

## Toddler Visit #8

- PIPE: Roadblocks to Learning

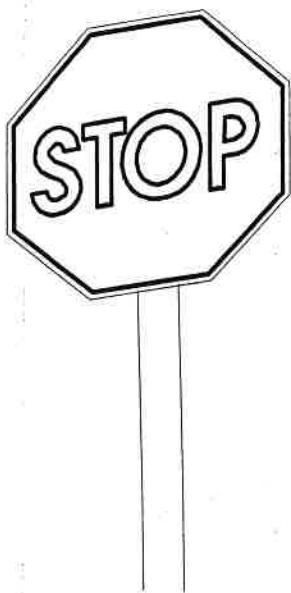


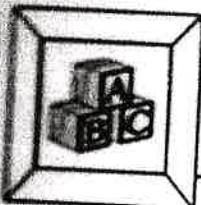
### Topics for Next Visit:

- 16 Month Growth & Development
  - Keep Baby's Teeth Healthy
    - First Aid
  - Immunizations: Myths & Facts



# Roadblocks to Learning





# Conceptual Overview

PLAY  
TOPIC 6

1. **Emotional communication can inhibit learning.** We have learned that positive emotions motivate babies and toddlers to play, to practice, and to master skills. Sharing interest and fun, making tasks into games, and praising the child's actions encourage learning. Negative emotions have the opposite effect. Negative emotions alert us to stop, withdraw, and re-evaluate what we are doing. Learning is sidetracked while the child responds to her anxious feelings and readjusts her behavior. If the joy of discovery is thwarted and pleasure of sharing is gone, learning is tedious and the feelings of mastery are taken away.
2. **Negative emotions are like hazards in the road.** They stop progress and may cause a detour. Often when you avoid the hazard or take a detour, you never return to where you were going. When babies or toddlers are faced with another person's anger, fear, or sadness, they feel these emotions. Learning gets derailed, and they begin a different thinking process, seeking to escape from the extreme emotions of the other person. A child's nervous system becomes disorganized as his thinking process becomes focused on survival. He will then tend to feel fearful or sad himself. He feels unsure, off-balance. He has lost his focus. Learning becomes paired with feelings of anxiety and defeat.
3. **Babies and toddlers imitate the emotions they experience.** Those who experience negative emotions often have more tantrums and more oppositional behavior. They can become devious and harmful to others, acting out their parents' anger or sadness in relationships with other people. Children who live with lots of strong negative emotions begin to believe they are flawed people. They learn to feel shamed and to feel devalued. They may withdraw from others and from learning.
4. **Anger is a roadblock in learning.** Many parents have been raised with anger and believe that anger will be a strong teacher. The opposite is true. Anger frightens a baby or toddler. Survival is all she can think about. She wants to escape or fight. She may become hysterical. Sometimes it takes many hours for the child to recover from her parents' anger and to be able to learn again. Often the bad dreams that toddlers have are about parents' anger toward them or toward others they know. They wonder how to mend their crucial relationship with their parent.
5. **Learning to manage anger is a skill.** An understanding of why their anger is harmful can motivate parents to try to change their behavior. There are simple techniques which can help parents. The first of these: Stop, take a big breath, ask "Why?" is often enough to refocus parents' thinking and quiet their fury.

## PLAY

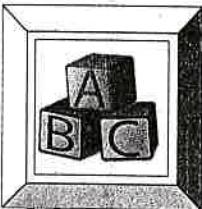
### TOPIC 6

6. Teasing is another roadblock to learning. Teasing can be a way to convey dominance or anger, by making someone else feel foolish. Teasing makes a child feel helpless. The child doesn't get a clear message, but knows that he is not OK. He is confused, off-balance. Over time, teasing may cause babies to distrust and dislike their parents. They feel devalued. Teasing sidetracks learning.
7. Babies' own emotions can be roadblocks to learning. Babies' emotional systems are as unschooled as their nervous systems. Emotions go out of control easily. Overstimulation, overexcitement, exhaustion, or fear can lead to hysteria. Often babies and toddlers need help from parents to regain their emotional and neurological balance.

In the beginning of their second year, toddlers are able to remember more things. They begin to dream, or to imagine. Their minds can recall the anger or fears that they have either experienced or witnessed. They can become overanxious and even hysterical. When a new event triggers an emotional memory, toddlers need help to regain their balance. They need to be held and feel protection and safety.

8. Controlling anger is a green light. All parents become frustrated and sometimes furious with their toddlers. Toddlers are constantly testing their limits. They test every rule over and over; they try new things, get into their parents' possessions, cry for help, and need attention almost every 5 minutes. Learning to say "No" without anger is an important skill for parents. It is one of the most important gifts they will give their babies.
9. Setting limits with clear, calm, controlled messages gives babies and toddlers a sense of structure and safety. Making guidelines and patterns clear and understandable for children gives them confidence and teaches them respect. Clear, Calm, Controlled Limits (we call them the "Super C's") are like caution road signs. They tell children to slow down, change directions, look for hazards. But the emotion is kept neutral. The shared experience is one of learning, not of emotional extremes. This is why parents must be prepared to follow up their limits with action. It is what a parent does when his child tests a limit that will change behavior and lead to learning. The desired shared understanding is one of "getting it right for the team." Clear, calm, controlled limits can give children a sense of mastery and feelings of worth.

When parents learn to re-evaluate and redirect problem behaviors and to reinforce the positive behaviors of their children, they see the rewards of these parenting skills for a lifetime.



## Play Propels Learning

Play is a natural activity for children. They do it because it gives them pleasure and because it is fun. But, play is complex. An infant shaking a rattle or a little girl play cooking are having a great time, but they are also learning. They are discovering how the rattle works or what dishes are needed for play cooking. They are exploring new skills, discovering new information, and finding limits through their play. For example, some children will have fun squishing finger paint through their fingers and learning about texture. Others will discover delightful patterns that can be made with their hands. Another child may discover how to create a new color by mixing two colors.

It is important to be sensitive to age differences in play. A 3-year-old child might sit on the floor pretending he or she is driving a race car, shifting gears, roaring around curves and having a great time. But a younger child might not play with the car at all.

Parents serve an important role in a child's play. Children will play spontaneously for a while, but they seem to have more fun when they can share an activity with someone. When a child plays alone in a sandbox, he or she often just scoops and pours the sand. When an adult joins in, expresses excitement, and begins to model new, creative ways to use the sand, the child's interest is increased. This shared experience likely motivates the child to continue to play and discover new ways to use the sand.

As long as play is pleasurable, learning continues. If a parent gets angry or insists on controlling a play experience, his or her child's interest will decrease. The child may withdraw or look for something else to do. The joy of sharing, of learning, of self-discovery, and mastery will have been lost. The child may give up the activity. The child may become hesitant to try other new activities. Learning will take a detour.





# The Power of Negative Emotions



Negative emotions are powerful.

- They alert and caution us. We usually stop and pay attention.
- We usually remember them for a long time.
- We work to eliminate negative emotions in other people. We try to fix them.
- Babies are frightened by negative emotions.
- Natural responses to negative emotions are to fight, to flee, or to freeze.



Too many negative emotions are detrimental to a child.

- When there are too many negative emotions, or when they are too strong, children withdraw and mistrust the person who is negative.
- Strong negatives can make children angry.
- Strong negative emotions can frighten young children. They are not learning when they are afraid.



Negative emotions affect relationships.

- When there are too many negative emotions, children mistrust their parents.
- They become disorganized and unhappy.
- They often turn to others for a model.
- They often feel shame.



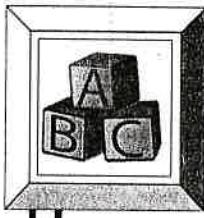
Children learn from watching negative emotions in others.

- When parents model negatives, children learn to act that way to others.
- They can become hostile and aggressive in school.
- They can become defiant and angry with their parents.

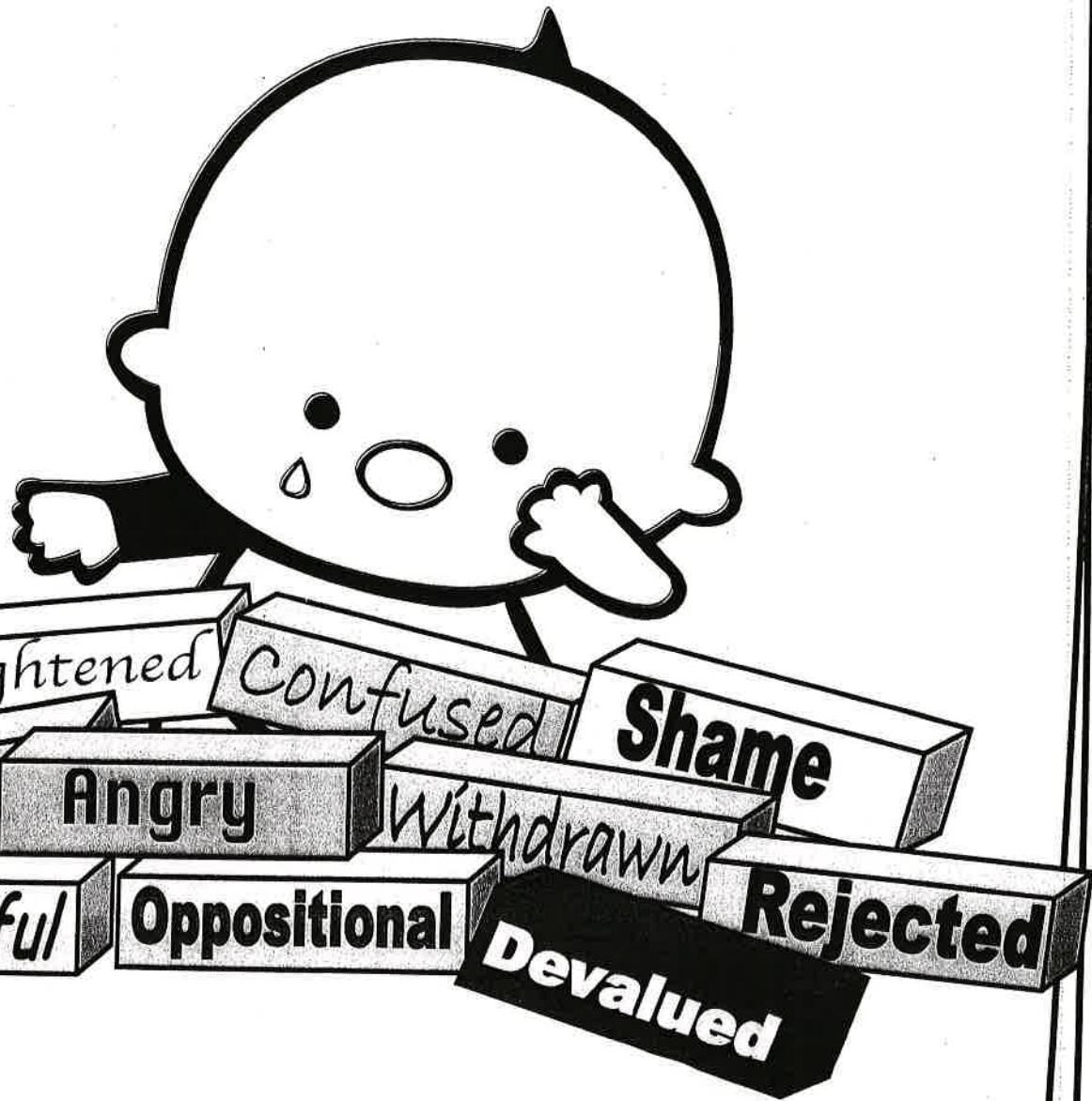


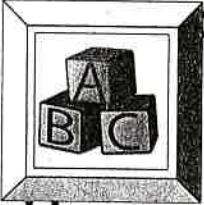
Keep more positive than negative emotions in your relationships





# When Too Many Negative Emotions Surround a Child, Learning Gets Sidetracked.





## Anger

- Anger sidetracks learning.

- The child becomes afraid.

- Emotion takes over.

- The child wants to escape or fight.

- The child can become hysterical.

- The child needs comfort before learning can begin again.





# A+ Ideas for Controlling Anger

**STOP:** Take a Big Breath!

**Ask "Why?"**

- Why did my child do this?

**Don't react.**

- Say, "I'm really angry." "I need to calm down."

**Isolate yourself.**

- Walk across the room.
- Cover your face and breathe deeply.
- Put your child in a safe place so you can be alone.

**Ask questions about yourself.**

- Why am I angry?
- Am I embarrassed? Am I too busy?
- Mad at my family or friends?
- Don't have my work done?

**Ask questions about your child.**

- Why is he or she acting this way?
- Is he or she tired, bored, hungry?
- Does my child need my attention?
- Is my child mastering a task, having fun?
- Is my child testing me?

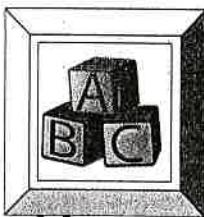
**Find a solution.**

- Reorganize; change the situation.
- Get help for yourself.
- Meet the child's needs.

**Take action.**

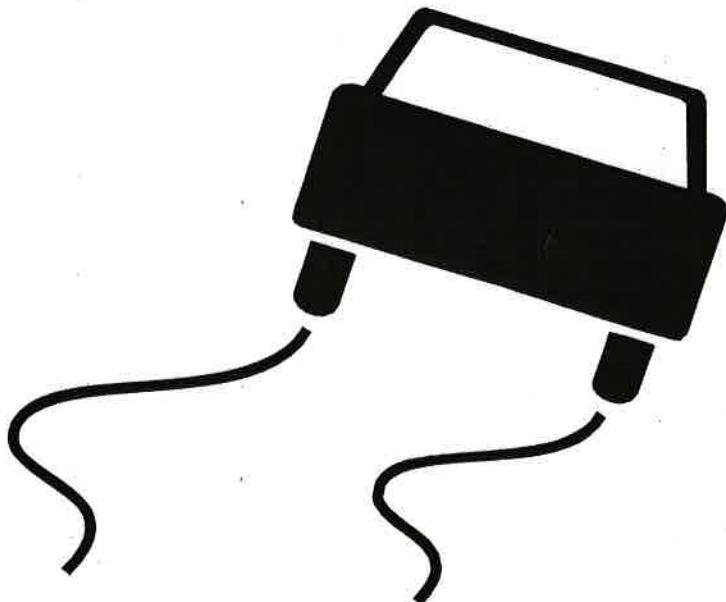
- Don't continue to repeat warnings or threats.
- Calm yourself, then rejoin your child.
- Approach your child with love.
- Don't continue to talk about the problem. Start fresh with something fun.

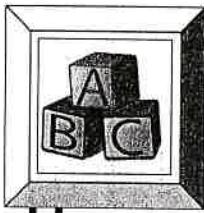
**Don't model anger. Don't model tantrums.**



## Teasing Sends Confusing Signals

- Teasing is a mean way to convey dominance.
- Teasing makes babies and young children feel helpless.
- Teasing brings out feelings of anger in children.
- Teasing may cause distrust and dislike for others.
- Teasing sidetracks learning.
- When others see an adult teasing a child, they feel sorry for the child and angry at the adult.





# How to Say "No" To Your Child

## Get your child's attention.

"Michael! No! Stop! Put the clay down."

## Calm your child, get down on your child's level.

"Michael listen to me."

## Give clear, calm messages.

"The clay stays on the table. Throwing it might hurt someone. We need to be safe."

## Give consequences and choices.

"If you throw the clay again we will put it away and play something else. We can pat the clay into pancakes; or play something else."

## Acknowledge good behavior and give praise whenever it goes well.

"Thank you for keeping the clay on the table. What good pancakes you make!"

## If the problem happens again, take action!

Put clay away. Say nothing or say, "I am sorry you are unhappy, but we have to be safe."

## Ignore tantrums and give the child time to calm down.

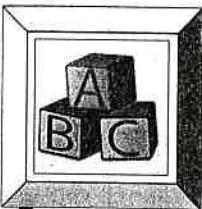
Say nothing. Walk away or look away. Keep yourself calm.

## When the child is ready to re-engage, give the child choices.

"Are you ready to play? Would you like to color or go outside and play catch?"

## Other ideas for action:

- Gently redirect your child.
- Remove the problem.
- Remove the child from the situation.
- Leave together (holding your child).



## Redirect, Re-evaluate, Reinforce

Helping a toddler learn the "do's" and "don'ts" of a relationship, a family, or a society is a major job. As a parent, you are constantly evaluating your toddler's behavior, and you need to decide how to reinforce the good and redirect the bad. You will build your child's strengths. Ignore and redirect problem behaviors.

For example: Let's suppose Maria wants to redirect Tomás.

She evaluates Tomás's mood. He has been playing hard, is restless, bored, and a bit whiny.

Maria wants to redirect Tomás to a quieter activity.

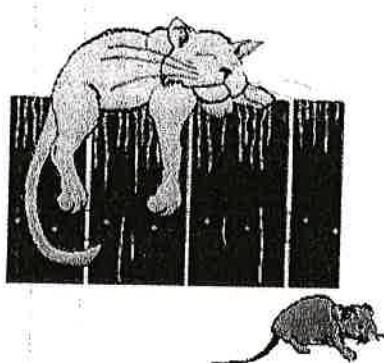
Maria says (with excitement), "Tomás, let's read a book. Look! This is about a Choo-Choo! See, "Whoo, Whoo says the Choo-Choo."

She takes Tomás on her lap and begins to read. Tomás settles into her arms and becomes interested, pointing to the train and the engineer. Maria reads.

Then Tomás starts trying to turn the pages beyond his mother's story and is tearing the book. Maria takes action. She holds Tomás's hand and says, "Remember, we take good care of our books so we can have them for a long time."

Maria re-evaluates. "Why is Tomás doing this?" ... "Oh, I think he wants to go faster, to see what is next."

Maria redirects Tomás. Maria stops reading the words and points to pictures instead.



"OK, Tomás, turn the page. Look, a duck! What does a duck say?"

Tomás "quacks," turns the page, sees a cow and says "moo."

"Turn the page," says Maria. Tomás sees a kitty and says "meow."

Maria reinforces Tomás's focus on the book. "Yes, a kitty and there's a little mouse. Thank you; you're turning the pages very nicely."

"Let's turn the page. What's next?"