

## Building Strong Families

### The Power of Words

Words can be powerful. We are eager for our children to learn to talk and learn new words, but sometimes your child may say some words that are inappropriate or even hurtful to someone else. How can you teach your child when that happens?

While testing new sounds and rhyming words, a young child might accidentally say a word that you consider a swear word. If you react too strongly to the use of that word, your child will probably repeat it at other times just to get that reaction again. What should you do? Tell your child that the word is not a good one to use and talk about one that is more appropriate. Also, praise her for learning new words. Then play a rhyming word game with her using acceptable words. It is good for your child to feel good about learning new things and she probably will not use the swear word again.

What if your child starts using swear words when he is angry or upset about something? This is the time to be firm. Tell your child a better word to use from now on. Then get your child involved in doing something else. It is also time for you to think about where your child is hearing and learning those words. Sometimes children learn these words from other children, from siblings, from a parent, or on television. Your child may repeat what he hears without knowing the real meaning of the words, but might figure out that it means something bad from the reaction of other people. This is a good time to think about what words you say when you get angry! Children do copy what they see their parents do.

There might be times when your child uses hurtful words that embarrass someone else. This can happen when another child does something like spilling a glass of milk, ripping a hole in a jacket, or wetting his pants. You can teach your child to be kind in the future by talking about that child's feelings and also talking about similar incidents that happened to you when you were a child.



### Fun and Games



Most children enjoy playing games. Young children enjoy simple games such as Go Fish, Slap Jack, Uno, Tic Tac Toe, Old Maid, matching games, and bingo games. Puzzles are challenging and can be found for all ages and levels of ability. There are board games for the whole family to enjoy. These include games such as Candyland, checkers, Connect Four, Scrabble, Twister, Yahtzee, Chinese Checkers, Clue, Pictionary, and Boggle, Jr. Establish a regular family time to have fun together.

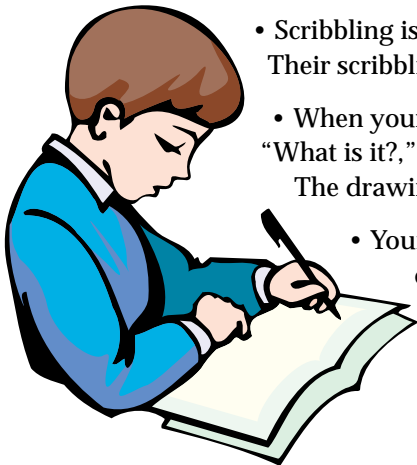
## Five Keys to Building Self-Esteem

- Help your children feel they are a part of something larger than themselves. Being part of a family is special! Everyone needs a sense of belonging.
- Love your children unconditionally and accept them as they are without reservation.
- Help your children feel capable by helping them develop their talents and teach them how to do things for themselves.
- Teach your children right from wrong. They need to be taught limits. This builds character.
- Help your children develop inner control, decision making, and problem solving skills. They will need these to be successful in life.



## Learning to Write

Children go through different stages as they learn to write. The process begins the first time a child picks up a crayon, marker, or pencil. Here are some ways your child will learn how to write:



- Scribbling is a beginning writing skill. Young children believe they are writing when they scribble. Their scribbling will eventually lead to letter formation and learning to spell words.
- When your child draws a picture it is a step toward learning how to write. Instead of asking, "What is it?," have your child tell you about the drawing and write those comments on the back. The drawing may not be of anything. It may have a different meaning for your child.
- Young children often make up words using letters and sounds they already know. This is called invented spelling. This is the way they begin to write before they learn how to spell words.
- Give your child chances to use writing materials often. Have paper, crayons, markers, and pencils available to use to practice.

## More from Better Kid Care

The Better Kid Care Web Site at [www.betterkidcare.psu.edu](http://www.betterkidcare.psu.edu) has more information for parents. Look for other *Family Time-Work Time* issues, *Parents Count*, child care and activity tip sheets, snack ideas, choosing child care tips, school readiness information, and the monthly Better Kid Care E-Newsletter. To sign up for the E-Newsletter, send a request to [BetterKidCareNews-subscribe-request@lists.psu.edu](mailto:BetterKidCareNews-subscribe-request@lists.psu.edu).

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