

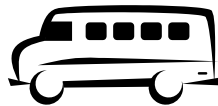
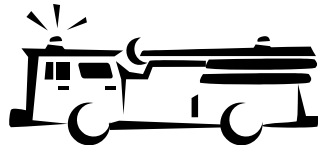
WELCOME BABY Newsletter for 30 Months

Dear Parents,

At two and a half years of age children are fascinated by repetition and sameness. Take a little trip through the farmland of Skagit Valley and look at the tractors, the horses or the cows. The same walk or drive everyday can be endlessly interesting to your two and a half year old. As you drive along look for cement mixers, fire trucks, police cars. This is a time for making sense of the world, of categorizing things. Flowers in the spring and summer are more than just “flowers”. There are tulips, daffodils, roses, marigolds, pansies. And birds, everything that flaps and flies is not just a *bird*, there are crows, pigeons, chickens, ducks, swans and geese, robins, wrens, and black-capped chickadees. If your child wants to know what something is and you aren’t sure, this is a wonderful time to go to the library and “look it up”. Parents and children can find a lot of interests in common that can last a lifetime.

Children love to help you fill the birdfeeder and watch the birds come to feed. It can be frustrating for you to have a squirrel get in the feeder and eat the seeds, but for a two and a half year old it can be very exciting to watch. Many of your conversations may be one sided with you doing most of the talking. Your child is picking up words, making connections, learning about the world, your values, finding interests of her own.

Some children will amaze you with what they can catalog and categorize. One little fellow sat on his potty looking through a magazine with pictures of cars and their logo symbols. After a few weeks, he knew what was a Datsun, Ford, Chevy, Toyota, even a Mitsubishi. What was interesting to him was making the categories. Other children can organize dinosaur collections, or reptiles and amphibians. You might not be a bit interested in bugs or snakes, but your child might be. So, back to the library you’ll go, looking for more books.



INDECISION AND MAKING DECISIONS

Yes, no, yes, no, change the mind. Now that the task of autonomy – “*I want to do it myself*” – is well underway, your child begins to say, “*Now that I have my own ideas I am going to change them.*” One little girl wanted her cereal in a pink bowl. She ate the cereal and then wanted some more. She even asked nicely, “*Please.*” Her mama poured the cereal into the pink bowl. “*No, no, no!*” the little girl screamed, “*I want the blue bowl!*”

What’s a parent to do? If your child’s language is still coming along, she might not be able to express her frustration and may just scream, cry or throw the bowl on the floor. You won’t be the first parent who says, “Do you want this one? This one? This one?” It can make you feel kind of crazy. Sometimes too many choices are simply too many choices. It is important to remember that much of the struggle is within the child herself. She is trying to learn how to make decisions.



Making good decisions is a life long activity. If you’ve ever bought a car, for example, think how long it took. You had to save and manage your money, check out the engine, examine the tires, take it for a test drive. You probably discussed your decision to purchase the car with someone, maybe with two or three people, perhaps at a bank. You couldn’t just throw yourself on the floor and kick your feet if you didn’t get your own way, although you might have wanted to. You’ve had years of practice making any number of decisions. Some were good, some not so good. Sometimes you may have had what is called “buyer’s remorse.” You’ve regretted what you’ve done and wished you could change things.

It is the same with the blue bowl and a two and a half year old child. No sooner is the cereal in a blue bowl, when he wants a yellow one. Maybe the trouble is with all the choices and colors.

We want our children to learn their colors, don't we? And we go to such pains to ask what the child wants. Do you want this? Or this? How about this?" And we expect him to decide. Sometimes it might just make a lot more sense to say, "Here's your milk," and forget about the color of the cup. There's plenty of time to learn colors. Just get the job done.

So how do we make good decisions? Even as adults this can sometimes be difficult. Parents, working together in a parenting partnership can find the behavior of two and a half year old children challenging indeed. A single parent can have a different set of challenges. All sorts of questions can come up, for example: What is a good child-care setting? How do I get my child to bed earlier? Will he ever get out of diapers? What do I do about biting? How do I handle a child who is rough with my child at the playground?

Sometimes a quick answer is not enough, we really do need to make a thoughtful, informed decision. If you have a spouse or a partner with whom to talk things over, it helps. In some cases, though, you need to make decisions on your own. Here are some steps:

- **Clarify the problem.** Try to define exactly what it is. (Not *your* problem or mine, but *the* problem.)
- **Examine options** and brainstorm some solutions (even silly ones.) *Brainstorming is sort of like shopping – brain-shopping - simply look at the options.*
- **Prioritize the options:** what might work best? Second best? (Some ideas you'll just throw out.)
- **Choose one option**
- **Try it** (for a day or a week, or so).
- **Reevaluate it** (come back a week later, discuss how it's working).
- **Change the plan if it isn't working.** Go through the same process again, if necessary.

PLAYTIME

Actually, making "decisions" is how your child plays. A child tries something to see if it works, pushing a train along a track, building a tower with blocks. When whatever he is making falls apart, he tries again, sometimes the same way, sometimes a different way, each time evaluating whether what he is doing is working. A parent can be encouraging and supportive, but needn't step in to do it *for* the child. The key is to try to guide, not be the "boss". Spend some time observing your child and listen to what he or she says. Play is how children work things out. *See this truck, it is rolling along the track, oh, no, it bumped into the block, oh, no, it rolled over, it can go over, push the car out of the way. Go on the track again.*

If you listen to your child's play and talk, you'll hear her day and experiences being played over. A child with a dolly says, "*Are you sleepy? Do you want to go to bed? Are you cold? Tuck you in, there, baby. You don't want to go to bed? You have to go to sleep now.*" Children pick up your tone of voice and your manner. They will use the same words you do in their play. By listening to you, they learn how to relate to others.

For many months your child probably has been saying, "*I want to do it myself.*" Now, at around two and half years, your child will begin to say, "*I want to help.*" Being helpful is play to a child. Most of the time it is probably easier to do a task or chore by yourself than to involve your two and half year old, but this is a delightful way to interact with children. Your little helper may wander off and lose interest, but you provide guidance and companionship, fun and experimentation that help your child learn about how things work.

Playing with adults can be very satisfying to young children; it models for them how to play with others. Being able to share is still in the future. In fact, you may be hearing a lot of, "*It's mine!*" This is what makes playing with other similar aged children quite difficult at times. Expecting a two and a half year old to share when friends come over is unrealistic at best. These little fellows need a lot of supervision. Don't be afraid to limit times with friends and neighbors. Just as your toddler has lots of practice struggling with the concept of sharing, you will get a lot of practice being patient and kind while your toddler screams, "*It's mine!*"

One little girl, so excited that her friend Gracie had come into her yard with her mother, was outraged when Gracie wet her pants. "*Gracie is peeing on my grass,*" she said, sending Gracie into tears. Not the best of play dates, needless to say.

But this possessiveness can be quite pervasive. Everything is MINE! Even with an older sibling who has moved on from this stage, if you give two things just alike, one to each child, the two and half year old still thinks that both of things are MINE! (This, too, will pass.)



TELEVISION AND VIDEOS

Do you know the poem, “Jimmy Jet and his TV Set,” by Shel Silverstein from his book, Where the Sidewalk Ends? It begins like this:

I'll tell you the story of Jimmy Jet --
And you know what I tell you is true.
He loved to watch his TV set
Almost as much as you.

And it goes on from there, look for it at a library or bookstore. If you aren't already familiar with Shel Silverstein, you'll find many humorous, quirky truths in his poetry. So what's the matter with television for toddlers?



WELCOME BABY! has said this before, it is not the TV the time spent not doing the normal developmental tasks of **developmental task is play**. (And of course, having copy what they see and learn to speak as they are spoken to. Television and many videos move very fast and the long- term effects on children's developing brains still are unknown. There is much good in children's TV programming, but remember, too, that children work things out in play that they see and watch. They learn by copying. If they see, or experience rough or violent acts, they may copy those behaviors.

and videos that are the issues themselves, it is childhood that matters. And **the most normal** temper tantrums). Keep in mind that children

Another thing to keep in mind is that just because products and videos are marketed to parents of very young children, it doesn't mean that children need those products and videos. Sometimes we think we need them more than the children do, it gives us a break from dealing with the kids. It is OK for children to have “down time”. It is perfectly acceptable for them to be idle and a bit bored. Creative imagination needs idleness to blossom.

A young child can only take in so much information at a time. Remember, this child you love is only two and a half years old. His imagination is just beginning to take flight. You, as parent are the very best teacher and companion.

It is very difficult if you need to work full time and your child is in child-care. You are tired when you get home and maybe even fussy. Your child has been keeping you in her mind all day, much as you have kept her in your mind. Find time to cuddle, to read on the sofa, to take a walk together, or to set the table or butter the bread together. These simple moments mean a lot to your child. Time goes quickly, and we want you to enjoy your busy, busy toddler. Teetering on the edge between toddler and preschooler, your child loves you best.

Best wishes from WELCOME BABY! Please watch for another newsletter when your child is 36 months old.

Meredith Baker, Program Coordinator
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BOOKS FOR FUN

Go, Dog Go, by P. D. Eastman

Byron Barton has a number of great board books:

Trains; Boats; Planes; The Little Red Hen; Machines at Work, published by Harper Collins, New York.

Planting a Rainbow Lois Ehlert, Voyager Books, New York, 1998

Where the Sidewalk Ends and **A Light in the Attic** by Shel Silverstein, Harper & Row, New York

REFERENCES

How Babies Talk, The Magic and Mystery of Language in the First Three Years of Life,

Roberta Michnick Golinkoff, Ph.D., and Kathy Hirsh-Pasek, Ph.D. Penguin Putnam, New York 1999.

Parenting Young Children, Dinkmeyer, Sr., McKay, Dinkmeyer, American Guidance Service, Minnesota, 1989.

Parenting Well in a Media Age, by Gloria DeGaetano, Personhood Press, Fawnskin, CA

Website: www.welcomebaby.org from Durham, NC, has good developmental newsletters in English and in Spanish.

Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child, by Marc Weissbluth, M.D., Fawcett Book, New York, 1999.

Best wishes from WELCOME BABY! Please watch for another newsletter when your child is 36 months old.

MUSICAL DISCOVERY TODDLER groups are available in Mount Vernon, Anacortes and Sedro-Woolley.

Please call for a schedule. 360-419-3324.

WELCOME BABY! “warm-line” 360-419-3324

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WELCOME BABY! is a parent support and education program available to families of **all** children, birth to age, three in Skagit County. WELCOME BABY! is sponsored by Skagit County Public Health, Skagit Valley Hospital, Island Hospital, Kiwanis, Rotary, Friends of Welcome Baby & Baby Talk and United Way of Skagit County.

Best wishes from Friends of Welcome Baby, watch for another newsletter when your baby is 36 months old.