



# Tips for Parents of Older Toddlers (24-36 months)

## LEARNING TO USE THE BATHROOM

Potty accidents are normal. Children slowly learn what it feels like when they have to pee or poop. Children are often 3 years old or older before they can use the bathroom by themselves. Many children will have accidents even after they have been using the bathroom awhile.

### INSTEAD OF ...

### TRY...

**Saying, "You are so lazy!"**

**Making your child sit on the potty or toilet against their will**

**Punishing your child for accidents**

- "Let's try to use the potty next time."
- Establishing comfort while sitting on the potty/toilet – read books. Avoid having a child sit on a toilet for more than 5 minutes.
- Expressing excitement when your child is able to use the toilet. When accidents happen, it just means your child's body isn't mature enough yet to consistently use the toilet.

## NIGHTTIME WETTING

Nighttime wetting may occur until children are much older. Stressful events can cause nighttime wetting even after a child has been successful.

### INSTEAD OF ...

### TRY...

**Punishing or shaming your child for wetting the bed or making a big deal out of it**

- "Oopsy, you had an accident. Let's change your pajamas and sheets and get back to bed."

## WON'T SIT STILL

Young children have a lot of energy. It is normal for a young child to have a hard time sitting in one spot for more than a few minutes. Allowing children to move helps them feel good.

### INSTEAD OF SAYING...

### TRY...

**"Sit still!"**

**"If you get out of that chair, you will be punished."**

- "Come here and sit by Mommy"
- "Let's [read] this [book]!" or "Let's play [I Spy or any other game]."

## WON'T GO TO BED

A consistent early bedtime routine every day and a safe sleeping space are keys to a happy bedtime and minimize tantrums and meltdowns.

### INSTEAD OF SAYING...

### TRY...

**"Go to bed right now!"**

**"If you get out of bed, you will be punished."**

- "I'm happy to help you get in bed. Let's read a book."
- Setting up a routine of reading a book before sleep. Reading out loud to a child can help them relax.

## WON'T STAY IN BED

A young child needs help to feel safe and secure. Sometimes your child may still want to be near you after bedtime. When they come to you, they are expressing a need.

### INSTEAD OF ...

### TRY...

**Scolding your child or locking child in room**

- Helping your child feel comfortable in the bedroom by turning on a night light, remaining in the room for a short time to offer comfort, reading a story, or rubbing their forehead or feet.

## BEING AGGRESSIVE

Toddlers commonly bite, hit and grab things from others. Praise good behavior.

### INSTEAD OF SAYING ...

### TRY ...

**"You are so mean, don't hit!"**

**"You are a bad boy/girl!"**

- "When you [hit, bite] your [brother], it hurts him and he feels sad." Saying, "It's OK to be angry, but I won't let you hit. We need to keep everyone safe." OR
- "You had something important you wanted to say."
- "Let's find something else to play with."
- "It's your [sister]'s turn with the [train]. Or, "I will help you wait until it's your turn."

# Dear Parents,

## Did you know that –



- Spanking **shrinks brains.**

Harvard Medical School found that kids who are spanked just once a month had **14-19% smaller brains in the decision-making area.**<sup>1</sup> These were children who remembered being spanked at least 12 times a year and once with a belt, paddle or brush, but were not injured or spanked in anger.

- 1,574 studies found that **spanking is harmful.**

- Even ‘everyday spanking’ is **consistently associated with:**

- **More** aggression
- **More** negative relationships with parents
- **Lower** cognitive ability
- **Substance** abuse
- **More** fighting
- **Weaker** moral values
- **Delinquent** behavior
- **More** mental health problems
- **Lower** self-esteem
- **More** antisocial behavior
- **Lower** self-control<sup>2</sup>

- Spanking **lowers IQ.**

The University of New Hampshire found that American children who are spanked at ages 2-4 have **5 less IQ points** than non-spanked children, even years later. Children spanked at ages 5-9 have **2.8 less IQ points.**<sup>3</sup>

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **Does this mean that everyone who was spanked as a child has problems?** No, it means that spanking doesn’t help children learn what we want them to learn. Every time we spank a child, we raise the risk that the child will develop problems.
- **Why is this so?** Spanking focuses on the behavior and misses the underlying need. It might stop a child from doing something in the moment, but the child hasn’t learned how to do things differently. And it can lead to built-up resentment and hostility, and prevent some children from telling about sexual abuse for fear of further punishment.
- **But I was spanked and turned out okay?** Today, we have a tremendous amount of knowledge about how children learn and develop. We know other ways of teaching children that don’t have these risks and harms.

Prepared, designed, and disseminated by:



The American  
Professional Society  
on the Abuse of Children®

Strengthening Practice Through Knowledge

In partnership with



Endorsed by:



marshfield children's®

Marshfield Child Advocacy Center



1. Tomoda, A., Suzuki, H., Rabi, K., Sheu, Y., Polcari, A., & Teicher, M.H. (2010). Reduced prefrontal cortical gray matter in young adults exposed to harsh corporal punishment. *Neuroimage*, 47(Suppl. 2), T66–T71.

2. Gershoff, E. T., & Grogan-Kaylor, A. (2016). Spanking and child outcomes: Old controversies and new meta-analyses. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(4), 453–469. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/fam0000191>

3. Straus, M., & Paschall, M.J. Corporal punishment by mothers and development of children's cognitive ability: A longitudinal study of two nationally representative age cohorts. (2009). *Journal of Aggression Maltreatment & Trauma*, 18(5): 459. doi:10.1080/10926770903035168

