

Cooperative Extension**Dear Parents:****Build Your Child's Self-Esteem**

A child's self-esteem is his overall judgment of himself. It determines whether or not he likes, accepts, and respects himself. Help your child feel good about himself.

Start early.

Children begin very early to form either a positive or negative picture of themselves. You can help your child feel good about himself by telling him that you like who he is and you like the way he does things.

Use smiles and words.

Let him know when you think he does a good job putting blocks in a bucket—or dumping them out of the bucket. Thank him for putting napkins on the table, or hanging his towel up. Show him with smiles as well as words.

Focus on the positive.

Tell your child what to do rather than what not to do. Instead of saying, "Don't carry the cat that way" say, "Carry your cat like this." That way, he'll feel like a success rather than a failure.

Listen with care!

Listen to what he says and respond to his questions. Take time to understand his feelings, his joys, and his fears. You are showing him that his ideas and feelings are important. All this will help him to feel valued and capable. You are helping him develop the self-confidence to become the responsible, successful person you want him to be.

23 & 24 MONTHS**Inside this issue:**

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**Bedtime Talk**

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

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

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

What's It Like To Be 23 and 24 Months Old?

How I Grow

- I can pedal a small tricycle.
- I can throw a ball into a wastebasket.
- I can walk down stairs alone, both feet on one step at a time holding on to the railing.
- I usually like to run more than I like to walk.
- I like to walk on low walls with one hand held.
- I can walk a few steps on tiptoe.
- I might be afraid of the noise of trains, trucks, thunder, toilet flushing, and the vacuum cleaner. I might also fear rain, wind, and wild animals. Be patient with me.



- I like to please others.
- I am interested in babies and their mothers.
- I am afraid of disapproval and rejection.
- I like to order other people around.
- I sometimes show my anger by slapping, biting, and hitting.
- I want my way in everything.
- I am sometimes stubborn and defiant, and I use words like, "It's mine," "I don't like it," "Go away," "I won't" and "no" a lot.

What I Can Do For Myself

- I can take off all my clothes and I can put most of my clothes back on.
- I like to unwrap packages.
- I know what a toilet is for, but I probably don't want to use it yet.
- I can turn doorknobs and open doors. Keep dangerous things out of my sight and out of my reach.
- I want to do lots of things by myself.

How I Talk

- I can ask questions just to keep the conversation going.
- I can answer some questions such as, "What is your name?" "What does the dog say?" "What does the cat say?"
- I can name almost everything that I see often, such as things in my house, my preschool, or my neighborhood.
- I'm beginning to learn the meaning of "soon" and I am learning to wait.
- I can ask for food and drink.

What I Have Learned

- I can sit and "read" picture books, turning the pages for myself.
- I can put together a puzzle of three to six pieces.
- I know pretty well where things are located in and around my house.
- I can make a tower of eight blocks.



Play I Enjoy

- I like to play simple chase games like tag.
- A teddy bear or soft doll is still my favorite toy.
- I like to take things apart and put them together. Watch out that I don't play with small pieces that could choke me.
- I can stack five rings on a peg toy in the correct order.
- I like to be pushed on a swing.
- I play happily with soft modeling clay.



Children can be very different from each other. Look for your child's growth in each area. Encourage each new ability. If you are concerned about your child's development, talk with your doctor.

How I Get Along with Others

- I still don't understand sharing, but I like to be with other children for short periods of time.

Games for Growing

Color Learning

Purpose of the Game

To help your child learn to match colors and begin to learn their names.



How to Play

- Sit in a comfortable position on the floor or sofa facing your child.
- Select five blocks or other objects of different colors.
- Place two blocks of different colors in front of your child.
- Point to a block and say, "This is red."
- Ask your child to give you the red block.
- Ask your child to say the color of the block she handed to you.
- Use only two colors at a time, but change the colors. For example, start with blue and red together, then switch to blue and green.
- Tell your child the name of the new color only. See if your child can remember the name of the other color.
- Learning colors takes a long time. Start with just 1-2 colors, and add another color when the old ones have been learned.

Other Color Games

Have your child tell you the names of colors in stoplights or on television, in magazines, or on signs. Put together different things that are of the same color and ask your child what is the same about them. Help your child use crayons or colored pictures to learn the names of the colors.

Blindfold Guessing

Purpose of the Game

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



How to Play

- Ask your child to sit on your lap facing away from you.

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

Other Blindfold Guessing Games

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

Toys That Teach: A Shape Board

Why?

This toy can help children learn about shapes and about things that are alike and things that are different.

Materials

- Cardboard sheet about 8 1/2 by 11 inches
- A bright colored crayon
- White paper



Making the Toy

Draw and color in simple shapes on the cardboard with colored crayon, a circle, a square, a triangle, and a star. Then draw, color, and cut out matching shapes from white paper.

Playing

Show your child how to match the cut-out shapes to the shapes drawn on the board. Talk about the pieces, naming their shapes. Ask her to put the star on the star, the circle on the circle, the square on the square, and so on.

Remember, play this and any game only as long as it is fun for both of you. Encourage and praise your child's efforts. Do not criticize her failures.

Questions Parents Ask: Help! Why Does My 2 Year-Old Bite?

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

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

Model good behavior.

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

Teach her to use words.

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

Praise good behavior.

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

Be good to Yourself: Good Parent-Bad Parent

Parents often think they aren't doing a "good" job if their children don't act the way they "should." No matter how good you are as a parent, your child will misbehave.

Think positive.

If you feel responsible for all your child's misbehavior, you will feel stress. That stress is hard on you and can cause you to be hard on your child. This will make things worse for both of you. Instead of criticizing yourself, try to give yourself some positive messages.

For example, sometimes parents think, "If I were a good mother or father, my child

wouldn't be having so many tantrums." How about telling yourself and your child, "We got through that trip to the store without any fussing at all!"



Remember: No one is perfect.

Young children need parents who try their best, but that doesn't mean we can succeed 100 percent of the time. We all make mistakes. When you're not feeling okay, do try your best but don't worry that you are not a super parent.

Give yourself and your child credit for the good times, and understand that nobody is perfect.

Toddler Talk

Give Me Lots of Different Experiences

- Make up a song or a story. Use my name and change the words to match my actions or feelings. This may help me calm down when I am cranky.
- Sing songs like "Rain, Rain, Go Away" and "Mary Had a Little Lamb." These simple songs will be easy for me to copy. I won't really be able to sing until I'm closer to 3 years old.
- Let me smell some sweet smelling spices like cloves, curry powder, cinnamon. Watch me closely so I don't eat them.
- Look at the sky at night with me. Point out the clouds, the moon, the stars.
- Keep me interested in my toys by dividing them into two boxes and switching boxes every week.



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

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



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

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

You can expect your toddler to wonder about babies and where they come from. Tell him the truth in words that he can understand, something like "Babies grow in a special place inside the mother's body." Show him you are glad he asked the question. If he asks how babies get inside the

mother, you may simply say that babies are made by mothers and fathers together. You could explain that the father's sperm comes into the mother through the father's penis.

Your child's early sexual concerns and questions may be about the differences between men and women. Little girls may wonder why they have no penis; boys may worry that they could lose their penis. You can help your child learn that boys and girls are born with different genitals. Your toddler should know the correct names for his body's sexual parts. Teach him these as you teach him the names of other body parts.

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

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



Research In Brief: Toddler Intelligence and Home Experiences



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

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

Get Ready for Toilet Training

Most girls are ready for toilet training at about age 2, most boys at about 2 1/2. You should not rush toilet training but there are some things you can do when you think your child is ready to be trained to use the toilet.

Start with the words.

Teach your child the words he needs to ask to go to the toilet. A good time to do this is when you change his diaper. Tell him why you are changing him, “You peed (or urinated) and made your diapers wet” or “You had a BM (or pooped or bowel movement).” Show him and tell him the word for the toilet or potty chair you will want him to use.

Make it as easy as possible.

Some children will let you know when they need to go to the toilet by saying the words, pulling your hand, or tugging at their diaper. When they are ready for training, it helps to dress them in loose fitting training pants they can pull off easily.

Compliment good behavior.

When your child shows he wants to go to the toilet, sit with him at least the first few times. Don't give him toys to play with and don't insist that he sit on the toilet when he wants to get off—even if he has not “done” anything. Always compliment him for his successes; don't criticize or punish his accidents.



Nutrition: New Foods Are Strange Foods

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

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

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



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

Winning Ways to Talk with Young Children

Good communication helps children develop confidence, feelings of self-worth, and good relationships with others. It makes life with them more pleasant and helps them grow into adults who have good feelings about themselves and others.

Communication is what we say and how we say it. We communicate with looks (frowns or smiles), with actions (slaps or hugs), with silence (warm or cold) as well as with words (kind or unkind).



Use kind words to encourage and build up a child.

Kind words bring happy results! They give children more self-confidence and encourage them to behave better, try harder, and achieve more. Kind words communicate love and respect, and create an atmosphere in which problems can be discussed openly and understanding reached.

Suppose a child has spilled milk on the floor. You can say, “Don’t be so clumsy! Just look at the mess you made!”—which leads to unhappy feelings. Or you can say, “Here is a sponge. Please wipe up the milk.”—with happy results.

Examples of kind words:

- Thank you for helping me clean off the table.
- You did a good job of putting on your socks.
- I love you.
- I like the way you remembered to hang up your coat.

Use “I-Messages” to communicate your thoughts and feelings.

“I-messages” give children the responsibility for changing their own behavior. Which sounds better?

I-Message

I need help picking things up now.

I don’t feel like reading a story when I’m tired.

I get upset when I see mud on the floor.

You-Message

You surely made a mess.
You’re a pest.
You ought to be ashamed.
You’d better shut up!
You’re dumb.

Use “You-Messages” to reflect a child’s ideas and feelings.

“You-messages” describe children’s feelings and encourage them to express troublesome feelings.

Examples:

You are sad because your dog died.

You are upset because I have to go shopping now.

You are mad because Jenny wouldn’t let you play with her new doll.

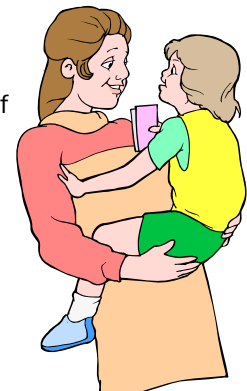
Actions can be labeled good or bad, but not feelings.

Feelings are neither good nor bad—they simply exist.

When children are allowed to express their feelings freely, they learn how to handle feelings in healthy ways.

Hiding feelings is self-destructive. Feelings do not disappear. People who avoid dealing with their feelings often develop symptoms including self-hate, headaches, ulcers and violent actions. Healthy people learn to recognize and deal with their feelings.

Good communication leads to warm relationships, cooperation and feelings of self-worth. Poor communication leads to kids who “turn off” adults, conflicts and bickering and feelings of worthlessness.



GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE: LIMITS SHOW LOVE

Sometimes between 15 and 24 months, toddlers may become resistant and defiant. You will probably hear them say “no” a lot. All this is perfectly normal. They are more aware of their individuality and more able to do things for themselves. They want to test their independence and power and to show you how important they are. They may do this by being negative, but that is a sign that they are growing up.

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

Be patient. These can be trying times for parents. Decide on some reasonable rules—a few, not many. Make rules that your toddler can understand and follow.

Explain in simple words why you have the rule. Say something like, “You always hold my hand when we cross the street, a parking lot or a driveway so I can keep you from being hurt.” This helps your toddler learn that rules have a purpose. Studies show that children follow rules better when they are given reasons for the rules. This understanding will help him follow rules and make good decisions later.

To keep your child safe in the car, always use a car safety seat every time your child is in the car. Never leave your little one alone in the car.



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