Reassurance for Parents: Kids Do Go Through Stages

Developmental milestones can be reassuring. They tell us, for example, that many two year olds have tantrums. Another example of a developmental milestone for twelve or thirteen year olds is that friends become very important. Children of this age may care more about what their friends think than what their parents think. Many teenagers seem to act like adults one minute and children the next. They may spend lots of time exploring their own thoughts and feelings and be pretty self-centered. Developmental milestones can be reassuring because they help parents see that their children are like others of the same age.

Where can you find information about child development?

You can get free information from the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension. Please call Dan Weigel at (775) 784-4848. Ask for the following Fact Sheets by name and number:

Notes From Me to You About My First Six Years, #93-77
Notes From Me to You About My Years Six through Ten, (no number available)
Notes From Me to You About My Years Eleven through Fourteen, #93-78
Notes From Me to You About My Years Fifteen through Seventeen, #93-79
Notes From Me to You About My Years Eighteen and Nineteen, #93-80

or, if you have a baby, call (702)222-3130 and ask to be put on the mailing list for:

Little Lives: A Parent's Guide to Development (from birth to three years)

Understanding the development and uniqueness of each child is an important skill for parents and adults. It is a skill that will allow the child to emerge as a bright shining star.

Keys of Successful Parenting:

Understand

Eric Killian, M.S., Area Extension Specialist
Children, Youth, and Families Team

Randy Brown, Ph.D., Area Extension Specialist
Children, Youth, and Families Team

Sally Martin, Ph.D. Associate Professor
Human Development and Family Studies
University of Nevada, Reno

Being a parent is not an easy job in today’s world. Sometimes parents need support or ideas to help them be better parents. While all families do things differently, research has suggested that there are common characteristics that make families successful. These characteristics have been studied by nationally recognized parenting experts and put into six categories or keys. These keys are: Care for Self, Understand, Guide, Nurture, Motivate, and Advocate.

Each family is different. So, there is no one correct way to be a parent. This fact sheet does not teach the “how to’s” of parenting. It does, however, explain one of the six keys of successful parenting. These keys are important to parents and parenting, although different styles and customs may influence how these keys and used in families. It is important for all parents to: Care for Self, Understand, Guide, Nurture, Motivate, and Advocate. How a parent practices these principles is up to each family and its way of doing things. If parents can practice these keys, they can unlock the door to a happy and healthy family.

This fact sheet focuses on one of the keys, Understand. Look for additional fact sheets with Parenting Keys: Care for Self, Nurture, Guide, Motivate, and Advocate.

Understanding means that parents have a basic knowledge of how children develop. Understanding also means recognizing and appreciating the uniqueness of each child.

Each child is like a shining star. Each has his or her own brightness and path. Each child is a combination of his/her unique make-up and experiences, always creating a unique person. Unfortunately, sometimes parents' expectations of a child can get in the way of seeing the true shining star. When raising a child, it is difficult not to compare that child with siblings or other children. A common question is, “Why can’t you be like ...?” Or, “Your brother/sister never acted like that!” If parents find themselves thinking or saying this, they need to remember, even identical twins have distinct aspects of their personality.

All parents want the best for their children. Sometimes, though, parents want their children to be something they are not. Understanding children and accepting their uniqueness can help reduce conflict in the parent/child relationship. A parent-child relationship that is based on understanding is an important part of helping children become healthy and happy.

Children are not likely to be caring or understanding of others, if they have not experienced this from people who are close to them.

Remember one thing in your childhood that made you special:

Who in your life accepted or appreciated this special quality?

What things did they do that made you feel good about this special quality?

How can you discover and value the uniqueness of each child?

---

Observing and Understanding

One important way to understand your child is through observation. When observing your child ask these important questions:

- What is special about your child?
- What is challenging?
- Are other kids his/her age behaving this way, or is he/she the only one?
- Are other parents facing similar issues or are you the only one wondering if you are doing the right thing?
- How does your child work and play with adults and other children?

Observing and understanding One important way to understand your child is through observation. When observing your child ask these important questions:

- What is special about your child?
- What is challenging?
- Are other kids his/her age behaving this way, or is he/she the only one?
- Are other parents facing similar issues or are you the only one wondering if you are doing the right thing?
- How does your child work and play with adults and other children?

Developmental Milestones: How do they help us?

How do we know if children are developing normally? Developmental milestones are signs or markers of a typical child’s progress in development. They help us figure out if a child is developing normally or needs extra help. Each child, however, develops at his or her own pace. Perfectly normal children may do things earlier or later than the developmental milestone for that skill. For example, Maria began walking at 10 months of age, but Brenda did not walk until she was 14 months old. Both are considered to be developing normally. But, at 10 months, Jan cannot stand and support his own body weight. Jan’s development should be checked by a doctor or child development specialist to see if he has a problem that needs attention.

Areas of Development

There are four areas of development:

- Physical
- Intellectual
- Social
- Emotional

A child may progress faster or slower than his/her peers. For example, in physical development, most five year olds can walk backwards and walk up and down stairs without help. Intellectually, most five year olds know four to eight colors. Mike knows 10 colors but he goes very slowly on stairs and stumbles when he tries to walk backwards. Mike is a little ahead in intellectual development and a little slow in physical development, but Mike is developing normally.

---