

Project 1, 2, 3, Go! Post



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A Huge Thank You!

Dear Project 1, 2, 3, Go! Families,

Last year, we were able to meet with GO! families for a 5th visit giving us an opportunity to follow your children through the transition to grade school. Ninety-three percent (285) of our original 306 families participated in these visits! We continue to be deeply grateful for your family's willingness to share your child's development and achievements with us. Although we have not yet completed analyses of the data from your children's 8-year-old visit, we know that it will provide us with critical information about how their preschool experiences and self-control contribute to their continuing growth through the grade-school years.

In this newsletter, we wanted to provide you with a big-picture summary of the valuable information that has arisen from your family's participation in Project 1, 2, 3, Go! and contributed to the body of knowledge about children's self-control development (see page 2 for findings).

We continue to pursue funding to be able to meet with your families again. Federal funding for this research has been hard to get! But we keep trying because we believe we have a unique and remarkable opportunity to understand how early childhood experiences impact children's social, emotional, and academic success into pre-adolescence and beyond, and we hope to build on the knowledge that your family's generous participation has already provided.



Project 1, 2, 3, Go! Findings



Family income serves as a marker for stress and adversity in a child's life. Families with lower income levels reported more experiences of stress and adversity.

Stress and adversity were related to lower self-control. The more adversity a family experienced, the greater the chance that a child was showing lower levels of self-control.

Parenting is a critical factor in children's development of self-control. Not all children who experienced adversity had lower self-control. What mattered more was parenting. When parents were able to support their children's development by being warm, consistent, providing guidance and structuring, while also supporting their children's autonomy, their children showed greater gains in their self-control.



Parenting protects children from the effects of adversity. When parents are warm, consistent and provide a balance of independence together with appropriate levels of guidance and structuring, children weather stressful experiences more successfully, showing better social competence, lower emotional and behavioral problems, and better academic competence.

Physiological stress responses also play a role. Remember the spit samples you helped us collect? Those were critical in helping us uncover the role that stress hormones play in children's developing self-control. The stress hormones, which can be disrupted when children experience adversity, predict the development of self-control. But again, parents play an important role in maintaining children's stress-hormone regulation. Parents who were less negative, critical or harsh had children with better regulated stress-hormone systems.



Self-control matters for social and academic competence. Performance on all those self-control tasks we administered when your children were 3 years old predicted their teacher's perspectives on their social and academic competence - when they were 5 years old! We have been measuring your children's ability to focus attention, avoid distraction, persist, be flexible, and wait for a prize. These are skills that help children be more successful in the structured setting of a classroom and in the complex social interactions with peers that take place in schools. All of those skills, taken together, predicted better social and emotional competence, lower behavioral problems, and better academic readiness in the classroom.



References

If you are interested in seeing the research articles that have come from this study, here is a list, or you can contact us for copies of the papers.

References:

Lengua, L. J., Moran, L. R., Zalewski, M., Ruberry, E., Kiff, C & Thompson, S. (In press). Relations of Growth in Effortful Control to Family Income, Cumulative Risk, and Adjustment in Preschool-age Children. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*.

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Zalewski, M., Lengua, L. J., Kiff, C., & Fisher, P. (2012). Understanding the relation of low income to HPA-axis functioning in preschool children: Cumulative family adversity and parenting as pathways to disruptions in cortisol. *Child Psychiatry and Human Development*. DOI: 10.1007/s10578-012-0304-3.

Information about your 9-11 year old child - Middle Childhood

From the CDC:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/positiveparenting/middle2.html>

Developmental Milestones

Your child's growing independence from the family and interest in friends might be obvious by now. Healthy friendships are very important to your child's development, but peer pressure can become strong during this time. Children who feel good about themselves are more able to resist negative peer pressure and make better choices for themselves. This is an important time for children to gain a sense of responsibility along with their growing independence. Also, physical changes of puberty might be showing by now, especially for girls. Another big change children need to prepare for during this time is starting middle or junior high school. Children in this age group might:





Middle Childhood (cont.)

Emotional/Social Changes

- Start to form stronger, more complex friendships and peer relationships. It becomes more emotionally important to have friends, especially of the same sex.
- Experience more peer pressure.
- Become more aware of his or her body as puberty approaches. Body image and eating problems sometimes start around this age.

Thinking and Learning

- Face more academic challenges at school.
- Become more independent from the family.
- Begin to see the point of view of others more clearly.
- Have an increased attention span.



Positive Parenting Tips

Following are some things you, as a parent, can do to help your child during this time:

- Spend time with your child. Talk with her about her friends, her accomplishments, and what challenges she will face.
- Be involved with your child's school. Go to school events; meet your child's teachers.
- Encourage your child to join school and community groups, such as a sports team, or to be a volunteer for a charity.
- Help your child develop his own sense of right and wrong. Talk with him about risky things friends might pressure him to do, like smoking or dangerous physical dares.
- Help your child develop a sense of responsibility—involve your child in household tasks like cleaning and cooking. Talk with your child about saving and spending money wisely.
- Meet the families of your child's friends.
- Talk with your child about respecting others. Encourage her to help people in need. Talk with her about what to do when others are not kind or are disrespectful.
- Help your child set his own goals. Encourage him to think about skills and abilities he would like to have and about how to develop them.
- Make clear rules and stick to them. Talk with your child about what you expect from her (behavior) when no adults are present. If you provide reasons for rules, it will help her to know what to do in most situations.
- Use discipline to guide and protect your child, instead of punishment to make him feel badly about himself.
- When using praise, help your child think about her own accomplishments. Saying "you must be proud of yourself" rather than simply "I'm proud of you" can encourage your child to make good choices when nobody is around to praise her.
- Talk with your child about the normal physical and emotional changes of puberty.
- Encourage your child to read every day. Talk with him about his homework.
- Be affectionate and honest with your child, and do things together as a family.

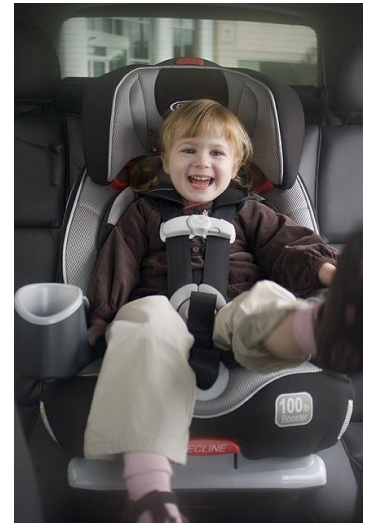


Middle Childhood (cont.)

Child Safety First

More independence and less adult supervision can put children at risk for injuries from falls and other accidents. Here are a few tips to help protect your child:

- Protect your child in the car. The [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#) recommends that you keep your child in a booster seat until he is big enough to fit in a seat belt properly. Remember: your child should still ride in the back seat until he or she is 12 years of age because it's safer there. Motor vehicle crashes are the most common cause of death from unintentional injury among children of this age.
- Know where your child is and whether a responsible adult is present. Make plans with your child for when he will call you, where you can find him, and what time you expect him home.
- Make sure your child wears a helmet when riding a bike or a skateboard or using inline skates; riding on a motorcycle, snowmobile, or all-terrain vehicle; or playing contact sports.
- Many children get home from school before their parents get home from work. It is important to have clear rules and plans for your child when she is home alone.



Healthy Bodies

- Provide plenty of fruits and vegetables; limit foods high in solid fats, added sugars, or salt, and prepare healthier foods for family meals.
- Keep television sets out of your child's bedroom. Limit screen time, including computers and video games, to no more than 1 to 2 hours.
- Encourage your child to participate in an hour a day of physical activities that are age appropriate and enjoyable and that offer variety! Just make sure your child is doing three types of activity: aerobic activity like running, muscle strengthening like climbing, and bone strengthening - like jumping rope - at least three days per week.

