



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Toys and Play

Favorite playthings have additional benefits

In the preschool years, children learn much from repetition. They will return again and again to a favorite toy, book or puzzle or a favorite set of materials, such as blocks.

Each time children play with these familiar objects, they learn something new about them. That information was always there to be learned, but the child who returns to the familiar toy is not the same child who played with it a month ago.

Now he brings to his play everything that he has experienced and learned since the last time he handled the toy or material. Because of this added experience, he is now ready to learn more from his present play than he could have learned a month before.

The toy, puzzle, book or set of blocks is the same — but as the child brings more to the activity, he learns more from it. □

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Academics

Building concepts of time

Time is something which cannot be seen or felt. Its passing is measured artificially by clocks and calendars.

Early mankind measured time only in the natural cycles of day and night and the rhythmic occurrence of the seasons: A journey was three days walk; an event took place during the last full moon.

Time during the day was measured by the passage of the sun. Longer periods were measured from new moon to new moon, from season to season.

Now when many of us live in cities, the cycle of seasons is less apparent. We use calendars instead of moon phases to measure off the months, and clocks to measure off the days.

Children measure their time by the events of their days, which begin at waking-up time and end with

bedtime. Their day does not include twenty-four hours but only the hours between waking and sleeping.

To expand Youngster's concept of time begin with answering the question: "How long until _____?"

To answer this question, a large calendar is necessary. Circle the date of the holiday, visit, or special event which is anticipated. Mark off all days of the month which have already passed.

Hang the calendar within easy reach for Youngster. Each night before she goes to bed, have her X out the day just over, and count how many days are left until the special date.

As you do this, you are teaching duration of time over periods longer than one day, and the child can begin to learn the concept of how time progresses in steady, measured segments. □



Out of bounds

A reader recently sent a question with which probably other readers can identify. She was concerned about her four-year-old daughter who was giving her lots of “sassy backtalk.”

Her comment was that this behavior was getting really tiresome and embarrassing around other adults.

She almost didn't need to tell me that the child in question was four years old. About age four, quite a transformation occurs in children's development and behavior.

From fairly docile and amenable children (once toddlerhood is past, to be sure) four-year-olds morph into a pint-sized version of the biggest, baddest kid in town.

Lots of developmental psychologists have noted this phenomenon. One explanation seems to be that the young child has gotten comfortable within her small world and is trying to expand the boundaries. In doing so, she becomes quite out of bounds in her behavior.

She may be loud, boisterous, deliberately trying the limits. She may tattle, use forbidden language or bathroom talk, and defy adult authority.

Four-year-olds are often quite outspoken in their communication with peers, and have to learn that what may be accepted by peers is not accepted by their parents.

While it may be of some comfort to know that it is not just your particular four-year-old who is behaving in these ways, that still doesn't answer the question of what to do about it.

Being reassured that this behavior is not just a result of something you have or have not done, it is now

important to develop appropriate responses.

Let's consider it from the child's perspective. As a young child, when you are trying to push the limits, it is important to understand which limits are so firm they cannot be pushed.

This means that parents are helpful when they are clear, specific, and unbending in their disapproval of the bothersome talk.

They take the child aside and say something like: “I don't like it when you speak to me that way. It hurts my feelings, and I don't want you to talk to me that way again.”



Their tone and face are both serious, and they make unbroken eye contact to help the child see that they mean business.

Because young children basically care a lot for their parents, and care about pleasing them, such a serious message helps the child control her behavior.

The next time the behavior occurs—and it will, since testing limits means re-testing to make sure the response is the same—the parent takes the child aside and says, “You

have forgotten what I said about talking that way to me. You can be unhappy with my idea, but I don't like that way of talking to me. I'm going to ask you to stay in here for a few minutes to remember what I said.”

Something like this is repeated until the child stops talking/behaving in the disapproved way.

Now, at the same time, parents need to find ways that children *can* push their boundaries in accepted ways, such as allowing them to play in the back yard for a while without adult presence, or whatever evidence you can give that you are recognizing her more grown-up status.

Equally important, parents need to make sure that their communication with the child, and with others in the child's presence is respectful and appropriate.

In addition, they make sure that other adults don't smirk or laugh when the child exhibits the “smart mouth.” Children do learn what they see and hear.

One other thing to remember is that embarrassment in front of other adults is not the real issue here.

The real issue is the child learning how to control her will in response to others' wishes. That is a hard lesson, and worthy of your continued efforts.

Clear limits help children learn the complexities of how people live happily with each other. One of the strongest tools parents have is children's caring for you.

Let them know exactly how you feel, and you should see a response.



Dolls help children understand family relationships

Have you ever noticed how puzzled young children can be when it comes to family relationships? For example, they may hear Dad referred to as John, father, brother, uncle, son, or husband.

A preschool boy who was asked about the other children in his family named Sally, Betty, and Marla. "They're sisters," he explained.

If they're sisters, what are you?" the parent asked.

"I'm a boy sister," he replied.

A family of dolls — or teddy bears— with grandmother, grandfather, father, mother, sister, brother can help a child sort out the relation of one family member to another.

It will take quite a while to grasp the idea, but once children understand the family relationships, they can extend it to other family groups.

They are fascinated with the idea that each child has a family group. The idea that a teacher is also part of a family is much harder for them to understand, however. □

Something New!

"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:
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FreeGrandmaSays
 and enter your e-mail address.

Praise and criticism

There are two ways to praise a child for something she has done. You can say, as you watch her finish her latest work, "Oh, what a lovely picture. It looks just like a sunset. You are a good artist."

Or you can say, "I really like the way the colors drip together. You really used a lot of paint this time."

When you say her painting is a "lovely picture", the praise fails to match what the child has actually done. She has been playing around with paint, experimenting with how it works.

You say it is a sunset. She knows it isn't but she keeps that little secret. She understands that her picture has to **be something** for you to like it, that practicing with paint isn't worthy of praise.

She knows she isn't an artist — but she'll go along to win your praise.

The second way to praise states the obvious: She has used a lot of paint, and you appreciate that. You

like the way the colors drip together. What gives her pleasure gives you pleasure, too. Her experimenting with color is an admired skill. She did it well.

Praising her this way helps her to judge her work appropriately, to feel that what she actually does is valued by people who count.

There are two ways to criticize a child for something she has done. You can say, as her glass of milk spills onto the floor, "Look what you've done. You are so clumsy." Or you can say, "You put your glass too close to the edge of the table. Now help me clean this up."

When you tell a child what she is — a clumsy person — you judge her. She is always clumsy, and will be.

But when you tell her exactly what she has done, she can judge her action as it really is. She can avoid spilling her milk like that next time.

No parent, exasperated by mud tracks on the floor, or stepped-on crayons in the rug, can resist saying "careless."

And most times, by the twentieth scribble, no longer really interested, we say "beautiful" without a thought.

But if parents can avoid for much of the time praise and criticism that judges the child herself, and instead judge the product or the action, a child will become more able to measure her behavior.

This allows the child to pursue what she is good at, to work on what is difficult, and to like herself the way she is. □

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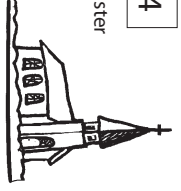




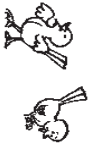


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Growing Child (birth-six years), and
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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns "he" and "she" are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>4</p>  <p>Easter</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Take a walk. Count all the dogs you see.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Look side and see what the weather looks like.</p> <p>Will you need to wear a sweater or a raincoat?</p>	<p>7</p> <p>What lives in an aquarium?</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Make a surprise "I love you" card for someone.</p> 	<p>9</p> <p>Use your finger to point in these directions: up down left right</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Ask how you can help around the house today.</p>
<p>11</p> <p>Play hide and seek with a toy. (Hide a toy for someone to find.)</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Did you learn something new today? Explain what you learned.</p>	<p>13</p>  <p>What is a rainbow? Describe what it looks like, where it can be found.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Draw a picture of a sunny day.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Orange and banana slices for a snack.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>What is your favorite cream flavor? What ingredients do you need to make ice cream?</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Eat lunch outside.</p> 
<p>18</p> <p>Make a picture using only circles and squares.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Help gather up clothes that don't fit and donate them to a charity.</p> 	<p>20</p> <p>Practice saying the days of the week. What's today?</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Make funny noises with your mouth and lips.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Go to the library and bring home a book about birds.</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>Talk about "blessings." Write down a list of some.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Go for a walk. Take along a paper bag and pick up litter.</p>
<p>25</p> <p>Sing in the bathtub.</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>Talk about ways to show kindness.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Pat baby's hands together and repeat "Patty Cake."</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Hum a tune.</p> 	<p>29</p> <p>Check the batteries in your smoke alarm(s).</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Do a favor or errand for someone.</p>	<p>31</p> <p>Visit a neighbor.</p> 