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Tips for Parents of Older Toddlers

(24-36 months)

LEARNING TO USE THE BATHROOM

Potty accidents are normal. Children slowly learn what it feels like when they have to pee or poop. Children are often 3 years old or older before they can use the bathroom by themselves. Many children will have accidents even after they have been using the bathroom awhile.

INSTEAD OF ...

TRY...

Saying, "You are so lazy!"

Making your child sit on the potty or toilet against their will

Punishing your child for accidents

- "Let's try to use the potty next time."
- Establishing comfort while sitting on the potty/toilet – read books. Avoid having a child sit on a toilet for more than 5 minutes.
- Expressing excitement when your child is able to use the toilet. When accidents happen, it just means your child's body isn't mature enough yet to consistently use the toilet.

NIGHTTIME WETTING

Nighttime wetting may occur until children are much older. Stressful events can cause nighttime wetting even after a child has been successful.

INSTEAD OF ...

TRY...

Punishing or shaming your child for wetting the bed or making a big deal out of it

- "Oopsy, you had an accident. Let's change your pajamas and sheets and get back to bed."

WON'T SIT STILL

Young children have a lot of energy. It is normal for a young child to have a hard time sitting in one spot for more than a few minutes. Allowing children to move helps them feel good.

INSTEAD OF SAYING...

TRY...

"Sit still!"

"If you get out of that chair, you will be punished."

- "Come here and sit by Mommy"
- "Let's [read] this [book]!" or "Let's play [I Spy or any other game]."

WON'T GO TO BED

A consistent early bedtime routine every day and a safe sleeping space are keys to a happy bedtime and minimize tantrums and meltdowns.

INSTEAD OF SAYING...

TRY...

"Go to bed right now!"

"If you get out of bed, you will be punished."

- "I'm happy to help you get in bed. Let's read a book."
- Setting up a routine of reading a book before sleep. Reading out loud to a child can help them relax.

WON'T STAY IN BED

A young child needs help to feel safe and secure. Sometimes your child may still want to be near you after bedtime. When they come to you, they are expressing a need.

INSTEAD OF ...

TRY...

Scolding your child or locking child in room

- Helping your child feel comfortable in the bedroom by turning on a night light, remaining in the room for a short time to offer comfort, reading a story, or rubbing their forehead or feet.

BEING AGGRESSIVE

Toddlers commonly bite, hit and grab things from others. Praise good behavior.

INSTEAD OF SAYING ...

TRY ...

"You are so mean, don't hit!"

"You are a bad boy/girl!"

- "When you [hit, bite] your [brother], it hurts him and he feels sad." Saying, "It's OK to be angry, but I won't let you hit. We need to keep everyone safe." OR
- "You had something important you wanted to say."
- "Let's find something else to play with."
- "It's your [sister]'s turn with the [train]. Or, "I will help you wait until it's your turn."

Dear Parents,

Did you know that –



- Spanking **shrinks brains.**

Harvard Medical School found that kids who are spanked just once a month had **14-19% smaller brains in the decision-making area.**¹ These were children who remembered being spanked at least 12 times a year and once with a belt, paddle or brush, but were not injured or spanked in anger.

- 1,574 studies found that **spanking is harmful.**

- Even ‘everyday spanking’ is **consistently associated with:**

- **More** aggression
- **More** negative relationships with parents
- **Lower** cognitive ability
- **Substance** abuse
- **More** fighting
- **Weaker** moral values
- **Delinquent** behavior
- **More** mental health problems
- **Lower** self-esteem
- **More** antisocial behavior
- **Lower** self-control²

- Spanking **lowers IQ.**

The University of New Hampshire found that American children who are spanked at ages 2-4 have **5 less IQ points** than non-spanked children, even years later. Children spanked at ages 5-9 have **2.8 less IQ points.**³

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Does this mean that everyone who was spanked as a child has problems?** No, it means that spanking doesn’t help children learn what we want them to learn. Every time we spank a child, we raise the risk that the child will develop problems.
- **Why is this so?** Spanking focuses on the behavior and misses the underlying need. It might stop a child from doing something in the moment, but the child hasn’t learned how to do things differently. And it can lead to built-up resentment and hostility, and prevent some children from telling about sexual abuse for fear of further punishment.
- **But I was spanked and turned out okay?** Today, we have a tremendous amount of knowledge about how children learn and develop. We know other ways of teaching children that don’t have these risks and harms.

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Endorsed by:



1. Tomoda, A., Suzuki, H., Rabi, K., Sheu, Y., Polcari, A., & Teicher, M.H. (2010). Reduced prefrontal cortical gray matter in young adults exposed to harsh corporal punishment. *Neuroimage*, 47(Suppl. 2), T66–T71.

2. Gershoff, E. T., & Grogan-Kaylor, A. (2016). Spanking and child outcomes: Old controversies and new meta-analyses. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(4), 453–469. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/fam0000191>

3. Straus, M. & Paschall, M.J. Corporal punishment by mothers and development of children’s cognitive ability: A longitudinal study of two nationally representative age cohorts. (2009). *Journal of Aggression Maltreatment & Trauma*, 18(5): 459. doi:10.1080/10926770903035168

