



The Parents Role When Children Misbehave

There are many reasons why children sometimes behave unacceptably. This short list may draw an aha from you as you strive to develop positive values and lifestyle patterns within your family. How we respond to children influences how often and in what way they may repeat the behavior.

Children do not always understand expectations. Carla, 18 months old, may throw her spaghetti on the floor simply to see what will happen. She may not understand that this is not allowed. If the behavior is met with an explanation—such as “The spaghetti belongs on your plate, not on the floor. Now we have to clean up the mess”—she is more likely to learn what is acceptable. If the behavior does not have a consequence, or was met with shouting and threats, learning doesn’t occur and the behavior may be repeated later to get attention.

- **The parents’ role is to teach and guide by explaining expectations.**

Children get tired, hungry, and frustrated. Jeremy might throw a tantrum at the grocery store because he needs a nap, hasn’t eaten or isn’t feeling well. Or he



might want the candy bar displayed conveniently at eye level in the checkout line and can’t quite understand why you don’t toss it into the cart with the cereal and milk.

- **The parents’ role is to take care of their child’s physical needs.**

Children want power and control. An important step for a child in gaining independence is to gain control over the environment. But in the interest of keeping children safe and healthy, parents have to be the boss. Riley cannot get out of her car seat, but she can pick whether she wants orange juice or apple juice for breakfast.

- **The parents’ role is to set limits but give children choices when possible.**

Children want attention. They also need attention, and they deserve it. They learn early on that certain responses follow certain behaviors. Giving attention for cooperative instead of uncooperative behavior is extremely important. It’s not easy to ignore a whining child, but it will help extinguish the behavior. Ignore Paula if you can when she interrupts your conversation; tell her what good manners she has when she remembers to say, “Excuse me.”

- **The parents’ role is to give lots of positive, nurturing attention when children get things right.**

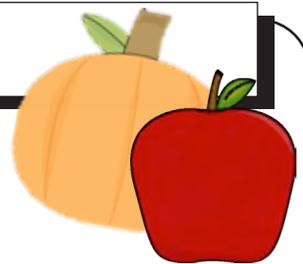
Children are children. They are not little adults. They are still learning, still practicing, and still need positive guidance. They need to be reminded often of what the rules are. The shorter the list of rules, and the more children understand and have input into making them, the more likely they are to remember and follow them. An important thing to remember when patience wears thin is that children need less guidance as they develop. A one-year-old takes constant supervision; a five-year-old is learning to be more independent.

- **The parents’ role is to understand the developmental stages children pass through.**

PERSONAL PARENTING



GOOD NUTRITION AND SNACK ATTACKS



Young children's tummies can hold only a small amount of food, so it's not surprising that they get hungry an hour or two after eating. Having a morning and afternoon snack plus a light snack about 30 minutes before lights-out is a good habit to get into. Some good snack choices: yogurt, cheese and crackers, a half slice of bread with peanut or almond butter, or a piece of nonacidic fruit such as bananas or pears.



MAKE A PLAY DOUGH PUMPKIN PATCH

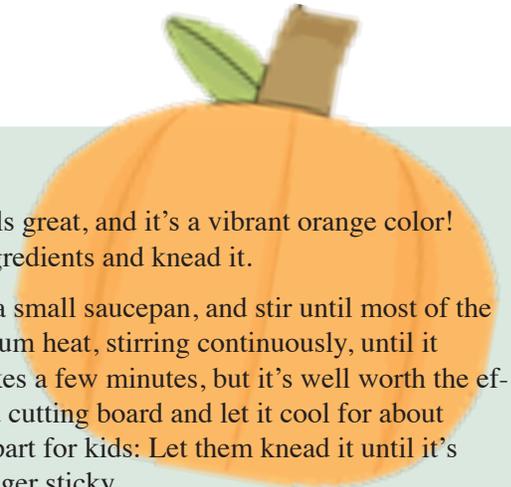
The consistency of this play dough made with Jell-O is fantastic, it smells great, and it's a vibrant orange color! An adult must cook it, but children can measure the ingredients and knead it.

You will need:

- 1 cup white flour
- 1 cup warm water
- 2 Tbsp. salt
- 2 Tbsp. cream of tartar
- 2 Tbsp. cooking oil
- 1 3-oz package orange Jell-O

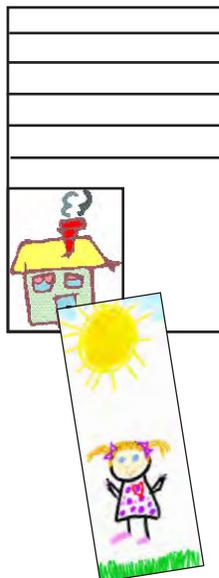
Mix all of the ingredients together in a small saucepan, and stir until most of the lumps are gone. Cook over medium heat, stirring continuously, until it thickens into a ball of dough. This takes a few minutes, but it's well worth the effort. Place the dough on a floured cutting board and let it cool for about 20 minutes. Now comes the fun part for kids: Let them knead it until it's no longer sticky.

You can add a little flour if you need to.



SCHOOL PICTURE PLACE MAT

Most school picture packets offer an assortment of photo sizes, and most contain one that's 11 x 13 inches. Instead of framing it, why not laminate it and make a personal place mat your child will love using. Or you can mix and match wallet photos with 5 x 7's or 8 x 10's.



THAT'S SO SILLY

Children have a fantastic sense of humor. They especially appreciate images that are silly. Ask these silly questions and make up your own. These are great activities when you're traveling or in line at the grocery store, or when kids are fidgeting in the waiting room.

- Could a dinosaur play baseball?*
- Could you pick pumpkins from an apple tree?*
- Could a snake bake a cake?*

MAKE YOUR OWN STATIONERY

Children see you write lists, thank-you notes, or letters. Why not let them create their own stationery?

What you need:

- paper in white and varying colors and sizes
- crayons, colored pencils, or markers
- copy machine

Let children create designs or pictures at the top or bottom of the paper, leaving space in the middle for writing. Make several copies of the stationery for use when your child wants to write a note.

Loose Parts for Fun Unlimited

What Is the Theory of Loose Parts?

Parents know that to a child, the box is often the most entertaining part of that brand new toy. The task is to embrace this tendency and learn to appreciate the loose parts that kids love to play with. In “The Theory of Loose Parts,” architect Simon Nicholson explains that loose parts in the environment inspire creativity. He believes that this interaction with materials leads to creativity and inspiration. The theory embraces and explains a child’s natural tendency to invent and reinvent, build and deconstruct, organize and reorganize.

Having loose parts available encourages open-ended play and learning, and children often choose loose parts over fancy toys. Combining loose parts together encourages imagination and creativity, while requiring skill and competence to maneuver and manipulate. Loose parts can be used again and again, and adapted in completely different ways.



Loose parts are any natural or synthetic materials that can be moved, carried, sorted, organized, or taken apart and put together. **Any material can technically be considered a loose part if it can be used on its own or combined with something else.**

Check out this list of materials that make great inside and outside loose parts:

stones (large and small), shells, fabric, sticks, boxes (all sizes) and crates, paper towel tubes, scarves, pipe cleaners, duct tape, stumps and logs, buckets, lumber scraps, PVC (pipes and knuckles), ropes, plastic plant pots

To get the most out of your loose part experience:

- There should be no defined way to use a loose part. Support children when they decide to change the shape or use of a part.
- Store loose parts where children can reach them without having to ask an adult for help.
- Replenish, change, or add to on a somewhat regular basis.

As a parent, you may feel nervous about the idea of all these loose parts haphazardly strewn across the yard or playroom. The concern that loose parts will look like a junkyard outside and a giant mess inside is legitimate. **But just like anything else, kids can learn how to store, manage, and put away the loose parts they get out.** And the payoff of an occasionally messy yard or playroom comes with a gigantic payoff. Kids stay engaged for hours!

Here are some ideas to help keep loose parts organized.

Create loose part categories. Consider using storage containers that can be used as additional loose parts. Milk crates, apple crates, baskets, and trash cans work well. Make sure there is one container for “random” pieces that don’t fit any particular category. A random container might hold items like doorknobs, hangers, a belt, ropes, and a tire tube.

Designate a space for loose parts. This can be a closet, a corner of the garage, or a backyard shed.

Teach children to keep loose parts organized and put away. This will help you keep your sanity and will also lead to the parts being used again and again in different ways. **That’s the beauty of loose parts—they’re used!**