

Parent Connections

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Spring 2015 April, May, June

Volume 2 / Issue 2

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The Power of Praise

Research Supports Importance of Praising *Effort*, Not *Talent*

Findings from a recent study has reinforced that praising effort increases motivation and encourages strategies for handling failure.

Researchers analyzed videos of mothers interacting with their children at 1, 2 and 3 years of age. The scholars tallied the kind of praise each mother gave to her child and the amount, paying particular attention to the proportion of the praise that was directed at the child's effort, such as "good throw," versus praise for the child personally, such as "you're so good at baseball."

Five years later, when the children were 7 and 8 years old, the researchers interviewed the children, asking questions about their mindset. For example, "How much would you like to do math problems that are very easy so you can get a lot right?" Toddlers who had heard praise commending their efforts were more likely as school-aged children to prefer challenges than those who heard praise directed at them personally, the study found.

Toddlers who heard praise directed at actions also were more likely to believe later on that abilities and behavior could change and develop. Researchers also noted that parents praised the efforts of boys more than girls. Later, boys were more likely to try more challenging pursuits.

<http://news.stanford.edu/news/2013/february/talking-to-baby-021213.html>

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cdev.12064/full>

TEXT4BABY

Expectant mothers and mothers of infants can text "BABY" to 511411 to get FREE text messages with tips for a healthy pregnancy and baby's first year of life.

TEXT4BABY is a project of the National Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition. Visit their Web site at text4baby.org

From Baby to Big Kid

A free e-newsletter showcases how children learn and grow each month from birth to 3 years of age and offers strategies parents can tailor to their unique family situation and to the needs of their child.

Sign up at:

<http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/from-baby-to-big-kid/>

Helping Your Child Learn:

Help your child to soothe himself. The calmer he feels, the more in control he will be. Babies have different ways of calming down. Some need lots of physical contact, such as rocking or hugging; others prefer to be swaddled or put down for a minute. You teach your child to calm himself by staying calm yourself when he loses control. This helps him feel safe.

Make everyday activities “teachable moments.” For example, bathtime is a fun time to learn basic math and science concepts. Filling and dumping out cups help children learn about empty and full, and in and out. When your child makes the rubber duck splash in the tub, she learns about cause and effect. When the duck stays on top of the water, she is learning about floating and sinking and the difference between liquids and solids.

Teach acceptable behaviors. Tell and show your child what he can do, not only what he’s not allowed to do. If he’s throwing balls around the house, give him an empty trash can to drop balls into, or take him outside and show him where he can play with the ball. This helps him learn right from wrong and to channel his energy and interests in acceptable ways as he grows—a key ingredient in school success.

Kindergarten Readiness Begins in Infancy

Children are born ready to learn and are naturally curious beings motivated to make sense of the world around them. The brain is the only organ not fully formed at birth. During the first 3 years of life, trillions of connections between brain cells are being made. A child’s relationships and experiences during the early years greatly influence how her brain grows.

Children learn best through everyday experiences with the people they love and trust, and when the learning is fun.



To become eager learners, children need to develop skills in four key areas:

- 1. Language and Literacy Skills:** Learning to communicate through gestures, sounds, and words increases a child’s interest in—and later understanding of—books and reading. Talking, reading aloud, and singing all help children learn to become good communicators and eager readers.
- 2. Thinking Skills:** Children are born wanting to understand how the world works. Babies make basic associations such as, “I call out, dad comes.” In everyday experiences, children use and develop an understanding of math concepts like counting and sorting and problem-solving skills that they will need for school. A 2-year-old figures out that she needs to get one more cookie because another friend has come to the snack table.
- 3. Self-Control:** The ability to express and manage emotions in appropriate ways is essential for success in school and for healthy development. It enables children to cooperate with others, cope with frustration, and resolve conflicts. Young children learn these skills through interactions with others and guidance from you.
- 4. Self-Confidence:** When children feel competent and believe in themselves, they are more willing to try new challenges, a key ingredient for school success. Self-confidence is also important for getting along with others and working out the social challenges like sharing and making friends.

How to Give Clear Directions

Brooke Brogle, Alyson Jiron & Jill Giacomini

“Why do I have to repeat myself time and again? Why won’t she listen to me?”

Listening and following directions are important skills young children must learn. There are many reasons why children do not follow directions.

-  **The child does not “hear” the direction.**
Parents often give directions from a distance or in passing. “Lauren, get your shoes on.” Did your child actually hear what you said? Adults often don’t hear what their partner has said because they are focused on email or talking on the phone. Children often don’t hear what a parent has said because they are focused on a task such as building a tower or drawing a picture.
-  **The direction sounds like a question or a suggestion and is interpreted that way.**
Daily conversation is filled with questions and suggestions. When you say, “Will you put your shoes away?” you’re asking a question. . . and the child’s answer may be “no” even if he/she doesn’t say so! When you intend to give your child a direction that needs to be followed, it is essential that you tell your child what to do **rather than ask**. For example, “Lauren, put your shoes by the door.”
-  **The parent gives too many directions at one time.**
Too many directions at one time, reduces the chance that she will follow the directions and increases the chance that she will be confused. “Lauren, please go upstairs, brush your teeth and pick up your blocks while I finish the dishes.” A multi-step direction is too long and complicated for a young child to process, understand, and follow. Instead, try giving one direction at a time.
-  **The direction does not actually tell the child what to do.** Parents often tell children what **not to do**, rather than what they should do. It is important to state what action you want to see in order to teach your child the expectation. Instead of saying, “Stop running!,” state what you’d like to see happen, “walk beside me.”
-  **The direction is too vague.**
Directions such as “Behave!,” “settle down,” “stop,” or “be nice” are too vague for young children to understand what behavior is unacceptable or what behavior to substitute in its place and do not state what you want him/her to do. If you say, “stop it,” it may temporarily stop the behavior, but she still may not know what you want her to do. Describe what you’d like to see for better results.



Try This at Home “Do WAWP:”

A technique you can use to make sure you follow through when your child has difficulty complying, or following directions is Do-WAWP.

- » Do—State the direction clearly of what you want your child to do.
- » W—Wait for compliance (silently count to 5).
- » A—Ask the child to restate the direction (to check for understanding).
- » W—Wait for compliance (silently count to 5).
- » P—Provide encouragement or help (helping will ensure success).



Parent Question of the Quarter:

Q: My baby is 9-months-old and I just found out that I have to go on a 2-week business trip. Will this separation impact our relationship?

A: Your worry is understandable because it's hard to leave a baby at such a young age, though many working parents are faced with this issue. Every baby is different: some babies are more flexible and make changes easily; other babies have a hard time with change and may have a bigger reaction. The good news is that by 9 months, most babies understand that things they cannot see still exist and your baby can now picture you in his/her mind when you are away. That is why, at this age, babies protest when they are separated from loved ones (also known as separation anxiety).

There are some things you can do ahead of time to make the separation easier for your baby:

- ✂ Take some photos of you and her together. Have the person watching your child show them to her while you are away.
- ✂ Make some audiotapes of you singing or reading to your baby that she can listen to while you are gone. You can even make the tapes together as you read her a favorite book or sing a favorite song. Record what she "says" too.
- ✂ Call your baby every day so she can hear your voice.
- ✂ Have the person watching your child keep her typical routine as normal as possible. When there is one big change in a baby's life, it is important that the rest of her world stay as much the same as possible.

The person or people watching your baby can prepare by expecting that your baby's moods may change throughout the 2 weeks. She may withdraw, be clingy, cranky, and more demanding. If she rejects their care at times, they should not take it personally. All of these behaviors are her methods of coping. It's important for the adults to stay patient, comforting, and consistent.

How might your daughter react when you return? Babies respond to separations in very different ways, all out of a deep love for their parent. Some babies "break down" with fussing and crying when seeing a parent again after a separation, as if they are saying, "You've been gone so long and I am really mad at you for leaving!" These are natural and expected feelings from a young child. It is also not uncommon for children to reject the returning parent and cling to the caregivers who have been around, but it's important to remember that this is normal behavior for young children coping with a confusing situation (Mommy was here, then gone, then here—will she disappear again?). "Feeling rejected" can be quite upsetting for a parent and elicit hurt feelings, guilt, anxiety, and even anger. How you handle your child's reaction to your return is very important. Let your child know that you love her and accept her feelings no matter what. As you get back to your normal routine and she experiences that all is well and nothing has changed, she will be back to her old self. Remember that your sensitive, loving support is teaching her that she can show you her true feelings and you will still love her and be there for her...always. Separations are a part of all our lives, and helping your child learn to cope with them is a gift you give your child.