



## healthy, happy kids



Balance active play with quiet cuddle time

### EMOTIONS

## How Dads Play

**Q** I try to be a modern dad—both approachable and playful with my kids. Still, sometimes it feels like my kids are shy around—or even afraid of—me. Why would this be?

**A** Balancing the many responsibilities of being a dad—such as setting limits for your kids while also encouraging open communication—can be challenging. Furthermore, research has shown that preschoolers tend to perceive their fathers as people with whom to have fun and roughhouse. But by being unaware of your strength or size, you may accidentally be too boisterous as a playmate, says Richard Gallagher, Ph.D., director of the Parenting Institute at the NYU Child Study Center, in New York. Of course, this doesn't mean you shouldn't play with your kids. When you notice them looking frightened, however, ask if they're afraid you're going to hurt them, then calmly assure them that you won't. This might be a cue for you that the play is getting too rough, or that your kids are getting too wound up or overstimulated. During these times, it's best to take the play level down a notch, and read a book, play a quiet game, or cuddle up together to tell jokes or funny stories.

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### DEFINITION

## Rx: WebIP

Web-based Information Prescriptions (WebIPs) are prescriptions doctors write directing parents to reliable Web sites that address a specific diagnosis, says researcher Lee M. Ritterband, Ph.D., of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. By requesting a WebIP from their child's doctor, parents avoid misinformation on other sites, and can learn more about their child's health issues and help take part in his healthcare. A pediatrician or specialist can direct you to a reputable Web site with details about your child's condition. For general medical information, Ritterband recommends sites such as those for the American Academy of Pediatrics ([aap.org](http://aap.org)), MedlinePlus, a service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health ([medlineplus.gov](http://medlineplus.gov)), and the American Academy of Family Physicians ([familydoctor.org](http://familydoctor.org)).

### BEHAVIOR

## Not a Party Animal?

While some kids seem to socialize easily and rush into the mix of kids at school or parties, others are more hesitant, needing to ease into new situations slowly, or watch the action from the sidelines before jumping in. These children—as many as one in four—are probably introverts. A recent book, *The Hidden Gifts of the Introverted Child: Helping Your Child Thrive in an Extroverted World*, by Marti Olsen Laney, Psy.D. (Workman, 2005), offers parents tips for helping "innies" enjoy super-stimulating events that may seem overwhelming at first. Here are the author's tips on prepping an introvert for a friend's birthday party:

- When a birthday-party invitation arrives, talk about it with your child.
- When you call to RSVP, find out how many kids will be there and what activities are planned. Tell your child in advance so she can mentally prepare.
- Make sure your child is both well rested and well fed before leaving for the party. Hunger is a common cause of meltdowns, especially among introverted kids.
- Get to the birthday bash a few minutes early, so your child can get acclimated before other guests arrive.
- Let her ease into the party at her own pace, by watching with you from the sidelines. Don't push your child to interact before she feels ready.

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