

# BRIGHT FUTURES HANDOUT ► PARENT

## 3 YEAR VISIT

Here are some suggestions from Bright Futures experts that may be of value to your family.



### ✓ HOW YOUR FAMILY IS DOING

- Take time for yourself and to be with your partner.
- Stay connected to friends, their personal interests, and work.
- Have regular playtimes and mealtimes together as a family.
- Give your child hugs. Show your child how much you love him.
- Show your child how to handle anger well—time alone, respectful talk, or being active. Stop hitting, biting, and fighting right away.
- Give your child the chance to make choices.
- Don't smoke or use e-cigarettes. Keep your home and car smoke-free. Tobacco-free spaces keep children healthy.
- Don't use alcohol or drugs.
- If you are worried about your living or food situation, talk with us. Community agencies and programs such as WIC and SNAP can also provide information and assistance.

### ✓ PLAYING WITH OTHERS

- Give your child a variety of toys for dressing up, make-believe, and imitation.
- Make sure your child has the chance to play with other preschoolers often. Playing with children who are the same age helps get your child ready for school.
- Help your child learn to take turns while playing games with other children.

### ✓ READING AND TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD

- Read books, sing songs, and play rhyming games with your child each day.
- Use books as a way to talk together. Reading together and talking about a book's story and pictures helps your child learn how to read.
- Look for ways to practice reading everywhere you go, such as stop signs, or labels and signs in the store.
- Ask your child questions about the story or pictures in books. Ask him to tell a part of the story.
- Ask your child specific questions about his day, friends, and activities.

### ✓ EATING HEALTHY AND BEING ACTIVE

- Give your child 16 to 24 oz of milk every day.
- Limit juice. It is not necessary. If you choose to serve juice, give no more than 4 oz a day of 100% juice and always serve it with a meal.
- Let your child have cool water when she is thirsty.
- Offer a variety of healthy foods and snacks, especially vegetables, fruits, and lean protein.
- Let your child decide how much to eat.
- Be sure your child is active at home and in preschool or child care.
- Apart from sleeping, children should not be inactive for longer than 1 hour at a time.
- Be active together as a family.
- Limit TV, tablet, or smartphone use to no more than 1 hour of high-quality programs each day.
- Be aware of what your child is watching.
- Don't put a TV, computer, tablet, or smartphone in your child's bedroom.
- Consider making a family media plan. It helps you make rules for media use and balance screen time with other activities, including exercise.

# 3 YEAR VISIT—PARENT



## SAFETY

- Continue to use a car safety seat that is installed correctly in the back seat. The safest seat is one with a 5-point harness, not a booster seat.
- Prevent choking. Cut food into small pieces.
- Supervise all outdoor play, especially near streets and driveways.
- Never leave your child alone in the car, house, or yard.
- Keep your child within arm's reach when she is near or in water. She should always wear a life jacket when on a boat.
- Teach your child to ask if it is OK to pet a dog or another animal before touching it.
- If it is necessary to keep a gun in your home, store it unloaded and locked with the ammunition locked separately.
- Ask if there are guns in homes where your child plays. If so, make sure they are stored safely.

## WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR CHILD'S 4 YEAR VISIT

### We will talk about

- Caring for your child, your family, and yourself
- Getting ready for school
- Eating healthy
- Promoting physical activity and limiting TV time
- Keeping your child safe at home, outside, and in the car

Consistent with *Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*, 4th Edition

For more information, go to <https://brightfutures.aap.org>.

The information contained in this handout should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances. Original handout included as part of the *Bright Futures Tool and Resource Kit*, 2nd Edition.

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DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



# 9-5-2-1-0 for Health!

**9**

get **9** hours of sleep



**5**

eat **5** servings of fruits  
and vegetables each day



**2**

limit screen time to  
**no more** than **2** hours each day



**1**

get at least **1** hour of  
exercise each day



**0**

**no** sugary drinks!



Soda  
Gatorade  
Juice

# 15 Tips to Survive the Terrible 3's



They call them the “terrible 2’s,” “trusting 3’s” and “pleasing 4’s,” but in reality having a 3-year-old can be harder than the 2’s. If you’re starting to feel like you just don’t really like taking care of your 3-year-old, you are not alone. Here are 15 tips to help you learn to love parenthood again (or at least make it through the day):

1. **Yell less, love more:** Yelling is a last defense mechanism, a technique we use when everything else fails. But yelling can hurt kids more than we realize— it might cause an immediate behavior change, but in the long run can cause real psychological harm. Rather than yelling and harsh punishment, children need positive parenting for healthy brain development. Dr. Joan Luby is a professor of child psychiatry and director of the Early Emotional Development Program at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. Her research shows that positive parenting of toddlers in stressful situations, rather than scolding or corporal punishment, is actually associated with an increase in the size of certain areas of the brain. If you find yourself yelling at your kids too much, you need other options for discipline. Keep reading.
2. **Label behavior:** Instead of getting angry, label behavior. I got this from *Sesame Street*—there’s one scene where Cookie Monster is accused of lying about stealing cookies. Frustrated and upset, Cookie Monster says, “Me glutton, not liar.” If *Sesame Street* can use words like “gluttony” to label behavior, so can I. So now we use words like “gluttony,” “patience,” “kindness,” and “diligence.” It sounded weird at first, but now I love it when 6-year-old tells her teasing brother, “That’s not kindness!”
3. **Be attuned to your children:** The key to raising emotionally healthy children is attunement, or how well you recognize your child’s needs at any given moment. Attunement, in short, is putting yourself in your child’s shoes and then meeting their needs with the wisdom of a parent. Try to identify the root of your child’s misbehavior— why she won’t put her shoes on or why she’s throwing a tantrum— then tailor your consequence appropriately. Most books on discipline and parenting revolve around the same themes—be consistent, follow-through with consequences, don’t give too many warnings, don’t punish in anger, etc. Although I agree with these themes, there is a risk of becoming too formulaic. In attunement parenting, we don’t just give time-out as a rote response to misbehavior. Instead, attuned parents ask “why” a child is misbehaving. When we understand the root of a child’s misbehavior, we can better meet

their needs, love them, and get long-term healthy behaviors. I've written more on Attunement Parenting and how it differs from Attachment Parenting [here](#).

4. **Give your child your full attention in frequent, small doses:** If your 3-year-old is pulling your cell phone out of your hands, banging on your keyboard while you type, or knocking over all your piles of laundry, this one is for you. I know your 3-year-old wants your full attention all the time, but it's just not possible if you're trying do laundry, run errands, read your email, or otherwise have a life. So as soon as you realize your sweetie is trying to get your attention, give her a few seconds of full attention. Look her right in the eyes, ask her some questions, and listen to the answer. Use body language that shows attention, like putting your phone down. While you listen to her answers, think of how you are going to redirect her.
5. **Redirect with creativity:** Try to redirect early, and with a loving voice. Ask yourself, "Why is my child misbehaving? What do they really need?" Aggressive behaviors usually require physical redirection. For example, if a child is snatching toys or yelling, they might need to ride a bike outside for a while. If a child is lying on the floor and whining, they may need a little attention and some quiet activity—try reading them a book.
6. **Touch your 3-year-old, many time per day:** Most 3-year-olds need lots of hugs and snuggles, even when you're not ready. Be ready to put your work down and hug your child, multiple times per day. Don't forget to actually say, "I love you," especially when your 3-year-old is misbehaving.
7. **Anticipate repeat offenders:** Children, like adults, have patterns of misbehavior. They do the same wrong things again and again. Do you fight about clothes every morning, or struggle to get your 3-year-old strapped into her carseat? Know your repeat offenses, intervene early and encourage your child to make good choices. I had a 3-year-old that liked to refuse to get strapped into her car seat because she knew she could control the whole family—the car wouldn't move until she was strapped in. The more she refused, the angrier our other children became, and she felt powerful. So one day, on the way to the car, I said, "If everyone says, 'We love you!' three times, will you strap into your car seat and be happy?" She said, "Ok, but you have to say it five times." We did, she strapped in, and everyone was laughing. By giving her control of a little issue, I gained control of the whole situation.
8. **Set clear expectations:** Write a list of family rules. For 3-year-olds, make the list short and simple. For example, 1) Use loving voices, 2) Obey Mommy and Daddy, and 3) Don't hurt other people. Discuss the rules daily, and praise successes at dinner or bedtime.
9. **Teach obedience:** Kids aren't born obedient, we have to teach it. 3-year-olds are naturally seeking autonomy and will fight obedience. The trick is to teach kids that they *want* to be obedient, that they get lots of praise and positive reinforcement when they do what you say. To practice obedience, play "Simon Says," except change it to "Mommy Says," or "Daddy Says." Start with typical stuff like patting your head and clapping your hands, then transition to putting toys away.
10. **Praise effort, not outcome:** Try to praise 10 times as often as you correct, but praise in the right way. Praise effort, not outcome. Too much praise can actually have an inverse effect on children's achievement—it can set the bar too high and lead them to fear

failure. The New York Times magazine has an excellent summary of the powerful research behind this paradoxical effect.

11. **Get a behavior sticker chart:** Stickers will never again be as powerful than when your child is 3. Enjoy it. Get a sticker chart and start keeping track of days your 3-year-old stayed in bed, cleared their plate, kept dry underwear on all day, etc.
12. **Be consistent:** Consistency does not mean harsh punishments or yelling, it means consistently addressing the same problem behaviors. If leaving your shoes on the floor is not OK on Monday, you can't pick them up for your child on Tuesday. That doesn't mean your 3-year-old needs a verbal lashing.
13. **Get on the same page with other childcare providers:** What positive reward systems are in place in your child's nursery classroom? What about grandma's house? If they are working outside home, try them at home, too. Rules at school and home need to be as similar as possible.
14. **When all else fails, resort to time-out:** Don't be angry, just ask your little defiant one to go to time-out, and pick him up if he doesn't go. Make sure you identify your time-out location before hand and try to be consistent about this location (we use the bathroom so they can't get out to go to the potty.) Give one minute time out for each year of life, or tell him he's staying in until he can stop crying and be sweet. As your child kicks and screams while you carry him to time-out, just gently tell him you love him. Resist the urge to debate to speak reason. He's 3. He won't be reasonable.
15. **Take care of yourself:** Ask for help. Talk through specific situations. Take a break. Remember that 4 is coming soon— let's hope you get a "trusting 4."