



Your Three-Year-Old: Friend or Enemy

Louise Bates Ames , Frances L. Ilg , Carol C. Haber

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A three-year-old is a real puzzle to parents, sometimes anxious to please and befriend, sometimes strong-willed and difficult to get along with. At the heart of the three-year-old's personality is often an emotional insecurity—and this causes a host of problems for parents! Drs. Ames and Ilg, recognized authorities on child behavior and development, help parents understand what's going on inside that three-year-old head, what problems children have, and how to cope with the toddler who is sometimes friend, sometimes enemy.

Included in this book:

- Jealousy of a new sibling
- Toilet training
- How to improve a child's eating habits
- Friendships with peers
- Common fears
- Developing language skills
- Nursery school
- Books for parents and three-year-olds

“Louise Bates Ames and her colleagues synthesize a lifetime of observation of children, consultation, and discussion with parents. These books will help parents to better understand their children and will guide them through the fascinating and sometimes trying experiences of modern parenthood.”—Donald J. Cohen, M.D., Director, Yale Child Study Center, Irving B. Harris Professor of Child Psychiatry, Pediatrics, and Psychology, Yale School of Medicine

Your Three-Year-Old: Friend or Enemy Details

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From Reader Review Your Three-Year-Old: Friend or Enemy for online ebook

Jeff says

I thought that Ames had written what the essential user friendly guides to child development based on the fact that every time I turn around these books pop up. They are at our library, on bookshelves in every major bookstore, in people's homes. They are down right ubiquitous.

With all this coverage you would think they were quite good. However, they were all published in 1985 and might as well have been published in the 1950's with the language that Ames uses and the assumptions that she makes. Throughout Your Three-Year-Old, Ames refers solely to the mom as the parent that cares for the child, and there is a general assumption that the mom is with the three-year-old most of the time thus more likely than not a mother that doesn't work outside of the home. In addition, when not explicitly talking about girls, the three-year-old in question is always referred to with masculine pronouns. Comments like how it is assumed that "Father" will expect the three-year-old to have proper table manners when it is developmentally inappropriate are down right aggravating.

With that said, the development ideas are pretty useful. Ames and her co-author make pains to describe in general terms what to expect from three year olds and differentiate between the three-year-old and the three-and-a-half-year-old as there are changes and typically shifts within any year at such young ages that are fairly typical. I found all of this useful, but repetitive.

In the end, if you are looking for a better overall user friendly book on child development, I recommend Yardsticks by Chip Wood. It covers ages 4 to 14, so doesn't go quite as young as the Ames books, and it doesn't go into the same level of depth because it covers so many ages quickly. However, it gives a strong overview of each age and is very user friendly with the format allowing the reader to get a good grasp of what they should expect from kids as they develop.

Thystle says

This is one of those books where there are little bits of information that are very helpful and whole chunks where I read it and cringe. It talks about what three year olds are like and basically generalizes 36 months old vs. 42 months old (3.5years). It also says some things like "an occassional spanking, if it works, is not immoral..." !!! I've tried to ignore all of the sections on parenting if it assumes a control/coercion world view and just look for the interesting parts.

The section on having your three year old tell you stories was very interesting. It seemed to correspond to some studies the authors had done and talked about how common violence was in stories and how children's relationship with their parents were manifested (less pleasant at 42 months than 36 months with a breakdown by male/female). Some example stories were for girls animals or pets getting hurt and for boys things getting broken. This was reassuring so that I have an idea that this is very normal in children of this age. Also all the part where they gave sample language that children say was very helpful - it reminds me of how three year olds use their imagination or how their relationship to time (yesterday vs. today) is changing or how their use of prepositions is developing (next to, on, by, etc.).

So if you can skip the bad parts (only very rarely horrid, mostly its gentle yet mainstream parenting advice) and just pick out the interesting tidbits, ignore their authority and find what's relevant to you, you might find

this a helpful read for understanding your child.

Kristan says

I'm not sure how (according to the author) a 3 year old is pleasant to be around, but when they turn 3.5, it's a whole different story. I find my 3 year old to be extremely challenging right now, and I can't imagine his behavior will be drastically worse in 6 months. The one thing I did takeaway was to minimize the stand-offs and battles and not be afraid to enlist outside help.

Allison says

What a crappy crappy bad book. I finished this book a week ago and keep trying to write a review but I'm not even sure where to start...

First off, I only have a barely three year old, but I've talked to people who have had 3yo's and the way this PhD author is describing the 3s doesn't really match up that well. The subtitle is Friend or Enemy and Ames (the author) seems to think that 3's are your friend and 3 1/2 yo's act like your enemy. And "our best advice" on dealing with your 3 1/2 yo? "enlist the services of a good baby-sitter for as much of the time as possible". Seriously? The BEST advice you can come up with is let someone else care for 3 1/2 yo child for as much time as possible? They also recommend nursery school, day care, and an untrained high school girl consistently throughout. Which leads me to my second big issue with this book... all the strange (ok, BAD) advice. Here's some other choice advice:

advice on whining: "it may help the child if you can encourage him to express his inner feeling in a poem or song so that he may be in control of the whining instead of having the whining in control of him". I don't even have a comment to that.

advice on acting out in public: "if your child is one who all of a sudden becomes quite unmanageable in stores....keep such occasions to a minimum." And if you're a temporarily single mom who really does need to buy groceries (and yarn on sale at AC Moore, of course)? I guess you can go back to the grocery store next year when your kid is four.

advice on tv: "Remember that television can be your friend.....it can keep a child happy, well behaved and out of difficulty for long periods." So, I suppose if you can't get a babysitter to do your job raising your child, just get the tv to do it.

advice on making a child feel good about himself: "let him know that you like him....and see to it that for much of the time he encounters situations in which he can behave successfully". This assumes I'd rather be around a child who is more concerned with how s/he feels than how others are feeling. But, then again, this is a child that I'm not around much anyway since s/he is spending most of her time with the babysitter and the tv.

advice about a three year old who has no respect for grown-ups and is constantly interrupting them and who is not well behaved: "she is behaving...like a normal three-year-old. There is not necessarily anything wrong with her." But can't you can still teach her to be at least better behaved?

advice about a three year old who gets angry if daddy kisses mommy in front of her: "have father greet you with a wink instead of a kiss" My advice would have been that if the child doesn't like it, she can go in the

Especially the assumptions about the role of the father, who was described as being a stern disciplinarian out of touch with his children. That may have been true when this book was written, but thankfully doesn't describe my family.

Tierney says

A thoughtful primer on child development (there's one for every year of childhood up to 14) in terms of what's typical, where kids are coming from and why they feel what they feel and do what they do. It helped me in empathizing with my daughter when she's acting out and in assessing what problem behaviors might just be a phase. Word of warning that it's dated since it was written in 1985, especially in its assumptions about gender roles (for both parents and kids). I was able to mostly ignore that and got a lot out of the more timeless developmental stuff. I'd love it if they updated the series, the authors approach the topic with so much empathy for kids as the growing human beings they are.

Jenn says

If taken only for the information about the mind, emotions, and development of a three year old child, this is a truly wonderful resource! Each book in this series serves to calm the worries of the reader that their once-delightful child has been ruined, revealing the new and often unpleasant behaviors as completely normal, expected developmental stages. In other words: relax! Your kid is NORMAL. I found it's great help, and entertaining to boot! The anachronistic advice is often silly, but any parent could use a little giggle, and the theme of encouraging mom and dad to take it easy and not try to force behavior that is developmentally unreasonable for the child is both sound and timeless.

Hannah Notess says

I think the word you're looking for is "frenemy."

Anna says

I have to say that upon reading the subtitle, 'Friend or Enemy', way back around her third birthday, I thought, "how offensive! My child could never be my enemy! That must be an artifact of the dated discipline advice I know to be endemic to this series!" Enter three-and-a-half, when friend/enemy status is renegotiated on a daily-- nay, hourly-- basis.

But yes, this book certainly is full of incredibly dated advice on discipline ("some endomorphic boys seem to need a good spanking now and again," etc.). But, as in the other books in the series, it co-exists with sensitive, nuanced description of developmental tasks and sequences. Is child development really that standardized, that a book written (I think) in 1978 can so uncannily describe the moods, interests, whims and caprices of my three-year-old in 2008? It would seem so. It's very reassuring. And somehow it's so much easier to be patient with certain kinds of craziness when you know it's necessary to someone's growing understanding of the world to engage in such.

But why aren't these books being revised and republished with fewer instances of bizarre somatyping, and maybe minus the repeated advice to put children in daycare if they are having too many conflicts with Mother?

Darcy says

Alternatively helpful and useless, *Your Three-Year-Old: Friend or Enemy*, comforted me even while it made me scratch my head in bewilderment.

The first chapter, "Characteristics of the Age," contained the best information. In it, the authors explained about the stages of equilibrium and disequilibrium that a child goes through. I found this comforting, as my 3 ½ - year -old is definitely in a stage of disequilibrium. "Your child is not your enemy. It is not you against him" (12), the authors, in emphasizing italics, remind their readers. So the next time your child throws cereal all over your freshly vacuumed floor, and then steps in it to grind it a little further into the carpet (and your soul), repeat this to yourself: "you are not my enemy." It might help.

There were several things that were downright unhelpful or just so common sense you cringe to think that some parents are actually asking such questions (no, mom, your child is not a "mental crackup" because she wants to use her left hand for things). The chapter on the three-year-old birthday party didn't seem to offer much. Let me tell you, there's only one schedule for a child's birthday party: chaos, pure uninhibited sugar high chaos from start to finish.

Their advice for hard to handle children often consisted of getting a babysitter or sending your child to day care so you don't have to deal with them. "Day care when necessary can reduce the time you will need to spend together" (12). True, but not very helpful for the modern stay-at-home mom on a budget. If that doesn't work for you, there's always the other type of babysitter: "the television can be your friend. Wisely used, it can keep a child happy, well behaved and out of difficulty for long periods" (30). Here's your golden ticket to guilt-free screen time for your children. Let's hear it for retro parenting via 1985!

The letters from disgruntled parents at the end and the authors masterful, yet slightly insulting, advice was a real goldmine. One mother gave her child a toy clown and then let him watch a violent show on TV with clowns in it. Much to her surprise, he suddenly became afraid of his clown. She asked if maybe she should "burn the clown before his eyes" or whether they should take the toy clown on vacation or leave it behind. The authors opened up their response with the understatement of the year, "You seem to have made several mistakes."

Amy says

If you're reading this book, it's clearly because you have a 3.5-year-old. A parent of a 3-year-old would not need such a book because 3-year-olds are perfect angels. Add on another 6 months, and you've got a monster child on your hands. Never fear. This book is here to help.

The first thing you must realize, dear mother, is that you are the problem. The child only acts like a monster around you because you actually care about your child and they can sense this. Thus, the first step is to remove yourself from the picture as much as possible. Your best bet is to pour yourself another margarita and hire a babysitter for the next six months. The best sort of babysitter is a young teenager that the child can sense doesn't give a damn about whether the child lives or dies. You'll certainly not want to take your little

terror to the grocery store with you. Lacking a babysitter, it's best to come to an agreement with other neighborhood mothers of monster 3.5-year-old children to alternate going to the store with looking after a house full of neighborhood hooligan preschoolers.

During the day, distraction is your best friend. You'll need to plan to either sit them down with a box of cookies or sit them down in front of the television for as many hours as they can tolerate.

Some mothers are foolish enough to think it's possible to sit down to eat a meal with their monster child. This is a bad idea, as it may incur the wrath of an angry father who demands a side of silence and civility with his meat and potatoes. Thus, preschoolers should be served their meals earlier than and separate from the rest of the family. You should sit the child down, plopp the plate in front of the child monster, say "there it is," and run far away from the child and the dining area just as you would from a wild animal devouring fresh prey.

Potty training may also be approached from the viewpoint of the child as an animal. You should put down fresh newspaper in your bathroom and have the unpottytrained monster child poop and pee in the corner of the bathroom because, at this stage in their development, it's hopeless to think you could get them to use a toilet.

There's a nice little song that you can teach your 3.5-year-old. It goes something like this:

*I can't wait until I'm four.
Then I won't be a monster any more.
No more tantrums on the floor.
No more putting mommy through the door.
But while I'm 3.5
And we're living in 1985
You're lucky you're still alive.
So don't give me no more jive.*

The end.

Kristen says

Outdated? Yes. Full of dad-at-work mom-at-home assumptions? Yes. Worth reading for some of the child development points? Yes.

I picked this up when my 3 1/2 year old suddenly changed into a new, uncooperative, tantrum-thrower. And I discovered that everything that was going on could be explained by his developmental stage. The descriptions of his behavior were spot on. Unfortunately the only concrete recommendation was to get a babysitter to help us ride out the storm until he turns 4, which is neither appealing nor affordable for us. That said, the understanding that he is acting out because he suddenly feels insecure has been really useful. And I have a bunch of strategies that seem to be working now that I understand what is going on with him.

Tiffany says

I don't agree with everything in this book, and it's been a while since I read it, but what this series does is give a great overview of what to expect socially, psychologically, emotionally, and in regard to general development. It's a little outdated, but there have been a lot of moments when I was like, ah, yes - now it makes sense. For example, 3's hate it when things are not whole - once I understood that, I had a better grasp of how to help my own daughters cope with some frustrations. Not a cure all by any means - but handy info.
