

Positive Parenting for Healthy Child Development

By Lisa Lenhart, Ph.D., and
L. Alex Mirabelli, Psy.D.



A child's developmental outcome is a combination of the genes she was born with and environmental influences (i.e., home, school, peers), and parents have one of the largest roles in shaping the environment their child grows up in. Therefore, it is vitally important that parents consider the experiences their children have in order to foster healthy and happy growth and development. One of the most crucial components in creating a positive growth environment is time spent with children in positive

activities. Parents may underestimate the value of playing with their children, of reading books together or participating in community activities/events (visiting parks, museums, attending plays, etc.), but it is through these experiences that children develop strong bonds with their parents, which gives children the strength to withstand stress and pressure. A healthy parent-child relationship and bond actually promote healthy brain development, and thus underlies the child's positive cognitive, emotional and physical growth.

What are some of the ways parents can support their children's healthy development?

Listen to your child: When parents see their child upset or struggling with something, often the first response is to help her fix it by offering advice, suggestions or opinions about the situation. It is important to recognize that sometimes children are not looking to their parents for advice; rather, they are looking for a way to understand their experience. By allowing children to talk about issues that are important to them, parents encourage

them to help develop their own solutions to problems they face. Often, an effective way to accomplish this is by reflectively listening to the child and using open-ended statements. For example, saying, "Tell me about your morning," instead of asking, "Did you have fun this morning?" invites your child to bring up what she feels is significant. Responding by reflecting the child's feelings, rather than offering advice or interpretations, can help her feel heard and accepted and lets her know that you are available to listen.

The price is right when you get what you really want

Since 1935
Glogau
Photographers

Families & Children
1st Year Baby Specials

In our Bethesda Studio
or on location

301-652-9577

www.glogau.com



Your One Stop
Family
Recreation
Shop!



PLAY N' LEARN
The Playground Superstores
THE BETHESDA & CEDAR HAVEN LEADER
Quality Play Since 1986

Darnestown 301-987-2600
✓ Columbia 410-992-0992
Severna Park 410-544-5222
✓ Chantilly 703-502-1864
Mt. Airy 301-829-4228
Manassas 703-396-7299
✓ Indoor showroom

VA, MD & DC's Play Equipment Headquarters
1-800-22 SWING
playgroundsuperstores.com/family

ANGLO DUTCH POOLS & TOYS

For All Your Quality Toys and Swim Needs

WESTWOOD CENTER

5460 Westbard Ave., Bethesda, MD

301-951-0636

www.anglodutchpoolsandtoys.com

HOURS:

Mon. - Fri. 10 - 7, Sat. 10 - 6

Sun. 11-5 May thru July

Free Gift
Wrapping with
most items



small change

1/2 price
summer sale
starts tuesday,
june 1st

we'll be closed
july 1-july 9

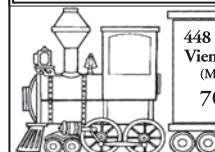


tues-sat 10-5

703-437-7730 • lake anne, reston
www.smallchangeconsignments.com

consignments
and new toys
for infants
thru teens
and
mothers-to-be
since 1981

Paddington Station
Children's Consignment Boutique



448 Maple Avenue East
Vienna, Virginia 22180
(Maple Ave. & East St.)
703-938-0378

Toys • Children's Clothing
Maternity • Nursery Furniture

**Behind BB&T Bank
at East & Maple Ave.**

www.paddingtonstationva.com
All major credit cards accepted

TIMETABLE

MONDAY- SATURDAY 9:30-5:00
SALE STARTS JUNE 15th!

Encourage communication:

Through language, children are creating and understanding their own experiences, forming their own opinions and developing their critical-thinking skills. Parents can help facilitate this by encouraging their children to share their stories and experiences daily. Engaging children in a mutual discussion about the events of the day, for example, allows them to tell their parents about their day and reflect upon their own experiences. Parents can help younger children do this by offering narrative observations. For example, reviewing that, "This afternoon, we went to the park and had fun playing on the swings. You were swinging so high. At first it was a little scary, but then you asked me to push you even higher," can help a younger child reflect on her own experiences and how she feels about them.

Spend time with your child:

Parents spending time with their children each day is an important building block of positive parent-child relationships and the development of children's self-esteem. Parent-child activities, which are chosen by the child and enjoyed by both, can be an important vehicle for developing trust. Even spending 10 minutes each night playing a game, making a snack, drawing or playing imaginatively with toys can be beneficial. By spending daily time engaging in such activities with their child, parents are supporting her overall development. It is important to remember that this time should be spent doing something fun together, rather than completing

homework, watching television or other activities which are not interactive or interesting/fun for the child. Play helps develop problem-solving skills, language, self-esteem and social skills, such as sharing and taking turns. Play also provides children with an opportunity to create a space in which they can master elements of the world they find themselves in, which can decrease anxieties and increase a sense of competence.

Provide structure: Parents also provide the first sense of a structured and predictable world through the routines that are established around family life, such as mealtime, bedtime and household chore time. Even a simple routine (bathe, brush teeth, read story, go to bed) is important in instilling a sense of order to the day. This is key for children to develop an organized internal sense of structure that they carry to the academic environment, as well as a sense of safety and predictability in the world.

Be objective: Sometimes parents feel they are helping their child by focusing on the positive and choosing to overlook the less positive, or they focus on their own expectations or desires for their child, rather than the child's true capacities or interests. If your child is truly having difficulty and/or is not developing in what is considered a typical manner, minimizing the concerns can actually make things worse for her in the long run. It is important for parents to recognize when there is a problem or when development is not occurring in an appropriate

CONTINUED ON PAGE 84

Positive Parenting for Healthy Child Development

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 79

fashion so that the concerns can be addressed and development can get back on track. Listening to your child's interests and observing her strengths and weaknesses more objectively can help parents direct their children to engage in activities that they are better suited for, which will enhance their self-esteem.

Be a role model: Parents cannot expect their children to act differently than they themselves act. The old adage, "Do as I say, not as I do" does not work with children, as they are much more likely to do what their parents are doing. It is important to remember that children look up to their parents and strive to be like them, and they are likely to pick up all habits—even bad ones—that they see their parents do in the effort to emulate them.

Parenting is one of the most difficult jobs there is, and with no training or preparation. We have discussed some of the many significant ways in which parents can support their children's healthy development. Recognizing when outside help or advice is necessary can provide parents with additional strategies and ideas to guide the way to positive parenting and create an environment that can promote healthy and happy children!

Lisa Lenhart and Alex Mirabelli are psychologists for The Testing and Tutoring Service of TLC—The Treatment and Learning Centers (ttlc.org), a local, nonprofit organization in Rockville that offers multiple services for children and adults with learning disabilities and celebrates its 60th anniversary of serving the community in 2010.

Savvy Study Skills Help Kids Make the Grade

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 81


Study with a friend: You can compare study guides, or create a better one together and test each other. A parent can test you as well.

Essay Tests: Ask your teacher to give some examples of questions that will be on the test. Then, take the time to write at least parts of sample essays, including specific examples to back up your ideas. Make sure you have a clear understanding of the course material so that you will be prepared to answer a variety of questions.

Ask Questions: Ask your teacher any questions you have about the final. Knowing what to expect and being psychologically prepared is half the battle.

Effective study skills can play a substantial part in improving grades. Take the time to study more productively. Create the right setting, manage your time efficiently and practice active studying. When you finally feel ready for a test, give yourself a break.

Cheryl Feuer Gedzelman is the president of Tutoring For Success, a family-owned company that offers professional home-based tutoring in the Washington, D.C., metro area. See tutoringforsuccess.com for more articles on education.



**Improved
Working
Memory.
Improved
Attention.**

Now with 12 months extension training

**Cogmed Working
Memory Training™**

**Five week, home-based
computer training
with a Personal Coach.**

Improved focus and learning

Measurable and lasting results

Evidence-based and clinically proven



COGMED

Working Memory Training

**For a list of Cogmed Qualified Practices,
visit cogmed.com or call 1-800-505-3312.**