

THE FINE ART OF SHARING

A universal topic for all parents is sharing. Have you ever experienced these toddler's "Rules for Living?"

If I want it ... it's mine.

If I had it ... it's mine.

If I thought about touching it ... it's mine.

If I might want it any time in the future ... it's mine.

You get the idea. Oh, the challenge of sharing when you've just learned what belongs to you and what belongs to others! Sharing is indeed difficult for toddlers. Fortunately between the ages of three and four, sharing becomes easier. Watch for these social developments in your child:

- Three-year-olds begin experimenting with various sharing techniques, such as taking turns and trading toys for short periods of time.
- Older three-year-olds begin to cooperate. They understand that giving doesn't mean giving up, and are more willing to give and take with friends.
- Four-year-olds grasp the concept of sharing very well. They play cooperatively with their friends and are willing to share their possessions.

What can you do to help your child make this transition?

- Encourage sharing. Don't force it. A reluctant sharer may feel that his needs are less important than the other child's needs. Forcing a child to comply is not the same as teaching him to be generous. Praise sharing when you see it.
- Acknowledge that sometimes it's hard to share. Use empathy rather than scolding to encourage sharing.
- Give your child opportunities to not share. Allow her to put away a few special toys before a play date so that the children do not have to share those toys.
- Share with your child. Be a role model for the behaviors you wish your child to exhibit. Share food, books and other "treasures" to reinforce the benefits of sharing.

So, about those toddler's "Rules for Living" – take heart! The more your child practices sharing, the easier it will get.