

## **The Toddler Years - Discipline - Part Two**

*By Mike Witzky*

I have just completed the series of articles related to the first five years of childhood development. In the series, I discussed the major aspects of a child's growth and maturity. It is thought by many that these years are some of the most critical in a person's life because a personality is formed from a clean slate. Actually, I have not discussed any aspects of genetics, which affects things like eye color, skin color, potential propensity for certain diseases, and even personality and physical traits. And although these can play a major role in our development, it is beyond the purpose of these articles. Instead, I have focused on the aspects of growth and development for which we have some direct impact.

Parents are the single most powerful and important influence on a child during the first years of their life. Once they enter school, teachers and peers begin to have ever increasing influence. Once this begins, there is a steady movement of the child toward independence. Parents will take their rightful place in this procession, but will not be the only and sometimes not even the most significant player. That is why the first 4 to 5 years are some of the most important for good parent-child relationships. Some parents see this and will try to keep their influence as primary over their children for as long as they can. This is the reason some parents home school their children. In my opinion, it is not one of the better reasons to home school a child. Sheltering and protecting a child from perceived outside influences never works. At some point in time, the child will enter society and face challenges like everyone else. Our responsibility as parents is to prepare our children for that time and the best way to do that is to establish a safe and nurturing environment in the child's early years.

In another series of articles I have discussed the school years.

If you think your child may benefit from professional assistance, please go to the "Find a Service Provider" section of the BHG Web site <http://www.bhg.org> to locate a behavioral healthcare agency in your county.

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