



# Tips for Parents of Preschoolers (3-5 years)

## DELAYED POTTY TRAINING

It is not uncommon for children to still rely on diapers at night until age 7. It's common for previously potty trained children to have accidents during times of stress or change (moving, new sibling, etc.).

### INSTEAD OF ... TRY...

**Forcing your child to sit on the toilet against their will**

- (Gently): "I notice you are holding yourself [or pacing back and forth]. Try sitting on the potty."

**Punishing your child or showing disappointment**

- If your child soils themselves, say, "It happens. It will happen less over time."

## EXAGGERATING THE TRUTH

This is normal in preschoolers because of their active imaginations. Pretending and imagining are important to a child's development.

### INSTEAD OF ... TRY...

**Calling your child a liar**

- "I wonder if you are afraid to tell me what happened."

**Punishing your child for lying**

- "I wonder if you really don't want to..." The more children are punished, the more likely they are to lie. Avoid using punishment. Talk about better solutions to their problem than using lying.

## TALKING CONSTANTLY AND ASKING "WHY?" FREQUENTLY

A child's curiosity about the world helps to build concepts, vocabulary, and understanding.

### INSTEAD OF... TRY...

**Labeling them as nosy and/or telling them to be quiet, hush, or shut up**

- Asking your child, "What do you think?" This turns the "why" question around so your child has a chance to think and come up with their own answer.

**Brushing your child off and not answering**

- "Let's [read] this [book]!" or "Let's play [I You might need to let your child know that you need quiet for a little while to help you feel calm.]

## HAVING MANY FEARS (THE DARK, GOING TO BED, MONSTERS, ANIMALS)

### INSTEAD OF SAYING...

### TRY...

**"Don't be a baby."**

- "It's OK to have fears. Let's figure this out together."

**"Don't be afraid." or "You better stay in your bed or the monsters will get you."**

- Mirroring your child's feelings: "You feel afraid. Maybe a nightlight would feel better." Give your child a flashlight or monster spray to help them confront or overcome fears.

**"Big boys and girls aren't scared."**

- "It's hard to be scared. Tell me what scares you." or "I can see that you are afraid. I can see this bothers you. I can see being in the dark frightens you. Can I turn on a nightlight?"

## BEING CURIOUS ABOUT PRIVATE PARTS AND ASKING QUESTIONS

### INSTEAD OF ...

### TRY...

**Shaming the child for touching their private parts**

- Teaching your child it's OK to touch their own private parts when they are alone.

**Using slang terms (e.g., cookie, bird, pocketbook)**

- Teaching your child about all body parts including penis, vagina, butt, breasts.

**Making your child hug and kiss when they don't want to**

- Teaching them to offer a fistbump or handshake.

## WON'T GO TO BED

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

### INSTEAD OF SAYING...

### TRY...

**"Go to bed now!"**

- "Do you want to walk or tiptoe to bed?"

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

- Make going to bed an enjoyable experience. Learn what helps your child go to sleep. Consider their sensory needs. Do they like dark and quiet, or do they prefer light and sounds of the ocean? Do they need a heavy blanket?
- "Let's read a book."
- "It's 8 o'clock and you are in bed already, well done!" Provide a consistent and enjoyable routine every night.