

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.

Potty Training

Tuesday 07 October @ 7:00 pm

Using the lens of temperament we will address how to approach getting your child out of diapers. We will suggest guidelines in terms of timing and techniques, explore some of the strengths and drawbacks of common approaches and provide tools for how to determine what strategies will work best for your particular, individual child.

Parenting Toddlers

Wednesday 22 October @ 7:00 pm

Life with a toddler is never dull. Each day brings new adventures, epiphanies and challenges for both parent and child. We'll discuss the highs and lows of life with a toddler from both a psychological and a practical perspective and cover basic guidelines for discipline, self-esteem building, and how to handle those "now what?" moments that toddlers are designed to produce.

Getting Your Baby To Sleep

Thursday 06 November @ 7:00 pm

This presentation will cover basic sleep theory and techniques, and include a step-by-step "how to" for a simple sleep training program. We will also address the most frequent pitfalls and stumbling blocks encountered by would-be sleepers. The evening will provide information for those wanting to get a sleep program in place, within the parameters of each family's preferred approach (e.g.: co-sleeping, cry-it-out, no-cry). We will also troubleshoot with parents who have hit snags and roadblocks in an established program.

october @ symbio



q & a

We successfully potty trained our 3 ½ -year-old about six months ago but he still refuses to poop anywhere except in his pull-up while hiding (behind a chair, the curtains, in the closet). When I find him it's clear from his squatting position and beet-red face that he's pooping but when I ask him if he wants to go in the toilet, he says no. I know I'm not supposed to force him but all the cajoling in the world hasn't convinced him that the toilet would be a better receptacle. More and more, I find myself grinning through clenched teeth when he asks me to change his diaper because it's clear that he knows when he has to go and is fully capable of doing it on the toilet. How do I encourage him to poop on the potty so I can say "farewell" to the pull-ups for good?

What you're describing is very common. Lots of kids will, like your little guy, tend to hover at a sort of mid-way point in the potty training process. For many children, using the potty to pee comes well before shedding the diaper for pooping. Odd as it may seem to adults, pooping in a diaper can be much more comfortable than using the toilet for children; they are used to the sensory experience and feedback loop of going in a diaper. For some kids, the open, public feel of going on the toilet can be over-stimulating. These are the same kids who will want to hide in a quiet place when the time comes to relieve themselves. As your son seems to be among this group, the fanfare and public attention that provides encouragement to pee in the potty may be too much for him when it comes to pooping. You are more likely to be [\(continued on page 2\)](#)

Introducing New Siblings

Tuesday 18 November 7:00 pm

There are few things in life that result in more change to one's lifestyle, routine and sense of self than becoming a parent. Becoming a first time sibling may be one of them. We will talk about how best to prepare young sisters/brothers-to-be for the addition of a new family member before the baby arrives; and how to help them through the changes that take place after he or she comes home as a family recalibrates to include a new member.

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.

New: Book Group

We are starting a monthly book group! Each month we will read a parenting-related book and meet to discuss it. In the discussions, we will share how the findings and teachings in each book relate to research and other theories on the subject at hand; and we will examine the principles in light of the real-life examples you bring in. No ongoing commitment is required; participation is month to month.

You can sign up for the each month's discussion group by sending us an email. Please also feel free to send suggestions and requests for particular books.

First Book:

Positive Discipline: The First Three Years

by Jane Nelsen, Cheryl Erwin and Roslyn Ann Duffy

First Meeting:

Wednesday 05 November
6:00 pm

NO FEE FOR OUR FIRST MEETING
\$25/person for subsequent meetings

San Francisco Office
directions are available at
www.symbiosf.com.

successful in encouraging him forward if you focus on encouraging him into the bathroom, rather than out of the diaper. We'd suggest that you tell your son you'll leave his diaper off at home, but that he can have a pull-up to use in the bathroom whenever he wants to poop. Keep the pull-ups in the bathroom, give him one and tell him to let you know when he is finished. Then, leave the room (it's fine to stay if he wants you to, but let it be his call). When he's finished you can flush the poop together. If he can manage it, you can just show him where the pull-ups are and he can get one whenever he needs to poop. This routine will accomplish two important things: 1/ It sets pooping aside as a specific event that happens in the bathroom and 2/ It takes the power struggle out of the process. It allows him to take charge of creating the comfortable, low-stimulation environment he wants, without bucking your system. Once he has this routine down, let him continue for 2 – 4 weeks (longer if you know he is slow to adapt to changes) before even suggesting that he consider the potty. If he is using a small potty for peeing, be sure that there is one in the bathroom. He may initiate pooping in the potty himself during this time. If not, you can move to spending regular periods of time each day sitting on the toilet and seeing if anything happens – no pressure. If nothing happens and he wants a pull-up outside of toilet time, he gets one. When he does poop on the toilet, keep the response positive, but not too over-the-top. Let him lead the way with the level of excitement he wants to have connected to the event.

I was at the playground with my 2-year-old boy/girl twins the other day and they were playing jumping games with some other, slightly older, kids. One of the older boys (maybe 3-½) shouted exuberantly for me to watch him jump and, when he did, I exclaimed over his fine form and general bravery. Then both his father and little brother came rushing forward to admonish him for talking to a stranger. His father looked at me and said, "nothing personal, but you know." I was a little chagrined but I also realized that I'm torn about how to handle the "don't talk to strangers" thing with my own kids. I have never said anything like that to them. While I want them to be safe and use common sense I really don't want to raise fearful, mistrusting kids. I feel like, since they are always supervised at this point in their young lives, it is too early to start these types of warnings; but I'm not sure if I'm being naïve. What do you think is the best way to balance this issue; and is there a right time to start telling kids to beware of strangers (even moms in the park playing with their own kids?!?!).

The line between instilling a sufficient sense of caution and creating unnecessary fear can be quite difficult to discern. Some children who are easily frightened may become overly avoidant of new people and places in response to warnings that eclipse their developmental abilities to make sense of a situation. Other children are so naturally fearless that parents feel they have to compensate by constantly reinforcing a message of caution. This may have been the case with the 3-½-year-old who apparently had not absorbed the injunction against socializing with strangers, despite the fact that his younger brother understood well enough to join in the chorus of reproach. The best approach to the issue depends, in part, on the personality of the child, the safety of the area in which you live, and the types of activities in which your child participates. Warnings will be less of an issue for parents of children who tend to be more reserved and cautious by nature. You raise a good point in questioning the appropriate age at which to start talking with kids about potential dangers – especially dangers posed by other people. In general we agree with you that there is much less relevance to the matter when children are too young to be in an unsupervised situation, particularly in a generally safe environment. Some parents feel that if they establish don't-talk-to-strangers rules early, they will be more deeply ingrained. However, while it's true that many toddlers will repeat such rules, and toddlers who are slow to approach by nature will gladly comply with them, children younger than preschool age will not actually understand the logic behind them. So the goal of encouraging good common sense and intentional caution is lost on children so young. We recommend introducing guidelines regarding strangers (continued on page 3)

when children are old enough to understand distinctions between say, talking to strangers when they are with a parent at a playground, and talking to someone who approaches them when they are on an outing with their preschool; or between saying “hello” to someone new and taking candy from them. Although it varies from child to child, for most kids this translates to between 3 and 4 years of age. Before this point we encourage parents to rely on their own presence, rather than rules, to keep interactions with strangers within appropriate bounds. Even once parents begin to discuss guidelines around strangers, it’s helpful for rules not to be too extreme in their message or too global in their constraints. If the rules against approaching strangers are too rigid or are imposed before children can understand them, very approaching children are not likely to comply; it’s too hard to fight down the impulse to approach. The message should be that strangers are not all scary, but that we don’t know them, so we don’t know if they are safe or not. If a child wants to talk to a stranger, the right way to do so is to get Mom or Dad involved, then it’s safe. This approach will also allow children to understand that, in each situation, Mom and Dad are making educated determinations of who is and is not safe. We want kids to understand that this process occurs so they can begin to experiment with the sort of reasoning it involves. That’s the basis of common sense.

sybio

psychological services for families with
young children

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Change to Wednesday Lunch Format

To accommodate more parents, we have revised the schedule for Wednesday lunch sessions. The 1st through 3rd Wednesday of each month will now be open to parents of children of any age between birth and 5 years. Topics will vary depending on the ages of the children being discussed. When needed we will be break into two groups based on age range. The 4th Wednesday will continue to be a play date hour - time for us to interact with parents and kids together.

New Schedule:

1st - 3rd Wednesday: Parents only

4th Wednesday: Playdate - bring your kids

Time: 12:30-1:30pm

Cost: \$25/parent or \$45/couple

Location: SF office