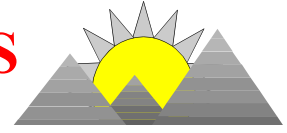


GREAT BEGINNINGS

A Series for Parents of Young Children



24 MONTHS

Bedtime Talk

You might enjoy starting bedtime talk as part of your bedtime routine with your toddler. Bedtime is a good time to talk to your toddler without interruption in a cozy, private place.

Review the best things that have happened that day and talk about plans for tomorrow. The sound of your soft comforting voice will help your child ease into sleep. You'll probably find yourself doing much of the talking at first, but you're setting the stage for later discussions.

As your child grows, she'll want to have private discussions with you about important things. You are practicing for these conversations with your bedtime talks. Some nights you may be in a hurry and skip your talk. Don't be surprised if your child says "You forgot to talk to me about today and tomorrow."

What's It Like to Be 24 Months Old?

How I Grow

- I like to walk on low walls with one hand held.
- I can walk a few steps on tiptoe.
- I might be afraid of the noise of trains, trucks, thunder, toilet flushing, and the vacuum cleaner. I might also fear rain, wind, and wild animals. Be patient with me.

How I Talk

- I can name almost everything that I see often, such as things in my house, my preschool, or my neighborhood.
- I'm beginning to learn the meaning of "soon" and I am learning to wait.
- I can ask for food and drink.

What I Have Learned

- I know pretty well where things are located in and around my house.
- I can make a tower of eight blocks.

How I Get Along with Others

- I like to order other people around.
- I sometimes show my anger by slapping, biting, and hitting.
- I want my way in everything.
- I am sometimes stubborn and defiant, and I use words like, "it's mine," "I don't like it," "go away," "I won't," and "no" a lot.

What I Can Do for Myself

- I can turn doorknobs and open doors. Keep dangerous things out of my sight and out of my reach.
- I want to do lots of things by myself.

Play I Enjoy

- I can stack five rings on a peg toy in the correct order.
- I like to be pushed on a swing.
- I mess happily with soft modeling clay.

Children can be very different from each other. Don't worry if your child is "early" or "late" in growth. Look for your child's growth in each area. Encourage each new ability. If you are concerned about your child's development, talk with your doctor.

Research in Brief: Toddler Intelligence And Home Experiences

What kinds of experiences are most likely to promote learning and intellectual development in young children?

Research shows that children who are most intelligent have parents or other caregivers who talk to them a lot, encourage their use of language and do things with them that help them learn and practice talking.

Games for Growing: Blindfold Guessing

Purpose of the Game: To help your child name objects he cannot see. This way, he learns to put the name of the object together with the way it feels.

How to Play:

- Ask your child to sit on your lap facing away from you.
- Place a blindfold on your child; if the blindfold is scary to your child, just ask him to close his eyes or turn his head.
- Bring together objects the child knows well—like a spoon, rattle, or small stuffed toy.
- Give your child different things one at a time to feel and ask him to guess what he is holding.

Other Blindfold Guessing Games

Put familiar things in a box or paper bag and ask your child to put his hand in the box or bag and tell you what he feels or ask him to take out of the box or bag the items that you name without looking at them.

Nutrition: New Foods Are Strange Foods

It isn't easy for a toddler to switch from baby foods to adult foods. Your toddler probably won't be happy when she finds a new food on her plate. In fact she, like most toddlers, probably won't eat a new food the first time it's offered.

When your child rejects a new food, it doesn't mean she doesn't like it. It means she's a little afraid of it and needs some time to get used to it. Here are some things you can do to help:

- Serve yourself the same food and eat it to show that you like it.
- Suggest that she might want to taste it, but don't force, bribe, or punish her if she refuses.
- Serve the new food again within a week or two. The second time, it won't seem so new to her. Again, don't make a fuss if she doesn't eat it. Sometimes it will take four or five tries before a toddler will even taste the new food.

Most toddlers would be happy to eat nothing except three or four favorite foods. To be well nourished, they need variety. Fix many different kinds of food for your toddler, not just a few favorites. Help her learn to enjoy foods like milk, yogurt, cheese, fruits, vegetables, breads, rice, cereals, fish, chicken, meat, eggs, peanut butter, and beans.

Watch Out: Keep Your Child Car-Safe

Your child darts around quickly now. He probably likes to run more than he likes to walk. He doesn't know what things could hurt him and may suddenly do something dangerous.

Don't let him play near the street. Always hold his hand when you are in a parking lot or crossing a street or driveway.

Use a car safety seat every time your child is in the car. Buckle the safety seat in the car with the car's seat belt. Never leave your little one alone in the car.

I'm So Glad You Asked: Toddlers Learn about Sex

Your toddler is learning fast. You love his curiosity and you encourage his questions because you know it means he is alert, enthusiastic, and competent. Do you encourage his curiosity about sex?

Sexuality is important. Naturally your toddler will have questions about where babies come from and why boys and girls are physically different from each other. Sure, these questions can be embarrassing, especially when you are in public, but whenever you see your little one curious or confused about sex, you have a very precious opportunity. You can show your toddler you admire his curiosity and you want him to learn about all kinds of important things, including sex.

If you can talk to your child now about sex, it will be much easier for both of you to talk about it later, as he grows and as his sexual attitudes and behavior become more important to him and to his relationships with others.

You can expect your toddler to wonder about babies and where they come from. Tell him the truth in words that he can understand, something like "Babies grow in a special place inside the mother's body." Show him you are glad he asked the question. If he asks how babies get inside the mother, you may simply say that babies are made by mothers and fathers together. You could explain that the father's sperm comes into the mother through the father's penis.

Your child's early sexual concerns and questions may be about the differences between men and women. Little girls may wonder why they have no

penis; boys may worry that they could lose their penis. You can help your child learn that boys and girls are born with different genitals. Your toddler should know the correct names for his body's sexual parts. Teach him these as you teach him the names of other body parts.

All young children handle their genitals. Normal children like to explore all parts of their bodies. When they handle their genitals and find that this feels good, they may rub them. They may masturbate when they feel bored or upset.

Some masturbation does no harm. It is normal and it is best to ignore it. If you try to stop it and tell your children that it is bad, they may feel that they are naughty, or that sex or sexual feelings are bad.

Questions

Q: "What do I do about my almost 2 year-old who bites and hits other children? Should I hit and bite her back?"

A: Sometimes, when young children play together, they push, hit, slap, or bite. Biting and forceful hitting must be stopped right away. Most children bite and hit when they are feeling angry. When your little one bites you or another child, say firmly, "No. Biting hurts." Move her to a safe place, look her in the eyes and say, "Stay here until you feel calmer. I cannot let you bite." After a minute or two, ask her if she is ready to play again without biting or hitting. If she says yes, let her return to her play.

Model good behavior. Never bite or hit your daughter back. This does not stop this behavior. In fact, it may make her believe that biting is all right. Most children who bite do so for only a short time. Hitting may continue for a longer time than biting.

Teach her to use words. Help your toddler learn better ways to handle her anger. Teach her to substitute words like "stop that," "go away," "I don't like that" for hitting and biting.

Praise good behavior. When your little one substitutes words for hurting, praise her with words and hugs and say, “You did a good job of using words instead of hurting.” As your daughter learns to express her feelings in words, hitting and biting will decrease.

Winning Ways to Talk with Young Children

Good communication leads to warm relationships, cooperation and feelings of self-worth. Poor communication leads to kids who: 1) “turn off” adults, 2) conflicts, 3) bickering and 4) feelings of worthlessness. Here are some winning strategies for talking with young children.

Use door openers. Door openers are invitations to say more, to share ideas and feelings. They tell children that you are really listening and interested, that their ideas are important, and that you accept them and respect what they are saying. Some examples are: “I see,” “Oh,” “MMhmmm!” “Really?” “Tell me more,” “Say that again,” “I want to be sure I understand you,” “No kidding!” “That’s interesting.”

Talk with (not at) children. Talk to children as you talk to your friends. Talking *at* a child is a one-sided conversation. For example: “Put on your raincoat” and “You are going to spill that.”

Adults who talk *at* children often use the excuse that a child cannot converse at the adult’s level. But no one—including a young child—likes to be talked *at*.

Talking *with* children is two-way conversation—speaking yourself, and then listening to what they have to say. Forming the habit of talking *with* children rather than *at* them will be especially helpful when they become teenagers.

Communicate acceptance. When children know they are accepted, they are able to grow, to change, and to feel good about themselves. When they feel good about themselves, they are likely to get along well with others.

Accepting children just as they are makes it easy to communicate with them. Those who feel accepted will be more likely to share their feelings and problems.

Larry says, “Mother, I’m afraid to sleep alone.” Which response encourages communication?

- You ought to be ashamed! You’re acting like a big baby! You know there is nothing to be scared of! or
- I know you are frightened. I will turn on the night light and leave the door open for you.

We can accept children without necessarily approving of their behavior, just as we “love the sinner, but hate the sin.” For example, we can love and accept Sandra, but we do not accept her behavior when she pulls the cat’s tail.

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