

Active Parenting Promotes Successful Child Development

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Active parenting involves the direct teaching of essential, age-appropriate skills to a child and greatly enhances the process of learning. Active parenting happens as you recognize teachable moments within your everyday activities and create meaningful experiences for your child. Teachable moments occur within your daily routines and family rituals. When parents incorporate consistency, structure, and positive feedback into these lessons, they build a motivated and confident child.

Suggestions for Active Parenting

- **Limit TV time.** Engage your child in activities that incorporate movement, communication, problem-solving, and hands-on experiences. Pediatric research finds that young children are at risk for having difficulty with concentration, impulsivity and restlessness. These difficulties become more likely as exposure to television increases. Time spent watching TV replaces time for concentration building activities, such as reading to or with your child.
- **Read with your child.** Help develop reading comprehension skills by taking time each day to read with your child. Discuss the pictures, characters, settings, plots, and main ideas within the story. Help your child make connections from his/her own life to the characters and events in the story and teach basic social concepts as they appear. Discuss the characters' feelings and why they feel the way they do. This is a great opportunity for children to observe and learn about social situations and appropriate behaviors when relating to others.
- **Encourage dramatic play.** Use events in the story for role playing. Acting out situations, reactions, and emotions of the characters is fun for a child and increases the child's comprehension of the story.



Model Appropriate Social Skills

- **Model appropriate social behaviors.** Children emulate the way their parents and caregivers interact with others. For children to demonstrate good behavior, manners, and other social skills, parents/caregivers should model these behaviors consistently.
- **Monitor your tone of voice.** Children "shut down" when they sense frustration from an adult. When engaging or directing your child, always use clear, direct statements and a positive tone.

Incorporate Fun Into Functional Play

There are various opportunities throughout the day to expand simple routines into effective teaching opportunities. Use some of the following activities that include many teachable moments that you and your child can enjoy together.

- **Diaper-Changing or Bath-Time**-These routines provide one-on-one time that is great for bonding and connecting with your child. Narrate the routine as you go, or sing songs during the task. Count toys or diapers and reinforce important vocabulary and concepts (e.g., “water on, under the table”).
- **Working in the Kitchen**-The tasks of counting, sorting, and carrying dinnerware to the table develops balance, coordination, and thinking skills.
- **Visiting the Park**-Talk about the sounds you hear, name the colors and shapes you see, and identify smells in the air. Increase strength and stability by showing your child how to skip, jump rope, or play follow-the-leader.
- **Coloring or Molding Clay**-Demonstrate a correct writing grasp using appropriately-sized crayons/pencils and encourage your child to color “up and down” or “side to side.” Draw circles and smiley faces. Expand your child’s imagination and creativity with clay/Playdough® as you both push, roll, and pull the clay. This develops hand and finger strength and coordination.
- **Helping Around the House**-Children can help with laundry by sorting clothes, placing clothes into the washer/dryer, and matching and folding them. These tasks improve motor skills while strengthening muscles for upper body development. Helping around the house promotes responsibility and working as a family.



Remember to have fun and involve your child during your daily routines whenever possible. Find new topics to talk about and activities to do together by looking at your environment through the eyes of your child. Demonstrate active parenting by sharing your knowledge, skills, and abilities and engaging your child in memorable and positive experiences.