



# Early Learning Digest

Research-based early childhood development information provided by LifeBalance Solutions



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## Tips for Raising a Compassionate Infant-Toddler

Infants and toddlers have strong feelings, make mistakes, feel possessive, and struggle to control their impulses. Recent research shows that infants and toddlers are capable of being compassionate as well. Here are some tips to help infants and toddlers develop positive social skills.

- **Model positive behavior.** Infants imitate what they see. Saying "please" and "thank you," using words, speaking in a calm voice, helping others, and sharing help infants learn positive social behavior.
- **Read books about social interactions.** When reading to your infant, point out acts of kindness to others and talk about the emotions the characters could be experiencing.
- **Engage your inner child.** When things are upsetting your toddler, doll or puppet play can help your child explore feelings and perspectives.
- **Model gentle touch.** Encourage toddlers to walk around others rather than pushing, to leave toys in others' hands, and to use gentle touch around pets.



- **Stay calm.** When conflict breaks out, be supportive and talk about your toddler's emotions by suggesting ways to make things better.

Keep in mind that everyone learns social skills at their own pace. Early, loving relationships lay the emotional foundation for compassionate peer interactions. An infant who feels understood becomes a toddler who understands others.

Source: <http://families.naeyc.org/learning-and-development/-10-tips-raising-compassionate#sthash.aQkVmZ7L.dpuf>

## What Does School Readiness Mean?

School readiness is defined as the skills, knowledge, behaviors and accomplishments that children know and can do as they enter kindergarten. For your preschooler, this means being able to count items, know written words have meaning, develop running, skipping and hopping skills, and have some basic self-help skills, like using the bathroom and dressing.

You can support your child's readiness for school in many ways:

- **Talk to your child about what is happening around you.** Use lots of vocabulary words and describe the action.
- **Help your child understand how the world works.** How did you know how much gas cost or how did you know where to catch a bus? Make a grocery list with your preschooler and show him how to find the items in a grocery store.
- **Read to your child whenever possible.** Read at least one book a day and make it a relaxed time. Point out words in the books and the letters that spell out the words.

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help me



If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or go to [www.helpmegrowmn.org](http://www.helpmegrowmn.org)





## Responding to Toddlers' Irrational Behavior

After telling your toddler she cannot have a fourth book before bedtime, she shouts, "You're the meanest mommy ever!" Or, she throws the bowl of cereal you have given her and screams, "I wanted the red bowl, not the blue one!" Sound familiar?

These behaviors are completely normal, and signal important milestones are being achieved. Young children are driven by emotions, not logic. They live and react in the moment and have little self-control.

So what's a parent to do?

**Stay in control when your child is spiraling out of control.** When parents get reactive and emotional, it tends to escalate the child's emotional state and intensify power struggles.

**Keep in mind that you can't actually make your child do anything.** What you do have control over is how you respond to your child's actions, as this is what guides and shapes behavior. If throwing a tantrum results in getting more of your attention, your toddler is making an important assessment, realizing that by throwing a tantrum, she gets her way.

**Show empathy and validate the feeling.** For example, "I know the blue shirt is your favorite and you are really disappointed that you can't wear it today, but it's in the wash."

**Set the limit and provide acceptable choices.** "Your choice is the red or yellow shirt." If your child refuses



the choices, then you let her know that you will make the choice. She may throw a fit. Calmly put a shirt on her and move along so she can experience the consequence of her actions.

If we see these behaviors within the context of normal development, we can approach our children with empathy and be more effective in teaching good coping skills.

Source: "I Said I Want the Red Bowl! Responding to Toddlers' Irrational Behavior," by Claire Lerner, L.C.S.W.-C, <http://www.pbs.org/parents/expert-tips-advice/2015/10/said-want-red-bowl-responding-toddlers-irrational-behavior/>, retrieved October 14, 2015.

## Test Your Knowledge!

- 1) T F Developing strong relationships based on time together builds confidence in preschoolers.
- 2) T F Young children are driven by logic, not emotions.
- 3) T F Research shows that infants and toddlers are capable of being compassionate.

## What Does School Readiness Mean? Continued from page 1

- **Walk and talk with your pre-schooler.** Go to the park or provide other opportunities for your child to develop strength, endurance and motor skills.
- **Follow routines in your home so your child understands structure and can predict what will happen.** Your preschooler will learn a sense of responsibility by having tasks to do in the home. For instance, ask your child to set the table for a meal using plates and silverware. Your child will need to count plates and silverware and put them in the proper place to successfully have the table prepared for the meal.
- **Take your child to places and events in your community.** These events are rich sources of vocabulary words, problem-solving and new information.
- **Play and have fun.** Developing strong relationships based on time together and enjoyment builds confidence and a sense of value in your preschooler.

Source: "School Readiness," by Eileen Nelson, M.A., Early Childhood Specialist, [www.parentsknow.state.mn.us/parentsknow/age3\\_5/topicsAZ/PKDEV\\_000427](http://www.parentsknow.state.mn.us/parentsknow/age3_5/topicsAZ/PKDEV_000427).



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