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## Parenting tips for parents in recovery

Credit: Clown Jeffrey Westbrook Boswick, father of two, San Francisco, California1. Start practicing with three small beanbag balls. Warm up by singing one in an arc (not a circle) from hand to hand. Never throw the ball higher than eye level.2. Once you've got the hang of it, take a ball in each hand. Sing it in your left hand. When it reaches the top of its arc, singa the second ball in the opposite direction. Catch both balls.3. Repeat the second step, but this time throw the balls back into the air as soon as they land in your hands. Try alternating which hand launches the first ball.4. Hold two balls in your right hand and one in the left (do the opposite if you are left-handed). Sing a ball from the right hand to the left. When it's halfway there, say the left ball.5. When the ball is halfway there, say the third. Catch the balls when they land. As you become more comfortable, try throwing each ball back into the air as soon as it lands in your hand. We rounded up our favorite unicorn gifts for kids, including cute stuffed animals, cool toys, craft projects, clothing and furnishings. Skip to content Good news: It's the little things that really make a difference. You want to be the kind of parent who takes the time to instill in your child good behavior, habits and behavior. But how? And with controlled chaos that rules the day, every day, when? Relax: Good parenting happens in real time, on the spot, and in the moment. The trick is to recognize the moments when your actions and reactions can help your child learn and grow in the best possible way. Here's help from top parenting experts—and some real moms. Be careful with Comparisons and Labels Your best friend's 8 month old son is babbling, while your daughter, at 9 months, is quiet in comparison. Is there something wrong with your child? While it's never a bad idea to express your concern for your pediatrician, don't equate developmental milestones with developmental deadlines. Babies develop so fast that one set of abilities is bound to evolve faster than another, said Harvey Karp, M.D., author of *The Happiest Toddler on the Block* (Bantam), also available on DVD. Watching your entire child when evaluating development, he suggests, a strategy that applies to toddlers as well: one 3-year-old can have fine-motor control skills, dealing with a chalk with dexterity, for example, while another can throw a ball better—and that's normal. Taking into account the whole little person involves factoring in temperament as well. It is important to think about who your child is, not just his age. For example, if your child is naturally shy and quiet, it may be that he's not inclined to talk—not that he can't. Dr. Karp says. Listen to him at stake when he's alone. He may be babbling happily then. Among siblings, comparisons can lead to labels. Our little scholar, you could say about your book-obsessed child, or our wild child by his energetic sister. Also labels intended to praise child's child's abilities can be problematic. Siblings sometimes feel that if one brother owns the athlete label, the other brother will not even try, for fear of failure. And that picky eater's label can fuel a lot of behavior you want to discourage. Sure, there will be times when you find yourself describing your child's likes and dislikes. But when you do, reframe your words, Dr. Karp suggests: try energetic (not wild), spirited (not hyper), and careful (not shy). Children look at every step, and especially for infants and very young children, parental behavior turns out to be much more powerful than words. You're actually teaching your child something every minute of the day—whether you're going to pass along a lesson or not, said Elizabeth Pantley, author of *The No-Cry Discipline Solution: Soft Ways to Encourage Good Behavior Without Whining, Tantrums & Tears* (McGraw-Hill). From how to deal with stress to how to celebrate success to how to greet a neighbor on the street, your child is observing you and finding out how to respond in different situations. Julie Hughes, from Wilton, Connecticut, was moved when she observed her daughter Amelia, who was then 23 months old and lovingly rearing her doll, after amelia's sister Jane's birth. I found Amelia with a pillow on her lap and her baby doll laid over it, pretending to nurse her, recalls Hughes, who was relieved that Amelia was learning about caring for others even without Hughes—who was busy with three under 4-year-olds-consciously teaching that lesson. Just having your child with you as you go through your days provides great opportunities to teach him about life, Pantley says. Your 2-year-old builds a tower, and you see that the block he is about to place on top will cause it to crash down. Anxious to avoid the crash (and subsequent tears), you stop him from adding to the block, explaining that sometimes one more is one too many. Even if you have the right to prevent accidents that can cause harm, allowing your child to learn from his error instills the lesson at hand better than an explanation ever could, said Christopher Lucas, M.D., associate professor of child and adolescent psychiatry at New York University School of Medicine, in New York City. On a very basic level, this type of mistake helps a child to understand cause and effect. But it's also more emotionally healthy to let your child experience disappointment at times—especially in the form of a toppled block tower—instead of protecting him from all the negative events—adds Dr. Lucas. Similarly, when your child mastered how to use a sippy cup or your child learns to dress himself, experts like Dr. Lucas encourage parents to let mistakes happen. Lillian Valentine Hope, mother of 18-month-old Lauren, remembers her daughter's first attempt at drinking water out of a cup. The first time, she started gagging a little. My first impulse was to panic and take it from her, said Hope, who lives Brookfield, Connecticut. But I chose instead to say 'It's okay' and 'Let's try it again!' After a few rounds of trial and error and soaked shirts, she was successful. Dr Lucas says there are good reasons for this: Children learn best on the edge of failure—that's where the challenge is and where there is the most opportunity for growth. In fact, let your kids be bored, says psychologist Michael Gurian, author of *Nurture Nature: Understanding and Supporting Your Child's Unique Core Personality* (Jossey-Bass). Their identities arise when they are left to their fate. They pick up a pencil and draw or go out in the backyard. They follow their own dreams and thoughts. The activity will be self-directed and will promote self-direction, said Gurian, who adds that this also applies to young toddlers—although they will need both supervision and some support, especially if they tend to fuss and quarrel when they are their own. Exhibit tools and toys to tempt them: art supplies or a large cardboard box to make a house, for example. Mother of two Nina Becker, of Glen Cove, New York, describes the frenzy of activity surrounding the return of her younger son, Kevin, which Beckers adopted at 18 months. At first we ran around with lots of activities, Becker said of her efforts to acclimatize Kevin to every aspect of his new environment. But then it seemed both boys were not happy with other kids around. I canceled all the play dates. I stopped scheduling, so we could all have fun together on our own terms. A couple of considerations for unplanned, home time: TV and computers should be prohibited. But if your child suggests playing a game together, by all means say yes. It's child-directed family time, and it's awesome, Gurian says. Bottom line: Strive for a balance between planned activities and downtime, and all-children and parents alike-will be happiest. Even the youngest child will start equating comfort with time consuming if the bottle is always offered to silent crying. So, the child will usually be given apple juice after a fall or a cake for good behavior, says Dr. Karp, who adds that what a child seeks—and what's important to give—is your attention, clean and simple. Even very young children are linked to social relationships, Dr. Karp explains. For them, parental attention is about more than just getting enough—it means everything in the world to them. Attaching a treatment to the deal changes that perception. You show that an item or sweet has more merit and value than a simple hug and a smile, says Dr. Karp, so that the occasional inflection of this rule is to be forgiven. Sure, pull out the big guns when you really need them. Your child has a tantrum at the grocery store? By all means, offer her a cookie. And it will really work then, because you haven't overused it. At some point your child will break every rule you make. However, if you on each infringement with the show disapproval—Mom's mad; he's in the time-out chair—he may not reach an understanding of what prompted the rule-breaking behavior in the first place. Simply put, your child's bad behavior is a direct result of the fact that he can't control his emotions—and it's one of the parents' most important tasks to teach his children how to do just that. Your child doesn't whine and has tantrums because he's trying to manipulate you. He's not intentionally being bad, said Pantley, who calls emotion-fueled outbursts on the part of very young children biologically, psychologically and completely normal. So even if you may well introduce appropriate disciplinary measures (like time-out, for example), a calm and compassionate conversation is important as well. Ask your child questions, and make suggestions, Pantley suggests: Your sister cries because you took her bear. What makes her feel better? You think you can help her bear give her a hug? Your intentions are good. In an effort to make the best choices for your child, you'll read up on how to introduce just the right nap schedule, follow the appropriate amount of TV viewing, and calibrate the best nutritional balance of protein, fats and carbohydrates. Trying to get it okay can be exhausting, and you're sometimes plagued with guilt that you haven't lived up to those standards. Does that sound familiar? The truth is, there are a lot of experts out there—and way too much advice, some of it conflicting. No one knows your child better than you do, said Gurian, who encourages parents to trust their own instincts. For example, do you intuitively feel that a baby music class will be difficult for your 10-month-old son, who wails when forced to sit still for even short periods? Then skip it. It's a read-readiness program that while loved by the neighbor's 3-year-old is not a hit with your own. Your child may not enjoy teaching at the age of 3 years. She can get frustrated and suspended. Your gut feeling might say she'd get more out of doing something else with her time: playing, for example, says Gurian, who encourages parents to avoid the trap of choosing too much too soon of an anxiety that their children will be left behind. And good news: There is an advantage for you too, to take this approach. When parents regain control of the decision-making process, they feel liberated, Gurian adds. They knew what to do; it was in their gut somewhere. A baby who once loved an activity rejects it now. Parents can be quick to assume that something is wrong when in fact it may be that he has matured. While measuring your child's external signs of growth in inches and on the scale, remember that he is making progress on the inside also—emotionally and cognitively. The role of parents as their children evolves from infants to toddlers and beyond? To develop right together with them. Today's parents reflect on lessons they received as children. My mother used to drive me into City to see the ophthalmologist. She always paid for the George Washington Bridge with a \$5 bill and got a silver dollar change, which she let me keep. Afterwards we had hot dogs and a soda—a special treat. These rituals made going to the doctor more appealing. — Bridget Pelosi, of Berkeley Heights, New Jersey, mother of Gavin, 2 1/2, and Peter, 7 months For my birthday, my dad would take me to a 'fancy' restaurant for dinner. It was a tradition he continued with me (and my two sisters) for years. I remember feeling so special about him all to myself for the evening. — Erica LePore, Kingstown, Rhode Island, mother of Sadie, 6, Will, 3, and Luke, 1 My dad emptied his change into a jar, and once it was full he would tell my brother, sister or me that he had a 'job' for us: to help sort and roll the coins. Then we put the proceeds into our savings account. It was a math lesson, small-engine practice and one-on-one time with dad all 'rolled' into one. — Liz Hammel, Weybridge, Vermont, mother of Owen, 8, and Maeve, 5 My siblings and I spent most Sundays with our dad so that our mother could study for graduate school. We were going to breakfast and the car wash. He worked a lot, so we really cherished this time. — Kim Santosky, West Redding, Connecticut, mother of Jack, 1, and Grant, 2 months All content on this site, including medical opinion and all other health related information, is for informational purposes only and should not be considered a specific diagnosis or treatment plan for each individual situation. Use of this site and the information contained herein does not create a doctor-patient relationship. Always seek direct advice from your own doctor in connection with any questions or questions you may have regarding your own health or the health of others. © Copyright . All rights reserved. Prints this link is to an external web site that may or may not meet the accessibility guidelines. Guidelines.

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