



# Learning to Grow

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII ♥ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

## Developing Self-Control

“I really, REALLY need that swing!” Does this sound familiar? Turns out, a child’s ability to express strong feelings, without harming others, himself, or property is evidence of a key social and emotional skill called *self-control*.

**Self-control** (also known as **self-management** or **self-regulation**) is the ability to cope with strong feelings and express one’s emotions in appropriate ways. Examples of self-control include the ability to calm down when angry or excited, share, persist at difficult tasks, and wait for a turn. The process of developing self-control begins at birth and continues throughout childhood.

According to the *Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning*, self-control is one of five core skills that have been widely recognized as critical social-emotional skills. The other skills are:

- ♥ **Self-awareness** – the ability to recognize one’s own feelings and emotions
- ♥ **Social awareness** – the ability to understand and recognize the feelings of others, take others’ perspectives, and demonstrate empathy
- ♥ **Relationship skills** – the ability to build and maintain positive relationships with others; cooperation, communication
- ♥ **Responsible decision-making** – the ability to make good choices about

In the last several years, there has been an explosion of interest and research on social and emotional skills – and the studies have shown that these skills are **crucial for school and life success**. In fact, ‘Emotional Intelligence’ is becoming recognized as *more* important than ‘Academic Intelligence’ in predicting a child’s future success.



Consequently, it is important for parents and caregivers of young children to nurture and support children’s social and emotional development; and to understand the important role you play in laying this critical foundation. This newsletter will focus on the development of self-control, and will present strategies for promoting self-control at each age level – infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

### This newsletter includes:

- ♥ **Age-specific information and suggestions** about activities to do with your infant, toddler, or preschooler,
- ♥ **Featured activities** for each age group,
- ♥ **How This Helps:** a summary of your child’s development by doing these activities together,
- ♥ **Resources:** for more information about this topic, and
- ♥ **Suggested Books:** a list of books to read with your child.

# Infants

Babies are born with little or no self-control. They act on thoughts and feelings without the ability to stop themselves. However, they develop self-soothing skills, e.g., sucking on a pacifier or finger before going to sleep – which is the beginning of self-control – in their first months of life.

With sensitive guidance from parents and caregivers, your baby will begin to manage his feelings and actions. Here are some strategies from *Zero to Three* to nurture self-control in your infant:

♥ **Help him learn to soothe himself.** How does your baby calm down? Does he like to be held and rocked? Swaddled? Sung to? Suck on something? By trying different ways to help your baby calm down, you help him learn to

soothe himself. Teach him that he can rely on you, which makes him feel safe and secure.

♥ **Comfort him.** If a baby is crying, it is often because he needs your help to calm down. Babies need your love and comfort. This helps them grow up to be secure and confident children.



## Activity for Infants: *Lullaby for Baby*

What You Need: None

What to Do:

1. When it is time for your baby to sleep, softly sing him a lullaby. Use words and songs from your child's family culture, or make up a lullaby using a familiar lullaby tune. Here are the words to a popular Hawaiian lullaby.

### ***Pūpū Hinuhinu***

By Nona Beamer

*Pūpū Hinuhinu* (shiny shells)  
*Pūpū Hinuhinu ē* (shiny shells)  
*O ke kahakai kahakai eē* (I found you by the shore, the shore)  
*Pūpū Hinuhinu ē* (shiny shells)

*Pūpū Hinuhinu* (shiny shells)  
*Pūpū Hinuhinu ē* (shiny shells)  
*E lohe kākou eē* (let's listen to our shells)  
*Pūpū Hinuhinu ē* (shiny shells)

*Pūpū Hinuhinu* (shiny shells)  
*Pūpū Hinuhinu ē* (shiny shells)  
*E moe, e moe ē* (go to sleep)  
*E moe-e-eē* (sleep)



(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)

## Toddlers

Young toddlers still need help with self-control and managing their emotions. There are many times when toddlers need to do what they may not want to, like getting in the car seat, or stopping play to take a nap when they are not tired. Let your child know you understand: “You are really disappointed that we can’t go to the playground today.” “You are so frustrated with that train—it is so hard to make it stay on the track.” Giving your child the words to describe his feelings is the first step toward helping him manage his emotions and develop self-control.

Here are some additional strategies from *Zero to Three* to nurture self-control in your toddler:

- ♥ **Give him opportunities to choose.** Giving your child opportunities to choose helps him feel in control. For example, let your child make decisions between two acceptable choices about: what to play, read, or have for snack.
- ♥ **Set appropriate limits with natural consequences.** The key is to take a teaching and guiding approach with clear and natural



consequences. Stay calm and explain the rule. If your child tests the limit, which is normal, calmly implement the consequence and let him know that he may try again later.

### Activity for Toddlers: “Stop and Go”

What You Need:

- A paper plate
- Green and red crayons

What to Do:

1. Have your child color one side of the paper plate red and the other side green.
2. Explain to your child that when you show him the green side of the plate, he should run toward you, and when you show him the red side of the plate, he should stop.
3. Start by showing him the green side and encourage him to run toward you. Then show him the red side, and remind him to stop, if he doesn’t stop on his own. Alternate showing him the green and red sides again, until he reaches you.
4. Vary the activity by: 1) using different movement such as hopping, tip-toeing, or crawling, 2) changing roles – have your child hold the paper plate and you run or stop –depending on the color he shows you.

Note: This activity works best in an outdoor area with lots of open space.

*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)*



# Preschoolers

Your preschooler is growing in his ability to regulate and control his behaviors. You may hear him “telling” on another child who isn’t following the rules. Regulating another child’s behavior is an important first step in regulating one’s own behavior. Remember that children develop self-control and emotional regulation over many years and only after a lot of trial and error.

Here are some specific strategies to nurture self-control in your preschooler:

♥ **Encourage your child to practice planning.** For example, have him plan what toy he will play

with first and then have him follow through. Planning means he thinks first and then acts, thus practicing self-control.

♥ **Acknowledge wins.** When you’ve successfully survived a potentially frustrating situation together, acknowledge your child’s positive efforts. For instance, you could say, “Waiting for our turn was hard, but we made the best of it, didn’t we!” Over time, your child will internalize the idea that we don’t always have control over situations, but we can control our responses.

## Activity for Preschoolers: *Soap Bubble Art*

### What You Need:

Liquid dishwashing soap  
Wide-mouthed cup or bowl  
Food coloring  
Straw  
Scissors (for adult use only)  
Paper  
Old newspapers

### What to Do:

1. Line your work area with old newspapers or do this activity outdoors.
2. Have your child squeeze a squirt of dishwashing soap into a cup full of water.
3. Add one drop of food coloring into the cup.
4. With the scissors, cut a small notch on the side of the straw about half an inch down the top. This will prevent your child from swallowing the bubble solution while he is blowing.
5. Show him how to blow gently into the straw to make bubbles in the soap solution.
6. Talk about how blowing air through the straw causes the bubbles to form.
7. Have him blow a little harder, then softer into the straw. Ask him what happens when he changes his blowing.
8. Gently press a sheet of paper over the bubbles. Lift it off and let it dry. Do this several times with different sheets of paper.
9. Ask him to tell you about the pictures he sees in the various pieces of bubble art. Describe to him what you see. Find a place to display his favorite bubble art.

*(See page 5 for information on how doing these kinds of activities with your child helps his development and school readiness.)*





## How This Helps

The activities suggested in this newsletter help promote many different aspects of development:

### Physical Development

- ♥ Use and strengthen large muscles such as neck, arms and legs
- ♥ Learn to use his body with intention

### Social and Emotional Development

- ♥ Develop a close bond with you
- ♥ Develop self-control and focus

### Language and Literacy Development

- ♥ Increase his observation, listening and understanding skills, and attention span
- ♥ Connect words and sounds he hears with what he experiences

### Cognitive Development

- ♥ Begin to understand distance and space
- ♥ Develop his creativity and imagination



## Kids in the Kitchen

Cooking teaches valuable lessons such as math (quantities, measurement), science (how matter changes), fine motor (stirring, pouring), and literacy (print awareness). As you make this recipe with your child, talk about kitchen safety. Show him how to handle items safely and allow him to do as much as he is capable of. Praise his efforts, and ask questions throughout the process to encourage his thinking skills. Most of all, have fun!

### Dill-icious Herb Yogurt

Adapted from *Farm to Keiki* by Tiana Kamen

#### Ingredients:

- 16 oz organic, plain Greek yogurt
- 1 cucumber, seeded and grated or sliced thinly
- 1 garlic clove, pressed
- 1 T. lemon juice (add more if needed)
- 1 tsp. olive oil
- ¼ c. parsley, fresh chopped
- 2 T. fresh chopped dill
- Salt and pepper to taste

#### Directions:

1. Scoop the Greek yogurt into a bowl.
2. Add the cucumber and mix well.
3. Talk about the ingredients and have your child add the parsley and dill as well as the pressed garlic, lemon juice, olive oil, pinch of salt, and dash of pepper into the mixture.
4. Mix well and taste, adjusting the flavor if needed.



## Resources

### Zero to Three Parenting Resources

[zerotothree.org/parenting](http://zerotothree.org/parenting)

Learn how the earliest relationships can promote healthy brain development, how young children build social and emotional skills, and ways you can support your child's development starting from birth.

### *Mind in the Making* by Ellen Galinsky

The author presents seven essential life skills that are important to helping children thrive, including *focus* and *self-control*.



## Suggested Books

Discover these books and more at the **Hawai'i State Public Library** [www.librarieshawaii.org](http://www.librarieshawaii.org).

### Infants and Toddlers

#### *Owl Babies* By Martin Waddell

Three baby owls awake one night to find their mother gone, and wonder where she is and worry. Joyous flapping, dancing and bouncing greet their mother's return. A tender tale to remind the youngest of children that Mommy comes back.

#### *When Mama Comes Home Tonight* By Eileen Spinelli

It can be hard waiting for Mama to come home, but once she's there it's the best time of the day. This soothing, rhythmic book celebrates the precious rituals a mother and child perform together as they wind down to bedtime.

### Preschoolers

#### *Wait Till the Moon is Full* By Margaret Wise Brown

A curious raccoon wants to see the night, but his mother says, "Wait. Wait till the moon is full." So the little raccoon waits and wonders until, at last, the very special evening arrives...

#### *Fix-It* By David McPhail

One morning Emma gets up early to watch television, but the TV won't work. No one can fix it and Emma finds ways to fix her disappointment. When Emma's father finally realizes what's wrong with the TV, Emma is too busy reading to care. The power of books to enthrall is presented in such a clever, simple way.



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