

WELCOME BABY Newsletter for 36 Months

Dear Parents,

This is such an exciting time. Three years old already, can you believe it? Are the eyes bigger than the tummy? Does your – **Hey! You've got a preschooler!** – child want everything at once? Is he eager to learn, eager to explore, get into mischief, tease and surprise, make funny faces and say silly, silly, silly things?

Does your daughter provoke her siblings? And then when you say, “Did you do that on purpose?” Does she say, “Yes!” with great confidence. So then when you say, “But that was his favorite book (or toy, or fort), she says, “*I know.*” And she stretches out the “I know” like you are an idiot and she’s the smartest kid on the block. Hey! You’ve got a preschooler!



If this hasn't happened yet, do be patient. Three years old is a lot of fun, some people think it is one of the best ages to be in all of life.

Three.

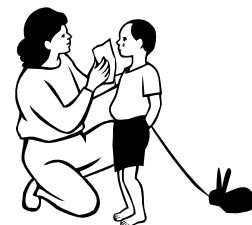
One... two... threeeeeeeee.....

Remember how we talked about autonomy? (*I want to do it myself*). Now we are going to talk about **initiative**. What do we mean? It means begin able to ask to do things: *May I paint now? I want to go swing. Can John- Paul come over? Let's go to the park!* It means just doing things without asking, like opening the refrigerator and pouring milk, taking out a hard-boiled egg, feeding bacon to the dog. It goes right along with progress in the bathroom department. *If I can get my pants down and take care of business, then I'm darned well going to fix myself a snack. So what's the problem?*

DISCIPLINE

One of the challenges of parenting a three year old is to find balance in yourself, while helping your child learn positive ways to get what he wants and to learn new skills. You've been doing this all along since the day your baby was born, but with a three year old you have some help from the child himself, his language is better and in all probability he is less self-centered than he was at two. He needs your help in the following ways:

- To increase his attention span
- To master his impulse control
- To learn patience so he can put off a little bit needing everything right now
- To figure out alternative behaviors, and
- To begin to take some responsibility for his actions



If you break down your parenting activities you'll see how much you are actually teaching your child everyday, by how you respond and how you explain things. You are the best model and teacher there is and your child's behavior is a reflection of you. That might not feel very good sometimes when you've lost your last shred of patience, but, remember, children are often harder to handle with their own parents than with anyone else. Why is that? Because they feel safe and confident with you and they can practice all their mistakes with you.

Remember when you learned a new musical instrument as a kid? Remember how horrible it sounded in the beginning? But after practicing and practicing, and some lessons, and practicing a whole lot more, and more lessons, you began to sound pretty good. Well, your three year old is practicing and learning how to - how shall we say this? - be civilized.

The simpler you can keep things, the better. Children learn about themselves during quiet times and learn to listen to their own inner talk. Sometimes there's a temptation to give up on naps and schedule your child into a lot of activities, but three year olds need lots of sleep. It is where they restore their batteries and make sense of all that they are learning. If you think about it, we struggle with this as adults all the time, wanting more quiet, more rest.



SLEEPTIME

Naps are still very important. Dr. Weissbluth in his book, Healthy Sleep Habits, Happy Child, reminds us of the importance of guarding our children's sleep, at both naptime and bedtime. He has a chapter called, "Young Children: Years Three to Six" with some good practical tips and some suggestions for solving sleep problems should your child have any. He ends one paragraph with this sweet reminder: "The routine of a set pattern in a bedtime ritual reassures the child that there is an orderly sequence: Sleep will come, night will end, the sun will shine again, and parents will still be there smiling.

We read a lot lately about the importance of early learning for children to help prepare them for kindergarten and school. What we don't hear much about is the tendency to over-schedule young children thinking that will make them smarter somehow. Your children are already very smart and what they need is for you to guard their developing brains. Good, satisfying sleep is as important as stimulating learning activities in helping children prepare for school. None of us function well on too little sleep. If your child is having trouble going to bed, try to move the bedtime routine a bit earlier. Just as you did with your baby, watch for sleepy signals and head for bed before things get all wound up and tearful.

LANGUAGE, READING & RHYME

We might think of nursery rhymes as best for babies, but this is still a great time to be reading them. Children this age can memorize the rhymes in their minds even if they can't get all the words out. Knowing how to rhyme is part of the later task of learning to read. It is still too soon to push your child into trying to learn to read. Over the next year your child will probably discover numbers and letters, especially the letters that spell his or her name. The key is to let your child find his own pace and not become a "parrot" ready to show off to adults how smart he is.



Reading rhymes, whether nursery rhymes, silly songs or sounds within words that are called phonemes. Being able to combinations is important. When we read nursery rhymes we think they don't make sense – often they don't, but what does make sense are the sounds. The rhymes are about the sounds. Reading aloud to young children helps them listen, focus, concentrate, and it gives you cuddle time with your busy three year old. Sometimes, however, your child will be playing on the floor, go ahead and read out loud anyway. Some children prefer to play quietly and listen at the same time.

poems, helps children hear the changing hear the difference in sounds and vowel

Enjoy making up jingles and silly sentences: Wiggle, piggle, sniggle, jiggle, giggle. Do you hear the difference between jiggle and giggle? This is an important distinction in getting ready to read. One kid had friends named: Matt, Pat, Nat, Nate, Nick, Mike and Mark. Another had friends named, Don, Dom, John and Ron, Bonnie, Connie and Lonnie, Lindy, Windy, Wendy, Cindy and Lindsay....See where you can go? You can write your own Cat in the Hat book. Driving in the car, you can sing silly rhymes and make up silly songs, like this from a three year old, "I know a corn-dog sitting in a tree...."

PLAY

Play: messing about with blocks, toys and balls and dolls; climbing and running; exploring the kitchen and discovering nature, this is what three year olds do best. Play helps children pull together their skills, their thinking and intellect, their mood and emotions, their social experience and how they relate to others. Play helps children

become better human beings, able to move and stretch the imagination between their inner and outer worlds. Children thrive when parents help them learn to play well.

Play is active learning with all senses working together: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. So much of a young child's learning takes place in non-verbal ways, in ways that we as adults have forgotten. It's really about fooling around with stuff. It might be tempting to think what is offered on video and television and marketed to children and parents is somehow better; we might think it is better because the videos hold the child's attention. But that attention is limited in scope; active play uses all the senses and keeps a child motivated and engaged because it is child driven, not "other" driven. The child is the actor, not the audience.

Observe your child sometime while the television is on and she is playing. See how often she is distracted from her play to watch what is happening on the screen. If a large part of learning and school readiness is based on the ability to concentrate and pay attention, what does this tell us? Watch your child some more, count the number of times she looks away from her play. We live in a media centered world, but just because a child can put a start button, doesn't mean she's going to be ahead of her classmates later on. It might be that uninterrupted play is what she needs.

REFERENCES

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

MOVING ALONG

Your child has just turned three, he's neither baby nor toddler anymore. This "golden" time of childhood can bring so much delight to you and your family. There will be many challenges, excitements, obstacles and new experiences in the years ahead and WELCOME BABY! wishes you all the best -- for good health and happiness. If you have questions about good books, parenting, child development, resources or information for your family, please know that you can always call our 'warm-line' 360-419-3324. We will do our best to answer your questions.

This is the last of the WELCOME BABY! newsletters in this series. We hope you have enjoyed them and found them helpful. We wish you well with your beautiful child and always welcome your calls and questions. It doesn't matter the age of your child, you will always be part of our WELCOME BABY! family. We like to know how you and your child are doing.

May the spark of love your three year old brings to your heart last you many years and bring you great joy!

Meredith Baker, Program Coordinator
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Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.

When the blazing sun is gone,
When he nothing shines upon,
Then you show your little light,
Twinkle, twinkle all the night.

Then the traveler in the dark
Thanks you for your tiny spark;
He couldn't see which way to go,
If you did not twinkle so.

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are !

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are !

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are !

Best wishes from WELCOME BABY!

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

WELCOME BABY! is a parent education and support 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.

Please remember, once you are in our WELCOME BABY family you may always call with questions.