



Curiosity Building

If the world is a giant laboratory, then children are the chief researchers. They ask a million questions wanting to know how things work, what makes a rain-bow and why dogs bark. They dump things out, take things apart, and occasionally put things back together. They're happiest when jumping into puddles just to see what will happen. They watch ants crawl, and if they spot a squirming worm in a pile of dirt, it's a magnificent discovery.

As a child's first teacher, what can parents do?

Exploration grows with the child's increased mobility. There's a lot of territory to cover whether crawling or walking, and children can get into a lot of things quickly. Parents must be vigilant in overseeing curious children, while at the same time keeping them safe. As children mature, their thirst for knowledge seems insatiable, and they thrive in a hands-on, interactive learning environment. Fortunately, there are many things parents can do to nurture this built-in motivation to learn about the world.

Provide inspiration: If you are awed by a bird's nest in your back-



yard or check out a book from the library to learn more about humming birds, you inspire curiosity in your child. Cook with your kids—let them crack the eggs, and mix the ingredients together. Encourage them to be adventurous eaters by trying new foods.

Provide a rich environment:

Elaborate playrooms are not necessary, but sometimes defining a play area with pillows or a small rug does help. Children's toys should be visible and easily accessible so they can make choices about what they want to play with. Outside play often allows for interacting with nature. Children may plant a garden, throw rocks into a puddle, or build a fort.


Provide great toys: Encourage water and sand play—quite often, messy endeavors are great for building curiosity. Invest in puzzles, blocks, books, a magnifying glass, magnets—all types of toys that require interaction from children.

Provide experiences: Children thrive when they're taken on trips to farms, museums, fire stations, and zoos. And don't forget the library—there's no better place for a curious child! Play games that require problem



solving such as twenty questions and I Spy. Planting seeds, watching weather patterns, and mixing colors are just a few of the activities that strengthen curiosity.

Encourage questions and seek answers: When your child asks, "What happened to all the dinosaurs?" don't despair, just reach for a book or head to the nearest library to find an answer. Kids learn soon enough that you don't know everything, but you can impress them with your willingness to learn more and share knowledge with them.



Researchers have found that curious children usually feel good about themselves.

They are creative, good at problem solving, and they adapt well to new ideas and changes around them.

PERSONAL PARENTING

Three Facts Moms Really Need to Know

1. **A** blank wall is like a canvas to a toddler.
2. **D**ipping veggies in something makes them taste better.
3. **C**hildren eventually sleep through the night!



Choking Prevention

According to the National SAFE KIDS campaign and the American Academy of Pediatrics, parents and other adults are a first line of defense for preventing choking in young children.

What you can do:

- Place small items **OUT OF REACH!** Infants and curious young children can choke on objects such as coins, crayon pieces, and small toys.
 - Throw away deflated or broken balloons—they are especially dangerous.
 - Never let a child run, walk, play, or lie down with food in his mouth.
 - Cut food into very small pieces. Offer one bite at a time.
- The following foods are especially dangerous for children under the age of four: hot dogs, whole grapes, tube cheese, popcorn, large marshmallows, raw carrots and celery, gum, hard or "sticky" candies, nuts, and peanut butter.



What's a Gross Motor Skill?

Physical play is integral to children's development. The term "gross motor skills" refers to activities that combine the use of many muscles, such as walking, running, climbing, jumping, and other activities.

Balls and bikes, hula hoops and wagons provide play that fits the bill. Of course, there's nothing like a run in the park or a climb on playground equipment to perfect those large muscles.



Wise Words

"It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer." Albert Einstein

Picnic Banana Bread

Add this dessert to a sandwich and veggie sticks and you have a simple but very special picnic lunch.

- 3 bananas • 2 cups white flour • 1 tsp. salt
- 1 tsp. baking soda • 1/2 cup wheat germ
- 1/2 cup butter • 2 eggs • 1 cup apple juice

Peel and mash bananas. Mix the dry ingredients in a large bowl. Combine the butter, eggs, and juice in another bowl. Alternate folding the egg mixture and bananas into the dry ingredients. Bake in a greased pan at 350 degrees for 1 hour.

Families In The Fastlane Learn to Relax



Most families agree that we live in a fast-paced world. Raising happy, healthy children takes a lot of time and energy, so simplifying just one or two areas of your life can add minutes and maybe hours to your day. That translates to a less rushed, more organized and fun-filled family life.

Simplify the calendar:

On a calendar, write down all of the things that take first priority, such as medical appointments, school functions, and family celebrations. Then write down other activities such as gymnastics or art classes. If you're happy with the amount of free time you have as a family, leave the calendar as it is. If you're overscheduled, decide what to cut back on. No matter how much we wish for more time, there are only 24 hours in a day. That's why it's important not to take on something new, even if your children beg to do it—unless you all agree to give up something else.

Simplify daily responsibilities:

When you cook spaghetti, chili, or soup, prepare enough for two meals and freeze leftovers for another time. Make cleaning easier by storing supplies in a dishpan or bucket that can be carried from

one room to another. Buy in bulk so you're less likely to run out of diapers and lunch bags. Spend an hour or two of unhurried time choosing greeting cards and presents for friends and family members. When special occasions roll around, you'll be prepared with the perfect gift—no more last minute shopping trips that in reality take hours of time.

Simplify stuff:

Many families accumulate but don't get rid of things, and that can add quickly to overload. It takes a lot of time to organize and get rid of unwanted stuff, but it's not so overwhelming when it's done gradually. Talk to your children, and explain the something-has-to-go rule. It's simple: No more new stuff until the old stuff is played with, used up, sold, or given away. Then move on to rule number two: Don't be tempted

to shuffle things around by transferring them to the garage, basement, or attic for storage. Those overstuffed rooms cause even more headaches later.

Simplify by slowing down:

Spend some time every week just hanging out and doing things that are *not* scheduled. This is not wasted time; this is time well spent. Think of it as a "deposit" in your family's memory bank. Play fetch with the dog, ride bikes, play cards, bake cookies, or just look up at the clouds. These activities are often spontaneous and bring the most pleasure. To capture these chill-out moments, you may have to rely on voice mail, turn off all the electronic gadgets, and leave the newspaper in the wrapper.

