

Bright Start UpDate

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Promoting Healthy Social-Emotional Skills!

Does your child want to do everything for himself and help with everything you are doing? Older toddlers and young preschoolers often seek to be independent and it is important to find a balance between letting your child be independent and keeping him safe.

Your child is learning to be autonomous and wants to be in control of different aspects of his life. Children search for independence in order to develop other skills such as self-confidence, competency and resourcefulness. For parents though it can be a tough stage and you must try to remember to be patient during this time.

One way to make an easy transition into the preschool years is to understand the developmental milestones of your child. For example, did you know that in the **social-emotional area**, a young three year old child will:

- Want to please adults,
- Have some fear of strangers, animals, or the dark,
- Become anxious in new situations and may still have some temper tantrums.

As a parent you can help your child learn some important social-emotional skills. For example, you may expect your child to behave in public and mind his manners. In order for your child to meet these expectations, he may need to learn self-control. Self control is the ability to control one's thoughts, behaviors and actions. You can help teach this skill through modeling. Likewise, you can also model self-discipline or the ability to set realistic goals by making a plan, sticking to it and following through on that promise.



Find a balance between letting your child be independent and keeping them safe.

Try to teach your child self control and self discipline by creating an environment that the support his growth and development. The following discipline techniques can help children develop self-responsibility and control.

- **Set fair and reasonable limits.** Setting reasonable limits based on your child's development offers realistic guidelines for children and helps them feel secure. It also teaches them what acceptable expectations for their behavior are. Limits also need to be consistently enforced. Children become confused when limits are not consistent or rules are never stated to begin with. As a result, they may misbehave more because they don't know what appropriate expectations are in certain situations.
- **Give clear and positive instructions.** As with adults, children want to feel successful in what they do. Giving clear instructions and making sure the request is heard is key for children of all ages to be successful. Instead of yelling the request from the kitchen, go to where your child is and express what you want done and if needed, model the behavior.

- **Keep in mind- your child wants to please you.** For example, if you ask your child to pick up his toys, let him do it. If you "clean up" after he has cleaned up, he will learn that he cannot meet your expectations and may not even try. If he does not meet your expectations, help him by working with him, modeling the correct behavior, and encouraging him for his efforts.

Use consequences. Letting children learn from experiences can be quite effective if done properly. Parents should tell children what the consequences will be for breaking a limit ahead of time. Consequences give children a choice, and parents must be willing to accept the child's decision to experience the consequence. Consequences are used to teach responsibility and decision-making. The situation provides the learning opportunity and helps develop a sense of accountability for one's actions.

Prepared by Ann Michelle Daniels,
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Source: Just in Time Parenting,
<http://www.parentinginfo.org/>



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From a Parent's Perspective – Potty Training Chronicles

Interest was first apparent in late spring, so we put a little potty in the bathroom for our son. This became part of the decoration scheme until September when we were launched into “actively training.” We actually had to use a timer to get him *OFF* of the toilet. I was already spending that extra cash saved from buying diapers!

Then regression set in. Admittedly, we were pretty loose with the whole potty training thing thinking that he would just get the hang of it. We are a pretty routine-based family, so not to have this part of the day structured probably contributed to the regression (in addition to being a typical two-year-old!).

To get the job done, start by maintaining a sense of humor and a positive attitude. You

will spend a LOT of time in the bathroom! Be sure to treat accidents lightly.

Next, devote some time to the process and schedule potty breaks. Establish a routine by sitting the child on the potty after waking, snacks, meals, as well as, before and after naps. It also helps to maintain the same routine for up to a month.



Let all of your children's caregivers – daycare, babysitters and grandparents – know what the routine is. Ask them to follow the same routine and terminology.

Know when to take a breather. Recognize that stressful transitions, such as moving to a big kid bed or a new sibling,

may stretch potty training longer. Take cues from your child concerning his/her readiness, and offer words of praise even if s/he doesn't have a bowel movement.

Consider incentives when actively training. We started out with tic-tacs (his favorite), but we are moving to a sticker chart to refrain from using food/treats as a reward. Experiment with what works for your child.

This two-year-old has a New Year's Resolution...with an expiration date of his August birthday!

Prepared by Amanda Larson, Extension Educator – Bon Homme County

Source: *Potty Training: How to Get the Job Done* at Mayo Clinic
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/potty-training/CC00060>

Family Mealtime – Family Mealtime: How It Can Help Families

Today, there are fewer meals eaten at home for various reasons, including busy schedules or simply a lack of knowledge of how to prepare a meal. All families are busy, but eating together as a family should be a priority. Mealtime is a great opportunity for parents and kids to have positive interactions and spend quality time together. Adults are important role models for their children and they have an influence on the foods children try and learn to eat. To create a positive climate for your family mealtime, consider the following:



- Remember that kids often take more time to eat than adults do. Be patient.
- Take your time through dinner and enjoy the extra few minutes sitting at the table before cleaning up.
- Turn off the television, radio, and cell phone so everyone can focus on the conversation without distraction.
- Ask each person at the table to talk about a fun activity or something good that happened during the day.

Mealtime is a wonderful time to catch up on special school events or the experiences or achievements

of your children. You can also plan upcoming family activities, such as going for a walk after dinner.

When meals are prepared at home and families sit at the table together to share that meal, it is easier to make healthy choices. It is a good time to talk about and model healthy eating, portion sizes and trying new foods. Try eating your next family meal at home to improve family communication and nutritional well-being!

Prepared by Holly Reis, Extension Educator - Brule County

Source: *Families-Eating Smart and Moving More*

Healthy Baby – Family Routines Decrease Stress

Adults often talk about being stressed. Kids can get stressed too and may exhibit this stress in a variety of ways.

Family routines help organize life and keep it from becoming too chaotic, thus reducing stress for everyone in the family. Children do best when their home and school activities are regular, predictable, and consistent.

Each family needs to establish comfortable, effective routines that balance structure with flexibility. Very little structure can foster disorder and confusion. Too much structure can become rigid and even boring. Children need routines but they also need the opportunity for choices.



As parents, review the routines in your household to ensure that they accomplish what you want. Weekday mornings, after school or work, evenings, bedtimes and weekends are pivotal times to look at what has to be done, who needs to do the important tasks, and who is responsible.

Suggestions when setting routines:

- Establish consistent bedtime and wake-up routines that are cheerful and positive.
- Regular meals and healthy snacks are important to start the day and keep energy levels strong.
- Use meal and snack times as family time with enjoyable conversation. As often as possible, family members should

eat together without distractions of television or phone.

- Rituals for nighttime or departures can help ease youngsters' minds. Rituals can include hugs and waves when leaving, storytelling, reading aloud, songs, etc.

Planning and maintaining family routines will help reduce stress for every member of your family. Parents can even set aside time for themselves in their family and household routines.

Prepared by Sally Park-Hageman,
Extension Educator – Fall River County

Sources: Healthy Children.org, and Academy of Pediatrics

Books & Baby – The Reading Post

I am now a mother of an 18 year old son. Ahh, but I remember, our *reading spot* and the time we spent together reading. I will treasure that time forever! One of our favorite books was, Love You Forever, by Robert N. Munsch.

The story begins with a new born son, then continues through the life of the boy through various stages, from unrolling the bathroom tissue, being dirty and messy, listening to LOUD music and driving the mother CRAZY, then moving away... until he is a grown man. The mother continues to rock her son to sleep singing “*I’ll love you forever, I’ll like*

you for always, as long as I’m living my baby you’ll be.”

Later, the role is reversed and he holds his elderly mother and says “*I’ll love you forever I’ll like you for always as long as I’m living my Mommy you’ll be.*” At the very end of the story, he is the father of a little girl, rocking her back and forth, back and forth to sleep singing the same song that his mother used to sing to him.

I still feel the love and treasure my memories as I write this article, which brings tears of love as I see my baby finish his senior year and soon will be moving on...



Since *Love You Forever* was first published in 1986, I

was one of the millions of moms who have lulled my child to sleep with these affectionate words. “*I’ll love you forever, I’ll like you for always, As long as I’m living, My baby you’ll be.*”

Remember childhood is a short season. Enjoy it and read with your child (children)!

Prepared by Nancy Pauly, Extension Educator – Bennett County

Web Wise – Just-In-Time Parenting

Just in Time Parenting is a national Extension web site that brings reliable information to families at a time when it can make the biggest difference in their lives. It includes age-paced newsletters and facts sheets. Can't find what you are looking for? Take advantage of the Ask-the-Expert section at <http://www.parentinginfo.org/>.

Prepared by Amber Lounsbery, Extension Educator – Minnehaha County

South Dakota State Cooperative Extension

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The **Bright Start UpDate** is a monthly publication for South Dakota parents with young children under the age of five. It is brought to you as part of Governor Rounds Bright Start Program, an early childhood initiative with a number of different programs. **Bright Start UpDate** is published by the Office of the Governor 4,470 copies of this publication were printed at a cost of \$.46 per copy. You are welcome to make copies and distribute as needed. You can reach us by calling **1-800-305-3064** or check our web site at: <http://www.sdbrightstart.com>

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