

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2010

Bright Start

The Magazine for the Kidicorp Community

Making the most
of your baby's
BRAIN POWER

Growing a
young reader

CRYING Tips on coping
with a crying baby

How to have a **healthier,**
happier relationship

GIVEAWAYS INSIDE



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FROM THE BRIGHT START TEAM

Welcome to the Kidicorp family.

Hello, I'm Fiona Hughes, Chief Operations Officer for Kidicorp, mum of three and grandmother to two.

We get some great stories from satisfied parents. Often parents tell their teaching team directly how much they value them. Sometimes people take the time to write to us to make sure we know what a great collection of people we have working for us, making children feel safe and supporting their learning.

It's wonderful when we do get this feedback because we work hard across the country to ensure we support our teachers to be the best they can be.

Children and families matter to us, that's why we also work hard to create centres that are a home away from home, where children learn life skills in a caring and nurturing environment.

Many parents worry about leaving their baby at childcare. Here's a reassuring story that shows how a great teacher can make a child feel safe, secure and encourage their development.

Charlie was 11 months when his parents started him at First Steps Palmerston North. His main teacher was Lucy. He was a clingy baby, wrote his parents, but Lucy would distract him when he got upset when he was dropped off in the morning. By the time we left he would be blowing us kisses and be happy to stay with Lucy.

She was wonderful with him and learned early on the books, jigsaws and puzzles he enjoyed.

Now 3, he is at the Toddler's Centre but still talks about Lucy. Said his parents, "If we had another baby we wouldn't hesitate to go back to First Steps and hope we got Lucy again, she is AMAZING!"

That's the kind of environment we work hard to create for every child – a loving, nurturing one that supports your child's learning. We want your child's memory of being at our centres to be a happy one, because we believe that it is this experience that supports their ability to learn.

Think back to your kindy or early school experience, I bet you remember the kind teachers and the mean ones. Kind teachers motivate children often which results in greater learning. We know how important that is in terms of lifelong learning and there are now a lot of studies about the importance of this.

Our relationship with you is very important to us, and that includes me, down through all the people who support our teaching teams in the centres. That's one of reasons we produce Bright Start, to provide you with quality parenting information to make your life easier.

We are delighted you have entrusted your child with us and we will do our best to give them the same experience Charlie had!

Fiona.



Bright Start

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Kidicorp is New Zealand's largest private early childhood provider. Over 8,000 children are enrolled annually in Kidicorp centres around New Zealand.

Bright Start aims to increase our sense of family amongst our teachers and to better connect us with our parents and their families.

TOP PARENTING TIP

Travelling with toddlers

Whether you are going on a long car journey, going on a short break, or visiting family who don't live nearby, here are some tips to make travel less stressful for everyone!

The top tip is always to have plenty of water and a bottle handy. Same applies if you are just going shopping, it's amazing how quickly children can get dehydrated and then ratty. Offering a drink bottle with water as you push them around the shops can often settle and reassure them.

A little backpack with drink, some food (like a packet of raisins, snack bar, piece of fruit or cheese and carrot sticks) and anything they might need, is a morale booster for those long journeys or situations when you have no choice but to take your child – eg a funeral.

Always keep a couple of small books, a notebook with some crayons or pens and some small toys like cars or a doll in the pack. If they only come out when you are away from home it's part of the adventure and will keep your child happy for a bit longer!



Elizabeth Arden Intervene GIVEAWAY

Thanks to Elizabeth Arden we have got 6 packs of the new Intervene skin tone perfecting capsules. This 'nightcap' delivers a dose of radiance-boosting pure Vitamin C while you sleep.

Each Vitamin C packed capsule targets signs of stress and sun damage, softens age spots, even dark traces left by acne scars are less noticeable.

Vitamin C is essential to our health and to our skin. Stress from both environmental and lifestyle factors depletes the amount of Vitamin C in our skin. During the day, skin is constantly under siege – from pollution, UVA and UVB rays and the damaging effects of our increasingly demanding lives.

Spoil yourself, thanks to Bright Start and Elizabeth Arden. Write to Bright Start with a tip for making your day with the kids go more smoothly!

To go in the draw, send your idea along with your name and address to Bright Start PO Box 276177 Manukau City 2104.



Develop your child's vocabulary

Talk to him. Use every day language and the real words for things. From birth children are capable of absorbing huge amounts of language. The brain is a huge sponge. Before he learns to walk, your job is to keep a running commentary going on what is going on around baby from the moment he is awake until he is asleep.

It's very important to keep talking to baby – it's early learning. Don't feel silly. Your voice helps your baby feel safe and secure. Tell baby, I'm going to change your nappy now or whatever it is that you are about to do.

As baby develops, he will be able to understand what is going on. Once your child can speak, when you respond to him, elaborate on what he says. For example, if he says "Drink," say back, "Oh, you're thirsty and you would like a nice cold drink of water."

FACEBOOK

Have you seen our facebook page? Look for Kidicorp childcare. For parenting tips, hints on bringing up children, ideas from other mums, articles on relationships and so much more, have a look today.



BOOKS

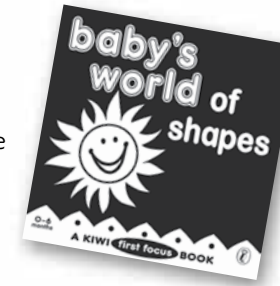
BABY'S WORLD OF SHAPES GIVEAWAY

By Terry Fitzgibbon

Many parents know that babies can't see colour until they are around 4 months. Babies are born seeing in black and white and shades of grey. Baby's World of Shapes is a stimulating book with shapes that look like they move to show your baby.

We have 6 copies to giveaway. Send your best baby tip to Bright Start PO Box 276177 Manukau City 2104. You might see your tip appear on our facebook page.

Penguin RRP \$9.99



STUCK

By Charlotte Calder. Illustrated by Mark Jacson

Three to six year olds will enjoy this story about a group of children whose kite gets stuck up a tree and their attempts to bring it down.

All Charlie's friends try to get his kite out of the tree and just when it looks like everything will stay stuck a cat sets off a chain reaction. Who is stuck now?

Children will enjoy the clever way the chain reaction of events unfolds.

Walker Books RRP \$29.99



JONAH'S FIRST DAY

By Feana Tu'akoi/Samantha Asri

Jonah has a bi-cultural family, his Dad is a Pacific Islander and he has a Pakeha mum and grandmother. Jonah is about to start kindergarten. Looking through the window it looks like everyone knows each other and he knows no one. He's scared and doesn't want to go. The next day his Grandpa walks him past the centre and says he's keen to play in the sandpit. The teacher welcomes them in and before long Jonah feels at home and can't wait to come back again.

This is a great book to read aloud to your child before they start school or early childhood to reassure them.

Scholastic RRP \$18.99



Bio Oil GIVEAWAY

We have 10 bottles of the beautiful Bio Oil skin care and a smart orange towel to giveaway. Bio-Oil is a great product to improve the appearance of scars, stretch marks and uneven skin tone. It contains the breakthrough ingredient, PurCellin Oil which makes it highly effective for those with skin concerns, including aging and dehydrated skin.

Send us your kid's favourite dinner recipe in an envelope to Bright Start PO Box 276177 Manukau City 2104. Winners will have their recipes added to our Facebook page.

A mother writes:

A Wellington mum recently wrote to our Regional Manager, Jo Glen, about her good experience at Early Years Hutt Road, "I don't often get a chance to drop off or pick up Flynn. Until recently, I had to rely on my husband's reporting of how he was getting on at preschool. I felt guilty. Dropping him off in recent weeks has been so reassuring and I have witnessed genuine warmth, interest and care for my son.

"I want the teachers to know how much of a comfort it is to know my child is sharing his world with people who genuinely enjoy him for the darling little rascal he is. I am so impressed and happy with these ladies, who you can tell their occupation is their vocation.

"Of special mention is Elena who consistently writes wonderful updates in his progress book (which I treasure) and whom I can see has a special connection with Flynn. This is evident by his smile when he sees her and how he is trying to say her name at home. I have noticed from her entries into his book that she has really taken notice of his interests as well as ways to build his confidence and self esteem. This means the world to all of us. Thank you."

Jo Glen reminded the mum not to feel guilty about using childcare. "There are many opportunities for children in a group education and care situation that sometimes just wouldn't be possible at home. There are daily opportunities to socialise with lots of children; activities that can be difficult at home (messy play!) and trained teachers who are dedicated to supporting and extending learning to assist children's transition to school.

"Our teachers can never (and shouldn't) take the place of the special bond that you have with Flynn. However, we recognise that trusting relationships with the teachers are paramount to a child's sense of wellbeing," ended Jo.

The Early Years teaching team of Elena, Amy and Sarah were thrilled to get this acknowledgment.

Did you know your baby would cry so much?

By Valerie Davies

This may be the most important information we have ever given in this publication.

We are able to do so because Dr Ronald Barr, MDCM, Professor of Paediatrics at the University of British Columbia developed this programme in partnership with the National Centre on Shaken Baby Syndrome, USA.

In British Columbia every family of a new baby is given this information in a booklet, and a copy of a DVD as well. The information and understandings in this article are based on over twenty five years of research by Dr Barr and other scientists, and funded by the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, the George S. and Dolores Dore Eccles Foundation and the B.C. Ministry of Children and Family Development. Kidicorp hopes by printing this valuable information, and giving it to all our parents, that they in turn, may be able to pass it on to other new mums if they don't need it themselves.

CRYING IS NORMAL

"I didn't know having a baby was so hard", one young father was overheard to say to another. We've all been there - taken by surprise by the tiredness, the crying and the anxiety. Nothing prepares us for it.

But knowing that how our baby is behaving is normal, even when he's crying himself crazy, and driving us mad at the same time, helps us to cope. This article is all about how babies cry, and how we can help them, and help ourselves. We feel guilty and helpless, and finally angry and despairing when our baby cries, and we don't know why, and can't seem to help him. Sometimes in our despair we forget he's a helpless baby, and start to see him as a demanding little bundle having a battle of wills with us. But it isn't like that really, all babies just want to be happy with their mothers, they don't even know about battles of wills at this age.

So the first thing to remember and comfort ourselves with, is to know and accept that healthy babies can cry a lot in the first five months of life. Doctor Barr has evolved a word to remember which helps new parents to understand their baby's crying.

He uses the word **PURPLE**:

- P** = Peak of crying. Your baby may cry more each week. The most at 2 months, then less at 3-5 months.
- U** = Unexpected. Crying can come and go and you don't know why.
- R** = Resists soothing. Your baby may not stop crying no matter what you try.
- P** = Pain-like face. A crying baby may look as though he's in pain, even when he's not.
- L** = Long lasting. Crying can last as much as 5 hours a day, or more.
- E** = Evening. Your baby may cry more in the late afternoon and evening.

All babies cry, and after about two weeks some babies may start to cry more each week. By two months, some babies often cry more than at any other time, and then start to cry less as the weeks go by. Babies can still be healthy and normal and cry five hours a day. It's a hard time for mother and baby (and father too), but the period of **PURPLE** crying does come to an end.



HOW TO COMFORT YOUR CRYING BABY

Do the obvious things, like checking to see if he's hungry, tired or needs changing. Hold him and walk and sing to him, maybe give him a warm bath, or take him for a walk, or a ride in the car. Hold your baby close to you with skin-on - skin contact. (This is often the most soothing of all for him). These things don't work every time, they may help sometimes, but soothing doesn't work all the time. (It often helps you, though, when you feel you're doing something for him).

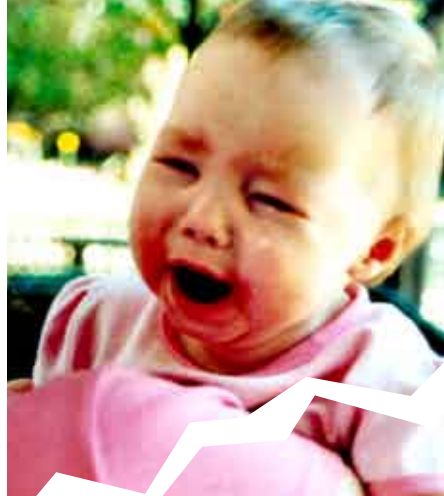
And of course, if you're really worried, you can always check with the doctor or ring Plunket. (Baby may be milk intolerant, for example).

WHY CRYING BOTHERS YOU SO MUCH

You never expect your baby to cry, and it all becomes so much harder than you thought. You feel that because your baby won't stop, no matter what you do, that you're a bad parent, or doing something wrong. You are tired with night feeds and all the other challenges of becoming a mother, and you feel guilty that you can't take care of your baby. Worse still, you feel like a failure, and sometimes it's easy to blame baby for making you feel this way if you get things out of proportion.

It's important to remember that feeling angry or upset is OK. It's normal. It's what you do with your anger that's important. So take a break from the crying, look after yourself, make a cup of tea, ring a friend, walk round the garden. Even take baby for a walk in his push-chair.

Above all, stay conscious. Don't, without thinking, shake your baby.



COPING WHEN CRYING IS BOTHERING YOU

First, Dr Barr suggests carry, comfort, walk and talk to your baby. He says when baby is crying, comfort him, and do everything you can. And he also says that sometimes this will stop the crying, but sometimes it won't.

Second, Dr Barr says, if it's too frustrating, it's OK to walk away. Put your baby in a safe place, and take a few minutes to calm yourself, and then go back and check the baby.

Third, he says: NEVER shake or hurt a baby.

WHY IS SHAKING A BABY SO DANGEROUS?

Crying is the number one reason parents shake or hurt their baby, when they get desperate, and frustrated. Without thinking, they can shake him, saying things like "why won't you stop crying?"

Shaking a baby is very dangerous and can cause blindness, seizures, brain damage and death.

KEEPING OUR BABY SAFE AT ALL TIMES

Sometimes others help to care for our baby, and it feels good to have a break. The important thing is to tell anyone who cares for our baby about the period of PURPLE crying, so they know how to handle it too.

Tell them how normal it is, and also how frustrating it is. Talk about the dangers of shaking the baby. Tell them that it's OK to put the baby down and take a break. Tell them that it's definitely OK to call you if they find it too hard to cope.

Dr Barr warns parents to be careful who cares for your baby, especially in the first five months of life. If the person caring for your baby has problems handling frustration or has a quick temper, it may be dangerous to leave your baby with that person.

When we know that something is normal, we can cope. When we think what is happening is a sign that something is wrong, that's when we start to feel stressed. So knowing that our crying baby is OK, and we are both going through the same challenges as every-one else, at least helps us to feel we're not failing; we are just coping with being a parent!

And as every mother or father who has been there before knows, it gets easier with every week that passes, and even gets to be fun! If Purple Crying makes you feel blue, then talking to other parents, and sharing the frustrations with a laugh is a great way to raise your spirits, and get things into perspective.

One baby a week is admitted to hospital with injuries in NZ, more than a third of them admitted because of being shaken. So this information really matters. All mothers with new babies need support from us all. Research has shown that babies who are comforted when they cry, cry less than other babies by the time they are a year old. Other research has shown us that the more babies are cuddled and talked to, the more the connections they make in the brain, leading to greater intelligence later, whether emotional or mental.

For more information on the Purple Crying Programme go to www.dontshake.org

TIPS FOR HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

By Jane Brown-Smith

Children thrive in a loving environment, and that is one in which each person in the family cares about each other.

But it's no good trying to teach children about relating to others, if we don't have any skills to teach them, and too often we don't realise that we do need to learn about relationship ourselves. So what do we need to know to make relationships work better?

A New York Times feature by Tara Parker-Pope recently posed the question: "Is marriage good for your health?"

This study showed that just one loving, kind or compassionate phrase in an argument lowered the health risks. Well, isn't that interesting! Love makes us feel better, we know, but we didn't know it improved our physical health!

The key word in relationships is compassion. If, in the middle of an argument, we can take a deep breath, step back, and try to see the other's point of view we begin to practise that wonderful quality. We can stop making assumptions which may not be true, like he just wants to hurt me, or he always wants his own way, or he just doesn't understand....

Genevieve Lill, an American writer on relationships, has given these simple common sense suggestions for becoming more compassionate in our relationships. These simple techniques for learning to practise compassion in our relationships can change our lives. By using them, we will see our relationships not just with partners, but with workmates, family members, and children become easier, kinder, sweeter, and more fulfilling.

Genevieve's first suggestion is: "Stop thinking about yourself!"

That's a biggie, but it works. She quotes

an ancient Indian saying that the total amount of unhappiness in the world comes from thinking about ourselves and the total amount of happiness in the world comes from thinking about other people.

Honouring the other person, instead of thinking about ourselves gives a very different perspective on a world, which, if we only practise self-interest, becomes a harsh place. Interest in others, creates a compassionate world

Another of Genevieve's techniques for changing our relationships, and ultimately, our world, is to learn to pause.

Most of us have knee jerk re-actions, which we kid ourselves into believing are gut reactions, but are actually emotional responses, based on old experiences.

So when we think our partner has hurt us, or needs to be called on something we think is un-acceptable, learn to pause. In the pause, and the deep breath we take, we have time to think: is this really how it is? Does the situation really warrant this emotional re-action?

A pause, a step back, a deep breath allows us to get the situation into perspective. Allows us to ask, do I really want a confrontation over this? Is this petty pace, or is it important?

Genevieve is not afraid to repeat the golden rule which we all learn as small children, and then too often forget: do unto others as you'd have done to you.

If we trust and encourage others and appreciate them, we find those things return to us, as we model a different way of relationship.

When something goes wrong, try to think how you'd like to be treated if you'd made a similar mistake, would you want to be blamed or shouted at? Or would you appreciate understanding, kindness, forgiveness?

And while you're thinking of others, you also need to think about yourself. If you are feeling stressed, busy, trying to mother and care for everyone else, you will burn out if you don't care for yourself too. You will be a happier, more compassionate, stronger you, if you give yourself what you need too... time-out to feed your soul, whether it's reading a book, a walk alone or a class learning something.

You need your kindness too. If we feel deprived, because we give to everyone but ourselves, we can start to feel angry and resentful or martyred. On the other hand, if we feel happy and relaxed, that's how we can be in relationship too. We need to balance our tasks with our leisure.

Start now, says Genevieve, and practise on everyone you know. That person who annoys you at work? Think about her challenges, put yourself in her shoes, and you will start to understand, and feel more connected, even compassionate. Do the same with your partner, if one of you is always nagging about one little thing, why not do it, if it makes the other feel happier and less stressed? If you feel you've been sharp or insensitive, just acknowledge it, and start again.

Start small. Put a hand on the shoulder of the one you love if you're discussing something difficult. Say: 'my love', when you are complaining about something that bugs you. These are the tiny things that soften the relationship.

Would you rather win the argument and diminish the one you love? Would you rather win, and know that the one you love is hurt and unhappy? These are some of the small things we can all do to make our relationships gentler, kinder, and more fulfilling, whether it's with your partner or your child.

One baby a week is admitted to hospital with injuries in NZ, more than a third of them admitted because of being shaken.

Growing a

READER

By Liz Fletcher

What child doesn't love hearing stories about when they were a baby. Whether it's a granny telling stories about when their mum was a baby, to mum talking about the funny things pre-schoolers did when they were babies.

We all love a good story. It's actually the start of early literacy, listening to language, learning new words, words being put in context and having meaning.

Storytelling puts memories, observations and fantasies into words. A love of words, language, stories and imagination are ingredients for a child to become an involved reader.

Anyone can tell a story, and often for children, hearing a parent tell a story that involves the imagination is much more exciting than a book.

One Dad who wasn't confident with making up stories used to tell well known stories but change the names of the characters to family members which caused much laughter. Eg Goldilocks became Benjamin in the story of The Three Bears.

Tell me a story

Being able to tell stories is a great way to fill in car journeys or unexpected waits at the doctor for example. To get you used to telling a story share with your child what has gone on in your day, recall the people you saw,

the things that happened, the funny hat they were wearing, the good turn you may have done. This will encourage your child to tell their story and when they do, give them all your attention and support.

An easy way to begin story telling is to recall a holiday and all the adventure and fun of getting to it, what happened on it, evoke the memories, the food, the weather and so on.

Stories from scratch

Make your own story, this helps your child develop their own imagination. The key is to use your feelings and the things around you as the source. You might be walking through a park and see a sheep. Weave a story about the sheep and how it might feel – all its friends are in another paddock but it saw some grass it just had to taste and wriggled through the fence. Now it's all on its own! Or now it's in a paddock with a horse and it's scared of the horse and create a story around why the sheep might be scared of the large horse. Develop the story so that the horse is friendly and gently sniffs the sheep and they become friends.

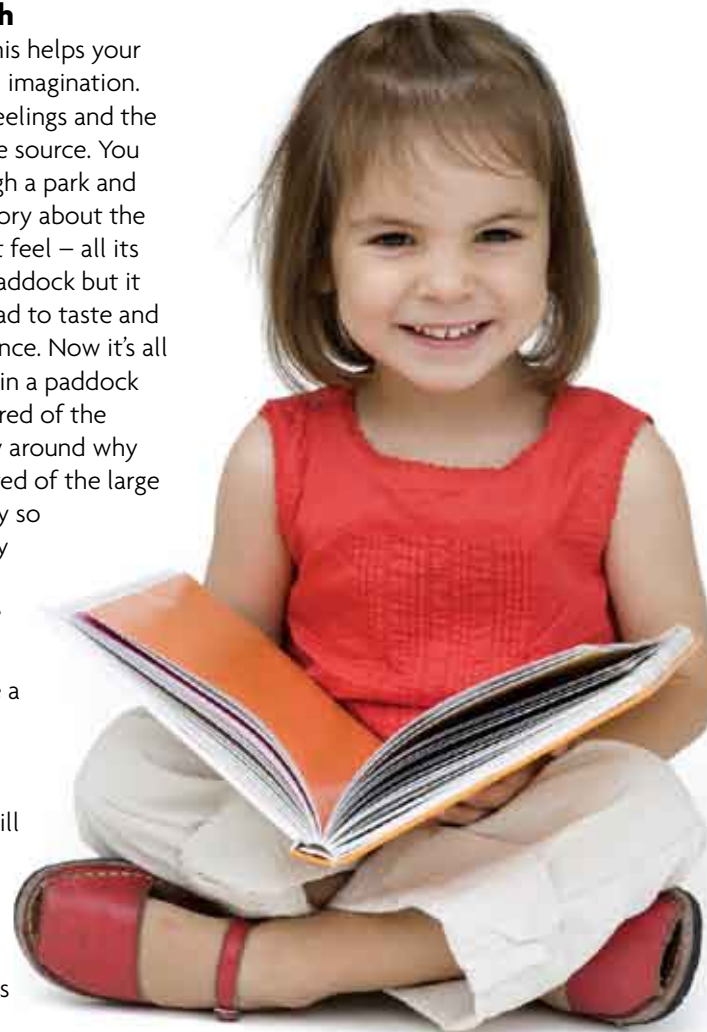
Let story telling become a natural part of your life. While you cook dinner encourage your child to go over their day. This will all help give your child a strong base of confidence in the use of language. Along the way, you'll share precious time together.

Read it again

Why is it that children love to hear the same story over and over again, night after night. Perhaps when Dr Seuss wrote, "I can read with my eyes shut," he was speaking for many parents.

There are lots of reasons why children love hearing the same story repeated and lots of reasons why you should.

We read to children because it is usually pleasurable quiet time. Children



learn about language, what words mean, how stories work, recognise letters, and through all this children slowly become literate. That's one of the reasons why children enjoy repetition. It also does wonders for their memory, so pause when you read the favourite story and allow them to fill in the gap and then let them see the word they have made so they can see the link between the spoken word and the written and what it looks like.

Repetition is comforting, and like a routine it soothes and settles. Stories can be depended on. No matter how often Robert the Rose Horse sneezes he is still loved and happy at the end of the story! No matter how many times the troll threatens to eat Billy Goat Gruff, the goat outsmarts him.

When a child hears a new story they have to concentrate harder to figure out who is who and what is going on. When a story is familiar and comfortable they can notice more and may ask questions about it as they think more deeply about what is going on. As stories are re-read children can follow the words and connect with the pictures. You can then ask them where does it say, "rolled their horrible eyes."

Enriching language

Use some of the words from your child's favourite books in your daily life. "Who is that trip trop trapping at our door?" So read it again, you won't have to repeat it forever but the benefits from doing it will be life lasting!

Develop your child's reading

Read, read and read some more. At least once a day read to your child and do it at a regular special time. If like many parents you are exhausted at bedtime, make sure you do read a book at another time. Bedtime can be a good time for the book you read nearly every night. Use different voices as you read and sound out the rhymes and emphasise the sounds.

Take a book wherever you go. I always used to keep a book in the car for when we had to wait unexpectedly, to amuse and entertain.

Discuss the book. Use your finger to show that words go from left to right and start at the top and go down the page. Explain what punctuation does.

Ever wondered why so many children's books are repetitive or rhyming like the wonderful 'When Grandma McGarvey' series or 'Hairy Maclary'? It's because they encourage children to read aloud with you, appreciate the sounds and of course this is all part of early literacy learning.

It doesn't just have to be books – words are everywhere, share with your child the words for school, numbers on mail boxes, street signs, and more. Even the cereal packet can be used to develop an enquiring mind.

Use the library, many have story-telling sessions so you can have a break and your child can also see you enjoying books. Use the library to explore your child's interests, for example, get books out on dinosaurs, motor boats, planes.

Make books with your child. I took my grandson on holiday and before we left I bought a large scrapbook. Every day after breakfast we would talk about what we had done the day before and then I would write the sentences in his book. He would draw pictures and when we got home I filled in the spaces with the photographs I had taken. It became a favourite book of a very special holiday filled with exciting and memorable moments.



Developing a Positive Attitude

By Valerie Davies

When your child enjoys doing activities with you she will often be learning at the same time. The way you react to her efforts will influence her attitude to the activity next time. Enjoyment and success foster a positive attitude whatever the job, activity and praise for work that is well done will boost your child's confidence.

When your child enjoys doing activities with you she will often be learning at the same time. The way you react to her efforts will influence her attitude to the activity next time. Enjoyment and success foster a positive attitude whatever the job, activity and praise for work that is well done will boost your child's confidence.

Encourage your child to listen to what people are saying. This is especially important when following instructions or if there are safety

considerations. Encourage your child to ask questions and to ask for help if she is unsure what to do.

Try to develop a positive attitude to learning so your child sees learning as fun or a challenge but not a threat. Work with your child to overcome difficulties or solve problems. If she says, "I can't do it..." Show her that help is always there to face the challenge and resolve it.

When your child is struggling with an activity, it is important to praise the things she is doing well to boost her



confidence. Progress at her pace and increase the difficulty gradually.

If she doesn't want to do it don't pressure. Work at new things together but give the minimum help required. Tell her afterwards how little help she needed. Whatever the activity make sure you're both relaxed and enjoying it. It's the quality of the time that counts not the quantity.

If your child isn't successful, rather than saying, "you're wrong," try "you were almost right, let's try again this way."

Point out where she got it right to show where the solution was. Foster good concentration by following the instructions together. Your child will practise looking and listening carefully if you follow a recipe or a board game together.

If your child is interested in what you are doing, involve her. Allow more time than you might otherwise. Encourage an enquiring mind by asking her to explain why certain things happen. Let her try and answer before explaining and giving as much detail as she can handle.

Encourage good observation by noticing things when you go out together. Even if it's just walking to school encourage her to notice what is around her.

It is a good idea to encourage children to finish the jobs they start. So make sure they're not too hard or boring so they get frustrated and give up. Reward with lots of positive praise.

WIN-WIN

At the end of a long exciting day, camping out, mother hands out the picnic supper. The eight year old son starts to "grizzle", he doesn't want his chicken pie... he's actually tired out, and not coping... He grizzles on while mother is busy organising the other smaller children. Suddenly his father explodes. "If you don't stop that now, I'll give you something to cry about!"

Mother stops, aghast. "Jim, you said your dad always did that to you. You always promised you'd never do it to Jason."

Father stops too, horrified. "You're right". He puts his arms round his crying son, and says he's sorry, and cuddles him. They sit curled together, both happy, eating their supper.

Father has remembered how he felt as a child, and recognises that his son is feeling tired and bit frazzled, at the end of a long tiring day. The father has acknowledged his old feelings, apologised, and comforted his little boy. His son on the other hand has learned that adults do make mistakes, but that it's OK to say you're sorry. He's learned that his father is kind, and cares about his feelings. Win-win.



LOSE-LOSE

The Warehouse just before Easter. Inside there's a wonderful Easter Bunny display. Outside there's a young mother, gazing indifferently into the distance while her beautiful little toddler has a tantrum. It goes on and on, the little girl is beside herself, heart-broken, shrieking, clinging to her mother and beating her head against her mother's legs, while her mother shrugs and tells a passer-by she wants to go back in and see the Easter Bunny again.

In the time spent in this shattering tantrum, they could have gone back in and the little two-year old would have learned several things – that life is magic, that if you ask for something special, mummy will give it to you, and that mummy is kind, and mummy understands and that it is OK to ask to have your needs met. She would have enjoyed sharing the bliss of the Easter Bunny with her mother, and she could have gone home happy and content and cooperative.

Instead she learned that good things can only be snatched at, that mummy is implacable, and that you have no power if the people you love decide to exert their power over you. She could end up being the rather detached distant person her mother seemed to be, with all her spontaneity and joie de vivre crushed out of her, out of touch with her feelings, and thus only half alive.

A reasonable request from the toddler turned into a battle of wills, ending with a heart-broken child, and a parent who seemed to have forgotten that mothering isn't about dominating your child, but about enjoying life together. Learning through fun is a better way of learning than through negative experiences, as any child care teacher will tell you. And happy children are well-adjusted children. Mother may have won the battle, but at the cost of hurting her child. Lose-lose.

Stretching the **Brain** with **Exercise & Play**

At around two and a half years things may change again. Some people will call it the terrible twos stage.

Very important things begin happening at two years.

Movement patterns are still constrained. For example, foot and leg move as one rather than as moveable parts. Later they will be integrated into a smooth walking and running pattern. Body control has improved so that jumping, climbing, throwing balls, catching balls with arms and body, kicking balls and using hands much more skillfully occurs.

Some children frequently seek out repetitive movement experiences like spinning. Don't stop them. They are spinning because it makes them feel good.

CO-ORDINATION IS DEVELOPING

Movements that occur on one side of the body will also occur on the other side: when using scissors, the other hand will open and close.

GET INTO 'TWO-SIDED' ACTIVITY

This happens because toddlers have not yet learned that the two sides of the body are different and can do different things.

So they need to have lots of opportunity to use the two sides of their bodies.

Through using the two sides of the body they will learn that they have two sides, and that these two sides can do different things at the same time.

GET TO THE PARK – OFTEN

Take your child to the park regularly. This provides plenty of opportunities to practice:

- climbing
- running
- swinging
- kicking balls
- rolling over balls or along the ground
- spinning
- balancing
- rocking
- jumping



These activities help develop body control, co-ordination and balance and some of these activities should be undertaken every day.

GOING FOR WALKS IS FUN

Just walking down the street is very exciting.

There are so many things to look at and do, especially

- jumping over the cracks in the footpath
- learning to balance on the edge of the footpath
- finding different rocks and stones and also collecting leaves that have fallen from trees
- Flowering weeds are also great to pick to take home and put in a vase.
- The different trees and birds are lovely, and
- imitating bird noises is fun.

Learning about the clouds, sun, wind and rain, the signs on the side of the road, the different cars and trucks is exciting.

Walking around your neighbourhood teaches child so much. Being driven in a car doesn't teach much at all.

SAND PLAY – VITAL HELP FOR LATER READING, WRITING AND SPELLING!

Sand play is also great fun and an excellent stimulus to the sense of touch.

Playing in sand also provides opportunities for pretending and fantasy.

This is very important for development as these abilities promote visualisation.

Later on in school these experiences will help reading, writing and spelling.

STRENGTHENING THE HANDS – TOYS ALONE WON'T DO IT

By two and a half years your toddler's painting is getting better because they can now move their wrist and not their whole arm when painting.

Because most of their toys do things for them they don't have to manipulate them.

This means they don't always get to use and strengthen their hands and will need lots of opportunities to do this.

Things that are great for this include:

- Finger painting and play doh
- threading beads
- pushing and pulling activities, especially tug of war type games, and
- hanging from flying foxes is a great strengthener for arms and hands.

GET ON THE MONKEY BARS

Monkey bars are the best way to develop hands, fingers and arms and also eye hand co-ordination.

Going across monkey bars with thumbs underneath the rungs, makes arms

and hands become stronger.

With better hand development it will be easier to control the pencil and write when in school.

The more practice on monkey bars the better.

LADDER SKILLS – LANGUAGE SKILLS!

Going across monkey bars also practices eye hand co-ordination as not looking at the hand on the rung may cause a fall off the ladder.

Improved ladder skills can help language skills improve. So don't wait!

Get on monkey bars as soon as you can because developing good eye hand co-ordination is important for everything in life, not just handwriting.

Growing older without good eye hand co-ordination and finger control, may cause clumsiness, this can lead to untidy written work in school and at home there may be difficulties buttering bread, doing up buttons, pouring drinks, dressing and taking lids off bottles and jars.

Movement activities such as monkey bars, threading, painting and play doh help the two sides of the brain work better together especially activities that involve crossing the mid line of the body.

When balance, visual, auditory, touch, smell and taste senses are stimulated



through movement and interaction with the environment, brains are more able to make sense out of incoming information. This is called integration and integration is very important for learning in school.

Maureen Hawke has 25 years child development experience.

For more information on how to make the most of your baby's brain power visit Maureen Hawke's website: www.brightstart.com.au

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