Staying Calm

Staying calm is an effective skill for parents and other child caregivers can use when they experience anger with children. These four steps for staying calm were developed by Elizabeth Pantley for Family Information Services. *Stop, breathe, and count.* When a parent or caregiver can identify any of the common signs of anger such as rapid breathing, tightness in the stomach, contraction of muscles, sweating, shaking, and the desire to hit or yell, they can take the step to STOP. Begin by putting up a hand and announcing “STOP” both to oneself and the child.

**See and hear yourself.** Once a parent or caregiver has stopped the initial surge of anger, he/she is most likely in a better frame of mind to view the situation. When parents and caregivers are calm, they will see the situation in a more objective point of view.

**Adjust expectations.** Parents and caregivers set themselves up for high levels of anger by holding unrealistic expectations. Realistic expectations allow for the misbehaviors that make parents angry. When the behaviors occur, they don’t take a parent or caregiver my surprise. Keeping expectations realistic helps parents and caregivers deal with life as it is, rather than how they’d like it to be. People who are knowledgeable about child development can recognize the times when their children are simply acting their age.

**Use skill and a plan.** Take time to analyze the situation and decide what the best way to handle it is. A good back up plan is wise to have. Having a plan to deal with the situation will enable you to remain calm and productive. With practice, parents and caregivers may find following these steps to saying calm may actually prevent them from getting angry in the first place.
Foothills Regional Parent Educator Conference

Enhancing the work we do with children and families is the theme for the 2012 Foothills Regional Parent Educator Conference, which will be held Friday, August 17 from 8:30-1:30 at the Agricultural Resources Center, 1175 South Brady Avenue in Newton. Workshops include How to Save A Dollar, What’s on My Plate?, Who’s on Your Team?, and Healthy Homes Update. Cost is $15 and paid registration is required by August 13. The conference is approved for four DCD contact hours of credit. Call 828-465-8240 or email Glennie_daniels@ncsu.edu to request a brochure, or register online at http://catawba.ces.ncsu.edu. The conference is coordinated by NC Cooperative Extension family and consumer sciences agents in Alexander, Catawba, Iredell, and Rowan Counties.

Things to Do in July and August

* Look in the newspaper for words that start with the letter J.
* Count the red and white stripes on the American flag.
* Have a picnic in the back yard.
* Go for a walk and look for wildflowers.
* Eat a raw or cooked carrot.
* Taste some watermelon.
* Learn to swim.
* Practice writing the letters that make your name.
* Visit the library and choose a book about your favorite animal.

Glennie Daniels
Extension Agent
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Toys for Three to Six Year Olds

Preschoolers and kindergartners have longer attention spans than toddlers. Typically they talk a lot and ask a lot of questions. They like to experiment with things and with their still-emerging physical skills. They like to play with friends and they don’t like to lose. They can take turns and sharing one toy by two or more children is often possible for older preschoolers and kindergartners.

Dr. Karen DeBord, child development specialist, suggests these toys for three to six year olds:

- Things for problem solving like puzzles, things to sort or count
- Things for pretending and building like blocks, dress up clothes, puppets, sand and water play toys.
- Things to create with like crayons, markers, paint brushes, fingerpaint, scissors, paper, chalk, rhythm instruments.
- Picture books with more words and more detailed pictures than toddler books.
- Music
- Things for using large and small muscles like large and small balls, ride-on equipment like tricycles and wagons, plastic bats and balls, plastic bowling pins, a workbench with tools.
- Interactive computer games.

Learning Life Skills

Summertime is a great time to help children learn important life skills and have fun at the same time. Here are some important lessons to learn:

- Dial 911 for help
- Answer the phone politely.
- Set the table.
- Sweep
- Help with laundry (matching socks, folding, putting away)
- Pick up toys
- Make a simple snack.

NC Cooperative Extension offers many training and learning opportunities throughout the year. Visit our website http://catawba.ces.ncsu.edu/ for helpful information.