



Living with Children the 3-to 5-year-olds

NEEDS OF CHILDREN

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What are Needs?

A child may say to you "I need a drink," "I need new shoes," or "I need to call my mama." In each case, the child is speaking of a want. Needs are those things we cannot live without and are more necessary to us than wants or desires.

Most basic of all needs is the need to live or survive. Adults may even kill when they fear death is near. A little child may cry, cough or scream until help comes when his life is in danger. Can you recall a time when you feared death and did strange things? You were experiencing the need to live!

Besides survival, other basic needs of children are food, clothing and shelter. Without any of these, children cannot live.

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Food Needs of Children

Food and feeding affect many parts of a child's life.

- His body — he grows stronger and is better able to work and play.
- His mind — he learns much through eating. He learns about the look, taste and smell of new foods; how foods are cooked; how to eat at the table; and to make mealtime pleasant for the whole family. A well-fed child's mind is more active.

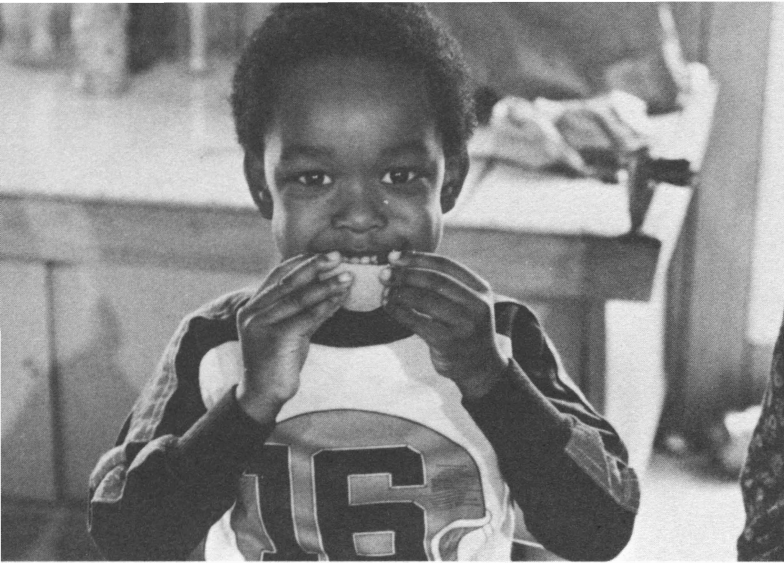
Children have individual differences in the amount of food they need. Usually:

- A child will decide for himself how much food he needs.
- A large child eats more than a smaller child.
- A more active child eats more than a slow-moving child.

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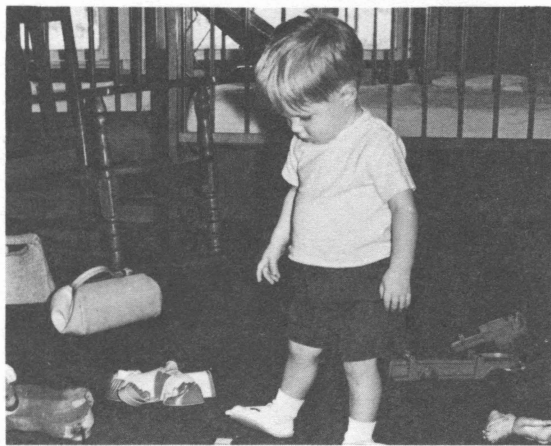
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- An anxious or worried child eats less than a happy child.

Children's food likes and dislikes change. A variety of foods teaches a child to like new or different kinds of food. As he grows older, a child likes to choose his own food to eat.

Establishing a routine or a regular time for meals is important to children. Allow enough time for slow eaters. If a child gets too restless, let him get up and move about. Then he can come back to finish his meal or snack. A relaxed meal is usually an enjoyable meal. Forcing a child to eat when he is not hungry is hard on you and your child.



Clothing Needs of Children

Every child needs clothing to protect his body from the weather — heat, rain or cold. Clothing also is important to a child because it helps him to look like his friends.



Children like new clothes, bright colors and trim or ornaments on their clothes. Parents are concerned about how long clothing will last. Children are more concerned about how clothes look and feel.

Home Sweet Home

Children and adults need a home or place to get out of the weather. In addition, a home gives a child a place that is his very own. Home gives a child a secure, good feeling.

The old saying, "There's no place like home," is true. A home offers a child a place to come back to every day. It is the place where people who are important to him (his family) live. Home also offers a child protection and privacy from the outside world.

Other Kinds of Needs

Children must have more than food, clothing and shelter to grow. Sometimes parents forget that little ones (and big ones) need love, recognition, health, freedom, new experiences and security. These human needs help children grow up with less pain and hurt.

Love

To get along with people, a child needs to receive love from others. If he is loved as a tiny baby and has learned acceptable

ways to behave, other people will find him easy to love throughout his life.

Love is the ability to give love as well as to receive it. The need for love and affection is common to all human beings. You can express love to a child by cuddling him, holding him on your lap, patting him, or even by smiling when the child looks at you.

Young children need parents to love them. Each parent has his own way of being especially important to his child. This involves much more than paying the bills for things the child needs.



Recognition

A fifth need is to be recognized as a person. Every child needs to be recognized and respected by his family and friends. Recognition differs from some of the other needs — one must earn it rather than demand it. Every child can do something well. To be successful, a child has to be recognized and rewarded for his efforts so he will keep on doing a good job.

Health

Children need good physical and mental health. When a child is ill, he and his parents generally ignore all other interests and needs while concentrating on regaining his health. Illness often occurs because

other basic needs have not been met. Poor diet, the wrong clothing, exposure to weather or the lack of love can cause health problems.

Freedom

Children need varying degrees of freedom. When a person has enough freedom to try new things, he develops to the best of his ability. Age and maturity of children determine how much you can expect of a child and how much freedom to give the child.

Challenge

Another basic human need is the need for challenge. When challenge is denied, people become bored, empty and seemingly lazy. Challenge usually brings about accomplishment and desirable change in people. Children like to have new toys, see new places and things and meet new friends. They may appear shy at first, but will slowly try out new things if encouraged.

New Experiences

New experiences are similar to challenges. When a person has limited sight, sound and conversation, he begins to feel strange or empty. A new experience helps a person to use something he has already tried and to make it better. For example, if a child can color, let him try painting with water colors. If he can swing, let him try the slide at the park.

Stability

Another need for children is stability or freedom from uncertainty. Children face this need often. When children are uncertain and do not have security, they may cry, hold onto a parent or try to hide. Stability and certainty are like having a warm nest. They make you feel good and safe.



If parents recognize a child's basic need for security, love and recognition, his thoughts and energies can be free for other interests. Those interests differ from child to child. When a child fulfills his basic needs, he can get involved in work and play that will help him be a child you are proud of.

Safety and Protection

Every child needs to be protected from harm. A few safety hints for parents are:

- Tiny, sharp or pointed things should be kept away from small children.
- Toys with small parts that can come off — such as glass or metal buttons on soft animals — should not be used with babies or young children.
- All toys should be larger than the child's two fists.
- Children should not be allowed to jump from high places.
- Climbing equipment must be checked to see that it is sturdy and will not fall apart.
- All plastic bags should be kept away from children at all times. Do not cover the child's mattress or store things a child can reach in large plastic bags.
- Keep children's shoestrings tied and belts fastened.
- Do not allow your child to play in the street.

- Do not wear jewelry with sharp points when caring for babies.

The Child's Partners — Parents

Parents are the caretakers of little children. Wise parents grow and learn with their children. They learn to relax and let a child be himself. They allow him to grow in his own way, his own time and his own fashion.

Secrets for Good Parenting

1. Understand that no two children are alike. Each child differs in his own speed and way of growing up.

2. Growth is uneven, but all children grow in the same way. We can see him grow in height and weight. We cannot see his heart, lungs and brain grow, but they do.

3. Each stage of growth has certain common characteristics — most children stutter or stammer when they first learn to talk; most 2-year olds are stubborn and do not play well with other children.

4. When a child learns something new, he repeats it many, many times. When the baby learns to crawl, he crawls and crawls and crawls.

5. Children at all ages and stages of growth have some reason to behave as they do. It may be because of the stage a child is going through, he is trying to satisfy some need (maybe he is hungry, wet or lonely), or he needs something he is not getting (playpen may be too crowded and he wants more room to crawl).

Most parents want to be good parents and can be if they try. There is no simple recipe for rearing children. Each child is different, each family is different and no two situations involving children are the same. Relax and enjoy your children today.

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