



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Science & Nature

Environmental pick-up

The next time your family is ready to take a walk, take along a litterbag or two. As you stroll along, keep an eye out for litter and trash and pick it up. (It's also a good idea to wear some gloves.)

This gives you a good opportunity to talk about our planet and what we can do as individuals to help preserve nature's resources.

Talk about the positive examples you see as you walk, such as containers for trash or recycling, as well as problems that need to be addressed such as litter and pollution.

Children who grow up aware and respectful of their world are in a much better position to help in its preservation.

And don't forget to recycle your trash, explaining why cans go in this bag and paper items go in this bag, and so on, as you separate them. Or better yet, separate as you pick them up! □

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Behavior

Discovering and exploring feelings

Sometimes when a child is upset, there's a special cause. Someone may have said something unkind to her.

Other times it may be hard to pinpoint the reason for her unhappiness.

For example, a child might feel a little blue without knowing why when an older brother, sister or playmate starts school and the youngest child is left at home.

Still other times, a youngster may be a little whiny, clingy or cranky for no apparent reason.

She may be overtired, hungry, sick, or just going through too many changes in her life.

Whatever the problem, you can help your child feel better by helping her explore her feelings.

If you know what the problem is, you can start the conversation by trying to put the child's feelings into words: "Your feelings are hurt because Tom called you a baby."

If you have only a general idea of what the problem may be, try something like: "It's tough for you to be the only one who doesn't go to school, right?"

When you really don't know what the problem is, try something like:



"You seem a little sad (mad, upset, quiet) today. Can I help? Want to talk about it?"

You may get a little resistance at first, but be patient and don't push her to talk if she's not ready. Just let her know that you're willing to listen if she wants to share her feelings with you.

Once she's started talking, say back to her what you think she's said to help her continue to explore her feelings. "Okay, so it made you feel mad when the other kids didn't ask you to play ball with them."

Try to resist giving advice or telling her how she should feel. Just listen, accept what she says, and help her express what's on her mind by showing her that you understand and care. □

Children learn to help

Beginning very early, children show us they can be kind to others and can help them. Toddlers love to “help.”

This willingness to work with others increases over the next several years—if the conditions are right.

Children really seem to enjoy helping out and will continue to act this way if they are taught how to help and then encouraged to do so.

Fostering kind, thoughtful behavior in the first place will help prevent a lot of the hurtful, aggressive behavior seen in some children as they develop.

Some guidelines:

- Plan some “nice to do” activities. Occasionally involve your child in the planning and carrying out of “nice to do” activities that benefit other people.

You can pick out a library book to take to a sick friend or draw an original birthday card.

- Verbally label thoughtful, cooperative behavior. When you see an act of kindness or helpfulness, point it out by putting a name on it.

For example, “It was a thoughtful thing for Mrs. Thomas to do when she drove us to the garage to pick up the car.”

- Role-play cooperative, helpful behavior. Children learn to cooperate when they have had a chance to actually practice these behaviors.

Young children enjoy playing with puppets and you can capitalize on this by doing some brief puppet role-plays that focus on helpfulness. For example, your puppet drops a whole box of nails. Ask the child’s puppet how it can help. □

Not Hide & Seek

Here’s a simple activity—kind of like hide and seek—that kids can do by themselves and that can be adjusted for each child’s age and ability.

First, identify what they’re to look for—colors, shapes or sizes.

Colors are the easiest. Name the color, one for each child or just one for a group.

Then the kids can walk around and find objects that are blue, green, red, etc. This probably works best inside the house where there are more things to look at.

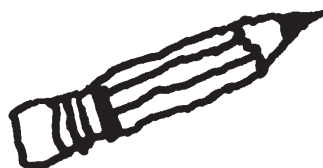
When they have finished, they report—and show—how many they’ve found. (Objects too big to move can be simply identified by location.)

The leader can make a trip through the house to see if there are objects that were missed... and give clues to help identify them.

Shapes are harder since circles, triangle, and squares can be found within and upon other objects.

Sizes are hard, too. Start by asking the kids to find four things that would fit inside the stove oven or some other large object. Discuss why some objects wouldn’t fit.

By looking for and identifying colors, shapes and sizes in these games, kids are sharpening skills in reasoning, perception, observation and memory. □



Learning about big and little

There are many experiences in daily life that you can use to help children learn the words and idea of size. For example, when you’re doing the laundry, ask your child whose clothes are bigger—hers or yours?

Get her help in putting all the big towels in one pile, and the small ones in another, or in separating all the baby’s small clothes from her larger ones.

When you’re shopping, ask her to hand you the larger of two boxes or the smaller of two cans of a certain brand.

When you unpack and put away the groceries, let her see if she can estimate if an item is too big, too small, or just right for a shelf before putting it away.

When putting her toys away on a shelf, have her trying lining them up from the smallest to the largest or put all the small ones on one shelf and the big ones on another in order of their size.

By your use of them, introduce her to the words and ideas of long and short, thick and thin, heavy and light, and so on, as more specific ways of looking at big and little, large and small. □

Read it free!

“Grandma Says” is a twice-monthly special message that includes general parenting tips, words of encouragement, and children’s book reviews.

To receive your free issues, go to: www.GrowingChild.com/
FreeGrandmaSays
and enter your e-mail address.

Learning to eat

A toddler learns to eat by practicing with both finger feeding and holding a spoon.

Once she starts doing it for herself, you can expect an occasional mess — being a neat eater takes lots of practice.

Some toddlers will feed themselves certain foods but want a parent to feed them others.

If this practice continues, it is possible that Toddler will build up faulty eating habits — she will discriminate between the foods she wants and the foods you want her to eat.

Such a practice can develop into a parent/toddler tug-of-war. In the future you may find that she may not have an appetite for your foods.

We urge you to allow Toddler to feed herself in spite of the mess she may make.

Between the first and second years, many youngsters will give up certain foods, particularly some vegetables. Accept her preferences and return to the objected food in a few weeks.

By pushing a temporary dislike on her, you increase the probability that the particular food may become permanently distasteful to her.

Today's preferences may result in an occasional lopsided meal but from day to day or week-to-week her choices should even out to a well-balanced diet.

There is no doubt that the quality as well as the quantity of her appetite will change during this period. She may drink less milk, but a pint a day (in any form) is satisfactory to cover her needs if she's receiving a reasonable diet.

If she rejects milk, don't force it; just quietly take it away. Experienced

parents report that each time Toddler says "no," her determination becomes stronger.

Should it happen that she is without a daily pint of milk or other calcium-containing product (such as cheese or yogurt) for more than two weeks, it might be wise to report this to your physician.

Toddlers require variety in their menu just as adults do. Chewy foods, especially finger foods like shredded carrot strips or a chicken leg are excellent for her emerging teeth and for exercising the muscles of the mouth.

The identical muscles used in chewing are used in speaking. Regular vigorous chewing practice will make the movements of the tongue, lips, and jaws more proficient.

Caution: Finger foods should be introduced with care and in small amounts, such as shredded carrots, not sticks.

Meat bones should be checked carefully to make sure there are no small fragments that can come off and choke Toddler. □

Discipline

A few basic rules for discipline

Some basic rules for discipline bear repeating.

Punishment should be meted out at the time of the offense and in proportion to the severity of the offense.

The timing is important because otherwise the child may honestly not remember later why he is being punished.

The type of punishment is also important. Continual yelling may force a child to "tune out" a parent or caregiver. Hitting is not acceptable and makes a child feel inferior and helpless without solving the problem.

Good discipline focuses on the problem, not on the child. It helps to explain, "This is not acceptable behavior because ... (name the reason — you might hurt yourself, you might hurt someone else, for example). I like you, but I do not like what you're doing."

It's better for the child to be given the chance to discuss the behavior and come to an understanding of why it was wrong and how to remedy it.

Such discussions might also include idea for how the situation could have been handled in a positive manner. □

Growing Together

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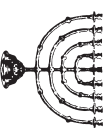

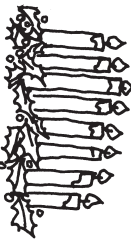
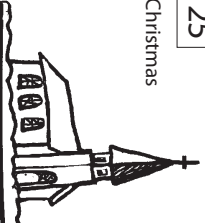
Growing Child also publishes: **Growing Child** (birth-six years), and **Growing Up** (grades K-12).

Growing Together issues may be reproduced in part or in full by participating organizations.

Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns "he" and "she" are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

www.growingchild.com

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						
<p>4</p> <p>Put together a picture puzzle.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>What games can you play outside in the winter?</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Talk about this: What would you be doing if you were a bird in the winter time?</p> 	<p>7</p> <p>Now is the time to bake the holiday cookies your friends and family love. Share some with a neighbor.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Play hide-and-seek with a teddy bear or favorite toy.</p> 	<p>9</p> <p>Make a winter scene by drawing with white chalk on blue construction paper.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Look out the window. Draw a picture of something you see.</p>
<p>11</p> <p>Is there snow or ice outside? Bring some inside in a bowl and watch what happens. (Can you guess?)</p>	<p>12</p> <p>What special songs can you sing at this time of the season?</p> 	<p>13</p> <p>Do you know what latkes are? Potato pancakes! Have some for dinner.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Play "Guess Which Hand?"</p> 	<p>15</p> <p>Do you know some place in the world where it's REALLY HOT today? Find out where.</p> 	<p>16</p> <p>Do you have gloves or mittens? What color are they?</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Is ice cream hot or cold? Name three things that are hot and three that are cold.</p> 
<p>18</p> <p>Warm up some apple cider for a special treat.</p> 	<p>19</p> <p>Don't throw away old catalogs—little ones love to look through them.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Hanukkah begins at sundown.</p> 	<p>21</p> <p>Winter begins! Go for a drive and look for a snowman, a Christmas tree, and a red bow.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Count the beds in your house.</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>What kinds of clothes do you wear at this time of year to keep warm?</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Christmas Eve</p> 
<p>25</p> <p>Christmas</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>Kwanzaa begins!</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Catch a ray of sunlight in a mirror and reflect it on the wall.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Draw a picture of a snow family.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Check the batteries in your smoke alarm(s).</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Practice a home emergency drill.</p>	<p>31</p> <p>New Year's Eve.</p> 