DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 281 640 PS 016 504

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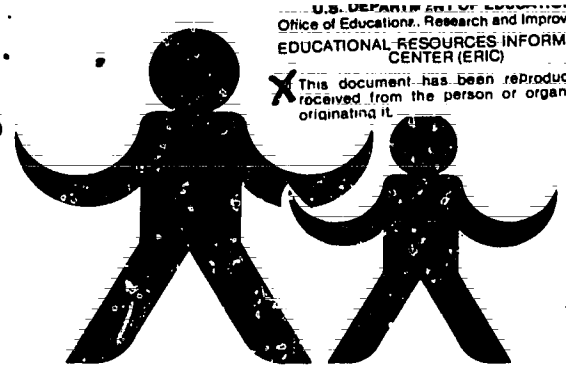
TITLE Especially for Parents: Understanding Babies and Toddlers; Understanding Three- to Six-Year-Olds; Disciplining Preschoolers.
INSTITUTION Idaho State Univ., Pocatello. Cooperative Extension Service.; Oregon State Univ., Corvallis. Cooperative Extension Service.; Washington State Univ., Pullman. Cooperative Extension Service.
SPONS AGENCY Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO PNW279; PNW280; PNW281
PUB DATE Jan 86
NOTE 13p.; A Pacific Northwest Extension Publication.
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Attachment Behavior; *Discipline; Emotional Development; *Individual Development; *Infants; Parent Role; *Personality; *Preschool Children; Self Concept; Toddlers
IDENTIFIERS *Developmental Patterns

ABSTRACT

This document consists of a compilation of three separate 4-page brochures by the same authors: (1) understanding babies and toddlers; (2) understanding three to six-year olds; (3) disciplining preschoolers. The first brochure covers bonding and attachment, infant temperament, patterns of growth, and the characteristics of children during the first, second, and third years of life. The second brochure describes characteristics of 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds and ways of promoting the child's self-image. The third brochure points out characteristics of 3- and 4-year-olds that should be considered in disciplining them; describes a way of thinking about discipline that differentiates between rigid enforcement, permissive discipline, and developmental discipline; advises parents to set limits, be a model for children to copy, and use natural consequences; points out causes of children's misbehavior; and urges parents to teach their children ways to handle jealousy, anger, and aggression. (RH)



especially for parents

Understanding babies and toddlers

For a long time behavioral scientists have been observing how babies grow and learn. They agree it's a slow series of achievements that are remarkably similar among all children. While parents are in charge of childrearing and promoting this process, three factors make each child different from all others: *hereditary temperament* dictates how children react to living; *environment* is the culture or places where children live; and *experiences* they have daily. All contribute to the formation of personality, attitudes, and behavior.

Ideas about baby rearing have changed but the needs of babies remain the same. Most parents are well equipped to love their children but soon discover love isn't enough. In a survey of young parents 90 percent desired "help to make the job of parenting easier." Research has provided information that increases a parent's knowledge about how babies develop. That makes it possible to provide childhood experiences leading to successful achievement and to patiently accept the trials and errors that are natural in childhood learning.

Bonding and attachment

A remarkable relationship is developed between parents and infants during the early months of life. No one is exactly sure about the mysteries of bonding, but in the hours after birth mothers, fathers, and newborns start falling madly in love with one another. Some hospitals place newborns in mother's arms, next to her skin, breasts, and the sound of her beating heart. Fathers hold and caress their newborn.

Although baby's attachment to mother does not instantly occur, observers report some infants show preferences for mother's voice as early as the third day. It is believed that the soothing effects of mother's handling, feeding, and care of baby promotes attachment to her.

Infant attachment increases during the first year. By six months infants begin to recognize that some faces do not belong to their mother or father. They may show shyness, but it will disappear. By one year they can be extremely upset when left with strangers unless they have a warm-up time and gradually learn that when you leave, you do come back. If mother works outside the home, find a caregiver who will continue the warm, attentive care you wish for your infant.

Attachment is a special relationship between a child and adult that endures through time. They need a continuously responsive adult who meets their need for positive interactions and responds to distresses of hunger and discomfort. Infants need to be constantly reassured that the world is a good place in which to live.

How do parents build attachments and trust?

- respond promptly to baby's cries
- talk to babies and tell them what you're doing
- hold babies securely while bathing as you let them feel the warm water around them
- play with baby's toes, fingers, hair, cheeks, legs
- cuddle baby closely while feeding and relaxing together
- concentrate on smiling at baby's face when dressing or diapering

Will all this attention spoil infants? No. Catering to infants in the first year usually results in a happier, more alert one-year-old. Infants act to satisfy their needs of the moment. The more adequately needs are met, the more satisfied they become. Crying is normal, waking at night is normal, and curiosity is natural and desirable. A great-grandmother who seemed to know what scientists are just discovering said, "The first year baby is boss, after that parents take over." Infants have a hard time if parents expect them to understand directions and obey rules before they are able. Lots of child abuse occurs to children under two. Parents become angered when infants do not remember or behave according to adult expectations that are beyond baby's capability.

The skills of mothering and fathering do not require special knowledge or social graces. They do require awareness and a decision on the part of parents to give a child the best start they can. Smiles, gentle pats, kisses, and hugs give baby a different message than frowns, impatient handling, and little touching. Your manner of attention tells the infants how worthwhile they are. Infants' responses are limited at first. But sometime in the second month, don't be surprised if baby stops in the middle of feeding to look lovingly at you. In later months, you will notice that your infant, who has had steady, gentle attention to cries and is picked up and handled frequently, will fuss less and be more alert than those who haven't had this advantage.

Baby's temperament

You may think all this information is fine but what should you do if your child has been screaming and kicking since birth? It's even worse if the neighbor's child is charming and cuddly and sleeps through the night.

Two psychiatrists and a pediatrician became interested in the personalities of infants in their hospital nursery. They watched some babies until their adolescence to determine what aspects

of temperament, if any, are present at birth. Their conclusions show that individuals are born with a basic behavior style or temperament. The qualities that are inborn include: activity level, regularity in sleeping, eating and eliminating patterns, readiness to accept new people and situations, adaptability to change, sensitivity to light and noise, general mood of cheerfulness or unhappiness, intensity of responses, and persistence.

Infants show a mix of characteristics and combinations of traits make some babies more demanding of parental tolerance and patience than others. Because parents have an image of the "perfect baby," infants who enter the world with predominantly intense reactions such as high activity level, a general mood of unhappiness, and longer periods of wakefulness are most likely to be misunderstood. If your infant is like this you'll need all the imagination you can muster to be the consistent, loving playmate baby needs.

Knowing about the characteristics infants are born with keeps parents from blaming themselves or feeling guilty about baby's behavior. If your baby is a poor sleeper, poor eater, a constant cryer, and stiffens in your arms when you're trying your best, it's just the way the baby is. Much of the spark of this infant's temperament will remain but by the end of the first year or by midchildhood many of the characteristics will have modified. Like any other infant, adjustments to life depend on your loving attention to bring about a transformation in baby's less convenient behaviors.

Patterns of growth

Development and behavior in the first three years of a child's life has a fairly predictable pattern and shape. A study of behavior patterns of babies for over 30 years repeatedly notes that learning and physical growth occurs in predictable stages.

At some ages children are said to be in better balance with themselves and others. Parents find them easier to get along with and they seem more content. It's possible that better moods occur after major learnings are accomplished. You'll notice the frustrations of learning to grasp, sit up, walk, or talk. Babies are notably more content at six months, 24 months, and 36 months. They tend to be more cross, unhappy, and confused with themselves at three months, 15 months, 18 months, and 30 months. A child's temperament affects how vigorously they react during their changing cycles. It's comforting to know that ups and downs are normal and "worse" behavior soon becomes "better" behavior. The extremes of behavior are an important part of development.

Even though behavior patterns are predictable and considered temporary they don't always vanish by themselves. A two and one-half year old having frequent tantrums needs parental help in resolving anger or frustration in order to progress. Without guidance children may perpetuate childish behaviors such as tantrums, rudeness, whining, or aggression.

Knowing what to expect as natural prevents parents from being too surprised or discouraged when infants or toddlers behave in ways that are inconvenient and unattractive to them.

The first 10 months of baby's life represent the most astounding physical growth period while the first three years represent the most rapid social and intellectual development period. Within 60 months of birth babies start kindergarten where they'll be expected to:

- use hundreds of words
- have ideas about time, size, color, numbers, and safety
- live by social rules regulating toileting, eating, and aggression
- cooperate in work and play relationships
- be physically competent

The following brief descriptions present some ideas about what you will enjoy and worry about as a parent. For more information read *Child Behavior,* a paperback book by Francis L. Ilg and Louise Bates Ames.

Birth to one year

Infants are born with only enough physical competence to keep their bodies functioning. There's muscular control to regulate heartbeat, to suck, to swallow, to exhale and inhale, and to eliminate body wastes.

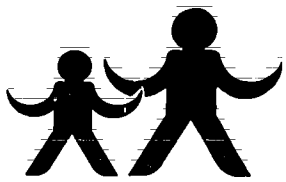
Muscular development follows an orderly pattern of learning to shift the head in the first few months. Between two and five months baby will be able to hold the head erect and be propped up for short times. By six months they can roll themselves over so they can no longer be depended on to stay where you put them. Sometime before 12 months babies are experimenting with pulling themselves to a standing position and creeping.

At three months baby begins to focus on moving objects and people. By six months the gradual cooperation of muscles and thought allow them to grasp an object and bring it into their range of sight and to the mouth.

By the end of the first year baby's hands and eyes work well together but not as accurately as yours. Don't expect the first birthday cake to be eaten daintily. But they do well at taking objects out of a can and putting them back, squeezing a doll to make it squawk, or shaking a bell to make it ring.

It may seem infants are preoccupied with eating and sleeping but they are listening to you. In about a week they are alert 30 hours a week and begin to make noises during their awake times. Cooing, chuckling, or crying are all languages you will learn to understand. When infants cry you'll know whether they are telling you they are bored and want to be held, talked to, and cuddled; whether they hurt and need relief; or are just plain hungry.

Babies need an audience to talk to them. They delight in the sound of their parents voices. In spite of what many parents fear, picking up a crying baby does not spoil them. Parents who respond quickly to baby's cries discover that between three and six months crying almost disappears. Babies who do not get needed attention



will continue crying and clinging to parents to get the satisfying contact they seek. Also, babies who receive more verbal stimulation are more alert and aware than those left in cribs to cry it out.

By the end of the first year babies are responding to words like "bye-bye," their name, and some family names. Since language development depends on baby's ability to hear, consider a hearing check-up at six months.

Pleasurable experiences with parents bring baby's first smile around three months. At six months infants initiate contact with other people or objects by reaching, crying, making noises, or laughing aloud. Social games like peek-a-boo are high-level entertainment.

One to two years

Now baby has become a "toddler." Some researchers claim they have never seen a "spoiled" baby but many "spoiled" toddlers. Babies are absorbed in their physical and emotional growth and meeting self-centered needs as they adjust to the world. They understand and remember little beyond how to get attention for hunger, warmth, soiled pants, pain, or social contact. Toddlers enter a new stage of development as their curiosity and mobility brings changes in family participation and territory to explore.

Keep in mind that parents are teachers. There's no schoolroom but in your home you're conducting short, simple lessons about everything. You provide safe and entertaining materials and space for an exploring child, and you enthusiastically share toddler's interests by helping and showing how things are done. Then you let them try their way. As a disciplinarian you follow a few rules and routines that help toddlers learn. You have the final say in disagreements. It's essential to set patterns of guidance for now and later years. For example, if toddlers are not to climb on the coffee table, that means all the time, not just when it's convenient for you to distract them or move them to where climbing is appropriate.

Firmness will not make your toddler love you less. They are better able to deal with the family and the world if you set and enforce realistic boundaries.

Physical development in the second year is marked by a new awareness of ways to use the body more efficiently. They achieve a clumsy walking style, climb stairs by hazardous methods, and seem to be always jumping over, around, and under objects.

There's a wide variation in the age at which talking begins. Whether they talk or not they are understanding more of your conversation than you think. Their first one or two word sentences usually stems from wants such as "me milk," pointing to the milk carton, or "me do it." You can expand their vocabulary by making a game of naming objects or animals; first the real thing, then pictures in a book. In the second year there is a fascination with hinges so expect turning pages to be more interesting than the pictures.

Independence is not always easy for parents to deal with. Toddlers now recognize they can win your attention through various actions—good or bad. They are increasingly assertive about doing things themselves. They take great pride in accomplishment but have a new negative attitude toward what you want them to do. They'll say "No" to many of your suggestions. It's best handled by patience, distraction, or ignoring whenever possible. It's important that they develop self-confidence so you may have to think of new ways to convince them to do things.

Around age two toddlers develop into delightful companions with good social relationships. They are fantastic helpers. Capitalize on their friendly attitude by teaching words, colors, shapes, names of objects, and how to follow directions. Set the table, put away toys, sort clothes, or clean the living room together. Reward them with encouraging words and praise.

Two to three years

Dramatic changes take place as toddlers approach their third year. Their original interest in parents, exploring the world, and practicing motor skills continues but the use of their time is more directed toward accomplishing goals.

Greater physical strength and muscular control produces graceful sitting and standing postures. Arms and legs move together more efficiently for the usual running and jumping while walking on tiptoes and galloping are added skills. With all parts working together toddler pedals a tricycle expertly and throws and kicks balls purposively. Large pencils or crayons are controlled enough to produce drawings. A big achievement is their control of urination. Strengthened muscles allow children this age to wait to urinate. However, heavy sleep, cold, or excitement may result in temporary loss of bladder control.

The changes in thinking and problem-solving skills are both interesting and challenging for parents. An important part of being two is learning what can be done with increased attention and memory spans. As older toddlers explore objects they want to know how it works and what can be done with it. The 30-month-old will repeat an activity over and over to master it.

Between two and three toddlers are eager to engage in conversations. Their words and sentences are more complete and they want to exchange ideas with aduits. They use more action words and show interest in descriptive words such as "huge," "shiny," "rough," or "fuzzy." Help them experience descriptive words with explorations of textures, sizes, sounds, or activities.

More activity outside the home now lessens toddler's focus on the family, especially on mother. Although the use of "No" has faded, it is still used frequently as toddler attempts to make choices. They want to attract and hold your attention, not in the same "clingy" fashion of babies but as individuals.

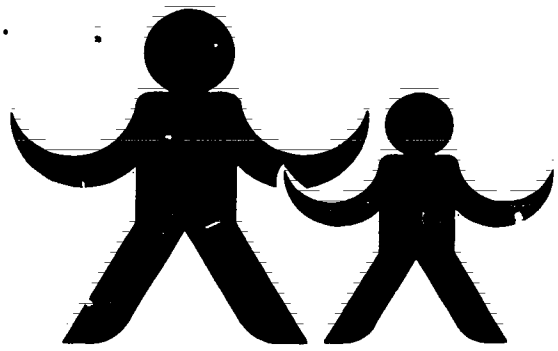
Greater emotional control is noticeable as they begin to express normal feelings of affection and annoyance with adults or other children. When your toddler wants to show affection relax and enjoy it. If they express displeasure with you or others pause to consider if the feeling is justified. It's

hard for parents to handle feelings of dislike such as "I hate you" but deal with it as a grown-up. Sometimes neither friends nor parents are pleasing.

A thinking, reasoning toddler sets a new tone for your relationship. By age three toddlers begin to size up situations and think them through before taking action. For example, younger children will try to lift an impossibly heavy log; a toddler will ask for help. Sometimes parents mistakenly take the request for help as a returning dependency. It's actually a new level of more mature reasoning and is an opportunity for you to teach decision-making. Plan together how to lift the log, arrange their room, or prepare a picnic. Planning helps children learn the important basics of problem-solving skills.

This publication was prepared by Marcelle Straatman, Extension human development specialist, and Shelley Lindauer, Ph.D.

Published and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, by the Oregon State University Extension Service, O. E. Smith, director; Washington State University Cooperative Extension, J. O. Young, director; the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension Service, H. R. Guenthner, director; and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.



especially for parents

Understanding three to six-year-olds

Fascinating preschoolers

Children develop while following a distinctive pattern that flows from one stage to another. Within each stage, children adopt new and independent actions leaving behind some dependencies of babyhood.

Children vary in the ages at which they reach and leave each stage. They progress according to their own internal timetable in intellectual, social, physical, and emotional steps. Skills that come easily and early to one child may be difficult and come later for another child.

While each child is distinctive, they are alike in many ways. Years of observing young children have produced information that helps parents know children are going to experience times when things go smoothly and times that are quite discouraging. Growth and change is a struggle for children and parents.

Preschool children are still basically self-centered. Their gradual growth in skills and social interest in others is developing through the first seven or eight years of life. Play is their natural way of learning. They use all of their senses to actively explore, imitate, and experiment with people, things, and behavior.

Three-year-olds

You'll discover three-year-olds are a calm, cooperative relief after coping with two-year-olds. Around the third birthday, activity is more balanced and smooth. But by 3½ children again turn non-conformist and become very strong-willed. A strong inner drive prompts their occupation with gaining a sense of control of who they are and what they can do and direct. It is appropriate that they make some decisions for themselves, but your patience and understanding will be challenged as you help them understand the necessity for family routines and rules.

Physically, three-year-olds have increased running, jumping, and climbing skills. Improved muscular control allows them to balance on narrow surfaces, use alternate feet for going up and down stairs, and manage small objects like buttons, snaps, and zippers. Some become picky eaters and all openly assert their likes and dislikes in food. Parents worry about decreased appetites but three-year-olds usually need less food as their growth rate slows.

Socially, three-year-olds are becoming more conscious of other people. They want to be with other children and show an increased desire to please others most of the time. You'll enjoy their willingness to cooperate with you. While playing with others has growing importance, three-year-olds have much to learn about cooperative play. They are beginning to share but still push, shove, or hit to get what they want. Their social problems stem from their natural self-centeredness and desire to call attention to themselves. "Look at me! I can ride the trike better than Billy!" is a bid for superiority. Help them feel good about themselves and reduce competiveness with simple responses like, "You are a real whiz when it comes to riding a trike."

The third year is characterized by emotional extremes and some negativism. While children at this age are not as rigid or inflexible as they were a year ago, they can be very demanding and lose control from time to time.

Three-year-olds rapidly progress intellectually. Experimenting with vocabulary building means they pay more attention to words and how to make sentences. Have their hearing checked to insure that words are heard and spoken correctly. They enjoy chatting with adults and asking many questions to satisfy their curiosity. Keep your answers simple—preschoolers aren't concerned about scientific explanations.

Three-year-olds are learning to connect ideas and objects. Numbers and counting, naming objects, colors, different shapes, animals, and people are now firmly learned. They like sorting objects according to size, shape, and color. When you look at magazines or books, point out houses, barns, nests, or stores. They like to look for happy or angry people, funny people or animals, dads, moms, babies, or boys and girls.

Play is the main occupation of three-year-olds. They have no preference whether it's with boys or girls. They are attracted to water, sand, or dirt. A three-year-old enjoys building blocks, climbing, throwing, puzzles, musical activity, and story telling.

Three-year-olds carefully observe activities in the home and on television. Imitation is the source of active pretending during play. They spend weeks as Superman or Strawberry Shortcake. Grown-up tasks are part of play, too, so capitalize on their willingness to help with doing dishes, making beds, folding clothes, cooking, sweeping the floor, and chores suitable to their strength and safety.

Four-year-olds

Exuberant and adventurous describes four-year-olds. They love excitement and anything new. Their creative imagination leans toward inventing more things to do, but their interest span tends to be short.

PNW 280
January 1986

A Pacific Northwest Extension Publication
Oregon Washington Idaho

At four, physical strength and energy has increased considerably. They like outdoor play that involves rough and tumble games, as well as running, jumping, hopping, skipping, and climbing. They rarely admit they're tired. Since they now think they're too old for naps, plan for daily quiet time. Tantrums, silliness, or aggressiveness usually are signs of fatigue.

At this age, children require companionship. They feel bad if they are isolated from the play group. Peers have become so important children may defy their parents in order to please playmates. Four-year-olds can play simple games in groups, but the games may end suddenly. It happens because each child wants to make the rules and decisions without regard for anyone else. In general, this is the year when taking turns and sharing gets better.

Children this age still turn to parents to solve most of their problems but they are torn between parent and peer influences. They discover subtle ways to resist you rather than flatly saying, "No."

Although four-year-olds have learned to handle an amazing number of emotional upheavals, many have wide mood swings. They may be pleasant one moment, in a rage the next. This calls for both firmness and freedom on your part. Many parents find that giving a "time out" period teaches children their unpleasant moods are not going to disrupt the family. Take children gently to their room saying, "It seems you need time out. When you feel better come back and play where we are." Emphasize that they can come out when they feel better rather than setting a time limit on their stay. Many spats between playmates can be resolved by the children without parental interference. However, be on guard against uncontrollable fighting or use of objects that could harm either child.

Four-year-olds continue the rapid intellectual growth characteristic of preschoolers. With a longer attention span they spend more time engaged in activities of interest. They expand their language skills by attempting new, big words. They make up rhymes and words of their own like, "smerfy, werfy, derfy" which brings on gales of laughter and more improbable words. They also discover swear words and "potty talk." It's best to ignore undesirable words as much as possible. Make it a habit to praise words you want to hear like "please" and "thank you," or offers of help.

The play of four-year-old's reflects imagination and love of pretending. Small-scale woodworking tools or household equipment particularly fascinate them. Climbing, swinging, sliding, and riding a trike are favorite outdoor activities. Indoors they can spend a lot of time with creative materials: paper, scissors and paint, books, musical instruments, and building blocks.

Encourage their interest in books by helping them write their own. After a trip to the zoo, a birthday party, or any event, help them cut and paste pictures into a booklet of 4 or 5 pages. Under each picture print words your child chooses to represent the picture. Children are proud of books they write, often reading them again and again.

Five-year-olds

Five-year-olds are generally happy people who find themselves satisfying. They find life appealing as they bubble with affection and cooperation. But as with previous pleasant stages the mood changes at about age 5½ when a fresh set of strong demands and emotional upheavals affect their behavior. They seem to want too much, try things that are too difficult, and make new claims on the center of attention. Children approaching six feel pressured by themselves and others to act more grown-up than they really are.

During the fifth year, well-developed motor skills allow children to perform more complicated tasks like riding a two-wheel bike. Better eye-hand coordination lets them lace and tie shoes and handle a knife and fork more easily. They can use paint, scissors, pencils, or other art materials constructively. They now show right or left hand preference.

Initiative, or planning and organizing, is characteristic of this age. Their plans and routines in the bathroom may not be familiar to you, but the main thing is they are trying to get the job done. Efficiency comes a bit later.

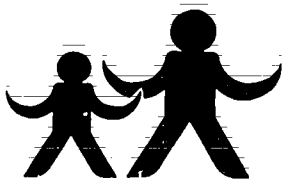
Five-year-olds reach a new level of cooperation in play with others. Most of them are happy, successful group participants. They want to be in on everything others do. But they are not ready for competitive games and are very discouraged by losing. Play for preschoolers is different than it is for adults. It's a child's beginning stages of thinking, planning, and organizing. These are also the years of their peak imagination—the rules for play are always their own.

Socially, five-year-olds have made great progress in learning what is "right" to say and do. They are more sympathetic toward others and usually in control of their emotions. They enjoy their independence and like to be given responsibility for running simple errands or taking a message to a neighbor.

Although fives can distinguish between what is true and false, they may exaggerate or tell "tall tales." Preschoolers deal with a shakey sense of reality and many unknowns. Was it real or wasn't it? Is it mine or isn't it?

Honesty is learned gradually. It begins to take shape in a child's thinking during this year. Families communicate the value of truth or not taking other's things with and without words. Lies may be imaginative tales, failure to understand your questions, or given in anticipation of punishment. Taking things is part of learning to distinguish what is theirs and what belongs to others. Even knowing that something belongs to someone else does not wipe out a desire to have it. This is not stealing. Accept lying or taking things as mistakes and help them understand why it is wrong.

Five-year-olds can understand reasons for behavior. Without being preachy or making them feel like criminals, help them return articles to their owners and praise their honesty.



They soon get the idea that certain things belong to others. Make sure they have their own treasures too.

Five-year-olds talk a lot! They are very curious and constantly ask how, what, when, and where. They have many stories to tell that flow more logically now. They'll sit for a chat or enjoy talking on the telephone. Their interest in exploring words is rapidly expanding. They ask, "What does this say?" It's time-consuming for you, but learning words is a powerful accomplishment for fives.

Clocks and telling time become a new source of interest. They have little concept of next week or next month, but, when the clock hands are straight up and down, it's time for dinner.

Children of this age are interested in everything from the smallest leaf to the biggest machinery. Satisfy this yearning to see and touch things in your surroundings—a walk in the woods, a trip to a farm, or watch street construction. Collect and save objects from their excursions for stories and books.

Promoting the self-image

Parents talk a lot about how they want their children to grow up. They worry about their children's progress because they know early experiences influence a child's school and social accomplishments. Good adjustments begin in childhood and continue step by step through life.

Preschoolers are not likely to ask themselves "What kind of a person am I?" or "How much do I like myself?" They do, however, create inner pictures of themselves based on how well they seem to be doing, how much they are loved, and how they are pleasing you. Successful experiences build pleasant inner pictures of self-confidence called self-image. "I can do it," becomes a child's foundation for action. Repeated failures and discouragement build pictures of despair. "I'm a flop," was the constant remark of a four-year-old whenever things didn't go well. When children have pleasant inner pictures, they have high self-esteem.

High self-esteem is not self-centeredness. It simply means that children see themselves as helpful, enjoyable, strong, and dependable. Preschoolers' constant demands for recognition of accomplishments are not self-centeredness. Instead, they seek reminders of their worth to make them glad to be who they are. Children with high self-esteem accept daily risks while children with low self-esteem withdraw from new learnings and adventures because they fear failure.

Children aren't born with self-esteem. You help create it by reflecting positive or negative responses to their efforts. Your words and actions carry powerful messages that tell children whether they are valued and enjoyed or whether they are an extra burden.

Everything that happens to children affects their self-image. Important and unimportant incidents raise and lower their self-esteem. For example, if you're always too busy, in a hurry, or use "put-down-talk," children conclude they're not as important as other things or people. You can repeatedly tell them you love them but if its not reinforced with your time and attention, they lower their estimate of themselves.

Preschoolers meet many failures each day that prove their smallness and incapability. Support their struggle to feel big and proud by telling them that they're doing well. If day after day, children experience more comfort than discomfort, more encouragement than discouragement, and more attention than lack of it, they develop good feelings about themselves.

No parent intentionally contributes to feelings of low worth in their children; however, sometimes carelessly or thoughtlessly, the best of pictures are not presented to children. Here are a few items to think about:

Appropriate expectations. Few children can live up to parental expectations. Standards are important to work toward but can become detrimental to children's views of their abilities. Children do their best to learn manners, remember rules, sit still, and share, but they are beginners and rarely achieve perfection. Since they measure themselves by your standards, do you make them feel that they're improving? A child who cannot meet a parent's expectations, soon gets the message, "I have little faith in you when you aren't measuring up." Remembering what children of each age can do will help you have more realistic expectations.

Promote trust. Let children show unhappy or angry feelings without fear of rejection. It's easy to share in accomplishments and joy, but other feelings are also part of getting along in different situations. You enhance self-images when you understand and comfort children in difficult times. Avoid degrading them in front of others or allowing others to tease or belittle them. Preschoolers must believe you're on their side.

Respond immediately when children behave well. "You were helpful when we were in the grocery by sitting quietly in the cart" makes a child proud. They strive to hear you say it again. Too often children's desirable behaviors are taken for granted while attention is focused on mistakes. This makes it difficult for children to gather enough positive pictures of themselves to build a high self-image. Constant encouragement for positive efforts, praise for tasks well done, and a sense of humor about mistakes give children the background for building high self-esteem.

Be sensitive to children's feelings. Shyness, anger, extreme dependence on you, misbehavior, or nervous habits may signal a troubled self-image. Put yourself in your children's shoes. Is there enough recognition, tenderness, and encouragement flowing their way? Some children need more encouragement than others to help them feel good about themselves.

Psychologists define love as helping someone to grow. Aside from the unconditional affection you freely give your children, helping their growth lies in understanding the world from their point of view.

Well-meaning parents often limit their conversation with preschoolers to giving orders or disciplining them. Many parents pay little attention to a child's feelings or concerns. Make

conversation with your children each day. Take turns listening and speaking so you can better understand one another. Parents may want to:

- practice making frequent up-lifting remarks to children
- focus on the effort going into an activity or action
- look for the good rather than the poor parts in an effort
- find ways to correct mistakes without discouraging positive activities
- look for and comment on a child's potential skill.

Preschoolers are filled with wonder at what they see and can do. Share the delight of their discovery and mastery with them as you grow together.

This publication was prepared by Marcelle Straatman, Extension human development specialist, and Shelley Lindauer, Ph.D.

Published and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, by the Oregon State University Extension Service, O. E. Smith, director; Washington State University Cooperative Extension, J. O. Young, director; the University of Idaho Cooperative Extension Service, H. R. Guenthner, director; and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.

especially for parents

Disciplining preschoolers

Disciplining preschoolers

Few parents can honestly say they never have trouble getting their children to "mind." Most admit they've lost their "cool" from time to time and don't know what to do when methods they've heard or read about fail to work with their youngsters. Many parents have no problem teaching children to avoid danger but find it hard to establish rules for everyday living.

Experts agree that the goal of rearing children is to help them learn useful behaviors. The old methods used to make children stop "bad" behavior are being replaced by understanding what's happening within a child and then guiding their natural interests and drive. Parents can now know what to expect at each age. But even that knowledge does not come with a set of instructions because every child and situation is different. Some child-rearing suggestions make parents feel more comfortable and make growing up easier for children.

Much of a three- or four-year-old's behavior troubles are due to poor memory. Although memory is steadily improving, they happily get into situations without remembering past experiences or consequences. They remember only a few words or ideas when someone is talking to them and have difficulty recalling what happened this morning or yesterday.

Their short memory makes them unable to follow many instructions given at the same time. Don't be surprised if Judy does not follow all your instructions when you say, "Take those toys upstairs to your room, put on your pajamas, brush your teeth, and hurry up!" Judy will probably brush her teeth thinking she has done what she was told. Being told too much, too fast, is upsetting to a child. Children are more likely to follow short, simple one-step-at-a-time instructions.

What is discipline?

Many parents feel uncomfortable with the word discipline because it recalls resentment and frustration from their childhood. It's often thought of as payment for being "naughty."

The word discipline refers to instruction and knowledge. Discipline is teaching children the rules people live by. It's also helping them learn and practice these rules. Discipline makes you get to work on time, drivers stay on the right side of the street, and children wash before eating. It's not a negative thing you do to children when they make mistakes.

There are two simple things children must learn: how to use desirable behavior and how to avoid undesirable behavior. What you as a parent have on your side is a child's natural desire to please you. Desirable behavior is most easily and rapidly learned when it is recognized and encouraged with special attention and affection. Desirable behavior that has been praised tends to be repeated because children love the grown-up, important way it makes them feel. Undesirable behavior is repeated, too, if that's the only way a child can get your attention.

Think of discipline as loving actions you take to teach your children to:

- achieve for themselves
- choose desirable behavior when you aren't around
- develop pride and pleasure in doing what is right and acceptable.

Showing your love is the first step in teaching effective discipline. As children become active preschoolers, many busy parents tend to forget to continue the playful, loving exchanges enjoyed with them as babies and toddlers. They neglect the secret of successful discipline—creating loving moments more often than corrective ones. Special outings, hugging, and playing or reading together always improves a child's efforts to please you. Yelling, blaming, lecturing, or belittling criticism often used to shock or shame children into desirable behavior has not proven to work that way. This reduces a child's sense of accomplishment and self-worth. It doesn't make you feel successful as a parent either.

Three discipline styles used by parents are reflected in children's behavior and self-confidence:

Rigid enforcement teaches obedience and conformity to strict rules and standards through fear of punishment or shame. Preschoolers are very sensitive to disapproval whether it comes from discouraging words, frowns, harsh voices, or physical punishment. Unrelenting discipline reduces children's curiosity, spirit of adventure, and ability to make decisions on their own. They learn more about what they should **not** do than what they should do.

Permissive discipline lets children rear themselves through trial and error. Without the security of limitations and parental guidance, children are less able to direct or control their inner urges.

Developmental discipline uses methods that are firm or permissive depending on the seriousness of a child's mistakes. It considers the age, maturity, and temperament of each child. Developmental discipline recognizes that children do not know what is desirable behavior and that learning is a slow process. Parents using this style support their children with encouragement for what is done well.

PNW 281
January 1986

A Pacific Northwest Extension Publication
Oregon Washington Idaho

Where does punishment fit into effective discipline? Effective discipline teaches children to decide what is desirable behavior and practice it because it feels right. The purpose of punishment is to stop children from doing what you don't want them to do.

Punishment may be physical like slapping, spanking, or any attack on a child's body. It can also be verbal such as shaming or ridiculing. Physical punishment stops children from doing what they are now doing, but it fails to guide them toward desirable behavior. A swat on the seat may be necessary to remind a toddler to stay out of the street or away from other dangerous temptations. While this mild punishment may do no harm, it cannot be used as an effective teaching method for preschoolers who should be helped to develop inner controls for their behavior.

Physical or verbal punishment teaches children to hate themselves and others. They think something is wrong with them because they are treated this way. Parents who use physical or verbal punishment are teaching children that it's all right to settle conflicts with hitting or name calling. Educators say that harsh punishment produces some of the unhappiest, least-controlled teenagers.

Parents who frequently rely on punishment for teaching desirable behavior usually think nothing else works. It also works fast, while effective discipline takes imagination and time. Sometimes punishment is used because parents are overburdened by a child's demands and punishing relieves their tensions.

You may ask, "What's wrong with spanking?" It's not a question of right or wrong but what is best for the child. Ask yourself, "How did I feel when I was spanked as a child?" and, "What is my child feeling and thinking when I spank?"

What's a parent to do?

Set limits. Every parent is not equally comfortable with all methods of discipline, but children need to know how far they can go. Limits allow children freedom to make decisions within given boundaries. To go no farther than the edge of the sidewalk is a set limit. Freedom and limits are different for each child at each age.

Too many limits and rules are confusing and make it hard for children to succeed. They also require constant supervision which is tiresome for parents. Most important is that there are limits. Set limits after you answer these questions:

- Is this limit necessary for the child's safety?
- Is it necessary for the safety and well-being of others? Is it mentally or physically harmful?
- Is it necessary for the protection of furnishings or other people's things?
- Is this limit necessary now or was it outgrown?
- Is this limit mostly for the comfort of adults such as too many naps, no noise, or mess?
- Does this limit stop children from satisfying natural curiosity or activity needs?

Sometimes you'll set limits without thinking about the reason for the limit or what the results are. Some parents say "no" to almost everything. If children must stay in the yard, is there something to do there? If they cannot cross the street, how can they play with children in another yard?

Not all limits need to be explained to very young children but preschoolers need to know reasons for limits. They can help you think of reasons for a limit and help you set some. You could talk about what would happen if everybody jumped on the sofa. What kinds of things can children do while riding in a car? They won't always agree or remember, but it's grown-up to be helping with family decisions.

Be a model. Few parents realize they are constantly being copied. If you yell and call Mary a brat for snatching baby's teddy bear, Mary learns to yell and call people names when things don't go her way. If you teach them not to hit the baby by hitting them, you are showing that it's all right for grown-ups to hit people. If your table manners are good, you eat all kinds of foods, and you hang up your coat, children will imitate you. Maybe not now but eventually.

Use natural consequences. Natural consequences are actions taken when children fail to control urges to misbehave. A natural consequence relates to a child's mistake. You may deprive children of a promised trip to the park if they don't eat their lunch. The two situations are unrelated. For natural consequences to be effective discipline it would be better to warn your children there will be no snacks at the park. Then stick by that statement. Hunger will be the natural reminder to eat lunch next time.

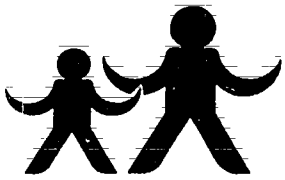
Natural consequences are most effective if they occur immediately. If you say, "Wait till your father comes home," most children will forget what the mistake was by the time he gets there. The consequence becomes unrelated to the deed, and it also makes a child fear father.

Why children misbehave

Much child behavior considered "naughty" or "bad" is best thought of as learning behavior. Good discipline is accepting what is natural and will be outgrown. Babies are excused for impolite burping and spitting. But life gets harder for three-year-olds who kick and hit, or throw fits of temper. Fours and fives have different troubles. They experiment with language that comes out as sass, balkiness, or name calling.

Your children's goals are different from yours. They act out impulses you have already conquered, like banging on Grandma's piano or whining for gum when you're at the store. A three-year-old mind is only beginning to absorb all the information it needs to behave well in many different situations. That's why you point out and compliment desirable behavior again and again.

Almost all parents are irritated when preschoolers waste time in routine



tasks, ignore parental requests, leave tasks unfinished, and wiggle a lot in sitting situations like restaurants. Never expect children to act like adults. Most of the time they will be acting like normal three-, four-, or five-year-olds.

Desirable behavior is best taught when things are going well, not when things are at their worst; children often misbehave when something is bothering them.

Children misbehave when they don't feel well. Children need plenty of sleep, healthy foods, exercise, and fresh air every day. They're hard to live with when they don't get it. If you rule out sickness, your children may need time outdoors or a snack to hold them over until the next meal. Trying to teach desirable behavior now would be useless.

Children misbehave because they lack knowledge and experience. They make mistakes when they are learning new things but haven't learned how or when the new things are appropriate. Three-year-olds learn to spit but need to learn to spit outdoors, not at others. Four- and five-year-olds learn shocking words but have to discover you don't use them in social situations. Children make behavior mistakes just as they make mistakes getting their shoes on the right feet. Some mistakes call for patient explanations, others are best ignored.

Children misbehave when they are upset. Children need order and routine to feel secure. They are upset by a new babysitter, a new baby, a sick parent, a family move, parent squabbles, divorce, or death. Just when your energies are focused on resolving changes, children want and need more attention because they, too, feel insecure.

Children misbehave when they are discouraged. What's the use of doing good things if no one notices? Sometimes families make a habit of giving mistakes all the attention. Without regular approval and praise for desirable behavior, your children may think the only way to get attention is by misbehaving. Negative attention seems better than none at all. Kind words encourage, scoldings discourage.

Children misbehave when they feel rejected. All humans crave love and acceptance and want it shown toward them. Feelings of rejection or of being unloved cause children to strike out with destructive or angry action. The feelings may come from harsh words or even having a new baby in the home. Older preschoolers may think they are being treated unfairly. Talking about the problem and showing extra affection usually helps.

There may be other reasons for misbehaving, but it's easier to attend to what's bothering a preschooler now than later with a teenager. Steady guidance and their maturing nature eventually ends the toy snatching, truth stretching, tattling, and demands for attention you now deal with. But they will test you, rebel, or forget the rules many times before they learn how to control themselves.

Guide emotional control

By age 3 the preschooler's heightened awareness and imagination prompts a range of emotional responses—uninvited feelings that cause children to laugh, cry, or hit someone within the same hour.

A child's emotional reaction may be interpreted as "bad" behavior but it is a response to feelings that the child doesn't understand. Children's emotional outbursts stem from their fear of losing your love, having their plans blocked, or fear for their safety.

It's not easy to accept a child's way of expressing feelings. Affectionately recognize your children's emotions as normal behavior and teach them ways to handle their feelings.

Jealousy is a miserable emotion everyone has and hates to admit. Around 18 months, toddlers notice you giving attention to others and develop a fear of losing your love. Jealousy is a normal feeling that cannot be entirely prevented.

Children do not understand that it's possible for you to love more than one person. Preschoolers are jealous of babies because they steal your attention. They're also jealous of older siblings or other children who might have more privileges or toys—what they consider symbols of greater love.

Jealousy can be the reason behind hitting, pouting, imitating baby, or show-off behavior. Four- or five-year-olds often try to show how much better they are than the child of whom they are jealous. It's not possessions, other children, or privileges that cause jealousy, but the imagined loss of your love.

You cannot treat all children alike no matter how hard you try, nor can a child have all your attention. Scolding jealous preschoolers for aggressive actions against other children makes them more jealous. In their eyes, sticking up for someone else only proves you love the other one more. Telling them to love the baby or other children increases guilt about a feeling they can't control.

Relieve jealousy with attention and affection to reassure children of your love. Daily spend time with each child and praise their accomplishments without comparing them to others. Jealous feelings are lessened when children are satisfied with the amount of attention given them.

Anger and aggression often occur together. Anger is a temporary feeling caused by frustration. Aggression flares when problems are solved by hitting and fighting. Preschoolers want to be in charge but run into many situations in which they feel either not big enough, skillful enough, or out of control. Screaming, "I hate you. You're mean," translates as, "You're frustrating my wants." Anger can be triggered by the failure to get a trike Johnny is riding or having to leave play for dinner.

In dealing with angry children avoid punishing, shaming, or teasing them for having the feeling. This doesn't help them to learn what to do about the feeling. Teach children to express their feelings by saying, "You're mad because Johnny won't let you play with his trike." Encourage further talk about the troublesome situation and other things they could play with.

Occasionally children completely lose control of themselves. If so, you'll need to hold them or take them away from the scene. This is not punishment, but prevention from hurting themselves or others. Be sure you tell them why you're doing this, "I'm not willing to let you hurt Johnny. You can play in the sandbox or show me how to make mud pies." Sometimes all they need is affection.

Children follow your example. If you or others in the family scream or hit in anger, a child learns that is a way to express angry feelings. You want children to stand up for their rights, but they need your help to learn how to do it. Usually praise for a child's generosity, patience, and skills removes many of a child's reasons for anger.

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