



Starting Strong Connection

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Do you ever feel like the perfect, magical holidays sold to us in commercials are nothing but a peppermint fantasy? I remember one Christmas when my children were small and they begged me to help them make and decorate sugar cookies. I had this vision of us making and decorating sugar cookies and having a blissful holiday experience. I gathered the ingredients and a variety of items to decorate the cookies. The kids were excited at first and had fun decorating *one* cookie each, leaving me in the kitchen to finish baking and decorating dozens of cookies *by myself*, on top of a long list of things I felt I had to accomplish.

If there is any time of year capable of leaving parents reeling and gasping for air, it is the holidays. Between work, school, school activities, tree-trimming, shopping, cooking, eating and generally just working one's self to the bone!

As difficult as the time between Halloween and New Years is for us, we sometimes forget how difficult some of these activities can be for our children. How many of us are guilty of trying to bribe our children for good behavior, repeatedly reminding them that Santa is watching, only to eventually find ourselves stressed to the point of losing our cool.

Whether you are taking a long trip in the car, shopping at the mall, sitting at a restaurant or at a family gathering (holiday season or not) here are a few tips that might help both you and your kids survive.

Think ahead: Take a few minutes to think about past holidays and consider the following when planning for upcoming seasonal gatherings or trips.

- Where or when might your kids have a difficult time during holiday event or activity?
- What is most challenging for them?
- What might help them manage their behavior better?

Prepare: Consider packing a small bag or backpack with items to keep kids busy. Things like stickers, paper, pencils, crayons, small activity books and short books they can "read". Take your children's personality and age into consideration when choosing items. You may also want to include things liked bottled water and small packages of healthy snacks so kids aren't tempted to overindulge in sodas and sweets. As much as possible, include children in planning and let them help prepare for Holiday events.

Talk to them about what to expect so they won't be caught off guard. Let them know important details (when, where, and who) and what you expect of them during the celebration, occasion or activity. Consider delegating a task or job they can do to help out.

Catch them being good: During activities make sure you let your kids know when they are doing a good job of behaving. Try to give them kudos throughout, instead of waiting until the end.

Give breaks as needed: If your child seems a little overwhelmed or on the verge of having problems give them a break by removing them from the situation. Try taking a short walk, get some fresh air outside or engage in a quiet conversation that helps them redirect their attention. And remember to give yourself a break too! Enjoy the Holidays!!

Surviving the Holiday Season with Young Children



Scholarship Recipients:

- ☺ Please remember to inform Early Childhood Connections of any changes in your address or contact information.
- ☺ If you plan to withdraw from the program please call Kim Booth at:
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Inside this issue:

The Journey of Mixed Emotions: How to Help Your Child Recognize and Understand Frustration. 2

Teaching Your Child to Wash Hands 3

Visual Handwashing Chart 3

Attendance in Your Pre-school Classroom 4

The Journey of Mixed Emotions— How to Help Your Child Recognize & Understand Frustration

Frustration is a common emotion in young children and typically occurs as a child begins to discover the many things he would like to do, but simply cannot do yet. Frustration is a natural and healthy emotion and provides a positive learning experience for a child. The feelings of frustration that occur when your child has difficulty communicating his needs or tying his shoes are his cue that he needs to try to do something in a different way or that what he is doing is not working. You can teach your child how to deal with frustration in a way that is useful for him. Most importantly, you must respond to frustration when it first arises before it changes into anger or becomes the dreaded

temper tantrum. Two skills children must learn in order to deal with frustration are: 1) how to ask for help, and 2) know when to take a break.



Try This At Home

Notice and label when you, your child or others are frustrated. Explain that everyone, including adults, feel frustration. Your might say:

- **About yourself:** "I am frustrated. I have tried three times to fix the vacuum and it is just not working! I am going to take a break. I will come back and try when I am feeling calmer."
- **About your child:** "you are so frustrated! I see that you have been trying to build that tower and it keeps falling down! Let's have a snack and then try again together."
- **About others:** "That little boy looks frustrated. He can't climb up the ladder on his own. I wonder if he needs some help?"

Teach your child appropriate ways to respond to frustration. You might say to your child, "You can ask Daddy. Say, 'Help please!'"

Knowing when to take a break is a skill that can be taught to your child. You can say, "I see you are frustrated. Let's take a break. First, let's do five jumping jacks and get some water. Then we can come back and try again!"

Puppets and toys are great tools for role playing situations that your child may be struggling with, such as trying to accomplish a task. "Wow, this train can't get up the hill. He has tried four times and keeps rolling back down. He looks like he wants to cry. I wonder what he can do?"

The Bottom Line

Childhood is full of frustrating moments. As young children explore their world they are faced with many challenges. There are numerous things they simply can't reach, can't buckle, and can't climb on their own. From the child's point of view, parents and other adults are always saying "No" to the activities and objects he wants. As a parent, you have the opportunity to help your child learn how to recognize, understand and find solutions to his frustrations. Each time your child is able to work through a frustration, he is adding a very important skill he needs to be successful in the world. (Adapted from the Backpack Connection Series)

Health & Safety: Teaching Your Child to Wash Hands! Protecting Your Child During Cold and Flu Season

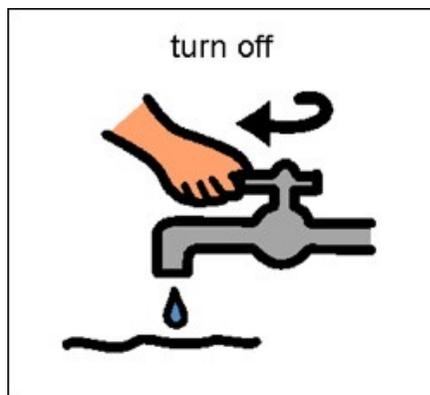
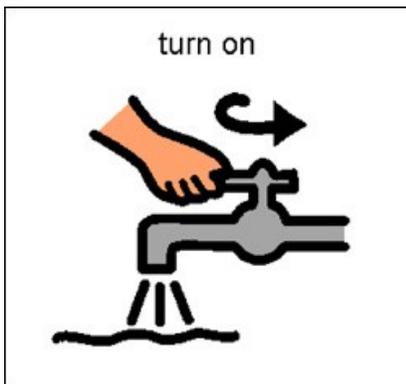
Good handwashing protects against the spread of many illnesses—from the common cold (which is responsible for 22 million lost school days each year) to more serious illnesses such as meningitis, flu, hepatitis A and most types of infectious diarrhea.

Experts say you need to wash your hands at least 20 seconds to really get germs off, so have your child sing "Happy Birthday" twice or the "ABC" song.

- Supervise their handwashing after they use the toilet and before they eat
- Model good handwashing and let them see you washing your hands.
- Put handwashing reminders at their level (see below)
- Keep a stool by the sink so they can reach easily.

Tips to Help Children Wash Hands:

Use Visuals to Help Your Child Remember the Steps!



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YMCA Zoo Crew Preschool
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Attendance in your preschool classroom

One of the biggest myths affecting the education of young children is the mistaken belief that preschool is just an add-on — that it doesn't really matter that much if my child skips a week of school now and again or is perpetually late. But research shows that poor attendance and tardiness are real issues even for young children and can hamper their ability to learn.

Early education programs help children gain the foundational skills they need to do well in school and in life. If your child is reluctant to come to school, be sure to communicate this to the teacher. Together you can make plans to address the concerns of your child.



Data on tardiness is more limited but equally startling in terms of habit development. A nationwide survey of Head Start programs indicates that in half of the classrooms, three to six children arrive late every week (there's a maximum of 18 per classroom). This is true across programs of all sizes in all types of communities: urban, suburban and rural. This tardiness also has an adverse impact on the educational experience. It is a problem, for example, when a child arrives 30 or 60 minutes after the circle activities have begun. The child misses out on the activities designed to build connections to other children and transition into the classroom. In addition, the late arrival can disrupt the flow of the classroom activities for other children. Parents and teachers can work together to ensure children acquire the habit of on-time attendance.

Remember, by bringing your child to preschool every day and on time, you are helping to ensure that he or she will live up to their full potential and become a successful lifelong learner.
