



FOR WASHINGTON CHILDREN



Spring 2014

Strong Families Begin At Home

## Child & Teen Services Newsletter

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## Inspire: Be A Helper!

### Phrasing Matters.

What parent doesn't want their child to help with household chores? Wanting and getting are two different things, though! It may sometimes seem like the whining and feet dragging are hardly worth the effort of asking for help with something. A recent study about preschoolers and helping behaviors may give parents a bit of an edge...and it all comes down to word choice.



Using the noun "helper" was shown to have a greater effect than using the verb, "help". The study looked at about one hundred and fifty preschoolers, ages 3-6 years old. The sample came from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds (although most were middle-upper-middle class). This was a talking experiment in which children had to stop playing in order to help clean up.

Two experiments were carried out. The study began with the researchers talking to the children about helping. The only difference was that in one group, the researcher used the word "helping" as a verb (e.g. "some children choose to help,") and in the other group "helping" was used as a noun (e.g.



My name is Lisa Nauta, and I am a student completing my first year in the

University of Washington Master's of Social Work program. I have been an intern at Parent Trust for Washington Children since January of this year, and have greatly valued the work I have been given the opportunity to do. I have been working in the Developmental Screening Program and on the Family Help Line, and both have been invaluable experiences.

For the Spring 2014 Parent Trust newsletter I have authored three articles - one each about physical activity, a springtime art project, and the importance of babbling for infants. I hope you enjoy them!

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## Be a Helper, continued

“some children choose to be helpers,”). These statements were presented first and then the children began to play with toys.

During the playtime, the experimenters provided four distinct opportunities for the children to stop playing and help the experimenter in some way (pick up a mess, put away toys, put away crayons that had spilled on the floor, open a container). Each time, the children had to stop playing in order to help. Prior to all this, the researchers had gathered baseline data about how many times children stopped to help without the mention of “helper” or “helping” in the beginning.

The experimenters discovered that when children heard the verb “help”, they didn’t help any more than when the word wasn’t mentioned. However, there was a significant increase (20% more) in how many times children helped if they

had heard the noun “helper”.

Researcher Christopher J. Bryan posits, “Using the noun helper may send a signal that helping implies something positive about one’s identity, which may in turn motivate children to help more.”

This was a small study—only 150 children. However, that doesn’t mean you can’t continue the experiment at home! Next time you anticipate wanting your children to help with a chore or household task, try to talk a bit about being a helper (I really appreciate when kids are helpers) vs. helping (it’s important to me that kids help).

*Child Development, 2014;*

## CREATE: Fork Flowers

Spring has sprung! The sun is shining (some days), April showers have brought May flowers, and bright colors are surrounding us. If you’re feeling like your home needs a bright addition this spring, create a miniature garden on paper with kitchen tools and paint. This fun spring art activity is great for toddlers and preschoolers, and is the perfect way to bring the spring season inside!



### What You’ll Need:

- \*3 or 4-pronged forks
- \*Colored paints
- \*Blank paper
- \*Paintbrushes or crayons/markers

### How It Works:

Put your colored paints on a plate so that you are able to press your forks into the paint. Press your fork firmly into the paint color you’d like each flower to be, and then press the fork firmly onto your blank paper to create a flower. Repeat

these steps to make a beautiful garden of multi-colored flowers.

Next, use paintbrushes or crayons and markers to create stems and leaves on your spring flowers. Encourage creativity by allowing your child to paint or draw their entire garden just as they imagine it should be. Allow your painted garden to dry and then decorate your walls with the colors of spring! (This activity is from blogmemom)



<http://www.blogmemom.com/spring-art->

# LEARN: The Importance of Babbling

Have you ever noticed your baby's babbling noises and wondered why on earth they happen so frequently? Have you ever thought the babbling sounds so silly that you can't take it seriously? We have all heard babies go on and on babbling, and some of us may have even seen popular videos online of babies babbling back and forth to one another.



Believe it or not, babbling is an important developmental task for infants and toddlers. While their sounds may sound silly to adults, children are experimenting with sounds and learning how to control articulation. According to Sharp Healthcare, babbling indicates the early stages of first words and future language development.

When these noises first begin, your baby will make repeated sounds such as “ba-ba-ba” or “da-da-da”, and as time progresses their babbling will change into varied sounds, such as “ba-da-la.”

How can you help to encourage babbling? Here are some ideas:

- Model babbling for your baby by having play conversations with them using repetitive babbling (ma-ma-ma/da-da-da) or varied

babbling sounds (ba-di-too-la)

- If your baby is already babbling, repeat what she/he says and see if they do it again. After a few repetitions, change your sounds and see if your baby will do the same.

- Most importantly, just have fun! Your baby will respond to your changes in tone and facial expressions, and will attempt to imitate those cues, too!

Citation:

<http://www.sharp.com/pediatrics/ask-expert-babbling.cfm>

If you are concerned that your baby isn't babbling, or making sounds like other babies, Parent Trust encourages you to schedule a developmental screening.

In person visits: screenings take place at Parent Trust's Center for Strong Families and are free! Appointment only. For more information: <http://www.parenttrust.org/asq> or call Marni at 206.233.0156 ext. 225

Online or mail home: Within Reach's Help Me Grow program provides the same screening tool that Parent Trust uses; however, you can have it mailed to you or complete it online. This is also a free service. For more information, call Within Reach's Family Health Hotline (800) 322-2588

# RELAX: Bellows Breath

Often when we think about what constitutes a relaxed state, we only consider one half of the equation. Relaxation really has two parts—a relaxed body and a calm, focused mind. There are many techniques that help to achieve this state. However, quite a few of them require already being calm (!) and quite possibly might put you to sleep. That's fine if sleep is your goal. When children are already calm, we rarely think about helping them relax further. But there are many times when

children are exhibiting chaotic energy, and can't come to a calm enough state to relax! A perfect conundrum—how to you focus enough to relax?



This is a great opportunity to try something called Bellows Breath. Bellows Breath is a yoga breathing technique that is quite fun for children. Children like it because it involves rapid

## Bellows Breath, continued

breathing, not slow breathing. However, the technique acts to calm and clear the mind, which in turn can relax the body.

Bellows breath is rapid belly breathing (which when practiced regularly can lower blood pressure and heart rate—two indicators of relaxation).

To do bellows breathing:

Sit up straight. With your mouth closed and relaxed, rapidly inhale and exhale through your nose. Each inhalation and exhalation should be of the same duration. This is a loud breath (which kids also love!)

The belly should move in and out with each breath (It's really the diaphragm moving,

suggesting the movement of a bellow). After 4 rounds of the breathing, inhale once as deeply as possible, hold for two seconds or longer, then exhale slowly. Rest for five normal breaths and begin again. Adults and teens can work up to doing this for a full minute.

Bellows breathing will stimulate and focus the mind, so it's not to be used at bedtime. Instead, use it when you need your child to be calm with heightened awareness, maybe when they are feeling sluggish and need an energy boost to complete a task, chore or homework.

## MOVE: Being Active as a Family

Spring and summer provide the perfect opportunities to get outside with the kids to soak up some sun and enjoy activities together. I remember spending as many hours as possible of summer days in the sun with my sisters and my mom. We would garden, play yard games, go on bike rides, exercise together, and sometimes picnic at our closest neighborhood park. I recently spoke with my mom about her motivation for encouraging my sisters and I to do activities with her as a family while we were growing up. I wondered why she encouraged outdoor activities so much, why it was so important to her that we all be involved, what her tricks for persuading us were, and what her favorite activities were.



My mom stated that she thinks it is important for families to do activities and exercise together for many reasons, including parents setting an example for being active and the fact that it is more fun to exercise with others

so that it does not feel like a chore. She also said it was important to her because time spent together doing any activities helps to strengthen bonds and allows opportunities for conversations about school, plans, and expectations in a more fun environment than perhaps the dinner table or a car ride. My mom said that she started encouraging family exercise as soon as we could walk – by walking the dogs to the park, riding in the stroller and then walking while pushing our dolls in it, or flying kites on our street. She started taking us to affordable swim lessons when we were infants through our local Parks Department. Anything to get us moving and out of the house, she said!

I also remember my sisters and I being somewhat hesitant to be involved with each passing year of childhood and then adolescence. I knew that my mom had to have had some fancy tricks up her sleeve, because we continued family activities for many years! When I asked her about her tricks, she said that her biggest success always came when we

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## Move, continued

all planned our dates together and when we each took a turn picking the activity for each date. She said that often our biggest gifts every few years would be something that encouraged us to be active, such as roller blades, a bike, or a scooter. She said that as we got older her encouragement never changed, but activities changed over time. Once we were old enough, we were allowed to choose our own Parks Department activity to sign up for – such as ballet, Tae Kwon Do, gymnastics, painting, swimming, etc. She learned over time that the more control we had over the activities – individual or family – the more involved we wanted to be!

Lastly, I had to ask my mom what her favorite activities were while we were growing up, and

she instantly said camping, hiking, and cross country skiing, but if she were only allowed to pick one she would pick camping. We all loved how different it was from being at home, how adventurous we could be outdoors, and of course ending each night with roasted marshmallows and chocolate! My mom said, and I have to agree, that encouraging kids to be active, to exercise, and to be outdoors is an overall great benefit to individual and family health, but also has the added benefit of creating healthy families who are close together and always creating excellent memories!

## Parent Trust Reads: Book Review

***Far-Flung Adventures:  
Corby Flood***  
**By Paul Stewart & Chris  
Riddell**  
**Ages: 8 years old and up**



Corby Flood is a young, curious girl on board the *S.S. Euphonia*, a former cruise ship that is now a shell of what it once was in its heyday. Corby finds one copy of the historical guidebook Hoffendinck's Guide on board the ship, and carries the book with her everywhere she goes. She refers to the guide to understand the area she is sailing through as her family and a few other passengers are traveling to the land of Harbour Heights.

On board the ship, Corby is traveling with her mother, father, sister, and four brothers. In addition to her family members, the ship is also carrying Mr. and Mrs. Hattenswiller, the Man from Cabin 21, three ship crewmembers, and five sinister, mysterious men who call themselves the Brotherhood of Clowns.

Corby soon discovers these five men are up to something suspicious, and they try to stop Corby from following their trail by any means necessary. Luckily, Corby is a smart young girl and manages to stay one step ahead of the Brotherhood of Clowns. After realizing the clowns have an elaborate plan in place, will Corby discover what these clowns have hidden away, or will her curiosity get the best of her?

Find out by reading this wonderful book full of maps and adventure guides from Hoffendinck's Guide, and Corby's handwritten notes about the ship's passengers and daily sights. Go on an adventure with Corby Flood and help her solve the mysteries of the Brotherhood of the Clowns!

For more book reviews, visit:  
[parenttrust.org/parent-trust-reads](http://parenttrust.org/parent-trust-reads)

If you have any comments, or suggestions for future articles, please contact:  
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FAMILY HELP LINE  
1-800-932-HOPE (4673)

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



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