

## ***The Top 4 Etiquette Tactics for Your Toddler***

Many parents say, "If I could only turn back the clock and do things differently...". It's never too early to start teaching your child, but sometimes it is too late. One mother told me a story about her 4 year old son. As a one year old, she would never let her son cry for more than a minute or two, especially at bedtime. Instead, she would take him out of his crib and hold him until he drifted off to sleep. Before she knew it, three years had passed and she could count the amount of times he had fallen asleep on his own on one hand. Every night was a struggle and it was taking a toll on her sanity and marriage. Her son refused to go to bed and screamed unless she held and rocked him to sleep...even now at the age of 4! Every time he woke at night, the same exhausting ritual would begin again.

Being a parent is hard enough without adding extra onto your already heaping plate. Believe it or not, there are ways to instill certain principles and manners in your child as early as 6 months. Today's toddlers and tweens have become the 'DO FOR ME' generation. It doesn't have to be this way and it takes each mom to do her part. With a little patience, consistency and practice, you will give your child the tools to help them become well-mannered and respectable teens and adults

### ***Please and Thank You***

Just like Barney says, "They are the magic words!" Your child is never too young to begin learning the all important 'please' and 'thank you'. As soon as your child is able to reach for a Cheerio, you should begin reinforcing these words. Consistency is the key! Every time your baby wants an item, ask "what do you say?...please". The same holds true for 'thank you'. After you give your child an item, again ask, "What do you say?...thank you". At first, these words may come out as a grunt, but eventually they will learn the words and not have to be provoked for an answer. Showing gratitude for something done for them is a great lesson that you will be glad you taught.

### ***"No" means No!***

Most parents can relate to the five acts of Hamlet that they must go through after telling their toddler 'No!' Many parents tell their toddler that he/she can't do or have something by saying "No". They then ask them to stop, then they plead, then they deal with the ensuing tantrum or cry-fest and give up altogether and give in! Why did they bother saying 'No' in the first place? Teaching your child to understand that 'No' means no, is not as hard as it may seem. As soon as your child can sit up and crawl, you can begin to teach him. If they go near an electrical cord or touch something they should not, firmly tell them, "No!" Next, physically remove them from the object or situation. Of course, no one expects a 6 month old to understand and obey, but eventually he will learn that when Mommy says no, it is best to do as he is told. As your child begins to walk, it is helpful to get down to their level, have them look you in the eyes and firmly tell them 'No' when they are misbehaving. Toddlers are much smarter than we often give them credit for being. If you say no and then give in, you are teaching them that crying and whining is the way to get what they want. Be consistent and in the long run, your hard work and effort will pay off. You will have a child that listens the first time.

### ***Shaking Hands***

A toddler who shakes hands is a rare sight these days, but it shouldn't be this way. Learning to shake hands not only gives your child more confidence to interact with adults, but shows

respect. You can start teaching your child to shake hands as early as one year of age. Cheerfully tell them to 'shake hands and say hello' and put their hand in the other person's hand. This will instill the principle and make it second nature. As they approach the age of two, you should begin teaching them some basic handshaking rules. First, extend the right hand. Of course, you will have many, many times where you will have to say "wrong hand". Second, have them make eye contact with the person. Making eye contact is something children struggle with, so lift their chin if necessary. How many times have you said hello to a child and they stare down at their feet? Third, teach them to squeeze the hand and lastly, say "Hi, nice to see you". By age three, they will have it down pat and you can have your child add the name of the person they are shaking hands with. For example, "Hi Caroline, nice to see you". Have your child shake hands when they arrive and when they leave. Teaching your children to shake hands is a lesson that they will carry with them for the rest of their lives. There is nothing worse than a fishy or pathetic handshake from a grown adult...it shows a lack of confidence and authority...so teach them while they are young!

### ***Bedtime Blues***

As much as we love our children, it a wonderful feeling when they don't fight going to bed and drift off to sleep without any resistance. Once asleep, we finally have a moment for ourselves to read a magazine, watch some television or catch up with our husband. In a perfect world this would happen each and every night, but is often not the case. If you start early, you are guaranteed a swift and easy bedtime ritual 90% of the time. It's all about routine! Follow a structured schedule each night and try to keep the time consistent. Remember, the more overtired your child is, the more he/she will fight going to bed. If you put your toddler to bed at 7:00pm, start your routine at 6:45. Have your child brush her teeth then read her a book and tuck her in with her favorite stuffed animal or doll. If you tell your child that you will be reading two books, don't allow four because they "just can't fall asleep without them". They are obviously stalling for time. In the beginning, your child may get out of bed or call you in numerous times to "tell you one more thing". Don't get frustrated and yell...rather, be firm, calm and tell them that it is time to go to sleep. Unless your child is sick, you should not give in to their requests, whether it is one more TV show or one more book. After a while, your toddler will learn that you won't give in and there is no use in crying wolf or playing games.