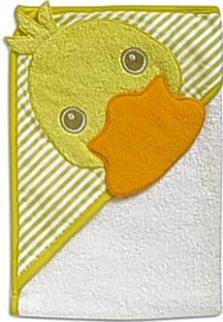


Two of the best . . . hooded towels

Mothercare Duck Cuddle 'n' Dry Hooded Towel

This 100% soft cotton towel with applique embroidery, a hood and a soft jersey lining will help keep baby warm and cosy after a bath. Suitable from birth, available from www.mothercare.com, £12.99.



Cuddledry Snuggle Towel

Soft, absorbent microfibre Snuggle Monkey, Snuggle Bunny and Snuggle Polar Bear character towels are designed for older children aged three to six years, who've grown out of their toddler towels but still want something fun and snuggly. It costs £29.99 from www.cuddledry.com



the buzz **B** Parenting

Family forum



SASHA BROWN, of Community Family Care, helps parents to tackle swearing

Tackling swearing amongst younger children

With the New Year in full swing many families will have set challenges for 2014 and will be looking to make changes for the year ahead. Many children experiment with using words that they pick up from others, particularly if they know it causes stress for their parents. Swearing is an issue that many parents struggle to tackle but is one that most want their children to stop doing. Here are some simple suggestions to help tackle the problem:

Why

Most children will experiment with words that they hear others say, particularly if they see others receiving a reaction for using them. Swearing is more likely to continue if it receives attention or a reaction, such as laughing, which can reinforce the negative behaviour.

How to discourage

- Set a good example – make sure you use appropriate language yourself to set a good example and encourage the desired behaviour.
- Use planned ignoring – this is a good strategy for the first time that children use a swear word. If it receives no attention then it is less likely to be used again.
- Plan ahead – make sure you know which words are acceptable and which ones are not. It is also useful to have a clear strategy for how you will tackle the problem behaviour as this will help you to feel confident in dealing with it as well as ensuring that those around you are following the same plan.
- Discuss the problem – when your child is calm discuss the problem with them. Give them alternative words that you find acceptable to use instead.

Managing swearing

If your child continues to use words that you find unacceptable tell them what the problem is and give a consequence. For example "John you are using words that aren't acceptable, you must now go to time out for five minutes".

Other consequences could be not receiving the reward for using acceptable words, reduction in television time, or any other privilege that you have agreed with your child. Be consistent and follow through with your consequence even if there are protests, your child will quickly learn that it is not acceptable.

How to encourage acceptable words

Praise your child for using acceptable words for a set period of time. This depends on the extent of your child's swearing, for example, if your child uses unacceptable words when playing with other children praise your child each time they use acceptable words whilst playing. Remember to keep the praise specific and tell your child what behaviour you liked. Another form of reinforcing the use of acceptable words is through using behaviour charts to monitor and encourage the positive behaviour.

Review

Remember to regularly review your child's progress and adjust your strategy for dealing with it where necessary.

■ Community Family Care, based at Staunton, Gloucestershire helps families, children and young people in need of additional support. It seeks to improve parents' confidence, help with routines to get children to school, or more complex support dealing with challenging behaviours at home. The work its staff carry out includes peer mentoring and life coaches for young people, and family support programmes. www.communityfamilycare.co.uk

Blue sky thinking

Blue Skies Natural Parenting Centre provides plenty of resources and advice, as LISA JONES found out

Pictures: Kevin Fern CHKF20140123D-014_C

WHEN it comes to parenting, there's no right or wrong answer, according to the woman behind a natural parenting centre and play cafe in Gloucestershire.

Blue Skies is the brainchild of former teacher Nicole Hastie, whose search for the perfect parenting approach for her two daughters led her on a voyage of discovery and resulted in the creation of the Cheltenham-based hub.

Blue Skies provides resources and workshops across Gloucestershire to help parents look for ways to encourage and support their children while caring for the planet.

They include helping to supply cloth nappies and organic food, and running workshops in topics such as baby-led weaning. Nicole said: "Parents are so much more informed now. But sometimes there can be information overload.

"We make it clear that all parents and choices are welcome here. People come here to talk about all types of parenting issues. We give suggestions on how we can do things that are more earth-friendly.

"As long as parents have the best interests of their children at heart, that's the main thing.

"It was my own parenting journey that led me to realise that you can pick whichever way of parenting worked for you."



Nicole Hastie the owner of Blue Skies, with Yann Lacy and William Rowe. Inset: Zofia Kmiec

Is the natural approach best?

WE posed Nicole Hastie and Karen Archer, Netmums South West regional editor, a few questions about the natural parenting approach to some hot topics:

Bedtime – How do I judge what is the best time to set for bed time?

Nicole: Most of our parents have very young children, so they don't tend to have set bedtimes yet.

Karen: Try and fit in with the child's natural pattern. It's all about trial and error to find what fits your child best.

TV – How much television should my children watch?

Nicole: There's a lot of research out

there which suggests that more than two hours can be damaging. But then some programmes can be educational. Karen: A useful rule of thumb is to aim for no more than two hours a day for children over two.

Sleep – How much sleep do my children need?

Nicole: It's a very individual thing. If your child is finding it difficult the following day, then they may need more sleep.

Karen: As a general rule, children aged 18 months to five years need 10 to 12 hours sleep and those aged five to 10 between nine and 11 hours.

Weaning – When is it right to wean my child?

Nicole: Research suggests that a child is ready to eat solid food from around six months. They can eat crudities or chunks of food and it helps develop co-ordination and independence through making choices. If your child is interested in what you are eating, it can be a sign they are ready to eat solid food.

Karen: It is thought that, in general, babies under six months have kidneys and guts that are not mature enough to cope with a more diverse diet and that early weaning can increase the risk of infections and allergies.