



Teaching Your Toddler Manners

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Recently, while standing in a long bank line, I had my hands full. I had my infant daughter on my hip, a jar of quarters in my right hand, and my three-year-old daughter clutching to my other hand. Strangers were smiling and generously complimenting my precious little girls, who presented as angels for the moment. The line continued for what seemed to be miles, and my “angels” were beginning to get a bit restless. Suddenly I felt the stares of the other customers change from friendly to horrified. Without a words notice, my three -year -old lifted my skirt up. Unfortunately, it didn’t drop back into place. With both hands full, I frantically struggled to get the skirt back down without dropping the quarters or my daughters. Once the gasps and catcalls subsided, I realized it was time for a BIG lesson in manners in the Smalley household!

Why Teach Your Toddler Manners? What are Manners?

There is never a better time to begin teaching your toddler about respecting themselves and others. Scripture such as “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39) discusses this concept. Manners include words such as “please” and “thank you” however, respecting other’s feelings or learning proper table etiquette can also be included in this category.

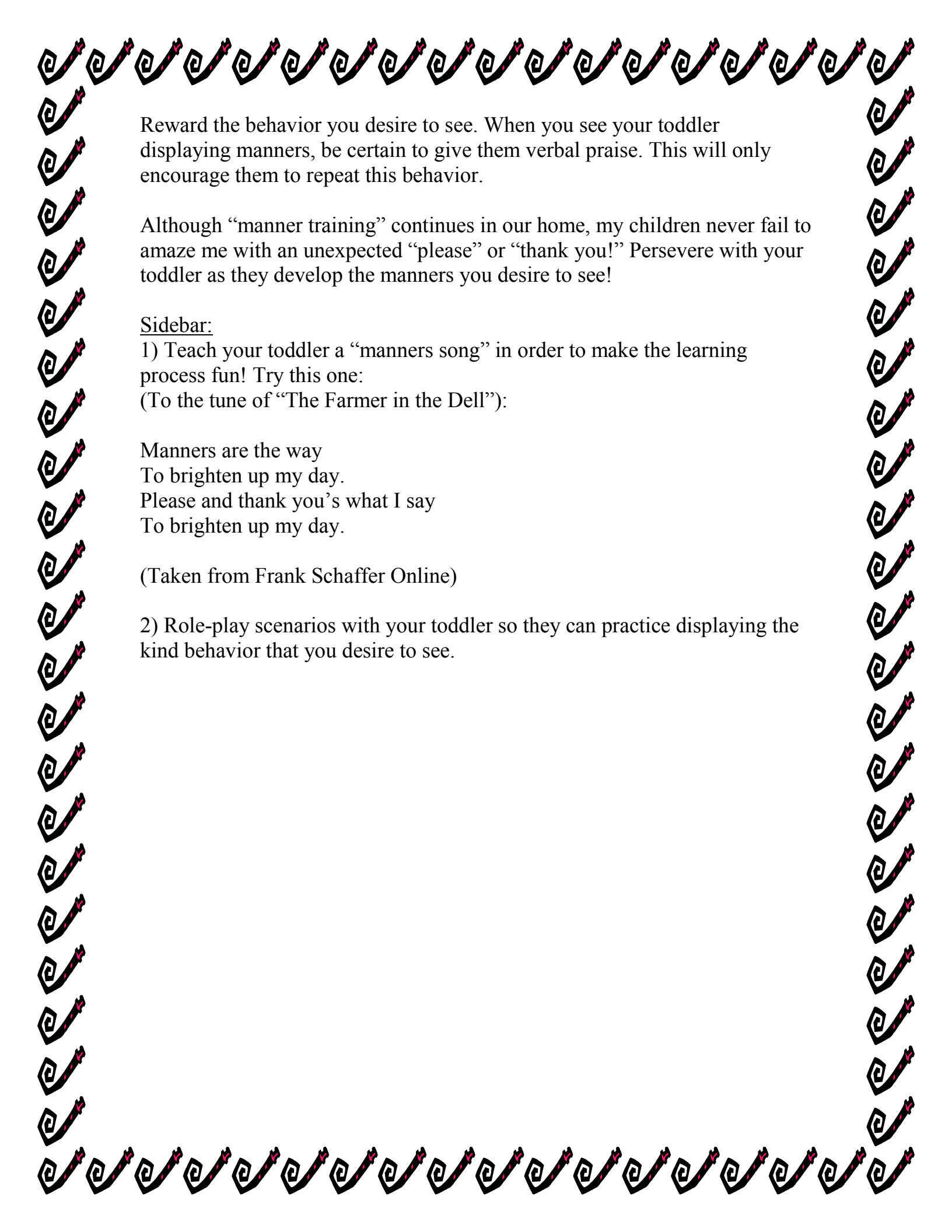
How Do I Teach My Toddler Manners?

After I had my “horrifying” bank experience, I headed home highly motivated for serious toddler “training” sessions. Here are some suggestions for the most effective training:

Work on one skill at a time. Don’t overwhelm your child with numerous tasks at once. Take them one at a time.

Discuss why the behavior is important and how the child can display it. It is helpful to explain to the child how they can best display the “manner” and discuss that the behavior will also communicate respect or consideration to others.

Model the behavior you want to see. Toddlers will learn manners best by observing others display them. Be certain that you are modeling the behaviors you desire to see.



Reward the behavior you desire to see. When you see your toddler displaying manners, be certain to give them verbal praise. This will only encourage them to repeat this behavior.

Although “manner training” continues in our home, my children never fail to amaze me with an unexpected “please” or “thank you!” Persevere with your toddler as they develop the manners you desire to see!

Sidebar:

1) Teach your toddler a “manners song” in order to make the learning process fun! Try this one:
(To the tune of “The Farmer in the Dell”):

Manners are the way
To brighten up my day.
Please and thank you’s what I say
To brighten up my day.

(Taken from Frank Schaffer Online)

2) Role-play scenarios with your toddler so they can practice displaying the kind behavior that you desire to see.