

## Parent blog for Co-Op Nursery School in Belmont, CA

### Temper, Temper

Apparently, there's a new study out that examined toddler temper tantrums for patterns in order to figure out how best to deal with them. You can check out an article about the study at [NPR.com](http://NPR.com), along with a video of a kid having a tantrum accompanied by a scientific play-by-play of the action. I'm a horrible person, so I found the video really funny. To be fair, I often can't help but laugh when my own daughter throws similar fits, so it's not just schadenfreude. The intensity of emotion our kids have over nonsensical things is just so surreal and ridiculous. Plus, if I don't keep laughing, I might start screaming.

Anyway, the scientists discovered that the quickest way to resolve a tantrum is to let the kid work his/herself out of anger and into sadness, because then they can be comforted. And the quickest way to get past anger is to ignore it. So it turns out that my self-preservation tactic of tuning out the screaming and retreating to my happy place is actually the best course of action. Score one for mom!

How about you? Any tips for dealing with atomic meltdowns?

## Teaching Compassion

The frenzy of the holiday season is upon us, and it's all too easy to get swept up. My daughter's excitement brings memories of my own childhood rushing back and before I know it I have spent too much time shopping for too many toys that will be quickly unwrapped and just as quickly forgotten. I'm doing my best to avoid the vicious cycle this year. Instead I'm working on channeling our collective enthusiasm into giving to others. I think it's important to teach Penny the importance of offering help to those who need it. Not to mention that some charitable giving might go a long way in debunking her currently held theory that she is the center of the universe.

I've compiled a list of some local groups looking for volunteers and/or donations this holiday season. Penny and I have donated some diapers and wipes to a local shelter, and I'm planning on taking her to Hillside Mall to drop off some toys for Toys for Tots. I'm just hoping that giving away that Pillow Pet she's been lusting after doesn't result in a tantrum in the mall, which is, coincidentally, another of our standing holiday traditions.

Local Charities looking for volunteers/donations:

- [Family Connections](#): Founded in 1993 by Little Hands parents, Family Connections is the only parent-child participation program exclusively dedicated to low income families in San Mateo County, serving over 400 individuals each year with bilingual education.
- [Second Harvest Food Bank](#): Second Harvest is one of the largest food banks in the nation, providing food to an average of nearly one quarter of a million people each month.
- [Samaritan House](#): Samaritan House is a non-profit health and human services agency with over 30 years of experience in providing a broad range of services and resources to low-income residents in San Mateo County.
- [Firefighters Toys for Tots](#): Firefighters' Toys For Tots is an independent organization voluntarily run by firefighters from the San Mateo Fire Department and assisted by firefighters throughout San Mateo County.
- [Shelter Network](#): Shelter Network is committed to providing housing and support services that create opportunities for homeless families and individuals to re-establish self-sufficiency and to return to permanent homes of their own.
- [Community Wish List](#): The Community Wish List is a free service that was started in 2004 by volunteers in Burlingame to encourage people to donate their discarded computers, furniture and other goods to nonprofits that need them.

## **Mary, Mary, Quite Contrary**

It seems that my daughter delights in being contrary, especially over the little things. When I say I love a particular story or activity, it immediately becomes her most hated. When I complain about reading "Dora the Explorer becomes a True Princess" (the process involves a ball gown and insta-grow Rapunzel hair) for the seven millionth time in one day, she tells me it is her absolute favorite and would rather die than hear the latest "Llama, Llama" book again.

I'm guessing that many of you know exactly what I'm talking about, and if you don't (cue sinister chortle) you will, my friend, oh, you will. I've found it easier not to fight it---there are way too many fights up in this joint already. So we're just riding the wave of "no" around here.

I'm curious: how do you handle your little Negative Nancys and Intractable Ians?

## **Potty Talk**

Why is the potty so intimidating to kids? For some it's the gaping, watery abyss threatening damply from under their tushies. For others, it's the menacing roar of the flush that may come unpredictably at any time. Some like the convenience of the diaper, and can't be bothered retiring to a separate room to do their business.

It is a complicated task, convincing a kid to use the toilet.

There are books, websites and DVDs, all aimed at different methods of potty training, but there are a few steadfast rules that will help you through it, no matter which method you choose.

1. No kid will potty train until he/she is ready. Unfortunately, unless you're one of the lucky few whose kid actually says, "I want to use the potty," it can be really hard to tell. In fact, the only surefire way to tell is to try. If it takes, they were ready. If not, put away the big kid undies and wait a few months. It will save you both a lot of trouble.

2. Most kids go back and forth a bit before they commit to full-fledged membership in the potty party. It's called regression, and when it happens you will be taken by surprise (accept that your glove compartment will be dedicated to diaper/wipes storage for the foreseeable future). But this too will pass. Promise.

3. Pee and poo are two very different things, and as such, may require different potty training methods. Penny follows the toddler diet of carbs and dairy, accompanied by an aversion to liquids. This made pee-potty training a cinch, but has presented us with a number of unpleasant challenges when it comes to #2. Other kids I know will happily skip to the loo for their pooping needs, but can't hold it when it's time to pee. Your child is a unique and delicate snowflake, and he/she will have his/her own unique snowflake potty issues.

There you go. Remember, we're all in this together. Godspeed and good luck--you're going to need it. Please send patience and wet wipes, along with your potty training tips.

## **Just a Little Nibble?**

We're two months into the school year now, and I wonder how everyone is doing. The kids should be settling into a bit of a routine, which hopefully makes things easier for all of you. Of course, as they get more comfortable in their classes, some of their less-than-desirable traits might start making an appearance. For my daughter Penny, this meant biting.

Now, I know that every kid has a different bad habit for his/her parent to deal with and many of them present a huge challenge. But as the parent of a biter I really felt pushed to the limit by my child's behavior. Her bites HURT and often happened too quickly for anyone to stop them (adults and children alike). Even though it was clear to me and people who watched her closely that the biting was more of an attempt at communication than an act of aggression, casual observers and parents of victims usually thought otherwise. I knew my baby wasn't a monster, but those teeth marks on the other toddlers were hard to argue with.

Thank goodness for our school. Little Hands was the best thing that could have happened to me and Penny as we worked through her biting. I had the support of the teachers, the board and my classmates, who knew how difficult the whole thing was for us. With their help my daughter learned that biting was an unacceptable means of communication. She learned that adults would listen when she asked for help, and that she wouldn't be punished for things that she couldn't understand. Eventually the biting stopped and new language skills popped up in its place. Cue gigantic sigh of relief.

To all of you parents out there dealing with the same type of thing, know that it will get better. And, in the meantime, you're in very good hands at our little school.

## **Rain, Rain, Go Away**

We're right on the edge of the rainy season, which means soggy parks, wet slides, and loong days inside with antsy little ones. Lucky for us there's Little Hands. Novel toys, patient teachers and lots of friends help burn off all of the extra energy our kids store up after a few days inside. There are new classes opening up this winter, so do a solid for your friends/acquaintances/strangers dragging screaming toddlers through the mall and let them in on the wonders of early childhood education and cabin-fever-relief techniques!

Two new classes begin the week of January 16, 2012:

Mondays 9:15 - 11:15 am for parents and kids ages 12 - 18 months

Thursdays 10:30 am - 12:30 pm for parents and kids ages 6 - 12 months

Tuition is \$450 for one child and \$787.50 for two children. [Registration](#) opens on November 15 at [www.littlehands.org](http://www.littlehands.org).