

upcoming presentations

All presentations are held in our San Francisco office. Fees are \$40/person or \$60/couple. For more information visit our website: www.symbiosf.com.

Discipline with Toddlers

Wednesday 06 August

7:00 pm

For discipline to be effective, it has to be developmentally and temperamentally accurate. We will help parents gain a clearer understanding of an approach to discipline that will be effective with their particular child or children. We'll cover basic strategies and specific techniques for handling different temperaments for kids from 1 - 3 years of age.

Preparing for Preschool

Wednesday 20 August

7:00 pm

As kids head off to preschool issues around separations, transitions, social interactions and adaptability can surface in new or familiar ways. This presentation will help parents anticipate their child's needs and behaviors around this transition and have a plan in place for how to respond.

Temperament: Understanding Your Unique Child

Thursday 04 September

7:00 pm

Temperament plays a large role in determining how your child experiences, and relates to, his or her world. Every child is unique temperamentally, which is why each child responds differently to parents' strategies regarding issues such as sleep, discipline and leaning. This talk will help you form an understanding of how your child's unique temperament affects your interactions with him or her and how it influences your child's role in your family. We will provide guidelines for effective ways of working with various temperaments.

august @ symbio



q & a

My husband and I find ourselves at odds over the basics of discipline with our 19-month-old son. Suddenly we are struggling with each other more than we are with our willful little monarch. Admittedly, I tend to be somewhat hardcore by nature; I am a serious athlete and was raised by a father who was career military. Basically, I believe that discipline builds strength and character. My husband, on the other hand, is the ultimate softy. He is gentle, calm and hates to see anyone upset or unhappy. These are all qualities that made me love him, but I worry that he is too soft with our son when it comes to limit setting. He worries that I am expecting too much from a 19-month-old and that my approach will "crush our son's spirit". Can you please weigh in on this for us?

Toddlers certainly have a special way of ferreting out issues in their parents' relationship. Because discipline is such an important topic, and influences so many areas of family life, it's a common wedge issue for parents. In our experience, when parents are at odds, it's usually the case that each parent is holding an important part of the picture. To be sure, firm boundaries, consistent limits, and age-appropriate expectations are fundamentals of healthy discipline. These are the things that give a toddler the all-important

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Parenting Preschoolers

Wednesday 24 September

7:00 pm

As kids move from toddlerhood into the preschool years, they bring new and different joys, challenges and developmental tasks to family life. This presentation outlines effective parenting strategies for addressing issues including discipline, transitions, socialization and learning style and describes the psychological lens through which preschoolers the view world.

Private Presentations

Presentations on any topic for groups of eight or more can be arranged by appointment. These presentations can be done at your home or another space of your choice, or at our San Francisco or Marin locations. For more details, contact us at: symbio@symbiosf.com.

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message that his parents are in control. This, in turn, creates the feeling of safety and security that makes learning and exploration possible and psychologically safe for a child. However, toddlers also need to know how to access the feeling of gentle constancy and soothing in relationship to their parents. When this feeling is the norm, parental rebukes will stand in sharper contrast to other interactions, and thus will have more impact. It will also prevent a build up of residual anxiety, which can lead to behavior problems. The athlete in you may relate to this analogy: Good discipline is like strength training. You have to calibrate the weight you are lifting, or the behavioral expectations you are imposing, so that it will make enough demands to make a muscle, or your child's impulse control, stronger. However, if you take on too much you can end up with a strained muscle or a child who is melting down under the weight of expectations that outstrip his developmental abilities.

Our daughter will head off to preschool at the end of August. Until about a week ago she was very excited to about going to school like her older cousin, whom she idolizes. Now, she is suddenly saying she does not want to go. On your advice we have always prepared her for new things ahead of time by telling her what to expect and keeping change gradual. This tends to work well in general. However, we were less successful in using this approach with the camp she attended this summer and we are worried about a repeat with preschool. Despite the prepping that we did, and despite the fact that one of us was able to stay with her for the first thirty minutes of camp each morning, we did not have an easy goodbye until almost three weeks into the session (which left her with one good week). It was really heartbreaking to leave her crying and pleading for us. We came close to pulling her out of camp but her counselors encouraged us that she was getting better slowly. She did seem to enjoy camp in general but, even once she quit crying when we left, she drug her feet when it came time to go each morning. Interestingly enough, her resistance to school began about the time camp ended. We are wondering if we have overwhelmed her with too much change and are worried we are in for a rough time this fall. This is especially unsettling knowing that our schedules are such that preschool is not something we can just forego if she does not take to it.

It's easy to understand why the experience at camp would leave you dreading more heartbreaking goodbyes at preschool. However, because we know your daughter's temperament is slow adapting, the progression of the camp drop-off sounds quite encouraging. For slow adapting kids, and even for kids who adapt quickly but are not accustomed to separating from parents, goodbyes sometimes have to include some period of protest as kids learn how to manage the distress created by the separation from parents. With these kids, we measure progress in terms of how quickly a child can return to a calm state after parents leave, rather than whether or not they express distress at all. Often kids need the time of crying and protesting their parent's departure in order to organize themselves to move through the transition; it's a form of anxiety release. They will move through the period of upset fairly quickly and can enjoy interactions and activities with others for the rest of the day. It's often these same kids who will have trouble leaving or tend to dawdle when their parents return to pick them up. Transitions, in general, are just tough for them. The fact that your daughter enjoyed camp is an indication that she is actually handling the separations successfully. If she was truly overwhelmed, you would have seen her steadily more upset and anxious. Her new resistance to school is typical for kids of her temperament as well: as the date gets closer, the feeling of change begins to come into sharper focus than her general enthusiasm for school; and change is something from which she will always tend to retreat. What she needs from you in response is confident, consistent reassurance and help understanding her own feelings.

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Wednesday Lunches

Starting Wednesday 13 August we will begin hosting brown-bag lunch sessions on the 1st - 4th Wednesday of each month. These sessions will be a time for folks to drop in and ask questions, or follow up on a previous session. The idea behind these lunches is to provide an economical forum for parents to get questions answered when they do not need a whole consultation. We also always enjoy the group format because we know how much parents can benefit from each other's insights and experience.

On the 1st - 3rd Wednesdays we will focus on a particular age group, taking on any question or topic related to kids of that age. For example, topics at the infant lunch might include basic new-baby care, establishing healthy sleep habits, or the transition to parenthood for first-time parents; toddler topics might be dealing with opposition, effective discipline strategies, handling transitions and so on. Of course, the list of topics for each age is almost limitless, and anything is fair game.

The 4th Wednesdays will be play date day - a time for kids to come in and interact with parents and with us. Over the years, we have come to know so many of our young clients vicariously, through their parents' stories, that we thought it was about time we invited them to lunch. So, bring your lunch, and your questions and come join us!

Schedule:

1st Wednesday: Infants
2nd Wednesday: Toddlers
3rd Wednesday: Preschoolers
4th Wednesday: Playdate - bring your kids

Time: 12:30-1:30pm
Cost: \$25 per **session**
Location: **SF office**

Now is a good time to start adjusting your routines and rituals to accommodate the fall schedule. The fact that you do a good job with preparing your daughter for what's ahead will make the transition to preschool easier. Given the way things went at camp, she will probably do well with having someone stay with her for a while for the first couple of weeks. Expect the same protest when you depart - what you want to monitor is how long and how intense these periods are based her preschool teachers' reports. It's also helpful to have a routine for handling the difficulty of goodbye. It's easier for kids when they can be with the same teacher or staff member everyday at goodbye; that person should not try to talk a child out of being sad, but offer empathy and a calm sense of containment while a child works through the goodbye. Another thing that will help a great deal is regular conversations about this process and all the emotions connected to it, hers and yours too. Parents often tend toward the "out of sight, out of mind" approach when it comes to focusing attention on difficult times. However, talking about the difficulty of saying goodbye, and how sad it makes you, and how normal it is to feel this way, will actually help to reduce your daughter's anxiety. It will show her that you notice, think about and share her experience. It will also demonstrate to her that, although goodbyes are sad, they are not too scary to talk about.

If you have a question you'd like us to answer here, please send it to us at symbio@symbiosf.com.

Sleep Training Packages

By request, we have begun offering a package price for sleep training. Clients may choose between this flat-fee option or our traditional fee/time structure.

The package will include an in-home initial consultation, which lasts about two hours, and two weeks of phone follow-up support as needed by parents, which consist of one daily phone session of 10 - 15 minutes in length. This option is designed for parents who are beginning the process of sleep training, or making major modifications to an unsuccessful sleep-training plan, and want daily support as they move through the process. Travel fee for the in-home session is included in the price of the package for clients in San Francisco and Marin. For clients in other locations, a travel fee based on mileage will be added.

The price of the package is \$395.