



Fingerprints

A Newsletter about Little Hands and Those Who Care for Them

Spring 2015

Dealing with Problem Behavior

Parents find many habits and behaviors of their children annoying. When you want to change an unwanted behavior, it helps to first understand why your child is doing it. Often bad habits are just a coping strategy. Your child may fall back on these behaviors when they are stressed, bored, tired, frustrated, unhappy, insecure or falling asleep. Many of these “bad” habits are calming and soothing to the child.

Most the of time, these behaviors are just “phases” or habits – not serious medical problems – and your child typically outgrows them. Managing them can be difficult, however. In general, you should ignore bad habits.

Yelling, calling attention to the habit and punishment don’t usually work to stop the behavior (and may even increase it) but praise, positive rewards and patience are likely to help.

What about thumb and finger sucking and pacifiers? There are different types of sucking kids might do in infancy and childhood. Thumb and finger sucking typically starts in the first few months of life. Many babies outgrow it well before their first birthday and most stop by age 5 due to peer pressure. Other sucking objects include pacifiers and blankets. If you need tips on choosing a safe pacifier, check out the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

Continued on page 2

Stress Management for Parents

Stress is part of our lives...it’s impossible to totally avoid stress. In fact, mild to moderate stress can be good but too much can result in various problems. Specific reactions to stress vary from person to person. Regardless of how stress affects an individual, everyone experiencing excessive stress needs to identify what stressors are impacting them and how to prevent and manage stress.

There are many clues that your body gives that indicates you are under too much stress: tight throat, sweaty palms, headache, fatigue, nausea, diarrhea, uneasiness, indigestion, depression, restlessness, frustration and changes in eating or sleeping patterns. If high levels continue, it can lead to numerous problems including:

- *increased risk of illness
- *increased risk of accidents
- *decreased satisfaction with relationships

Continued on page 3



Dealing with Problem Behavior (Continued from Page 1)

Sucking has a soothing, calming effect and often helps kids get to sleep. However, it may become worrisome when their permanent teeth start coming in (around age 5) if the sucking alters the shape of the child's teeth, palate or bite. Get more information on this from the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry. For more tips on how to help your child quit sucking, see the AAP's page on how to help your child stop.

What should you know about head banging, head rolling and body rocking? Rhythmic movements include these three actions. Head banging is when a child repeatedly hits their head against a solid object such as a crib as much as 80 times a minute. This can be dis-

trressing to adults for concern of injury. However, the child doesn't appear to be in pain but rather calm and content. The habit usually begins around age nine months and resolves by around age two years. The episodes usually last from 15 minutes to a few hours and typically occur while listening to music or falling asleep.

Head rolling is when an infant rolls their head from side to side when lying on their back. They may even rub their hair completely off the back of their head.

Body rocking is when a child rhythmically rocks while either sitting or resting on their knees or elbows. This behavior usually

starts around age six months and disappears by age two. Most children rock for 15 minutes or less. Like head banging, it occurs while listening to music or falling asleep.

Head banging, head rolling and body rocking are common childhood self-comforting habits. These behaviors are often harmless but can be worrisome if your child also has developmental delays. Talk about the habit with your pediatrician who can help you decide whether there is any cause for concern.

Source: University of Michigan Health System, <http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/badhabit.htm>.

Decisions About Discipline

According to child care experts, the most important thing we can give our children is love. The second most important thing is discipline. So what is discipline? It's important to understand what discipline is *not*. Discipline is not punishment and it's much more than rules and consequences. It's teaching. Discipline means providing guidelines and support for young children while they are learning, mostly through trial and error, how to manage their emotions, deal with disappointment or frustration and form relationships with others.

Supporting young children's development means providing limits as well as opportunities. The way parents choose to set limits for their children has a significant impact on their development. Here are some guidelines to help you make decisions about discipline based on development research. These three principles make up what researchers have called a "teaching" style of limit setting.

Consider your child's perspective. Taking a minute to understand and reflect your child's feelings can be a powerful way to support them when you set a limit as well as convey why the limit is important. Let them know you understand that it's difficult to be little and not be able to do what you want.

Choose your battles and then be firm. No parent wants to say "no" all the time. Especially with toddlers, who are busily trying everything, it's important to think about what is worth teaching right now and what can wait until the child is older.

Help your child succeed in following a limit. Young children need help. You are bigger, stronger, more experienced and skilled at everything. Children are just beginning to develop the ability to manage emotions and behavior so waiting for things and wanting things they can't have is very, very difficult. Once the limit has been set, help them succeed. Offer an alternative and stay as calm and supportive as you can.

In addition to being clear about what limit is being set and why, parents who set them in this way are also sensitive to their child's feelings and provide support in a way that is developmentally appropri-

Stress (continued from page 2)

*increased risk of alcohol and/or drug abuse

Here are a few ways to decrease stress:

*Don't ignore it. When you feel stress coming on, take steps to control it rather than letting it control you.

*Reframe your stress. You can control the way events affect you. You decide to a large extent how stressful a particular situation is for you.

*Work on changing your beliefs. Your beliefs determine a lot about your life: how you behave, how you raise your children, the choices you make, etc. Your beliefs also determine what will and will not be stressful for you so make an attempt to change those beliefs.

*Don't be a perfectionist. Realize that you can't do everything perfectly.

*Develop good problem-solving skills. Define the exact problem, make a list of various solutions, evaluate each solution and then make a decision.

*Choose how you spend your time

wisely. Decide what's important and know your limit. One very important skill to develop is the ability to say "no."

*Don't put off making decisions. You only prolong the stress. Once you have all the information needed, go ahead and make the decision. Avoid second guessing yourself once the decision is made.

*Get organized. Set realistic goals and stick to them. Learn how to plan: plan ahead, make lists and rank each item in priority order, and stop procrastinating.

*Learn how to relax. This helps release the tension caused by stress. Find those activities that help you relax and then use them.

*Get enough sleep and/or rest. An adequate and consistent sleeping schedule is important to your physical and mental health.

*Set aside time for fun. Fun activities restore your energy. It doesn't matter what you do as long as it's enjoyable.

*Eat a well-balanced diet. Increase your consumption of fruits, veggies and whole grains and decrease foods high in fat, cholesterol, refined sugar, salt and caffeine.

*Maintain a healthy body weight. This allows you to have greater energy which enables you to handle stress more effectively.

*Get regular exercise. The specific activity isn't important as long as it's done regularly. It should also be enjoyable so you stick with it.

*Focus on the positives. Don't lose perspective on your life. Try to maintain a focus on the positive aspects of your life.

*Develop support systems. Find a trusted friend to talk about your stress. Remember you must be willing to give support to others, too, so learn to be a good friend.

*Maintain a sense of humor. People who can laugh at themselves tend to be able to handle stress more effectively. Try to look for the humor in stressful situations.

*Seek professional assistance if you have significant problems coping with stress.

Source: Stress Management for Parents, Kristen Zolten and Nicholas Long, PhD, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, 2006

Discipline (continued from page 2)

ate. That means that we respond in a way that considers the age of the child, what skills h/she have mastered and what skills h/she are still trying to develop.

Discipline is about teaching, not punishment. Harsh disciplinary tactics such as spanking are not recommended since they don't support a child's developmental progress towards self-control. In fact, some studies suggest that spanking, especially with very young children, creates harmful outcomes. Limit setting can seem difficult and may require a lot of patience. It can help to remember that it's just another way that you are your child's first and best teacher, providing tools that they will use for the rest of their lives.

Source: Parenting Counts, <http://www.parentingcounts.org>



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Cooking with Kids

Cinnamon Biscuits

Nonstick cooking spray
1 ½ teaspoons sugar
Generous pinch of cinnamon (about ¼ teaspoon)
1 4 ½-ounce package reduced-fat refrigerator buttermilk biscuits
1 teaspoon reduced-fat tub-style margarine

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Spray a small baking sheet with cooking spray and set aside. In a custard cup, mix together sugar and cinnamon. Open the biscuits, separate and set on the baking sheet. With your fingers or back of a spoon, brush the top of each biscuit with margarine, dividing equally. Sprinkle the cinnamon-sugar over the top of each biscuit, dividing equally. Bake for 8-10 minutes or until golden. Serve hot. Serves 6. Per serving: 56 calories, 1 g fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 185 mg sodium, 11 g carbohydrates, 1 g protein.

Banana Strawberry Shake

1 small very ripe banana, cut into large chunks
1 cup unsweetened frozen strawberries
1 cup low-fat (1%) milk

In a blender container, combine the banana, strawberries and milk. Blend on medium speed until the strawberries are completely pureed and the shake is smooth. Serve at once. Serves 2. Per serving: 117 calories, 2 g fat, 5 mg cholesterol, 64 mg sodium, 23 g carbohydrates, 5 g protein.

