



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Social Skills

Telling a lie

Many parents view truthfulness as the most important characteristic of a good child, more important than obedience or friendliness, for example. Not surprisingly, these parents get very upset whenever a child utters an untruthful remark.

Children begin saying things that are untrue at about age three or four. At this stage of development, they are beginning to explore the world of imagination and fantasy.

Parents may hear about the “elephant” in the backyard, or other tall tales of the children’s creative imagination and fantasy.

The child is not trying to deceive. He is just telling the parent a tall story—perhaps just like the one a parent read to him the night before!

What to do? The development of a child’s creative imagination should generally be encouraged rather than frowned upon, as long as the child is not seeking to deliberately deceive the parent.

A parent can enter into the child’s fantasy game, yet instill a sense of reality by saying, “Draw me a picture of your *imaginary* elephant.” □

November 2020

Vol. 36 No. 11

Parenting

Dealing with mistakes

Do you sometimes worry about the mistakes you make as a parent?

Do you fret about possible harmful effects your mistakes might have on your child? Have you lost the ability to relax as a parent?

These questions need to be addressed because they are of concern to so many parents.

Some of the anxiety parents experience is no doubt due to being bombarded with so much information—sometimes contradictory—about child development. So, we can consider each of these questions in turn.

First, do you sometimes worry about the mistakes you make as a parent?

Actually, everyone—even the most renowned child development expert—makes mistakes at one time or another. It’s part of being human. So, there is no need to be consumed by guilt or blame yourself unnecessarily if you make a mistake from time to time.

Do you worry about possible harmful effects your mistakes might have later on your child?

Fortunately, most child development experts tell us that a young child is a highly resilient creature.

This means that your mistakes generally will not harm her if you are being reasonable and genuinely trying to help her.

So, the important question to ask is: “When I made that mistake, was I genuinely trying to help my child or did I do it just for my own convenience?”

As long as parents continue to strive to do what they think is best for their child, their love—even with some mistakes—will eventually triumph over all else.

Have you lost the ability to relax as a parent? If so, step back from what you are doing. Give yourself a break so that you can enjoy raising your child.

By doing yourself this favor, you are doing your child a favor. Your child needs a relaxed and happy environment in which to grow and develop.

So, if you answered “yes” to the questions at the beginning of this article, here is a threefold message for you:

(1) Realize and accept that you will make mistakes.

(2) Focus your attention on doing what is good for your child rather than on guilt for what you may have done wrong.

(3) Give yourself and your child the gift of a relaxed home environment.

Finally, at the end of a long and trying day, look back and consider all the good things you’ve accomplished today.

It will help you end the day in a positive frame of mind. □

Let's do history

When your children ask, "Where was I born?" or "How old was I when I started walking?" they are asking questions about history. These two questions contain the two meanings of "history":

1. The story of people and events;
2. The record of times past.

History helps us understand the past and how we got here. Here are some "history" things you can do at home:

- Share family history with your children. Share your memories and help your relatives and friends share family stories, too. Encourage children to tell their own stories.

- Read with your child about people and events that have made a difference in the world. Help your child pick others people and events you both find interesting to learn more about.

- Watch television programs and documentaries about topics related to the past with your children.

Search the Internet for the most recent information on-line. Go to the library and find books on the same topics. Tell the librarian about topics you're interested in. The librarian will be pleased to help.

- Then ask this question: Do the books, websites and television programs agree?

- When you celebrate holidays such as Independence Day, Christmas, Passover, Ramadan, or Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, explain to your child what is being celebrated and why.

Help your child find stories or speeches about these holidays online, at the library, or in a newspaper or magazine.

- Get to know the history of the town, city or state where you live.

Your newspaper may list parades, museum and art exhibits, children's theater, music events, history talks and walks under "Things To Do."

Choose to do some of these activities with your children. □

Language

Encouraging good communication skills

In previous generations, people didn't have to worry about good communication skills because they had time to talk to one another.

With so many changes in today's fast-paced world, many things can interfere with good interaction between parent and child.

Here are some good ways to encourage good communication with your child.

- *Be an attentive listener.* When your child has something important to tell you, give her your undivided attention. Even if the topic seems trivial to you, it may be very important to her.

- *Be patient.* Even though you may want to interrupt what your child is telling you, be patient. Let her finish what she has to say.

- *Paraphrase.* It's helpful to repeat to your child, in your own words, what

you *think* you heard her say. This will avoid misunderstandings and will give her an opportunity to clarify what she wants to tell you.

- *Be sensitive to your child's body language.* Pay attention not only to your child's words, but also to her body language, such as nervous behavior or facial expression.

- *Focus on one topic.* When you have something important to say to your child, focus on only one issue at a time.

It's better to convey a clear message on one topic than to confuse your child by addressing several issues at the same time.

- *Be brief.* Keep your message as short as possible because young children have a rather limited attention span.

- *Keep your message simple.* Use simple words—one or two syllable

words, if possible—which your child will understand. Use no more than nine or ten words in a sentence.

- *Deal with the here and now.* The concepts of time which young children have are different from those of adults.

Young children tend to live in the present rather than the past or future. Reopening old wounds from the past will only get in the way of what you want to communicate right now.

- *Be aware of your own body language.* When talking to your child, be aware of the non-verbal messages your body may be communicating.

Use good eye contact, for example, to convey your message. Young children pay more attention to your facial expression and to the emotional tone of your voice than to the actual words you use. □

The Big Ideas

Back in the 70's there was a Broadway show and then a television sitcom titled "Please Don't Eat the Daisies." The lighthearted story was about the trials of family life with three young children.

The title came from an occasion when the mother was preparing her home and children to be on their best behavior for guests. She had given her kids a long list of do's and don'ts.

Much to her shock, one of the boys got hold of the flower centerpiece and nibbled it to a collection of stems.

She moaned that hereafter, her list of behavior standards would include: "Please don't eat the daisies."

Alas, there is just no way to make a list long enough or sufficiently complete to prepare our children for everything they will encounter in the days and years ahead of them.

If we were to keep adding to the list of prohibitions and rules as our children grow, one could imagine it being a mile long by the time they were teenagers.

Nor is it useful to engage in the style of parenting that discovers afterwards what the problems are, and then makes up rules to match. Playing catch up with guidance can only be frustrating for children and parents alike.

Rather, it is important that parents understand that the guidance they are giving now to their young children contains the vital limits that will control their actions through life.

That is, they are teaching four basic principles, or Big Ideas, that can be applied to fit particular situations as they occur, no matter the age of the individual.

These really are the important values that should help them make important decisions as they learn to control their actions and behave appropriately.

The four **Big Ideas** to teach your children are:

1. Keep yourself (and others) safe. This applies to behavior on the playground or running into the street, as well as when you get your first driver's license or are tempted into risky behaviors by teenage peers.

Parents should frequently ask the question, "Is that a safe behavior?" This helps even the youngest children learn to consider and control their actions.

2. Take care of the things around you. Even toddlers have to learn the limit of not destroying their toys or messing with the property of others.

But this same principle later applies to environmental stewardship, managing family resources, and neighborhood relations.

3. Take responsibility for your actions. Even with our youngest children, they must learn that their choices are followed by results. As children learn that their behavior has consequences, they begin to modify their behavior to avoid undesirable consequences.

As a toddler, this means learning that if I make a mess, I have to clean it up, or if I hurt someone, I must make amends.

Later in life, this principle means living with the consequences of choices in relationships and job situations. Same principle.

4. Treat everyone fairly, with respect. Learning that others' feel-

ings, needs and rights must be taken into account is an important idea that governs moral and right actions.

Helping even the youngest children understand this idea lays the foundation for all productive relationships.

Only four big ideas, but if you think about it, these are the ideas behind all our laws and codes for behavior.

Working with young children to help them understand and apply these principles in individual situations is far more positive parenting than making a "please don't eat the daisies" list. □

FREE!

"Grandma Says" is a twice-monthly email that includes general parenting tips, words of encouragement, and children's book reviews.

Issues are free of advertisements; email addresses are shared with no one.

Get the next issue by signing up at:

<https://growingchild.com/grandma-says>

Written by a very wise grandmother;
From the publishers of **Growing Child**
and **Growing Together**

Growing Together is published by Growing Child, Inc.,
P.O. Box 2505 W. Lafayette, IN 47996
©2020 Growing Child, Inc.
Telephone: (765) 464-0920.
Customer Service: 1-800-927-7289.











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

November 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p> <p>Everyone make a prediction: When will it snow?</p> 	<p>2</p> <p>What and where is the Grand Canyon? Find some picture books.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Election Day!</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>Play simple charades. Everyone take a turn. (Not the dog.)</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Make a list of short things.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>What things could you use to "make" a smile? Examples: a line of gumdrops or a piece of clay in a curve. Put on your thinking caps.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Buy a neat wind sock. Hang it outdoors and see what happens.</p>
<p>8</p> <p>Find some leaves to rake. What colors do you see?</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Write a poem: I love my cat. She's black and white. She loves to sleep With me at night.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>See if you can find someone who will teach you how to dance "the twist." And sing the song, of course.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Veterans Day</p> 	<p>12</p> <p>What is the temperature outside?</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Play "Spoon Hockey" with wooden spoons and a ping pong ball. Choose a goal.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Help make some muffins.</p> 
<p>15</p> <p>Draw a rainbow with all the colors.</p> 	<p>16</p> <p>If you were an owl, where would you live? What would be your favorite word?</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Who can make the funniest face?</p> 	<p>18</p> <p>Use an orange crayon and draw a Christmas tree.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Count your ears. What is the total number of ears at your house? (Not counting corn.)</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Can you gobble like a turkey?</p> 	<p>21</p> <p>Go to the library and get a book about the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.</p>
<p>22</p> <p>Fruit salad with lots of different fruits for lunch.</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>Go outside and talk about the differences between winter and summer. How many can you think of?</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Make a list of TALL things.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Trace your hand and draw a turkey using the tracing.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Thanksgiving. Name something for which you are thankful.</p> 	<p>27</p> <p>What is your favorite toy? Why?</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Sing our National Anthem. Do you know its name?</p> 
<p>29</p> <p>Eat some citrus fruit for a snack. That Vitamin C is good for you!</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Winston Churchill's birthday. Look him up.</p> 