

Reading with toddlers reduces harsh parenting, enhances child behavior

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People who regularly read with their toddlers are less likely to engage in harsh parenting and the children are less likely to be hyperactive or disruptive, a Rutgers-led study finds.

Previous studies have shown that frequent shared reading prepares [children](#) for school by building language, literacy and [emotional skills](#), but the study by Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School researchers may be the first to focus on how shared reading affects parenting.

The study, published along with a video abstract in the *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics*, suggests additional benefits from shared reading—a stronger parent-child bond and less hyperactivity and attention problems in children.

"For parents, the simple routine of reading with your child on a daily basis provides not just academic but emotional benefits that can help bolster the child's success in school and beyond," said lead researcher Manuel Jimenez, an assistant professor at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School's department of pediatrics, and an attending developmental behavioral pediatrician at Children's Specialized Hospital. "Our findings can be applied to programs that help parents and caregivers in underserved areas to develop positive parenting skills."

The study reviewed data on 2,165 [mother-child pairs](#) from 20 large U.S. cities in which the women were asked how often they read to their children at ages 1 and or 3. The mothers were re-interviewed two years later, about how often they engaged in physically and/or psychologically aggressive discipline and about their children's [behavior](#). The study controlled for factors such as parental depression and [financial hardship](#) that can contribute to [harsh parenting](#) and children's disruptive behavior.

The results showed that frequent shared reading at age 1 was associated with less harsh parenting at age 3, and frequent shared reading at age 3 was associated with less harsh parenting at age 5. Mothers who read frequently with their children also reported fewer disruptive behaviors from their children, which may partially explain the reduction in harsh

parenting behaviors.

The findings can strengthen programs that promote the academic, emotional and socioeconomic wellbeing of children, the authors said.

More information: Manuel E. Jimenez et al, Early Shared Reading Is Associated with Less Harsh Parenting, *Journal of Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics* (2019). [DOI: 10.1097/DBP.0000000000000687](https://doi.org/10.1097/DBP.0000000000000687)

Provided by Rutgers University

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