



interSEEDnGrow
Developmental & Speech Therapy Services Provider

SEEDS FOR GROWTH: Teachable Moments

1. Eye contact: You and your child run into someone you know or are introduced to someone new. Your child stares shyly downward and says nothing or mumbles, “my airplane got lost.”

Your teachable moment: BEFORE your child is approached, remind your child what is expected. SAY: ‘Neighbor Joanie is walking over to us, remember to look her in the face and say hello’. If your child is not doing so, don’t be shy, say it aloud: “Look her in the face and say ‘Hello’ ! Good for you!” Every child is capable looking someone in the eye when they are introduced, even if it takes years of training. Don’t hesitate to keep reminding.

2. Manners: Every child is capable of saying please, excuse me and thank you—again, even if it takes years of training.

Your teachable moment: Every single time your child asks for or accepts any item, task, or favor. **Also:** You must model this behavior by saying please and thank you yourself, every single time. Your child can learn to do this, and it will make so much difference later on in his or her life.

3. Simple conversation skills: Your child should be able to hold up his or her end of a basic conversation, including asking questions: *How are you? What do you like to do in school? Who are your friends? What are your hobbies?*

Your teachable moment: Driving in the car is a great time for parents to rehearse these conversations with children so they are at ease with the questions and ready to roll. They can help you make up the questions and, of course, they get to answer the questions too. Model having back and forth conversations with imaginary people or friends, don’t hesitate from adding some humor to it, kids love to laugh at absurdities, like what to say to Mr. Elephant at the zoo or Mr. Ralph who, of course, owns Ralphs grocery store.

4. Planning and organizational skills: How to clean out a backpack. How to neatly put papers in a folder without them getting crinkled. How to lay out clothes the night before (also builds good planning skills). How to prepare lunch with their parent the night before.

Your teachable moment: After homework is done but before TV privilege time. Now is the time to run through all the necessary prep work for the next day. The trick is forcing yourself to take the time to teach these skills in a patient and relaxed way at the end of a long day. It's always so much easier just to do it yourself, right? Don't! Your little Johnny needs to pack up his own backpack and put it right by the front door all by himself. He can do it!

5. Nutrition: Children must eat foods that are not white. I lost count as to how many parents have told me that their child will only eat exactly 3 foods, over the years. How did that happen? Eating a healthy diet is the most important brain-building activity.

Your teachable moment: Start young. Give them nutritious food before they have an opinion. The world of natural food is delicious! Whole Foods offers cooking classes for kids or you can buy simple cook books with pictures and experiment. Do not succumb to every plea for orange-dyed snacks, and oversalted, oversugared pseudo-food that only benefits food industries but certainly not your child. DO NOT. EVER. PLEASE.

6. Entertainment: Do not introduce your child to iPads or iPhones until at least age 5. You have control until then. Use your parental control and your wisdom. Please. One parent I know equated the iPad to vodka for an alcoholic. It can be that addictive. Why would you want to do that to your child? From age 0-5 is the time for a child's sensorium to develop, including sensory relationship with the world. That does not include using a finger to swipe for immediate gratification, but does include crawling, touching, tasting, sensing and interacting with real people in real time.

Your teachable moment: Any moment when you are stressed and it would be so much easier just to hand over the device. No, make that BEFORE you are stressed. PLAN AHEAD. Are you going to be in the car for a long stretch? Doctor waiting room? Long meeting? Long car pool line? Remember drawing on a scratch pad with crayons? Picture books? CDs? If you can't listen to Radio Disney for one more second, try movie soundtracks or children's classics like "Peter and the Wolf." Plan to have conversation topics or plan songs from your childhood to teach your child while waiting. Teach them finger games or other ways to entertain themselves for those few minutes.

Reference: <http://positivelyatypical.com/2013/09/29/parents-here-are-your-teachable-moments/>