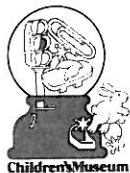


HELPING YOUR CHILD SHARE



A friend brings her 2½ year old over to play with your 2½ year old. Both children are playing. Your child is playing with a red fire truck. Your friend's child is playing with some plastic cups. Your child puts down the fire truck and begins to play with some blocks. The other child puts down the cups and picks up the fire truck. Your child starts to scream--"No, mine, my truck! I want my truck..." Familiar scene?

Helping your child to share can be tiring, frustrating, rewarding, exasperating, and even anger-provoking for parents as well as children.

Here are some ideas you might try with your child to help him or her learn to share. If you have anything you've tried with your child that you like, please write it down and drop it in the Parent Box. We'll add it to our list.

Some things to think about:

1. How old is your child?
2. Does she or he have opportunities to play with other children?
3. Can he or she share?
4. Should a child have to learn to share everything?
5. What does sharing mean to a baby, a toddler, a pre-schooler, a parent?
6. How do you feel about sharing?

Some things to try:

1. Dividing things in 2 piles if there are 2 children; 3 piles if there are 3 children.
2. Sometimes children shouldn't have to share things. Talk with your child about this and then put it away when other children are around.
3. Sometimes children need to share things. You may have to say "time's up", and pass the object on to another child.
4. Use a clock. When the big hand's are on the 4, it's Jeri's turn.
5. Change the activity...suggest another activity.

6. Change the place...move from inside to outside...from upstairs to downstairs.
7. Praise your children when they are able to share. "What a nice thing you did."

Some things to say:

1. When you finish your banana, it's Jeri's turn to use the red crayon.
2. Andy will tell you when he's finished with the fire truck. Then it's your turn.
3. Now it's time to give the robot to Elaine.
4. It's Michael's turn now.

Some things to try or think about when you child won't share:

1. Talk about it later to your child.
2. Give him or her a change of activity.
3. Know that every child has times when he or she refuses to share.
4. Maybe your child is tired and needs a rest.

Statements from some child-care books about sharing:

When children begin to play around each other at 1½, 2, 2½, they are apt to grab things from each other without much ceremony. Small children who have a possession never give it up to be nice. They either hang on like grim death, perhaps whacking the attacker, or they give it up in bewilderment. Parents, seeing these goings-on, are sometimes horrified.

If your girl (or boy), around 2, always seems to be the grabber, it doesn't mean that she's going to be a bully. She's too young to have much feeling for others. Let her grab sometimes.

If she's doing it constantly, it may help to let her play part of the time with slightly older children who stand up for their rights. If she always intimidates a certain child, better keep them separated for a while. If your child is hurting another or looks as if she were planning murder, pull her away in a matter-of-fact manner and get her interested in something else. It's better not to heap shame on her--that only makes her feel abandoned, and more aggressive.

If the child goes on being unusually aggressive when she's 3 or older and doesn't seem to be learning anything about cooperative play, it's time to look into her adjustments at home. It's in these early, less serious problems that a family social agency or a child-guidance clinic can help a parent and child most easily and most thoroughly...

If your child at 2 doesn't give up her possessions, she is behaving normally for this age. She will come around to generosity very gradually, as her spirit grows up and she learns to enjoy and love other children. If you make her give up her treasured cart whenever another child wants it, you only give her the feeling that the whole world is out to get her things away from her-- not just the children but the grown-ups, too. This makes her more possessive, instead of less. When a child is reaching the stage when she's beginning to enjoy playing with others, somewhere around 3, you can help to make a game of sharing. "First Johnny has a turn pulling the cart and Catherine rides in it. Then Catherine pulls the cart and Johnny has a turn to ride in it." This makes sharing fun instead of an unpleasant duty.

-Dr. Benjamin Spock, Baby and Child Care,
(New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1976, p.347)

...social development, the acquisition of standards of behavior, the restriction of impulses and urges, will not develop without teaching. The little child will not acquire control over his impulses unless we require him to. He has no incentives of his own, no inherited tendencies "to be good," "to be unselfish," to control his appetities and his temper. His parents provide the incentive. Much later in his development the child will call these incentives his own.

Now in speaking of "conscience building" in the small child, we need to face the fact ruefully that even under the best educational program the two year old will reach his third birthday with greatly improved self-control, but no conscience in the strict meaning of the term. By this, we mean that his self-control is still dependent upon factors outside himself, namely, the approval or disapproval of his parents. A conscience, in the proper sense of the word consists of standards and prohibitions which have been taken over by the personality and which govern behavior from within. Such an internal system of standards will usually not require outside controls to support it. When one has a conscience he forbids himself to do certain things, checks his impulses, experiences guilt reactions for transgressions, without the need for a "policeman" outside. Such a conscience does not emerge in the child until the fifth or sixth year. It will not become a stable part of his personality until the ninth or tenth year. It will not become completely independent of outside authority until the child becomes independent of his parents in the last phase of adolescence.

-Selma H. Fraiberg, The Magic Years, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959), pp. 145-147.

A two-year-old is just learning what it means to be somebody called "me" and to have things that are "mine". This is not an easy idea for a toddler to understand. Until he or she understands who "me" is, he can't begin to understand that the other people around him have wants and interests of their own. That's why it isn't easy for two-year-olds to share things.

. . .

Saying no is a way to learn to do things on your own. Your "no" meant "I won't do what you say because I am a separate person, and I have my own idea." The power of saying no helps you to tell yourself and others that you are becoming a separate person with your own feelings and ideas. Since this is a new feeling and a new way of expressing feelings, toddlers often exaggerate while they are trying it out. That is why it often seems as if all they say is no to everyone and everything.

-Robie Harris, Elizabeth Levy, Before You Were Three,
(New York: Delacorte Press, 1976), p. 88; p. 91.

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Many toddlers are vividly aware of ownership, may spend a large amount of time labeling objects with the names of their owners, and fiercely resist use of any object by someone who is not its owner. Such possessiveness may apply to other people's belongings before the toddler begins to defend his own against encroachment. Many parents with an altruistic bent try to bring up their children in a spirit of openhanded sharing, and are disappointed when a toddler seems to be selfish about his own possessions. It seems to be the case that almost all toddlers and young preschool children go through a period of possessiveness, which may be an important step in the definition of an identity and the articulation of relationships in the outside world, and which cannot be rushed.

-I. Joseph Stone, Joseph Church, Childhood
and Adolescence (New York:Random House, 1973),
pp. 241-242.