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a newsletter for people who care about self-esteem  
Volume 13, Number 2 - Issue 74 - March-April, 1993

## PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

Dear Readers,

Stop that! Right now! "As children go about their developmental tasks, they sometimes do things that can be misinterpreted by parents, who then may be overly severe or hurtful in their attempts to stop or control these behaviors or who may worry about spoiling an infant. When parents keep their children from doing what is developmentally correct and normal, children are hurt physically or emotionally." *Dr. Christine Tarnand*



The books **Help! For Parents of Children from Birth to Five** and **Help! For Parents of School-Age Children and Teenagers**, HarperSanFrancisco, 1993, by Jean Illsley Clarke, et al., contain specific suggestions, or Suggestion Circles, for dealing with hundreds of common problems that parents face.

In addition, short sections address problems in a general way. Dr. Christine Tarnand wrote the sections on safety and abuse.

In this issue of WE her six sections on **Common Pitfalls** that may lead to abuse, **Keeping Children Safe**, and **Signs of Abuse & Neglect** have been collected with Suggestion Circle examples for each of the six developmental stages.

Current research suggests that abuse is the cause of 30% of the deaths of children under age six. I hope that having this material gathered in one place will help you as you think about abuse and will help you use the books in workshops, seminars, or dialogues with individuals. Directions for leading your own Suggestion Circles are included.

Let us all speak out about abuse and help people find healthy habits to replace abusive ones.

Sincerely, *Jean Illsley Clarke*







## BABY: Help! For Parents of Infants from Birth to Six Months Common Pitfalls

The following behaviors or characteristics of children at this age are frequently misunderstood and so become pitfalls for parents:

- *Extended periods of crying.* An infant cries to let you know she has a need. A baby should be learning to trust those who are important to her. She needs *unconditional love* and *caretaking*. Her needs may seem exhausting or even overwhelming to a caring adult. (The caring adults must realize that adults require adequate support in order to meet the infant's needs, because tired adults may act and speak abusively despite their best intentions.)
- *Being wakeful at night.* Infants frequently take three to six weeks to establish a normal light/dark sleep cycle. (The womb was always dark.) They are not deliberately trying to keep the adult exhausted by being active at night. They may need guidance to help synchronize their sleeping and waking periods to match those of the rest of the family.
- *Grabbing and biting.* Babies have strong reflexes for sucking and grasping, and they may inadvertently cause parents physical pain by pulling hair, grabbing skin, or biting. Parents may misinterpret these reflexes as willful attempts to hurt, and they may respond harshly or hurt the child back. Parents need to remember that only nurturing touch should be used with the baby.
- *Being real, not ideal.* The difference between the ideal baby (or the "Gerber baby") and the baby the parents bring home is often difficult for parents to accept. They may mistakenly try to fit their baby into the "Gerber image" instead of accepting the child as she is. At this age, the child should be learning and simply being herself. Well-meaning parents may inappropriately try to get their child to "do things" (such as raise her head, smile, look at flash cards, and so on) before the time when she would do them naturally. Parents should celebrate the new life and be with the child, not push the infant to perform.
- *Being male or female.* Since the child needs to experience unconditional acceptance, the sex of the child must be accepted and affirmed. If you wished for a child of the other sex, grieve that loss as much as you need to and then accept this child as fast as you can. Enjoy boys for being boys and girls for being girls, and encourage other adults to do the same.

Christine Ternand, M.D.

This issue excerpted from **Help! For Parents**, originally published in six volumes, copyright © 1986 by Jean Illsley Clarke, et al.

## PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

### Opening Activity

For thinking about child abuse

- Hand out name tags.
- Choose a partner. Make a name tag for her and ask her to tell you who she thinks is responsible for child abuse and why.
- Introduce your partner and tell the group her thoughts if she is willing for you to share that information.

### Closing Activity

For a workshop about child abuse

- At the end of the meeting, briefly review the activities of the meeting.
- Ask several people to share what they will personally do within the next month to help prevent child abuse.
  - Ask for Resentments. Listen to resentments, do not defend or explain.
  - Ask for Appreciations.

Edited by Jean Illsley Clarke  
Designed by Kreatz Art/Advertising  
**WE**

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or in support groups.

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## To lead a Suggestion Circle:

1. The person with the problem states the problem in one sentence.

2. Someone writes the suggestions for him or her.

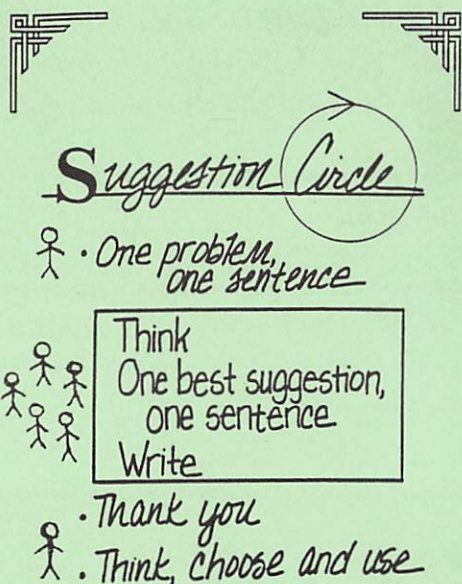
3. Each person thinks of one best suggestion. This means no put downs and no violence.

4. Anyone has the right to pass.

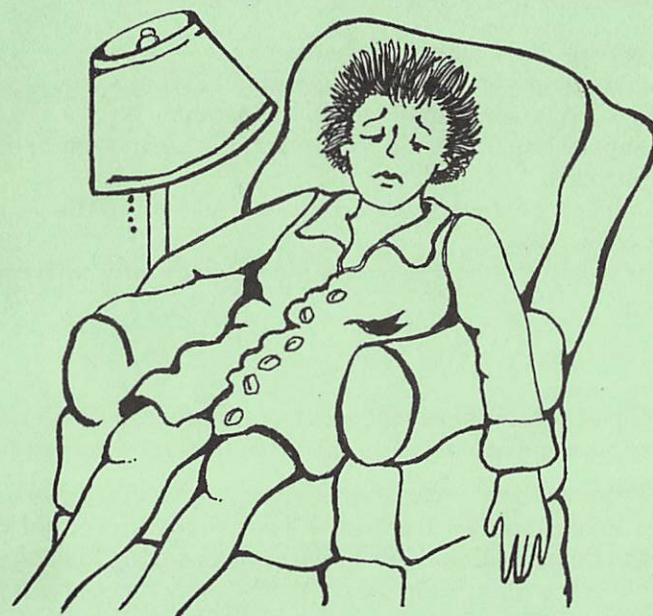
5. The person who has a suggestion starts the circle. Go quickly around the circle; each person either offers a one-sentence suggestion or passes. No one comments on a suggestion.

6. The person with the problem listens to each suggestion and does not say anything except "thank you." Do not say, "That was a good answer," or "I've tried that."

7. The person takes the suggestions home and thinks about them and uses them in the way that fits for him or her.



Permission to copy.



**58. I get so tired of all this; sometimes I want to walk out the door and quit.** (Choose the options that fit for your family.)

- Don't.
- Go out on the back step and scream. Then go back in the house and think about how to get some help.
- Phone a friend or ask a neighbor over for a cup of coffee and a visit.
- Quit for an afternoon by having someone in to care for the baby while you get out for a break.
- Care for your spiritual life.
- Babies are big commitments. Adjusting to family life involves lots of growing up. Hooray for you for doing it!
- It's common today to say, "Take this job and shove it." With babies, you may want to, but don't do it.



Thanks to Deane Gradous,  
Suggestion Circle from Minnetonka, Minnesota





## Keeping Babies Safe

We keep babies safe and physically protected when we

- Refuse to leave a child alone in a house or car.
- Always use car seats when traveling with a child in a car.
- Use safe toys, cribs, and other infant equipment.
- Carefully supervise a baby on a changing table, in an infant seat, and in a shopping cart.
- Set firm limits on a baby-sitter's activities, and remind the sitter that the infant comes first.
- Allow other young children to be around the baby only with constant supervision.

We ensure physical and emotional security when we meet our infants' needs with respect and caring. Infants learn to trust when we provide the following:

- Adequate food but not overfeeding. If you are bottle-feeding a child, the child should be held and given eye contact during feedings; he should not be left with a propped bottle. The baby should be in charge of when and how much to eat unless a physician guides otherwise. (It's OK to "waste" an ounce here or there.)
- Touch, including frequent skin-to-skin, not just skin-to-clothing, contact. Touch that hurts, such as pinching a baby's cheeks, is not appropriate. Touch that surprises, such as tickling or "raspberries," sometimes delights babies and sometimes overwhelms them. Let the baby be in charge.
- Warm clothing. Dressing the child as warmly or as lightly as you dress yourself is a convenient rule of thumb unless the infant gives clear signals that her thermostat is different from yours.
- Prompt attention to distress. Children should never cry for more than fifteen minutes without an adult reassuring them.
- Dry diapers. Some children are more tolerant than others of wet or dirty diapers. This may depend on what type of diaper is used. It is important that all children have this area of their bodies cleaned in *matter-of-fact and nonsexual ways* so that they learn about the acceptability of their genitalia. Touching a child in a sexually stimulating way is always wrong.

*If you suspect abuse of any kind, find a way to protect your child. Get help if you need it. Report the abuser to the child protection service in your area.*

- Significant changes in school performance, attitudes, relationships, or truancy.
  - Signs of depression, such as subtle changes in response, drop in energy level, increased secretiveness or more time spent alone, increased difficulty in functioning.
  - Suicide gestures, such as notes saying, "I want to die," or attempts to overdose.
  - Any form of self-mutilation, including satanic symbols on the skin.
- If you suspect abuse of any kind, find a way to protect the child. Get help if you need it. Report the abuser to the child protection service in your area.*

*Christine Ternand, M.D.*







## SCHOOL-AGE & TEENAGE:

### Signs of Abuse & Neglect

Child abuse and neglect are prevalent - perhaps epidemic - in our society today. We editors feel strongly that all children will be better protected when parents know the signs of child abuse.

Signs of abuse can vary with the age of the child. Listed here are signs that should arouse a parent's suspicions. If you find yourself worried or concerned about an abusive relationship between your child and another adult or older child, check it out.

Physical and behavioral signs that may indicate neglect or abuse include:

- Any unusual marks, particularly around the upper thighs, genitalia, or anus.
- A sudden reluctance to wear shorts or bathing suits, which may mean revealing unusual marks around upper thighs.
- Straight-line bruises that may come from a ruler or belt.
- Hickey marks (purplish marks caused by sucking) on the neck.
- Any statement by the child that he has been inappropriately touched.
- Questioning by the child about how adults touch children, especially if the child will not state why he is asking the question.
- Behavioral problems, such as drug abuse, soiling, stealing, starting fires, or eating disorders.



**9. When my child cries, I want to shake her. My physician says this can cause brain damage. What can I do with my anger that won't hurt anyone?** (Choose the options that fit for your family.)

- Get relief immediately for yourself. Put your baby down and stomp on the floor in another room, or shake a pillow instead.
- Let someone else take over for awhile.
- Call Parents Anonymous in your area.
- Set your baby down in a crib or safe place, and call a neighbor or friend for help.
- Yell (some place away from the baby).
- Do some deep breathing and center yourself.
- Cry.
- Count to ten.
- Turn energy into action: shoot baskets, clean the house, go for a walk, pull weeds.
- Get support from your friends.
- Get more rest.
- Get some counseling to find out the root causes of your impatience.



*Thanks to Ellen Peterson,  
Suggestion Circle from Lafayette, California*







## TODDLER: Help! For Parents of Toddlers Six to Eighteen Months

### Common Pitfalls

The following behaviors of children this age are frequently misunderstood and so become pitfalls for parents:

- *The toddler should be learning to explore and to trust his or her environment.* Adults who misinterpret this activity as "getting into my things" or "deliberately breaking things" or "messing up the place" may become inappropriately angry or even violent. Parents of toddlers can learn to cope by saying "Messy is beautiful" when their children are at this stage. Also, the environment should be changed when children are this age. Anything the parents value highly should be stored away from the baby's areas for these few months. It is developmentally inappropriate to teach "don't touch" this early.
- *Children at this age are active and curious,* and supervising them is physically tiring to an adult. Tired adults are more likely to act and speak abusively in spite of their best intentions. Parents can cope by getting enough sleep and rest.



- *Children this age are beginning to want some time and space away from others* to develop their separateness. Caring adults sometimes respond by feeling rejected and then may reject the child emotionally. Parents can remember to refrain from interrupting the child whenever possible.
- *As the child starts to become mobile,* it is possible to think of him as someone who will fulfill the parent's dreams. Asking the child, through words or actions, to live out a parent's dream hampers the child's development of his sense of self.

Christine Ternand, M.D.

- Be honest about risks. AIDS is a fatal disease. It is not just a "gay" disease.
- Be well informed. You can call 1-800-342-AIDS and ask for guidelines about how to talk about AIDS. Keep the communication line with your children open.
- Ask your teens what they know about STDs, HIV/AIDS, and protection. Reinforce their appropriate knowledge, and tell them the parts they don't know.
- Emphasize that you can't get a "little," HIV. Either you have it or you don't.
- If your teen has sex, using a condom and spermicide is *absolutely* necessary, and it is still not completely safe.
- Be sure your teen knows that heterosexual adolescents are a population that has an increasingly high rate of becoming HIV positive, so the risks are going up.
- We know there isn't safe sex. I believe there is sacred sex.
- Say to them, "The only 'safe sex' is with one uninfected partner. If you have sex otherwise, a condom and spermicide are a hell of a lot better than nothing."

Thanks to Sara Monser,  
Suggestion Circle from Lafayette, California



**164. How do I help my son keep his values in the face of the messages in violent movies and in many kinds of music that promote promiscuity and devalue people?**

(Choose the options that fit for your family.)

- Model respect and nonviolence consistently.
- Watch for occasions when you can honestly affirm his good judgment and discrimination.
- Have family discussions about the messages the media send viewers. Listen a lot. Don't preach. Ask how his friends react to these messages.
- Listen to the music with him, and ask him to explain the lyrics and what they mean to him. Say what they mean to you.
- Make sure you are giving your child values he can live by. Without strong values from parents, children will absorb values elsewhere.
- Become a volunteer for Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) or Women Against Military Madness (WAMM), and enlist his support when you need help.
- Write letters of protest to theaters and radio or TV stations, and ask who else in the family wants to sign them.
- Go to a violent movie with him. Discuss his reactions and yours.
- Do not allow violent music to be played in your house.



Thanks to Sara Monser,  
Suggestion Circle from Lafayette, California





## Keeping Teenagers Safe

It is easy to believe that teens are "old enough to take care of themselves," but parents are still responsible for their teen's safety. To protect teens parents do the following:

- Attend to all of the safety issues from the earlier stage (see "Keeping School-Age Children Safe"), and overcome any reluctance to offer direct information about AIDS and pregnancy.
- Remember that teens need some clear rules - for example, about curfews and car privileges - and that they need to have these rules enforced.
- Make certain teens are capable of staying alone before leaving them alone. Pay special attention to their ability to follow social and safety rules.
- Give them permission to say no to peer pressure.
- Give them permission to call home *anytime* they need help or to take a taxi if it's needed for their safety.
- Teach safe driving skills in a positive, respectful way. Monitor their driving until they have developed skillful, careful driving habits.
- Become aware of the extent of alcohol abuse and drug abuse in the teen's environment, and take action to help them protect themselves from that abuse.
- Continue to be a reliable source of information about people and the world. Explain about sexual maturity, safety, and responsibility to teenagers caringly, lovingly, and knowledgeably, or get a specially trained adult to do it. Information from other sources, such as peers or washroom walls, is often inaccurate or incomplete. In addition, parents supply teens with accurate printed information about these topics.
- Help teens establish a sense of personal responsibility, but do not exploit them by expecting them to take major responsibility for the household or for child care, both of which are functions of the parents. Do not allow sports coaches or teachers to exploit them either.

*Christine Ternand, M.D.*



**116. How can I help my daughter and my son to know how urgent it is for people to use condoms as protection against STDs (sexually transmitted diseases) and HIV/AIDS (human immune deficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome) and also that this protection is not complete?** (Choose the options that fit for your family.)



**129. What can I do instead of hitting the baby when I'm exhausted?** (Choose the options that fit for your family.)

- Get a sitter, get away, and give yourself a rest.
- Put the child in a safe place, go into the bathroom, close the door, and scream.
- Call a friend.
- Figure out some ways not to get so tired.
- Take a deep breath and count to ten.
- Hit a pillow.
- Read an old favorite letter or reread a list you had written earlier of ways in which you are a good parent.
- Get your feelings out so the child can see you are angry, but don't threaten, scare, or hit or shake him.
- Go out and walk around the house (if the baby is in a safe place).
- Move away from your child and start whispering instead of yelling.
- Put the child in his crib for four or five minutes so you can have time out for yourself.
- This is the time to use the playpen.
- Put some calm, flowing music on the stereo, and fix yourself a cup of tea.
- Learn and practice some meditation or relaxation exercises.



*Thanks to Carole Gesme,  
Suggestion Circle from Minnetonka, Minnesota*



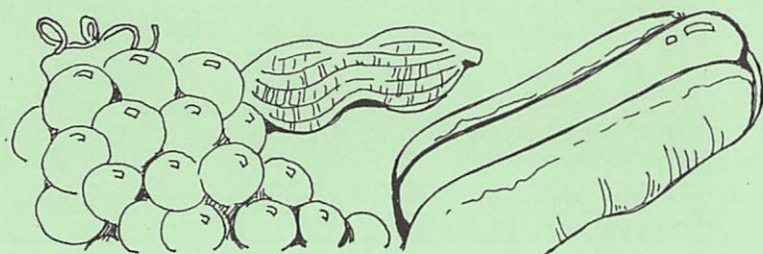




## Keeping Toddlers Safe

Explorers need especially careful supervision for safety. Parents who do not abuse or neglect their children keep them safe by doing the following:

- Childproofing their homes. One effective way to evaluate the safety in every room the child can enter is to lie on your stomach and see the exciting environment from the child's point of view. Remove or secure all dangerous attractions, especially cords and outlets, household chemicals, soaps, and medications.
- Carefully adding solids to their diets. New foods should be added slowly so that unusual reactions can be more easily noted. Food should be cut into very small pieces to prevent choking. Grapes and hot dogs are two of the most frequent causes of choking in children of this age.



- Refusing to allow children this age to eat nuts. If choked on, nuts can cause serious lung damage.
- Refraining from using walkers. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that walkers not be used because of the high number of accidents they cause.
- Carefully supervising play with older children, who sometimes hit or bite a younger sibling who is exploring their favorite possessions.
- Removing fragile, breakable objects from the explorer's environment for these few months.
- Refusing to leave a child alone in a house or car.
- Carefully supervising a child in a shopping cart.
- Always using a car seat when traveling with a child in a car.
- Using caring, nonsexual touch when changing the active child's diapers. Children learn about the acceptability of their genitalia by having the genitalia cleaned in a gentle, nonstimulating way. Touching a child in a sexually stimulating way is always wrong.

- Make an absolute rule about no drinking and driving.
- Listen to her feelings about drinking, and stay firm on your rule that drinking is not permitted until she is of legal age.
- Say "If you drink, I will take away your privileges." Let her know you'll provide a ride home if for any reason she will be unsafe in a car.
- Have her call you or a sober friend for a ride if anyone is drinking and driving.
- Say, "Drinking is illegal for underage children. You may not drink alcoholic beverages."
- Each of you sign a contract stating that neither of you will drink if you must drive.
- Think about what rules you feel are appropriate for a child in your family; then state them clearly to her and enforce them.
- Read *Steering Clear: Helping Your Child Through the High-Risk Drug Years*, by Cretcher.
- "If you drink, don't drive."
- "If you drink when you have the car, you are grounded for three months."



Thanks to Sara Monser,  
Suggestion Circle from Lafayette, California







## ADOLESCENCE: Help! For Parents of Teenagers

### Common Pitfalls

The following behaviors of young people this age are frequently misunderstood and so become pitfalls for parents:

- Teens are beginning to experiment with ways of *expressing their budding sexuality*. They have many sexual behaviors and attitudes to explore and decisions to make before they are ready for sexual intercourse. It is neglectful for adults not to set guidelines for appropriate adolescent behavior. Unfortunately, many media in our society are reinforcing the fantasy that these children are highly desirable sexual objects. In spite of physical signs of sexual maturity, teens still need the protection of caring adults. It is always sexual abuse when someone misuses a *trust* relationship and gives suggestive kisses or touches a child sexually in any way. The adult is responsible: an adolescent is *never* responsible for the seduction. If there is a difference of more than three years of age between participants, and one participant is a minor, sexual touching is considered rape by law in many states.
- One of the most important tasks of the teenager is to *separate* from the family and become an independent adult. Many times, teens will escalate negative behaviors as part of this separating task. Caring adults who don't understand this need for separation may become verbally or physically abusive or may back off, instead of calmly continuing to set and enforce the important limits.
- As part of the maturing process, teens rework and *upgrade earlier developmental tasks*. The emotional ups and downs that accompany these recycling activities may appear confusing if they are not seen as part of normal development. Some adults may become abusive in response to their feelings of confusion.
- Teenagers are making early decisions about life choices, including future schooling, careers, and life goals. Adults need to support teens in sorting out what they truly seek, rather than expecting the young people to fulfill some of the parents' unmet dreams.

*Christine Ternand, M.D.*



#### 101. What kind of rules should I set for my sixteen-year-old daughter regarding drinking and driving?

(Choose the options that fit for your family.)

- If she does drink at a party, set a rule that she is to call home for a ride.

- Safely, caringly changing diapers. Children this age would prefer to explore than quietly cooperate with diapering. It is important that they be in a safe spot where they can't squirm and harm themselves and that parents use only nurturing and nonviolent touch when changing these squirming, active little ones.
  - Making certain that other adults who care for the child know how to support the child's need to explore. Ask them to think from a child's point of view and to figure out ways to protect the child without hitting the child or using harsh words.
  - Allowing the child to be around water only with constant adult supervision. Toddlers have drowned in toilets or buckets of water while parents answered a "quick phone call."
  - Monitoring outside play with very careful structure for the safety of these active explorers.
- If you suspect abuse of any kind, find a way to protect your child. Get help if you need it. Report the abuser to the child protection service in your area.*

*Christine Ternand, M.D.*



#### 140. Grandma's house is not babyproofed. How can I deal with this?

(Choose the options that fit for your family.)

- Call your mother before you leave for your visit to give her a chance to prepare.
- Pick up valuables and put them in a safe place when you first arrive.
- Ask Grandma to look for safe, interesting objects to put into a special drawer, like plastic spoons and containers, metal lids, and coffee cans.
- Ask Grandma to visit in your home and lovingly explain why.
- Make visits short, and don't plan to stay overnight.
- Explain to her that your son can learn the difference between a crystal ashtray and a margarine tub later, after he has had plenty of chances to explore how things feel and stack.
- Affirm yourself for not wanting to say no all the time!
- Babyproof one room in Grandma's house. Get socket covers and safety locks. Use heavy rubber bands to lock cabinet doors. Bring them with you when you visit.
- Bring a special box of toys with you to keep your child busy.



*Thanks to Backyard Center Parents,  
Suggestion Circle from Yakima, Washington*



## TWO-YEAR-OLD: Help! For Parents of Children Eighteen Months Through Two Years

### Common Pitfalls

The following behaviors of children this age are frequently misunderstood and so become pitfalls for parents:

- *Resisting using the toilet.* Some children this age may be ready for toilet training, and some may not. Some parents may forget that children are in charge of their own bodies and, in an effort to help their children learn toilet habits, may become abusive. Both the child and adult will benefit and have much happier lives if the adult acknowledges that the child is in charge of his own body and should initiate toilet-training activities himself rather than when the parents or the neighbor's children say it is time to start.
- *Becoming separate and saying no.* When adults are fearful for a child's safety or misunderstand his need to resist and become separate, they may respond to normal two-year-old contrariness with anger or even violence. This may teach the child to feel powerless or that big people can be violent. On the other hand, giving in to tantrums teaches the child to get what he wants by bullying. Whenever possible, ignore tantrums.
- *Learning about how they are unique, separate individuals.* When parents are fearful that the child is "too separate" and is not fulfilling their dreams, adults may coerce the child into being what the adults want instead of allowing the child to be who he is; this happens, for example, when parents want a naturally quiet child to be active.

*Christine Ternand, M.D.*



#### 184. My two-year-old has tantrums. What can I do?

(Choose the options that fit for your family.)

- Remember that tantrums are normal for this age.
- Think about whether the child is using tantrums to control or whether she is responding to big stresses in her life. If she's responding to stress, do what you can to relieve it.
- Go on with your activity. Don't reward the behavior. Tell her she can finish her mad behavior.
- Practice acting bored.

should know that they are to report sexual touches or sexual invitations by adults or teenagers to their parents.

- Parents need to overcome their own fears and confusions about possible unplanned pregnancies and AIDS so that they can give their child accurate and perhaps life-saving information.
  - Finally, they reevaluate their own value system and use common, daily opportunities to affirm those values to their child.
- If you suspect abuse of any kind, find a way to protect the child. Get help if you need it. Report the abuser to the child protection service in your area.*

*Christine Ternand, M.D.*



#### 37. My six-year-old daughter is tearful and fearful of a teacher who "taps" kids in class. How can I address this problem at an interview with the teacher?

(Choose the options that fit for your family.)

- Feel confident of your rights as a parent, and don't stop until you are fully satisfied about the physical and psychological safety of your daughter. Talk with the teacher and then the principal, if necessary.
- Affirm yourself for coping with this problem. Also know that other children may be upset.
- Bring up the issue now - don't put it off.
- It is important to talk with your daughter to find out how she feels. Get more information. Make sure she is telling you specifically what the problem is. Give her support.
- Share with the teacher your concern about having to bring up the subject. Treat the teacher with respect but not reverence.
- Check with other parents about the situation.
- Don't fly off the handle with the teacher.
- Role-play the interview with a friend before doing it. First play you, then the teacher.
- Find out if hitting children is permitted in the school in your area. Be clear about your right to protect your child from physical abuse. You may need to check out other schools and their discipline policies.



*Thanks to Eveline Goodall,  
Suggestion Circle from Calgary, Alberta, Canada*





## Keeping School-Age Children Safe

Since children this age are learning about values and rules, parents need to provide clear structure. Parents who keep their children safe and who do not abuse or neglect their children do the following:

- They remember that children need some clear rules (for example, about bedtime on school nights, chores, and so on) and that children need to have those rules enforced in a caring, consistent manner.
- They make certain their children are capable of staying alone before leaving them alone. They pay special attention to the child's ability to follow safety rules, and they start by leaving the child alone for short periods of time during daylight hours.
- They ensure that children use seat belts on all car trips - whether short or long.
- They give children permission to say no to peer pressure.
- They help children establish a sense of personal responsibility by assigning age-appropriate chores and maintaining a structure for them. This structure allows children to learn how to do the chores and then encourages them to assume responsibility for those jobs on an ongoing basis.
- Parents should become aware of the extent of alcohol abuse and drug abuse in their child's environment and take action to protect the child from that abuse. They should refuse to serve their children alcoholic beverages. The chances of alcohol causing liver damage in a child this age are much greater than in an adult.
- They meet the responsible adults of any home where their child spends significant time. They also meet any adults who will be alone with their child for periods of time (such as people for whom their child baby-sits and adults who lead groups for these children).
- They meet their children's friends.
- They establish clear lines of communication with the parents of their children's friends in order to establish consistent rules about safety.
- They maintain open lines of communication with the school system, and they follow up on problems noted.
- They establish themselves as a reliable source of information about people, the world, and sex. They explain about sexual growth to their children caringly, lovingly, and knowledgeably, or they get a specially trained adult to do it. In addition, they supply the children with accurate printed information about these topics. It is important for children this age to receive lots of nurturing touch, but they should *never* be touched sexually by adults. Children

- Make sure that she is in a safe place so she won't hurt herself or damage things. Then ignore the tantrum.
- Don't leave the room. Let her know you won't leave her just because she is mad.
- Tell her that it is OK for her to be mad, that you won't change your mind, and that you will be available when she is finished.
- Compliment yourself on running a family where your two-year-old can have her tantrums at home.
- Give her lots of loving.



*Thanks to Gail Davenport,  
Suggestion Circle from Seattle, Washington*

## Keeping Two-Year-Olds Safe

The methods of protecting children this age are a continuation of "Keeping Toddlers Safe." Because children this age are developing their thinking skills, it is important for parents to *explain why* they are keeping the child safe. Remember to add the "why" when you set limits for your child.

*Christine Ternand, M.D.*



### 187. What can I do instead of yelling and spanking my two-and-a-half-year-old when she is being defiant and I am at the end of my rope? (Choose the options that fit for your family.)

- Put her in her room and say calmly, "When you are ready to cooperate and remember the rule about \_\_\_\_\_, you can come out." Then turn up the radio and sing loudly with it.
- Count to ten backwards, slowly, and think of what you really want your child to learn from this.
- Tell her what you want her to do: "Stop playing and put your toys on the shelf now."
- Go in the bathroom and wash your face. Then come back and deal with the child calmly.
- Have your spouse take the kids off to a park while you call three people you want to say no to.
- Take a break. When I expect too much of my child, it is often because I am expecting too much of myself.
- If it is a safety issue, put your child in a safe place and both of you take a one-minute time-out.
- Make an A-to-Z list for yourself of things to do instead of hitting. There is a list like that on page 145 of *Self-Esteem: A Family Affair*, by Jean Illsley Clarke.
- Watch for times when your child is cooperating, and hug her.



*Thanks to Nat Houtz,  
Suggestion Circle from Alderwood, Washington*





## PRESCHOOLERS: Help! For Parents of Children Three, Four, and Five Years of Age

### Common Pitfalls

The following behaviors of children this age are frequently misunderstood and so become pitfalls for parents:

- Three- to six-year-old children are learning about their *identity* - including their sexual identity. This frequently leads to sexual play, including masturbation, "playing doctor," and so on. If caring adults do not realize that this is completely normal, they may overreact and physically or psychologically abuse children and give them a distorted view of their own sexuality. Parents should choose this time to explain to children that sexual organs will eventually be used to "make babies" and that sexual activity is a private activity, a source of pleasure, and a personal responsibility. It is my belief that by beginning to associate responsibility with sexuality at this stage, we as a society have the greatest hope of preventing teenage pregnancies.
- Also because these children are *learning about sexuality*, they may be practicing the flirtatious or coquettish behaviors they have seen adults model. Parents must be certain that all adults (and all baby-sitters) interacting with children know that sexually touching any child is completely wrong. It is also wrong to blame any child this age for "leading someone on." Adults are always responsible.
- Children this age are learning to *recognize the difference between fantasy and reality*. They often experiment with what is truth and what is a lie. It is important for caring adults to tell children what a lie is and to expect the truth. At the same time, they should not overreact with physical or verbal abuse if children are lying.
- Children are learning about the many *options* life offers through fantasy play. Parents should help children explore many options, not only the ones that coincide with the adult's hopes for the child.
- Because this is the *age of fantasy*, creativity should be encouraged. Many toys that "run themselves" should be replaced with blocks, with trucks and dolls without batteries, or with costumes, hats, and so on.
- Children this age are very busy learning about and *testing their own power*. If parents find themselves in a power struggle, they may inappropriately use verbal or physical abuse to "win." When parents remember that they are truly in charge, they can step out of the power struggle. They will not need to be abusive in order to "win," nor will

- Six- to twelve-year-old children are beginning to develop secondary sexual characteristics. Unfortunately, the media and others in our society often offer the fantasy that these children are highly desirable sexually. *Any sexual touching of children by adults is abuse.*

Christine Ternand, M.D.



### Discipline



#### 10. What is the difference between discipline and punishment? (Choose the options that fit for your family.)

- Discipline says, "Stop. Do something else instead." Punishment says, "You did something wrong, and you are bad!"
- Discipline sets the child up for success next time. Punishment focuses on failure.
- If there is physical hurt, it is punishment.
- Discipline is something that shows consequences but is not as severe as punishment.
- Discipline does not expect more than a child this age can do. Punishment often does.
- Discipline is learning the right and wrong of life. Punishment is the negative side of discipline.
- Discipline addresses the *act* as wrong. Punishment addresses the *person* as wrong.
- Discipline has a good chance of being effective. The results of punishment are unpredictable.
- Discipline comes from thought, and punishment comes from anger.
- Punishment is being disciplined without knowing what's expected of you.
- If the parent feels gleeful or vengeful, it's punishment.



Thanks to Christine Ternand, M.D.  
Suggestion Circle from Saint Paul, Minnesota





## SIX TO TWELVE YEARS: Help! For Parents of School-Age Children Common Pitfalls

The following behaviors of children this age are frequently misunderstood and so become pitfalls for parents:

- School-age children are deciding about their own rules. They question all rules, including those of their parents. Many caring adults misinterpret this as "mouthing off." Parents can be firm on a few important rules and spend time with the kids negotiating others.
- As peers become more important to children, sometimes caring adults may see this as a rejection of the parent. They may then neglect or abandon the child. It is important to remember that children want both parents and friends, even if they don't say so. The adults must be responsible for getting their own companionship needs met and not depend on the child to meet them.
- Children this age show signs of rational, adult-thinking. Adults sometimes seize on this sign of new thinking as an opportunity to push children with a "hurry-and-grow-up-fast" message. It is important to let children be children.
- Children this age need to spend time with their parents. The "quality time" that parents spent with preschoolers is more difficult to schedule during this stage when children's attentions and priorities turn toward their peers. But parents must spend enough time with school-age children for "quality time" to emerge. Sometimes "quality time" is just "hanging out," not being entertained or instructed or programmed. Children need their parents to "be with" them.
- These children need to practice effective ways of getting along with others. Adults who do not expect and demand some level of respectful behavior cheat children of their right to learn positive ways to interact.
- At this age, children are frequently encountering social systems outside the family, such as school, Little League, and so on. When a child has a problem in one of these organizations, the parents may inadvertently be so upset about how the behavior reflects on them that they forget to focus on the child and the problem. They may be confused about what the child is responsible for and what the adults are responsible for. Parents need to support their children and help the children problem solve.

- they need to overindulge in order to placate the child. When parents know that they are in charge, both parents and children win.
- Some children this age still need to *learn toilet habits*. Caring adults may forget that children are in charge of their own bodies, and in an effort to help them learn toilet habits, they may become abusive. Both children and adults will benefit and have much happier lives if the adults acknowledge that children are in charge of their own bodies by allowing them to initiate their own toileting activities, despite the grandparents' or the neighbors' advice.
  - Children this age are *using rational thinking* and show some early signs of adult behavior. Adults sometimes seize on this sign of new thinking as a signal to push children with a "hurry-and-grow-up-fast-to-take-care-of-me" message. It is important to let children be children.

Christine Ternand, M.D.



### 288. How can we get our child to mind without hitting him? He is stubborn. (Choose the options that fit for your family.)

- Stop hitting him; tell him you are stopping and that he will be minding words and looks from now on.
- When you tell him to do something, look him directly in the eye and say, "I expect..." Have clear, definite expectations!
- Try giving your child more specific information about what you want him to do.
- Allow him to do things his own way whenever possible.
- Honor his no when it is appropriate.
- Do not give a choice when there is no choice. When there is a choice say, "Do you want to...?" And honor his no if he says no.
- Explain reason and expectation and consequence.
- Define your family as a team, and tell him about his part in it.
- Teach him about times when it is important to be "stubborn" or tenacious.
- Look in his eyes at a quiet time and say, "I love you. I want to spend time having fun together. I'm not going to hit anymore."



Thanks to Mary Paananen,  
Suggestion Circle from Seattle, Washington





## Keeping Preschoolers Safe

Children this age need careful structure for safety. Parents who do not abuse or neglect their children keep them safe by:

- Refusing to leave a child alone in the house or car.
- Always using car seats or safety belts when traveling with a child in the car.
- Carefully supervising a child in a shopping cart.
- Continuing to cut food into small pieces.
- Setting clear and firm limits for baby-sitters by discussing do's and don'ts and then leaving a list for them.
- Monitoring outside play and water safety.
- Making certain that other adults understand what the children need.
- Teaching children what good or bad touch is and then listening carefully if children report anything that would suggest abusive behavior from other adults.
- Teaching children accurate terms for all body parts, including penis, testicles, vagina, vulva, and breasts.
- Teaching children ways to resolve conflict without verbal or physical attacks.
- Teaching children their full name, phone number, and address.
- Teaching children how and when to use 911.
- Teaching children safety skills, like saying no and respecting their own and other's bodies.

*If you suspect abuse of any kind, find a way to protect the child. Get help if you need it. Report the abuser to the child protection service in your area.*

*Christine Ternand, M.D.*



### 275. My five-year-old colors on the walls. She does it secretly while I am caring for the baby. What can I do?

(Choose the options that fit for your family.)

- The coloring may be her way of acting out about something else. Ask her to talk about her feelings about the new baby. Accept her feelings and suggest ways for her to deal with them.
- Set up a coloring mural on one wall in the house. Show it to people and brag about her coloring on it.
- Control the crayons. She can earn the right to use them again by using them properly.
- Expect the child to help clean the wall.
- Be sure to spend fifteen to twenty minutes every day with her in

one-on-one time doing what she chooses to do, not what you think would be good for her.

- Tell her stories about when she was her little sister's age and how you cared for her.
- Offer to rock her and hold her.
- Tell her she does not need to do this to get your attention; then make sure you have periods of time alone with her.
- Put the crayons out of reach. Tell her they are to be used at the table only. Enforce that rule.
- Give her lots of love and the Being affirmations.



*Thanks to Carole Gesme,  
Suggestion Circle from Anoka, Minnesota*



## Signs of Abuse and Neglect of Infants thru PreSchool Age



Child abuse and neglect are prevalent - perhaps epidemic - in our society today. We editors feel strongly that all children are to be valued and cherished. We believe that children will be better protected when parents know the signs of child abuse.

Signs of abuse can vary with the age of the child. Listed here are signs that should arouse a parent's suspicions. If you find yourself worried or concerned about an abusive relationship between your child and another adult or older child, check it out.

Physical and behavioral signs that may indicate neglect or abuse include:

- A child who is not growing appropriately (not gaining weight or length).
- Diaper rash that's getting worse or is not clearing up when the child is in the care of others.
- Pin-size marks around the eyes or blood in the white part of the eye, which may indicate that the child has been shaken.
- Circular bite marks, either adult or child-size.
- Hand-slap marks on the face or elsewhere.
- Bruised or tender fingertips from little hands being slapped.
- Bruises on the thighs or upper arms.
- Straight-line marks on the skin from abuse with a belt or a ruler.
- Inappropriate sexual or violent play with dolls.
- Unwillingness or overwillingness to display genitalia.
- Any bruises around the genitalia.

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