

The Development of Fear

Are children born with fear? Last month we talked about children who experience feelings of shyness and its relation to fear. But it's not just more timid children who experience fear. Everyone has fear. Some of it's healthy and some irrational. But almost all of it is learned through experience or the experience of others.

All children are born with the ability to be startled by a loud noise or a sudden motion (Startle reflex). We know they will cry and show discomfort when they have a physical need such as hunger or feel pain. But these are reactions rather than fear, which Webster's defines as a feeling of "apprehension" or "to be afraid." We don't know the baby fears what will happen next if his needs are not met, in fact he may not have the brain development to think that far in advance. He has not yet experienced or observed enough life to be afraid. It's important to recognize how fear and observation effect the development of fear, so we can help children avoid learning unnecessary fear and help them overcome the fears that inevitably develop during daily living.

Fears That Develop From Experience

Some fears develop because we are intelligent human beings who remember and learn. This ability keeps us safe. Very simply, we have an experience that causes pain or uncomfortable feelings, so we know to be afraid to engage in that experience again.

For instance: A child gets on his new tricycle for the first time. He rides down the sidewalk, loses control of the tricycle and falls. His only experience with the new toy is now pain. He is not a coward, nor is he overly sensitive, he is just smart. This is his only experience on the bike, and he is now very fearful of trying again.

Sometimes fear is more subtle. Your child gives her favorite bear to a friend who promises



to return it in a minute. But the child has an accident and damages the bear. This is your child's first experience sharing something special and the result has been very negative for her. She then becomes very fearful of sharing any of her toys with her friends.

Fears That Develop From Watching Others' Experiences

Many times fear is developed simply from watching people be afraid. This is called Social Learning Theory and was developed by Albert Bandura in the 1960's. He proposed that children learn not just from experience but vicariously through others. Let's propose for instance that on a city street there is a diverse group of people crowding the sidewalk everyday on your child's daily walk in the carriage. Among that diverse group is a number of spirits and ghosts. They walk with the crowd everyday and no one pays them any mind at all. They are simply one of many. Your baby would never develop any fear of

ghosts. No one else is afraid. They have never done anything to harm her and so she has no reason to be afraid. However, if she strolls down that same street and she sees people screaming and carrying on at the sight of a spirit, she will become afraid. The crowd of strangers have taught her that there is something to fear.

This seems to be a very light-hearted example, but it's not very different than our children's development of racism. After years of working with preschoolers, I have never yet met one who has any fear or discomfort with another child's skin color. As a matter of fact they appear to remain "color blind" until exposed to the media, a racist adult or a situation where someone else points out that there is a reason to be afraid. The imbalance in the media of negative minority stereotypes teaches children through social learning to be afraid of those whose skin is different. A well meaning parent who fears those of different cultures can pass that fear along to a child.

Even in the best of situations a child can develop a fear from watching someone else's experience. I remember my own child, who loved taking a bath, being riveted to a highly respected children's show that was doing a story about why you don't have to be afraid of things going down the bathtub drain. My son never even thought of such a thing until watching the story. He then made sure that he and his toys were all out of the tub before I drained the water. Even the suggestion of another child's irrational fear placed a seed of doubt in his mind.

Avoiding the Development of Fears

We can't stop our children from living their life and observing the world. This is how they learn and in fact is how they learn healthy fear. We certainly want our children to have an intelligent fear of crossing the street or touching a hot stove. There are some things we can do to make sure they don't develop irrational fears that keep them from moving forward in life.

1. If your child is experiencing something new, be there to act as a safety net. Do your best to have your child avoid any excessive pain, without totally protecting him from the learning experience. In other words, if he's learning to ride a bike, allow him to teeter, but avoid having him hit the ground hard. Once a child learns the joy of riding the occasional fall will not sway him, but do your best to have him experience the joy of riding first.
2. Do not throw your child into a situation that's way above his ability level. If he wants to try rock climbing and is happy climbing three feet off the ground, allow him that joy until he wants to go five feet and then maybe ten. If your child wants to stay in the baby pool, let her until she asks to experience the big pool and be there to protect her in case of mishap.
3. Avoid having your child develop a fear of the dark by having her sleep in darkness from infancy. If your child wakes in the dark and is frightened, do not immedi-

ately turn on the lights. Comfort your child in the darkness.

4. Make your child aware of things that may surprise or shock her, like the noise of fireworks or darkness in a movie theatre. Before going on rides in amusement parks, watch and stay away from rides if the attendant can't tell you exactly what will happen during the ride.
5. Make sure your child knows that she is free to leave an uncomfortable situation if necessary. The only thing worse than being terrified is not being able to flee the situation.
6. Most of all, avoid having your child learn others' fears and terrors through television, movies and the evening news.

We all learn to be afraid of things as we live and grow. There is always a reason a child is afraid, whether real or imagined. Just telling a child to face the fear is not always helpful, especially if they follow through and the result is the same terrifying experience that seeded the fear. You need to change the result of the experience.

And remember, social learning is not just responsible for the learning of negative things. Our children can learn fearlessness, courage and joy from watching others' positive experiences. Fill your child's life with people who experience joy from learning new things and who deal with fear and insecurity in constructive ways.

Keep Moving Into Autumn

I Hug Myself 'Cause I Love Me So!

The following is sung to the tune of *Turkey in the Straw*. The words describe the movement.

Oh, I love my knees, and I give them a squeeze.
And I bend them and stretch them as I please.
I love my toes, and I love my nose.
And I wiggle, wiggle, wiggle them until they grow.
I love my back and I give it a slap.
I curl it up and I give it a nap.
I love my head and I take it to bed.
And I can shake, shake, shake til my face turns red.

Head Shoulders Knees and Toes

This is a classic that children never stop enjoying. Start the poem out very slowly having the children touch each body part they hear and then repeat it increasing the speed until everyone gets very silly.

Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes.
Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes.
Eyes and ears and mouth and nose.
Head, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes.

Everybody Jump by Skip West

This is an incredibly simple song that the smallest children in your group can keep up with. You can listen to the music on www.songsforteaching.com

Everybody jump, everybody jump,
Everybody jump with me.
Everybody jump, everybody jump,
Everybody jump with me.

Replace jump with any movement you like. Allow the children to pick some movements.

Rumble to the Bottom

This is a traditional Puerto Rican game. The children can use any movement they choose. When they rumble to the bottom and top they simply move their own dance closer to the floor and bring it back up again. At the end the children can turn until they finally fall to the ground.

Oh, I'm going to Fiesta.
I'm going to the fair.
To see the senorita,
With the flower in her hair.
Oh, shake it, shake it, shake it.
Shake it if you can.
Shake it like a milkshake,
And do it once again.
Oh rumble to the bottom,
And rumble to the top.
And turn a round and turn around
Until you make a stop.

Get Back to the Basics: Classic Toddler Art

Macaroni Art

Macaroni has so many uses. It can be strung as beads, pasted on paper and used to make sculpture. Purchase the most inexpensive you can find. Taste is of no significance. If you have children under three, you must supervise the project closely. While the macaroni is not toxic, a child can choke while tasting a piece of hard macaroni.



Macaroni Jewelry

Purchase shoe laces of different lengths and colors. Have the children string ziti or large elbows to make necklaces or bracelets. Use pasta wheels as decorative accents.



Macaroni Collage

Place bowls of assorted shapes of macaroni in different bowls. Give the children heavy construction paper and glue. Let them create a macaroni collage.



Macaroni Sculpture

Purchase long pipe cleaners. Have the children string ziti or large elbows on the pipe cleaners and then bend them to make a sculpture.

Dyeing Pasta

Your children will have plenty of fun doing their projects with plain macaroni. If you'd like to make it more interesting you can purchase macaroni colored with beets, spinach or carrots. These are colorful and tend not to release their colors when played with. It will cost a bit more and you may not have the variety of shapes you want. If you want a great variety of shapes and colors, you can dye your own. However, this is not a project for young children.

Macaroni
Sealable Plastic Bags
Rubbing Alcohol
Food Coloring
Plastic gloves



Use the plastic gloves to keep the dyes off your hands. Divide your pasta into plastic bags. You will need one bag for each color. Place 1 cup of macaroni and approximately 2 Tablespoons of rubbing alcohol in the bag to coat the pasta. Place food coloring in the bag to achieve the desired color. Generally 8 - 12 drops are needed to achieve deep color. Shake the bag so everything gets coated and leave for ½ hour. Empty the bag onto a paper towel that has a metal pan underneath. You don't want dyes seeping through to your counter. Let the pasta dry completely. This may take 24 to 48 hours. Once dry allow the children to play. Please be aware that pasta dyed after production tends to release some dye if it gets wet. It is best played with at a table.

Don't Dismiss Crayons

Crayons should be a staple in every art corner. They are a great fine motor exercise that readies a child for a pencil. Not only that, they are inexpensive, come in hundreds of colors and aren't very messy, so they can be made easily accessible for the youngest of children. Start your toddler out with the Jumbo size crayons, move her to the large, and eventually to regular size crayons at age four or five. See page five for how to recycle all your broken crayons.



All About Town

And The Beat Goes On

- Working parents need childcare.
- Infants need stable caregivers who will bond with them and care for them for a number of years.
- Providers continue to leave the workforce and change jobs frequently because of low wages.

(www.policyalmanac.org)

Policy makers have a hard time making changes that will deal with all these difficult variables. So, what can you do to make sure your child gets the best care possible.

1. Pay your childcare provider her requested fee. Don't barter for a cheaper rate. When broken down, most providers make less than minimum wage. If possible, think about a holiday bonus or tip.
2. Make sure you pay your caregiver for vacations.
3. Allow your caregiver sick days.
4. Pay your caregiver on time.
5. Treat your caregiver with kindness and respect. She is taking care of the most important treasure in your life.
6. If you are receiving assistance, fill out paperwork properly, so your caregiver gets paid.
7. If you're upset with a practice that your caregiver engages in, speak to her. Don't abruptly change your child care. This will do more harm to your child than dealing openly with the difference of opinion.

Your childcare provider provides a valuable service. It is fair that you try to keep her happy. If you and your child love your provider, do the best you can to retain her services.

No Fear of Artistic Expression

How do children become afraid to express themselves artistically. Perhaps they have been hurt or have watched someone have their feelings hurt over an art project. Remember to be very sensitive about the art that young children produce. Don't hold up others' art as an example of what a project should look. Just let them create and have fun. They have time in their lives to meet others' expectations. Let them enjoy this time to meet their own.

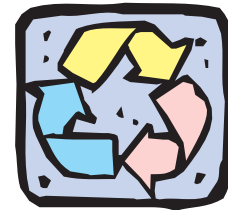
Recycle Old Crayons



Small Cookie Cutters
Wax Paper
Microwaveable plastic cups (preferably disposable)

Place your cookie cutters on the wax paper. Gather up all your old broken crayons, remove the paper and sort them by color. Place each color in a disposable microwaveable plastic cup. Melt the wax in 10 second intervals. Check after each interval. As soon as it's liquid, pour the wax into the cookie mold. Let it cool until it's solid.

You can make solid colors or you can make a rainbow crayon by mixing colors in one mold. You can use these as little gifts or just place them out for the children to play with.



Recycle Old Paper

Children go through lots of paper when coloring. Pile up all the used sheets that children don't want. Put them through a shredder and use them to make collages.

Courage: In a Small Way

If your child has already developed fears, such as a fear of the dark or monsters under the bed, there are many helpful picture books that can help your child overcome these feelings. Use the search engines on the more popular book sites to find the appropriate book. The following books are stories that illustrate living life without fear and enjoying the adventure that comes from discovering new things.

I'm Big by Milton Schafer

I'm Big! Confident, strong words from a toddler. With that confidence comes a vivid imagination. This toddler starts out being big enough to dress himself and sit in a chair and make his feet touch the floor. But then he becomes big enough to jump a ten foot fence, feed a lion a hot dog and finally easily lift 100 pounds. So perhaps he's not really that big, but his confidence will certainly get him to wherever he wants to go. Lyrical, rhyming text makes this a great read aloud. (Ages 2½ - 5)

Swim, Little Wombat, Swim by Charles Fuge

It's a beautiful summer day and Wombat and Platypus are playing near the pond's edge. Platypus jumps in and Wombat tumbles in and discovers he is unable to swim. Platypus quickly rescues him and then begins to teach him step by step. Wombat learns all day and rests with a full tummy at lunch. In the afternoon he paddles and frog teaches him to dive. There is absolutely no mention of fear in this story. It's a beautiful celebration of the joy of learning. (Ages 3 - 6)

Way Far Away On a Wild Safari by Jan Peck

Dressed in his full safari gear, binoculars in hand, this little boy is hiking away on a wild safari. He has no fear of the animals in the wild. He politely addresses them and continues his search for the lion. "Hello, hippopotamus. Big bottom-a-mus, hippopotamus. See you later, hippopotamus." He continues on his way until he finally meets the lion and returns home where we see him helping his Grandma bake animal cookies. The illustrations are bold and bright and the little boy always wide-eyed and happy. (Ages 2½ - 6)

I Went Walking by Sue Williams

A small child only needs to walk around a farm to see new and wonderful things. This tiny board book follows a curious red head as she spies a cat, horse, cow and other familiar animals. She looks, plays and touches and then just goes along her merry way. A perfect little board book to put in the car, especially if you have a child who loves animals. (Ages 1 - 4)

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