



TEDS - environment

TEDS Environment Study NEWSLETTER

September 2002

Dear family,

This is the second newsletter from the TEDS Environment Study for 2002 and we have a lot to tell you about in this edition! We report on progress with the study and plans for the future, and tell you about our new website and e-mail address. We have the results of the drawing competition that featured in the last newsletter too and have included some of the fantastic winning entries. Finally, as we do in every newsletter, we report on some of the interesting findings from the study so far. This time we report on a study about the effects on children of fathers being present or absent.

As always, we hope that this newsletter will help us stay in touch with you and let you know how much we value your participation in the study! You are helping us to understand more about twins and their behaviour and development. You are also helping us to find out about the issues and circumstances that affect families and children in England and Wales.

*With Best Wishes
The TEDS Environment Team*

Progress and plans

As you may know already, we have now finished visiting all 1116 families in the TEDS-Environment study for the second time. We visited you first when your twins were aged four or five and our second visit took place when your twins were aged six or seven. We are hoping that we can visit you again in a few years when the twins are aged ten or eleven. It will be very interesting for us to see how your children have changed by age 10, and we are already planning this visit!

As we will not be seeing you again for a few years, it is very important to us that we keep in touch with you. We have included a **change of address card** with this newsletter, so if you move house or get a new number, please return this completed card to us so we can find you again! Remember you can also call the freephone number which is on the back of the newsletter. You can also e-mail us now or log on to our new website!

TEDS-Environment website

We are pleased to announce that we now have a TEDS-Environment website. The website provides more information about the study and reports on findings from the study so far. It also has links to other websites about twins. Our website has just been developed and we will be adding a lot more to it over the coming months so that it is helpful and interesting for parents. If you have a chance to look at this website, we would love your views and suggestions for improvements!

We also now have an e-mail address, which is different to the TEDS e-mail address (TEDS-Environment is part of the bigger TEDS study). You can use our e-mail address to contact us!



Bedtime problems: nightmares and bedwetting

One of the most common problems faced by parents of young children is bedtime problems. Bedtime problems can include refusing to go to bed, delaying bedtime, bedwetting, calling out to parents, and coming into the parents' bed. Children can also be scared of the dark and experience nightmares. All of these problems can be distressing and exhausting for both parents and children!

There is no single right way to deal with all bedtime problems. If you have concerns about any aspect of your children's sleep, we would suggest that you talk to a health professional such as your GP or health visitor about your concerns. However, we have included below some information about two problems, nightmares and bedwetting, and hope that you find this helpful.

Nightmares

As many as one in three children have bad dreams for a regular period of time. For girls, nightmares seem to be most frequent at about 6 or 7 years of age and for boys it is about 10 or 11 years. A traumatic experience or changes in a child's life, such as starting a new school, may cause nightmares but often there is no cause.

The best way of dealing with your child's nightmare is to sit with him/her until he/she has calmed down and is nearly asleep. It is important to try to not talk about the dream at the time but ask your child about it the next day, at a time when they are feeling relaxed. Children will not always be able to remember what their dream was about, but if they can, sharing their dream with you may help them. If it is a dream that occurs often, you may be able to find out if something is troubling them.

Bedwetting

Bedwetting is a common problem for children until about 5 years of age and affects more boys than girls. By the age of seven, if a child still wets the bed and it concerns them, it may be time to seek assistance from your GP or health visitor.

Research tells us that the most effective treatment for bedwetting is a device called the 'bedwetting alarm'. This involves placing a pad under the bottom sheet of the bed and when a child wets, the bell rings and wakes the child who will then turn the alarm off and go to the toilet. The child learns to connect the feeling of a full bladder with being woken by the alarm and will learn to wake with a full bladder instead of the alarm. About 8 in 10 children stop wetting with the use of the alarm. Your health visitor or GP will be able to tell you more about this device. A few other tips about bedwetting:

- Do not restrict the child's drinks as this will not stop the bedwetting
- Regular waking of a child during the night is not recommended as it can disturb their sleep pattern

Research Findings from TEDS-Environment

Fathers present or absent: effects on children

Background to the study

Many researchers have compared children who are raised by one parent versus two parents to see if this makes any differences to children's behaviour or school achievement. Generally, research shows that the quality of the parent-child relationship matters much more than whether both parents are present.

Some researchers have found that children from two-parent families do better than those from one-parent families. This is often because single parent families have less money available to spend on educational opportunities for their children or because divorce may have temporary negative effects on children. However, children who have a warm, loving parent with enough money to pay for basic necessities do just as well as children raised by both parents.

What was our research question?

In this study, we were interested to find out what happens to children when their fathers who have antisocial behaviour are present or absent. Men who have antisocial behaviour often get arrested or are convicted of crimes, have physical fights, lose their tempers, do not pay bills and debts, and find it difficult to keep a job.

What did we find?

We found that when fathers did not have antisocial behaviour, the longer they lived with their children and the more time they spent taking care of their children, the fewer behaviour problems their children had.

We found just the opposite when fathers did show antisocial behaviour. The longer they lived with their children and the more time they spent taking care of their children, the more behaviour problems their children had. Under these circumstances, growing up with two parents had harmful effects on children's behaviour.

Thus, the benefits of growing up with two parents depend on what sort of parents they are.



Why are the findings of this study important?

In the United States and in Britain, policy makers have suggested that giving parents money to encourage them to get married and stay married will lead to better outcomes for children. The findings of this research study suggest that the qualities of individual parents are most important to children's behaviour, and that encouraging parents to stay married may not be beneficial for all children.

It is important to remember that most children who have a loving parent do well in school and do not show behaviour problems.

The research paper on this study will be published in the Journal of Child Development.

Hallmark birthday cards for children in the study!

Hallmark cards has generously sponsored the TEDS-Environment study which means that all children in the study will receive a card on their 8th and 9th birthdays! Please do let us know if you move house so we can make sure these birthday cards get to your twins.

Winners of the Draw Your Environment Competition

Thanks and congratulations to all children who entered the competition to draw their environments. We received some creative and colourful entries and awarded first prize to three pictures, although all children received achievement certificates and movie vouchers. The pictures from the three winners are displayed below. The winners were: Daniel, William, George, Gemma and Jasmine.

Look out for more competitions in future newsletters!

Comments

If you have any comments about our newsletter or any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact us! We love hearing from you.

OUR Contact details

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Future newsletters

We will continue to report on findings from the TEDS-Environment Study in future newsletters. As we know that many families are interested in twins and school, in the next newsletter we will tell you the findings of a study on classroom separation and twins' behaviour.

And here are the 3 winning entries from our drawing competition!



By
William,
George,
Daniel,
Gemma,
Jasmine

