



Center for Children and Families  
*Spring 2019 Lecture Series*

**Parenting Challenge #1: Children's Challenging Questions** (Candice Mills, Ph.D.)

- Children ask questions both for attention and to seek information.
- Caregivers' responses both provide information and demonstrate how open or closed the caregiver is to discussing their children's questions.
- Children are curious, but sometimes it is difficult to tell from their initial questions what they want to know. Consider prompting for clarification to narrow down how to respond.
- Sometimes children are satisfied by snippets of information. Other times, they want more detail than you may be ready to give them. Engage in conversation to decide how far to go with your response.
- It is okay to say that you'd like to come back to a question another day. It is also okay to show that you don't know the answer to a question. Show them how to handle uncertainty.
- Use books, movies, and experiences as opportunities to engage children in conversation about challenging topics.

Helpful Reads to Manage Challenging Questions

- Academic: Ronfard, S., Zambrana, I. M., Hermansen, T.K., & Kelemen, D. (2018). Question-asking in childhood: A review of the literature and a framework for understanding its development. *Developmental Review*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1016/j.dr.2018.05.002
- General audience: Hirsh-Pasek, K., & Golinkoff, R. (2004). *Einstein Never Used Flash Cards*.

**Parenting Challenge #2: Candid Appearance-Related Observations** (Shayla Holub, Ph. D.)

- Children are adept observers and readily notice differences in people's body shapes, skin color, and other aspects of appearance.
- Children use their observations to learn about the social world and to develop theories about the way the world works. This process can, but does not have to, lead to children developing stereotypes and bias toward others.
- Many parents worry that engaging with their children about difficult topics like race or body shape will have unintended negative consequences, so they avoid these conversations. These parents miss opportunities to positively guide children's thinking about accepting others and celebrating differences.
- Respond to children's candid observations as calmly and as positively as possible. Remember that they are still learning. Make this an on-going conversation.
- Be proactive by reading books together to begin a dialogue about the value in diversity. Talk about the importance of recognizing similarities and differences. Challenge media that promotes stereotypes and bias. Discuss historical events and their meaning today. Help children feel good about their own appearance and the appearance of others.

### Children's Books to Help Start a Conversation about Diversity and Acceptance

- "We're Different, We're the Same, and We're Wonderful" by Bobbi Jane Kates
- "What's the Difference?: Being Different is Amazing" by Doyin Richards
- "The Skin You Live In" by Michael Tyler
- "Shapesville" by Andy Mills and Becky Osborn
- "We are Family" by Patricia Hegarty
- "I am Enough" by Grace Byers
- "I Like Myself!" by Karen Beaumont

### Parenting Challenge #3: Children's Negative Emotions (Jackie Nelson, Ph.D.)

- Young children have difficulty understanding and controlling their emotions.
- Caregivers' supportive responses to those feelings, such as problem-solving, comforting, and giving space for appropriate expression can teach children that their emotions are accepted and manageable.
- Those supportive responses require that caregivers have patience, self-regulation, and help from others, as these frequent emotional outbursts can be challenging for caregivers to manage.
- A "supportive" response to a child's negative emotions may be defined differently as the child gets older and needs to learn to cope with stressors more independently.
- Even when these emotions occur during caregiver-child conflict interactions, try to respect the child's feelings (respecting feelings is different than being permissive and "giving in" to their demands) and involve them in solutions.

### Helpful Reads to Manage Children's Emotions and Conflict:

- Faber, A., & Mazlish, E. (1980). *How to talk so kids will listen & listen so kids will talk*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Cline, F., & Fay, J. (2006). *Parenting with love and logic*. Colorado Springs: NavPress.