- **Give the bitten child attention.** Attending to the victim helps to reinforce that biting is an undesirable act. Often times our natural reaction is to address the biter rather than the one who was bitten.
- If you have a repeat offender, **remove her or him from the situation** in an appropriate form of time out. For a toddler, two or three

minutes removed from the situation is all that may be needed.

- Read toddler books, role play, or **demonstrate appropriate actions** to teach children socially acceptable behavior.
- Serving a mid-morning and mid-afternoon **crunchy snack helps**.

First aid for the bitten child includes:



- Calming and reassuring the victim. Sometimes it's appropriate to have the biter soothe the one bitten.
- Wash your hands with soap and water and then wash the wound.
- Cover the injury with a bandage.
- If the bite is actively bleeding, control the bleeding by applying direct pressure with a clean, dry cloth.
- Call your pediatrician for advice.



### THE BIG PICTURE

Looking at things closely is an important part of science. Introduce your toddler to a magnifying glass and let them see things we don't even know are there. It also helps to see how objects are similar or different from each other. Try looking at soil, leaves, bugs, snowflakes, flowers, butterfly wings and more!

*Source: Science, Science, Everywhere by Cynthia Pollich*

**READERS ARE LEADERS**  
Marcia Weber, Family Living Educator  
York County



**Did you know?**

- Children who read daily almost always become good students and have an easier time with school.
- These same children are more likely to develop a love for reading and become lifelong readers and learners.
- Child development experts and educators agree that reading is the single most important skill for children to master.

**How can you help?**

1. Simple – as parents and caregivers, read out loud to your children as much as you can as often as you can.
2. Literacy begins with someone reading aloud to a child. According to research, what matters is the action of being read to, rather than what is read.

3. Children enjoy the attention of being held close in a parent’s arms and sharing the magic of a book.
4. Research has provided evidence that children as young as infants will associate being read to with moments of peace and security. As they grow older, children begin to identify a reading voice as a calming non-threatening sound that they associate with love, attention and favorable things.

By reading aloud to your child you are helping your child learn to love reading. Also, reading to your child also improves your child’s language skills, builds your child’s vocabulary and helps your child learn to read on his or her own.

**Need help?**

Penn State Cooperative Extension has developed a series of bulletins entitled ‘Reading Wizards.’ This series of bulletins will help you get started on reading to your children and developing their love of books.

To obtain these bulletins call your local Penn State Cooperative Extension office or access them on the web at

**<http://resiliency.cas.psu.edu/ReadWiz/Wizard.html>**

*Adapted from information provided by Dr. Daniel Perkins, Associate Professor of Ag and Extension Education, Penn State University.*

Don’t forget to include some active reading and some humor! ☺  
Try this finger play from MOVE OVER MOTHER GOOSE by Ruth I. Dowell.

**I’m Glad I’m Not**

*(Have children sit, the mouse is the pinky on the right hand and the bat is both hands palm down and thumbs crossed. Flap hands up and down for the bat wings.)*

I’M GLAD I’M NOT A MOUSE OR A BAT!  
I WOULDN’T WANT TO LOOK LIKE THAT!  
BUT MICE AND BATS, I’M SURE AGREE  
THEY WOULDN’T WANT TO LOOK LIKE “ME”!

*Make motion for mouse & bat  
Shake head ‘no’  
Make motion for mouse & bat  
Point to self*

## BUILDING CHARACTER

Phyllis Wright, Family Life Educator, Warren County

Ask parents what personality trait they want in their child and they'll probably refer to "good character." How do you develop character in a toddler? Remember "those little eyes" watch adults and experience good character everyday from others. We are modeling behaviors and displaying character traits constantly, sometimes even without knowing it. How do you rate on these traits? Your toddler's behavior may already be keeping score!

**Trustworthy** – Can your toddler trust you, does what you say match your actual actions? When you give them choices do you follow through? Do you keep their secrets?

**Responsibility** – It is important to provide opportunities to be responsible. Children can have chores as cleaning rooms, caring for their clothes, feeding pets, etc. When a task is completed, your child will get to feel accomplishment and responsibility. Sure it's easier to do it yourself, but you already know about responsibility, don't you?

**Fairness** – That's hard for a toddler, especially when they want to do the big people stuff. "It's not fair" they exclaim. Children can learn to take only his/her share of food, toys, etc. At their level of understanding, explain rules are made for safety, to be organized, show courtesy, so others will want to play with them, etc. Are your actions fair? Do you whine and complain about work or life not being fair?

**Respect** – "Be Nice!" is a saying that means don't insult your children or say unwanted nasty adult comments. Children learn intolerance from adults and the media. Talk about differences and help them know that being nice is a sign of respect.

Exercising character is part of the Character Counts program of the Josephson Institute of Ethics, 4640 Admiralty Way, Suite 31001, Marina de Rey, CA 90292 6610.

## ENCOURAGE A SENSE OF WONDER

Cynthia Pollich, Mentor, Penn State University



### **Listen to children.**

Watch what they do and hear what they are saying BEFORE you ask questions.

### **Follow children's leads.**

Don't pull their attention away from something they are obviously interested in.

### **Don't answer too quickly.**

Allow time for them to answer on their own, ask them what they think or see.

### **Ask genuine questions.**

Real questions lead to conversations through which adults and children share thoughts and ideas and even more questions.

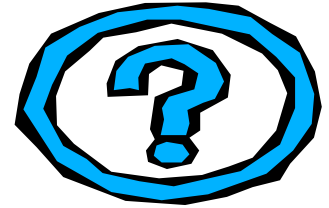
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## ENCOURAGE A SENSE OF WONDER

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### What kinds of questions are most effective?

- ◆ Those that follow children's interests or leads
- ◆ Those you may not already be able to answer
- ◆ Those that may have more than one answer
- ◆ Those that encourage thought or further experimentation
- ◆ Those that lead to friendly conversations about something interesting



### Encourage children to engage in science processes.

What does your snail eat?

Are any of those rocks shinier than yours?

What is the same about these plants?

Can you find other materials in the room that your magnets will attract?

### Encourage children to use science tools.

Have you tried looking at your snail with a hand lens?

Which one is the heaviest?



### Give children time to answer.

Give them a chance to think things over! (wait time)

### Children will ask questions.

Encourage them, especially to ask questions that lead them to further explorations!



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and childcare information?  
Visit the Better Kid Care website.  
[www.betterkidcare.psu.edu](http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu)



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