

PRESCHOOLERS
THREE TO FIVE YEARS

DR. GRACE LALANA PUBLICATIONS

PRESCHOOLERS

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Dr. Grace Lalana Christopher

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NEW GEN PARENTING

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To my children

FOREWORD

This book provides an invaluable resource for parents, teachers, health and social service providers and also a lay audience who have an interest in the field of child development and planning of services.

Dr Lalana provides an authoritative account of the domains of child development taking a holistic perspective of linking developmental stages to educational nurturing, rearing and service delivery.

There is a welcome section in unusual situations and children who face emotional and behavioural difficulties. The principles espoused in this book would be a solid foundation for services providing an emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

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INTRODUCTION

The preschool years are an important period in the life of a child, where readiness for school is established. The children with rapid gains in intellectual, emotional and social skills are at an exciting stage for preparation to enter the academic world, rapidly evolving from a toddler and soon to grow to the middle childhood, a stage of relative calmness before the next turbulent stage of adolescence.

This book gives insight for parents in the learning curve of their preschooler and how best to implement various strategies in molding the healthy growth and mental development of the child to enjoy success in school and academic environment and to evolve accomplished to the next developmental stage of middle childhood.

Chapters dealing with how to develop resiliency in children and to provide nurture taking into consideration a child's unique inherent temperament as well as to foster independence in a growing child

are some of the important aspects in the holistic approach in effectively parenting preschoolers. As parents often out of ignorance due to lack of understanding and knowledge about what is normal in the growing child, harm them inadvertently.

Several various other criteria are also included, such as how to deal with common behavioral problems should they arise, as well as to address any special needs in the preschool stage is well described.

I cannot underestimate the significance of all parents and grandparents, teachers and other child care personnel, in picking up early soft signs that something is wrong with the child and to seek early intervention and remedy for the benefit of the child and society at large. Parents are the first and foremost teacher for their child. It is in knowing what is normal and what is not, that one is able to detect any deviance in the growth and development of a child so aptly described in-depth, hence the importance of reading 'New Gen Parenting'

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CHAPTER 1

PRESCHOOL STAGE

As children grow into early childhood, their world begins to open up for them as they have now learnt the social skills necessary to play and work with other children. They are more independent and begin to focus more on adults and children outside of the family. They will want to explore and ask about their surroundings even more. Autonomy is further enhanced by the emergence of language and social skills with increasing mobility.

The preschool years between three and five years are the fastest growth period for the frontal lobe networks and speed of processing, memory, and problem solving is increasing. The most rapid brain growth occurs in the first two years of life, at birth the weight of the brain is 25% of adult size, by six months it becomes 50% and by two years it becomes 75% and is at 90% of its adult



weight by five years. The corpus callosum which connects the two hemispheres develops and this helps the child to process more information. Myelination also continues resulting in increased physical coordination. The critical period or the period of maximum neurological proliferation extends from mid gestation through early preschool years.

Physical growth however, slows with corresponding decrease in nutritional requirements and in appetite with decrease in somatic and brain growth. Adult height can be predicted from measurements of height at three years of age; males are approximately 53% of their adult height and females, 57%. Legs grow faster than arms, circumference of head and chest is equal; head size is in better proportion to the body. Baby fat disappears as neck appears. Posture is more erect; abdomen no longer protrudes. However parents may be reassured that if the child's growth is normal the food intake is adequate. Between three and five years, an average child gains 2 kg in weight per year and 5-7.5 cm per year in height. Physical energy peaks and the need for sleep declines to somewhere between 11 and 13 hours a day with one daytime nap.

Preschoolers three to five years refine their large motor skills and improve their small motor skills. As toddlers, children learn to walk away and come back, as preschoolers they explore emotional separation, alternating between stubborn opposition and cheerful

compliance, between bold exploration and clinging dependence. The emerging increasing autonomy with rapid shifts between clinging dependence and defiant



independence, between angelic joy and uncontrollable rage can erode a parent's self confidence and patience.

Parents need to remain calm, children are learning what behaviors are acceptable and how much power they wield by

testing limits, or power struggle which can arouse parental anger. Firm, loving discipline is essential for two to three year old to accept limits while maintaining a sense of self direction and self control of aggressive impulses. Preschool children know that they can do more than ever before and seek mastery in all their efforts but they are also aware of their own limited abilities. More time is now spent in the classroom and playgrounds, challenges child's ability to adapt to new rules and relationships and social development.

The child obeys simple rules and participates in simple group games under adult supervision. Parents should allow preschoolers to express their feelings and ideas about things and know that their opinion is valued. Outdoor walks or a trip to a shopping mall can be a creative and stimulating experience. The search for mastery stimulates curiosity, and the child always wants to know, asking

“Why, why, why? The drive for discovery is insatiable, and the capacity for learning is unlimited. It is important to praise the child’s abilities and stimulate their intellect and curiosity by asking and answering questions.

Handedness is usually established by the third year. Frustration may result from attempts to change children’s’ hand preferences.

There is a tendency to left handedness during the latter half of the first but with maturation develops right hand



preference. About ten percent of people are left handed. Handedness is finally established by four years. Bowel and bladder control emerge during this period, at an average of thirty months. Daytime bladder control typically precedes bowel control. Bed-wetting is normal up to age four years in girls and five years in boys. Many children master toilet needs with ease, particularly when they are able to verbalize their bodily needs.

By five years the controls need to be internalized if a child is to function in school and social interaction. This depends on the ability to use internalized images of trusted adults to provide security in time of stress. Parents also need to ‘let go’ or give the child more freedom to make choices with occasional few, firm ‘No’, because excessively tight limits or too many ‘Don’t do this, or don’t do that’, can

undermine a child's sense of initiative in contrast overly loose limits, provokes anxiety in a child, who feels that no one is in control.

Control becomes a central issue, when parents occasionally give into a child's demand, since young children cannot control many aspects of their life; they are prone to lose internal control as well and manifest



as temper tantrum. Tantrum normally appears by end of first year of life and peaks between two to four years. But tantrums lasting more than fifteen minutes, regularly occurring more than three times a day may reflect an underlying emotional and social problem. Thus when limits are inconsistent the child tends to resort to temper tantrums, which can become an

entrenched strategy for exerting control. Frequent tantrums after five years of age tend to persist throughout life.

Preschool children normally experience feelings of possessiveness towards one parent, jealousy or resentment of the other parent and fear that these negative feeling may lead to abandonment. Often the child is unable to comprehend or verbalize these feelings, expressed in labile mood swings. This crisis

is usually resolved over subsequent years with the child's decision in emulating parents rather than compete with them.



Play and language allows for development of emotional control. Here, effective parenting is encouraging the child. Over protection of children prevents them from growing up to look after themselves.

They remain ultimately dependent on their mother and so are late in learning various skills such as eating, using the toilet or dressing independently. The conduct of these children is immature. They are insecure and do not play well with other children as their socializing skills are poor. This lack of confidence or competence leads to low self esteem and the child is unable to move on successfully to the next developmental phase of middle childhood.

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Titled

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