

upcoming events

Infant & Toddler Sleep

Tuesday 12 January
7:00pm

Lamorinda Moms
Orinda CA

RSVP:

www.lamorindamoms.org

*Members only event. Please visit our website for more information.

Emotionally Intelligent Discipline

Tuesday 19 January
7:00pm

@ [Peekadoodle Kidsclub](#)

Ghiradelli Square
900 North Point St, F100
San Francisco CA

In order for discipline to be truly effective, it has to help a child learn how to regulate and appropriately express emotions as well as control behavior. Because of the goal of discipline is for a child to internalize a sense of appropriate vs. inappropriate behavior and ultimately moral action, discipline has to be relationally relevant. We will discuss effective ways to set limits, deliver emotionally supportive guidance and foster the development of a healthy sense of self in your child in the toddler and preschool years.

RSVP: info@thepkc.com

Peekadoodle members:

\$40/person or \$60/couple

non-members:

\$45/person or \$65/couple

Discipline with Multiples

Tuesday 26 January
7:30pm

Twins By the Bay
Oakland CA

RSVP:

www.twinsbythebay.org

*Members only event. Please visit our website for more information.

january @ symbio



q & a

We have a three and a half year-old daughter who has developed an incredible bossy streak. She has always been headstrong. About two years ago we thought it was cute when she would order us around and were actually proud that we had fostered such self-confidence. But it's not so cute anymore. She is constantly defiant and shouts orders at both of us, her babysitter, and her cousins ... even our dog has started to avoid her. Her behavior has become a problem at school too. Last week, she hit another little girl after the girl refused to play a game with our daughter. Her teachers have asked us to institute a star chart or system of consequences but we have always tried to avoid these things. We have tried to talk with our daughter calmly, explain things rationally and treat her with respect. We do not yell at each other or bark orders, so we are not sure how our daughter learned to behave this way. We've read a book recently that stresses the importance of unconditional love and warns against using consequences because that can make a child feel like they are not loved when they do something wrong. Last weekend, we told her she could not stay at her cousin's party if she kept refusing to share. She responded by telling us that we didn't love her if we made her leave. We are not having the positive family life we imagined. We don't want to make selfish choices based on our own needs, and of course, no matter what we have to put up with, we want our daughter to feel loved. But we are also (we hate to say) worried she's going to be seen as a brat. We hate the thought of destroying her self-confidence or sense of security, but we know she needs boundaries too. We are not sure what the right choice is in this situation and are worried that our frustration is not serving any of us well.

It is agonizing to feel caught between two essential tasks when so much is on the line. However, fostering self-confidence and setting limits are absolutely not mutually exclusive; rather, they are inseparably linked. When you find yourself feeling that you are failing at one in support of the other, consider that a tell-tale sign that something is a little off track and it's time to step back and gently reassess the situation. It's hard to maintain a clear perspective in the midst of the day-to-day fray, especially when you feel that your child's future well-being hangs on the decisions you make. Course corrections are an inevitable part of the fine art of parenting. The more strong-willed your child is, the more important it will be to hone the skill of recognizing the need for one. We absolutely agree with the book

Setting Limits & Dealing with Tantrums

Tuesday 2 February
7:30pm

@ Recess Urban Recreation
470 Carolina Street
San Francisco CA

Testing limits in part of a toddler or preschooler's job description, which can make for some tough moments for parents trying to maintain control and good humor at the same time. We'll talk about healthy and effective ways of establishing boundaries that support a child's sense of self as well as a parent's sense of sanity. We'll also talk about the meaning and management of temper tantrums: how they related to limit testing, what can be gained from them and what your response to a tantrum means to your child. The presentation will include plenty of time for q & a.

RSVP:
signup@recessurbanrecreation.com
or (415) 701-7529

Recess members:
\$35/person or \$55/couple
non-members:
\$40/person or \$60/couple

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psychological services for families
with young children

www.symbiosf.com

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lele diamond, mft license # 40324

you read that it's essential that your daughter feel unconditionally loved by you. The knowledge that you will love her no matter what she does will direct the shaping of her self image and assure her that she never needs to compromise who she is in order to try to gain love from another. But unconditional love is very different from unconditional approval of a child's behavior. The best of developmental research and generational wisdom will attest to the fact that you will not diminish the former by withholding the later. To the contrary, the behavioral limits that you would like to maintain are in service of your daughter as well as her cousins, your babysitter, yourselves and your dog. Her sense of self and security will both be increased by your differential responses to the behaviors that you want to encourage and those you want to discourage.

For some children, a rational explanation that "hands are not for hitting" and "to share is fair" will be enough to motivate them in the desired direction most of the time. However, the distinction between the child who will repeat these phrases as a form of self-admonishment and the one who will utter them in a tone better suited for "game on" as they land a well aimed right-cross is as much a matter of temperament as anything else. In truth, children with more compliant temperaments will obey rational directives for the same reasons that children with more defiant ones will eventually respond to consistent positive feedback for positive behaviors and consistently employed consequences for negative behaviors: children are motivated by the desire for positive feedback from parents and by the desire to avoid a negative outcome. The difference has to do with the threshold at which these experiences register. Temperament plays a large role in determining where that threshold lies for a particular child. For some children, the soothing tone in a mother's cooing voice is enough inspiration to fuel impressive efforts at self-control. For other children, that cooing sound and the feeling complex it inspires seems very remote when they are in the grips of an impulse. Their receptors are tuned to levels more on par with a coach's megaphone. Your daughter sounds like she falls into the second group and, for this reason, it's all the more important that your feedback be relevant to, and conditioned by, her behavior.

In addition to acting as guardrails between the zone of positive (or tolerable) family life and the chaotic hinterlands beyond, boundaries are the markers that remind children that parents are still in control. Despite the fact that this reality will often frustrate your daughter when she encounters it, in the bigger picture it will also allow her to feel safe. Your daughter's impulse to test the limits and amass control is an expression of one strong developmental need, but it's not the only need shaping her right now. She also needs to know that, as powerful as she is, her parents are more powerful. She needs to know that you are stronger than she is so she knows that you can keep her safe; so she doesn't have to feel overly responsible; so she doesn't begin to feel she is too powerful. Without a strong faith in the strength of your authority, she will have to shoulder the weight of deciding when to behave, delay gratification and accept limits – that's too much to ask of someone who is supposed to be experimenting with how to get power and gain influence. Appropriate to her developmental stage, your daughter is gathering data about what works in social interactions and what doesn't. If she gets information that tells her demanding and threatening works, she is getting misleading information about the impact of those behaviors she will not be prepared to succeed well when she is in a broader social context. In other words, when you respond positively to disrespectful or rude behavior you are supplying misleading information about the impact of those behaviors. In addition, when your daughter knows she's pushing you around, she may feel giddy with power, but she will also have to contend with the anxiety-provoking sense that she may be powerful enough to break the system. She knows already that she is not really supposed to be in charge; the feeling that the family structure has broken down can feel a lot to your daughter like there is something wrong with her. This is why boundaries are just as important to the development of self confidence as ample expressions of love, admiration, interest and respect. In fact, you have a rich opportunity for the expression of unconditional love in those moments when you make it clear to your daughter that you are displeased by her behavior but that you are still full of love for her. That's a concept that is very hard to convey to children in words – they need living experiences of it in order to come to understand it. When she is telling you "you don't love me if ...", think of it as preschooler-speak for "If you love me, I should always get my way with you." Your response in this meta-communication needs to convey both authority and affection: "No, that is not how life and love work. I am not afraid of you being upset because I know that we still love each other even when we are upset. When you learn that, you won't have to be so afraid of being upset either." And that is a very powerful form of security.