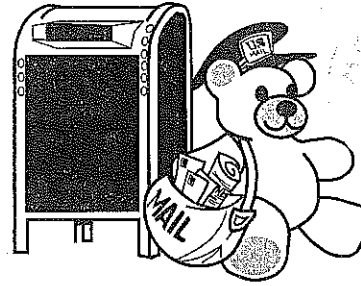


## THE TEDDY



## BEAR POST

A NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS OF PRESCHOOLERS

## Expressing Feelings

**A**lthough communicating feelings is more difficult for some children than for others, it is a skill all children can learn. Parents can help children gain these skills by the simple technique of STOP, LOOK, and LISTEN. If your child is talking to you, stop what you are doing and pay close attention to what your child is trying to say. To help focus on the situation, turn off the television, take a few deep breaths and really look at your child. Getting down to your child's level (maybe sit on the floor together) and making eye contact is a great way to connect. You are now ready to listen to what your child's body language and words are saying. Wait for your child to finish expressing her feelings and avoid the temptation to jump in. Here are some other tips:



way than if you ask questions that start with "why", such as "Why are you so mad?"

4. **Avoid making fun of a feeling or putting your child down.** Saying "Only babies feel that way," or "You have no reason to be mad", makes your child feel unsupported and stops your child from sharing or expressing his feelings. Respect all feelings, even those that make you uncomfortable.

5. **Provide physical outlets for emotions.** Playing with playdough, climbing, swimming and running at the park or beach are wonderful outlets for children's feelings.

Temper tantrums, although not planned, are also a release for pent up emotions. Allow your child time to express feelings of frustration and also time to regain control of her behavior.

6. **Share your own experiences with your child.** Recalling a time when you were angry, scared, happy, proud or sad will help your child understand feelings and how they can be handled. She will be relieved to know that other people have had the same feelings she does.

1. **Help your child to identify feelings.** Label feelings with words. Say "It looks like you are feeling happy. . . or sad. . . or angry," etc. If a child is obviously upset but can't talk about it, you might be able to suggest the reason, such as "I wonder if you're angry because your friend got sick and you have no one to play with." Or, if you have no idea what is wrong, you could simply say "You seem angry." Then let your child know that "it's OK" to not want to talk right away and reassure your child that you will be ready to listen when he is ready to talk.
2. **Let your child know that all feelings are normal.** Feelings are not bad or good, they are the child's natural emotional responses to life experiences. Your child is entitled to feelings of fear, sadness, anger, etc. However, your child must also learn that it is not OK to hurt anyone when expressing those feelings. For example, when you observe your child about to hit the dog, stop her and say, "I see you're angry and that's okay, but I can't let you hurt the dog. Let's think of something else to do with your angry feelings."
3. **Help your child talk about feelings.** For example, you could say, "Tell me about it," when your child announces she's angry or happy. Or "I'd like to hear about it," when you're told your child hates a friend. You are more likely to get a response this

**SUGGESTED READING:**

To help your child begin to understand how he feels and how others feel, look at pictures of faces in magazines and books. Have your child guess what feeling is being shown, i.e. happy, sad, mad. Read your child books about feelings. Some excellent books available at the State Libraries are:

*When Sophie Gets Angry - Really, Really Angry* by Molly Bang

*Glad Monster, Sad Monster: A Book About Feelings* by Ed Emberley

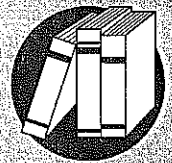
*Today I Feel Silly and Other Moods That Make My Day* by Jamie Lee Curtis (EG)

*Sometimes I'm Bombaloo* by Rachel Vail

*The Way I Feel* by Janan Cain

*If You'll Be My Valentine* by Cynthia Rylant

*Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst



**THE TEDDY BEAR POST** is published 4 times a year and is distributed by The Parent Line Distribution Center. Please call 593-0437 or write to: [distributionctr@theparentline.org](mailto:distributionctr@theparentline.org) to revise your count/address.

Funded by Hawaii Department of Health, Maternal and Child Health Branch (808) 733-4054

Linda Lingle, Governor • Chiyome Fukino, M.D., Director of Health

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### "A PARENT ASKS"

**Q: What can I do about my daughter biting me and her playmates in anger?**

A: Biting is very alarming and upsetting to parents. It can be stopped, but be prepared to work on it consistently for awhile.

Some suggestions:

- Act immediately when biting occurs. Remove your child to a sofa, corner, pillow or nearby area. With a minimum amount of talk and attention, say "No biting, biting hurts. Stay here until you are ready to try again without biting." When your child lets you know she has calmed down and is ready to try again, help her return to the play activity. Be consistent. Use this method every time she bites and be as patient and calm as you can.
- In quiet moments, while reading books and talking, help your daughter to express her feelings using words. It's important to teach alternate ways of dealing with anger and other feelings. Teach your child to say, "Don't take my toy." or "That makes me mad when you push me, so stop it." or "I don't like that."
- When your daughter is sharing or is using words to handle feelings, immediately reinforce the positive behavior with encouragement and acknowledgment such as "You are really sharing." or "You are really using your words, good for you!"



### PARENTS WANT TO KNOW

#### COMMUNICATION: *The Open Door Policy*

In order to help your child build communication skills, it is very important to pay attention to what your child is trying to say. Listen carefully and summarize what you think you heard him say and then repeat it back. For example, "Let me see if I understand. . . You are angry because you wanted to keep playing with your toys instead of going to the store?" This will give your child the opportunity to point out any differences between what he actually meant and what you heard. You don't always have to fix the problem. Acknowledging the problem is often enough - it validates the child's feelings.

While speaking with your child, keep a calm, friendly voice. You might take a break to cool off if you feel yourself getting frustrated. Allow your child the chance to have a difference of opinion. Winning isn't as important as working toward a resolution that you and your child can live with.

#### TINY TOT PROGRAM

Keeping an active preschooler busy is often challenging. Take advantage of the Tiny Tot Program offered through the City and County of Honolulu Parks and Recreation



Department. There is no cost and most district or community parks offer the program during the regular school year. It is a great time for your preschooler to socialize with other children and to participate in crafts, songs and games. It also provides an opportunity for parents to meet other parents/children from their neighborhood. Most of the parks have limited enrollment and you will need to register at the park once every three months. Most parks also require a parent/guardian to stay with the child; however, some parks do not have this requirement. If you are interested, call the district offices listed below and ask when the next registration date will be. Neighbor Island families, please check with your local parks for playgroups in your area.  
Hawai'i Kai to McCully . . . . . 973-7250  
Makiki to Aiea . . . . . 522-7070  
Pearl City to Wai'anae and  
Wahiawa . . . . . 675-7130  
Waialua to Waimanalo . . . . . 233-7300

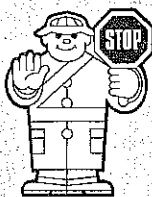
**The Parent Line:** Free statewide phone line for parents and others caring for children. Call for support, encouragement, information, and ideas about handling behavior or about community resources.



Hours: Mon-Fri 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. and Sat 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
O'ahu: 526-1222. Neighbor Islands toll-free: 1-800-816-1222

**H-KISS** - Information for parents of children birth to 21 with questions on special health care and developmental needs. Referral for ages birth to three with special needs to developmental, screening, evaluation, therapy and other services.  
Mon - Fri 8:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
O'ahu: 973-9633  
Neighbor Islands: 1-800-235-5477

**April is Autism Awareness Month.** Autism is a neurological disorder that impairs the ability to relate to others and the outside world. It may occur in 1 in 500 children. While autism is more prevalent in boys than in girls, it is found in all racial, educational, and income groups. For more information on autism, please call the Autism Society of Hawaii at 228-0122.



#### SAFETY WORKS

Childhood lead poisoning is usually caused by eating or breathing in lead. Lead may be in your home's paint chips and dust, ceramic dishes or brought into the house by someone who works with lead in their job or hobby. Children from 6 months to 6 years are at the greatest risk. Children with lead poisoning usually do not show any symptoms but their brain and nervous system development may be affected, causing learning and behavior problems. A woman who is lead poisoned can pass lead to her unborn infant. Ask your doctor about lead testing. For more information call the Maternal and Child Health Branch at 733-4056.