

EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

12 Months-Introduce

15 Months-Reinforce

2 Years-Reinforce

★ FINDING OUTLETS FOR YOUR CHILD’S AUTONOMY/TANTRUMS ★

★ PROBLEM SOLVING A BEHAVIORAL ISSUE ★

★ NORMAL CHILDHOOD AGGRESSION ★

**All parents experience frustration as children grow through early childhood developmental milestones.**

Early childhood is a time of discovery: every day, the toddler learns new things about herself and her environment, and new ways to relate to others. Parents are learning, too, often trying frantically to keep pace with the child’s ceaseless exploration and growth. It would be remarkable, indeed, if all went smoothly. When one party or another is fatigued or stressed, when expectations exceed performance, tempers can flare. By helping parents keep their perspective and teaching appropriate developmental expectations, pediatricians can help prevent crises.

It is essential that the child explore in order to grow; it is equally important that she do it safely. Babies and toddlers learn by being curious. Curiosity and intelligence compel babies to touch, handle, put things in their mouth, and take things apart. While this can be stressful, or even dangerous, there are steps that parents can take to respond more positively to their children and allow safe exploration. Responsible parents do their part by imposing limitations and structure to create safe spaces for them to explore and play, while recognizing and responding flexibly to the infant’s needs. A good “developmental IQ” can help parents to understand their child, and to develop effective strategies for responding. The pediatric office is an excellent place to begin to develop this understanding.

**Assessment**

- When does your baby “lose it”? (hungry, tired...)
- What makes you “lose it” with your baby?
- What do you do then?

**Anticipatory Guidance**

Strategies for parents:

- Managing the stress of a frustrating situation:
  - Take a moment to remember that the *child* is the one with the problem.
  - Make sure the child is in a safe place.
  - Take ten deep breaths before responding to the behavior.
  - Call a friend or family member to talk about your emotions or to provide childcare.
- Preventing problems before they start:
  - Remember to take time for yourself in the form of hot baths, exercise, reading, spending time with friends, or just being in a quiet room alone.
  - Consider your child’s limitations, temperament, and developmental level when planning your day, be flexible.
  - Childproofing reduces the number of times you have to say, “no.” Removing the “no’s” from the environment reduces stress for both of you.
    - Remove valuable, breakable, and hazardous items from child’s reach.
    - Use child safety gates and lock doors to keep unsafe areas inaccessible to small children.

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## ESTABLISHING ROUTINES

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6 Months-Introduce	15 Months-Reinforce	2 Years-Reinforce
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**Children need routines to feel secure.** <sup>1,2</sup> The parents' job is to teach the child proper behavior, and learning depends on predictability. Providing structured daily routines while learning to recognize and respond flexibly to the child's needs reduces resistance, conveys respect for the child, and renders negative experiences less stressful.

### Assessment

- Can your child anticipate daily activities (playtime, bath-time, meals, and sleeping)?
- How predictable is your child?

### Anticipatory Guidance

- Understand that, while routines can be important, that they can be hard to establish for some infants. Routines are best established if you try to follow the baby's cues and patterns rather than trying to impose routines that conflict with these patterns.
- Remember that a child whose routines are disrupted may have trouble regulating his behavior. When he misbehaves, ask "Is he hungry? Is he tired?" before you act.
- Ask for help when you are feeling frustrated.

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## DISCIPLINE = TEACHING

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12 Months-Introduce	2 Years-Reinforce	3 Years-Reinforce
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**Discipline is more than merely punishing improper behaviors – it's teaching proper ones.** Teaching desired behavior begins on a foundation of positive parenting that includes daily routines, praise for desired behavior, and a nurturing and understanding environment. Parents can then 1) communicate clear expectations, 2) show the children how to be successful, and 3) focus more attention on their child's positive accomplishments than on perceived misbehavior. Building on this foundation, parents can support their children in moving to independence by helping them take responsibility for their actions and use effective coping skills to resolve conflicts. Teaching and rewarding become the center of their parenting.

Tantrums begin at this age! If your child is safe, simply wait it out. Reasoning with toddlers does not generally work, especially when they are frustrated and enraged. Calm parents can often figure out why the child is frustrated. It is best to *get curious, not furious*. When a parent responds to a tantrum with anger, the child becomes the teacher. A parent who can predict which situations will lead to tantrums can anticipate and redirect before the situation gets out of control.

### Assessment

- When your child is doing something good, how do you communicate this to him/her?
- When your child is doing something bad, how do you communicate this to him/her?
- When you tell them what they are doing wrong, do you also show them what would be right?
- Does your child have tantrums? What do you do when they occur?
- Does your child hit or bite? How do you handle this?

## Anticipatory Guidance

- Responses to misbehavior must be developmentally appropriate to be effective. Distraction and diversion are the best disciplinary measures for infants and toddlers. Changing the environment or the activity is an effective way to change your child's behavior.
- Redirect any activity using a neutral voice. Infants don't understand the word or concept of "no" before they are about 9 months old, and need frequent reminding for a long time after that.
- TIPS: Never bite or hit back  
Redirect your baby; pull her away.  
Show her alternative behaviors.  
Watch for the warning cues prior to the biting and redirect her to something else.
- Give immediate praise for behaviors you want to reinforce. Don't laugh or smile at behaviors that you do not want to continue. Be consistent in communicating what you expect.
- Ignoring behaviors, such as whining or tantrums can be very effective. Negative behaviors are often attention-seeking behaviors, but sometimes just redirect a child who is over stimulated or tired. In either case, they stop faster without an audience.
- Build responsibility by offering your child choices, but make sure the child's decisions will be acceptable to you: *"We're going to the supermarket. Do you want to wear your sweater or your jacket?"*
- It is common for children to try out aggressive behaviors to try to get their way. A good response to hitting and biting can be simple limit setting: *"No hitting."* and *"No biting."* Couple this with concrete suggestions to help play go more smoothly: *"Why don't you boys take turns."* Acknowledge good behavior, *"I love to see you playing so nicely."*
- When these other strategies don't work, it may help for child to take a "time out". Rather than a punishment, a time out is a chance for the child (and often for the parent as well) to cool off and regroup. To be effective they must be consistent and shouldn't last too long: try one minute for each year of age. Try to give a few warnings about a time out before actually instituting it, and follow it up with a brief explanation of the misbehavior, and of the desired behavior.

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## MODELING BEHAVIORS

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<b>9 Months -Introduce</b>	<b>15 Months-Reinforce</b>	<b>18 Months-Reinforce</b>
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**Children learn from their parents.** Parents should model positive ways to deal with angry feelings. Parents who can remain calm during stressful situations set an example for their children to do the same. Keep voices at a moderate level; use words to state how you're feeling, and stick to the issues at hand. Make it clear to the child that while the behavior might not be acceptable, the parent's love for the child is unchanged. Avoid using negative terms to label the child. Never shame or humiliate a child when addressing undesirable behavior. A child whose feelings are respected will learn to respect the feelings of others. Maintain kindness to your child and have a sense of humor. There are several undesirable consequences of spanking and hitting, children learn to use physical force to express anger and deal with conflict, parents often use physical force when they are angry themselves, and it does nothing to teach alternative ways of behaving.

### Assessment:

- How were you disciplined as a child? Do you plan to do the same with your child?
- Do you discuss discipline methods with your partner? Do you agree on what's best in disciplining your child?
- How does your child see you handling conflict?

**Anticipatory Guidance:**

- Set a good example.
- Help children to express their feelings with words rather than hitting.
- Avoid spanking or hitting. It can hurt your child physically and emotionally.
- BE firm and consistent with limit setting and expectations
- Criticize the behavior, not the child. “Don’t run into the street” is better than “You’re a bad boy.” Make the consequence match the circumstance. Use natural and logical consequences. A natural consequence, e.g., might be having a friend not want to play for some time because of getting hurt; a logical consequence might be not going to the store for a few times if the toddler is disruptive or destructive when he/she does go.

In closing, the Practicing Safety effective discipline materials support the positive parenting approach by providing information connecting child behavior to child development.

**THE PARENTING PYRAMID: Teaching Desired Behavior-putting punishment at the top of the pyramid.**



The Parenting Pyramid, "Developed by Rose Allen, Family Relations Specialist, University of Minnesota Extension Service. All rights reserved. [www.parenting.umn.edu](http://www.parenting.umn.edu)," offers tangible suggestions parent can use to help them guide their child’s behavior. This information and guidance changes as the child grows in order to help parents achieve age-appropriate balances between fostering skills, independence, self-reliance, and disciplinary practices. This balance is schematically reflected below:

Age	Promoting Autonomy	Discouraging Inappropriate or Unsafe Behavior
Less than 12 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical contact</li><li>• Respond to cries</li><li>• Promote secure attachment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sleep issues</li><li>• Child-proofing the home</li></ul>
12 to 18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encouraging speech</li><li>• Establishing safe areas</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Distraction/removing toddler from situation</li></ul>
18 to 48 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Offering choices</li><li>• Teaching emotional vocabulary</li><li>• Rewarding good behavior</li><li>• Establishing routines</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Setting explicit expectations</li><li>• Time-out</li><li>• Monitoring child’s environment</li></ul>

## **PARENT EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS**

### **“How do Infants Learn” brochure**

Based on current brain development literature, this brochure developed by, Connected Kids: Safe, Strong, Secure, offers practical suggestions to parents. It promotes activities like reading or singing that encourage brain growth. Since some parents interpret an infant’s normal exploration as bad behavior, it helps parents understand that exploration is a natural developmental need and this can lay the groundwork for later discussions of toddler behavior and discipline.

### **“Teaching Good Behavior – Tips on Discipline” brochure**

With increased mobility and rudimentary verbal skills, the toddler years can be an especially trying time for parents. New parents often look back to their own childhoods, and either emulate or negatively react to the way their parents raised them. This brochure developed by, Connected Kids: Safe, Strong, Secure describes the basics of a behavioral approach to parenting:

- Children seek parental attention. The most effective way to teach a child is to provide positive reinforcement for desired behaviors.
- Limit setting evolves from simple distraction (appropriate for infants), to the recitation of a simple rule (“No hitting.”), to the use of a brief time-out.
- Time-outs work best when children have learned they get positive attention for wanted behaviors. Think of a time-out as “time-out from positive reinforcement.”

### **“Temper Tantrums: A Normal Part of Growing Up” brochure**

This brochure developed by the American Academy of Pediatrics, helps parents understand the many reasons children have tantrums. Strong emotions are difficult for children to express. They may become angry, frustrated, or disappointed which leads to temper tantrums. The information in the brochure addresses:

- Why children have tantrums.
- How to help prevent temper tantrums.
- What to do when tantrums occur.
- When tantrums are serious.

### **“Playing is How Toddlers Learn” brochure**

Connected Kids: Safe, Strong, and Secure developed this brochure, which helps parents understand normal toddler behavior. Its two main goals are to help parents:

- Provide a stimulating environment during this explosive period of brain development.
- Understand the natural curiosity and exploration of toddlers.

Parents can come away appreciating how their toddlers think and not interpret natural curiosity as purposeful misbehavior.

### **“Splash Water On Your Face” brochure**

Prevent Child Abuse America, developed this brochure that gives the parent 12 simple ways to take time out to cool down before addressing their child’s undesirable behavior.

### **Suggested Reading List**

This booklist was suggested as a parenting resource to support the information that has been outlined in this module. Therefore, this list is just a starting point, as there are many books about discipline for young children on the market. The resources listed have not been reviewed or endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

## ***OFFICE MARKETING TOOLS***

### **“Reading. Routine. Relationships. Rewards.” Poster**

These posters can be placed in exam or waiting rooms and can be used as a marketing tool to discuss the idea that each of these components needs to be operating effectively in the home for discipline to result in improved child behavior. This poster can also be used with other modules.

### **“Discipline: Teaching Limits With Love” – Video**

The Parents Action for Children formally the I am Your Child Foundation developed this video featuring Dr. T. Berry Brazelton, to show parents that setting limits is not punishment, but a loving way to teach a child how to control his or her own behavior. This video can be played in the waiting room area or parents can check the video out when needed. (Available in English & Spanish)

## ***STAFF TOOLS***

### **Physician Prescription Pads**

This pad is a tool that pediatricians or staff can give parents to remind them of things they can do when their child’s behavior makes them feel angry and frustrated. Generally, speaking, toddlers like to please their parents. Their curiosity, impulsiveness, and emotions can get in the way. Parents can help a great deal by noticing - with a word or a kind look - when their children are struggling to do the right thing. This sort of positive reinforcement powerfully communicates the "You can do it!" message, and is an important twin to the corrective discipline toddlers also require!

### **Cool Down Before Things Heat Up**

This pamphlet designed by, Prevent Child Abuse America, can be used by staff to offer parents helpful ways to respond to behaviors such as: screaming, tantrums, whining, biting, toilet training and eating problems.

### **Guidance for Effective Discipline Policy Statement and Speaking Points**

The American Academy of Pediatrics has provided speaking points from their policy statement on effective discipline that can be used as a cheat sheet for staff to highlight specific issues to address with parents when they have concerns about disciplining their child.

## ***MODERATE/INTERACTIVES TANGIBLES***

### **Behavior Chart**

Use this instrument to record the kind of discipline you use. A good chart should include the time, a description of the child’s behavior, and a description of your response. Over the course of one week, you may realize that some forms of discipline do not work for your child or do not reap the desired behavior you were expecting. In this case, try using another style of discipline and then record how your response allowed for encouragement of good behavior. The objective is to find methods that work with your child while developing a healthy parent-child relationship.

### **Practicing Safety Timers**

This tool can be given out to parents on an as-needed basis. The timer can allow for a few minutes to deal with stress in various situations. When used as a tool for effective discipline, the timer can help to structure time-out periods (removal of positive parental attention). Set the timer for one minute per year of age.

## Practicing Safety Stress Ball

The tennis-ball size stress ball, made of polyfoam, serves two purposes in helping parents to take the time to calm down before reacting to a child's behavior. First, as a visual cue, it reminds parents of their goals in dealing more effectively with discipline issues. Second, the action of squeezing the ball can help to channel angry energy into harmless activity and reduce the impulse to respond physically to the undesirable behavior.

## ISSUES MANAGEMENT

A toddler continues to act out, have tantrums, hurt other children despite time outs, removing from the activity, diverting to other activities.

1. Make sure that the parents are being consistent and supportive to each other
2. Try to better understand the home environment, the role of the parents, family, or other caregivers
3. Consider a home visitor assessing the home environment and discipline approaches
4. Role Play in the office
5. Make sure there are not other reasons for the tantrums: family dysfunction, neurodevelopmental issues, attentional problems, and parental emotional problems.
6. Involve the child in day care for respite for the parent and to have other caretakers involved
7. Support the parent; use follow up phone calls or have them return on a regular basis
8. Consider a referral to child development
9. Consider enrolling the parents in a parenting class

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Portions of this guide were adapted, with permission, from Spivak H, Sege R, and Licenziato V, eds. "Clinical Guide for Connected Kids: Safe, Strong, Secure." Elk Grove Village, AAP, 2005 *in press*.

<sup>1,2</sup>American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health Guidelines for Effective Discipline. *Pediatrics*. 1998; 101: 723-728.