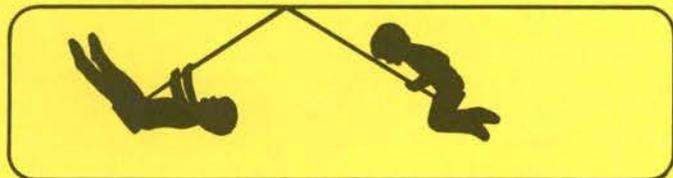


young families

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Your Child's Behavior

It's amazing how often we treat children as if they were merely smaller versions of ourselves. We expect them to be polite when company comes, not to spit out food they hate, always to tell the truth, never to be selfish with their toys, and not to hit the neighbor boy even when he is mean. But we sometimes forget that it takes many years of watching, copying, and making their own mistakes before children really can start acting like adults.

Almost all child behavior, at certain stages, is normal and even necessary. This includes crying, making messes, fighting, thumbsucking, saying "no" all the time, and refusing to be toilet trained. This kind of normal behavior shouldn't be punished, but rather redirected by firm, loving discipline. Normal behavior should not be punished any more than a plant should be punished for needing to be watered. Indeed, children can be compared to plants, with specific growth stages and special requirements at each stage. But raising children requires more understanding, watchfulness, patience, and judgment than growing the most magnificent plant ever did.

Knowing about the stages of child development is important for you as a parent. It will free you from needless worry about whether your child is "normal." It will help you allow your child to grow at the pace nature intended. Understanding child development will enable you to be a calmer, more effective parent, and will help reassure you that a particularly difficult stage won't last forever.

Here are some hints for coping with your growing, changing child:

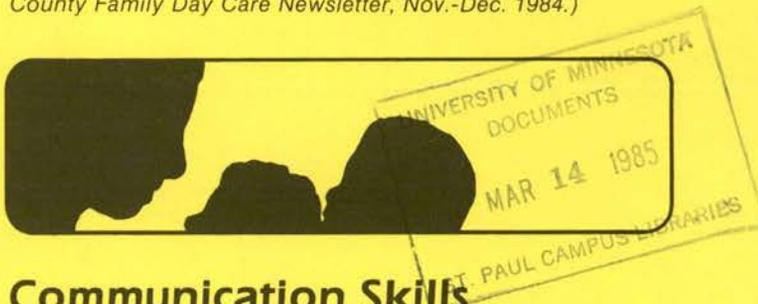
- Be ready to change, right along with your child. Make rules and guidelines the same way you buy clothes — with the idea your child will outgrow them.
- Be realistic about what your child can do at each stage. Avoid difficult situations. For instance, if Johnny is in the "obstinate twos" — rebellious and getting into everything — don't tempt fate by taking him shopping.
- Realize that no stage lasts forever. The day will come when the baby will stop crying, or when you won't have to wash diapers anymore.
- Remember that growing up isn't a race. Don't try to rush things. And don't expect your child to be just like other children of the same age. Like nature, each child has a season and a pattern.
- Look at situations from your child's point of view. Think how frustrating it must be to almost, but not quite, know how to talk or walk or ride a bike. Think of how hard it can be to make a friend, stick to a project until it's done, or make sense of "unfamiliar territory". Parents must make

every effort to sustain their children's self-esteem and to restore their confidence when they are discouraged and think they have failed.

- Remember that children learn by doing and experiencing more than by listening. That's why it takes them a long time to learn mature behavior and why they will make some mistakes over and over again. Provide them with lots and lots of learning experiences. Don't expect perfection.
- Learn all you can about child development. There is plenty of interesting information available that can help you understand your child's behavior and developmental stages. Check with your doctor, public health nurse, or library. In many communities, pre- and post-natal courses, child care or parenting classes, or parent help groups are offered at hospitals, vocational-technical and high schools, or county extension offices. If you are facing a particularly difficult situation, check with a social service agency or other counselor.

Ronald L. Pitzer
Extension Family Life Specialist

(Parts adapted from "Children Are Not Adults", Hennepin County Family Day Care Newsletter, Nov.-Dec. 1984.)



Communication Skills

Good communication skills help strengthen families. Communication is more than just talking. It means stating things clearly. It means expressing yourself nonverbally as well as verbally. And it means listening.

Communication must be open, clear, and direct. A frequent family problem is not making your wishes known and then getting miffed when what you want doesn't happen. When dealing with children, it is especially important to say exactly what you want done and in such a way that the child will know what is expected. A clear and simple "what-to-do" is more useful than a long list of "what-not-to-do's."

The emotional side of a message is often conveyed nonverbally — by a gesture with the eyebrows or hand, a way of looking (or not looking) at someone, even shifting positions in a chair. We need to be aware of the nonverbal messages we are sending and we need to "read" the nonverbal signals being sent to us.

Listening is an important part of communicating. Here are some tips for better listening: pay attention, listen for meanings, do not interrupt, watch for feelings (both yours and the speaker's), be aware of how you are interpreting what you hear, and give feedback — that is, let the person know what you think he or she has said.

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Children and Money: Safety

Young children consider coins valuable only for their shine and for the clinking noise they make, and to them bills aren't valuable at all. But children — even preschoolers — can be taught that money has value and should be kept in a safe place.

Preschoolers and Money

When preschoolers no longer put everything in their mouths, they can be given washed coins to play with. Provide a decorated box or can in which to keep the coins. Place the coin box on a low shelf so it can be reached easily. Encourage your preschooler to put the coins away after playing with them.

Allow your young child to take money to the store to purchase a toy or treat. Provide a small amount so that it is not a crisis if it is lost. Warn the child not to lose it. Fasten the money in a zippered or snapped pocket or in a small coin purse pinned to the child's clothing. Make sure that the child can open the pocket or purse. Let your child carry the money rather than holding it in your purse or pocket.

Carrying Money to School

School-age children often need to take money to school. Use a check for large amounts, sealing it in an envelope with your child's name and address. For smaller amounts, use a coin purse pinned to the child's clothing, or a zippered or snapped pocket. Another alternative is to put the money in the child's knee-high sock. Let your child carry just the amount needed for one day to reduce the chances of loss, impulsive spending, or lending to other children who may not repay it.

When your child loses money, use the loss as an opportunity to teach your youngster the importance of handling money safely. Discuss how to avoid a similar occurrence in the future. If it is lunch money that was lost, you'll probably want to replace it. But if the money was for treats, it may be a good experience for your child to do without this time.

Saving Money

Saving toward a small item is a good way to learn the value of accumulating money. Children can keep their savings in a box or jar in a drawer. Be sure they can open the container and count the money as often as they wish. Encourage them to put it away safely each time and not to show it to friends or babysitters.

Money will always be a part of our children's lives. Teaching them to handle it safely at an early age will begin building lifelong skills in money management.

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Safe Appliance Use

Most appliance-related injuries are caused by carelessness, lack of concentration, or improper use. Everyone in your family needs to learn safe habits when using electrical and gas appliances.

Always unplug appliances when not in use to avoid danger of fire, electrical shock, or injury from moving parts. This includes toasters, electric razors, and hairblowers. Always unplug the toaster before trying to remove stuck pieces of toast. To unplug an appliance, pull the plug straight out rather than pulling at an angle or yanking on the cord.

Always check ranges to be sure they are off. Some electric ranges have an indicator light to show when the unit is on.

Turn pan and pot handles to the side or the back of the range to reduce the risk of hitting the handles and spilling hot food.

Know how to put out grease fires. If the fire is in a pan on the range, simply cover the pan with a metal cover to smother the fire. Don't run with or move the pan. If the fire is in the oven, close the door and turn the oven off.

Don't touch electrical equipment with wet hands or when standing on a damp surface. NEVER touch any electrical equipment when in the bathtub or shower.

Never immerse in water any part of an appliance that is not designed for immersion. Water trapped in the unit can cause a shock the next time the appliance is used.

Take an additional precaution and install a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) in the kitchen and bathroom. This is a device that reacts immediately to a small electrical current leak and breaks the electricity flow. GFCI's can be plugged into a standard wall outlet to protect against leakage from products plugged into that outlet. GFCI's can also be installed in a circuit breaker box or permanently installed in a wall outlet receptacle to protect all outlets on the same circuit.

Purchase appliances that carry the UL label. This means that samples of the design of the product have been tested and found reasonably free from fire, electric shock, and related hazards.

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Household Equipment*

This Issue

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