



Strong Families Begin At Home

Child & Teen Services Newsletter

Spring 2011

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FAMILY HELP LINE
1-800-932-HOPE

Parent Trust's statewide, toll-free phone number provides callers with a greater understanding and awareness of child development, guidance and resources.

If you have any comments, or suggestions for future articles, please contact:

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BALANCE FUN

Last newsletter's activity was a combination of using balance and focus, and we are going to continue with that theme this newsletter.

There are two types of balance activities: static and dynamic. Static balance is the balance in which the body maintains equilibrium for one position. In other words—"hold the one position and don't move!" Dynamic balance, on the other hand, is maintaining equilibrium while the body is in motion or changing from one balance posture to another. Another way

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MOVE



Physical fitness is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body, it is the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual activity. ~JFK

PLAY



*You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.
~Plato.*

BUBBLES!

Some of my favorite activities for children are the ones that have minimal structure, and allow for the children's imagination to run wild. Blowing bubbles is that kind of activity. Yes, there have to be some ground rules (no blowing at each other, wear smocks if necessary, etc.) but for the most part, this activity is just plain fun. A variation on this standard activity is what I'll call "ground bubbles" and can also be called "plate bubbles" depending on whether you're playing indoors our out. Ground bubbles→ outside! Plate bubbles→ inside! Here's how it works, as well as some variations on the theme.

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PLAY

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more about a
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BUBBLES, CON'T.For indoors:

All you need for this fun activity is a small plate, a plastic drinking straw, dish washing liquid and tap water (and glycerin if you want to be fancy). Place bubble mixture (see below) in the center of a plate..

Carefully place the plate on a flat, sturdy surface, such as the kitchen table, and have your child point his straw into the water. To create bubbles, blow gently and slowly into the sudsy water. If you are slow and careful, you can create bubbles inside of bubbles, and attach bubbles to bubbles so they look like igloos!

For outdoors:

Same idea as indoors, just spill some bubble mixture on a playground surface!

Bubble recipes:

- Dish soap plus water.
- 1 gallon water plus 2/3 cup dishwashing liquid soap (plus 1 Tbs. glycerin).

BALANCE FUN, CON'T.

...to describe this is maintaining your center of gravity while changing your base of support. An example would be playing hopscotch, which is a great outdoor activity for spring!

For those of us with rainy springs, here are two indoor dynamic balance activities:

1. Use masking tape or string and create a single line "runway". Practice walking the runway without falling off. Too easy? Try balancing a book on your head while walking!
2. Finger touch: Stand with feet shoulder width apart. Place one hand behind your back with your pointer finger pointing down. Reach around your back with the other hand and grab the wrist of the first hand. Now, try to squat down and touch the floor with the pointed finger without falling over. Switch hands and try again. This is a hard one, but can be done! It demonstrates center of gravity really well. This exercise from:
<http://www.pecentral.org/lessonideas/ViewLesson.asp?ID=6232>

MOVE

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not only one of the
most important
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CREATE

*Art washes from
the soul the dust
of every day life.
~ Pablo Picasso*

NATURE CENTERPIECES

Celebrate spring by bringing it indoors to enjoy. Whether you do this activity as a Circle of Parents group or as a family, creating a nature centerpiece is a wonderful activity that can bring appreciation to the season.

You can start your activity with a nature walk. You may want to bring a bag with you to hold your finds. Make sure that your children know that anything off your property has to be a "found on the ground" object. Collect things that remind you of spring. Wildflowers, twigs, etc.

Once you've collected some objects, bring them inside. This activity can be combined with the "Mindful Snack" activity in the EAT section of this newsletter. Read that first, then continue from here.

Now the creativity begins. Instead of just throwing things down on the table, you are making a centerpiece (or centerpieces). You may want to show your child(ren) pictures for example. You will gather your objects and arrange them to be displayed at the table.

Here are some examples of what you might try:

- Fill a small vase or tall glass with grasses and wildflowers. Tie a ribbon around the glass.
- Take a ceramic pot and fill it part way with stones or pebbles. Stick some leafy twigs in to make miniature "trees". If there are no flowers or buds on the twigs, make those with tissue paper and tape them to the branch.
- Make daisy chains and lay them on the tablecloth
- Use paper towel roll as vase for dry flower or craft flowers. Decorate cardboard roll with markers and/or stickers.
- Add arts and crafts items—water color butterflies, egg carton tulips, dyed eggs; etc.

Here are some pictures for examples:



From swankychicks.blogspot.com



From petiteplanet.blogspot.com



From blisstree.com

EAT

*Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are.
~ Anthelme Brillat-Savarin*

MINDFUL SNACK

This activity is a combination of three different, yet similar activities that combine mindfulness and food.

First, set the stage:

- Play soothing background music
- Dim the lights, maybe light candles (you can get "flameless" ones for safety)
- Purchase beautiful napkins and cups--paper if necessary
- Have hand cleaning towelettes ready
- Fill a bowl or platter with easy to eat fruit, like clementines or bananas. They are great for this activity because even the very young can open them. Bananas can be cut in half for easier peeling.

Hand out towelettes. As children clean hands, you can mention that they might really pay attention to each finger as they clean up. Wait until everyone is done, then move to the next step.

Hand around napkins and instruct children to unfold, picture side up. This becomes their placemat. Talk about the picture on the napkin. You can talk about where you bought it, why you choose this design. Ask if the picture makes anyone think of anything. Wait until this step is done before moving on to next.

Note: if you are combining this activity with the Nature Centerpiece "Create" activity, you can take a moment and talk about the found and made objects from the centerpiece.

Pass around pitcher of water. Everyone fills their cup. You can use small measuring cups so even young ones can try pouring. Wait until everyone has water in their cups.

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PARENT TRUST READS

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

By Eric Carle

Ages: infant-preschool

This charming story takes us along the 7-day journey of one very hungry caterpillar. Each page is filled with warm, vibrant pictures that show the caterpillar's food-filled transformation from an egg until ultimately turning into a beautiful butterfly!

Babies and toddlers will love looking at all the colorful pictures and older children will laugh as the caterpillar eats himself sick! Perfect for children 1 – 6 years old, and fun for parents too!

SAFE SLEEP

Parent Trust for Washington Children is part of a state-wide coalition that educates about and advocates for safe sleep environments for infants. Linda McDaniels, Associate Director of Parent Trust, responds to some questions about her work with this coalition:

? What are the Washington State statistics on infant mortality due to unsafe sleep environments?

Linda: In 2008/2009, 23 infant deaths were due to asphyxiation or suffocation in an unsafe sleep environment.

? Can we hope to get those stats to zero?

Linda: Yes! We believe that we can reduce infant deaths due to asphyxiation/suffocation to zero if infants have the following sleeping conditions:

Babies placed on their backs to sleep.

Place baby on a firm mattress in a crib/bassinet with no extra toys, bumpers, pillows or blankets.

Tuck the baby's blanket in no higher than the waist or use a sleep sack.

Keep temperature in the room where babies sleep between 65-70 degrees.

? What is the Washington Infant Sleep Safety Workgroup?

In 2008, Snohomish County Legislator, Representative Roberts, became very concerned about the increase in Washington State infant fatalities. Representative Roberts invited a broad coalition of organizations (including Parent Trust) to come together and form the Washington State Infant Sleep Safety Workgroup. 90,000 new babies are born in Washington State every year and this workgroup is dedicated to helping parents, caregivers and service providers know how to keep babies safe while they sleep.

? Who can parents talk to if they have specific questions or concerns?

Linda: Please call the Parent Trust Family Help Line at 1-800-932-4673.

? Is there anything that parents can use as a visual reminder about safe sleep positions?

Linda: Yes, contact Parent Trust for Washington Children to order "Keep Your Baby Safe While They Sleep" Cards! These cards are a quick and simple way to remember basic safety for sleeping babies.

LEARN



*Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow.
~ Albert Einstein*

EAT

Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are.
~ Anthelme
Brillat-Savarin

MINDFUL SNACK, CONT. FROM PAGE 4

Hand around the fruit. Instruct everyone to wait--no one starts until everyone has one. If you know where the fruit came from you can mention it. Or perhaps the group can guess where it was grown. Maybe it came from California, or Chile. Does anyone know someone from this place? How did the fruit get to you? Can you close your eyes and imagine what it would be like in this place? Warm? Did the fruit grow on trees?

Imagine that this is the very last fruit of its kind in the world. Can you open your eyes and smell the fruit? Everyone can peel the fruit slowly. Take time to smell it as you peel. Everyone place one segment, or one bite in their mouth. Chew three times and then stop. Notice the flavor, the texture. Complete chewing, and swallow. Sit quietly or in silence, and slowly finish snack together.

This activity is a combination of three mindfulness activities that use food as their point of focus:

Mindful Snack

[Yoga Calm for Children](#), by Lynea Gillen and Jim Gillen

The Last Orange on Earth

University of Wyoming, Cooperative Extension Services

<http://www.uwyo.edu/winwyoming/Last%20Orange-final%20low%20res.pdf>

Mindful Raisin Meditation

Jon Kabat-Zinn, director

Stress Reduction Clinic at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center



United Way of King County



United Way of Snohomish County



United Way of Central Washington County