

FAMILY RESOURCE

C O N N E C T I O N

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Why is My Child's Only Word "No!"?

As children near the age of two, they begin to exhibit a behavior called negativism. This behavior is easily recognized by a frequent "NO!" in response to nearly every suggestion from the parent. Understandably, parents can become quite annoyed at this bewildering development in their child's life.

Actually, this negative behavior is a normal part of a child's development, and it signals the transition from babyhood to childhood. (It is not unlike the behaviors and transitions to adolescence!) The child is asserting him- or herself—seeing how it feels to make decisions of his or her own. And part of making these decisions is disagreeing with parents, caregivers, and other caring adults.

Remember that your child's struggle to be assertive is a necessary stage of development. Children at this stage appear defiant. They want to do everything immediately and want things done in the same way every time. They make unreasonable demands of parents and try to dominate them. They even say "no" to things they want to do! Through this process, children are learning the distinction between their own will and the intentions and will of others, notably parents. This rocky road is an important one that leads the young child to autonomous "self-hood."

What Can Parents and Caregivers Do? As aggravating as this behavior can be, remember that you are not the cause of your child's contradictory behavior. All children at this stage of development struggle to assert themselves, although there are individual differences in how this battle unfolds. It is important to accept that not only is this an inevitable stage of development, it is a very necessary one. And remember that sometimes your child may not really want his or her "no" to be taken seriously.

Try to limit your own "nos" to your child, offer choices, and commend instances of cooperative behavior. It is not hard to understand why saying "no" is so popular with young children. After all, they have been hearing their parents use this word with them for most of their young lives! One way to moderate the negativism that occurs at this stage is to reduce the number of times you use the word "no" with your child. Although it takes more energy than giving a firm "no" from across the room, it makes better child development sense to divert the child from the unacceptable activity. It is also wise to explain what you are doing and why you are doing it, even though you think your child may be too young to understand. It gives both of you practice for the upcoming "terrible twos."

(continued)

Mission

To open "New Horizons" of self-esteem and potential for the little people entrusted to our care, their families, and our employees by providing and continuously improving the best child development on the planet!



When your child is acting especially negative, use a combination of the following techniques to help restore a bit of harmony:

- Offer the child a choice of limited options: “Do you want a cheese sandwich or a peanut butter sandwich for lunch today?” rather than “What do you want for lunch today?”
- Use as few commands as possible, and insist on obedience only when absolutely necessary. Encourage your child to make his own decisions in matters of lesser importance.
- Emphasize the positive. “We will have a treat later” works much better than “You cannot have a cookie now.” Negative statements from you can prompt negative behavior from your child.
- Pay special attention to instances of cooperative behavior. (Yes, there will be some!) Commend your child when they occur. Invite your child's cooperation. Instead of telling her what to do, ask her for a favor: “Will you please not talk to me while I am talking to Grandma on the telephone?”
- Remind yourself that this is a necessary, temporary phase of your child's development and that as your child acquires more verbal and motor skills, his “nos” will decrease.
- Enjoy your new relationship with this interesting creature who is developing his or her own personality, likes, and dislikes. You may never have a docile, placid child again, but you are sure to have a more engaging one.

Congratulations! Your stubborn and rebellious toddler now knows he or she is not a baby, but is not sure exactly what will happen next. As the parent, you cannot be certain either. You may be experiencing some ambivalence about your child's new-found independence. Although it may be difficult to remember while your child is energetically emptying cupboards in your just-cleaned kitchen, try to keep an appreciation of this process of self-discovery. The beginning of this lifelong journey happens only once.

Congressman Kline Supports More Federal Dollars for Minnesota Child Care Programs

Child care advocates are finding support at the federal level as legislators like Congressman John Kline (R-MN) step out to do all they can for our nation's youngest learners. In light of the recent state funding cuts to child

care assistance, Kline, a member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, supports proposed changes to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) that would help struggling child care providers by:

- Allowing for-profit providers to receive full CACFP benefits as long as 20 percent of children in their care are receiving child care assistance. This would bring an additional \$1.4 million in federal funds to Minnesota providers.
- Making permanent language that qualifies all types of assistance for the program.

According to the Child Care Consortium in Washington, D.C., the proposed changes would allow an additional 50 child care programs in Minnesota to participate in CACFP.

Congressman Kline kicked off a listening tour of four communities in the southern portion of his district in July. To show support for early childhood initiatives, Congressman Kline and wife Vicky visited the New Horizon Child Care center in Lakeville on July 3. Kline gave a lesson on how the government works to school-age and preschool children by reading the stories of *Woodrow*, *the White House Mouse* and *House Mouse*, *Senate Mouse* by Peter W. Barnes and Cheryl Shaw Barnes. Both books, along with *Marshall, the Courthouse Mouse: A Tail of the U.S. Supreme Court*, by the same authors, have been added to the New Horizon school-age classrooms.



Congressman Kline kicks off a listening tour by visiting New Horizon Child Care in Lakeville and reading stories to the school-age and preschool children.

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