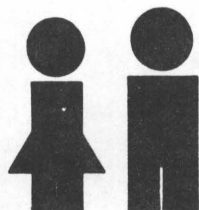


# VIRGINIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

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FOCUS ON CHILDREN

Petersburg, Virginia 23803

## "Difficult" Children

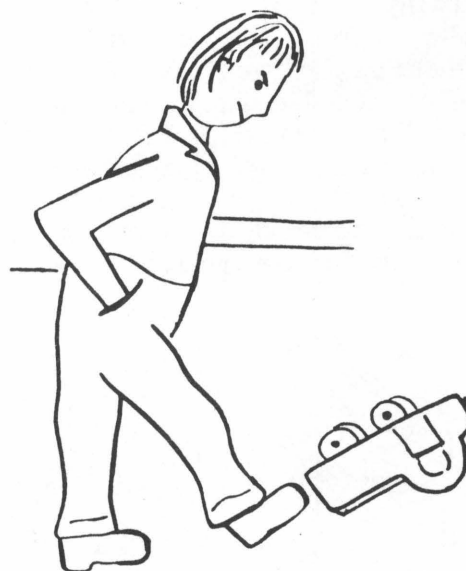
Every parent who has more than one child knows that each child is different. My first child was a calm, easy-going little girl--and I couldn't understand why my friends were having such problems with their children! My child was no problem and I was sure it was because I was such a good mother.

Then I had a second child--a little boy who had a will of iron, who got into everything and was determined to have his own way. I had problems!

Children are born with different temperaments. Some are easy-going and some are very difficult. Yell at one child and he will cry. Disapproval upsets him. Yell at another child and he is unconcerned. Your words affect him no more than water affects a duck! Other children are somewhere between the two extremes. If parents recognize their child's temperament and work with him accordingly, they will save themselves and the child a lot of misery.

Difficult children as infants are very irregular in eating,

sleeping, and elimination. They cry a lot. When they are faced with foods that are strange, people they don't know, or new places, they protest loudly or withdraw. As preschoolers, new things like day care or a birthday party bring on howling or other kinds of misbehavior. Difficult children shriek more than they whine. When they are frustrated, they throw tantrums. They don't mind, won't eat, won't play with other children, won't go to bed at night, or won't take a bath.



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c. 2 Difficult children have been called "mother-killers." Mothers of these children may feel either frustrated, guilty, resentful, or anxious--or all at the same time. However, problems with the children rise most often when parents don't know how to handle this kind of child.

There are fewer problems when parents take the child's temperament into consideration. It helps to be consistent and calm--to wait out the child's storms without becoming angry and to be good-humored in dealing with him.

These children need firm, steady, patient, and consistent care. It is not easy to be patient and consistent. When the child keeps screaming for something he wants, it is easier to give in and have peace and quiet than it is to be firm and endure the screaming. It is easier to yell at the child and insist that he stop crying at once than it is to ignore it.

Yet giving in and yelling at the child are not effective in getting rid of behavior you don't like. It is much more effective, though harder for the parent, to be firm and not give in to the child. If the child learns that his screaming will not help him get what he wants, he will not be as likely to continue screaming.



Setting up routines, and sticking to them, helps difficult children. Having meals and bedtime at a certain hour helps reduce friction.

Setting up simple rules, and insisting that they be observed, helps parents deal with difficult children. Let the child know what the consequences are for disregarding the rules and be consistent in carrying out the consequences.

One child, for example, who generally was quite difficult, was quite obedient about staying out of the street, not touching electric plugs, and waiting to cross the street with the traffic light. His mother was firm and consistent in teaching the child about safety, and he had learned the rules. If she had been as consistent and firm about teaching other behavior as she was about safety, the child would not have been nearly as difficult.

Parents should stop blaming themselves for their hard-to-raise children and realize that these children were born with their temperamental traits. By trying to understand the temperaments of their children, they can deal more effectively with them. Being consistent, firm, patient, and good-humored will make life with difficult children easier for parents and for children.

#### NOTE

"Doing is Fun" is a free pamphlet suggesting to adults and children how to learn more about their immediate world and make it a little bit better. This guide explores all seasons.

For a copy, send a long, self addressed stamped envelope to: The Garden Club of America, 589 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022.

## Warm Fuzzies and Cold Pricklies

A WARM FUZZY, according to Alvin Freed in his book, TA for Tots, is something that others do or say that makes us feel all warm and fuzzy inside...like...when they say...

"Good morning!"

"My, that is a pretty dress."

"Thank you."

"I like being with you."

"You are a nice person."

"You are doing a fine job here."

"I love you."

Warm Fuzzies feel good...like a gentle touch of the hand or a kiss...



A COLD PRICKLY is something that others do or say that makes us feel all cold and prickly inside...like...when they say...

"Don't act so dumb."

"How can you be so sloppy."

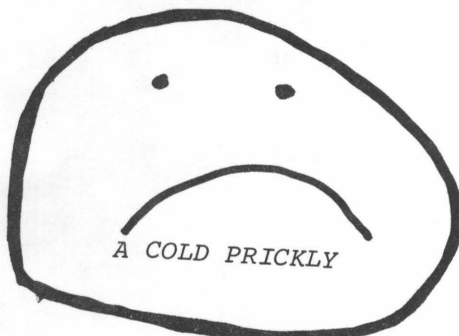
"How can you make so many mistakes?"

"Your hair looks terrible."

"Shut up."

"Don't bother me now."

Cold Pricklies hurt...like a slap on the face or a spanking...



Both Warm Fuzzies and Cold Pricklies are called strokes. We all need them. But children, more than anybody else, need Warm Fuzzies from others to make them feel loved and worthwhile. The number of Warm Fuzzies they get may determine how good they feel about themselves for the rest of their lives.

Babies need a lot of strokes so they can feel "OK"...like rocking and cuddling...and older children need strokes, too...like listening and touching and praising.

If children don't get enough Warm Fuzzies, they begin to feel that they are Not-OK. Sometimes they do things that bring them some Cold Pricklies just to get attention. If they can't get a Warm Fuzzy for being nice, they will settle for a Cold Prickly. A Cold Prickly is better than no stroke at all!

Most parents spend much time teaching their children all of the "should's" and "should-not's" of life. They get so busy doing this that they forget to give out Warm Fuzzies for all of the wonderful and good things that children do each day.

### WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

1. Give Warm Fuzzies consistently, every day, when children do what you want.
2. Encourage children to talk about their feelings so they won't feel guilty about them.
3. Avoid giving too many Cold Pricklies.
4. Don't make it necessary for children to have to settle for Cold Pricklies because they aren't getting enough Warm Fuzzies!

-Frances Jones, Specialist  
Arkansas Cooperative  
Extension Service

# Fun at Home

## Clothespin Drop

For young children: Place a quart-size bottle on the floor behind a chair or sofa. Kneel on the seat and try to drop clothespins (or bottle caps or pennies) into the bottle.

## "Simon Says" Exercises

Play this follow-the-leader game using exercises, such as: touch your toes; somersaults; running and/or jumping in place; hopping on one foot; knee-bends; sit-ups. See how fast you can do them.

## Bowling

You can play this anywhere, although a rug softens sound. Set up 5 or 6 empty snack canisters as pins. Roll a tennis or rubber ball to knock them over. Points are scored by the number knocked over - set a winning total before you start.

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