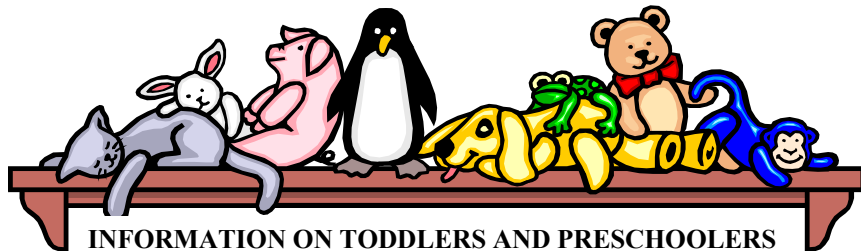




TODDLER TOPICS: 2005



INFORMATION ON TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS

ISSUE NO. TWO

Dear Parent:

Parents and child caregivers are busy people, but never too busy to spend time with their young children. When a child and a parent(s) spend time together, an important message is sent. The child knows he/she is important. The child feels good about him/herself.

This issue looks at “Things To Do.” You and your family will benefit by doing things together.



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STRONG FAMILIES DO THINGS TOGETHER

One way to build a strong family is to do things together. The family who spends time together gets to know each other better. They learn, even at an early age, to count on one another. They develop a strong sense of security. Strong families don’t just happen by chance. Family members work at it. If you want to work toward being a stronger family, plans must be made. Set aside time regularly to do activities together. Look for ways to involve all members of the family. Skipping or rescheduling the activities is very disappointing to the children. They may begin to think they are not valued.



Sincerely,

Nancy E. Wallace, MS, CFCS
Extension Educator

Penn State Cooperative Extension in your county provides educational programs of interest to children, youth and families. Contact your county office at: Westmoreland County Cooperative Extension, Donohoe Center, RR 12, Box 202E, Donohoe Road, Greensburg PA 15601, 724-837-1402.

E-mail us at WestmorelandExt.@psu.edu. Visit our web site at: Westmoreland.extension.psu.edu.

ACTIVITIES: AGES AND STAGES

Children ages two and three:

- Want to do things for themselves
- Talks all the time; need to be included in conversations
- Needs lots of fresh air and exercise
- Needs affection
- Wants to play “make believe”
- Are in the “Me To” stage of life
- Is full of questions: *Why, What/How come?*
- Likes story telling and to be read to
- Loves large muscle play
- Likes to help

Children ages four to six:

- Ask endless questions:
How does this work?
- Can take turns
- Want to “be good”
- Like active play
- Sees play as his/her business
- Values friends and playmates
- Like slapstick humor and being silly
- Needs to be praised
- Is independent

LETS GO FLY A KITE



Spring is kite flying time. The air is crisp and the wind is blowing. Buy a kite or better yet, make one. Then wait for a windy day. Make the kite from paper, plastic and wood. Never use metal. Have your child draw a picture on the kite paper. Use thin pieces of wood to act as braces. Use dry string not wire for the kite. Fly the kite in an open area away from electrical wires and transmission towers. If the kite becomes entangled in wires, trees, or roofs, leave it.

THERE'S MUSIC IN THE AIR IT'S AN OUTDOOR BAND CONCERT

Look in the local newspaper or listen on the radio for announcement of local band concerts or outdoor performance. Summer is just around the corner. Many communities have Sunday evening or afternoon concerts. Pack up a blanket or two, maybe a lawn chair, some bottled water and plan to take the family. In many communities, outdoor concerts (with local bands) are free or tax supported. The concerts are a great way to introduce your child to jazz, country, semi-classical or traditional music.

Children love music. It is a good way for children to see a musician perform live. At an outdoor concert, children don't have to sit still or be perfectly quiet. They can get up, clap their hands or even dance to the music. If they get tired, they can take a short nap. Plan to go early, then the children can see the musicians unpack their instruments.



A DAD'S WEEKLY "TO DO" LIST

Congratulations dad! You have been selected to experience life's greatest journey for a man-fatherhood. As with any journey, there can be great joy at one point and hardships at another. We, dads, need to get equipped for the journey so we can be as effective as possible. After all, our kid's well-being and happiness is at stake.

Having two girls of my own, I'm always looking for ways that I can improve as a dad. One thing I've found helpful is to develop a "dad's weekly to do list" to serve as a reminder of how much my girls need me and how important it is that I stay involved, responsible and committed to them.

Do I model the behavior I expect from my kids? - When I look at my kids, I'm looking in the mirror. They reflect what they see me doing or not doing. They see if I'm physically active or not. They see how I treat their mother. They see how I express feelings. So, if I'm expecting them to lead healthy lifestyles, treat others with respect or to be truthful, I better be modeling those traits or my kids will not reflect them.

Do I get into their world? Entering my kid's world requires asking a lot of questions. How was preschool? Who did you play with today? It also involves time. Time to watch their TV shows, play with their dolls (of course I always get to be Ken) and read them fun books.

Do I let them into my world? Men can be easily task oriented. They can focus heavily on work, hobbies, or projects around the house. This tendency can cause us to lose focus on family relationships. I have to consciously ask myself "How did I involve my children in my world this week?" Our kids want to be important in all aspects of our lives.

I have found some ways to let them enter my world. One way is to let them experience what I do at work. I've done this in different ways over the years, from letting them spend a day with me at work, to taking a few extra minutes before I leave to answer their questions of where and why I'm going to work.

I've also found ways to let them be a part of my interests and hobbies. I enjoy playing the guitar; it seems to be a kid magnet. Every time I pick it up, my kids appear out of nowhere and beg for silly songs! I'll play the guitar and let them make up songs or they will give me a funny subject to sing about. These are memories they will carry with them, I hope, forever. You may not be able to play the guitar, but whatever your interest, think of creative ways to let your kids be a part of it.

Do I make my girls laugh? Although I'm surprised at what my kids find amusing, there can be no doubt that they sure do love to laugh. There is no more wonderful sound to my ears than to hear my kids laughing at the goofiest things. Recently, my girls brought home a toy from a restaurant. It was a fill-in-the-blank story where we would spin the toy to get a word. We sat and laughed for a full hour being silly with this thing. Grab hold of these opportunities with all your might, because they are fleeting.

Was I involved in the daily loving discipline of my girls? First and foremost, I have to remember the word "discipline" means to teach or to guide. But, it's still very easy for me to say "I'm with the kids for such a limited time, that I don't want to waste time having to discipline them." Yet, if I do that, everyone involved gets the short end of the deal. Mom is stuck being the "bad guy" most of the time, Dad doesn't gain the respect needed as part of the family, and the kids lose out most of all. A balanced discipline plan from both mom and dad is the best thing for our children.

I've seen the joy my girls have when I've checked these things off my "dad's weekly to do list." They soak it up like a sponge! You can use this list to remind you as I do, or better yet, create one of your own. And, remember, you're not alone— I'm right along side you on this great journey.

Author: Erik J. Veccre, Executive Director, Community Based Programming, National Fatherhood Initiative



WHEN ARE WE GOING TO GET THERE?

Children are adventuresome, but they also are impatient. It is not unusual to hear, “When are we going to get there?” as soon as the car starts. Or how do we get there. Young children can begin to learn the art of map making or map reading. Draw a map showing where the child lives and how the roads lead to your destination. Point out places the child knows like childcare, a gas station, church, the playground, etc.

Have the child draw a map of how they would go from their own kitchen to their bedroom. They can draw “landmarks” within the house. Children can map their neighborhood. Have them show where their house is located in the neighborhood. Map the route to their best friend’s house. Mark off the fire station, police station, library, etc. Then finish the activity by using the map to take a short trip.

LET’S GO VISIT THE LIBRARY

Many communities have a local library. Many of those libraries have story time for children. Libraries are eager to see children arrive. The librarian wants to share his/her love of books and reading with young children. Research shows that if you get children hooked on books early, they will read throughout their lifetime.



Children love a good story. They laugh, giggle and sometimes even cry. A good story charms children. The early childhood years, birth to eight, are the most important for literacy development. Children gain knowledge, skills and reasoning. Reading aloud is vital to children’s success in later life. When parents read to children and talk about books, children become good readers. When children see parents, grandparents and older siblings read, they become good readers.

Children love books. The pictures take them to new places. Children see a diversity of people and places in books. Children’s imaginations develop through reading and story telling. Reading aloud develops children’s listening skills. Children love to hear the sound of another person’s voice. They begin to appreciate language. Reading aloud increases children’s concentration. Children like to hear the same book over and over again.

Make time to read. It is important to schedule a special time each day to read with your children. Bedtime might be best. After lunch or before a nap is a good time to read with children. Sit with the child on your lap or have him sit next to you.



WHAT BOOKS SHOULD I READ TO MY CHILD?

Books about families:

A Baby Sister for Francis
Titch
Me, Too
Who's Mouse Are You?
Polar Star
When I Am a Sister
When Mama Gets Home

Books about friends:

Snail Started It
Will I Have A Friend?
George and Martha
That Toad Is Mine



Books about feelings:

Runaway Bunny
Ask Mr. Bear
Nicky and the Big, Bad Wolves
Without Wings, Mother, How Can I Fly?
Guess How Much I Love You
Little Lost Fish
Go Away, Big Green Monster!

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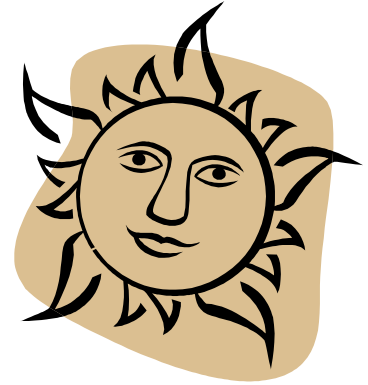
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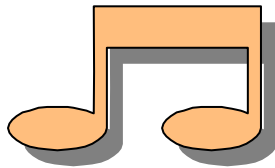
RAIN

OR



MAKE A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT

Use household items such as empty oatmeal container, paper plates, coffee can and plastic bottles. Dried beans or buttons inside a can (with a well secured lid) make a great tambourine. Drums are a quick fix with the covered can. The shaking and pounding are good for gross motor skills.



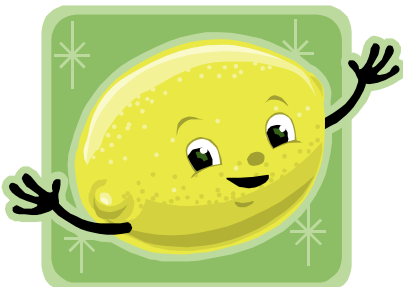
PLAY RESTAURANT

Make your own props or visit a restaurant to get old menus. Use plates, bags, plastic silverware. Go out to eat.



JUMPING JACK, SALLY OR BOB

Have child stand with their toes at a starting line. Give a signal to have the child jump five steps forward, then five steps back. Count the steps. Change the number of steps.



LEARN ABOUT TASTE

Give a child pieces of several different foods-both sweet and sour. Have the child taste them. Identify which are sweet, which are sour. Try sweet and dill pickle, candy, lemons.

