

MILFORD FAMILY RESOURCE CENTER

The Infant and Toddler Times

JUDY LOBDELL, EDITOR

March 2021

Dates to Remember

March



Look for
Shamrocks on the Green
all this Month to benefit
the Literacy Center

2nd. Read Across
America in celebration
of Dr. Suess's
birthday (see p.3)

8th. Re-opening of the
Milford Public
Library
Children's Department

14th. Daylight Savings
begins. Spring forward.
And it's National Pi day.

17th. St. Patrick's
Day



20th. First
day of Spring



April 2nd– 9th.
Spring break.

Kindergarten
registration continues. Visit
Milforded.org for further
information.

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Milford Family Resource
Center Staff:
Program Coordinator:
Peggy Kelly
Parent Educators:
Kathy Aspinwall
Judy Lobdell

The Milford Family Resource Center and the Ready to Learn Program are pleased to announce that the Milford Public Schools has hired Ms. Elizabeth Gaffney as the District Coordinator of Early Childhood Programs to include the Family Resource Center at the Fannie Beach Center, the Ready to Learn School Readiness Program and the Family Connection Center at the Pumpkin Delight School.

Elizabeth has a wealth of experience focusing on early childhood and most recently has been the Head Start Director for the New Haven School District which includes oversight of six Head Start locations and managing approximately 130 staff across the city.

Liz's first day will be March 8.
Please join us in welcoming Liz to the Milford community,

Peggy Kelly, Kathleen Aspinwall, Judy Lobdell and Anne Mundy



"It is very, very, very hard to wait"...*



"Here we are, more than [two] months into the new year, and we're still waiting... still waiting for the pandemic to end and a "new normal" to begin. The waiting sure seems endless, doesn't it.

As hard as it is for us, imagine what waiting is like for children. So often they have to wait for their turn, wait for our attention, wait for a birthday or holiday, or maybe wait for a friend who's coming to play (outdoors, with masks on).



Fred [Rogers] lifetime studies in child development gave him a very real understanding of how children experience things, and he shared that with us in his songs, his words and through his Neighborhood of Make-Believe stories. Fred was a master in addressing everyday feelings and offering developmentally appropriate ways of dealing with them. Here are ways we can use the message of letting children know their feelings are natural and normal.

Helping children find ways to manage their feelings. Children often feel overwhelmed by their feelings and don't even know there are things they can do to deal with those feelings. You're supporting their emotional development when you talk with them about healthy things they can do when they're impatient, sad, angry, frustrated, excited – or whatever they're feeling. Why not ...ask children to talk about what helps them when they have to wait? You can even apply it to all kinds of feelings. When we help children know there are things they can do when they feel impatient, upset or frustrated, they don't feel so helpless. That's empowering. It can also help if you talk about the things you and other adults do when we feel impatient or sad. Isn't it interesting to hear about how many people, during this pandemic, have taken up baking, painting, knitting, or doing puzzles. [For young children, singing songs and drawing] can help fill the waiting time and to feel more in control."

* excerpts from *The Fred Rogers Institute* by Hedda Sharapan

As the need to wait will always continue to be required at times, we can take comfort in the words of Fred Rogers and Hedda Sharapan that teach the importance of acknowledging feelings and exploring strategies that can help.

And while you are waiting, you can check out these books for young children:

Waiting Is Not Easy by Mo Willems and *Waiting* by Kevin Henkes (delightful reading by the author here:) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=89bZv8tEOx4>

***Parent Do-Overs – 7 Confidence Building Responses**

Janet Landsbury

If parenting were film acting, we'd always be brilliant because we'd have plenty of "takes" to perfect our responses (not to mention make-up, hair styling and ridiculously high salaries). But we are playing a part — the role of a lifetime for a lifetime. Luckily, we perform for an adoring, forgiving audience, and our children will usually accept our less thoughtful, less than stellar performances. In fact, even our bloopers can be blessings because they teach kids the invaluable lesson that mistakes are okay since even superstars like their parents make them. Here are a few of my "Take 2" suggestions for handling common infant and toddler situations and some of the reasoning behind them...

1. Crying

Instead of "Don't cry", "Shhhh", "You're okay", "Okay, that's enough now", "It's alright, nothing happened"...

Non-judgmentally acknowledge the child's response and the incident that caused it. "Ouch, that hurt you when you bumped into the wall." Or "oh, you are very upset that the dog barked." Or "You are having a hard time relaxing your body. I hear you." Then allow the child all the time he or she needs to finish crying with your full support. Encouraging children to express their feelings is the key to fostering emotional health. No matter how unreasonable our child's reaction seems, he or she needs it to be accepted. Remember, even adults can't control emotional reactions, but young children are not capable of controlling the manner in which they express them, either. Discouraging the feelings or responding impatiently invalidates the child. When you're feeling impatient with a tantruming toddler, stay present, relax and imagine all the future therapy bills you're saving.

2. Minor accidents

Instead of running over to the child and scooping him up in a panic...

Take a moment to observe his response. If he cries, go close to him as calmly as possible, ask if [he] wants you to pick him up, acknowledge what happened (as explained above) and his feelings about it.

When we respond frantically, we startle our child, which can make him fearful or cause him to become upset when he might have quickly recovered and continued playing. Our little ones are very tuned into us and benefit greatly when we can trust their competence. Allowing children to recover autonomously whenever they are able to fosters self-confidence and resiliency, gives them an opportunity to try to understand what happened and learn something from the experience.

3. Praise

Instead of "good job", "That's beautiful", "You are so smart!" or a big round of applause...

You might say, "Thank you for helping me!" "You did it all by yourself!" "You pulled the plastic beads apart. That was hard!" "You struggled and struggled, but you didn't give up." "You must be proud of yourself." Add specifics so your child knows you've been paying attention (and to aid language development).

These responses encourage children to own their accomplishments, protect intrinsic motivation, and are less likely to train kids to depend on others for validation.

4. Encouragement when a child is struggling

Instead of "you can do it!"

"I hear you getting frustrated, but you're almost there." "This is hard work you're doing!" "I'm here and I won't let you fall, but it is safer for you to climb down yourself. Try placing one foot on the bar below."

"You can do it" can be perceived as pressure and make the child think he's disappointed as if he ends up not being able to do it. Giving a little verbal instruction helps children learn to get down safely after they have climbed onto something. Children usually can do this themselves, but by taking them down, rather than just spotting and providing verbal support, we lead them to believe they can't.

5. Undesirable behavior

Instead of distracting, coaxing, bribing, shaming, scolding, punishing...

Handle with care, confidence, respect, brevity (save the lectures for another time). Whenever possible, acknowledge the child's point of view. "You wanted ____." Give a brief instruction (and an option if possible). "I can't/won't let you _____. That's not safe" (or "It's not time for that now", etc.). "But you can ____." Physically block the behavior if necessary. Acknowledge again. "I know you wanted ____ and I wouldn't let you. That's upsetting."

Infants and toddlers need help managing their immature impulses and understanding our boundaries. They are not bad kids who need to be reprimanded, punished or "taught a lesson". The most vital lesson they must learn is that their parents are always in their corner (rather than sending them off to one), and that we will calmly, consistently and patiently remind them of the family rules and prevent them from harming us or themselves. When we do this, children learn our expectations and internalize them with amazing proficiency.

6. Sharing

Instead of telling babies and young toddlers they must share or take turns...

Observe closely and calmly reflect (or 'sportscast') the situation and allow it to unfold. "Justin, you are holding the ball and Meredith wants it, too. Now Meredith has the ball." Or, "Meredith are you asking Justin for the ball? Justin seems to be saying he wants to keep it for now. Maybe when he's done."

(continued on page 3)



Infants and toddlers commonly socialize by taking and (less often) giving toys. From the child's perspective it's as if the toys suddenly come alive and become interesting when another baby is holding them. When we allow children to connect with and learn from each other this way, they may react negatively in the moment, but they are usually quite capable of working it out without our intervention. The big clue to the child's perspective? After these little play tussles have ended, the desired toy is almost always left behind, no longer of interest to either child.

7. Learning language

Instead of correcting toddlers when they mispronounce words or use them incorrectly (for example, they call green "yellow" or a rabbit "a dog")...

Don't. It takes courage to speak words for the first time. Encourage your child to speak by treating him with the same respect you would a foreigner trying out English. If the child mispronounces a word, we can respond in a manner that provides a gentle correction. In other words, when your child points to the rabbit and says "bobby", you could reply, "I see the rabbit, too!" If the child points to the rabbit and says "dog", you could say honestly, "Yes, I see! That looks like a dog."

When children begin using language, they are only able to say a fraction of the words they know. Chances are they know the difference between a rabbit and a dog but just aren't able to express that yet. Trusting and supporting your child's process means allowing him to be "right" as much as possible. And don't forget to enjoy (and log!) your child's creative use of language while it lasts.

Cut, print, that's a wrap.

*from <https://www.janetlansbury.com/2012/02/parent-do-overs-7-confidence-building-responses/>



Read Across America Day, also known as Dr Seuss Day, is a yearly observance in the USA inaugurated by the NEA (National Education Association). It is held on the school day that is nearest to 2 March, Dr. Seuss birthday. Theodor Seuss Geisel was an American artist, book publisher, animator, poet, a political cartoonist as well as an author. He is best known for authoring over 60 children's books.

NEA launched the Read Across America, which is an initiative on reading that began in 1997, to encourage children in reading more books and also getting them excited about reading. On March 2, 1998, the first Read Across America Day was celebrated; since then, it has been held annually.

The holiday mainly focuses on motivating children to read, as it improves their performance in school. On this day, hospitals, bookstores, community centers, churches, libraries as well as schools host many events.



CREATE & CELEBRATE

a nation of diverse readers

Each month will highlight books on different topics. This month's topic is:

Cultivate Compassion

Books and stories provide points of access for understanding other people's lives. Reading diverse books helps students walk in someone else's shoes—or try on a different hat! Talk about what they read and how to put their compassion into action.

To view the monthly calendar click on this link:

<https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/read-across-america/2020-2021-calendar>

Outdoor playgroups continue where there is always playground fun, songs, a take home craft and more!
See the photo below of one participant who made her bird feeders and hung them on her tree.



Free Diapers to Milford Families in Need

DRIVE UP AND GET YOUR FREE DIAPERS!

SATURDAY, MARCH 6TH
11AM-2PM
UNITED WAY OF MILFORD
20 EVERGREEN AVE.

Sponsored by:





Young Toddler

They say March comes in like a lion and out like a lamb. Let's hope it goes out fast and we start to see signs of spring!

Recommended Activities:

- Be sure your child has several special places for his books. Keep some near his bed and others out where you spend most of your time. Do what bookstores do: stand a few of the books up in front of the shelves, facing out, to catch your child's eyes.
- Assist your child in planting seeds at home. Give each child a paper cup and a spoon. Have the children scoop potting soil into cups, make a hole in the dirt with their finger and place a few seeds into the hole. Then cover the hole with soil and water gently. Place cups in sunlight and let the children water their seeds every few days.
- Actively search for signs of spring and discuss them with your child as you take walks or drive in the car. Talk about robins and how they have been away. Did you know robins find worms by listening to them move in the dirt?



I'm a Little Shamrock

I'm a little Shamrock see my leaves. Count my three petals if you please. If you give me water and lots of sun, I'll bring you good luck and lots of fun!

SONG FOR THE MONTH



Recommended Readings

St. Patrick's Day in the Morning, by: Eve Bunting
Clever Tom and the Leprechaun, by: Linda Shute
Jamie O'Rourke and the Pooka, by: Tomie DePaola
Green Eggs and Ham, by: Dr. Seuss
Round Robin, by: Jack Kent
The Lion and the Mouse, by: Jerry Pinkney
St. Patrick's Day, by: Gail Gibbons
The Little Lamb, by: Judy Dunn and Phoebe Dunn
How to Trap a Leprechaun, by: Sue Fliess
The Night Before St. Patrick's Day, by: Natasha Wing
The Wind Blew, by: Pat Hutchins
In Like a Lion Out Like a Lamb, by: Marion Dane Bauer



KidSense Therapy Group, LLC

Helping KIDS make SENSE of their world

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ATTENTION FAMILIES



KidSense Therapy Group is dedicated to supporting diverse clients and families. We recognize the importance of families working with teams where they feel valued, supported, and understood. **KidSense** is here to provide you with comprehensive evaluations, second opinions, and recommendations to help you, your child, and your team members.

- ✓ We offer workshops and trainings directed at supporting bilingual clients.
- ✓ We have fluent Spanish speaking therapists that can provide bilingual evaluations, interventions, consultation, and translation services.
- ✓ Our comprehensive evaluations are carefully planned to determine if there is a language difference or disorder.
- ✓ We are dedicated to empowering parents with the tools needed to support their children.
- ✓ Our therapists are available to advocate and consult with other providers in order to deliver the best plan of care for your child.

Call us today
to learn more
about how
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can support
your family!
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