

VIP

Toddlers' Parents' Pack



Toddlers' Parents' Pack

Author Marley Laurie



Welcome to the VIP Tots parents' pack. This booklet accompanies those VIP resources that are aimed at the toddler age group. It will look at ways to use the VIP resources with your child, methods of discipline, common issues faced by the parents of toddlers and a list of resources that you may find useful.

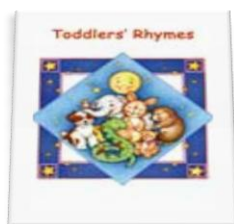
This booklet is, by no means, a parenting manual. Rather than tell you what to do, we hope to enable you to find your own way. You know your child best and, therefore, you will know what will work and what won't work with your child. Don't feel that you need to follow only one method to the letter – most parents use a mix of different methods, using those parts that work for them as a family.

To date Eighteen And Under has produced 2 resources specifically aimed at toddlers as well as a pre-school pack that can be adapted for use with children aged under-3.

1. Happy Dog and Pals is a book of 5 short stories that looks at 5 main feelings –
 - a. Happy
 - b. Sad
 - c. Cosy
 - d. Scared
 - e. be careful.



These 5 feelings are a common theme throughout the VIP programme, as they are simple for young children to understand and recognise.



2. The Toddlers' Rhymes Book uses rhymes and poetry to lightly look at the 5 feelings and allows for good discussions with your child.

3. The Wee VIP Pack has a game, a story, a DVD and colouring sheets all based around the 5 feelings and the theme of staying safe. Below are some ways of using these resources with your child. As with all our resources, there is no one way of using them and we encourage you to find your own way that will work for you and your child.



The VIP Programme

VIP (Violence Is Preventable) is a multi award winning abuse and violence prevention programme for children, young people and vulnerable adults throughout the UK and abroad, developed by the Scottish charity, Eighteen And Under.

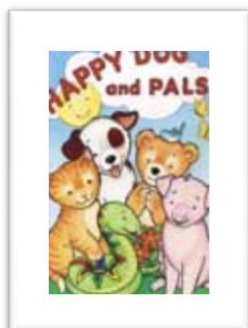
It works on three levels:-

- * Early disclosures - meaning abuse is stopped sooner
- * Staying safe - avoiding violent or abusive situations
- * Prevention - changing the mindset of potential abusers of the future.

Independent research by the University of Dundee has found VIP to be the only abuse prevention programme world wide, proven to not only increase child safety through raised awareness but also to substantially increase the number of abuse disclosures.

If you are working on personal safety or violence prevention with any age group, The VIP Programme has developed a number of resources that can assist you. They are easily adaptable to any situation or audience. And the research proves, beyond any doubt, that they do work!

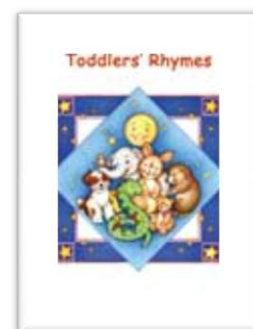
Happy Dog and Pals



This book comes with questions to ask your child to encourage understanding and discussion. Normally, children will be happy with only one or two of the stories and you may find that they have one or two favourites that they ask you to read over and over again. It's fine for them to have their favourites, but do try not to neglect the other stories as those feelings are also important for your child to become familiar with. When reading the stories, don't be afraid to act like a child and do silly voices and noises. Also, don't become overly focussed upon your child getting the 'right' answers to the questions, don't even worry if they show no interest in answering the questions at all, the important thing is that they enjoy the stories – the answers and understanding will come later.

Toddlers' Rhymes

This book is a book of rhymes and rhyming stories themed around the 5 feelings. It contains short nursery rhyme type rhymes as well as revisiting two characters from Happy Dog and Friends – Happy Dog and Scared Snake. Unlike Happy Dog there are no questions to ask your child; instead you should use the rhymes as a starting point for talking about feelings with your child. Ask them what they do when they are happy/sad/scared etc. Speak to them about who they can talk to if they feel sad or scared. Talk about some of the other feelings your child might have such as anger, shyness, embarrassment, etc.



The Wee VIP Pack



This consists of a story, a game, colouring sheets and a DVD.

The story is Jenni's Story and is a simple story that introduces the 5 feelings. It follows Jenni through a

series of adventures and includes questions to ask your child. As with Happy Dog and Friends, the important thing is that your child enjoys the story and starts to identify the feelings.

The game consists of flashcards with scenes with children that are either happy or sad. Ask your child to identify what the children are feeling and act accordingly – e.g. for happy they could laugh and jump about, for sad they could pretend to cry. Some of the images from the flash card game appear in the following pages.

The colouring sheets give you a chance to talk to your child about the different feelings and when they may have experienced them.

The DVD gives you the opportunity to speak to your child about safe and unsafe situations. The pack includes parents' notes that will help you to use the materials effectively.

Talking to your child about feelings

Key to the VIP programme for toddlers is the idea of teaching children to identify their own feelings. We believe that if a child can identify their feelings and articulate them, they can be taught how to handle them and what they can do if they feel sad or scared – tell an adult.

Try to talk to your child often about their feelings. If they are crying, acknowledge that they are feeling sad; if they are angry let them know that that is what they are feeling. Children have no way of identifying what they are feeling unless someone explains it to them. Another thing that can help children to articulate their feelings is to teach them some basic sign language for feelings. Simple signs allow a child that does not yet have the verbal language to explain how they are feeling, communicate their feelings to you. The BBC children's programme Something Special has an episode that teaches the signs for the basic feelings.

Watching TV together can give you a good opportunity to speak to your child about feelings. Ask them what they think the people on the TV are feeling – are they happy, sad, scared, angry? Ask them how they know what the person is feeling, or if they have ever felt that way before. The same applies to books, try to read books with a variety of emotions in

them and then discuss them with your child. Below is a useful list of books that talk about different feelings.

- * All Kinds of Feelings: a Lift-the-Flap Book (Emma Brownjohn)
- * I feel angry – your emotions (Brian Moses)
- * Angry Arthur (Hiawyn Oram)
- * I feel frightened – your emotions (Brian Moses)
- * I feel sad – your emotions (Brian Moses)
- * Frightened Fred (Peta Coplans)
- * The way I feel (Janan Cain)
- * Feelings for Little Children series (Elizabeth Crary & Shari Steelsmith)

Disciplining toddlers

Smacking

Discipline is a contentious issue among many parents, and in society in general, and often there are two main groups – those that smack and those that don't. Obviously there are many variations on these two groups, but smacking tends to be the main dividing point. The VIP programme does not believe that there is a place for smacking in today's society; however we do know that for the majority of parents it is used effectively and is usually a last resort. That said we do believe that there are equal and even more effective forms of discipline, therefore we will not be discussing smacking as an appropriate form of discipline – not when there are so many effective non-violent alternatives.



Naughty step

Probably the most well known non-violent method of discipline is the one championed by Supernanny – the naughty step. This involves giving a child a warning and, if the behaviour continues, being placed on the naughty step/chair/spot for one minute for every year of their life. The child must give a sincere apology before they are allowed off the naughty step. This method is portable – you can create a naughty spot anywhere – and gives children a clear consequence for their bad

behaviour. This method is similar to 'time outs' in that it is best used as a way of calming down the child, the parent or both. Use of the naughty step or a time out can give a parent the much needed time to calm down, reducing the likelihood of the parent resorting to smacking or out of control shouting. One of the problems with the use of the naughty step with toddlers is the emphasis placed on saying 'sorry' after the allotted time. There is research that suggests that children under 3 are unable to grasp the concept of apologising and feeling sorry. Therefore there is the risk of teaching a child to simply say sorry without ever having any real feelings of remorse.

Time outs

Time outs are a bit different to the naughty step. They shouldn't last any more than 3-4 minutes, and they are less about punishment and more about both the parent and the child taking some time to calm down. At the end of the time out, there is not the need for the child to say sorry, rather, now both parties have calmed down, this is the time to talk about what happened – explain why you wanted your child to do/stop doing the behaviour, it doesn't need to be a long explanation, a simple 'it's dangerous and you could get hurt' will suffice. Another form of time out is to put your child out of the room for a few minutes. This is particularly effective when your child is being anti-social e.g. hitting, biting, snatching etc. the idea being that if they cannot behave in a social manner then they cannot be a part of society; when they are prepared to behave nicely they can come back into your society. With older children you can give them the option – 'will you behave nicely?' or 'you can come back in if you play nicely' – before letting them back in, this allows them the choice of behaving well (and be sure to praise them if they do so) and you may find that they answer 'no' in which case leave the ball in their court and tell them they can come back in when they're ready to behave in a sociable manner.

Prevention better than cure

One of the best methods to use is that of prevention. Toddlers often have triggers that will set them off – some are easily frustrated when they can't do something (or get the toy to do what they want it to do), some have little patience for siblings, some don't like sudden changes (e.g. when they're



playing with their toys and suddenly it's time to go out or to bed). These triggers are part of a child's personality and, if you can identify what they are, you can take steps to prevent the tantrum or bad behaviour before it starts. If a child is easily frustrated offer to help them (don't just do it for them without asking or you'll likely trigger a tantrum anyway) or offer them a distraction. If your child lashes out when bothered by another child, intervene before it gets to the lashing out stage, show them how to take turns or play nicely with each other, or teach an alternative behaviour such as telling you that they're being bothered or shouting 'no' so that you can step in to diffuse the situation. If your child doesn't like sudden change warn them in advance of things that are going to happen e.g. 'in 5 minutes it's bath time and after that it's bedtime', and continue to inform them – 'we'll wash your hair and then you can get out of the bath and put your jammies on and then it's time for bed'. Saying goodnight or goodbye to their toys/dog/cat etc. can also help to ease transitions.

Another major trigger of tantrums and bad behaviour is discomfort such as hunger, thirst or tiredness. Try to identify the reason for their behaviour, and then you can take steps to address the problem. This



often results in a change in children's behaviour for the better. Many children get up to mischief when they are bored, so sometimes a change in scene or a new game can work wonders. That's not to say that a child should never be bored, boredom can work wonders for a child's creativity and imagination, but sometimes they need to be pointed in the right direction – e.g. pulling out the paper and paint or making up a new game to play.

Sometimes the key to your children's behaviour lies in looking at your own behaviour or situation. Do you give your child attention when they're behaving well or do they have to misbehave before you take notice of them? Are there issues or tension in the home? Has there been a major change in their life such as moving home or a new baby? If you can identify a reason such as this you can take steps to change your child's behaviour for the better. Of course, sometimes there is no apparent reason for their bad behaviour, in which case they are likely just testing the boundaries and limits.

If... Then...

Another technique that can be effective, particularly with older toddlers is the 'if... then...' method. This is a very good way of getting your child to do something that you want them to such as putting on their shoes or picking up their toys. It is a very simple method, you simply explain to your child that if they do this, then they can do that, e.g. if you put on your shoes, then we can go out; or if you pick up your Lego, then you can play with your cars. It is important to remember to praise your child when they do as you've asked. It's even more important to praise your child for good behaviour that you haven't asked for – e.g. putting away some of their toys. Praise will reinforce the good behaviour and make them more likely to do it again.

Lose some battles to win the war?

Picking your battles is vital when it comes to parenting a toddler. Let them win some of the minor battles such as what clothes they want to wear, or reading them yet another story at bedtime. This will leave you with more energy to fight the big battles such as bedtimes and holding your hand to cross the road. The big battles are the ones that you cannot afford to lose; it can be very hard going and so tempting to give up, but for your child's own good you need to win them. Thankfully, the more of the big battles you win the easier it becomes as your child learns that you're not going to give in – the first one is always the worst.

Positive discipline

Positive discipline is currently a very popular discipline method, and is used by both parents and schools. It works on the theory that there are no bad children, just good and bad behaviours. There are a few key aspects to this method – first, as mentioned above, preventing bad behaviour from starting is better than correcting the behaviour once it's started. Another is to ask your child to do something rather than to stop doing something; it is often easier for a child understand being asked to stand still than being told to stop running away.



Praise is vital to positive discipline, but only if it is deserved praise, praising your child for anything and everything can actually devalue the meaning of praise. Watch for small things that you

can praise your child for such as walking nicely beside you or sharing a toy with a sibling. Being praised for good behaviour can help to build a child's self-esteem and shows them that they can get your attention through good behaviour as well as bad. Star charts can help with this, but you need to start with a reward after only two or three stars when using them with toddlers, or they very quickly lose interest – it won't be long before they start helping just so they can get a star. Overall, positive discipline is about treating your child with respect.

Boundaries

No matter which method you choose to use with your child, it is absolutely vital that you set and maintain clear boundaries for them. Without boundaries a child can feel adrift and that no one cares enough to teach them right from wrong. It can also be very confusing and unsettling for children if the boundaries are constantly changing and if something that was permitted yesterday is not permitted today.



Stick to your guns when you threaten your child with a sanction. If you tell them that if they throw another toy at you, you will remove all their toys, then do it! If you don't your child will very quickly learn that they don't need to listen to you, and they will continue to push you until you snap. On which note, never threaten to do something that you know you won't follow through on, e.g. don't threaten to not take your child to the park if you are actually wanting to go yourself.

The choice is yours

As a parent you must choose the best discipline method for you and your child. Many parents take different techniques from the various methods and mix and match to suit their family. No matter what techniques and methods you use, remember to be consistent and to pay your child some attention when they're behaving well. Most importantly, remember to show your child that you love them.

Common issues faced by parents

Post-natal depression

Post-natal depression (PND) can continue right into the toddler years, though it usually does start to improve by then. It is a very treatable illness and if you suspect you may have it, it's advised that you speak to your health visitor or GP. It is important to stress that fathers can, and do, develop PND as well. Below are some of the symptoms of PND

- * Crying a lot
- * Difficulty sleeping
- * Thinking you're a bad mother
- * Not being able to cope and blaming yourself
- * Anxiety and panic attacks
- * Being overwhelmed by even the smallest of tasks
- * Feeling anxious or guilty
- * Feeling tense and irritable
- * An inability to make decisions
- * Poor concentration
- * Bizarre, obsessive and disturbing thoughts
- * Thoughts or fears that you may harm your baby
- * Having 'what if' thoughts you cannot control
- * Hating your baby
- * Hating your partner

Although the symptoms of male and female PND are exactly the same, the reasons are different. For women the cause is hormonal and psychological, while for men the cause is emotional and often linked with the change in their identity and lifestyle.

Babies learn a massive amount in the first few years of life – they learn even more when their parents have the energy and time for them and when the relationship or bond is strong. Therefore, the sooner you can get help with PND, the better.

Everyone's an expert

From the moment you announce a pregnancy everyone, from your parents to the milkman, will have an opinion on parenting; and many will not be afraid to share their viewpoint. Once you have your child it gets even worse. Opinions will be given on everything from feeding your child to disciplining them. Some of the more common issues include breastfeeding beyond a certain age (6 weeks/6 months/1 year/2 years), choosing to bottle feed, clingy children needing 'socialised, toilet training, disciplining, etc.



To be honest, short of walking around with your fingers in your ears going 'la la la', there is little you can do to avoid other people's opinions being offered. It can be wearing to have people questioning your parenting choices and skills, and grandparents and relatives in particular can really sap your confidence; it is much easier to brush off comments by strangers than by people you care about. Sometimes you, or your partner, may need to have a talk with relatives and ask them to stop offering advice, and for them to just support you.

One of the best ways of dealing with comments and unasked for advice is to simply thank the person for their advice, and then completely ignore it. Another way is to laugh lightly and say 'oh, I didn't realise people still thought that way' and move on. Whatever way you choose to deal with comments and advice, do not allow them to sap your confidence; you know your child best and know what works for them and for you as a family.

Never did my kids any harm

Something that almost every parent has to deal with at some point is other people disciplining your child. Whether it's nursery workers, childminders, grandparents or the child's other parent, at some point the issue of discipline will arise. Often there is no real conflict when others take care of your child; particularly when different techniques from similar methods are used e.g. you use the naughty step while your childminder uses time outs. Techniques like those are often

interchangeable and kids adapt well, however if you are uncomfortable with any of the techniques or methods used by the person caring for your child then you are well within your rights to ask them to stop and to start using techniques and methods that are closer to your own.

The most obvious conflict in disciplining children is between those that smack and those that don't. Whether you believe in smacking or not, you may feel uncomfortable with another person smacking your child. If this is the case, it is important that you make it clear that it is unacceptable to smack your child under any circumstances. If this is not heeded, you should not leave your child in that person's care. The only exception to this is when the other person is a parent of the child, in which case it is important to sit down with them and come up with some mutually agreeable ground rules over disciplining your child.

Discipline is not the only source of these types of conflicts; they can also arise over issues such as feeding your child certain foods, bedtimes, language, TV and what your child is permitted to do. The solution to most of these issues is communication.

Talk to the grandparents/childminder/babysitter/etc. about what you expect from them when they have responsibility for your child. It can be beneficial (particularly with grandparents) to let them win some of the smaller battles such as giving your child sweets, in order for you to win the larger battles over discipline etc.

The basic rule when it comes to any of these conflicts is that you are the parent; therefore you have the final say.

Tantrums

There's nothing worse than being in a packed shop when your toddler throws a massive tantrum. It's particularly hard when, despite your best efforts to calm your child, you can hear the "tuts" and feel the stares. Is it any wonder many parents are driven to shouting at, dragging or smacking their child? However, this sort of reaction is counter productive as it rarely works at calming the child down and often makes the parent look out of control.



The best tactic, though it's often the hardest one to use, is to ignore the tantrum. If you need to, move your child to the side of the street or a quieter spot, but don't feel you need to hide away – you are simply experiencing something that every other parent in the world has had to deal with at some point. In fact, if you make eye contact with many of the passers by you will probably receive a sympathetic smile in return. Let your child calm down and get on with what you were doing, don't be tempted to bring up the subject that led to the initial tantrum (unless you really need to) otherwise you may set off another tantrum.

Distraction works wonders with toddlers and you can often divert your child from a tantrum by pointing out a passing bus, asking them what they want to do when they get home etc. Remember that there may be an underlying cause for repeated tantrums such as hunger, thirst, tiredness, illness, etc. and address that cause if you are able to; if you can't solve the problem there and then, try to understand how your child is feeling.

Pushing the boundaries and your buttons

When a toddler misbehaves they are usually testing the boundaries to learn what they can and cannot do, it is a totally normal part of growing up. The best thing you can do to help your child with this is to have clear and consistent boundaries and to ensure that they are not constantly shifting. Rules can be bent, but be careful which rules you do bend; you shouldn't bend rules involving safety for example.

Toddlers seem to have an uncanny ability to push a parent's buttons and there are times when they are pushing the boundaries and your buttons at the same time. When you feel you are on the verge of losing control, use a technique such as counting to 10. As clichéd as it sounds, it really can bring back some self-control, allowing you to remain calm with your child. If all else fails and you can feel yourself losing your temper, take a step back and distract yourself for a minute or two – a quick phone call to a parent or friend for a quick 2 minute rant can really help to diffuse the situation and give you a second wind for dealing calmly with your child.

Isolation

Isolation can be one of the hardest parts of being a parent. Sometimes, particularly if none of your friends have children, you can feel friendless or envious of your friends going out or having fun without you. It can help if you are able to take the initiative and invite your friends out with you or round to your house in the evening – remember that many of your friends may have no idea how much your life changes when you have children.

Another thing you can do is to find local groups or classes for you and your child to attend, look at what your local library or community centre may offer. Other places that run groups for toddlers are sports centres, parent and child groups, churches, councils etc. The internet is a great way to make contact with other parents and to make 'virtual' friends. Well moderated forums such as Baby And Bump or Netmums can be a lifeline for isolated parents. Remember to take precautions when dealing with people you have never actually met in person and, if you arrange to meet people from over the internet, ensure you are not alone and that you meet in a public place. Most people in the internet are genuine, but a few are not, so ensure you take steps to safeguard yourself and your family.



If you have someone such as a partner or a parent that is able to baby-sit for you once or twice a week, taking up a regular activity such as acting, keep fit, weight management etc. can be a great way to meet new people and make new friends.

Helpful Websites

Below are some websites and resources that you may find useful in helping you to parent your child.

www.babyandbump.com

www.mumsnet.com

www.babycentre.co.uk

www.askdrsears.com



For more information about the VIP programme visit our website at
www.violenceispreventable.org.uk

Or email

Lormac1053@aol.com

Or call

01382 206222