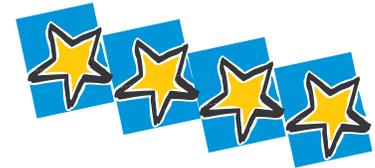




A Strength-based Approach To Keeping Children Safe



Are you a parent who has a hard time with the thought of your little one falling off the monkey bars? Do you run across the playground if you think your child might take a tumble? Maybe you hover nearby and never leave your child's side, in order to prevent bumps and bruises. Or is this description the exact opposite of you? Finding the right balance when protecting kids and teaching safety skills is essential. But it can be tough to discern when you're being overprotective and when you're lending a helping hand.

There are two types of safety that require the attention of parents. One is physical safety. How high should kids climb? Can they jump off the swing safely? How far can they ride their bikes? But they also have to learn about emotional safety (safety with people)—when it's okay to talk with strangers, how to protect their feelings from those who might hurt them, and how to establish clear boundaries with people concerning touch and uncomfortable situations.

Children who rarely have a chance to take risks may become overly fearful and afraid to try anything new, or they may become overly zealous and take too many risks. Parents must pay attention and assess what types of risks their child is ready for and ultimately decide what situations their child can embark on. As children get older, of course, the balance between taking risks and being safe can be even trickier!

According to *The Kidpower Book for Caring Adults* by Irene Van der Zande, parents can do the following things in order to encourage this balance.

1. Gather realistic information about potential hazards in each given situation.
2. Trust their intuition about their child's skills and limitations.
3. Help children develop skills and confidence to understand and keep themselves safe.
4. Encourage children to do things on their own when they're capable.

The goal is to help children be aware of the risks in their environment and to learn how to keep themselves safe from physical and emotional harm. To do this, parents need a way to teach without using fear-based strategies. Scaring children is not an effective way to teach them.

Here are some things parents can do:

- Even young children can learn to ask for help when they need it. Teach children to identify three adults they could get help from in an emergency.
- Provide opportunities that allow children to be more self-sufficient.

- Notice when they make good choices.
- Talk to them about specific situations they may encounter and ask them what they would do in given situations. “What would you do if a child pushed you on the playground?” “What if someone asks you to do something you know is wrong?”
- Maintain balance between safety and overprotection. Supervise activities based on the child's age, the environment, and the child's abilities to make good decisions.
- Never let negative stereotypes such as “helicopter parent” or “overprotective” be the reason you don't supervise your child.
- Use common sense and your best judgment when assessing the child's risk in a given situation by asking, who, what, where, and when.
- Be available to help children deal with risky, disappointing, and uncomfortable situations when they occur.

The international organization Kidpower offers classes and resources for teaching children interpersonal safety and for helping



- grown-ups think of the kinds of risks their children may be exposed to. It's Web site provides numerous articles as well as locations around the world where Kidpower is taught.
- www.kidpower.org

PERSONAL PARENTING

Chalkboard Fun

If your child is getting tired of crayons and markers, try a chalkboard and chalk for something different. Writing and drawing with chalk strengthens small muscles and builds eye-hand coordination. One of the great things about drawing with chalk is that mistakes magically disappear with a couple of swipes of an eraser. Old socks work great for erasing, too, and they can also be used for storing the chalk when not in use.



Pancakes Galore

Pancakes are easy to make and are nutritious especially if you use whole grain flour pancake batter and toppings such as applesauce, cream cheese, or almond butter.

• Personal Pancakes

Instead of making round pancakes, why not make pancakes in the shape of your child's initials? It's easy. You can also create portrait pancakes with a little more time and a supply of condiments for hair and facial features.

• Teddy Bear Pancake

Make one large circle for the face and add a couple of smaller pancakes for ears. While the pancake is still hot, you

can add chocolate chips or banana slices for eyes. For some reason, a teddy bear



pancake is just more fun to eat!

• On-the-Go Breakfast Pancake

Place a few tablespoons of applesauce on a pancake. Sprinkle it with cinnamon, roll it up, and eat. Or spread a pancake with almond butter and sliced bananas, sprinkle on some wheat germ, and roll it up.

Baby Play Power

125 Brain Games for Babies, by Jackie Silberg is packed with activities to nurture brain development. There are opportunities every day to nurture brain development in the first twelve months of life. In this book you'll find games such as Peekaboo Music, Rum Tum Tum, Little Cheek, and Love Those Keys! The games are simple and the activities are organized into: Birth to three months, Three to six months, six to nine months, and nine to twelve months.



Curl Up with A Good Book

Reading to children is one of the great joys of parenthood. It's especially rewarding when books are entertaining for adults, too.



• Parents who loved *Where the Sidewalk Ends* and *A Light in the Attic* now have a new Shel Silverstein book to read to their children. *Every Thing On It* is so cleverly written and illustrated that it's hard to keep a straight face while reading. There are dozens of poems in this book and each seems

to be more outlandish than the next.

• *My Name Is Not Isabella* by Jennifer Fosberry, illustrated by Mike Litwin, is for all little girls who dream of being anyone from Sally Ride (the first female astronaut) to Rosa Parks (the civil rights activist). Isabella takes a journey through history, changing her name as she goes. In the end, she thinks it would be pretty special to be the best mom in the world, too!

• Time to settle down for the night and read *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, our most loved lullaby illustrated by Caldecott medalist Jerry Pinckney. This is a magical book featuring a lovable chipmunk taking a journey through the night sky. The pictures (many of the pages without words) are bound to create calm in little ones drifting toward sleep.

Go Easy on the Fruit Juice

There was a time when pediatricians pushed 100 percent fruit juice. Now doctors recommend no juice for children under 6 months; a moderate 4 to 6 ounces of fruit juice a day for children 1 to 6; and 8 to 12 ounces for children ages 7 and older. It's sometimes hard to enforce these guidelines, but by forming some new, healthy habits such as drinking more water, it can be done.

Light Up Your Child's Imagination: Set the Stage for Make-Believe and Creativity



Imagine being a king or queen and living in a castle. Or imagine being a lion, a doctor, or a cowboy. Even babies engage in make-believe play--they feed baby dolls and put stuffed teddy bears to bed. For children, make-believe comes naturally. They grow up reciting rhymes about cows jumping over the moon. They wear capes and carry magic wands. They paint pigs that fly and flowers in the sky.

It's important to nurture imagination and creativity in children. Creative adults are not only painters and writers, they're politicians and CEOs. They're teachers, architects, and parents. Innovative, problem-solving thinking begins with imagination. As a child's first teacher, parents play an enormous role in enhancing and keeping imaginations fresh.



Dress-up and Prop Boxes

Parents can create prop boxes filled with interesting items that enhance make-believe play. A trip to the thrift store can provide a large assortment of dress-up clothes. Themed prop boxes can be created by filling them related clothes and objects and then labeling them. When children want to play, they simply bring out the prop box and start pretending. Here are some great prop box themes to consider. A bakery might include play dough, muffin tins, aprons, bowls, measuring cups and spoons, money, and a cash register. Other prop boxes could be a veterinary clinic, restaurant, office, flower shop, school, and post office.

Puppet Play

Even children who are often quiet can put a puppet on a hand or finger and be transformed into another personality. Puppets can be made inexpensively out of everything from spoons to socks and topped with googly eyes and yarn hair. Finger puppets can easily be made by cutting off the fingers on a pair of old gloves and putting facial features on with magic markers.

Storytelling

Give kids a bag full of objects. They can be related, such as all cooking utensils or all things from nature, or they can be a hodgepodge of items you find around the house, from erasers to playing cards. Let your child hold the bag, take out an object, and start a story. The story continues as another object is taken out of the bag. "There once was a stick named Harry. He liked adventures, so he hopped on the old wooden spoon and they went sailing into the universe..."

Feel the Quiet

Children are being raised in a very busy world. Slow down and enjoy nature with your child by taking a walk in the woods or throwing sticks into a stream. Visit a museum and look at art. Go to the library and open pages of books, select a few, and bring them home to read.

Painting, Collage, and Sculpture

Yes, you can paint a purple cow. Or a blue one or a pink one. Children have strong imaginations. Parents can build on this natural ability by providing lots of art supplies. All kinds of paper can be used, from newspapers to blueprint paper. Brushes can be out of from anything from pine branches to yarn or sponges. Crayons and boxes of paint are inexpensive, but paint colors can also be made from food coloring and water. Play dough is a great sculpting medium, but don't forget sculptures made from paper tubes, scraps of wood, and craft sticks.

