

Shy Children

Some parents worry that their shy child seems fearful. Fearfulness is not always the reason for the child's timid behavior. Often it is a matter of timing. Remember, there are times when every child feels shy.

One child may be quick to explore new things, like the toddler who races through the shopping mall to find out what is up ahead. Another prefers to explore the mall slowly from the safety of a parent's arms. Both personalities are normal.

The shy child feels unsure about new people and situations and needs time. Your child may hold back, watching and waiting before joining an activity. If pushed, your child resists and clings to you. This behavior can be very frustrating for a parent.

There aren't ways to force a shy child to become more outgoing. Forcing causes more fear and s/he will only become MORE shy! When your shy child learns that you respect his/her "way," the child feels comfortable exploring. The more often you allow the time needed to discover new things, the less stressful exploring is and s/he feels more self-confident.

Respecting your child's pace allows him-her to feel more control. A child who feels s/he can control the pace, feels less fearful and develops self-confidence. When you push a child to go faster, s/he resists and shows fearful behavior like hiding and clinging.

Be a gentle cheerleader. Show signs that you accept your child's way. Your child watches you to see if you feel the same way s/he does about new people or new experiences. Smile and stand nearby. When you feel anxious for your child to be outgoing, your child sees your expression and thinks that you are feeling afraid too!

Pointers for Parents:

- ✓ Do give your child plenty of time to adapt to new situations.
- ✓ Do not force your child to be out-going.
- ✓ Let your child hold your hand for extra security.
- ✓ Take your child's behavior in stride. You be confident to show your child how to feel secure.
- ✓ Avoid describing your child as being shy. Use positive words like, "Johnny is a very good observer."
- ✓ Be patient and allow your child time to develop self-confidence.