



STEPPING STONES
CURRICULUM

WHAT ABOUT THE KIDS?

WRITTEN BY:

GAYLE T. GENNETT, M.A., L.P.C.

LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR / BOARD CERTIFIED

UNIT ONE: STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

Children grow at different rates because of their gender, their own parents who come in all shapes, sizes, and nationalities, and don't forget grandparents too. This information serves as a guideline to help you look forward to what your children may accomplish as they grow up. If for any reason you are ever worried that your child is not reaching the potential you think they should then it's important to bring it up at your next visit with a health professional.

I've also included some activities that your child may enjoy as they reach different stages of development. They are designed to help your child with increasing their attention span, improving their motor skills, growing academically, personal hygiene and using their imagination and creativity.

I am hopeful you will enjoy this unit as much as I enjoyed writing it. Now it's time to learn about the stages of your child's development.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

One Month of Age. Your baby may now raise their head slightly off the floor or bed when lying down. They will watch and follow objects with their eyes. They will want to eat five to eight times a day.

Two Months of Age. Your baby may hold their head erect, slightly bobbing when supported in a sitting position, they will follow you with their eyes, imitate or respond to your smile.

Three Months of Age. They recognize a bottle or breast, they begin to coo and laugh and even make a few cute faces, they usually can feel calm when they are rocked back and forth.

Four Months of Age. They are better able to hold their head on their own, may roll over, take objects that are small and may

begin reaching for small items. This is a good time to put those tiny toys away that older brother or sister may have. We don't want them to choke.

Five Months of Age. They can sit up with little support; they will roll over, move an object in their hand and definitely put small items in their mouth. They even will babble cute little sounds. They enjoy being cuddled and begin to recognize who mom is and can begin to tell the difference between mom, dad, brother, and sister.

Six Months of Age. They have more ability to move, grab things, and roll over. Look out when they are on the move! Careful they don't roll off the changing table! Now they recognize faces; mom, dad, brother, sister, grandma, and grandpa.

Seven Months of Age. They are beginning and to sit up without leaning against something. Sometimes they may cry when mom leaves the room, "don't worry little one she'll be back."

Eight Months of Age. Now we love a good game of "peek-a-boo" go ahead and try it ... your baby will laugh and giggle. Baby will still become upset when mommy leaves the room or a sitter comes to watch them.

Nine Months of Age. Your baby still wants to be with mommy and now may crawl about when she walks out of the room. Your baby will like to play with small toys and may even say "mama". I can't talk yet but if I could I'd say, "I can sit up all by myself."

Ten Months of Age. Your little one is starting to get control of their legs and feet. They may soon be crawling around. You'll still need to pick up any small items on the floor because baby will want to check them out by putting them in their mouth.

Eleven Months of Age. You may hear your little one imitating sounds. They will still need plenty of sleep; up to twelve hours at night and at least two naps a day. They will wave bye-bye and begin to understand the word "no".

Twelve Months (1 Year) of Age. Yay! Happy 1st birthday! Our little one may be pulling themselves up to stand and check things out. They enjoy stacking blocks, playing with toys and will want to give you a hug in return. They may even say two or three words.

Thirteen to Fifteen Months of Age. Your little one may walk without support, stack up to three blocks, begin trying to talk but sounds more like babbling and can creep up the stairs. Now would be a good time to block any stairs with gates to keep baby safe from crawling up and down when you may be busy. Boy, do they become upset when momma isn't around. They also like to see themselves in a mirror and have fun feeding themselves with finger foods.

Sixteen Months to 2 Years of Age. Watch our little one start to run and kick a ball. I am starting to say more words.

"I am so busy but I still need a nap and want to sleep up to 12 hours at night. I really like to climb stairs now. Pull toys and push toys are my favorite. I like when mommy, daddy, grandma, or grandpa read to me. I may say five words clearly now. I really want to feed myself with my baby spoon or fork or I can just use my fingers. Sometimes I even rub food in my hair just for the fun or because it feels good. Please don't be mad at me, I am learning to feed myself. If I play with my food too much I might not be hungry anymore. Please use a wet towel or cloth to wipe my face and hands and I'm off to explore again!"

2 Years to 3 Years of Age. You will find your toddler wanting to jump off a step, wanting to use a crayon, but better direct them to paper because the walls look like fun. They can put more words together and maybe make a sentence. They don't like it when you leave them with a sitter.

"I will ask for things by name but sometimes you might not understand my words. I may ask for a smoothie and you think I said movie. I like to pretend I am doing housework because I watch you clean and vacuum and want to do the same."

3 Years Old. "Boy oh boy do I get angry. Sometimes I have a temper tantrum and may throw myself on the floor or even want to punch you or my siblings. I show lots of feelings like anger, sadness, and happiness. I don't want to share my toys and I don't

want to do what you tell me. Sometimes I just can't make up my mind about what I want or need, so please be patient with me. I respond best to a routine, like getting up and going to bed and eating meals at the same time every day. This helps improve my mood. I behave better when I have been fed and have a good night's sleep, or a nap in the afternoon. I may want to learn how to ride a tricycle and by now I can feed myself with a fork and spoon, I can drink from a cup, and I can open any door or cupboard left unlocked. I will also begin to tell you that I need to use the toilet."

4 Years Old. "Look at me! I can stand on one leg, jump up and down, and I can draw a circle and a cross! I am usually nicer toward my parents. I am beginning to share and I want to play with other children. When I am alone without a friend to play with sometimes I will make up an imaginary friend. I am getting better at throwing and catching balls. I am also learning at least six colors. I know I am a boy or a girl, how old I am, and even my last name! I like playing with other children, so I hope that I can go to preschool!

I am using more words now and even can say a sentence like, 'I want to go to the store,' or 'May I have a cookie?' I'll remember to say please and thank you when you remind me.

Before eating meals (if you remind me) I will wash my hands and again when I am done using the bathroom, which by now I use all by myself. I can dress myself if you let me and give me some choices of what I can wear."

5 Years Old. I can surprise you by walking backward or running on my tiptoes! I can print a few capital letters and will try to recognize my own name when I see it printed.

I can cut my food with a knife. I can tell which is a penny, nickel, or dime if you teach me. I know a lot more words now. When you read me a story I understand what will happen in the end. I love to skip and jump, play ball, and will want to help cut the grass and do household chores. I am so proud of myself when I finish doing a good job all by myself. I like to play with other kids and may want to play sports on a team. I might be ready for kindergarten, but if I am not, then a young fives program would help me get ready for kindergarten next year.

6 Years Old. I can tell you how old I am and where I live and count to ten or higher. I am starting to lose my baby teeth and get my first molars. If I am a boy I want to play with other boys and if I am a girl I will want to play with other girls. I am getting a sense of humor so I love to hear funny stories, tell silly “knock, knock” jokes, and have you read me funny books. I also like to help take care of my younger brother or sister because it makes me feel like a big boy or girl. But remember I am not old enough to take care of them all by myself. I can even read a few words, write my name, and copy shapes.

When I draw a person I remember to draw the head, body, legs, arms, feet, hands, fingers, eyes, mouth, nose, and ears. Sometimes I’ll even add hair and eyelashes. Sometimes I think there are monsters under the bed so will you check for me and let me know I am okay. I might be afraid of large dogs if we don’t own one because large animals may scare me and I need you to tell me it is going to be okay.

7 Years Old. I have better balance now and can do somersaults, cartwheels, and play T-Ball and soccer if I haven’t started already. I can pay attention longer so if you give me a toy to play with or read me a story I will listen longer and play with my toy longer. I am beginning to learn the days of the week, months of the year, and can even tell you the season if you teach me. I worry sometimes because I know the difference between what is right and wrong because you taught me. I know I should wait my turn and I want to please you and do everything just right. So sometimes I feel bad about myself. You can help me by telling me when I do a good job at something. Maybe it’s picking up my toys or helping you with a chore. I am proud when I do something well, but I am also sad when I don’t do something well.

Help me make decisions and give me choices. I like to play games when I need to figure things out so maybe a card game or a board game would be something we could do together.

8 Years Old. My large motor skills are getting better which means if I play a sport which I may want to do I am now better at running, catching, kicking, and jumping. Even my small motor skills have improved so my writing is much better because my fingers can better grasp a pen or pencil. It’s fun to belong to a small group

whether it's scouting, a sports team, cheerleading, or a church group.

Sometimes you might just want to sit down and chat about things because I like to talk and learn. I grow impatient quickly at this point in my life and I find it hard to wait. I also recognize what money can buy so an allowance might be something to talk about. Maybe now is a good time to talk about saving money for something special. Keep in mind that it is hard for me to wait, but it is something that I need to learn. Like they say, "All good things come in time" and "patience is a virtue."

9 Years Old. My friends are very important to me. This may be a good time to talk about peer pressure. My friends may talk me into doing something you wouldn't like me to do so explain to me about rules and boundaries. What I can and can't do and what's accepted. I am more aware of my body and how it's changing. I really want to fit in and will be picking out clothes to fit in. I still love you, but sometimes I just want to be with my friends. I still enjoy being part of a group and will begin to compare myself to others whether it's how I look or what things my friends own or places they can go and I cannot. Sometimes life just doesn't seem fair. Is life fair? Maybe we should chat about it.

10 Years Old. I probably have a best friend who is a boy or girl like me. I am getting interested in reading for fun and will even spend time looking at and reading magazines. I still enjoy being active and exploring basketball, dancing, and soccer. I enjoy cursive and will add curly designs to my name. I may even keep a journal or write short stories. If I like to draw, you can give me my own sketchbook. Math is getting easier! I understand subtraction, multiplication, division, and fractions. I'm not perfect at it, but I am trying!

11 Years Old. I may not like the other gender, but I will tease and chase them. I have more energy than I know what to do with. So if I am not already playing a sport, dancing, or playing outside, I will have trouble sitting still. Maybe I need a bike to ride around the block before doing homework. Did you notice your grocery bill getting bigger? I am growing and eating an awful lot. I do love my family and will sometimes spend more time with you than in my room or with my friends. A family game night could be in order. I

have fears I didn't have before so I don't like to be left alone. I enjoy collecting things like rocks, cards, even bugs. I enjoy and understand movies and appreciate the photography and special effects. So can we rent a movie, or better yet, can we go to see a movie on the big screen?

12-14 Years Old. Your child will experience a growth spurt. During this age range we all develop at different rates. If you are ever concerned your child isn't growing, consult your pediatrician. Girls during this age range will develop sexually and start their period. Boys will have testicular growth and their voice begins to change. They will also experience "wet dreams". This time frame wouldn't be complete without mentioning their moods. Up one moment and down the next. No matter what you say it won't be right. They seek out friends with similar interests and are concerned about how they appear to others. They will challenge family rules, so be certain to set firm guidelines at home. They become overly sensitive when you say anything about them and they definitely want their privacy, oftentimes spending hours in their bedroom. Sometimes they will become show offs, seeking friends and other attention. They may also be influenced in to trying alcohol, tobacco, and having sex.

15-17 Years Old. Girls have usually reached their full height and may grow a little more in filling out. Boys will continue to grow and gain muscle mass. Both boys and girls become anxious about school, their friends, and taking tests. They are overly concerned with how they look and compare themselves to friends and movie stars. They are looking for a relationship with the other sex. The upside to this age is that they care and are able to understand that their actions will affect their future plans. They begin to question life more and look for their own role models.

18-20 Years Old. They are growing up and show a concern for others. They can make good decisions and discover who they are and what they want in life. They usually want to help others, the environment, and/or get involved in world issues. They can express themselves in an adult manner and take a lot of pride in what they accomplish. Some are ready to leave the nest and go on to higher education or get a job. They will still need your guidance,

so be there for them as they will always come to you when they need something.

Your children will always be your children, no matter what their age. Think back on how you felt when you were twenty, thirty, or even forty. Maybe you went to your own parents or grandparents for needs financially or looking for help to make a decision. The door doesn't close just because they've reached adulthood. They will always need you, but sometimes you just have to wait until they come to you. After all, you've raised them to be independent, and now they are on their own!

DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES TO HELP YOUR CHILD GROW

0-6 Months of Age

Tummy Time is an exercise to do when your baby is awake. Put them on their tummy and lay in front of them making faces or silly noises. Put colorful toys in front of them encouraging them to reach for them. This exercise should be limited to ten minutes. It will strengthen baby's neck and encourages them to raise their head. It also strengthens back muscles. By setting toys out for them to try and touch works their arm and finger muscles. You can move objects in front of them and then move the toy from right to left. This will exercise their little eye muscles.

Buzz the Bee is fun to do when your baby is on your lap. Move your hand around in the air making a buzzing sound. Your finger may land on their head or knee or even tickle their tummy. They may giggle with excitement waiting for the pretend bee to land.

Touch Tour is quick and easy. Hold your baby in your arms and show them around the house and outdoors. This gives them a better view of their new world. Look at items and call them by name. Allow them to touch the item you name. Touch windows, flowers, fruit, leaves; anything that

you aren't worried about them breaking but want them to know more about.

Water Play is fun and you only need a few simple items. You'll need a plastic tub. Fill it with two inches of water. In the tub you can put squeeze bottles, small boats, sponges, water toys. Don't put the baby in the tub as this isn't bath time. Let them put their hands in and splash and play with the toys. They will enjoy this longer than most activities and will want to play longer. If the phone rings or someone comes to the door don't respond, don't leave the baby alone with the activity. Remember that water does splash around so you might want to do this on a floor you aren't worried about getting wet.

0-6 months of age is also when we worry most about **SIDS**. SIDS stands for "Sudden Infant Death Syndrome". It is an unexplained death of an infant younger than one year of age. Most deaths due to SIDS seem to occur between the ages of two to four months of age and seem to happen more during the cold weather. **Remember to lay your baby on their back for naps and nighttime.** Remember, we talked about placing baby on their back for naps and nighttime. We talked about tummy time exercises so they do get some time on their tummy.

Here are some potential risks of SIDS:

- Smoking, drinking, or drug use during pregnancy
- Poor prenatal care
- Premature birth or low birth weight
- Mom younger than twenty years of age
- The baby's exposure to cigarette smoke
- Over heating from too many layers of clothing to sleep in
- Too much bedding; for example: pillows, padded crib liners, blankets, stuffed animals
- Sleeping on their stomach is the most common risk. Babies breathe their own air because their face is too

close to the crib. If there is a pillow or stuffed animal close by they may smother as well. Refrain from using blankets or stuffed animals until babies can move around on their own; typically one year old or older.

6 Months to 1 Year of Age

When you play, remember that your baby gets tired of doing the same thing quickly, so keep your activities to five minutes for each one you decide to do.

Blowing kisses to each other while you are in front of the mirror. Encourage your baby to copy you. Practice having them blow kisses goodbye to family members. They enjoy this activity and it is a great way for them to interact with family and friends.

Wrap it up involves finding a small box and place crackers or a toy or a small book inside. Wrap it up gently with the comic section of a newspaper because it is brightly colored, or use old wrapping paper that is brightly colored. Babies love to learn unwrapping and then it is fun to see what they have found inside.

Peek-a-boo is easy and fun to do. You can hide behind a pillow or behind a wall or curtain and then quickly show your face and say, "Peek-a-boo!" They will love this activity and giggle so much that you'll laugh too.

Pass the hat is something you can do while sitting on the floor with your baby. Have plenty of hats on the floor in a box or a basket next to you. Put one on your head, then pass it to your baby or help them put one on their head. You can put hats on their stuffed animals and dolls too. They will start to copy you and put a hat on their head and take them off. This is fun and may last up to ten minutes.

1 to 2 Years of Age

Coffee Can Drum is also a fun one to make. Take an empty coffee can and remember to keep the plastic lid top. You can cover it with contact paper. Your toddler will want to tap on it like a drum or use a wooden spoon for tapping it. Some people like to

glue or tape the top to the drum but I have found that toddlers like to store small items in their drum and then shake it to hear the noise it makes. Another easy instrument that's not too noisy is to take an empty can of soup or vegetables and put duct tape or contact paper on one end and then add uncooked, raw kidney beans or chickpeas in the can. Tape the other end shut and decorate the entire can with contact paper. Your toddler can shake this and listen to the noise it makes. You can find beans in your grocery store or food pantry. Remember to buy the uncooked ones that come in a plastic bag.

Short and tall is an activity to help your child learn that things are different heights. Get some paper towel rolls and cut them into different sizes. Cover them if you wish with different colored paper. You can use contact paper, tissue paper, wrapping paper, or even paint them with water based tempera paint. Encourage your toddler to line them up from shortest to tallest. Store the rolls in a shoe box when you are done and until you play this again.

Balloon toss teaches your toddler how to bounce, throw, and hit a balloon. It is like baseball. You can even bounce the balloon off of your head. You can sit three feet from each other on the floor and practice tossing them to each other. Your toddler will improve catching and throwing with this activity. You can have them bat with an old paper towel roll. When you are done, make certain you put the balloons away, or better yet, pop the balloons and throw them away so your toddler isn't tempted to bite one or your dog might get one, because when they pop, a baby or family pet might choke on them. Never leave balloons around your children unless they are supervised.

2 to 3 Years of Age

Follow the Leader. Have your child(ren) follow what you do. It's like *Simon Says* but instead you say things for them to do. They can still play if they don't get it quite right. Things you might say and do are: touch your toes, reach for the ceiling, shake your hands, put your hands on your head, put your hands on your knees, jump up and down, and turn in circles.

Freeze is a good inside activity. Turn the stereo, radio, or CD player on. Have them walk around the room in a large circle. When you stop the music say “FREEZE!” And your children stop like a statue or they can make a funny face, or stand in a funny way for about twenty seconds. Then start the music up and stop again and say, “FREEZE!” It burns up some of their energy and they love to freeze for about twenty seconds when the music stops.

Matching colors is a game to help them identify colors. Buy a packet of colored construction paper. Cut the paper to make two sets of colored cards. Set one set on the right and one set with the same colors on the left. Hold up a red one and say, “This is red card, can you find the other red card in the other pile?” Start with just a few colors like red, blue, and green. After a few weeks you can add harder colors like yellow, brown, black, and purple. Store cards in a zip lock bag for future use.

Teeth brushing is not only a good game but a good thing to practice daily for healthy teeth. You’ll need two toothbrushes and children’s toothpaste. Children’s toothpaste doesn’t have a strong taste and they will want to use it if it tastes like orange or bubblegum. When a toddler’s first tooth arrives it is time to learn this activity. Help them by brushing your own teeth in front of them as well as in front of a mirror. Give them their own tooth brush. You can guide them by helping their hand and guiding the brush up and down. They might also want to practice on their dolls or stuffed animals without paste. This morning and night time activity will help prevent costly dental problems later on. Don’t forget to rinse with water and spit it out in the sink.

3 to 4 Years of Age

Story telling keeps your child thinking and lengthens their attention span. Read your child their favorite book. Ask them who their favorite person in the story is. Ask them to tell you how the story ends. Ask them to make up a new ending. Ask them how one of the characters in the story felt. This gives you the chance to talk about feelings like sad, scared, and happy. Ask what their favorite part of the story was and why.

Watch clouds when you lie down in the grass and look up. Talk about how clouds are formed. Water evaporates (leaves) the earth and when it reaches the sky it becomes a cloud. When it soaks up lots of water from the lakes and streams it forms rain. When a cloud touches the earth it is called fog. Gaze up and look for shapes in the clouds.

Mapping is a way to help your child(ren) with direction. Make a map of your town. Point out where you live, where their friends live, where relatives live. Find the part on the map, the library, beach, and playground. Talk about where you live and what surrounds you.

Matching numbers helps your child to identify and count their numbers. You'll need index cards and old magazines, some glue, and markers. On one set of cards write the numbers 1 through 10. On the other set of cards draw or cut out pictures from magazines that match the number; cut them out and glue onto the cards. For example, three purses, two flours, four birds. Lay the cards out face up and have your child match the written number to the card with the same number of objects.

These activities suggested may help your child be better prepared for pre-school, young five's, or kindergarten. By now you'll be looking into a program that meets your needs to help your child continue on their path of learning.

UNIT TWO: DISCIPLINE

With each age comes different disciplining. Children develop at different rates and depending on their age they need different discipline. For example: a two year old needs to be in bed before a six year old. A two year old will have a difficult time sitting still at the dinner table, where a six year old can sit longer and finish a

meal. On the following pages we will go over some guidelines for developmentally appropriate discipline.

AGE APPROPRIATE DISCIPLINE

Babies **do not** need discipline.

Babies **need** love and care.

They cry for a **reason**.

Maybe they are hungry, or have a wet or dirty diaper or maybe they have a tummy ache or are overtired because time flew by and you forgot to put them down for a nap. Check to see if your baby is overly warm. They might be bundled up too much or they may be running a fever. Once you've checked everything out your baby might just need some sleep so a quiet rocking or burping them might help.

Remember: if you get angry, **walk away**.

Let the baby rest.

Eighteen months to 3 years of age is a good time to let your child know what a good job they are doing and let them know when they are doing something you don't approve of.

Redirecting is a good way to change a bad situation into a better one when your child is misbehaving. For example: if they are fighting with someone over a toy, show them another toy to play with. If they are heading towards someone or something you know will get them into trouble pick them up and face them in a different direction and show them something else they might be interested in. You'll hear people talk about the terrible two's, but more often than not, toddlers have the hardest time listening and following your directions when they are around three years of age. They want to let you know they think they know how to do everything and will want to do everything for themselves.

When you correct or even try to help them they may throw themselves on the floor and hit the ground with their fists, they may throw and break something, they may punch you or punch their

brother or sister, or even kick the dog. When this happens and it will, remember to take a deep breath and carry them over to a quiet place for a time out. We'll talk more about time outs later. If your spouse or caregiver loses their cool and begins to hit and scream **it's time for them to walk away** and chill out so they don't harm the child.

It's also not a bad idea to have a babysitter once in awhile so you can take a breather from your very active three year old. Once your child is potty trained it might help you if there is a pre-school they can attend. This will give the two of you some relief from each other and will also begin to hold your child responsible from someone other than their parent. It's surprising how well they sometimes listen to a stranger and not to their parent or grandparent. It has to do with seeing you more often and they know you will always love them no matter what their behavior is.

Yes, toddlers are good at knowing when and when not to behave. Another clue to lessening this behavior is establishing a quiet or nap time, frequent healthy snacks as they are growing rapidly and a quiet bed time routine. For example: bath time, brush their teeth, followed by a story and some quiet time in their own bed with a favorite book or a quiet toy. You may still need to sit in their room on the floor or nearby until they settle down. Try not to talk to them during this time as that will encourage them to get out of bed to play.

4 to 12 years of age will usually respond when they are told they are doing a good job and will respond when you let them know you are unhappy with what they are doing. This is also a good time to make charts for the child so they can see that good behavior results in a reward such as a cookie, candy, allowance, posters, extra time to play with a friend, playing a board game with mom or dad, or screen time (just some ideas). The key is to be consistent. If you get tired of their whining and give in, it will only be harder next time you are in the same situation. Your child has learned they can wear you down. Establish rules (and boundaries) for the house and in the grocery store and in the car. When you write the rules out for them to see it's easier for them to follow. A four year old can't really read yet so you might want to draw a picture of what you want them to do. Remember when you were in

school and the teacher wrote the rules on the board? He or she did this so they wouldn't have to keep saying them again and again.

Make certain you talk about the rules first before enforcing them. Children need to understand the behavior that is good and the behavior that is not so good and why they are being disciplined. When you are consistent, your child(ren) will listen better.

Often time, parents will use the discipline of counting to three. Let them know ahead of time what will happen if you finish counting to three and then do what you say will happen. For example: if your child escapes through the store and you yell their name and say, "_____ that's one," if they keep away and not listen then say, "_____ that's two!" If you have to say three, then go and get your child and follow through with what you said would happen. This may mean a time out or leaving the store. Letting your child(ren) do or have something they really want then they are doing well helps them to keep their behavior in check.

13 to 16 year olds need positive reinforcement more so when you catch them being good as their self-esteem is usually low during this period in their lives. They have mood swings as their body begins to change. Be aware that it isn't that they don't like you, they are fighting inside with how they feel and they usually take it out on you. Don't take it personally.

When they don't follow your rules it is okay to not allow them to do something they enjoy or not have something they usually use a lot of. Grounding them is good, but remember, grounding a child for a week or more creates punishment for you as well as you want them to be involved with this activity or your might not be consistent with keeping them from doing something. Short term has a better effect than long term. For example grounding for a weekend has more effect than grounding for two weeks.

Some extra notes on disciplining that are important: Not all children feel bad when they have done something they shouldn't have. To begin helping them understand that their actions affect someone else, consequences and talking about your own feelings

such as, “I feel bad when you hit your sister,” is a good start. It is also important to have a child say they are sorry to another person if they have hurt them either physically or with their words. It is best to have them say this after they have cooled down or are better able to say what they feel. Learning to say you are sorry is something that will help them later as adults.

Speaking of adults, it is important that parents agree on how they discipline. You may have grown up in a household where everyone was hit and your significant other may have grown up in a house where they yelled at each other or they went to different rooms to cool off. Everyone was raised differently. We all have a tendency to raise our children like we were raised unless you personally make an effort to change it. It is best that the two of you talk about discipline when you are calm and not mad at each other or the kids. When children see you argue about the discipline they will take sides immediately and start to encourage one parent to be angry with the other. When you and your significant other don't agree and the children see this it only encourages them to go back and forth between the two of you with hopes of having one of you agree with them.

Make rules, keep them, review them, talk about them, and change them when you need to, but change them together.

ANGER MANAGEMENT: YOURS AND THEIRS

As a parent you can become overwhelmed with keeping your child calm and happy while you are busy taking care of other children, cleaning the house, answering the phone, or the front door. Sometimes you will experience your own problems, like not being able to pay your bills, or when you get angry with your partner, or you just feel lonely. Please don't take this out on your baby or older children. These situations can make even the most patient person get angry.

DEALING WITH YOUR CHILDREN AND FEELING ANGER OR RESENTMENT

If you are a new parent or one that has many children to care for, it is easy to get angry with a crying baby. Shaking the baby can cause “Shaken Baby Syndrome.” Shaking your baby or young child when you are angry can cause them to become blind, have learning problems, or even death. Unfortunately, this does not only happens in babies, but can also happen to a child up to five years of age.

Please talk with someone if you had been abused as a child growing up or if you become angry easily. Talking to someone will help you. You can talk to a family member, your doctor or nurse, a good friend, or your campus supervisor here at Joppa House. Sometimes you might just need someone to come over and babysit so you can go for a walk to clear your head. Exercise can also help you feel better again.

Using “I” statements are important. Whenever you are in a disagreement with your partner or your child, say what makes you unhappy by starting with “I” as the first word in your sentence. For example: “I feel disappointed when you don’t listen to me.” Or, “I am angry and feel hurt when you hit your brother.” This helps a person to feel less threatened and they are more apt to listen to you. Now might be a good time to write out and share with your case manager a situation that made you angry and discuss what you can do about it. On a separate piece of paper write out the answers to the following questions and/or statements and share with your case manager the next time you meet.

1. I get angry when...
2. Things I can do to calm down are...
3. If my partner and I don’t agree on how to discipline, here are some things we should do about it...
4. Why is it important to use “I” statements instead of starting with the word, “You”?

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING STRUCTURE AND A ROUTINE IN YOUR HOME

When your child knows what's going to happen next they are more relaxed, less anxious and willing to help, learn and grow. When you visit your child's classroom you will see written on a white board or poster the schedule when they are taught math, reading, science, and even when they have lunch and recess. This is important because children are often anxious and curious about that happens next. Seeing it written out gives them a sense of security of what we will take place next. Just like in school it's also good to have a schedule at home.

Keeping the same wake up time and bed time helps your child to get a better nights sleep. You might let them stay up a little bit later on a weekend, but by a little later I wouldn't make it more than an hour later. They will still want to get up at the same time the following morning and may become tired and cranky.

Going to bed and getting up at the same time has health benefits. They feel rested, so they have energy and want to learn and do new things. Their brains begin to tell them it's time to go to bed even before you look at a clock for the time. That same brain pattern wakes them up in the morning.

Mealtime Schedule

Growing toddlers and children right into their teens need healthy snacks between your meal times. To reduce their craving for sweets try buying fresh fruit and vegetables when they are in season. Even a small dish of yogurt will help hold them over until mealtime.

It is also good to have your child on a regular meal time schedule as well. Eating around the same time helps your growing child to digest their food and keep them from wanting to eat all day. When they say they are hungry sometimes they are just bored. Did you ever notice that when your child is busy playing they forget to eat?

Having fresh water is important for keeping them well and hydrated. Sometimes a child who hasn't had water in their day will become tired, cranky, and may even get a headache. The organs in our body need water daily to keep things in working order. Water can help them feel full so be careful how much they have

before eating. Water can help keep their bowel movements regular. A constipated child is not a happy one. If they do have problems in this area, a glass of apple juice mixed with prune juice will help them go to the bathroom.

Bathing Schedule

When it comes to bathing most babies and small children take one daily bath. If lack of water or your busy schedules keeps this from happening than at least one bath every couple of days. The benefit of having a daily routine of a bath before bed helps create a quiet time and a time for you to spend quality one on one time with your child.

Make certain you have a lotion that is comforting for your baby and child's skin as their skin is still young and can dry out after bathing.

Bedtime Schedule

Besides having meals at regular times and baths it's also important to include the routine of bath, brushing teeth, bedtime story, and then bed time. This routine when followed daily will help your child fall into a pattern of knowing what comes next and they will be more apt to follow it. There are always times when things don't go as planned but give yourself a break as tomorrow you can try again. Most children do not like bedtime so having a routine helps them to fall asleep.

As your baby and child reaches certain growth spurts they may not want to be alone so sitting in the same room with them for awhile may help them to settle down. This is not a time to get mad at them or talk to them as that provides them with attention. Sit quietly until they can settle in and then leave quietly once they are sleeping. As time passes they become used to this routine and they know you will not get angry or talk continually they will soon fall asleep. If you need to spend the night elsewhere the new surroundings will make them feel scared so you need to be aware of changes you are also making and what their needs are.

Infants have the widest range of needs. They need anywhere from ten and a half hours to eighteen hours of sleep a day. This is normal.

Babies up to about one year have sleep patterns that are predictable. In other words you can almost look at a clock and know when they need a nap and bedtime. Babies need one to

four naps a day and may nap from thirty minutes to two hours. As they get closer to their first birthday they will need nine to twelve at night and usually two naps at least two hours each.

Toddlers from one to three usually have one midday nap and sleep twelve or more hours at night. From the ages of three to five nap times will begin to be as needed and then not at all. Most preschoolers need eleven to thirteen hours of sleep each night. Ages five to twelve do best with a solid ten to eleven hours of sleep at night. Teenagers need nine hours of sleep a night.

ARRGGG... BUT MY TODDLER WON'T SLEEP!

Are they getting up very early? If they are in bed by 7:00 pm and they have slept eleven hours, their internal alarm clock says "Let's get up and play at 6:00 am!" If they are wide awake during the day, try moving bedtime to later in the evening. If they are cranky by 10:00 am they may have not slept well. They may need a nap but if they argue about it just say they need a quiet time and to stay in bed quietly for thirty minutes with a small book for them to look at.

Sometimes young children don't sleep well because they are hungry. It's okay to give them some fruit or whole grain crackers thirty minutes before bedtime. When it's still sunny out and the sunlight keeps them awake, try getting darker shades or hang a blanket over the window.

When can we cut out naps?

When your toddler whines and has a bad attitude they clearly need a nap. Most toddlers refuse to nap because they don't want to miss out on what you or a sibling may be doing.

Don't argue with an overtired child. They just don't understand. Give them some quiet time. Nap time can become routine just like bedtime. It helps if you do some physical things in the morning like running in the park, playing catch with a ball, and then later in the afternoon quiet activities like coloring. Remember arguing with them won't work. Tell them they need quiet time and you do too! They can go in their room to rest. Eventually they will fall asleep, if

this goes on for a couple of weeks than your child may no longer need a nap. Most kids stop napping at three years of age but some children will need them until they are six.

INTERNET RESOURCES

As a parent in this generation you've been given opportunities your mom and grandma never had. One of those is the internet. You can connect with friends, family, and ask for advice at a moment's notice. You can pick up a book that is online if you don't have it at home. There are many, many websites available to you that will give you the information you need on just about any topic.

Some of the ones I've included below will help you understand your child's developmental stages and discipline.

Ten Scientific Tips for Raising Happy Kids

www.livescience.com

Behavior, Health, and Emotional Needs of Your Child

www.kidshealth.org

A guide to letting you know what to expect with each stage of your child's development from a doctors perspective

www.webmd.com

Seven Tips for Practicing Positive Discipline

www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/seven-tips-for-practicing-positive-discipline

Another wonderful free resource that is right here in our community is the Charlevoix Public Library. You can find a schedule for all the resources and events for children on their website: **www.charlevoixlibrary.org**

TIME OUTS

Giving your child (or yourself) a time out keeps your anger in check. Rather than lashing out with words or hitting, a time out gives you both some time to chill out.

The standard rule is having your child sit on a couch, chair, floor, or porch stoop for one minute for every year of their age. After their minutes are up this is usually followed by your explaining what they did that you are unhappy about. This can be followed by them having them say they are sorry to you or whomever they bothered.

Part of disciplining is having them tell you what they think they did wrong. If they are young such as three years old then you can tell them what they did that wasn't very nice. You do this when you are both calm. When you talk with your child afterwards it is a way of reconnecting with them. It is important to connect with your child so they don't feel unloved or abandoned. For example: bend down on one knee at their eye level and look at them to speak.

Some things you might hear yourself needing to say are: "You are mad but no biting is allowed." Or, "You wish you could play longer, but it is time for bed, so I want you to get ready for bed now." Or, "You are upset and angry and I understand that." When your child feels they are being heard or understood the behavior may improve.

Here are some more words that are helpful to say:

- "I know it's fun to play, but sometimes it is bedtime and that makes you sad." Then follow up with your bedtime routine.
- "I know you don't like it when I say no but we don't say 'shut up' to each other."
- Or, "it is okay to be mad at momma, but use your words and say you are mad instead of hitting and screaming."

This is a good time to bring up spanking. As a parent, grandparent, teacher, and counselor, my suggestion is next time you get angry and want to hit someone or spank, tell your kids you're taking a time out. Go to the bathroom and run the water and maybe splash some on your face. Take a few deep breaths.

From my own experience I have concluded that spanking and hitting of any sort increases aggressive behavior in children. They are more likely to hit other siblings and children at school and

maybe even you. Later in life they may have relationship problems where they are frustrated and can't talk it out, but instead, hit.

Maybe you were spanked or hit and feel you've turned out just fine. But what if you hadn't been hit or spanked? You might even feel better about yourself right now. I see more depression, aggression, and anxiety in children who were hit than those that were not.

If you need some help, there is a woman by the name of Dr Jane Nelson who wrote a book about "Positive Discipline". She also talks about positive discipline in another book written by Judy Arnall, "Disciple Without Distress" that works as a guide for raising responsible kids. "The Explosive Child" by Dr Ross Greene is helpful for raising a strong willed child. These books can be ordered online, viewed on your Kindle or in your Kindle app, or they may be downloaded for you to read right here while you are staying at Joppa House.

UNIT THREE: QUALITY TIME

In this unit we will talk about the importance of sharing your time with your child and positive ways of improving their behavior. We will give you some ideas to help your child appreciate the environment around them. You will also have the opportunity to share your own feelings about attending school and whether or not you felt your own parents were supportive. Keep in mind that as your child grows, you will too, and these units will help you to understand parenting as well as the responsibilities that go along with being a parent.

In this unit we will be talking about quality time. Examples of quality time include reading time, sporting events, positive reinforcement, integrating school work and parental involvement, extra-curricular events, and affection.

PHYSICAL ABILITY

Let's begin by talking about your child's physical ability. As your child grows their body will be a bit clumsy at first, but those large muscles begin to work better when you play things like catch or run and play tag. From the time they can run, which is shortly after they begin to walk, they will want to throw things and to see the power they have over the object they've thrown. Since we don't want your toddler throwing stones at other children or throwing objects that might break or hurt someone, it's a good idea to start with a large, soft object to throw.

Some balls are made just for the purpose of improving your child's ability to catch. Look for round rubber balls with little knobs on them to help them grasp or have them toss a balloon to each other. The balloon is soft and won't break anything, just be careful if/when it pops. As we talked about earlier in the "Stages of Development" it is a good idea to put the balloon away or pop it so your child or pet won't get it and choke on it. By the time your toddler learns to toss they will also improve in kicking and the ability to turn and run. If they have an older sibling that plays a sport, it is a good idea to bring your little one along. They may catch on how to kick a soccer ball or they have a small bat they can hit a ball. Tiger Woods was only two years old when his dad taught him to golf. Yes, he was probably very capable at a young age, but your own child may surprise you with what they are able to do as well.

GOOD SPORTS

Having your young child start in sporting events such as t-ball, soccer, little league, snowboarding, skiing, swimming will help their large motor skills. When they get older they may be interested in joining a team. Being a part of a team helps your child to learn to get along with others. It reminds them of the importance of taking turns, sharing, and working together. If they wear a uniform it will help them feel like they belong. This will help with their self-esteem and provide them with a little discipline that comes with working together as a unit.

If you don't have the money that might be needed for your child to join a team or purchase a uniform, please don't be shy. There are usually plenty of scholarships available. The Charlevoix Recreation Department is very helpful in finding the necessary funds for children to participate in sporting activities. Unless you ask, no one will know, so be certain to speak up.

You can help out with your child's participation in sports by asking what you can do to help as well. Sometimes soccer, t-ball, or other sporting activities need an extra parent to help hand out snacks, keep score, and/or call and remind parents of upcoming dates. It is important to do your part too. When your child sees you take an active interest they will become involved and will want to help others as well. This is a time for you to role model what parenting is all about.

Side note: when your child participates on a sports team it is not your job to coach, make fun of, or put down your child, another child, or the person acting as the referee or the coach. It is your job to support your child and cheer them on. Criticizing other people involved will only make you look like a parent who has anger issues and does not know how to get along with others. This should be a fun time for everyone and remember this isn't the major leagues. This is a time for your child to explore and learn new things. This time also gives them a time to shine outside in the fresh air.

JOYS OF NATURE

It is important that your child understand their outside environment as well. There are so many bugs and butterflies, worms, and creepy crawlies all about. Children love to watch the sun as it moves across the sky and watch the leaves move on the trees when a breeze comes through. They love to lie down in the grass and look up at the clouds, the sun, and the moon. They enjoy listening to tree frogs, crickets, and song birds. This is a time to teach your child about the earth, seeds, planting, and watching things grow. Maybe by the time your child is three it would be nice to plant a garden together or grow a plant indoors if it's winter time.

When your children see how you care about plants and they watch things grow you can explain that they are growing too and

they need water, food, and fresh air, just like the plants. You can let them know that moms, dads, and people who care about them, want to take care of them, and watch them grow too!

Your child will learn to respect their environment and be kind to our planet by your planting a garden together, mushrooming, recycling, carefully picking up litter, returning pop cans to the store, being careful not to damage trees, shrubs, and flowers in the neighborhood.

As your children grow, you will grow with them. The quality time you are able to spend with them will help you to maintain a better relationship with them later down the road.

READING TOGETHER

One of the best ways I can think of to bond with a young child is through reading stories to them. That quiet time where you read and they look at the pictures in wonderment. Ask them what they think will happen next in the story. They never tire of the same story for you to read again and again. You might wonder how they don't get tired of the story. It's because they like the story, they know how it will end, it is something they can easily follow, and most importantly, they love that they have your undivided attention. From birth to as long as they'll let you, reading to your child is probably one of the most important learning experiences that can take place between you and your child. When they see you read they will begin to pick up a book and read too. They will want to model and copy you because they look up to you and they want to be just like you.

Lap sit and read sessions are free at the Charlevoix Public Library. The youth librarian will read a story to all of the children in attendance, most of infants, and some as old as five. After the story there is a discussion about what happened in the story. Sometimes an activity will follow after the story. Check with the library to see when lap sit read will take place!

When you are not at the library you can read together at home, in a park, in the car, or even while waiting at the doctor's office. The bigger and brighter the pictures, the more interested children become. Children from the age of two will love to point things out in a picture book. For example: you can say, "Where is the frog?"

Or, “Where is the fire truck?” They will begin to enjoy recognizing items you’ve taught them about and finding them in the book. It builds their self-esteem when you let them know that, “Yes, there’s the frog,” or “Good job! You found the fire truck!” After recognition you can add, “What kind of sound does a truck make?” Or “What kind of sound does a fire truck make?”

Finding and recognizing items in a book helps them to relate to things they see in real life. By adding the sound will reinforce what they have learned. If you teach your child the sound an animal makes it is fun to take a field trip to a farm so they can actually see and hear the animal they have been reading and learning about.

If you read stories about fire trucks and then take them to the fire department, they will have a better understanding about what the fire department does to keep us safe. The same pertains to reading about police cars and visiting the police station. Both the fire and police departments in Charlevoix enjoy having children visit and will often provide a tour. They may even give your child a souvenir!

AFFECTION

Besides team sport, reading together, and appreciating nature, another quality that is important when raising your child is affection. It can be shown in words and in actions. When it comes to affection, your child will never tire of hearing how proud you are of them and that you love them. Just as we as adults appreciate kind words from our significant others, friends, family, and co-workers, our children will blossom with positive affirmations and kind words. When your child is doing something you don’t approve of it is okay to say, “I feel bad,” or “I am disappointed that you didn’t tell the truth,” or “It makes me sad when you are not nice to your sister.”

Affection is also physical; such as a hug, high five, a kiss, and just walking hand in hand. When your child sees you hugging a friend or kissing your own mom goodbye or giving someone a thumbs up, they will begin to do the same. The same would happen if they witnessed you hurting someone or a pet, or throwing an object. Remember that they are watching you even when you think they aren’t.

Being kind to one another is one of the best qualities a parent can teach a child. It is important to remember that positive reinforcement works better in the long run than corporal punishment. Keep in mind that words speak harder than a fist. We remember what people tell us and how it makes us feel. It has been proven that it will take four positive comments to lessen the one negative comment made.

Catch your child being good and remember to say, “Wow, I am so happy you picked up your toys!” Or, “You make me feel so good when I see you working on your school work.” Or, even, “I am so proud of you for sharing your treat with your brother.”

You can physically let your child see how happy you are with a hug, thumbs up, or just your smile. If you are using charts to reward behavior, stars and smiley faces can be counted up together to remind your child they are doing well. Below is an example of an easy behavior chart for your child to follow:

Activity	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
Picked up toys							
Brushed teeth							
Helped mom							
Read book							

You can decide on the reward whether it be an allowance, playing a game together, or going to the park. Just make certain it is something you can follow through with. It does not have to be anything expensive. This is not supposed to be a punishment for you, but something that will help your child follow through and learn responsibility.

The qualities of parenting that we have covered will help you to be more involved as a parent in your child’s life. These qualities also spill into your child’s school work and extracurricular activities.

As a parent it is your responsibility to see their schoolwork, visit their school and meet with their teacher. Maybe you were someone who grew up struggling with school, were afraid of teachers, or maybe your parents became very angry with you when you did not understand your schoolwork or finish your homework.

Now is the time to let your earlier fears or concerns to be left behind as you take care of your own children. If you have concerns or fears from the past make sure to bring them up with your counselor and/or case manager and discuss them. Talking about what bothered you growing up, attending school, or your own parents' behavior or lack of involvement will help you to be a better parent. Being open to new ideas and following a consistent schedule will help you and your child.

Use these questions and journal your thoughts. Talk about them with your case manager the next time you meet.

- 1. What are your feelings about school and teachers?**
- 2. Were your parents supportive during your school years?**
- 3. What do you remember most about attending school?**
- 4. Did you participate in activities after school? Were you on a sports team?**

Answering and discussing these questions with your case manager and with your housemates will help you to understand that others may have had similar experiences with their schooling. By talking and sharing you will hopefully realize that you do have support from others. There is always the possibility of making change as we all have choices to make.

By making choices that help your child you are helping to make the world a little brighter and better. You are also making your life easier and your child will never forget the things you said and did for them.

Parenting is not an easy job, but it truly is the most rewarding.

You've been doing great in this module so far and I know that I am proud of you. Give yourself a hug for working so hard on all the units you have finished so far.

In the next unit we will talk about social issues which include how your child's behavior and attributes may affect them outside of school. We will also look at resources available to you locally and online.

UNIT FOUR: SOCIAL ISSUES

Raising a child is the most important and rewarding job you'll ever have. With information, common sense, and support from others who care about you and your child, you will look back on all you did and feel better that you tried the best you could.

Children make up twenty-five percent of the population but one hundred percent of our future. The things you choose to do now will have a lasting impact on their lives and the lives of others. I am grateful that you are involved in the Joppa House program that will help to nurture your parenting skills and in time to help you to see the big picture of how one person making change in their lives, even small changes, will have an effect on your family and your community.

Children have energy we sometimes wish we had and there are times where it gets them into trouble and drives us a little crazy. Is it normal for a child to forget homework or even how to do it? Of course it is, but to forget everyday and to feel the need to move constantly and impulsively hit, climb, touch, or move something when they've been warned not to may be a symptom of something else.

ADD/ADHD

If your child has a hard time paying attention in school and continually says, "I don't remember" they could have Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, or ADHD. Oftentimes, children who exhibit this disorder are viewed as troublemakers. They are seen as someone who is always breaking the rules. Because children are active it may be difficult to determine whether they have this disorder until they reach seven years of age.

At home you'll be pulling your hair out because of their actions and at school the teacher will say the very same. When this is happening at home, in school, and while they are playing with friends, it is time to take a closer look.

It's important to understand that not all children who have ADD are active. Children with impulsive, overactive symptoms are diagnosed with Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorder or ADHD. On the flip-side, some children appear to be daydreaming and unmotivated. This is Inattentive Attention Deficit Disorder. Many parents will ask, "How can my child have such a short attention span but focus for great lengths while playing on their computer?"

The answer is simpler than you think. If it's something they are interested in they will have an amazing ability to focus for great lengths of time. Some of our best Olympic skiers have ADHD! Children with this disorder have more difficulty focusing on something they consider boring or routine, and homework is at the tip of the list.

I've had parents tell me that their children will outgrow ADHD. I personally have not seen this happen. That is why we are hearing more and more about adults who have ADD/ADHD.

The best treatment option includes understanding how difficult it is for your child to manage themselves and not make them feel bad. They already feel bad about their behavior and get frustrated with how difficult it is to stop the behavior when their mind wanders or is working at warp speed. Behavior plans need to be put in place which would include charts, rewards, and consequences. Home and school need to keep in touch at least weekly, daily if needed.

Lots of exercise is also important. These students are the ones who need to collect materials, sharpen pencils, and drop off things to the office. Proper nutrition is important. Avoiding sugar, processed food, and foods with food coloring is recommended. As a last resort, you might consider medication. There are pros and cons and many different medications, so you would need to work closely with your child's pediatrician to find which one is best.

Children do better in a house and/or classroom where there is structure, calm, and quiet. Since there is the very busy and ADD/HS and the quiet unmotivated, inattentive ADD, here are some signs to look for:

Inattentive Attention Deficit Disorder

- ★ Doesn't want to pay attention
- ★ Makes many mistakes
- ★ Doesn't seem to listen

- ★ Can't remember things
- ★ Is not organized
- ★ Doesn't finish any work they start
- ★ Loses homework, clothes, and back pack

Hyperactive Attention Deficit Disorder

- ☆ Can't sit or stand still
- ☆ Has trouble sitting to eat
- ☆ Talks excessively
- ☆ Cannot seem to relax
- ☆ Has a quick temper
- ☆ Interrupts frequently

It is important to work with your classroom teacher, school counselor, and pediatrician before coming to this diagnosis. I have witnessed children who are going through a traumatic event, such as a death in the family or a divorce, who exhibit the very same symptoms listed above.

THE SOCIAL ISSUE OF GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS

There is another issue that will rear its head while your child is of school age: the social issue of friendships. All friendships in childhood have ups and downs. It is important to listen to what your child is telling you about their classmates. There is a difference between what a child will feel is normal in a school day and what something is that can become a serious problem.

Feelings of sadness from losing a friend or occasional teasing are what I consider normal. Your child may be able to handle friendships and take things in stride; being sad one day and then everything is okay the next. If they are anxious about attending school and have difficulty separating from mom and/or dad for the first time, it is also something that is quite natural. This occurs often with a child who does not have siblings or never had many babysitters or parents that may live apart.

Shyness. For some children who are quiet and shy they may become the victim of teasing and bullying. They will complain of

stomach or headaches and it continues every day and appears to be getting worse. Or, maybe your child is belligerent and argumentative with you or their siblings and they have become the bully who is continually bossy and pushing others around verbally or physically. The child who is being bullied and the one who is the bully can start as early as first grade. Take time to listen to what your child is telling you so you can determine if help is needed.

By the time your child reaches third grade they will begin to develop closer friendships and exhibit more independence. Unfortunately, they may have also formed cliques where they leave others out that they don't feel look cool, have limited ability or dress differently from themselves. They decide who they feel is most like themselves or what they believe to be popular.

Children today struggle with learning how to cope and get along with all children. Watching TV for countless hours, computer/tablet time that is endless and not interacting with other children leads to more isolation and less socialization.

Conversation and using skills of working things out with one another is going by the wayside. Girls seem to be more interested in talking about their looks and buying new things they have viewed on TV or in magazines and boys emulate aggressive behavior they view on TV and on computer games.

Limits need to be set on game and TV use. Playing outside or getting your child involved in a sports team, joining groups such as Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, or in a church group is important with learning how to get along with others. Becoming a member of a positive role-modeling group lessens their desire to feel like they have no friends or that there is a need to be bossy. Check with the school your child attends and see if there may be some programs already available for your child at minimal or no cost. It is also good to check with the library and see what activities they have available for kids.

When you show interest in what your child is doing and take part in these activities as an assistant, leader, or helper, they are more apt to join in. It will be a win-win situation for you and your child. It will improve their self-esteem and yours too.

D-I-V-O-R-C-E. Another topic that is important to bring up that children deal with socially is divorce. Children of any age are adversely affected as most of them feel that, in part, they are to blame. When they see you argue about child rearing, bills to pay

for child care, school needs, and the food bill rising, they cannot help but think that they are to blame. I have never met a child who doesn't miss the parent who is absent and struggle to feel like they are not a complete family.

Extra care needs to be spent with your child if you are in this situation. They need to understand that this is a grown up problem and not theirs. Arguments with your former spouse must not be viewed or heard by your child. They will always love their other parent and to speak unkindly about them truly hurts your child. When arrangements for visitation are equal it is the child and the parents' responsibility to make certain homework assignments are completed and not forgotten at one or the other's home. Playing any blame games is not warranted. Ever. If visitation is limited due to substance use or other circumstances, the Friend of the Court is your recourse to mediate situations you are uncomfortable with.

If at some point you begin to date someone else please do not bring them into your child's life until you are in a serious relationship. Frequent dating partners and time spent away from your child is a message that your social life is more important than time spent with them. You are sending a poor relationship message to your child when they see you with many different partners. They will follow what you do when they reach their teen years and beyond.

Be careful of excessive drinking and partying. Just because you may be unhappy this is not the message you want your children to learn. If possible, have your child receive counseling in a school support program or other programs that may be in your community for children going through divorce. They need to know they are not alone and that life can go back to being normal with mom and dad not living together anymore. Counseling for yourself is also advisable as divorce has a lasting impact on the decisions your child makes in the future whether it is dating, marriage, or having children.

School Safety. Physical issues at school can mean anything from how they are perceived and treated as I mentioned earlier, the victims or the bully, to how the actual physical classroom is set up. Children respond to structure, having a schedule to follow, quiet time, and feeling safe.

Make certain you understand the rules and policies of the school your child attends. Can anyone just walk into the building?

Are there policies in place to keep your child safe whether it is weather related, bullying, or uninvited adults in the room? Are there programs and people available to help your child when they are in need? Is there a before and/or after school program if you need a safe space for your child(ren) to arrive early or stay late to school? These are just some of the questions that come to mind, but you may have others as well. Make sure to write them down and chat with your child's school leadership.

Bullying. Bullying takes many forms. It can be verbal, such as name calling, gossiping, or on TikTok, Snapchat, and other social channels. It can be physical with body force, hitting, and pushing. It can be written word via texting, notes, letters, direct messaging, tweeting, and blogging. It can be done by one person or a group. It exists when nothing is done to change the behavior. It occurs in most cultures and countries and is not a symptom of being poor or uneducated. It happens because human nature drives us to feel threatened at times and we are all, for the most part, insecure. How we treat one another falls upon how we were raised and what we were exposed to.

Many bullies are children or adults who feel picked on themselves and take their feeling out on others. In other words, bullies are often victims as well.

With young girls, bullying usually begins with telling rumors, gossiping, nasty messages, and making other girls feel uncomfortable by leaving them out.

Boys are usually verbal by saying things face-to-face to others and then becoming physical. Overall, the bullying by girls is not as easy to detect as they are mindful of being caught and can become devious, whereas boys tend to act out their emotions so that all can see.

Watch and listen to what your child is saying and watch how they treat others. What are they watching on TV, what games are they playing, and who are they hanging out with? As children's bodies mature there is more teasing about body size, weight, and stages of puberty. Always be open to discuss your child's feelings about how they are feeling about themselves.

Cyber Bullying. Cyber bullying has increased with the availability of technology. If your child has withdrawn from family and friends and spends more time in their room, please check in on

them. Whether your child is the bully or they are the victim it is important to take this seriously. You may think your child is overreacting, but what seems like no big deal to us is a huge deal to them.

It is important to set rules on the computer, phone, tablet, and TV use. Make rules and follow through with them. Don't be afraid to ask for help for your child if they continue to have difficulty not wanting to attend school, sleep, or eat. Reach out to the school, other parents, and law enforcement.

Encourage your child to get involved in other forms of computer use, such as digital art, photography, composing music, or designing their own video games. They are still using technology they enjoy, but in a positive mode.

SPECIAL EDUCATION AND DISABILITIES

Your child may value from the services offered through the schools regarding educational programming if there is a special need. Federal Law mandates that children are to receive these services if they qualify. A major part of this process is you, as the parent, recognizing the need, asking for help, and agreeing to that help for your child.

No testing will be done without your consent. If you do agree to test, nothing further will be done unless you accept the program that will be put in place for your child. As a parent, you always have the final say.

As a former school counselor, I remember many parents who felt their child should not receive any special services because it might result in negative attention. On the other side of this, I have witness parents who have openly discussed their own learning difficulties in school and how grateful they are that someone is taking the time and interest to help their child.

Children who need services feel better about themselves because they are happy that a teacher or parent finally understands that school is difficult for them and they cannot complete what others are doing.

After testing by a school psychologist and a learning disabilities diagnostician, the results are shared in a meeting with you and the

classroom teacher where decisions can be made to best help you and your child.

AUTISM AND ASPERGER'S SYNDROME

In this module we have already mentioned ADD/ADHD which affects a child, but lately we have been hearing and reading more about Autism and Asperger's. Both of these disabilities fall under the same spectrum, which means they are similar.

Autism and Asperger's generally appear within the first three years of a child's life. Symptoms include:

- ▶ No babbling and cooing as an infant
- ▶ No response to their name as a toddler
- ▶ No smiling
- ▶ Poor eye contact
- ▶ Excessive lining up of their toys as a toddler
- ▶ At school age they have difficulty getting along with others
- ▶ They don't understand facial expressions
- ▶ They have to follow a routine and to changing it upsets them terribly
- ▶ They will offend someone by what they say
- ▶ They appear clumsy and usually do not want to compete in sports or physical games

Autism ranges from mild to severe and there may be another disability present as well. Testing by a licensed psychologist who is familiar with this disability will help you begin the process of getting the help you need.

There is no known cure, but early identification and understanding how and why your child reacts to others in school and at home will help you to be more understanding.

Educational programming is available as well as family counseling. Medication may be needed depending upon the severity of your child's Autism. The medication often helps with additional diagnoses that may also be present, such as ADD/ADHD, Tourette's, or obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).

Asperger's is a form of Autism. Just as in Autism you will see similar symptoms, but this child will be able to communicate. They

will speak, but can offend because they do not filter what they say. They seem to be exceptionally talented in a particular area, usually computers, math, or music. It is helpful for the child to have both the school and home set up a reward system to reward positive behavior and a support group to work on social skills. Medication may also be helpful as anxiety, depression, and OCD may also exist.

They, too, will have few, if any friends. The conversation is not true conversation as they will talk on and on about a specific topic without hearing what you need to share. Noises, smell, and touch affect them differently than most of us. They may have a routine such as brushing teeth first and then washing their face when getting up in the morning or going to bed. They would find it very difficult to change this routine.

LET'S REVIEW AND DISCUSS

- ☑ Often times when your child has a difficult time learning it may be genetic. Was school difficult for you? Are there family traits on your side or your spouse's that are similar to your child's? Sometimes it skips a generation so be certain to think about grandma or grandpa's behavior or learning ability as well. Discuss and share with your case manager how attending school was for you growing up.
- ☑ Using "I" statements, role playing with another member present on asking for help at your child's school. For example: "I am concerned about my child. They seem to be in trouble and it is the same at home. What can I do to help my child?" This exercise encourages and helps you to practice asking for help and in a manner that is positive and not demanding or blaming.
- ☑ Practice Reflective Listening. Listening to your child requires letting them know they have feelings. When we listen reflectively it helps your child to be less upset and to use their words instead of throwing tantrums. Reflective listening states how your child feels and they feel understood.
 - ☑ For instance, if your child says, "The teacher is mean and unfair. I hate school!" You can respond by saying, "You're feeling angry and disappointed. I can

understand how you would feel like giving up.” Or, “I am so mad that Billy isn’t coming over to play with me. I am bored and there is nothing to do.” You can respond with, “It seems as if no one cares and you’re feeling left out.”

- ☑ These types of answers encourage your child to talk about their feelings. Had you answered “get over it! Things don’t always go the way we want them to. Time to grow up,” your child will feel more frustrated and begin acting out. This, in turn, will lead to an argument.
- ☑ Avoid responses which ignore how your child is feeling. Mutual respect involves accepting how your child feels. Avoid nagging and put downs.
- ☑ Recall how you felt when your significant other or another adult didn’t really listen to what you were saying. How did it make you feel?

RESOURCES

As soon as you begin to question yourself as to why your child may be behind developmentally or they seem to be more anxious, active, or unhappy, the following places are available to go to for help:

Your pediatrician has been trained to recognize stages of your child’s development and will have taken professional coursework on current trends and information regarding ADD, ADHD, and Autism. Your pediatrician is also the person you would want to talk with if you are interested in medication.

The classroom teacher can log your child’s progress and provide some information on what is viewed in the classroom and on the playground. They may ask for further testing.

Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate School District (Char-Em), or the district where you live, will be able to assess your child at no cost

to you and provide information that will be helpful whether it means special education services or someone to work one-on-one with your child in the school setting or at home if they are not yet school age.

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Thank you for working so hard on this module.

I am hopeful you found some of this information helpful.

My hope is that you may better understand your child and realize that you are not alone when it comes to parenting.

There is help when you ask for it. Children are a gift from God and you have been fortunate to receive this gift.

Parenting classes are a way of sharing, learning, and growing. We really never stop growing up and there is always something new to learn. I appreciate all you are doing and wish you all the best on your continued journey. 😊

Gayle Gennett