

Is That Spring That I Smell?

April 2009

Dear Families,

Spring weather wakes us from our winter doldrums and makes us want to get out and have some fun. Even though the trees look bare, we can smell the beautiful blooming trees and fields of daffodils. The brisk wind draws us to the park for kite-flying. The warm sun welcomes us into the garden for outdoor projects. Is it our imagination or are these wonders of spring just around the corner?

Here are some ideas to jump right into spring with your family:

- Invite a group of your child's friends to join you and take a nature walk in the park. If you can, bring home some rocks for some "Rock and Roll Crafts" Make crawly critters with glue, googly eyes, pipe cleaners and cotton balls.
- Do you and your child want to attract some butterflies to your yard? Make a butterfly feeder from a clear plastic deli container lid by using a sharp knife (adult use only), some twine and over-ripe fruit.
- Using the sharp knife, poke four evenly spaced holes in the clear plastic lid about an inch from the edges. Try to make a diamond or square shape out of the holes so the string won't slip out easily. (For safety purposes, ONLY parents should do this step.)
- Paint colorful flowers on the lid or use stickers. This will help attract the butterflies to your feeder.

- Run each of the four pieces of twine down through the holes you poked in the top of the plastic lid and knot them so they won't come back through. Tie all four pieces together at the top.
- Hang your feeder from a tree, but make it low enough so you can reach the lid and place the day-old fruit on it. The butterflies will be attracted to the color of your flowers and the overripe fruit!
- Why not work with your child to combine the fun of gardening with some art? You still have another few weeks to buy pansies and you should be able to find some at your local garden center. Load them with fertilizer when you plant them and then harvest/cut a few flowers to create some pressed pansy art with your child. Press them between pages of a book or iron them between 2 pieces of wax paper. Then, you can glue them on a hat or use them as illustrations for a book about the smells of spring that you and your child write together!

If you would like more ideas about spring projects and fun things to do with your children, there are many wonderful resources out there for you. One place to start might be to visit a website that will help spark a parent or caregiver's imagination like www.create-kids-crafts.com.

Respectfully,
The Education Team

If you would like to respond to anything you read, have parenting questions or child development topics that you'd like to see explored in future issues of this monthly newsletter, please e-mail us at education@tutortime.com. We would love to hear from you!

Discipline: Teaching for the Future

We have all been there ... we stare helplessly as our toddler screams in the middle of the store or as our preschooler (once again) hits a neighbor, bringing their play date to a screeching halt. Supporting our children in learning the rules of behavior and getting along with others is a daunting and challenging prospect.

As we provide guidance to children, remember that the goal of discipline is to help children learn expected behaviors, not to punish them for misbehavior.

Keep in mind four things as you support your child in positive behaviors.

- **Have realistic expectations:** Remember that children don't have years of experience, they're "new" to our world. In their short lives, they have had to conquer a variety of difficult tasks (walking, potty training, communicating, etc.). So it is important that we have realistic expectations of our children. For example, it is not realistic to expect a young child to behave properly in a restaurant when they are hungry and bored. It is also not realistic to expect that a child not want a treat and will try anything (including begging or tantrums) to get it.

Once we understand that these behaviors are to be expected, we can either avoid those situations or plan ahead to help a child be successful.

- **Set your child up for success:** As parents realize that certain behaviors happen due to children's lack of understanding about the world, they can better help the child navigate some situations. For example, make sure that your child has interesting things to occupy their time when you and he will be waiting. Or before walking into a store with fragile items, give your child something to hold.

For older children, this can mean creating pictorial schedules that show the steps he must follow. Notes posted in visible places, such as "home-work" on the door, can help a child remember to take his assignments to school.

Continued on next page

What is Tutor Time® LifeSmart™?

Tutor Time® LifeSmart™ was designed by early childhood specialists and national experts to prepare children for kindergarten, elementary school and beyond. Because we know that our society places a strong emphasis on particular academic disciplines, the Tutor Time LifeSmart curriculum gives children particularly strong foundations in:

Reading & Writing

Our WordSmart™ and Phonics Express programs support and guide emerging writing skills in large and small group activities. The Book Center provides children with a quiet place to explore quality literature. The Language Center provides them with the tools and materials they need to explore the written word. Journaling and interactive activities extend learning at home.

Mathematics

Our MathSmart™ program means that counting, numbers and mathematical concepts play an important role in Tutor Time classrooms. The Math Center gives children daily opportunities to join in number games, sort and investigate patterns. During MathSmart Circle Times, teachers lead activities that allow children to actively explore important math concepts.

Science

Our NatureSmart™ Circle Times give children the chance to perform experiments, investigate properties and observe cause and effect. The Nature Center provides children with a rich array of natural materials and tools, encouraging them to explore their understanding of the natural world and actively build scientific thinking skills.

If you have questions about the Tutor Time® classroom experience, please speak with your director or contact us at ttinfo@tutortime.com.

- **Pick your battles:** Because children are learning, it is important that they are not always hearing “No” or being told what they cannot do. Let little things go and focus on those behaviors that can cause harm or damage. Before saying “No” take a minute to ask “Why not?” If there is not a good reason, perhaps the behavior is okay.

For example, children experience a great sense of satisfaction when they are able to dress themselves. Does it really matter if the shirt does not match the pants? In the grand scheme of things, a feeling of “I did it” is much more important than having everything look perfect.

- **Give choices you can live with:** Children develop a sense of autonomy when they have opportunities to make choices and experience some power in their lives. This sense of autonomy is important to healthy development. If you do not give your child healthy chances to have power, they will look for it in unhealthy ways (such as tantrums or power struggles). Look for opportunities to give your child controlled choices.

For example, “Do you want to brush your teeth or put on your pajamas first?” Either way, your child is in the process of getting ready for bed. “Do you want to hold the keys or my purse as I get you in your car seat?” In both of these scenarios, your child has a sense of power and you are still in charge of the situation.

These proactive approaches to supporting positive behavior make it less likely that problem behaviors will occur. When they do, the best teaching happens through natural or logical consequences. When you throw your food, you are done eating. When you hit a friend, he does not want to play with you anymore. When you refuse to put on a coat, it is cold. These can be hard lessons, but when a caring adult lets a child experience the small consequences of poor behavior, the child is more likely to learn from their decisions.

The role of discipline is to teach for the future, not punish for the past. It takes time, patience and lots of love. However, the time we invest now will result in children that are better able to control themselves and make good choices tomorrow.

Extend the Tutor Time® Experience Into Your Home

There are many ways to support your child's growth and development at home. Here are some activities you can do together that will build all of your child's Smarts.

Infant – While holding your baby, choose one of her favorite songs and hum it while rocking back and forth. You can also sing the song using a whisper voice, or try singing it quickly or slowly. Does she react to you singing the song differently?

Toddler/Twaddler – Look through some magazines or books with your child and look at the people's faces. Ask your child how he thinks the person might be feeling. See if he can copy the expression. Now you try to make the same expression. Come up with other expressions to make with your child.

Prepper – Crumple up some scrap paper and make a ball. Place a box or some other type of container on the ground. Give your child the paper balls and encourage her to toss the paper into the box. Count how many she makes. Take your turn and toss the balls in and count how many you make.

Preschool/Pre-K – Look through a magazine and find pictures of animals or you can use a book that has pictures of animals. Tell your child to pick one of the animals and start to act like it. Try to guess which animal she is pretending to be. Switch roles so that you can act out an animal.

Kindergarten/Adventure Club – Think of things you have a lot of around your house such as shoes, socks, books, magazines, toys, paper, etc. Choose one of these items. Have your child pick a number and tell you what it is. Tell your child that he has to find that many of the item you thought of (for example, you selected a book and your child chose the number 10, then he has to find 10 books somewhere in your house.) Switch roles and have fun.

My Child...A Famous Musician?

When someone asks you to name a famous musician, who do you think of? Mozart? Elvis Presley? Macy Gray? John Lennon? There are a variety of individual names and many bands that may come to mind. One day, it could even be the name of your child.

Throughout the school year you have been told that Tutor Time® believes all children are smart in a variety of ways. The Tutor Time Smarts are based on the eight intelligences explained in Harvard Professor Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences. One of Gardner's multiple intelligences is Musical Intelligence. Children at Tutor Time explore this intelligence in a variety of ways as they become MusicSmart™.

As children develop their music smarts, the sounds they make often seem like noise to adults. This is because we compare children, who are just beginning to make sense of music, with adults who have been exploring music for decades. However, remember that it is important for young children to be exposed to music, even though it can cause a headache for us.

Research has shown that children have windows of development and they are able to learn certain skills and concepts easier at a younger age than they are at an older age. At Tutor Time we take advantage of these open windows of development by inviting children to participate in MusicSmart activities.

When your child joins in a fingerplay or a song while transitioning to a new experience, he is enhancing his music smarts by learning rhyme, rhythm and beat. When your daughter participates in MusicSmart Circle Time, she has the opportunity to learn about volume and tempo. While working in the Music Center, your child learns how to control his motions and use his body to make music.

Tutor Time offers your child many opportunities to become a MusicSmart kid. The next time you have the pleasure of listening to her musical noise, just think Barbara Streisand!

Focus on Learning

Children of all ages enjoy pretend play, partly because these experiences allow them to act like the adults they see in their lives. Children learn a variety of skills and concepts when they participate in pretend play including how to:

- Express themselves in a sentence
- Be flexible in their thinking
- Solve problems, especially socially, through negotiation with friends
- Sort and organize play things
- Make decisions
- Improvise and use things in a symbolic way to represent something else (a form of abstract thinking)
- Carry out their ideas with the cooperation of others
- Exercise their imagination and creativity

The next time your child is interested in pretend play, either at home or at school, support her in learning the skills and concepts listed above by playing along with her!



Creating Character

This program invites children to explore what it means to be a person of character. This month's book is Anansi the Spider by Gerald McDermott. In this book, brother spiders work as a team to help their father. Invite your child to work with you to help around the house or to help someone else.