

## 8 Ways to Raise a Caring Child

(adapted from an article by Robert Schwebel, Ph.D.)

**C**an your preschooler read the facial expressions of other people? Can your child see when someone is happy, sad, scared or angry? A study (*Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*) suggests that three and four-year-olds who have trouble reading different emotions may be more likely to behave aggressively once they start school. Children who cannot read emotions cannot read signals and this is connected to behavior problems.

Young children are just beginning to learn about their own feelings. They do not learn until school-age that other people have feelings too. But it is important for children to begin to learn that others have feelings. Here are some basic lessons in emotional awareness for young children.

**1.** Be an attentive parent. Respond to your children's emotions. When you pay attention to their emotions, they experience empathy first hand, from the beginning. Look them in the eye. Say you are sorry they got hurt, or look at them and tell them when you are angry about something so they begin to see it in your face.

**2.** Label your children's feelings. Say, "It's nice to see you so happy," during smiling moments or, "Oh that's so frustrating," when a child is frazzled by a

puzzle and beginning to "lose it."

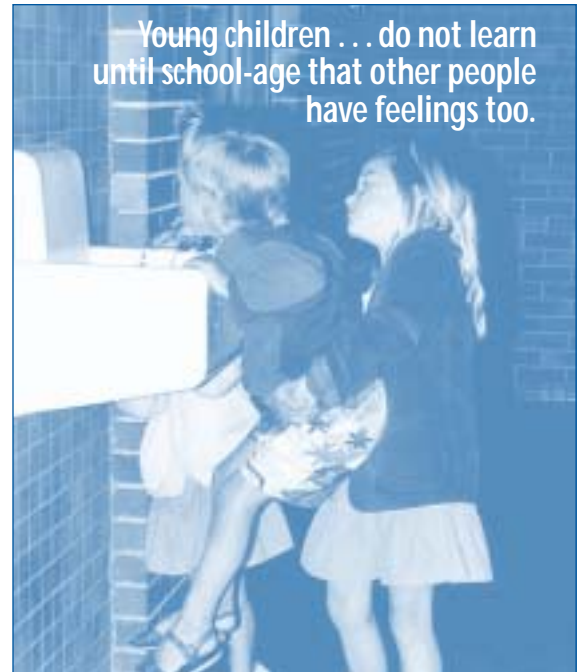
**3.** Label your own feelings. Say, "I feel sad," when your child gets hurt or, "That hurts my feelings," when a child says unkind words to you.

**4.** Read their feelings. As in: "I can see why you're angry. You wanted to keep playing, but now it's time for a nap." This shows that you can see the world from your child's eyes.

**5.** Stop angry or aggressive behavior and let your child know how you feel about it. When your child hits another child say, "You can't do that. You're hurting Susan." Young children may not yet understand how others feel when they are hit (pushed, shoved or whatever), but they do understand when parents strongly disapprove of their behavior—and they can begin to see that the disapproval is linked to their hurtful behavior toward others.

**6.** Teach your child to see things through other people's eyes. When your child hits someone, say "How do you think Susan feels when you hit her?" or "How would you feel if Susan, or someone else, hit you?" But remember that this is just an exercise for young children. They do not really understand without practice and getting a little older.

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**7.** Care for victims. When a child is hurt by another child, immediately stop the aggressive behavior and attend to the "victim." This shows caring and concern. Then gently and firmly explain in short phrases the feelings involved.

**8.** Teach through play. Playing with dolls is a great way for girls and boys to learn about caring for others. Caring for others can also be taught and encouraged in the context of many types of imaginary and expressive play, such as artwork or puppetry. □

Go to <http://www.parentsoup.com> for more child guidance hints.



# Stress-Free Travel with Your Kids

by Mia Cronan

It's almost Spring break time and then Summer. It's time to head to Grandma's house. You have screaming kids in the backseat, carsickness, boredom, Goldfish crackers flying everywhere inside your car! So, we grit our teeth as we buckle our smiling tots into their car seats while they kick their little feet in joyful anticipation of the trip. And we hope for the best.

Here are a couple ideas that can help you with boredom and restlessness. And some tips that will help you be prepared for a stress-free trip.

## What To Pack

Have extra diapers, wipes, and first aid items in the glove compartment.

Get yourself a fanny pack so your hands are always available for your children..

Try to use see through bags for packing small items. This makes things easier to find.

Be sure to bring along comfort items for each child- a blanket, a pillow or a stuffed friend.

Always have at least one change of clothes available in the car so that spills and accidents don't have to create a panic situation for you. With that, make sure you always have plenty of plastic grocery bags packed in which you can store dirty clothes and diapers.

It's always a good idea to have a travel bag just for them, too, but don't let them see it, otherwise they'll want everything in it all at once. In the bag, you can have all kinds of silly things that will keep them busy.

If they are old enough to look

at a map, and they recognize letters or numbers, try highlighting some cities through which you'll be traveling, asking them to find them on the map as you go through them. As you pass through the highlighted cities have a related treat to give them. This will teach them a little about map-reading, keep them occupied, and also give them something fun to look forward to.

If your children are not quite to that age yet, there are plenty of other things to bring. Try a roll of duct tape. Cut pieces of it for them. I don't know what it is about tape, but kids love to play with it. And hey, if it lands over their mouths, so be it :)

Another good thing to pack is a small hand mirror. Mirrors are great fun for kids. You might consider a hand-held calculator, too.

Bring along a few tapes with kids songs that you know they enjoy. Singing is always a fun way to pass the time.

Place a box next to their seats that contains some little gadgets for play. If your children are prone to carsickness, books might not be the best idea. But little toys and fun things can be shared.

For potty breaks have a bottle of bubbles or a Frisbee packed for some outdoor fun. Kids have so much energy, and it's important that they expend some of it during these breaks.

If possible, change seating once in a while, if there's room.

## Dining Out With The Kids

Once you're there, when eating out with kids, find places that are kid friendly. Ask for a kids

menu. When stopping along the travel route, try to stop at restaurants that have a play area where children can play a little.

Take along toys or books to the restaurant. Remember that sitting still is difficult for young children.

## More ideas concerning where you stay:

When staying in a hotel or motel, you will want to call ahead to see if they have necessary equipment for rent—cribs, roll-away beds, etc. Make sure that your room is safe for your children. Check balcony doors and make sure that they are locked. Check the windows to be sure they cannot be easily opened or there are no dangling cords from blinds or draperies. Check all of the outlets, you may want to bring some outlet covers with you to use during your stay.

When staying with family or friends in their home, be sure to call ahead and ask them to please place any breakable items in a high place. Again check outlets and any windows or doors that may be accessible to your child.

Be realistic about your schedules. If you plan too many activities in a short period of time, your child is likely to make you pay for it. Becoming over tired makes children more irritable. Everyone will have a better time if you take it slow and have plenty of time for relaxation and rest.

Most of all, offer praise for good behavior, and let them know that you know it's tough to be away from home for a long time. They'll appreciate your positive reinforcement, and they'll want to show you continued good behavior if you recognize it.

A Parents Guide to the Internet:

<http://www.familyguidebook.com/>



<http://MainStreetMom.com>, the magazine for modern mothers with traditional values, is owned by Mia Cronan.