

Teach Your Children

Toddlers are loving, curious, energetic and honest little human beings. They're on a constant search for new and exciting pleasures and generally don't want anyone to stand in their way. Their search to constantly achieve and attain what they want and need can sometimes lead to problems. If you're constantly using negative reinforcement to try and get your toddler to socialize appropriately, you're going to express too much negative energy. Most parents sometimes feel that all they do all day is say "NO!" or "Don't do that!" That negative energy eventually tires you and your children and leads to anger.

Toddlers aren't born knowing the rules that will help them feel at ease in social situations. However, they are born with a need to belong and be part of a group that loves them. Teaching your child how to behave must come from a place of love and respect, not anger. It's natural to react to misbehavior with a negative reinforcement such as "NO!", or, "What are you doing?", or "Stop that!" This may immediately interrupt the behavior, but changing a behavior takes observation, planning and teaching.

Timeout For Both of You

Negative or annoying behaviors repeated time after time can get on your nerves. Anyone who's had children has had the experience of just wanting to stand there and scream. That type of steam builds up because you've tried over and over to tell the child to stop what she's doing to no



avail. When you're in that place, it's not possible to process what's happening and come up with a solution. Giving yourself a time out means not reacting, because your reaction is not working. It's not stepping you closer to your goal. Acknowledge what the child is doing, remove the child and yourself from the situation, get a cup of tea and think through how you're going to approach this problem. While you're sitting there, be especially mindful of the voices inside your head. Perhaps they're saying some of the following.

"I can't take this anymore."

Translation

(I'm incapable.)

"Why is she doing this to me?"

Translation

(She is more powerful than I am.)

"I'm going to blow my stack."

Translation

(I can't control myself.)

"This child is just bad."

Translation

(I give up.)

Those voices are there because we've absorbed them from the environment. They are not only useless, they are damaging. They keep you in a place of weakness where you can't possibly move forward to address the real problem. As soon as you hear those phrases, STOP! You may even have to say "STOP" out loud to break up the recording. Replace the voice with "I've got a challenge here and I can resolve it. I can teach my child a different way to get what he wants and needs."

Changing the language in your head does not seem like a method of dealing with an out of control toddler. But in fact, you're taking the first step in controlling the situation by controlling yourself. You're modeling the very behavior you want the toddler to pick up. Instead of taking from your child or punishing her, which is always uncomfortable, you're offering her a gift of the love and wisdom you've gained over the years that will help her work more effectively in the group.

When you come to the place where you feel in control, and you can understand your role, it becomes much easier to observe your child and come up with a plan to teach. You can watch her from a place of kindness and understand why she is behaving in this manner. By removing the thin veil of anger brought about by your frustration, you can clearly see what her motivations might be without the complications of your own emotions.

Changing the inner voices in your head will also change the process you use to change your child's behavior. If you see yourself and speak to yourself as one whose job it is to parent and teach, you will tend to use methods that employ more teaching and less punishment. If you believe that the only thing you can do is to keep your child in line, then you will tend to choose methods that employ control tactics.

Believe you can parent and teach. Believe you have wisdom to offer, and when you feel negative energy building, you'll be able to identify it, stop it and approach the challenge differently.

So, why do our children get under our skin? I believe it's their honesty. They're like magic mirrors that reflect only a truly honest image. At times it can feel like they're holding up signs with all our faults and weaknesses lit up in neon lights. Toddlers especially seem to push us to our points of weakness because they can physically tire us, which further thins our defenses. Every day you work with children you get to know a little bit more about yourself. Over time I've come to think of this as a gift few adults are capable of giving. Most adults are far too polite and kind to really make us look at ourselves. So, this month be thankful you've been challenged by your child and use it as an opportunity to grow as a parent and a human being. Perhaps you've been put together to teach one another.

"Before a painter puts a brush to his canvas he sees his picture mentally ... If you think of yourself in terms of a painting, what do you see?.... Is the picture one you think worth painting? You create yourself in the image you hold in your mind."

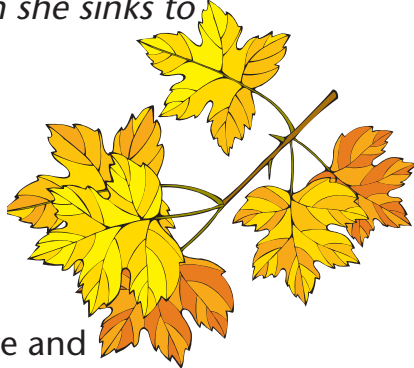
Thomas Dreier

Fingerplays and Poems: Autumn



Down by the Oak Tree

Down by the oak tree.
On an Autumn morning.
See all the yellow leaves
Whirling to and fro.
See how they twist and turn.
Whirling, whirling, whirling.
Down, down, down, down
Off they blow.
*(Have your child twist and turn
and whirl around the floor until
the last line when she sinks to
the floor.)*

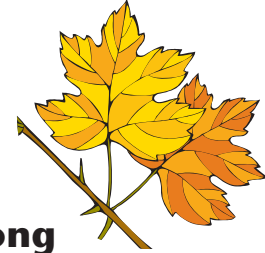


Five Red Leaves

Five red leaves, five and
no more.
(Put up five fingers.)
The caterpillar ate one and now there are four.
(Put your thumb in your palm.)
Four red leaves, that's easy to see.
Along came a rain storm and now there are three.
(Take your index finger down.)
Three red leaves, nothing much to do.
A big wind blew and now there are two.
(Put your middle finger down.)
Two red leaves, that's not much fun.
I glued one on my paper and now there is one.
(Put your ring finger down.)
Hang on red leaf. Your branches won't break.
You're one less leaf for me to rake.
(Put your pinky down.)

My Turkey

I have a turkey big and fat.
(Place arms out front to make a big belly.)
He spreads his wings and walks like that.
(Strut like a turkey.)
His lunch of corn he would not miss.
(Eat an ear of corn.)
And when he talks he sounds like this.
(Gobble and strut like a turkey.)



Infant Song

The leaves are dropping from the
trees, brown and red.
They patter softly like the rain.
One landed on your head.

*(Gently tap baby all over like softly
falling leaves.)*

Happy Thanksgiving



Five Ways to Make a Turkey Tail

Making turkey tails is great for toddlers because they can be made like a collage. No matter what their style or fine motor level, the end result is quite beautiful. You'll need to be in charge of the turkey heads. Make lots of them on simple construction paper with their warble and let your child glue them to their finished tails.

Real Feathers

You can purchase a bag of real feathers in most craft stores for a very reasonable price. They'll come in natural or bright dyed colors. Both work just fine. All you need to do is cut heavy construction paper in the shape of the tail. You can make any size you like. Give your children some Elmer's glue and have them glue the feathers on the tail in any pattern they choose.

Coffee Filters and Water Colors or Chalk

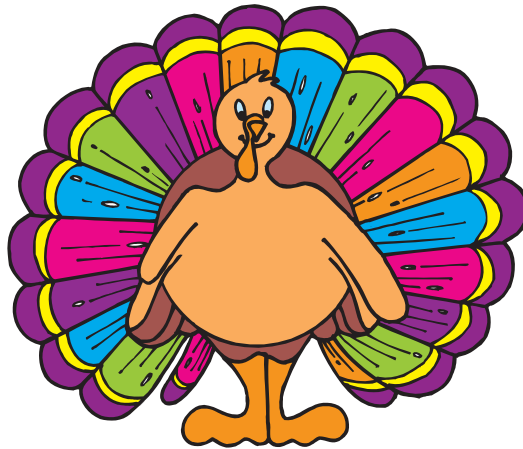
Purchase the largest triangular coffee filters the store stocks. If you think your child is ready for water paints, just have him randomly paint colors on the filter using a brush. If your child is younger, have him color the filter with colored chalk. When done, place the filter on a paper towel and dampen it using a fine mist sprayer. The colors will run together and you'll get a water color-effect.

Hand Print Tails

Most young children love to paint their bodies, so why not give them the opportunity. Have some light colored construction paper available. Have your child use fingerpaint to paint his hands and then stamp them on the paper. Make a single turkey or a whole flock.

Leaves

Go for a walk on a bright dry day and pick up as many colorful leaves as you can. Make sure they're not so dry that they crumple when handled. Oak and maple leaves should still be moist enough to use.



Cut heavy construction paper into tail shapes and have your child glue the leaves on their tail. They can use the leaves whole or use safety scissors to cut them into random shapes.

Construction Paper Feathers

Cut many feathers from colored construction paper or scrap paper you've saved. Place them in your collage box and let your child glue them on paper. Make as many as you need to keep her involved.

All About Town

Turkey Mush

So what's turkey mush? It's that wonderful gourmet dish you make the day after Thanksgiving by tossing leftover turkey, dressing and gravy in a frying pan. I thought only my family made turkey mush, but have found that most families have some rendition of the "mush."

I have also found mush is an easy one dish meal that kids love and can be made at any time of the year. Here's a toddler-friendly recipe you can throw together after work in minutes.

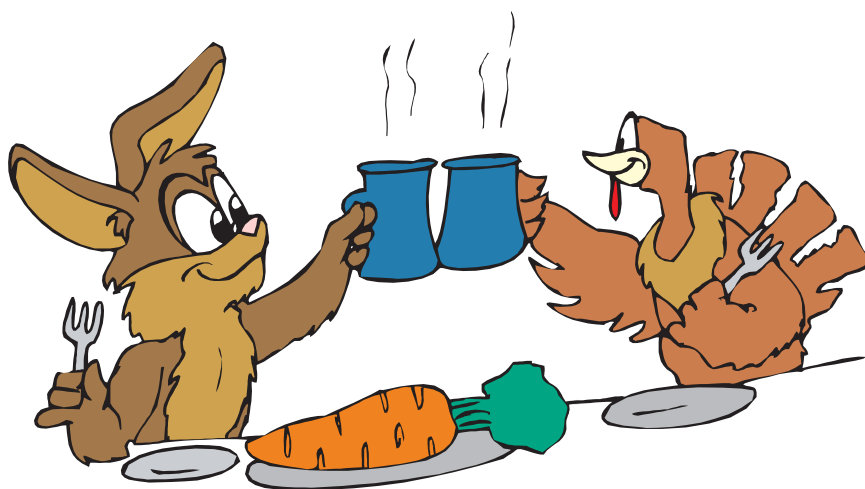
2 heaping cups of your favorite dressing - Leftover, made fresh or the stove top varieties.

1 cup cooked shredded turkey

Turkey gravy - leftover or from a can.

1/2 cup carrots, peas or green beans - leftover, fresh, frozen or canned.

Place a few tablespoons of gravy in the bottom of your pan over medium heat. Put the dressing in the pan with the shredded turkey and any vegetables. Toss them together until all the ingredients are mixed. Add just enough gravy to keep the mixture moist. Heat thoroughly. Serve with cranberries and extra gravy on the side. By the way, this is great food for toddlers who are just learning how to use a utensil.



First Aid and CPR Classes

Learn basic procedures for emergencies, sudden illness and accidents. Those who pass the test receive a New Jersey recognized First Aid and CPR certificate valid for two years.

All sessions are 9:00 am sharp to 3:00 pm

Friday, November 3rd

*Paul Robeson Center
Rutgers University
350 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
Newark*

Saturday, November 11th

*Programs for Parents
500 Bloomfield Avenue
2nd Floor
Montclair*

Cost: \$30

Save Gift Wrap Scraps

The holidays are coming up fast. Remember to save all those gift-wrap scraps for your collage box. Blues, whites, silvers and golds are great for Chanukah or snowy January collages. Reds and pinks are perfect for Christmas and Valentines Day. Don't forget to add the ribbon scraps and holiday cards. It's a great way to recycle and reuse.

Just Published Thanksgiving Stories



Off to Plymouth Rock by Dandi Daley Mackall

This chunky board book tells the story of Thanksgiving in light and cheerful lyrical rhyme. Each verse ends with "Off to Plymouth Rock" until the Pilgrims arrival. "Here at Plymouth Rock" closes each verse as the author describes the experience of the new world to toddlers. The combination of the colorful illustrations and the engaging historical story helps toddlers understand why we celebrate Thanksgiving. (ages 1 - 4)



Thank You Thanksgiving by David Milgrim

The simplicity of the text and illustration purify the important message in this story as a little girl walks through her day and thanks everything and everyone she touches. She thanks her warm boots, music, pretty clouds, a rabbit and her Mom. She thanks snow people, the mixer she uses to make Thanksgiving dinner, and she finally thanks Thanksgiving Day. The very blocky, lightly shaded illustrations bring home the simplicity of the message. It's about just being Thankful. (ages 2 - 6)



The Hoboken Chicken Emergency by Daniel Pinkwater

Arthur is so excited. It's his responsibility to pick up the Thanksgiving Turkey. Unfortunately, there are no turkeys left, which is fine because no one in the family really likes turkey, so he buys a chicken. A 266 POUND CHICKEN. Henrietta, the chicken, turns out to be quite a find and leads Arthur on an hysterical adventure. Children ten to twelve can read this alone. Parents can read a few chapters a night to younger children and laugh along with them. (ages 4 - 13)



The Thanksgiving Door by Debby Atwell

Ed and Ann were alone this Thanksgiving, and Ann has burned the Thanksgiving turkey. Refusing to miss the Thanksgiving meal, they head for the local diner. The door is open, so they enter and see a lovely banquet table. The family who runs the diner is upset that they have left the door open and that visitors are interrupting their dinner. But not Grandma. Grandma knows the meaning of Thanksgiving and had she not secretively wedged that potato in the door, Ed and Ann would not have had such a marvelous day. A great reminder to all of us. (ages 2 - 7)

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