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6 Year Visit

At this developmental stage your child is a master with language, speaking 7 or so words in a sentence, forming friendships and have had exposure to another's point of view. There should now be a return to enjoying who they are versus the 5-year-old child who wants to become the friend or idealizes what a friend has. If you find your child is struggling with friendships and balancing what they want as compared with what another wants the time is now to get some help or at least discuss this with the child.

At this age the mind can understand numbers and understands the concept of left and right and understands time. The first introduction to the realm of abstraction has arrived. This may throw some kids off because these concepts are so vast it might feel a bit overwhelming. Some kids at this age will feel a bit lost and could have some sleep disturbances or behavioral concerns. The world becomes a large place with their new understanding and their little body may feel somewhat vulnerable in it.

If you see some sadness or anxiety, some fearfulness or some sleep changes or is becoming oppositional-not hearing what you are saying then you may need to sit down with the child to discuss what is going on with them. Some children respond to tightening the boundaries, another might simply need to discuss their process with you and still another may need to discuss their process with a professional. Too much freedom may not help them feel secure at his time. In my mind, to make them feel safe let them know you will catch them if they make a mistake or if they have questions regarding the world, answer honestly but keep in mind you may not want to load all the world's problems on their shoulders. They only need to know as much as they can take without becoming too stressed out.

Your 6-year-old child has a mind able to grasp many subtleties however it is up to you to discuss their process and to protect them from too much. Expose to appropriate books, activities such as museums and music and sports. In this way we will help them grow but keep them happy and safe. A solid foundation will be easy given appropriate exposure to ideas while maintaining limits on exposures to ideas not appropriate. Let your child know anything can be discussed, nothing is a "wrong" question. In this way they will feel safe to explore the world of possibilities

Enjoy, Call for concerns or questions.

Suzy Holbrook, M.D.