

News for the Nurturing Child Care Professional

TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION



Volume 9, Issue 4

20 things to say to encourage your children

1. Great job! Thank you for doing that.
2. Way to go. I'm proud of you!
3. That was so kind of you!
4. Fantastic- thanks for obeying the first time.
5. Wow- you really rocked it!
6. You know what? You are a great kid!
7. I appreciate what you did.
8. I'm praying for you.
9. Look at what you've accomplished!
10. What a great decision you made!
11. Thanks for doing that before I could even ask.
12. I'd love to hear about it.
13. You figured it out- that's awesome!
14. One step at a time- you're doing it!
15. Fabulous job- you were really listening.
16. I know that was a new thing for you- excellent try!
17. I love your creativity!
18. Thank you for sharing.
19. Keep going- you can do it!
20. I love you.

Inside This Issue

Talking to Parents Who Just
Don't Care

Negative Self-Talk

Students Who Lie and Deny

Toddlers Who Deliberately
Disobey

Stages of Play

**FAMILY &
CONSUMER
SCIENCES** 
Creating Healthy & Sustainable Families

Alexis Cordova, M.S.
County Extension Agent
Family & Consumer Sciences
alexis.cordova@ag.tamu.edu

**Texas A&M AgriLife
Extension
Service Liberty County**
501 Palmer, Liberty, TX 77575
(936) 334-3230
FAX (936) 336-4565
<http://liberty.agrilife.org/>

How To Talk To Parents Who Just Don't Care

By [Michael Linsin](#) on October 10, 2015 [15](#)

How To Talk
To Parents
Who Just
Don't Care



Smart Classroom Management

For the most part, it's a misnomer. 99.9% of parents love their children. They may have a misguided way of showing it. They may not sign one bit of correspondence from the school.

They may be uninvolved, negligent, or worse. They may be preoccupied trying to get their own life together.

But few don't genuinely want what is best for their children. The key to [talking to parents](#) who don't appear to care is to speak to that part of them that really, really does.

Here's how:

1. Make contact.

The first step is to doggedly pursue making personal contact. Most teachers will try the one or two phone numbers on file, but then give up and send an unreturned email instead.

You must go the extra mile.

You may have to call the company or organization they work for. You may have to call neighbors and cousins and friends of friends. You may have to wait and speak to whoever picks up their child after school.

Whatever it takes to get the parent on the phone is worth doing. It can even be life changing.

Most parents who are difficult to get a hold of are never actually contacted. So when you go out of your way to surprise them at work or through a neighbor they're typically humbled and over-the-moon appreciative.

2. Treat them with royal respect.

The biggest key to tapping into that part of them that deeply cares about their child's welfare is to speak to them as if they've been voted parent of the year.

Speak to them in the same manner you would a parent who cuts the crusts off the lunch bread and is front and center at every school event. Give them their dignity back.

This affectation of tone and expression is magic. Seldom have they been spoken to with such respect, and in response they'll rise to meet the subtle call to be worthy of it.

3. Remind them of their responsibility.

Somewhere along the line many teachers have acquired the awful habit of intimidating—or outright commanding—parents to *do something* in response to their call. Many even condescend to make suggestions. But unless expressly asked, this oversteps your bounds. It [puts parents on the defensive](#). It makes them feel an inch tall and all but guarantees that they won't speak to their child about your issue.

The most effective approach is to start with something positive and then kindly relay the facts.

"I'm so happy to have your daughter in my class this year. She is outgoing and asks excellent questions. My concern is that she hasn't been doing her homework . . ."

Be specific but maintain your respectful tone. Never allow your frustration to surface. Before hanging up, add the key line: "The reason I wanted to tell you personally is because *I know you'd want to know*." This is a gentle but powerful reminder of their responsibility. And it hits them directly in the heart. You can hear them sigh and melt on the other end of the line. Most will thank you profusely and request that you keep them posted.

It's also a good idea to take the opportunity to invite them to your class or tell them about upcoming events.

A Profound Difference

Although it seems like a simple little thing, when you go out of your way to contact wayward parents in a non-judgmental way it almost always makes a profound difference.

They start asking their child about their day. They inquire about behavior and take an interest in homework. They become more responsible. Combined with your faithful adherence to [your classroom management plan](#), you'll see a change in their child as sure as the leaves of fall.

The greatest reward, though, is the day they darken your doorway.

They'll step in eyes wide, tentative and uncertain, at back-to-school night or to volunteer for a field trip.

But once you bound toward them with a smile and a handshake, once they get comfortable getting to know the other parents and children . . . They'll glow.



Have you ever wondered what is for dinner after a long day of work, errands, or afterschool activities?

We know we could drive through another fast-food restaurant to save time, but is that meal meeting the nutritional needs of your family?

The Dinner Tonight program was developed to provide busy families with quick, healthy, cost effective recipes that taste great. Not only does the Dinner Tonight program provide recipes, it also gives you weekly video demonstrations on cooking tips and techniques, nutrition topics, menu planning basics and information on healthy living.

Our goal for the Dinner Tonight program is to improve the health and wellness of Texans through nutrition education. We are so excited to help you get you started on preparing your dinner tonight.

Visit to dinnertonight.tamu.edu sign up for weekly emails, info on recipes, cooking schools and more!

THE KIDS WHO NEED
THE MOST LOVE
WILL ASK FOR IT IN
THE MOST UNLOVING
OF WAYS.



Made with [by meebot.com](#)

In my world there are
NO BAD KIDS,
just impressionable,
conflicted young people
wrestling with
emotions & impulses,
trying to communicate
their
feelings & needs
the only way
they know how.
- Janet Lansbury

How to Respond to A Child's Negative Self-Talk

Adapted from: imperfectfamilies.com

"I'm so dumb," the child mumbles at the table. He bangs his fist on the table and growls.

He's working on a writing assignment. Writing does not come easy. Eraser smudges fill his page showing that he was not happy with his previous attempts.

"You're not dumb, honey," you say soothingly.

He crumples the paper and yells back, "Yes I am! I'm so stupid! I'm the worst!"

You hang your head in your hands.

Is he just being dramatic? Does he really think he's dumb?



How to respond to negative self-talk.

When negative self-talk spews from a child's mouth, your knee-jerk reaction is to stop it. To give the child some reassurance or to convince them that their thinking is flawed.

Unfortunately, their words may match their feelings. They do not feel "loveable" or "wonderful" (as you may suggest), they feel "dumb," "stupid," and "like the worst kid in the world."

Instead of moving in to fix it, try these ideas to address the underlying feeling and their internal struggle.

- **Empathize:** Put yourself in their shoes and try to understand what they may be feeling. "That writing assignment's pretty challenging, eh?" or "Wow, sounds like you're feeling frustrated!" If you can't think of what to say, try a simple response like, "That's tough" or "Need a hug?"
- **Get curious:** Some kids have a hard time verbalizing the problem. When you start to explore the situation together, they may be able to understand what's really bugging them. "I wonder why this assignment is tripping you up today." or "Is it all writing assignments or this one in particular?"
- **Rewrite the script:** Once you've explored, you can work together to create some new phrases to try. Instead of "Writing is hard. I'm stupid," the child could say, "I'm working hard on writing" or "Making mistakes is part of

learning." Or even, "I'm so frustrated with this assignment."

- **Problem-solve together:** Resist the urge to suggest a solution to the problem or lead them to an answer that seems right to you. Work as a team. Sometimes, there is no easy solution or quick fix because the answer is, "I have to keep practicing" or "I am working toward the goal."
- **Challenge thoughts and feelings:** Feelings come and go, they do not define you. The child may FEEL unlovable, but feeling something doesn't mean it's true. Someone can struggle and not be stupid. Talk about times when the child has overcome something difficult and felt confident or excited.

Keep your conversations brief, don't tackle all of this at once.

You're eager to help the child, but it's not always easy to accept positive, reassuring comments if you've been in a negative-thinking frame of mind. Expect some resistance at first. Especially if your child is not used to seeing things in a different light.

What else can you do?

Create an environment of support, encouragement and teach frustration tolerance using these tips.

- **Give Choices:** Let the child have the option to make choices throughout the day, picking their outfit, afternoon snack, or where to do their homework. Give positive feedback for good choices and **watch your criticism!** If you give them a choice, keep your negative opinions to yourself.
- **Embrace Imperfection:** Everyone makes mistakes – even you! Practice using light-hearted responses to mistakes, "Oops! The milk spilled! Let's wipe it up!" Model healthy ways to handle frustration, apologize after yelling, or acknowledge your part in a misunderstanding.
- **Focus on the Good:** Instead of nit-picking or constantly focusing on things that

need to be changed, fixed or cleaned, learn to let go. Building or repairing relationship may be more important than a tidy bedroom. Try to give 5 positive statements to every 1 negative statement.



- **Encourage Independence:** Kids need caregivers to help them make good decisions or stay focused, but sometimes constant direction sends the message: "You can't do it on your own." Brainstorm or problem-solve together, ask the child's opinion or have him offer a solution.
- **Value Perseverance:** Focus on the little steps that lead to success, overcoming an obstacle, or moving closer to a goal. Phrases such as, "You're working really hard on that..." or "That took a lot of effort!" help your child see the benefit in the process rather than the prize at the end.
- **Teach Coping Skills:** Expose the child to a variety of coping and calming skills, work on deep breathing and create positive, helpful mantras. Practice these skills often so your child is prepared and knows how to handle frustrating situations and discouraging thoughts.
- **Seek support:** If you have been working with the child for a while and still hear them struggling with negative self-talk, or if they threaten to harm themselves or others, it may be time to seek help from a local mental health provider. (If the child is suicidal, please get help immediately)

Looking up from your hands, you meet the child's eyes.

"This is a frustrating assignment."

"Yeah." He replies.

"How can I help?" you ask.

Shrugging, he replies, "you could do it for me."

You both laugh.

It doesn't change the assignment, but at least you can talk about it without hearing the work "dumb."



How To Handle Students Who Lie And Deny

By [Michael Linsin](#) on November 22, 2014

While observing your class gather materials for a science experiment, you notice a student kicking the heels of the boy in front of them. But because you're in the good habit of letting misbehavior play out, you decide to watch a bit longer before jumping in. You see the boy turn and ask the student to stop. After a brief pause, however, the student resumes the practice. You mentally record every move, and as soon as they sit down, you approach. The student sees you coming and before you can even get all the words out ("I saw you kicking Darren and—"), they begin aggressively denying.



"That's not true! I didn't do anything. Oh my gosh! I wasn't kicking anyone." Your first inclination is to refute the student's claims, to prove that you're right and they're wrong. "Yes, you were. I saw you

with my own eyes from across the room. Now stop lying and take responsibility for your actions." But doing so would draw you into an argument. It would put you on equal footing with the student. It would turn into a your-word-against-theirs battle royal.

This is a common situation, one so many teachers find themselves stuck in every day. It's frustrating. It's stressful. It puts you at odds with your students and turns you into the ogre you never wanted to be. The good news is that it's entirely avoidable. All of it—the lying, the denying, the arguing, and the stress—it's all avoidable using the following three steps:

1. Know the truth.

You should only approach a student to give a consequence when you *know* the truth. This underscores the importance of letting misbehavior play out, of eliminating any plausible deniability, of leaving no doubt who is responsible and what rule was broken.



If you're unsure, then get to the bottom of it first before confronting the student. This step alone will save you a mountain of headaches. Still, like the teacher above, it isn't always enough to avoid a confrontation. The next two steps are crucial.

2. Enforce.

With the truth on your side, there is no reason for debate. There is no reason to ask why. There is no reason to allow the student to lie to you or deny their involvement. Simply approach and say, "You have a warning (or time-out) because you broke rule number three."



Most often, that's all you need to say. However, if you're uncertain they know what misbehavior you're referring to, then you can add, "You were kicking Darren while getting science materials."

3. Move on.

After delivering your consequence, turn on your heel and walk away. Nothing else needs to be said, and waiting for a response is an invitation to argue. Because you've taught, modeled, and practiced your classroom management plan thoroughly, the student knows exactly what this means.

They know you have them dead to rights. They know that in your classroom, rules that protect learning and enjoyment are sacred and nonnegotiable. They know that arguing, denying, or complaining is fruitless. The only thing left for them to do is take responsibility.



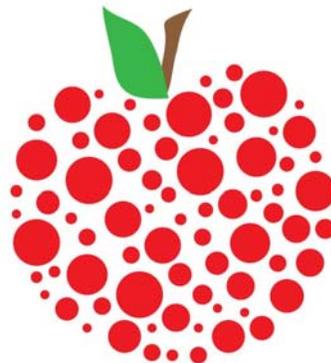
Avoidance Is The Key

Many teachers contact us wanting to know how to respond when students lie, yell, throw tantrums, refuse to go to time-out, or engage in other aggressively willful behaviors, and we gladly cover these topics. But the trick is to avoid them from happening to begin with. The three-step strategy above is a perfect example.

By calmly—even matter-of-factly—delivering your consequences with truth on your side, and then walking away, you avoid the behaviors students have used since time immemorial to sidestep accountability.

You avoid the arguments and protestations. You avoid the deceptions and shocked faces. You avoid the manipulations that have worked with so many other adults in their life, including teachers. And here's the thing:

When you do what you say you will, when you handle accountability fairly and consistently, when you show your students how much you care by safeguarding their right to learn and enjoy school without interference, chaos, or drama . . . They'll love and respect of you because of it.



When You:
 Cut it for me,
 Write it for me,
 Open it for me,
 Set it up for me,
 Draw it for me or
 Find it for me,

All I learn is:
 that you do it better than me



Listen



Children will listen to you **AFTER** they feel listened to.

- 1) Notice how often you interrupt, explain, defend your position, lecture, or give a command when your child tries to talk to you.
- 2) Stop and just listen. It is okay to ask questions such as, "Can you give me an example? Is there anything else?"
- 3) When your child is finished, ask if he or she is willing to hear you.
- 4) After sharing, focus on a solution that works for both.

Quotes from the Positive Discipline books © Jane Nelsen and Lynn Lott

They may forget
 what you said
 but they will
 not forget
 how you made
 them feel.

inspiredbyfamilymag.com
 -Carl Buechner

Encouragement vs. Praise



Teach self-reliance instead of dependence on others.

Encouragement invites self-evaluation. Praise invites children to become "approval junkies".

Examples:

Praise: "I am so proud of you. Here is your reward."

Encouragement: "You worked hard. You must be so proud of yourself."

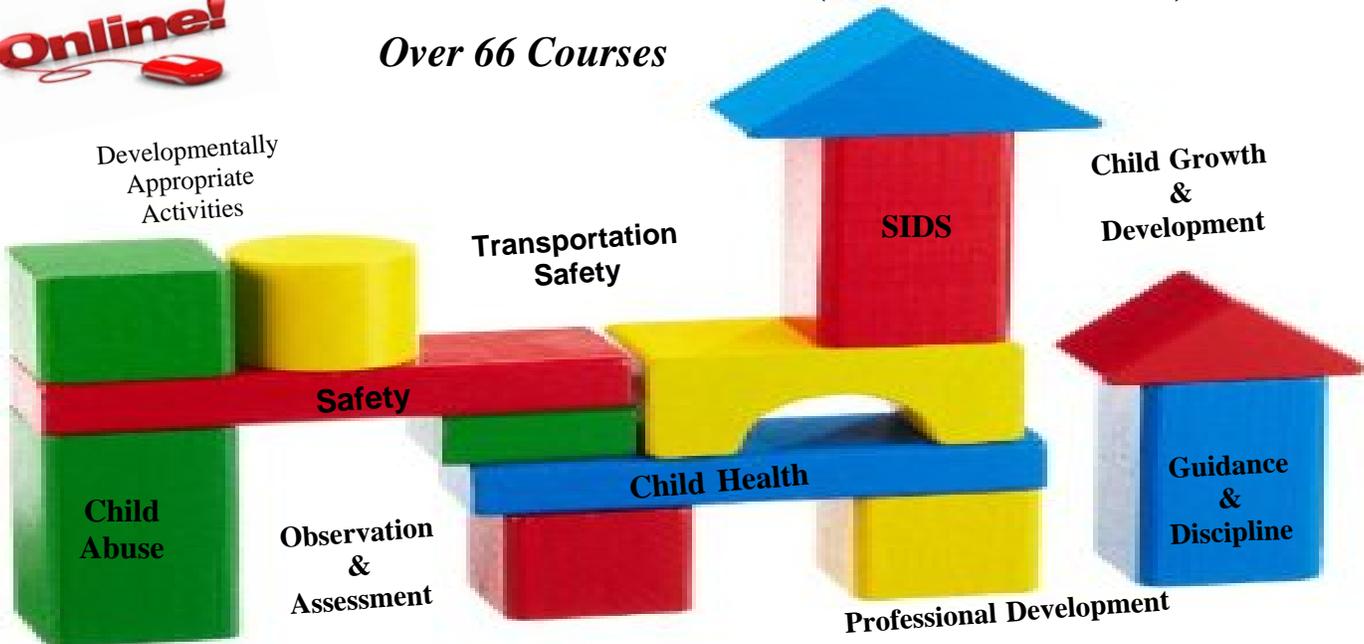
Praise: You are such a good girl."
Encouragement: "Thanks for helping."

Quotes from the Positive Discipline books © Jane Nelsen and Lynn Lott

Child Care Courses (childcare.tamu.edu)

Online!

Over 66 Courses



How to Discipline a Toddler Who Deliberately Disobeys

Your child ignores you, walking away despite asking him several times to do his chores. Sometimes he even smiles with mischief to see how you'll react. And even if the task itself may be no big deal, you also don't want to set a precedent that this behavior is okay. Is it too early to discipline a toddler and expect him to understand?

What are some tips on how to discipline a toddler who doesn't listen?

Most people think of discipline as punishment or time outs. But discipline is simply teaching children how to behave and helping them understand and express their emotions. It doesn't happen once your child hits a certain age like potty training or introducing solids. **It's never too early to discipline a toddler if your goal is to help him behave appropriately and manage his emotions.**

How to discipline a toddler who disobeys on purpose

Acknowledge your child's intentions.

Before laying out consequences, acknowledge and empathize with how your child feels. Maybe he felt tired from a long day or needs company. Or he wants the same toy his brother is playing with. Get into his mindset and look for the reason behind his actions. Recently, I asked my toddler to move a little so he's not bothering his brother by sitting too close to him. He stays put, so I try again, "Can you move a little so your brother has some space?" Still no response, as if he didn't even hear me.

So I asked myself if there's another reason other than defiance he refused to move. And I realized he wanted to stay close to his brother. So I rephrased the request to "You want to play near your brother, don't you? It looks like he's having fun and you want to do the same thing." Only then did he move after I had acknowledged his underlying intentions. Not all kids behave to disrupt our days or because they don't want to listen. A child might refuse to come to the table to eat because he feels too sad about the toy he can't seem to fix. Or he was too excited and started jumping on the bed even if, in your mind, he should've known better.

Pause before reacting to your child's behavior. Be curious about why he's behaving the way he is. Then cater to that reason and show empathy to let him know you're on the same side.

Get down to his level and make eye contact.

A typical scene in many homes? You're trying to be serious with your child except he thinks the whole thing is funny or lighthearted. When this happens, get down to his level so you're looking directly at and making eye contact. Your demeanor should be calm but firm so he knows you "mean business."

Although it's easy to lose your temper, a calm voice is more effective than an angry one. It's tough, for sure. Sometimes I feel like I'm just acting, putting on a neutral face when inside I'm boiling. But remaining calm is quicker and more effective than yelling. Model the behavior you want to see and your child will learn how to behave appropriately.

Give and follow through with consequences.

Stick to your word and follow through with consequences so your child takes you seriously. The other day, my toddler dumped a bunch of blocks on the floor, then decided not to play with it. Rather than putting the blocks away like I asked him to, he scampers off.

So I found a natural consequence to his actions if he doesn't clean up his mess: "It doesn't look like you're ready to play with those blocks just yet. I'll have to put them away in the closet until tomorrow if you don't put them away."

The most important part? If your child ignores you, follow through with what you said. In my case, I put the blocks away until the next day, despite my toddler's protests.



Kids learn accountability for decisions they make when the consequences tie directly with their choices.

They didn't pick up the toys = They don't get to play with them. Parents are enforcers, but a child's actions determined the outcome.



Guide your child.

Kids need a helping hand or even a way to "save face" after they've disobeyed on purpose. For instance, your toddler is supposed to head to the bathroom to wash hands after eating. Except this time, he refuses to. Rather than exploding in a battle, walk him to the bathroom and say, "Here, let's walk to the bathroom and get those sticky hands washed off."

Give your child a choice.

Giving limited choices can be an effective way to curb a potential meltdown and encourage your child to listen. Once in a while, offer your child a choice between two parent-approved options.

If your toddler refuses to put his jacket on, phrase the request while giving him two options that lead to the same goal (in this case, wearing a jacket). You might say, "Let's put on a jacket. Which one do you want to wear—the gray one or the blue one?" Having a choice makes him feel more empowered and likely to comply.

Explain the reason.

Researchers ran a study where a woman was able to cut in line to make copies simply by saying "because." We're more likely to comply when we hear a reason. Rather than simply being told what to do or not do, kids are more motivated to comply knowing the reason behind the request.

When you ask your toddler to do something, even if he disobeys on purpose, follow it up with the reason: "Don't jump on the couch—you might fall down and hurt yourself."

Praise your child when he does what he's told.

If your toddler finally does what he was asked to do, praise him for doing so. Even better: praise him when you catch him behaving well any other time. Praising positive behavior is more effective than correcting misbehavior. He'll get the message that this is the kind of behavior that earns attention and praise.



Conclusion

It's one thing when your toddler is throwing a tantrum or hitting his brother. But learning how to discipline a toddler when he flat out ignores you can be difficult.

Encourage your child to obey by acknowledging his emotions and intentions. Get down to his eye level and calmly but firmly explain what needs to be done. Explain the reason why, and even give parent-approved choices of how to do so. Guide him so he has help, and follow through with consequences if he continues to disregard you. And praise him when he does what he's supposed to. All those moments of positive reinforcement are much more effective in the long run.

Discipline isn't about being strict or doling out punishments. Discipline is helping your child learn how to behave in appropriate ways and manage his emotions. You're teaching him how to best cope with difficult situations. Discipline with the intention of helping him learn from the experience—even if it seems he's deliberately disobeying.

Adapted from: sleepingshouldbeeasy.com

Stages of Play

(Black & Duckett, 2009)

UNOCCUPIED

- The child is not playing or watching anyone or anything in particular.
- They might stand or sit and just do nothing.



PARALLEL PLAY

- The child plays alone but with toys that are shared with others.
- The child plays beside other children but communication might be limited or none at all.



SOLITARY PLAY

(Independent Play)

- The child plays alone.
- No connection or conversation is made with anyone nearby.



ASSOCIATIVE PLAY

- The child plays with other children.
- The play is not coordinated. They may talk and share toys but they are still independent players.



ONLOOKER

- The child spends most of their time watching others play.
- They might look or talk to the players, but will not engage in the actual play activity



COOPERATIVE PLAY

- Children come together and play.
- A group of children with a common goal or similar interests, acting out adult situations or playing formal games.



How to Build Up Confidence in Your Children

Dr. Robyn offers these tips:



1 Praise effort over personal characteristics. Studies show that when we praise the effort it takes to make progress or achieve a goal rather than fixed, personal characteristics, your children will be more likely to work hard and see challenges as hurdles that they can clear.



2 Surround them with positive, confident people. When children are around people who work hard and have a "can do" attitude, they are more likely to adopt a "can do" attitude as well. Especially when children are around others who are conquering similar challenges that they face, it can be particularly powerful.

3 Give them a job. When children are given the opportunity to feel resourceful, helpful and successful, they receive an internal boost that can't be attained in any other way.



4 Encourage them to set goals. When children set meaningful goals, they are able to strive, feel the excitement of progress and eventually earn the confidence that comes with goal achievement. What are they interested in learning? Have them write it down and devise a plan.



5 Show them the evidence. When your children are feeling down, talk to them about what they have achieved with hard work and perseverance. Reminding them of the high grade they achieved on a tough test or the award they received for a sport or contest will be difficult to deny.



POWERFUL WORDS
CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

For more powerful parenting tips, visit:

DrRobynSilverman.com

©Powerful Words Character Development 2014

Alternative Phrases when a child says "I can't"

I believe in you.

You are doing so great.

Look how far you've made it already!

I am really proud of your effort/for trying.

Try to do ___ and I will help you finish.

What an awesome job you're doing!

Can I help talk you through it?

Wow, your hard work is paying off!

Do as much as you can and I can help with rest.

Can I demonstrate it for you?



10 Incredibly Fun MOVEMENT songs for toddlers



HumbleinaHeartbeat.com

1. [Freeze Dance](#) by The Kiboomers
2. [Listen and Move](#) by TheKidscartoons
3. [Head Shoulders Knees and Toes](#) by Super Simple Songs
4. [The Hokey Pokey Shake](#) by Super Simple Songs
5. [Action Song for Kids](#) by The Singing Walrus
6. [Touch Your Head](#) by Maple Leaf Learning
7. [Shake Break](#) by Pancake Manor
8. [JUMP!](#) By Patty Shukla
9. [Walking, Walking](#) by LittleFoxKids
10. [Play Pat-a-Cake with Elmo](#) by Sesame Street