



Early Learning Digest

Research-based early childhood development information provided by Lifetrack

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Am I Spoiling My Baby?

Many parents worry they may be spoiling their baby if they respond quickly every time their baby cries. They feel a strong urge to make things better immediately when their baby signals that he is upset. But at the same time, they think that by responding to every cry they might be making their baby overly dependent and clingy, or be teaching their baby to expect always to get what he wants.

Babies who have been responded to quickly and consistently, especially during the first six to eight months of life, actually cry less than babies who have been left to cry. And as toddlers, the babies whose cries were responded to promptly and consistently are more independent than the children whose cries were not responded to.

One of the most important things for a baby to learn is that others will respond in a caring and predictable way. This allows the baby to develop a strong trust in others and in self, a basic sense of security, that the world is a good, safe place to be and that he can play an active role in this world.



Use a variety of ways when responding to your baby. Sometimes if you respond when he first begins to fuss, just the sound of your voice will be enough to help him settle down. Other times, holding your hand firmly but gently on his back or tummy will be calming. Wrapping very young babies snugly in a blanket may help them feel more calm and organized.

Your baby's cry also may be a way of asking for you to respond by changing a diaper, feeding, or moving him into a different position. Remember, your baby's cry is a way of asking for something. It is one of the major ways he has of communicating with you.

Source: "Am I Spoiling My Baby?" by Martha Erickson, PhD, Center for Early Education and Development, University of Minnesota, 2009.

That's a Lie!

At times it may seem as though your preschooler is lying. Children love to exaggerate and make up tall tales. Children between ages 2 and 5 begin to exercise their imagination, engaging in role-playing or making up stories about people in their lives. When challenged in a playful way, preschoolers will show that they know the real situation and are having fun with embellishing it.

So how can parents teach truthfulness without curbing creativity?

Be a good listener. No matter how outlandish her stories are, be receptive so that your child is comfortable communicating with you. For example, if she says she saw a dragon say "Wow! Tell me more."

Look for the truth. Children sometimes make up stories to deal with something that's bothering them. For instance, a child may say, "The teacher pushed Johnny," when she may have only put an unruly child in timeout. Ask questions to get clues about what really happened.

Set a good example. Kids often learn by watching their parents in action. If you've told "little white lies" in front of your child, she will learn that lying is okay when it's convenient.

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If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.

That's a Lie!

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Most important, show your interest in what she has to say, not only to nurture her creativity but also to help build her self-esteem. Eventually, your child will be better able to distinguish fact from fiction.

Source: "Ask Dr. Sears: Preschoolers and Lying," William Sears, MD, <http://www.workingmother.com/2006/10/home/ask-dr-sears-preschoolers-and-lying>.

Test your knowledge on spoiling your baby...

1. T F Babies who have been responded to quickly and consistently, especially during the first six to eight months of life, actually cry more than babies who have been left to cry.
2. T F One of the most important things for a baby to learn is that others will respond to him in a caring and predictable way.
3. T F A baby's cry is a way of asking for something. It is one of the major ways your baby has of communicating with you.

Answers: 1) F, 2) T, 3) T

I've Got to Go Potty!



Potty training is a milestone that is on the wish list of every parent who has purchased, changed or disposed of diapers. So how do you know when your child is ready to be introduced to the potty?

Most children start to show an interest between the ages of 18 months and 24 months. Other signs that your child is ready include a desire to use the potty, the ability to help dress and undress himself, the ability to follow simple instructions, and a desire to wear "big kid" underwear. When your child (and you!) are ready to begin the process, you will want to do following:

Decide what words to use to describe body parts, urine, and bowel movements. It is best to use proper

terms that will not offend, confuse, or embarrass anyone.

Pick a potty chair. These are easier to use for a small child because there is no problem getting onto it. If you use a child-size seat attached to an adult toilet, be sure to provide a step-stool to support the feet so your child can push down during bowel movements.

Help your child recognize signs of needing to use the potty. If he lets you know after the fact, suggest that next time he let you know before wetting.

Make trips to the potty routine. If you notice signs, take your child to the potty. Explain what you want to happen.

Encourage the use of training pants to help your child feel proud. Be prepared for accidents. It may take weeks, even months, before toilet training is completed. The most important way to keep him interested in being diaper-free is to provide lots of encouragement and positive reinforcement for even small steps in the right direction. Avoid criticizing or scolding when accidents occur. Praise your child's efforts with hugs, kisses, stickers, and encouraging words.

Source: "It's Potty Time!" www.healthychildren.org, 2013.

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