GOLDEN RULES OF PARENT INTERACTION

As the “public face of science research” in the museums and daycares where we run our studies, we wish to make sure that the families we interact with have the best possible experience. It is our mission to be positive, to educate, and to make families feel safe and happy at all times.

1. **Smile.** Be friendly and professional at all times. You represent both the museum and NYU.
2. **Slow down.** Give every participant/volunteer/staff person your full attention. Speak slowly and clearly, pause for response. Resist the temptation to multitask.
3. **Keep the parents informed.** Make the research process transparent. Walk parents/participants/volunteers/staff through as many steps as possible.
   a. “Next I’m just making sure I know where the baby’s looking”
   b. “First we’ll do a warm-up task”
4. **Be inclusive.** Include interested participants whether we can use the data or not

(because of developmental delays, language barriers, etc). Always allow interested siblings to participate (even if they are the wrong age). Talk to interested adults, even if they are not parents.

1. **Ask – don’t guess.**
   a. Remember that parents and legal guardians may be much older or younger than you expect, may be two men or two women, or may be of a different racial or ethnic background than the child.
      i. If you ask, “Are you her nanny?” “Are you her grandmother?” to someone who is the parent, you can cause hurt feelings.
      ii. Ask instead: “Are you here with your kids today?”, “Are you her legal guardian?”
2. **Children come in all shapes and sizes.**
   i. If you say, “Are you four?” or “he looks about two, right?” to a small 6-year-old or to the parents of a large 1-year-old you may cause hurt or embarrassment.
   ii. Ask instead: “How old are you?” “May I ask how old he/she is?”
   iii. Be careful of making assumptions about gender. If you’re not sure ask “What is your child’s name?”
3. **Keep it positive.** “She did great.” “She explored a lot.” “He was a big help.” If it’s obvious that the child did something other than the predicted behavior: “The children are always right. The children’s job is to show us how children behave. Our predictions can be wrong, but the children never are.”
4. **Be honest and professional.** If you don’t know the answer to a question, say so, but give a way to find the answer (you will contact them after asking someone, recommending another expert to ask, etc). Never guess or make up an answer.
5. **Report any concerns immediately.** If you think something might have gone wrong, tell the supervisor on duty and the PI right away. We can only do damage control when we know what happened. You will never get in trouble for telling us things we need to know.