

Two Year Visit

BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

One of the greatest challenges of parenthood is discipline. Loving your child is only part of being a good parent. Teaching your child is just as important. Do not trust society, school or television to instill good values and rules of conduct in your offspring. Let us teach our sons and daughters the difference between right and wrong. No job is more important than this.

1. Discipline does not mean punishment; it means teaching. There is no reason to physically punish your child. Physical punishment is less effective in the long-term, in eliminating the problem behavior than other means. Physical punishment sends a confusing message about how wrongs can be righted and distracts the child from attempts at changing behavior. Children who are physically punished learn that force is a preferred way of resolving conflict.
2. Make the “punishment fit the crime”. If a child makes a mess with some crayons, they should help clean it up and have the crayons taken away until they can play with them appropriately. Spanking, yelling, lecturing or pleading does not teach about what is expected and may actually reinforce bad behaviors by rewarding the child with intense attention. Do not overreact to minor age-appropriate behaviors. Do not under react to major offenses.
3. Discipline your child with respect for their feelings. Never scold them in front of others. Even the youngest child can feel humiliation, and humiliation does not teach. A stern whisper or removal from the group for private discussion is just as effective and far less embarrassing for the child. Never discuss your child’s behavior with others in their presence, no matter how young the child. When you discipline, let your child know that your anger is not at them but at their behavior – that you love them even though you do not like what they are doing. For example, say “It makes Mommy/Daddy very angry when you do not do what I ask” instead of, “You make me so angry”.
4. Everybody has good days and bad days. Give your kid a break if they are tired, sick or going through some difficult changes. Sometimes a hug or sympathetic words are all that is needed.
5. Recognize age appropriate behaviors. Curiosity and independence should be fostered, not squashed. A one-year-old intentionally, but innocently, spills juice from their cup. A three-year-old sometimes plays aggressively or even destructively, but out of excitement, not out of spite. These behaviors need to be modified, but with the child seen as a developing human being who has a lot to learn, not as a little monster. Do not expect your child to act older than they are.
6. Be a role model for your child. Kids learn what they live. Sensitivity, sharing, honesty and moral integrity are all learned from a parent’s good example. If you value your relationships with family and friends more than you value your material possessions, so will your child. Be shocked when you see your child picking up your own bad habits. Let your child bring out the best in you.
7. The golden rule of behavior modification – reward behaviors you like and ignore behaviors you would not like to see repeated. Give attention and praise when your child is playing nicely. Withdraw your attention around undesirable behaviors. All of this is certainly easier said than done. Just as you should not expect too much of your child, do not demand too much of yourself either. Just as children need plenty of time to develop, so do parents. Make sure to take a break here and there. Look to your family, friends and health care providers for support and creative suggestions.

TIME OUT

Time out procedures are a means of controlling a young child’s problem behavior(s) without the use of yelling, pleading, scolding, continued spanking, etc. on the parent’s part. The procedure as used with 2-12 year olds works as follows: A parent picks out an action or behavior, such as hitting another sibling, saying “No” when told to do something, throwing a temper tantrum, etc. We call these “problem behaviors” Most parents usually begin applying “time out” to only one problem behavior to start, as this makes for an easier way to learn.

Time out procedures is not complicated, and most parents report success in using it within 2-3 days. The steps of the procedure are as follows:

1. Provide information about what you want your child to do or stop doing.
2. A single brief time out warning may be given should your child not comply with your request. For example, “John, if you do not pick up your toys right now you will have to go sit on the time out chair (room, place, etc.)” Importantly, you should not scream, yell, beg or physically threaten your child. The consequence should be stated non-emotionally, but firmly, without any discussion. No second chances or multiple warnings should occur.
3. Time out – if your child does not comply, then the child should be placed in time out. A simple non-emotional statement should accompany the instructions to go to the time out location. You may gently lead or place your child to the time out location, with little verbal interaction.

Many parents warn or threaten their child multiple times with some negative or unpleasant consequence for a “problem behavior”. Once the child learns that threats have little meaning, the “threat procedure” will be of little value in influencing the child’s “problem behavior”. Also, children will often repeat that behavior which will then get them lots of attention, even negative attention, from their parents. Time out, in essence, sends children a strong message the “problem behavior” will result in less attention or being ignored, rather than rewarded.

The most important feature of time out is that when the child ignores the time out warning, the consequence of being placed in time out must immediately follow. Each and every time the “problem behavior” occurs time out must promptly occur. Consistency is the key.

For young children the location and length of time out is less important than the consistency of the message about “problem behaviors”. Many families will have a specific location or chair. Some will use the child’s bedroom or the parent’s bedroom. As long as the location is somewhat isolated from the rest of the family, even if it is simply an adjacent room, it will be effective. Time out is intended to teach and change behaviors – it is not to ensure a certain punishment or “sentence”. Even a brief period of isolation gives the message that the behavior will result in a disruption of normal interaction. For a young child, a couple of minutes or less is significant. As long as a child and parent are ready to “start over” with a new attempt at positive behavior, the child should be allowed to come out and join the family.

If used consistently and immediately following specific misbehaviors, this technique is very effective. Your child soon learns that when you ask something of them, you mean business. No one desires to punish the child, but by using time out as outlined, the child soon learns that certain behaviors lead to an unpleasant consequence (time out). When used consistently, children receive clear communication from their parents about what is and is not acceptable behavior. At the same time, it keeps you out of intense interaction or quickly diffuses the situations that have gotten out of hand. After time out, you should give your child a clean slate. A warm hug lets them know that you have given them a fresh start.

NUTRITION

It is normal for many two year olds to be somewhat picky at meal time. Preschoolers are very inconsistent about the quantity and variety of what they eat at any particular day. If, over the course of a week, your preschooler is eating a reasonably balanced diet, then they are doing okay. It is important not to get into kitchen table battles. You cannot force a child to eat. If you try, you would likely be met with increased resistance. If your child is a picky eater, then desserts and snacks in between each meal should be strictly limited. Kids can fill up enough on juices alone to take the edge off their meal time appetites. Inappropriate demands for between meal junk food and drinks should, in general, be ignored. It is good for the whole family if you simply keep non-nutritious food out of the house altogether. What is good for the kids is good for the parent

SAFETY

1. Maryland law requires children to be in a car seat until they are 4' 9" or taller. Be sure your child's safety seat is properly installed in the backseat. Children should stay rear facing for as long as possible. For information on the latest recommendations and considerations, please visit healthychildren.org and search for "Car Seat Safety".
2. Supervise your child carefully when playing outside, including on the playground. Keep your child away from lawnmowers, driveways and garage doors.
3. Teach your child the danger of following a thrown ball or a dog darting into the street. Do not count on the child remembering such instructions. Your child has to be closely supervised when near a street.
4. Watch your child constantly whenever near water, including, but not limited to, bathtubs, play pools, buckets and the toilet. "Knowing how to swim" does not make a child water safe at this age. Always be a hand grab away. Be sure that swimming pools in your community, apartment complex or home have a 4-sided fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate.
5. Firearms pose a potentially tragic threat to children of all ages. The best prevention measure is to not keep firearms at home at all. If firearms must be in the home, they must be stored unloaded and in a locked location. Take steps to ensure that firearms are not accessible in other homes where your child may spend time, such as day care providers', relatives' and friends' homes. Teach your child never to touch a firearm and reinforce this by not allowing toy guns as objects for play.
6. Make sure you have a working smoke detector on every level of your home. Develop an escape plan in the event of a fire in your home. Install a carbon monoxide detector near every sleeping area of your home.
7. Limit time spent in the sun. Put sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher) on your child before they go outside. Use a hat to shade the face, ears, nose and lips.

ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR CHILD

1. Encourage family exercise, such as walking, jogging or bicycling (always wear a helmet).
2. Read books together every day. At this age, children typically are able to follow the story line of simple books and may ask you to read the same book again and again.
3. Limit TV and video watching to no more than 1-2 hours each day. Monitor the types of shows your child watches. Try to watch with your children. Use TV shows as an opportunity for discussion and communication. Do not put a TV, DVD player or tablet in your child's bedroom.
4. Provide opportunities for your child to play with other children near your child's age. Supervision will be necessary, because children this age are not always ready to share and play cooperatively.

Rx for Healthy Active Living

Name _____ Date _____

Ideas for Living a Healthy Active Life

- 5** Eat at least 5 fruits and vegetables every day.
- 2** Limit screen time (for example, TV, video games, computer) to 2 hours or less per day.
- 1** Get 1 hour or more of physical activity every day.
- 0** Drink fewer sugar-sweetened drinks. Try water and low-fat milk instead.

My Goals (choose one you would like to work on first)

- Eat _____ fruits and vegetables each day.
- Get _____ minutes of physical activity each day.
- Reduce screen time to _____ minutes per day.
- Reduce number of sugared drinks to _____ per day.

Patient or Parent/Guardian signature

Doctor signature

From Your Doctor

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