



Should You be Raising a Superbaby?

Paula Palady

Superbabies can become burned out adults.

Gym, math, and reading classes on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Science, ballet, and French on Tuesday and Thursdays. Saturdays and Sundays spent at the museums and art galleries. A very busy young lady. And she's only six months old!

Seriously, many parents today feel compelled to raise a child who will excel and succeed in all areas of her life. And they want to begin now, when the child is only a baby! But there is a fine line between *nurturing* — allowing a child to learn at her own pace, and *pushing* — forcing a child to per-

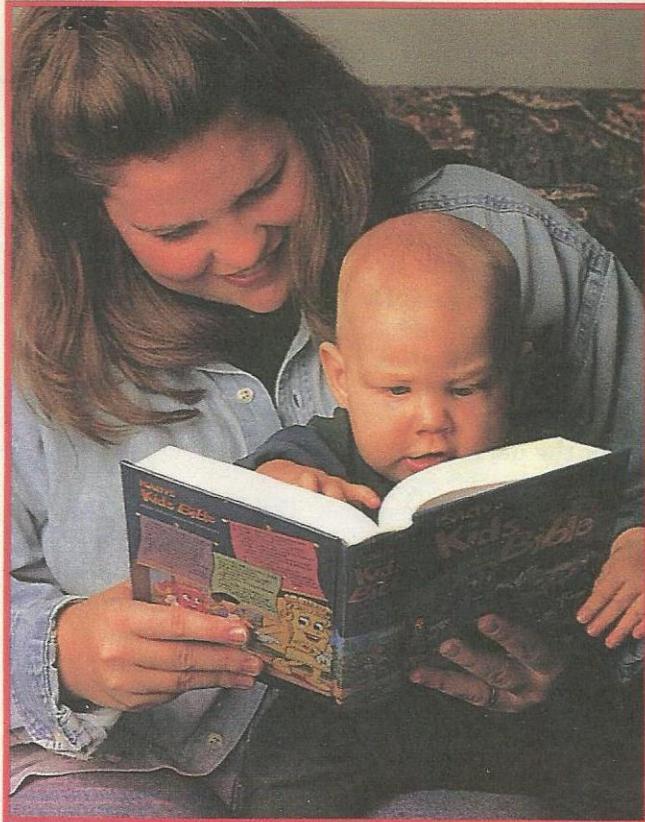
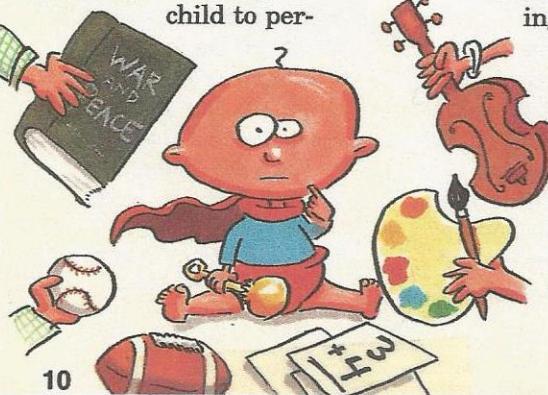
form beyond her maturation level and abilities. Hurrying a child's development before she is ready can have painful results.

Reading early is not an assurance of future success. Children who start school ahead of their peers do not necessarily stay ahead. Children who have been pushed become terrified of failure, often turning into either underachievers or perfectionists.

Many experience burnout long before they reach the age to work, unable to motivate themselves. Others become overstressed workaholics, forgetting how to have fun.

Parents' expectations that exceed a child's abilities can kill her desire to learn. Too many structured activities and too little free play destroys creativity.

Although pushing a child too soon usually has less than desirable results, encouraging him to learn to,



Randy Powers

but not beyond, his limits can have happy rewards. Early, positive experiences, such as a parent reading to a child, are far more important and productive than him knowing his ABC's by the time he's a year old or reading on a sixth grade level in kindergarten.

Right now, your child is a baby. Enjoy these months, and make a conscious decision to let her learn at her own pace, in her own time.

Paula Palady is a columnist for Positive Parenting Magazine and a freelance writer. She lives in Arkansas with her husband and two children.

How do you know if you are pushing or nurturing your child?

The following books can help you decide if you've crossed the line:

The Hurried Child: Growing Up Too Fast Too Soon by David Elkind (Addison-Wesley, 1981).

Whiz Kids — Success at an Early Age by Marilyn Machlowitz (Arbor House, 1985)

Perfectionism: What's Bad About Being Too Good? by Miriam Adderholdt-Elliott, Ph.D. (Free Spirit Publishing, 1987).

All Grown Up and No Place to Go: Teenagers in Crisis by David Elkind (Addison-Wesley, 1984).