

JCCCA

Parent Page

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Honing Your Child's Decision-Making Skills

As our children grow and leave for school, they will be making a lot of decisions on their own. As parents, we can start the practice of good decision making within the framework of your family's routines. Here are a few suggestions that can help your young children:

Don't overwhelm with too many choices. Give your child limited options, such as whether to wear his blue or his green sweater.

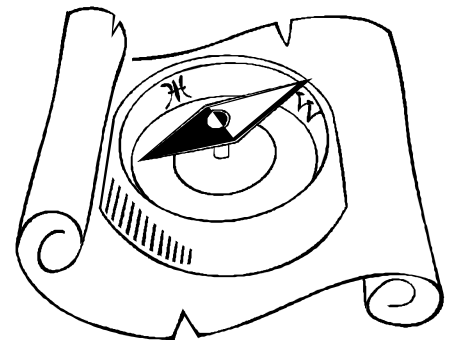
Don't offer choices that you can't live with. Refrain from asking what your child wants to wear, for instance, if you're not willing to let him go to day care in a polka-dotted shirt and striped shorts in the winter.

Let your child experience natural consequences. Within the bounds of safety and common sense, let your child practice making decisions, even bad ones. For instance, if your child wants to drop an old book or magazine into his wading pool, you can allow him to learn on his own that the paper will be ruined by his action.

Don't overreact to mistakes. Making mistakes is a valuable part of learning. When your child makes a wrong decision, give him the

opportunity to learn from it. Don't admonish harshly, for instance, if he uses a crayon to draw on the walls. Say, "Crayons are for paper only. I will put the crayons away for a while because you used them on the wall." Then have your child help you clean up the mess in a matter-of-fact way.

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Provider of the Month

Would you like to nominate a childcare provider to be recognized for their outstanding and unselfish efforts? We would like to hear from you. Send a small paragraph telling us the name of your provider along with your nomination describing their outstanding performance and efforts to: JCCCA, Provider of the Month, P.O. Box 280853, Lakewood, CO 80228.

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Make appropriate decisions. Your child needs you to decide for him in matters of health, safety, and learning right from wrong. Don't leave it up to him to determine if he needs to wear a hat on a freezing-cold day or hold your hand in a crowded parking lot. Simply state the rules without offering alternatives.

Good decision making is an on-going process. Be patient. There will be days when their choices will be appropriate and other days they will not. With our continued guidance, our children can and will successfully make good decisions on their own.

Coloring outside the lines?

Should you correct your preschooler's artistic sloppiness?

Q My son scribbles all over his coloring books. I think he should learn to stay within the lines, but my husband believes that'll stifle his creativity. Who's right?

A He is. While coloring is an excellent way for young children to develop finger and wrist dexterity and good hand-eye coordination, staying inside

the lines offers no advantages, says Sandra Fisher, assistant professor of early-childhood education at Kutztown University, in Kutztown, PA. "It's actually developmentally inappropriate to urge children this age to color in the lines, since they don't have fine motor control yet."

In fact, it's a good idea to alternate the coloring books with blank paper. Freehand doodling will not only enhance your child's fine motor skills, it will give him a sense of autonomy and another way to communicate. "Children express themselves more freely in their drawings, especially if they still have limited vocabularies," says Fisher.

As long as your son is attempting some representational drawing (i.e., family, a pet, or a tree) by age 4, he's right on track — even if he has his own style of covering his coloring-book pages.

Parenting, October 2006

Open a kiddie bank

Teach your child math and money skills By Elizabeth Crane

Allowances at the Buckners of San Francisco used to be the usual kind. Every week Allie, 11, and Gigi, 5, would get cash that they'd stash, spend — or lose. Their dad, Peter, wanted to

come up with a way to make their allowance better, so he founded the Bank of Dad, with Allie as his first client.

The bank is a spreadsheet on his computer. Allie and her dad record her allowance there every week, but she doesn't receive the actual cash. For spending money, she writes a check to the Bank of Dad using an old checkbook from one of her parents' closed accounts. This helps her keep better track of what she's spending, and she's realized that it's not always worth it to deduct money she's just going to spend on snacks at school. She's learning math and money management.

Buckner is expanding his bank by starting an account for Gigi and a savings incentive plan for Allie (5 percent interest on money in her account at the end of the month) — and he may offer loans for big purchases.

Parenting, October 2006

Fit for two

Give one child a foam ball, beanbag, or stuffed animal. Shout out "Elbows!" and have the kids trap the toy between each other's elbows while shuffling across the room, taking care not to drop it. Choose a new body part — "Belly buttons!" "Foreheads!" — and send them back.

Doctor's Opinion

By Penelope Leach, child psychologist

Q: My toddler thinks it's fun to run away from me on the street or in crowded places. I don't want to tether him to his stroller, but I'm afraid I'll lose him or he'll get hurt if I don't. How can I teach him to stay close?

A: When important safety issues are involved, no amount of teaching (or learning!) will ensure that a toddler always does as he should. That's why it's vital to take responsibility for keeping him safe yourself. Strollers are invaluable for keeping toddlers close, and since a child must be strapped in to ride safely, it isn't like being "tethered" the way you'd tether a dog. At this age, and especially while the running-away phase lasts, it's best not to let your child walk until you can leave crowded streets for somewhere more child-friendly, like a nearby park or playground. Of course, you should never leave your child strapped into his stroller while you dash into a store to buy a paper or run across the street to mail a letter — *always* keep him with you.

If either of you needs a change from the stroller, two other safe options are a back-carrier (if you're up for it) or a toddler harness. Some people feel that a harness demeans or imprisons toddlers; others feel that they're the best possible means of providing freedom *and* safety. If you're uneasy about a harness, don't try to compromise with a wrist strap. If your toddler is walking at its 3-foot extent on a crowded sidewalk, someone could easily walk between you and send him flying. *BabyCenter.com. Nov 2005.*