



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Art

Make a silhouette

Here's an easy art project that requires a child and an adult working together and results in a keepsake both can be proud of.

1. Have the child sit next to a wall in a straight-backed chair.
2. Tape a piece of black construction paper to the wall next to her head.
3. Place a lamp about 10 feet from the child. Remove the lampshade. You may need to adjust the distance between the lamp and the child to get a good shadow profile.
4. Outline the profile on the paper with a pen or marker.
5. Cut out the silhouette you've drawn. Apply glue to the back of the paper and paste it onto a piece of white construction paper, smoothing gently to avoid "bubbles."
6. Purchase an inexpensive frame and hang your "masterpiece." □

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Behavior

Emotional roller coasters

Around three years of age, toddlers generally experience great fluctuations in their self-esteem and self-confidence.

At times they act as though they could conquer the world. At other times, they appear to want to creep back into the safe and protective environment of babyhood.

These fluctuations are a normal part of growing up.

For example, as you watch your three-year-old venture into a world of new social experiences—whether in childcare, nursery school or with other playmates at home—it is sometimes difficult to let go of her.

She is determined to demonstrate to the world that she can do things on her own. She wants her parents and caregivers to "Let me do this by myself."

Within minutes, however, she may panic if she thinks she has been left alone.

She comes running to your side for the comfort, reassurance, or encouragement that she needs.

These emotional ups and downs—emotional roller coasters—may test a parent's patience to the limit. As adults, we prefer

emotional stability in our interactions with others.

Toddler, on the other hand is more accustomed to emotional ups and downs as she learns to deal with her feelings.

Coping with a toddler's emotional swings demands great patience and self-control on the part of parents.

If they feel that their patience has reached its limit, it is well, if possible, to withdraw from the situation, even for a few moments.

Parents occasionally need a "two-minute time out" to gather their composure.

When they return, they can generally deal more effectively with a troublesome situation.

It is often reassuring for parents simply to be aware that their child's emotional roller coasters are a normal part of growing up.

It is also reassuring to know that all parents, at one time or another, have difficulty in dealing with these situations.

A warm, dependable relationship is the best stabilizer a child can have at times of emotional turbulence. □

Teaching cooperation

Why do some children seem willing to cooperate while others do not?

In fact, children *learn* to be cooperative and helpful. They do not become that way automatically.

They have to learn to work with others to accomplish a job and to help others by sharing materials and information.

Children have to learn how to make someone else's work or play easier. This learning takes place slowly, but the foundations can be laid early in life.

Here are some things that parents and caregivers can do that will set the stage for the development of cooperation:

1. Be a model. This is one of the best ways to teach cooperation because children imitate the actions of people who are important to them.

If young children see parents and other adults cooperating with others, they will be more willing to do the same.

When a parent helps a neighbor move an air conditioner, or takes a casserole to the new family next door, he or she is setting an example that is seen by children and recorded for future reference.

2. Provide other models of good behavior. Children are exposed to lots of models other than parents, including television, movies, books, toys, recordings, smart phones and video games.

Make an effort to screen these media and choose those that show good friendships, unselfish giving, or acts of kindness.

3. Give suggestions and reasons. One of the reasons adults

sometimes fail to help is that they do not know what to do or how to do it.

Don't expect a child to automatically know how to do anything without specific, concrete suggestions. For example, tell a five-year-old: "Joan, push the door and hold it open for Mrs. Stanley. She's having trouble doing that and pulling the grocery cart at the same time."

You are more likely to get help from a four-year-old if you say: "I want you to help me set the table for dinner because I have to finish the salad. Here are the plates. Put a napkin and a knife, fork and spoon next to each plate—like this."

Giving reasons along with suggestions helps children understand why another person needs their help and makes them more willing to cooperate.

4. Assign real responsibilities that are age-appropriate. We usually get what we expect from children, and they need to know that we expect them to take an active part in the work of the family.

Parents can convey expectations of cooperation and helpfulness, not by preaching, but by giving children real chores to do, and by showing them how to do the chores, when necessary. □

Which is bigger?

Here's another one of those games that anyone can play—anywhere. It doesn't require any props and costs nothing.

When you're riding in the car or waiting in line at the grocery store, ask your child, which is bigger?

- A cow or a mouse?
- A shoe or a wastebasket?
- A marble or an apple?

Your child will want to take a turn and ask you questions, too.

When you run out of ideas, switch sizes and ask: Which is smaller?

- An airplane or a truck?
- A coffee pot or an orange?
- A pencil or a piano?

Keep comparisons simple for very young children—perhaps even objects that are in view.

Interested in an adult's version?

Which number is larger:

- The national debt or the miles to the moon?
- Your age or the number of wrinkles on your face?
- The number of times you pour milk or juice each day or the number of times you get up each night?

No doubt you will have some comparisons of your own to add to each category. □



Have confidence

Having confidence in yourself as a parent is easier said than done. It is natural for parents to worry if they are doing all they should for their child.

After all, this is the most important job in your life, and no one has prepared you for it.

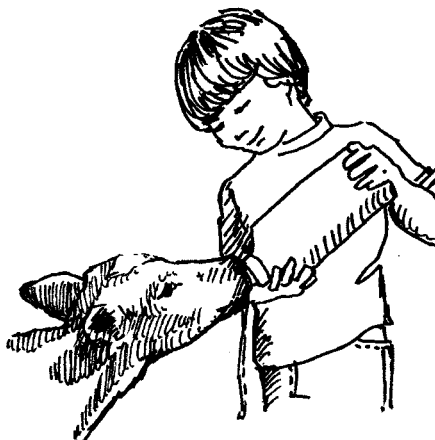
The advice of “experts” may do more to create confusion and doubt than to help. And parents may not agree with what they learned about being a parent from the way they were treated as a child.

Nevertheless, parents do have within them the necessary resources to help their children grow to be happy, healthy, responsible adults.

Try to remember how it felt to be a child and try to treat your child as you would have liked to have been treated.

Be as kind, understanding, patient, and supportive as you can.

You’ll make mistakes—that’s part of being human. But the more relaxed you are about yourself, the more you’ll be able to learn from your mistakes and be the most successful parent you can be. □



The importance of play

It is generally through play that a preschool child learns about the world around her and then assimilates what she has learned into her concept of reality.

Preschool children enjoy three different forms of play: physical, manipulative, and symbolic.

Physical play refers to activities that involve the use of the muscles. These activities emphasize action, and include running, hopping, jumping, climbing, throwing, sliding and playing with a ball.

Manipulative play refers to activities by which a child learns to gain better control over her environment.

These activities include the use of puzzles and building blocks (which also require some physical play skills) as well as games that involve social manipulation (“What can I do to make Daddy come to me?”)

Symbolic play involves manipulation, not of people, but of events and objects. These play activities would include the use of fantasy, pretend play, and nonsense rhymes.

In symbolic play, a child can change events, identities, and emotions for the sake of her play, thereby gaining more complete control over her newly created world. In a child’s life, play has many important effects on development.

Physical development. Play activities that involve physical exercise help to promote a child’s general health. Specific activities that involve, for example, perceptual-motor skills also help to develop the child’s eye-hand coordination.

Cognitive development. Through play a young child is able to try out her understanding of how

the world works. What we see in a child’s play is not just trucks, dolls, teacups and saucers. It is the child’s cognitive conception of the world as she experiences and understands it.

Emotional development. Perhaps the single most important contribution of play to emotional development is the role it has in the formation of a child’s self-concept.

Play is also a means by which a child can deal with emotional conflicts (for example, by using puppets to talk about hurt feelings).

Social development. In play activities, a child has an opportunity to experiment with different roles, power relationships, and rules. For example, a young child may tell a doll or teddy bear to “sit in a corner” for some type of misbehavior.

Because young children enjoy play, it becomes a very natural way for them to learn about themselves and the world in which they live.

So, the next time you see your child engaged in play, you will know that she is not just “goofing off.” She is engaged in the “work of childhood,” namely, promoting her physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. □

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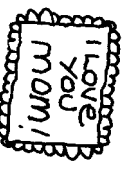

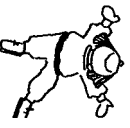




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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns “he” and “she” are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 Black History Month
2 Groundhog Day. What does the groundhog NOT want to see today?	3 Feed the Birds Day. 	4 Take a walk. Walk swiftly.	5 Sing a song: "America the Beautiful." 	6 This is hard: Can you invent a new toy?	7 Pop some popcorn. String it and hang it from the trees. The birds love it! 	8 Boy Scout Day "On my honor, I will do my duty ... "
9 National Pizza Day. Eat some you-know-what.	10 Time to start thinking about valentines! 	11 Do-a-favor-for-a-grouch Day. What's a grouch?	12 Abraham Lincoln's birthday. 	13 Play with water and measuring cups. Slowly.	14 Valentine's Day 	15 Susan B. Anthony Day What did she stand up for?
16 Play tag outside in the snow.	17 President's Day 	18 Make some dinosaurs out of clay.	19 Do the "Hokey Pokey!" 	20 What is your favorite beverage to drink?	21 Pretend you're a tree. Tell a story about your life. 	22 George Washington's birthday. What was his job?
23 Talk about the safest way to cross the street. Remember to always look both ways first. 	24 Count your fingers and toes. fingers ____ toes ____	25 Play "Go Fish" with some friends or family. (Not the dog.) 	26 Ash Wednesday.	27 Pretend you're a talking snowman. What would you say to a snowflake? 	28 National Chili Day. Eat some!	29 Leap Year Day. Look it up! 