

Family Development

Fall 2005 — Report to New Mexico from the UNM Family Development Program
College of Education, Center for Family and Community Partnerships

Discipline—Turning Challenging Moments Into Teachable Moments

Is he cute or disrespectful?
It's a matter of perspective.



In this issue:

Why Does He Do That? Understanding misbehaviors can prevent problems

Good Humor Discipline: Turn them around with laughter

The Power of Empathy: Transforming relationships

I Am What I Am - And So Are You: Looking at temperament styles
and their effect in the classroom and home

Brain-Smart Discipline: Difficult behaviors benefit from thoughtful responses

What's the Matter with a Little Swat? Discipline means teaching, not punishing

A Path to Positive Discipline: Pithy points to ponder

A Toolbox of Discipline Tips: Practical advice – short and to the point

Insert: Temperament – Mix and Match / El temperamento – ¿es una mezcla o se coordina?

Why Does He Do That?

by Jan Winslow

Most everyone is familiar with challenging behaviors in children. Some of us have difficulty with children throwing tantrums, refusing to do as they are told, whining, tattling, etc. Many child development experts agree that if we recognize why a child is behaving the way he is, we could prevent or substantially curtail the negative behavior from happening. It helps to understand what we could do to turn the situation around so that the child learns that positive behavior serves him far better than negative.

The first step in dealing with a child's misbehavior is to understand why it is occurring. Handling a challenging behavior can be quite a struggle, and it can be very enlightening to recognize what sets it off. From there you can decide what's next. Hunger may prompt a disruptive behavior, so if that's the case, perhaps you could design an eating schedule that meets the child's and your needs. Following are a number of triggers that may contribute to a child's misbehavior:

- ♥ Hunger
- ♥ Tiredness
- ♥ Emotional distress
- ♥ Temperamental tendencies
- ♥ Need for attention
- ♥ Peer influences
- ♥ Environmental factors
- ♥ Lack of clearly stated and enforced rules
- ♥ Boredom
- ♥ Family stress
- ♥ Learning difficulties
- ♥ Exposure to violence
- ♥ Physical pain or neglect

Once a caregiver can either handle or rule out any of the above challenges, it helps to be able to recognize that whether a child realizes it consciously or not, there is something to be gained from any type of behavior, good or bad. That's why he does it. For instance, if a child believes that he only belongs when he's being noticed, he'll attempt to get attention by acting out. The caregiver may feel annoyed at the attempts for attention, and perhaps remind or coax the child to stop the attention-getting behavior. Reminding, punishing, rewarding, and coaxing are all ways of giving the child attention. This may temporarily stop the misbehavior, but it very well may resume later in one form or another. So, instead of the above tactic, the caregiver could ignore the misbehavior when possible, and give attention for positive behavior when the child is not clamoring for it.



Pushing the child at this point could lead to tears. Ignore this cue and you may be in for trouble.

But even in the best of circumstances, misbehavior will occur. What then? The response by the caregiver will set the tone for what happens next. If a child throws a toy out of anger, a natural response might be to scold. This likely would make the child feel belittled or mad, but may not encourage him to change his behavior. Or, a caregiver might turn the situation around so as not to place the blame for the mis-

behavior on the child. This type of "saving" or "rescuing" of the child seldom helps in the long run. Why should the child assume responsibility for the action if the adult habitually lets him off the hook? In another response to the situation the caregiver teaches the child that he'll have to live with the consequences of his actions, and also offers alternatives for next time so he won't find himself in the same unhappy situation.

When children understand their behavior and can see clear responses to their actions, the world makes sense to them and they know what to expect from their choices. This last method has teaching at its core. It doesn't use guilt and it empowers the child to make a good choice next time.

There are no easy solutions to many situations of misbehavior, but learning to recognize why the behavior occurs, then responding by teaching the child alternative ways to behave is a solid start at creating harmony that can last a lifetime. ♥

References

- Bailey, Becky A. *Conscious Discipline*. Oviedo, FL: Loving Guidance, Inc., 2000.
- Cinkmeyer, Don and Gary D. Mckay. *The Parent's Handbook*. Circle Pines, NM: American Guidance Service, 1989.

Good Humor Discipline

by Paula Steele

The Good Humor Man used to be the guy who drove the ice cream truck, wore a white suit, had a little white cap with a visor. Parents used to say, still say, “Behave, and you can have an ice cream later.” Teachers may use a similar tactic, saying in effect, “Behave now, and you’ll be rewarded later.” That’s one form of discipline—doesn’t much work with the youngest children who haven’t the concept of time required for *that* to be effective—may not work all that well with older children either. It’s just not immediate enough. And it doesn’t help solve the issue at hand that’s creating the discipline problem. We want to be Good Humor disciplinarians. And that means to solve the situation without bribery, without shouting, and without getting mean and nasty.

Mean and nasty?! You’re shocked to read that anyone might assume that you could respond in such a manner to a child. Well, yes; we’ve all done it. Even me. Oh, I have mimicked a child who was whining: “I don’ wanna clean up. It’s messy. I’m tired. Heeeelp me!” And the

whole time my voice was wheedling and my face was scrunchy. Not a very appealing image, is it? What could that poor child do except respond with tears of embarrassment and shame or by getting angry? Neither of which helped him or me. We both felt bad and the mess was still there.

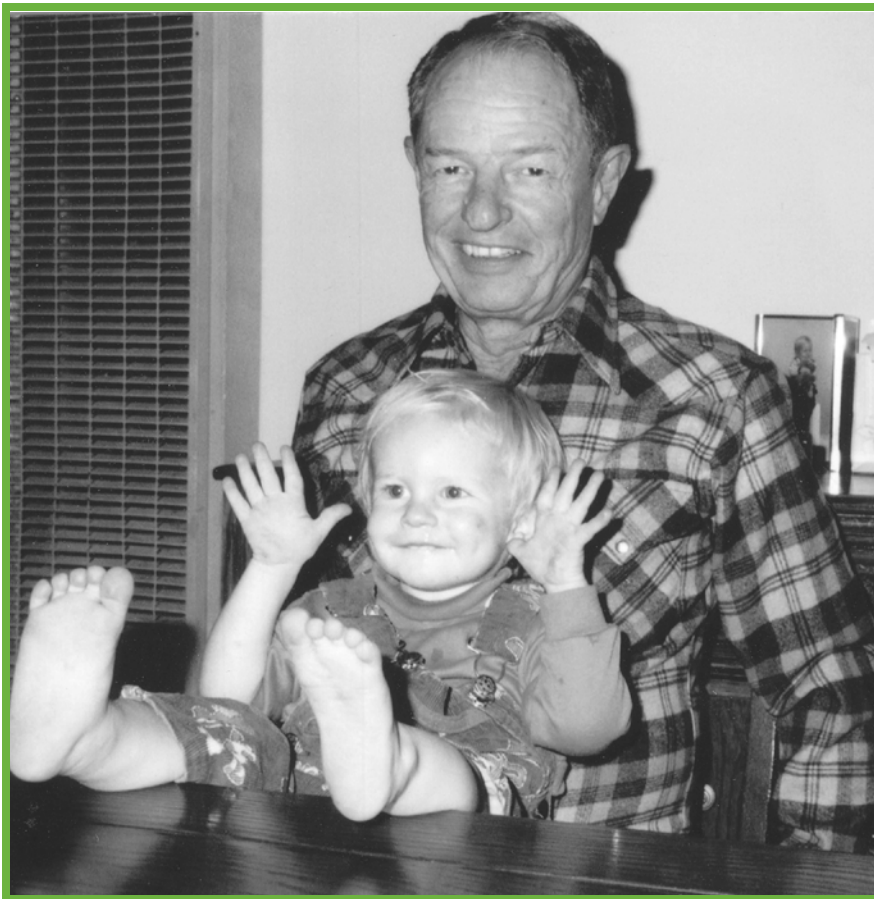
Humor brings insight and tolerance. ~ Agnes Repplier

Now, however, I can usually handle a situation like that with grace. I take a breath and find my inner giggle. I don’t listen too long to whines and complaints or wait until my mind is in a frenzy. I take control sooner by saying something like, “Oh my goodness, it *is* a mess! It’s the biggest mess I’ve ever, *ever* seen! What can be done? Shall we call in the National Guard? Do we need bulldozers and cranes to help with this monumental task?!” That takes ‘em by surprise. The whining stops and I am either corrected by being told “No, it’s not such a big job.” Or, the child (or class) gets into the spirit of exaggeration by adding their own ridiculous suggestions to mine. Generally, the mess is cleaned up in short order.

One mom told me of an experience she once had with her son. It was bath time and he wasn’t interested – at all. “I’m not taking a bath,” he said. She agreed. “No, I know you’re not.”

Meanwhile she continued to fill the tub, adding bubbles and toys. All the while they continued the dialogue. He: “I’m really *not* taking a bath.” She: “I know you’re not.” But as the bubbles began to mound in the tub and colorful toys made their splashy entrance one by one, he started to take his shirt off. Mom pulled it back on saying, “You’re not taking a bath, remember?” Of course, he ended up in the tub amidst much laughter, his protests dissolving along with his little boy grime. Moral: overcome a power struggle with playfulness.

Whether you are a teacher or a parent you have chosen to be on the path of teaching. What a heady, emotional, mystifying experience! The spectrum of human behavior offers a challenge that tests patience and helps to develop new coping mechanisms. As you learn about the young beings in your care, you



Grandpa’s sense of humor helped Jake return to his playful self.

learn about yourself. This in turn helps you decide how you will guide your actions as you work and play with the children. The choices you make can determine the outcome of any exchange. And your behavior will model the choices that children have available to them in the future. Thinking about discipline this way may help you to reframe how you respond to a difficult or challenging situation.

Discipline may be the most difficult component of adult-child interaction to manage. Sometimes the problem stems from a joyless or controlling approach to resolving a situation. Or perhaps the adult is in a rush and not in the mood for tricks and monkey business. When that occurs, the playful child can be seen as a troublemaker. However, many situations can be turned around with the injection of a little humor and reframing a “must do” as a game.

You may think that you’re not in the mood to “play around” when it comes to discipline, but I think you’ll find that in the long run, it’s actually the short run. By choosing to find your sense of humor, you help the child develop one of her own. You avoid the struggle of wills by finding a style of communication that invites one to action instead of mandating it.

Laughter shows us that we are more important than our problems. ~ José Ferrer

Here are some reasons to use humor from Dr. Bob Sears on his website:

1. Humor surprises and diffuses a situation before it gets ugly: a child sticks his tongue out at his mom or the teacher. She could get righteous and indignant, demanding an apology and punishing the child for such disrespectful behavior. Or she could recognize that this child is upset and hasn’t the words to describe it—only the action. So, she might say, “You stuck your tongue out at me. It was red and pointy, shiny, too. It was purple from the grape lollypop.” Most kids will start laughing at this point. Then you can smile too and help them talk about their feelings. “And your face looked angry. I guess you’re unhappy with something.”
2. It’s protective: you won’t feel bad if you’ve found a humorous

- way to communicate and the child won’t feel attacked.
3. It’s disarming: children are quick to go on the defensive when they sense a negative response. Smile and cajole them into a desired behavior for a more effective solution. So the next time the blocks are in the middle of the room try humor. “I walked by those blocks five times today. The last time I did one shouted to me that they were all tired and wanted to be put to bed, all nestled in the box.”

The most completely lost of days is that on which one has not laughed. ~Chamfort

Laughter heals and it’s a good preventative, too. Try to keep that in mind next time you’re faced with a cranky child or even your own cranky self for that matter. Train yourself to stop; take a breath; and in that breath, find a smile. Now, how can you turn that potentially negative situation into one that crinkles with humor? It will take some practice. It will take time. You may not be able to do it every instance. But, it’s worth the effort, and you will see a difference. Children respond to humor more than threats; and they respond to an adult who can help them see an alternative to behavior that may be their only recourse (in that exact moment). Skillful teaching, be it at home or in the classroom, requires the ability to maintain order **with** a sense of humor and **without** an iron fist.



Pearly of bath-time laughter.

What is your ability to attend lightly instead of dropping the heavy hand of demands? Take this test adapted from the work of Diane Loomans and Karen Kolberg to help you discover how well you manage the day with ease and humor vs. control and difficulty.

YES NO

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. I am able to laugh about small disruptions, but I can nip them in the bud before they become distractions. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. I give children creative, playful outlets when appropriate. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. I am able to make strong directive statements without yelling. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. I believe that children who lack self-discipline can learn how to improve their behavior. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Children respect me more than they fear me. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. I am a good role model. This includes the ability to laugh about my mistakes. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. When I become impatient with children, I remind myself that I used to be their age. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. I am able to correct in a firm but positive way. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. I choose not to limit my expectations. A child who misbehaves today might be a shining example of good behavior tomorrow. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. When I discipline, my demeanor is calm and focused, and I maintain steady eye contact. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. I make it a habit to tell children what I do want rather than what I don't want. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. I'm enthusiastic and affirming whenever I see positive behavior. I make an effort to "catch them doing it right." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. I'm able to use my authority without becoming authoritarian. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. I know how to set realistic limits and fair consequences. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. I don't resort to name-calling or put-downs to get the behavior I desire. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 16. I am able to put the events of the day into perspective and begin fresh the next morning. |

Scoring

Give yourself one point for each yes answer.

13-16 points

You are able to balance concentrated effort with play in a surprisingly easygoing manner. It's likely that children and other adults appreciate your efforts to maintain an atmosphere of stability without resorting to totalitarian control or humiliation. You know how to guide and to teach in a helpful and playful manner.

9-12 points

You have the ability to maintain a calm and even tone while putting small exasperations into perspective. You state rules clearly and are fair in dealings with children. Your enthusiasm adds buoyancy to home or class life.

5-8 points

You are a little too serious. Relax—take a joke break; shake out the tension. Gain control by giving in a little.

Take some time to hear the children's side and negotiate where possible.

1-4 points

Let loose that iron grip! Take a step back and re-visualize your role as one who teaches, guides, and models. Soften your view of who and how children are. Remember how you were as a child and what your behavior was like. Reflect on the adults who were your role models, in a positive or negative way, and choose the positive. ♥

References

- Loomans, Diane, and Karen Kolberg. *The Laughing Classroom*. California: H J Kramer Inc, 1993.
Sears, Bob, Dr. "Humor - The Best Medicine."
<http://www.askdrsears.com/html/6/T061400.asp>.

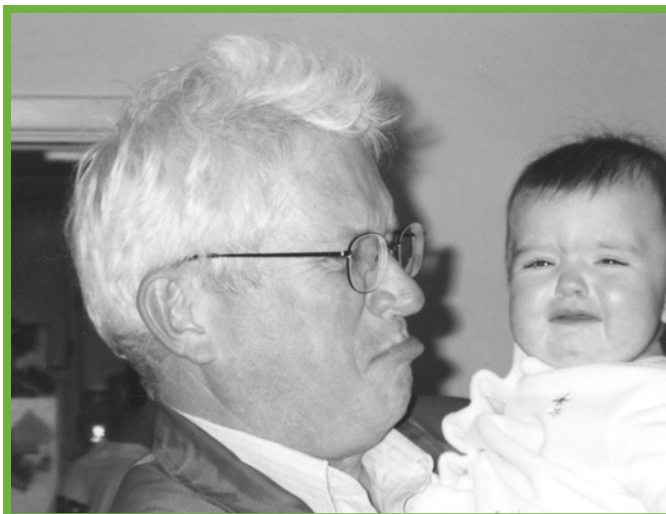
The Power of Empathy

by Lois Vermilya

Alison Gopnick, Andrew Meltzoff, and Patricia Kuhl are leading scientists who have helped to revolutionize what we know about how much babies and young children know through their ground-breaking book: *The Scientist in the Crib*. They introduce us to the “power of empathy” through one of their own personal stories...

“One day, Alison came home from the lab in a state of despair that will be familiar to working parents. She had realized that she was a terrible researcher (one of her papers had been rejected by a journal) and a failed teacher (a student had argued about a grade), and she came home to discover she was also a disgraceful mother (the chicken legs for dinner were still frozen). Like any good, strong, tough-minded professional woman in the same position, she broke down in tears on the sofa. Her son, who was not quite two, looked concerned and after a moment’s thought ran to the bathroom. He returned with a large box of Band-Aids, which he proceeded to put on her at random, all over; this was clearly a multiple-Band-Aid injury. Like many therapists, he made the wrong diagnosis but his treatment was highly effective. She stopped crying.

This isn’t just a touching story about a particularly adorable child. Systematic studies indicate that two-year-olds begin to show genuine empathy toward other people for the first time. Even younger babies will become upset in response to the distress of others.”



Grandpa knows just how she feels.

When we recognize the fact that very young children understand what someone else is feeling, and that by the age of two they even know what they can do to help make them feel better, we are challenged to ask ourselves: what can we do to nurture a child’s growing sense of empathy?

“Empathy” is about being in relationship with other people because there is a genuine sense of caring. It is a kind of caring that goes beyond just yourself to try to understand and connect with someone else because you are trying to understand them, too. “Real empathy isn’t just about knowing that other people feel the same way you do; it’s about knowing that they don’t feel the same way and caring anyway.”

It is remarkable then to think about what empathy really means for helping our children learn how to be sensitive toward others. This ability to really care about other people emerges early in life, and is essential as a moral compass for our entire lifetime. It also is at the core of how we can think in new ways about effective discipline. As Joseph Campos of the University of California at Berkeley advises:

“If you tell a child that this is bad, the child will learn the rule, but the child will only learn it as a set of words. If you want to affect the child’s behavior the child needs to have the rule linked to reading how (his) behavior impacts another person for good or bad. That’s where empathy comes in—it is a crucial element in learning moral behavior.”

The Snyders in their book *The Young Child as Person* encourage us to focus on how we can help children develop a healthy conscience as their own inner guide for self-control in order to be part of a classroom where the teacher’s approach to discipline is through understanding. A healthy conscience is about empathy. It means caring—caring for yourself and caring for others too because they also have important feelings. When a teacher provides an understanding response, she communicates to the child that “I care for you; what you say and feel is important.” She helps the child learn how to understand his own feelings, find dependable ways to express them, and discover strategies for solving problems.

An understanding response acknowledges that a child’s thoughts and feelings are important and tries to reflect back to the child what is happening so that he can find ways to understand what he is feeling. For example: “You really wanted to play with the blocks, didn’t you?”



Mom helps Ariana see another point of view.

could be a response when one child grabs a block from another. By responding with empathy—“Let’s get some blocks for you so you can be building, too without making your friend so unhappy,”—the teacher acknowledges the situation and helps both children start to solve the problem together, without it escalating any further. This way discipline becomes a learning opportunity. The child learns how to become more aware of his feelings and those of others as well, while also learning how to handle them the next time they erupt.

Becky Bailey advocates for the power of empathy as an important practice in her approach to conscious discipline. She reminds us that children’s emotions are at the heart of creating a loving school-community that brings out the best in every child. “Children have a right to all of their feelings. Feelings serve us as our core system for discerning right from wrong. Feelings are our moral navigators. We do not need to stop having them. We need to become acutely aware of them and then learn how to express them more appropriately.”

When teachers approach discipline through empathy, they work at trying to understand what children are feeling and thinking. They focus on positive intent – looking for insights into what might be causing the disruption rather than just scolding the misbehavior itself.

Becky Bailey also counsels “empathy helps children organize their brains”. We can respond to children by describing what we see them doing and then helping them put words to what they might be feeling which can support them to solve their own problems. “Gee, you’re kicking your feet on the floor—I’m wondering if you’re mad about something.” By describing the behavior we help the child stop and get grounded, getting back into his body when emotions are out of control. By giving words to what we think he might be feeling, we help him start to find his own words to describe the emotions

When you empathize with children you teach them...

- ♥ Self-awareness
- ♥ Self-control
- ♥ Recognition and acceptance of emotions
- ♥ The knowledge that emotions can be expressed to others
- ♥ The ability to label feelings with appropriate words
- ♥ The understanding that feelings influence behavior
- ♥ The realization that relationships are based on mutual esteem and communication

as a first step toward becoming a problem solver. This approach—simply to describe what you “see, feel, hear”—helps young children move through different levels of the brain to process what is happening with greater understanding.

“Our job is like that of an elevator operator. We are to assist children to move from the lower levels (brain stem—survival), to the middle levels (limbic system—feeling), to the upper levels (cortex—problem solving) of the brain. With each level children become more organized, calm, and in control of themselves.”

When we combine children’s empathy with our thoughtful guidance as teachers we can turn discipline into teachable moments that build on children’s strengths. Discipline through understanding and empathy values who children are, validates that their thoughts and feelings are important, and helps children discover ways to express their feelings more appropriately.

“Empathy has the power to transform relationships. It reminds us of our connectedness with each other and strengthens our sense of self. We feel connected, can clarify our thoughts and discover what we feel when we’re with someone who offers empathy. When others understand us, we can understand ourselves.”

Becky Bailey, Conscious Discipline ♥

References

- Bailey, Becky A. *Conscious Discipline*. Oviedo, Florida: Loving Guidance, 2001.
- Galinsky, Ellen, Peg Sprague, Nina Sazer O’Donnell, and Amy Dombro. *Mind in the Making: An Early Learning Program* (review copy). New York: Families and Work Institute, 2005. (reference for quote made by Joseph Campos)
- Gopnik, Alison, Andrew N. Meltzoff, and Patricia K.Kuhl. *The Scientist in the Crib: Minds, Brains, and How Children Learn*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1999.
- Snyder, Martha, Ross Snyder, and Ross Snyder, Jr. *The Young Child as Person: Toward the Development of Healthy Conscience*. New York: Human Sciences Press, Inc., 1985.

I Am What I Am – and So Are You

by Diana Montoya



She's not like my other children. Alisha, who is seven years old, is always so intense and persistent. Joseph, my 5-year-old, is a quiet and calm child. And my 2-year-old, Sara, is somewhere in the middle. She's always busy, toddling around the house, climbing and exploring. Joseph and Sara are such easy children. But Alisha...this child pushes all my buttons. Why can't she be calm like her little brother and sister? Her brother doesn't challenge me. He loves to try new things. Her little sister is active but not ALL the time! I like a calm easy child who doesn't question me; someone who can sit still when I read to her. She has never been able to sit quietly no matter what I say or do. And when I think about it, she has never been able to be still for very long, even as a young baby... a newborn for that matter.

That's right. The truth of the matter is she was probably like this in utero. Even during pregnancy different babies may have very different activity levels. One may have been very calm, while the other was so active he barely let you sleep. They were displaying their very own temperament styles even before birth.

All children come into this world with their own particular way of "being." This is what makes them so wonderfully unique. It is called temperament. And every

infant begins life with her own particular temperament that can profoundly influence the way others treat the child and how she reacts to the world. Understanding the differing temperamental styles can help adults respond appropriately to children's behavior, helping them to reach their full potential.

According to child development experts Shelly Butler and Deb Kratz, temperament is a person's normal, natural style of behaving and responding to the world. The wide range of temperaments helps to explain the wide range of behavior and disposition. Temperament does not dictate what children do, but helps us understand how and why they do it. Personality is the traits and characteristics that people are born with (nature) combined with the effect of people and environment (nurture). Personality is affected by many factors including temperament, birth order, life events, illnesses, economic status, age, health, and parenting.

Butler and Kratz go on to explain that the temperament children exhibit in childhood is likely to be similar to their temperament as an adult. So what does this mean when the adult temperament style doesn't match that of the children they care for? It has great implications in the classroom and home. Some styles are a better match to your own particular temperament style. And



Amber has the look of an easy-going child.

when that occurs, life can move along pretty smoothly for the most part. Child development experts call this a *goodness of fit*. But when there's a mismatch, it can be rough going since it often influences the way adults treat children.

Researchers Alexander Thomas and Stella Chess describe the different temperaments of infants and toddlers in three categories: fearful, feisty, and flexible. Understanding these temperament styles of children can improve the caregiver-child relationship and help caregivers be more responsive to them as individuals. Thomas and Chess list nine temperament traits, which shows us that children not only have distinct personal styles from birth but also share a combination of traits.

- 1.) **Activity Level** - Children differ in how active they tend to be.
- 2.) **Biological Rhythms** - The times at which a child eats, sleeps, or toilets may tend to be regular or irregular.
- 3.) **Approach/Withdrawal** - Some children tend to withdraw from people and things; others approach.
- 4.) **Mood** - Children vary in how often they display negative or positive moods.
- 5.) **Intensity of Reaction** - Some children express both discomfort and pleasure in a low-key way, others with great intensity.
- 6.) **Sensitivity** - Children differ to stimuli such as bright lights, loud noises, touch, and internal discomfort.
- 7.) **Adaptability** - Some children adapt quickly to new routines or situations; others adapt more slowly.
- 8.) **Distractibility** - Children differ in how easily they tend to be distracted from activities.
- 9.) **Persistence** - Some children often give up on performing a task or activity as soon as they encounter an obstacle; others tend to keep on trying, even when faced with difficulty.

The flexible child traits: Regular rhythms, positive mood adaptability, low intensity, low sensitivity.

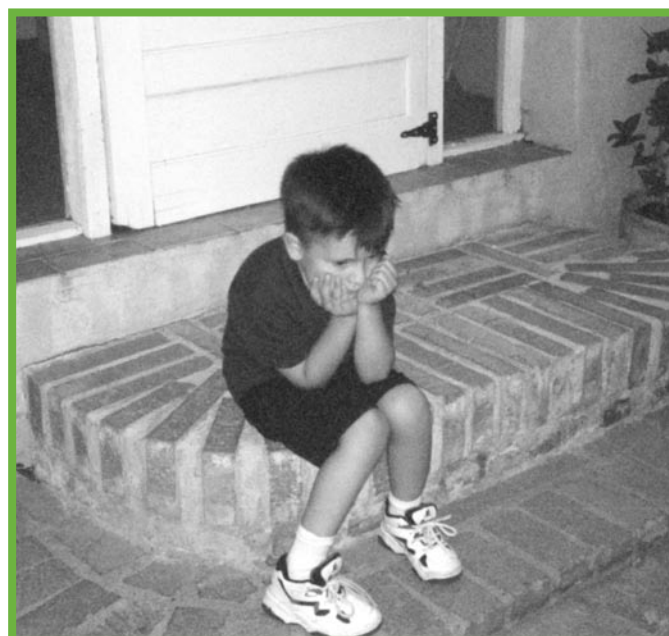
Franklin is a cheerful little boy who seldom makes a fuss. When given a new situation, new toy, or activity he quickly adapts. He will wait his turn at the water table even if other children are pushing their way in front of him.

What you can do. Because Franklin tends to be easy and resilient and doesn't demand a lot of attention it's easy for him to get overlooked. It is important for the caregiver to check in with this child from time to time. Sometimes a smile or a simple gesture from across the room tells the child that he isn't forgotten. Then set aside special time for some individual attention.

The fearful child traits: This child tends to adapt slowly and sometimes withdraws.

It takes Ariana time to adapt to a new environment or situation. When her teacher asks her to join other students in the dramatic play area, Ariana resists, cries, and hides behind her teacher.

What you can do. This child needs more time to warm up with new activities as well as new people. They are usually very attached to their parent or teacher. With this child, go slowly. Introduce her to new activities little by little. Allow her to stay close to you and check things out from a safe distance. Instead of insisting she go to the dramatic play area alone, draw her in by offering her a toy and share the activity with her until she becomes engaged. Then step back but



Andre needs some coaxing.



This feisty one needs help redirecting her energy.

remain available until her caution changes to enjoyment.

The feisty child traits: Active, intense, distractible, sensitive, irregular, moody.

Carlos screams intensely because another child is playing with the blocks that he wants. He is impatient and pushes the child and grabs the blocks. After playing with the blocks for a while he moves on to grab a ball from another child insisting that the ball belongs to him.

What you can do. With this child you will want to use a redirection technique. Recognize the child's feelings and let him know that expressing anger through hurtful or disruptive behavior is not acceptable. Give the child calming strategies for self-regulation. Offer a new toy or activity that might interest him. If this doesn't work try the redirection technique again. Remember that this child can be unpredictable and irregular and may not fit into your schedule, so it may be easier for you to adapt and be flexible.

Goodness of Fit

Think of your own temperament when you were a child, and now as an adult. Did you recognize any of the above traits that fit into your own personal style? And how does your temperament style match or mismatch with the children in your center or classroom or your own children?

On Saturday mornings do you love to sleep in late, wake up slowly, get a cup of coffee, and read the newspaper in bed? But your son is up early, full of energy and can't wait for you to take him to the new children's amusement park. You don't like busy places or not knowing exactly what to expect. He's impatient with your reluctance and wants to get out of the house now!

Let's reverse this situation. It's Saturday and you are up early, ready to get out into the garden, then run errands, and take your son to the park to play with other children. But your son always drags his feet. Plus he wants to watch cartoons and is not interested in making new friends. As a matter of fact, he would prefer not to.

Becoming aware of our own and others' temperaments can give insight and awareness to our behaviors and needs. Understanding and respecting these differences are critical for children to develop and thrive. It's important not to label but to acknowledge that we are who we are.

The pullout section of this journal contains a Mix and Match chart. You can identify your own temperament traits as well as the traits in the children in your life. Use this information to navigate relationships and to help develop children to their full potential. ♥

References

- Butler, Shelly, and Deb Kratz. "Temperament and Personality." "The Field Guide to Parenting. Family Fun: Family Field Guide." <http://familyfun.go.com/parenting/child/skills/feature/FGP_personality>.
- Thomas, Alexander, and Stella Chess, "Flexible, Fearful, or Feisty, The Different Temperaments of Infants and Toddlers." *Child Care Video Magazine*. California Department of Education Sacramento: Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development. 1990.

What's the Matter with a Little Swat?

by Jan Winslow

Jenifer is sitting at home admiring her brand-new son, Michael, who is lying on her lap. Along toddles 2-year-old brother, Stephen. He notices all the attention baby Michael is receiving and bops him on the head! "Don't hit your brother, Stephen!" scolds Jenifer, as she swats Stephen on his diapered bottom. Immediately Jenifer looks back and forth from baby to toddler in shock as it sinks in—she's just done to Stephen what she punished Stephen for doing to Michael. Why was her first reaction to swat the toddler? She didn't know. All she knew was that it was not an appropriate or effective way to change Stephen's behavior. Both boys are now in high school but that memory has stayed with Jenifer for a decade and a half. If only all parents could have that type of crystallizing "aha!" moment when deciding on methods of discipline for their children.

Spanking. Is this form of punishment a reasonable way to discipline? The word discipline comes from disciple, which means follower. So, the disciplinarian gives instruction to the disciple. And, therefore, discipline should be teaching, not punishing. What did Stephen learn from the swat on his bottom? Nothing. Jenifer realized Steven's behavior likely wouldn't change and she thoughtfully opted against spankings in the future. Here's what some researchers say on the subject:

- ♥ Spanking teaches your child that violence is the way grownups resolve conflicts even though children are told not to hurt others.
- ♥ Spanking tells a child that he is powerless, and this could lead him to act out, resulting in even more problems.
- ♥ Spanking is disrespectful to the child and does not teach the child respectful values.
- ♥ Spanking stops constructive communication; he can't learn from his mistakes, or understand what is expected of him.
- ♥ Spanking is emotionally harmful to the child. It makes the child feel there is something wrong with *him* instead of his *behavior*. A child is not bad. His behavior may be bad, but the child lacks the tools to make the right choices. That's what you are there for.
- ♥ Spanking is a dead-end. Once you've spanked, what can you do next? Spank more? Harder? Physical discipline leads you down a scary path.
- ♥ Spanking is emotionally painful to the parent. Very seldom does a parent feel good after spanking—it often leads to feelings of guilt and you may doubt your parenting skills. Wouldn't you rather give your child the tools to handle the conflict next time on his own?
- ♥ Spanking is not discipline; it's punishing. There is no teaching involved, no possible alternatives for next time, and no thought to having the "punishment fit the crime."

- ♥ Spanking shows your child you lack self-control. Parents generally spank when they are mad or out of control. Why would a parent in control of the situation ever want to hit a person they love more than most anyone else in the world?
- ♥ Spanking teaches injustice. What do our actions show when we spank the smallest people?
- ♥ Spanking must mean that you want your child to be afraid of you. It's true that a child may obey more quickly when afraid. But wouldn't you want your child to obey out of love, respect, and understanding?
- ♥ Spanking is not an act of love. Does the old adage, "This hurts me more than it's hurting you," really make sense? Do you want your child to grow up thinking violence is a way to show love?
- ♥ Spanking stops effective communication. Will a child want to have a discussion with you on appropriate alternatives to his behavior after you've hit him?

What to do instead? Re-directing, discussion, and distraction are common options. Stephen wanted attention. He also may not have understood that bopping a baby can cause pain. Jenifer could have put little Michael down and explained Stephen's actions to him. She could have invited Stephen up on the sofa to gently love his brother. She could have provided an activity for Stephen. Although every situation may not be resolved beautifully or effortlessly, it's clear there are alternatives. If we teach our children with patience and understanding, resorting to physical violence isn't necessary. There are numerous books outlining many methods. There are experts in your community with alternatives. Talk to teachers and parents you know and respect for more ideas, and they'll be honored you asked!

In our global, high-tech, busy society our children are aware of and confronted with a great amount of violence. Let's not compound that with more violence at home. Let's create an atmosphere where our children feel secure, loved, and nurtured; a place where we can teach constructive alternatives to society's example that "might makes right." ♥

References

- Brandenburg, MA, Mark. "Attachment Parenting" *Natural Family Online*. 2005. Ballard Web Solutions. 5/18/05. <http://www.naturalfamilyonline.com/5-ap/45-spanking-discipline.htm>
- DiLeo, Gerard M. MD. "To Spank or Not to Spank? Can't Decide." *Ask BabyZone*. 5/18/05. BabyZone. 2005 <http://www.babyzone.com/features/expertsqa/default.asp?QAID=340&ExpertID=1#q>
- Hyman, Irwin A. *The Case Against Spanking*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1997.

Brain-Smart Discipline

by Ellen Biderman

Three-year olds Joey and Lucy are playing with blocks on the floor. They are piling them up and then crashing them to the floor, laughing each time. Lucy's dad is pleased that his emphasis on sharing seems to be paying off. Suddenly, seemingly out of the blue, Lucy grabs all the blocks—she has finished sharing. Joey then hits Lucy, saying, "I want the blocks!" Lucy then throws a block across the room. In an instant, Lucy's dad is faced with both children in the throes of a tantrum.

What should he do?

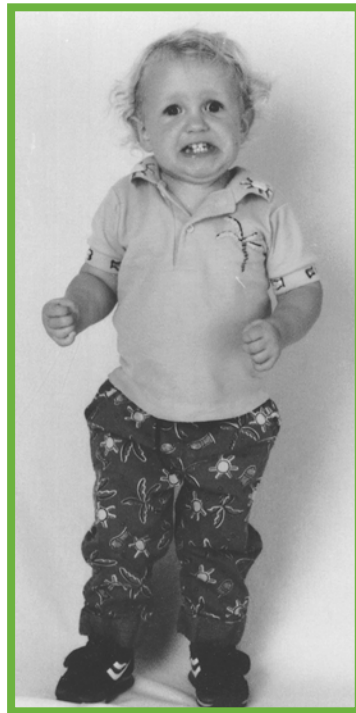
Why didn't Lucy remember all his talk about sharing?

How should he discipline Lucy so she'll act correctly next time?

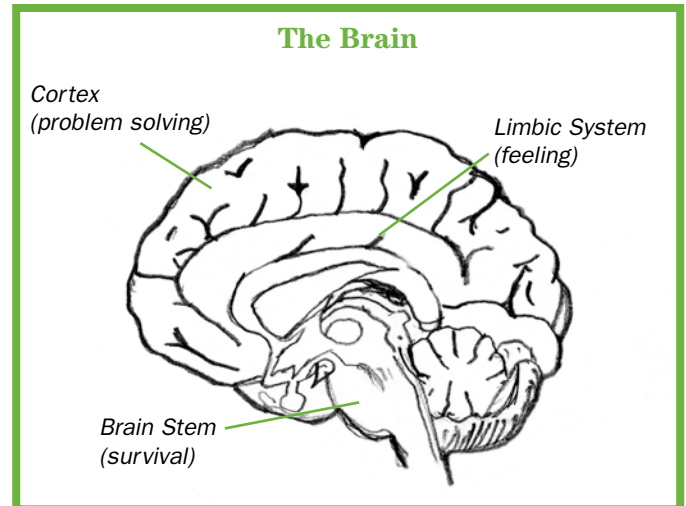
Should he talk to Joey's parents, or discipline him right now?

Before we get to these questions, let's step back a moment and figure out what is really happening to Lucy and Joey. Dr. Megan Gunnar from the University of Minnesota believes that "stress (in this case manifested by a tantrum) happens when there is a challenge that matters to you and you don't have the resources to manage it." Dr. Alicia Lieberman, senior psychologist at the infant-parent program at San Francisco General Hospital says, "I think of the temper tantrum as a very eloquent, although seldom appreciated, expression of a child's difficulty managing overwhelming negative emotions. Take the tantrum seriously because the tantrum gives a perfect opportunity to teach the child how to manage overwhelming feelings."

Perhaps Joey and Lucy had simply exhausted their resources for sharing. Enough was enough. But still the parent or teacher needs to understand how to deal with



Managing overwhelming negative emotions with a tantrum...



Courtesy of Sam Kerwin, age 13

a tantrum. Understanding the physiology of the brain can help.

During the first years of life the brain is creating patterns, based on experience, of how to respond to stress. The brain records and documents our social successes and failures in the language of neurochemistry. Whether one's needs are consistently met, whether the world seems safe or scary, whether one is bullied or a victim, all shape children's perceptions of themselves and the world and become hard-wired into the brain. When a child is in stress or distress, the body reacts on the physical, emotional, and intellectual levels. Neurotransmitters carry messages to the brain, relaying that they have received stimuli that can't be processed. This can range from a physical need such as hunger to an overwhelming social situation, such as sharing for a three-year old.

These messages cause a distress response characterized by the release of various hormones that put the body out of balance. In healthy adults, this automatic response is countered by the ability to understand and verbalize emotions and temper instinctive reactions. These more rational responses help the body's systems come back into balance in order to effectively deal with the threat or emotion. In children, this developing system is sometimes either underdeveloped or oversensitive, causing children to fly off the handle for no apparent reason. They cannot handle disappointment or frustration and thus act out. The good news, however, is that adults through positive, caring discipline, can help children fine tune this system because the brain thrives on feedback for growth and learning.

Although the brain works as a whole, it can be thought of as having three levels. The first to develop is the brain stem. This area deals with instinct, reflexes, and survival. “I’m hungry; I’ll cry.” “I’m frustrated; I’ll lash out.” Children operating on this level need to learn how to calm themselves. Adults can help by attending to their physical needs, assuring them of their safety and reflecting behavior back to the child. For example, Lucy’s dad could say, “Wow, you are really throwing those blocks hard, but I cannot let you hurt yourself or others. Let’s breathe deeply to calm down.” Psychologist Becky Bailey believes that teaching children breathing techniques is essential to their being able to calm themselves, as deep breathing helps the chemicals in the body return to a normal state.

The mid-brain or limbic system houses emotions and long-term memory. Current research tells us that the optimal time for nurturing this area is between the ages of 15 months and 4 years. To help a child move “up” to this level, the adult should reflect the child’s feelings. “Your actions tell me you are angry or just tired of sharing. Let’s find something else to do.”

The cortex or frontal lobes is the area where problem solving, creativity, and higher order thinking take place. The sensitive period of development for this area is 4 to 8 years. This is the area we want to access while disciplining in order to help the child become a productive problem solver. “Maybe you and Joey can play with play dough for a while.” Lucy’s dad has offered an alternative as a solution to the situation.

What brain research tells us is that you cannot reason with a child in the throes of a tantrum. In fact, brain scans show that areas of the brain responsible for long-term memory and critical thinking are not even accessible during periods of stress. Children, or for that matter adults who are in stress, need to lower that stress for the brain to be able to focus on emotions and cognitive reasoning. When there is fear and threat, the brain moves away from the frontal lobe area of reasoning and “downshifts” to the lower brain areas. In other words, a crying child is not going to come up with a rational alternative for behavior because someone took his blocks away. Only when he feels safe and calm will he be able to make a plan to avoid this problem in the future. The brain processes information, first from the brain stem, then to the mid brain or emotional center, and finally to the neocortex or center of reason. Children in a tantrum revert to the lowest level and use their bodies. Our job is to help them move out of the physical response in order to access emotions and then reasoning. Discipline thus becomes a way to lead the child through development.

But what is the behavioral goal of discipline? Is it to make the child obey, to conform to social niceties, to



Mom helps Spencer handle a difficult situation.

make the parents proud? For Lucy’s dad it was to teach his daughter to share and behave so she can get along with others—a great goal. But child development experts and psychologists have helped us to expand our definition.

Martha Snyder, Ross Snyder, and Ross Snyder Jr., authors of *The Young Child as Person*, state that discipline is a set of rules necessary for daily survival. Positive discipline allows children to develop a healthy conscience in order to care for themselves and others. It allows children to experience autonomy, freedom, safety, security, self-control, and a sense of themselves as part of a social system. Discipline, according to the Snyders, should allow the child to stay in relationship, to function, and to explore the exciting world of people and ideas. This implies an active role for the adult to respond to children’s emotions with respect, honesty, and understanding. So Lucy’s dad could chastise Lucy for not sharing, tell her she is bad and that he is so disappointed in her, tell her to give the blocks to Joey, or tell her to go to her room. Instead, he used brain-smart discipline to give an understanding response, acknowledging that Lucy didn’t want to share, but Joey wanted to play with the blocks, and then elicited her help in solving the problem.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow says that discipline helps inform the ways in which children express their needs through behavior. Maslow spent his life investigating needs as motivation of behavior. He developed a hierarchy of needs, beginning with the physical and moving through safety, belonging, self-esteem, knowledge, understanding, beauty, and self-actualization. In disciplining, Maslow says we should appeal to these various levels in ascending order. If basic needs are not met, children will revert to unacceptable behavior to try to meet those needs. Interestingly, his theory mirrors the way the

brain processes information—from the physical to the abstract.

Positive discipline based on brain development and the research of psychologists is an inter-relational process. Lucy's dad, in responding to the situation at hand, had to figure out what need was being expressed (whether the children were hungry, tired, frustrated) and how to respond to and accept the need while helping the children design alternative behavior that would also give the child needed skills for the next time the situation arises.

It sounds complicated, but in the end, Lucy and Joey, after a gentle intervention from her dad, and a snack of milk and cookies, went on to play with play dough. They are learning that when they are frustrated and overwhelmed in a social situation, a caring adult can help them move on and that there are solutions to situations that get out of control. Hopefully Lucy's dad's caring response became part of the hard-wiring of their brains

that will help them to see the world as a safe place with caring adults—a place where they can find their own solution to problems and successfully function in this exciting world of people and things. ♥

References

- Bailey, Becky. *Conscious Discipline*. Florida: Loving Guidance, 2000.
- Evandki, Gerard. "Brain-Compatible Discipline." www.disciplineassociates.com
- Galinsky, Ellen, Peg Sprague, Nina Sazer O'Donnell, Amy Dombro. *Mind in the Making Early Learning Modules* (review copy). New York: Families and Work Institute, 2005.
- Maslow, Abraham. *Toward a Psychology of Being*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1968.
- Preschool Learning Alliance. "Stress, Babies, and the Developing Brain." *Issues for Childcare*, www.preschool.atalink.co.us/articles/47.
- Snyder, Martha, Ross Snyder, and Ross Snyder Jr. *The Young Child as Person*. New York: Human Sciences Press, 1985.

PNM Teacher Grants Make Ideas Come Alive for Students

In a world where kids have access to stimulation from the Internet, video games, and TV on a near-constant basis, it sometimes takes creative techniques to teach kids a given subject. Teachers are pressed to come up with innovative ways to communicate information to students, and to develop projects that will interest kids and keep them engaged in their learning.

To help address this situation and offer resources to teachers, PNM provides two grants to reward teachers for their ingenuity. The **Classroom Innovation Grants** and the **Earth Study Grants** allow teachers to offer projects and programs to their students that would not have been possible. To date, PNM has awarded 554 grants and \$1.3 million in the two programs. More than 12,000 students benefited from the grants last year.

Grant applications are evaluated using a scoring rubric that values innovation, practicality and evaluation procedures.

Janet Escobedo received a grant for her project involving sand trays to enhance reading skills. Escobedo is a teacher at an elementary school in Rio Rancho. Over 300 students utilized a sand tray and a baggie of articles, such as feathers, rocks, figurines, shells and cars to "build a world" and tell a story about their world. As a result of Ms. Escobedo's project, reading scores increased dramatically compared to non-participating students. In addition, Escobedo's students improved their listening skills and learned to be more respectful of others.

Ms. Escobedo states, "(The grant) gave me more variety to my work week and a sense of pride in what I do. I am extremely excited and encouraged by the results!"

The deadline for applying for **Earth Study Grants** is 5 pm, February 5, 2006; **Classroom Innovation Grant** applications are due 5 pm, March 5, 2006. Full-time K-12

teachers from New Mexico are encouraged to apply; for the first time, full-time pre-K teachers with an early childhood New Mexico license are also eligible. To get more information about the grant programs, or to find out how to apply for grants online in the spring, please visit PNM.com/edgrants.



Fund A division of the PNM Resources Foundation

A Path to Positive Discipline

by Dorothy L. Kerwin

- ♥ Children need love most when they are least lovable.
- ♥ Children learn by example.
- ♥ Respect yourself and your children.
- ♥ Reflect on your values and guide your children in that direction.
- ♥ An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
- ♥ Create an environment that allows you to say *yes*.
- ♥ Acknowledge feelings and use words to describe them.
- ♥ Keep a sense of perspective.
- ♥ Choose your battles.
- ♥ Keep it simple.
- ♥ Learn from your mistakes.
- ♥ Forgive yourself.
- ♥ Understand and work *with* your children's temperaments.
- ♥ Understand and work with *your* temperament.
- ♥ Take care of yourself.



- ♥ When you're stuck—*move* (better yet, *dance*).
- ♥ Laugh.
- ♥ Have fun with your children.

A Toolbox of Discipline Tips

by Dorothy L. Kerwin

There is no magic wand for disciplining children but there are helpful tools. Remember that every tool does not work in every situation with every child. It is easier to turn a bolt with a wrench than with a hammer.

- ♥ Meet basic needs: following rules can be difficult if you are hungry, thirsty, tired, or have to go potty.
- ♥ Create an environment that is safe and child friendly.
- ♥ Use background music to influence behavior that is appropriate to the activity or situation.
- ♥ Observe children's nonverbal cues; listen to their words.
- ♥ Redirect:
Change activities *before* negative behavior begins.



- Use humor. (Avoid sarcasm and put-downs.)
Create games and songs to diffuse tension.
- ♥ Use your voice as a tool:
Practice using a firm, even voice.
Gain attention by changing your voice—whisper, sing, boom.
- ♥ Let children help brainstorm rules and solutions.
- ♥ Keep rules simple and consequences clear.
Natural consequences: the milk was spilt so it needs to be cleaned up.
Logical consequences: if you leave the yard, you will have to play inside.
- ♥ Choose your battles: decide in advance which rules are non-negotiable and when there is room for flexibility.
- ♥ Choices:
When possible, give children a choice.
Give choices that you can live with.
- ♥ Create a cool-down space that allows children to feel safe as they deal with strong emotions.
- ♥ Try reverse psychology:
Make unpopular but necessary activities (clean-up, bath time, etc.) attractive.
Think of Tom Sawyer painting his fence.
- ♥ Model positive behavior: practice what you preach
- ♥ Use genuine praise to describe appropriate behavior.

UNM Family Development Program

2005-2006 Inservice Offerings for Teachers, Community Program Staff, Administrators and Parents of Young

Successful Practices for Successful Children

- ♥ Building a Positive Relationship with Parents
- ♥ Home Visiting as a Way to Get to Know Each Other
- ♥ Setting Goals Together for a Successful School Year
- ♥ Building on Common Ground to Resolve Conflicts
- ♥ Celebrating Differences in Family Culture and Values
- ♥ Multicultural Schools
- ♥ Family Stories/Family Literacy
- ♥ Fun with Math, Science, and Art
- ♥ Supporting Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
- ♥ Welcoming Fathers to Their Children's Learning

Creative Classroom Learning

- ♥ Human Development from Birth to Age 5
- ♥ Understanding Children's Behavior and Temperament
- ♥ Intentional Discipline: Working with Challenging Children
- ♥ How Witnessing Violence Affects Young Children
- ♥ Emergent Curriculum: Following the Children's Lead
- ♥ Early Language, Early Literacy
- ♥ Discovering Together through Play
- ♥ Outdoor Learning in Nature
- ♥ Great Explorations in Math & Science
- ♥ Portfolio Assessment: Documenting Children's Progress
- ♥ Managing the Learning Environment

Call To Request a Training Partnership Application!



Call 277-5800

"You help close that gap between 'Teacher' and 'Parent.'"
—Julie Tisone, Teacher, Emerson Elementary, Albuquerque

We would like to acknowledge Albuquerque Printing Company for their contribution toward the publication of this journal.

Design by Jana Fothergill, UNM Communications & Marketing



The University of New Mexico

Family Development Program
MSC 06-3630
1 University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, NM 87131-0001

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Albuquerque, NM
Permit No. 39

**Apply For A
FREE
UNM
Training
Partnership**