

## Growing Kids God's Way - Appendix 4 - Growing Kids Topic Pool

Sometimes you just need something extra. Even Mary Poppins with all her charm relied upon a spoonful of sugar to “help the medicine go down.” And while we cannot promise you toys that march by themselves to their box, we do have a few nifty tools and ideas to share that can help your little one march to the beat of your drum.

Bearing in mind that every child is unique, often requiring an added measure of effort in specific areas, we offer the following topic pool of ideas, suggestions, and explanations. We have consolidated a number of common topics of interest into one location to better serve your query. This final appendix is both practical and highly relevant to parents of our day. For convenience sake, we arranged the topic pool in alphabetical order. You will want to become familiar with the list. Parents will typically come back to this resource many times over, sometimes in just one day. Also, please remember there are many more parenting resources available on the ministry website at: [www.GrowingFamilies.Life](http://www.GrowingFamilies.Life).

### Encouragement Tools

Parents all over the world have found the following three activities to be a great way to motivate children to do chores, care for others, pick up their toys in a timely manner, and be responsible.

#### *Cheerful Chore Cards*

Let's face it, getting kids to do their chores can be tiresome. Mom is constantly prodding and endlessly checks for progress; the children are stalling, whining, and bickering. It almost makes a parent want to just give up and give in. Family chores play a significant role in building loyalty, unity, and responsibility into your child. Therefore, parents must find a way to work through the agony of getting a child to do his chores. Connie Hadidian, author of *Creative Family Times*, offers a creative approach to accomplishing family chores for preschool-age children.

You'll need colored three-by-five-inch index cards, an index card box, three-by-five-inch dividers, and a black marker. Divide your chore card box into four sections. Pick one color to use for each child's personal tasks (i.e., blue for Matthew's personal tasks, red for Rachel's). Personal chores include making the bed, brushing teeth, picking up the child's room, etc. Choose another color to represent chores that your children are capable of doing. The book *What Every Child Should Know Along the Way* helps parents decide what chores their children are capable of doing at a given age. Paste or draw a picture on all the cards to represent the task or chore you want your child to be responsible for. Finally, pick a color of cards to be used as special “See Mom for a treat” cards.

Here is how it works. Each morning, Matthew's chore cards are placed out for him on the

kitchen table or the counter. This will consist of his personal task cards and his chore cards. Mom sets the kitchen timer for an appropriate amount of time. Matthew works through his cards, flipping each facedown when the task is completed until all chores are done. They must all be done before the timer goes off.

The last card in Matthew's stack reads, "See Mom if you think you are done." This card is helpful for two reasons. First, it lets you know if the chores are done before the timer goes off, and second, you can check to see if the job is done to your satisfaction. Every once in a while, Mom throws in the special card, "See Mom for a treat." When your child discovers this, after his squeals of delight die down, express your appreciation for how well he is doing. The special treat might be going out for an ice cream cone, a dollar bill, or some other small treat. Here are some advantages to this method:

It takes only a few minutes each morning to gather the children's chore cards for the day, or you can put them out the night before.

It teaches children responsibility and self-discipline. The system is flexible. You can add or delete chores as needed and as your child grows older.

Here are a few more samples of chores age-appropriate to children:

- Dress themselves
- Make bed
- Wipe up their own minor spills
- Help set and clear table (do not expect perfection)
- Put dirty clothes in hamper
- Pick up socks and shoes
- Empty small wastebaskets
- Dust baseboards and bottom of kitchen chairs

While none of the above will be accomplished exactly the way you would like, these activities are getting the child into the habit of tidiness. Keep it simple, stay with it, and please remember the following helpful guidelines:

Do not expect him to do the task alone the first time. Work alongside him until he understands what to do and how to do it himself. Do less and less for your child as he becomes more and more responsible. Praise your children for great attitudes and jobs well done!

Finally, regarding motivation, remember that simply getting outward performance is not the goal of your parenting. The goal is to help create a servant's heart in your children. Chores

are one way to teach the virtue of otherness (putting the needs of others before yourself). Your children need to feel that they are important contributing members of your family. Having them do chores is one way to accomplish this, and yes, it can start as early as age three.

### *Charting Positive Action*

By using the principles in Chapters Nine and Eleven, we believe you will begin to see progress in the correction arena. However, sometimes we all need something a little extra. The Positive Action Chart is a nifty tool that can move a child from the not-doing-wrong stage into the spontaneously-doing-right stage. This calls for the creation of a colorful chart. Make a special trip to the craft store with your little one to purchase the needed material. Let your child help create the chart, as this will further enhance his ownership of it. Select poster board and markers and a variety of fun-filled stickers. Before creating the chart, consider specific traits you would like to see developed in the heart of your child. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control are good starting points. These form a portrait of a tender heart that looks to the needs of others before his own.

On the left-hand column of your chart, list the attributes we mentioned above. Write the days of the week across the top. Now post this chart in a prominent place in your home. The kitchen is a good place, or your child's bedroom—if you do not mind him dragging every visitor into his room to check out the cool poster the two of you created. Here's how it works. Each time your child demonstrates one of the positive attributes on the chart, you point it out. You explain exactly what happened and how it relates to the desirable trait. He gets to put a sticker on the chart. When you start actively looking for, say, kindness, you may find it where you least expect it. This can be surprising to moms who have been focused on restraining the negative behavior of their children. Watch how your child's face lights up as you begin to notice the good, inspiring actions he does every day. This will encourage him to keep up the good work!

For areas of development where your child needs extra help, offer bigger stickers when that trait is demonstrated. For every ten stickers that are accumulated on the chart, a reward is given. This may be a trip to the ice cream parlor, or purchasing a new book. When fifty stickers have been accumulated, create a wonderful memory for your child to savor, such as a trip to the zoo. The encouragement he receives from seeing his own virtues mount up is worth more to him than any scoop of mint chip or visit with a chimpanzee. However, it is nice to be rewarded for the good things he does! Being recognized for a job well done is a major shot in the arm in his journey toward the kind of character any parent could be proud of.

### *Marbles for a Cause*

GFI leaders Tom and Evangeline Reed offer this great idea. There are days when Mom feels

like a referee, sorting out battles between siblings. Much of this strife is caused by tattling. "Mommy! Justin hit me!" is a frequent refrain heard in homes where more than one child resides. We have another helpful tool parents can use to promote harmony in the home.

Get a large plastic jar and a bag of marbles. Whenever anyone catches another family member doing something good, he gets to put a marble in the jar on behalf of that person. When the jar is full, the family chooses something fun to do together. When another family member puts a marble in the jar because a child did something good, this alone is enough immediate recognition to inspire similar behavior in the future. Do not think of this as a type of bribe. The difference between a bribe and a reward is this: A bribe is offered upfront. Beth gets a piece of candy before she picks up her toys. That's a bribe. A reward is given after the desired behavior occurs. Beth gets a piece of candy after she picks up her toys because she did so without being reminded. That's a reward. To avoid dependency on rewards, some ground rules must be established.

First, no one gets to put a marble in the jar because he did something good. Someone else has to notice another's goodness. Second, there may be no complaining if a child's "good deed" goes unnoticed. Sometimes life will be unfair. But that is when you teach your children that we all should be willing to do good things, not for the praise of another man but simply because it is the right thing to do.

Before you start, you must actually consider what the desirable traits look like in order to not overlook too many. For example, following through on a task is faithfulness. Not crying when a treasured candy is dropped and crushed in a carnival stampede is surely self-control. Playing nicely together for a prolonged period of time brings much-treasured peace. And sharing a new birthday present with another anxious onlooker demonstrates love. Take a few minutes during dinner for family members to share the good things other family members have done. When Mom and Dad agree that the thing mentioned is worthy of a marble, then the child gets to put it in the jar.

#### *Teaching the "Three Candy Speed"*

Your little guy's dentist appointment is in just a few minutes. You completely forgot about it last month, so you want to be on time. All you've got to do is have your son pick up his markers and put away his paper. You instruct him to do so. He gives you a nice "Yes Mommy" and begins to clean up. But for some reason you feel like you've entered the "Twilight Zone." Right before your eyes, your son, who normally has all the energy in the world, suddenly goes limp on you. He moves slower than the 1950's movie, *The Blob*. "Sammy, you have to pick up your crayons right now." One marker is picked up. Pause. Another marker.

Yawn. "Come on, Sammy. Now! I mean it. We have to get going." One more marker. Pause.

Another marker. Scratch. “Sammy, move faster! Sammy, we’re going to be late because of you. Come on, Sammy, move faster!” For Mom, this whole episode has transformed into a slow-motion dream. Each of the boy’s limbs seem attached to an invisible stretchy web, pulling against him as he reaches for the marker’s purple cap.

What’s happening here? Clearly, he sees your rush to get out of the house. You prompt him, reminding him to hurry so you do not steal the dentist’s time by being late. You find yourself rambling on with insignificant, energy-draining adult reasoning until you are ready to scream. Instead, you clean the coffeepot, stick some glasses in the dishwasher, nervously glancing over your shoulder at the clock, then at your son to check his progress. You know he can move faster. But how do you get him to pick up the pace without sounding like a slave master?

The problem is that your child doesn’t know what “fast” looks like. It is an abstract concept. Three Candy Speed is a way to show him what accelerated movement is. Surely if your child’s favorite candy waited at the end of his task, you’d see lightning-fast movement on his part. You might be thinking that we are encouraging you to bribe your child. Not at all. Keep reading!

Try this sometime when you’re not rushed. Begin with a slight mess that your child needs to pick up. Put three small pieces of candy on the counter, and call your child over. Tell him that you are going to set the timer and that he should begin cleaning up when you do so. Inform him that if the toys are picked up and neatly put away, these three pieces of candy will be his reward. At this point, his energy is on full alert and he takes his mark. Go! The child moves faster than you’ve ever seen, thus beating the timer. This is his Three Candy Speed. You just established in concrete form a benchmark of time that becomes a future reference point for you both.

While Sammy is consuming the candy (and before the sugar rush kicks in), sit him down and explain to him that the speed he just moved at is called Three Candy Speed. You need to tell him that he will not be getting candy every time you ask him to do something. In fact, this is the only time he will get candy for moving fast. Tell him you just wanted him to feel himself going fast so that later, when you need him to move quickly, you can just tell him to go at Three Candy Speed, and he’ll know what that feels like. The next time you need to get moving lickety-split, all you have to do is tell him to pick up his toys at Three Candy Speed.

### **Fears Of Childhood**

How old were you when you first saw the ghoulish monkeys dispatched by the wicked witch of the west to pick up Dorothy and her dog, Toto? Do you remember the scene of winged monkeys spreading the gentle Scarecrow “here, there, and everywhere”? These scenes from the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*, when observed by this writer, were some of the most

frightening scenes that a twelve-inch black-and-white screen could project to the pounding heart of an eight-year-old boy.

Fear! It is part of the overall human experience and not simply a childhood phenomenon. Some childhood fears might appear irrational, even silly, to parents because they do not arise from any real external danger, but they are very real to your child and should be respected as such. Although the cause of fears may not always be discovered, we know there are general categories of fear that children experience. Knowing the origin of fears may not always eliminate them, but it may lead parents to better management and reduction of fearful stimuli. Consider these sources:

Natural Fears: In spite of the fact that fears vary from child to child, there is evidence that certain fears are characteristically found at specific ages. These are referred to as “typical fears.” Many fears are learned from direct association of experiences with fearful stimuli. The most frequently displayed fears for children come from animals such as dogs, snakes, and rats. These are followed by the fear of strange people, being left alone, and dark or high places.

Fear of the Unfamiliar: Among the primary fears of young children is the fear of the strange and unfamiliar (strange from the point of view that something stands apart from the child’s previous experience). It could be a person, event, situation, or activity. This type of fear takes place because young children do not have cognitive tools to adequately measure the legitimacy of their fear and thus lack the ability to understand the cause and effect associated with fearful situations. For example, a child with an ice-cream cone may not understand that it was the food that attracted the neighbor’s puppy and not a wolflike desire to devour the child. Yet the fear, although misplaced, is still very real in the mind of the child.

Developing Imagination: We have already discussed the developmental benefits of a child’s imagination in Appendix Two, *Let Them Play*. Imagination can also create fearful expectations, especially when the imagination develops faster than the child’s reasoning abilities. Imaginary fears include ghosts, skeletons, bogeymen, or any combination of the above.

False Beliefs: Some fear is the result of bad experiences, such as the fear of the dentist or the hospital or a visit to the doctor’s office. The frightening experience becomes an expected reality and thus apprehensiveness occurs. Your child will even react with fear to a new situation that in and of itself, normally would not arouse fear. Other fears are passed on to children by the false beliefs of their parents, siblings, and friends.

Parental Anxiety: Parents sometimes unwittingly arouse fears in their children and introduce attitudes of apprehension by their own overprotective anxiety. Constant warnings of restraint

such as “Be careful, you are going to fall down,” “Do not pet the dog or he will bite,” “Do not climb in the tree or you will fall and break your leg,” or “Do not go by the road you might get hit by a car” might keep a child in an atmosphere of fear and continuous dread. Note the operative word above is constant. Of course there will be times in which you might say all of the above. This is not the same as constant warnings of danger that place a child in a perpetual state of anxiety about his own welfare.

### *Helping Children Manage and Overcome Fear*

Some fears need to be managed, while other fears can be overcome with time and education. Here are some facts and suggestions to consider while working with your child’s fears.

Fear itself is not a cure for fear — Forcing a fearful child to “face his fears” is not the best way to help him overcome them, nor is ridiculing a child for being afraid or commanding him to ignore his fears. This approach goes against the very thing the child needs — that being the full confidence that his burden of fear is being shared with Mom and Dad or big brother or sister. Ridiculing and name-calling are antagonistic forces to companionship and trusting relationships.

Education: Methods that promote self-confidence are the best ways to help children overcome their fears, and this can be done in part through education. Children are less likely to be fearful if they have some understanding of the object of fear. When the child learns that the puppy’s actions are playful not threatening, and that the snake is behind the glass and cannot get out, or that thunder has an explanation, he will better be able to manage potential fear with the assurance brought by such knowledge. Educating a child about his natural fears is one of the best ways to reduce fear that parents can use with their child.

Getting acquainted: Giving your child opportunity to get acquainted with the fearful object or situation is another form of education. This may take time since the child’s confidence in the knowledge of what is safe must grow stronger than the fearful experience of the past. Gradually introducing your child to the object of dread through role-playing, actual encounter with the object, or parental example helps alleviate his fears. When your child sees that Mom is not afraid to play with the puppy, he will join in the fun and in time overcome his fear. In contrast, if Mom overreacts to the excited puppy by hopping on a chair, the child will not be far behind her.

Removing Fearful Stimuli: Remove all inappropriate fearful stimuli from your child’s life. The Wizard of Oz is not a movie for preschool-age child to watch. Even the movie Dumbo can create apprehension. Poor little Dumbo, separated from his Mom and forced to work the circus scene as an oddity, is way beyond the context of your child’s sense of security. Take note of what your child is watching on television, including cartoons. Given the state of the world, even the nightly news can be fear-provoking to children (and adults).

Substitution, Not Just suppression: Universal in application, this particular suggestion should not be limited to the single category of fear, but applied to any circumstance that employs moral and virtuous opposites. For example, the Ezzos were once approached by a father asking how to deal with his son's obsessive jealousy. That question leads to a broader one—how do you deal not only with jealousy, but all attitudes of the heart and emotions, including fear? Children of all ages are better served by substitution than by suppression. The father mentioned above was frustrated by his efforts to suppress his son's jealousy. No matter how hard he tried to keep the lid on it, jealousy continued to leak out.

The problem here and for many parents is not simply the presence of a vice or a weakness, but the absence of a virtue and strength. Suppression of wrong behavior is often achieved by encouraging the opposite virtue. If you want to suppress jealousy, give equal time to elevating the opposite virtue, which in this case is contentment. If you have a child struggling with envy, teach charity. For anger, teach self-control. For revenge, teach forgiveness. Substitution will make all the difference in the world. This same principle applies to childhood fears.

Often the problem is not the presence of fear but rather the absence of courage. Parents, by the language they use, tend to focus primarily on the fear (the negative) and not on courage (the positive). Instead of saying, "Do not be afraid," parents should consider saying instead, "Be brave" or "Be courageous." This type of encouragement is not meant to satisfy a moment of fear, but to establish a pattern of belief for a lifetime.

Prevention: Most of the suggestions above that can help overcome fears can also be employed to prevent many fears. Giving a child a heads-up about the neighbor's dog or how loud the fireworks will sound makes good sense. When dealing with young children, some form of pre-activity warning is better than the shock of discovery.

The fears associated with early childhood are significantly different than those of older children and adults. For that reason, parents must demonstrate a liberal amount of patience, empathy and understanding. They should never view their child's fears as "silly", attempt to delegitimize them, or insist their child "toughen up" or "just get over it." Rather, they should become a calming and reassuring voice. After all, the last thing you want to create is a condition in which your child fears telling you about his fears.

### **Manners At Mealtime**

Children acquire good manners in two ways: through education and instruction, and by parental example. The latter, of course, is as important as the first. If Dad asks Mom to "Please pass the potatoes" and then replies to Mom with "Thank you," such courtesies are easily accepted by a child as integral parts of his speech and patterns of behavior.



The context of mealtime is one of the best for teaching courtesies that have lasting social value. They are “other-regarding” rather than “self-regarding” and hence become a useful tutor in preparing a child for otherness virtues that are necessary to get along with others. In short, good manners become an integral part of a child’s character, and thus a well-mannered child is a gift returned to society.

Good manners will always accompany good morals. Children with good manners shine brightly wherever they go. While sitting with your children in a restaurant, you just might hear the voice of a stranger comment, “What well-mannered children you have. They’re so polite.” Such compliments are the result of correct training in social graces, particularly in mealtime etiquette, and they are well worth the effort.

Etiquette refers to one’s behavior in the presence of others and should manifest itself in a demonstration of courtesy, politeness, and respect. Your goal is to train your child in such a way that he practices these courtesies both at home and away. Listed below are some basic recommendations of politeness and respect as they relate to mealtime behavior. Here are some general courtesies to work on with your kids.

Positive mealtime manners include:

- Complimenting the cook
- Chewing quietly, keeping your mouth closed
- Saying “Please” and “Thank you”
- Not leaning on the table
- Not reaching across the table
- Not stuffing your mouth
- Not talking with your mouth full

Recommendations for Various Mealtime Settings

There are five mealtime settings families will experience. They include:

- Dinner at home with no guests
- Dinner at home with guests
- Buffet-style dinner with guests
- Dinner away from home as guests
- Dinner at a restaurant

Keep in mind, most of these settings require practice at home for a period of time before your child tries his manners on others. Look for conflict-free opportunities and comfortable avenues for introducing these different environments. Invite close friends over specifically for this purpose. Ask a relative if he or she might have you over for lunch, especially if you have

an outing on the horizon in which you wish your children to shine. Practice! Please remember, your example does make a difference. Do not get so focused on your child's behavior that you forget to praise the meal that is in front of you or the table setting, placemats, or centerpiece. Anything that seems appealing will resonate in your child's mind and provide fuel for future compliments he may make.

For advance training in mealtime manners please review the many short video segments found in the *Parenting From the Tree of Life*. (Chapter 11 - Civility and Mealtime Etiquette) on the GrowingFamilies.Life website.

### **Parenting Your Child's Emotions**

"My two-and-a-half-year-old son doesn't like it when I correct his four-year-old brother. He becomes sad because his brother is being taken away for correction and he will lose his playmate. What should I do?" the mother asked. "I'm thinking it might be better if I didn't correct my four-year-old if it makes my two-year-old sad."

Every child enters life with the propensities for both pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Most parents realize this truth and consequently attempt to find ways to make childhood a happy time for their offspring. Parents recognize that a happy child is a pleasure to be with, is easier to teach, and exhibits longer sustained periods of self-control and self-entertainment. But is happiness really the ultimate goal of parenting?

One of the greatest mistakes a parent can make, however, is attempting to parent a child's emotions and not the child. Please note this distinction. We are not saying a child's emotions are not important, but rather attempting to parent the single category of emotions is not the same thing as attempting to parent the whole child. Every child will experience both pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Hopefully, your child will know much more of the first than the second.

The experience of positive emotions, like joy, happiness, affection, esteem and the sense of discovery leads to feelings of security and confidence. This in turn helps the child face and properly react to the negative emotions of worry, jealousy, envy, fear, disappointment, anxiety, and frustration. But parenting to create all the right emotions and avoid all the negative emotions is both unwise and unhealthy. Such an approach holds the parents hostage. Everything is guess work.

When you attempt to create all the right feelings, you abandon other significant values necessary to raise a well-adjusted child. In our opening example, the mom was willing to put aside her four-year-old's wrong behavior to satisfy the happiness of her two-year-old. She was willing to suspend a life-needed lesson in virtuous self-control, a tool of life, for a momentary state of happiness.

If happiness is the highest value to offer children, then other “good” values such as honesty, compassion, self-control, self-entertainment, obedience, submission, and patience are all subservient. If there is a context that pits virtues with the emotion of happiness, then happiness must dominate. But the developmental fallouts with this approach are numerous. The child that is pampered or shielded from unpleasant experiences is ill-prepared to meet the disappointments, frustration, and other unpleasant experiences that life brings. Parenting a single emotion or a range of common emotions is a poor substitute for parenting the whole child - his heart, his head and body, and emotions.

Our evaluation of this situation above brought us back to the principles of parenting the whole child: body, soul, heart, and mind. It is from these four capacities that we are to love the Lord. (c.f. Mark 12:29-30) This mom placed greater value on the younger son’s emotions than on her older son’s character faults in need of correction. She was willing to allow her older son to bully his sibling for no other reason than she feared her younger son would not be happy for a moment.

We’re pleased to say that we were dealing with a very open and teachable mom who created for herself a clever reminder. She hung on her refrigerator door a small chalkboard. On it she wrote, “Parent the whole child, not the single category of emotions.” That friendly reminder stayed there until the principle was second nature to her. As a result, today she has a four year-old who shares his things, and a happy two-and-a-half-year-old.

the sleep factor and children’s ability to learn

Last night was a rough one. The dog was barking, and the electricity went out, causing phones to beep and bedside clocks to flash when sometime later power was restored. Throughout the ordeal, you stayed horizontal. You do not specifically recall being really awake, although you are aware the outage occurred. The end result is a dead giveaway—this morning you are cranky, edgy, and wondering if an eighteen-wheeler drove across your bed looking for the highway. Simply put, you got a lousy night’s sleep and every raw nerve ending on your body stands ready to proclaim it.

Now transfer this sleep quality to your child. When it comes to children, parents tend to think only in terms of two categories; their child is asleep or he is awake. There is actually a gradation of sleep and wake times. Sleep ranges from a completely relaxed state to active sleep, to groggy wake time, to complete wakefulness. Optimal wakefulness is directly tied to optimal sleep, and optimal development is directly tied to optimal wakefulness.

We cannot overemphasize that point. Children who suffer from the lack of healthy naps and nighttime sleep also experience a type of passive chronic fatigue, effecting maximum alertness. Who would want to live continuously in this condition? While a child may not suspect an off-course tractor trailer, nor even pinpoint the source of his agitation, the effect of

too little sleep is equally devastating. It creates an alertness deficit, which further increases the child's inattentiveness while decreasing his focusing and concentrating skills. This child is easily distracted and often physically hyperactive. He is also more demanding, lacking the ability to interact within a learning environment for sustained periods of time. In contrast, children who have established healthy sleep habits are optimally awake and optimally alert to interact with their environment. Having observed a generation of these children now, we see some common threads among the school-age population. In classroom settings, I have consistently found these children to be more self-assured, happier, less demanding, more sociable, inspired, and motivated. They have longer attention spans and become faster learners because they are more adaptable. Mediocrity among this population is rare, while excellence is common.

In *Preparation for Parenting*, we spoke about a child's ability to learn. We noted that while parents cannot alter a child's intelligence quotient, they can maximize or limit it. One way this is done, both positively and negatively, is through sleep. The impact healthy and not-so-healthy sleep has on educational outcomes was first noted in a 1925 study conducted by Dr. Lewis M. Terman. Amazingly, his insights and conclusions related to factors influencing I.Q. continue to stand unchallenged to this day. His study looked at 2,700 children with superior intelligence and found one common link—all of them had experienced healthy nighttime sleep. Good sleep habits are not a child's choice, but a parental decision and are so often impacted by the presence or absence of routine.

quieting the wiggles

We introduced this concept in the DVD portion of our presentation and wish to offer it here as well. We know that some of our readership have one. You know, a mover and a shaker, a high energy, perpetual motion, chase-his-own-tail kid. How many times have you tried to slow your little missile down with words such as these: "Calm down," "Settle down," "Sit still," "Stop moving," "Stop kicking," "Put your hands down," or "Sit on your hands"? Has it ever worked for longer than a millisecond?

Have you ever thought about what "settle down" or "slow down" looks like to a three-year-old child? These are abstract concepts, metaphors. A three-year-old doesn't have a clue what you mean. Louise called her friend Jessie in a moment of desperation. "Jessie, I'm getting a little apprehensive about our breakfast meeting with the Ezzos this Saturday. My two little ones do not do well sitting for long periods of time. Help!" "Louise," Jessie said, "there is a nifty little thing that helps children gain self-control in moments when you most want it and they most need it. Are you ready?" "Yes!" came Louise's response. Jessie continued, "When you begin to see those early signs that your kids are going to lose it physically or verbally, instruct them to fold their hands and work on getting some self-control. That is all you need to do."

Louise began the training immediately. She and her family did meet the Ezzos that Saturday for breakfast. Toward the end of the meal, a little wandering leg propped itself up on sister's chair. That would normally be enough of a catalyst to energize the two-and-a-half-year-old and four-year-old into all-out playtime right there in the restaurant - but Mom had another plan. Instead of the classic begs, bribes, and threats, she simply said, "Girls, we're not quite ready to go yet. I want you to fold your hands and get some self-control."

Would you believe that in less than a minute those two little girls sat still, with their hands folded in their laps, subduing their impulsive behavior? And this without a war of words with Mom! Mom then pulled out some crayons and let them color on the paper napkins. Teaching your child that self-control begins with the folding of her hands is a wonderfully concrete way for her to understand calmness. Her eyes focus on those peaceful hands lying still in her lap, and soon physical and verbal self-control is achieved.

We have all heard the slogan that starts out, "An ounce of prevention. . ." Parents should always try to help a child gain self-control before he or she crosses the bridge of trouble, not afterward. The folding of the hands exercise does exactly that. It is a wonderful tool that can be used at grocery checkout counters, school functions, sporting events, dentist's offices, or during that longer-than-usual sermon.

When a young child folds his hands to get self-control, it handles all the excessive body energy that makes self-control so difficult. After all, if you want your child to settle down, his energy has to go somewhere. Now, instead of it going into squabbling, cartwheeling, or whispering, it can go into the hands.

Another amazing thing about hand-folding is how quickly it brings about self-control. Usually only thirty to ninety seconds needs to elapse before Mom can say, "Okay, kids, you can let go of your hands." Your child only needs to fold her hands long enough to gain self-control in that moment. Once that is accomplished, Mom can redirect the child's energy to productive activities (like coloring on paper napkins).

It is important to teach this technique to your children when things are calm. If you are already in conflict, your children are not going to be especially attentive pupils. You may have your child practice this at the table while you finish up last-minute mealtime preparations. Make it a fun game in the beginning. Demonstrate how to achieve self-control during a peaceful time so that when things begin to get out of hand, you've got the cure in place. This simple technique will become second nature to your child and will work wonders in creating the peace your family deserves.

### **Vacation/Traveling With Young Children**

"My husband and I will be traveling for the next couple of weeks with our young son. How

do we maintain his routine, especially when we move through other time zones?" This is one of the most common questions received in our office. There are two considerations to focus on when traveling with toddlers and young children: For your infant and/or toddler, begin 1) training your child to sleep other places than in his crib or bed, and 2) adjusting your child's routine to each new time zone.

In preparation for travel, begin a few weeks in advance putting your child down for his naps or nighttime sleep in other places. This will of course depend on the age of your child. Infants can sleep in a playpen. For a couple of nights, put the playpen in the living room, family room or your bedroom. Drape the outside of the playpen on two sides with towels or extra child blankets, then take those blankets or towels along on your trip or borrow some towels when you arrive at your destination. The blankets or towels serve to enclose the child's sleep environment and reduce potential distractions. If your child pulls the towels into the playpen, then stop using them. You want to avoid a situation that could endanger his health or safety. Toddlers can be trained in the same way but use a small mattress that becomes his or her special bed. Be creative with the sheets. Use something fun that he or she would not normally get to sleep on in their own bed.

If your trip is to an adjacent time zone, time adjustments will be fairly automatic. However, when flying through three or four time zones, make the adjustments to your child's routine once you arrive. The type of adjustment depends on whether you are traveling east to west or west to east. With the first, you have an extended day; with the second, you have an early night. If you have an extended day, add another feeding and possibly a catnap. If you go east, split the bedtime difference in half between the old and new time zones. For example, your child's 7:00 p.m. West Coast bedtime is equivalent to 10:00 p.m. East Coast time. Splitting the difference between the two time zones would make your child's first East Coast bedtime 8:30 p.m. Over the next couple of days, work his bedtime back to 7:00 p.m., making as many adjustments as needed to his daytime routine.

We suggest you limit sweet drinks and snacks while traveling. A long trip is a particularly bad time to add extra sugar to your child's diet, and extra snacks can suppress hunger to the point where it can affect behavior. Disrupting your child's routine can affect his sleep/wake cycles, something neither you nor your child want to have happen while traveling.

Do take a Pack-and-Play (playpen) along if your child has not yet transitioned into a bed.

If you are driving on a long-trip with your child, figure out how many hours you will be in the car each day. Plan activities for your child using the same schedule you use at home, working in 15 minute to 1/2 hour segments. Rotating toys will keep him occupied for longer periods of time. Many vehicles have some sort of television. Do use videos, but keep in mind the attention span of a child, keep them to 30 minutes and rotate them with other activities.

Do stop often for potty breaks at rest stops and let your child run on the grass/picnic area. Give him an inflatable ball to chase around.

If you are flying, make sure you take advantage of any opportunity to pre-board. Determine the amount of time you will be traveling, including time sitting between flights, if applicable. Again, using the routine you have at home, rotate activities for your child. If you have a long wait between flights, take your child for a walk so he can burn off some energy before he is expected to sit on the plane again.

Check with your airline regarding food options. This seems to change frequently with most airlines. And remember, airlines now are starting to sell their lunches rather than provide them for free, so pack food for your child and yourself. And do not forget to take his favorite stuffed animal and blanket on the plane.

Whenever traveling, whether by car, train, or plane—do take a stroller. If you are limited by weight restrictions, consider purchasing an inexpensive “umbrella” type stroller for the trip. There will be times your child will be too heavy for you to carry. He can’t be expected when sight-seeing to “keep up” with those with longer legs. Do realize when you are vacationing in the summer that long periods of time in the sun and heat will wear your child down and make him crankier than usual. If you are vacationing on the beach, consider getting a large beach umbrella and have him sit under it for periods of time during the day. This can be used for blanket time. Enjoy your vacation.