



USEP-OHIO PARENT TIP

Moms - Our First Teachers

This brief Parent Tip is provided at no cost by United Services for Effective Parenting-Ohio, Inc. as a tool to assist parents, teachers, grandparents and all who help to care for and to raise our children. For more information on this and other tools from USEP-OHIO refer to the conclusion of this Parent Tip.

Mothers are the first teachers in our lives. Much about what we feel, pay attention to and give back to the world comes from the indelible influence of Mom on our minds, hearts and spirits.

The fact that research tells us newborns focus on the face and voice of their mother more than any other influence is only the beginning of the story of connectedness between mother and child.

What we mothers do or say is critical in the lives of our children. The exposure that we give our youngsters to influences in *our lives* is sure to influence *their* lives more than we ever expect. So *what we think is the right way to parent-to mother, is so important to get right!*

Facts we know: drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause irreversible damage to the growing baby; babies who are constantly exposed to stress and fear, cannot learn at a normal rate; infants who are continuously ignored learn not to cry when they are hungry or need changing, do not trust their environment and fail to thrive; children who are not placed in safe seats in automobiles are much more likely to suffer severe injury in case of a crash. Mothers accept these and lots of other facts, and care for their children accordingly.

Wrong information can influence mothering in surprising ways. The recent study of TV watching in our homes spun off some frightening facts. In the USA 60% of three month old infants are watching TV on a regular basis, and 90% of two year olds are regular TV watchers. Maybe their mothers think that the bright lights and the loud music are

needed to stimulate and teach their children. Educators and researchers fear that our babies are learning to watch television for entertainment and stimulation that traps them into being passive observers. A new Pew Research Center survey found that only 15% of the eighteen to twenty-nine year olds in our country read a daily newspaper. Most got their information from TV shows like Comedy Central.

The right information about how children can be stimulated and learn is all about what Mom can offer - loving interaction with children. Mom's face, loving hands, and voice are the critical tools for learning. Moms who listen and guide are indeed the best teachers at infancy and beyond.

Our future is certainly in the hands of Moms (and dads and caregivers) and depends upon what they think is the *right stuff* to teach the children. Moms have tremendous power to determine what and how children learn. We can make a child's life miserable or joyous, and instill in them a limited or a boundless capacity to learn and grow. *So, we must be thinking moms every day! The best way to get it right, and to remain the most effective teacher in your child's life, is to keep listening and learning, to interact with your children each day, and make being a MOM, your passion.*

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