



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Developmental

## Slowing down the restless child

Children's behavior can sometimes get out of control, and whatever tactics you use to calm them down just don't work.

Here are a couple of suggestions for those times that may provide both you and your child with space to quiet down and regain control.

- Read to her. Is there a favorite book she loves to hear? Take the opportunity to sit close and touch her.
- Tell her stories about herself when she was younger, and stories about yourself when you were her age.
- Keep a collection of colored chalk, magic markers or other decorative items (stars, dots, stickers) that are used only on special occasions such as "quiet time."
- Remind your child that you love her. Tell her at least two good reasons why. □

## Discipline

### Different children = different discipline

Discipline wears many faces. To some it means punishment. To others it means teaching right from wrong. To still others, it means setting clear behavioral limits and making certain that the child knows and respects these limits.

But really what we are all saying is that discipline is the process by which we "civilize" our children and teach them to live within the constraints of our society.

There has been a lot written about how to discipline children, but it is a subject about which it is very difficult to generalize. Children's personalities differ widely and what works with one child may be a complete failure with another.

As an individual child grows and develops, his responses change and the method of discipline or "civilizing" must also change if it is to be effective.

Parents who have more than one child usually become aware very early of the often very different personalities of their children. The shy, sensitive child will respond to verbal correction or even a stern look and because of a strong desire to please his parents, may need comfort and reassurance instead of punishment.

On the other hand, the vigorously active and impulsive child will let the verbal correction just go in one ear and out the other. Such a child must

be strongly motivated before he will teach himself to control his impulsive behavior.

And don't think girls will always respond to verbal correction and explanation while boys always require sterner measures. The personality and not the sex of the individual child is the key to successful discipline.

The age and developmental level of a child is equally important. Behavior that might be expected of a two-year-old will be unacceptable in a ten-year-old.

For instance, a very young child has few ways of expressing anger. It is a rare two-year-old who has not bitten another child who takes a favorite toy or interferes with some ongoing play activity.

Undesirable behavior? Yes, but recognize that this is a very normal way for a two-year-old to express anger, frustration or aggression.

The same behavior in an eight- or ten-year-old would be cause for considerable concern because such behavior is not appropriate for these ages.

Discipline is not about punishment, but about education—education in the art of being human, of helping a child to understand that falls from grace are part of growing up and not a sign of being a bad or worthless person. □

## Mean kids

I had been working with Jenny at the preschool for twenty minutes or so when she looked up at me and said quietly, “Sometimes Gina and Hayley are mean to me.” The sadness in her voice was heavy; this was a painful thing in her four-year-old life.

We all recognize that socialization skills are just emerging in preschool, as kids learn how to be friends with one another, and make many mistakes along the way.

But there is a difference when the negative behavior is persistent and deliberate, such as the way the other two girls excluded Jenny from their play, telling her that they wouldn’t let her join them, and almost seeming to delight in her discomfort.

We generally think of the school-aged years as the time when bullying is rampant, but a visit to most preschool classrooms can find instances of such meanness.

It is difficult for teachers and parents to accept the idea that some young children can be consciously mean to other children, but this is a fact.

So what to do? The most important concept is for adults to indicate clearly that bullying is not acceptable at any age. This is not just kids being kids, or something they will grow out of. It may just be experimentation, but this behavior needs active adult responses.

Comfortable environments and social relationships allow children to share their distress with adults, as Jenny did, and then adults have responsibilities to help both the mean kids and the targeted kids.

If preschoolers who use aggressive behaviors with others are not helped to learn more positive behaviors, they are likely to continue.

It is vital that they learn that bullying behavior is not acceptable and will not be allowed. Adults must encourage all children, families, and teachers to report bullying behavior.

Preschool classrooms should have discussions to define what bullying looks and feels like to children, and rules about treating others with kindness in an environment of respect for all.

Teachers and parents can model perspective taking, helping children develop insights about the results of their words and actions.

Children who have been targeted by mean kids also need assistance from caring adults.

Helping kids develop the skills to stand up against bullying is the most important adult strategy, rather than adults continually intervening to protect the child.

Such continual intervention reinforces the notion that the child is weak and helpless, with resulting low self-esteem.

Instead, teaching young children to be assertive on their own behalf, such as saying “Stop it” or “I don’t like that” empowers them to stand up for themselves.

Children who feel confident that an adult is aware of the situation and will back them up if need be will be more likely to tell others how they feel in a bullying situation.

Sometimes just standing nearby gives children the support they need to voice their needs. It is also important that children know how to get adult help if they need it.

No child should have to feel the sadness that Jenny expressed about mean kids. □

## Basic principles of effective parenting

Developing effective parenting skills is not easy. It is an endeavor that demands constant effort.

But the effort is worthwhile because it will help a child become socially well adjusted. It will also increase the joy of parenting.

Here are four basic principles that are worth repeating:

**1. Be prepared.** Try to anticipate problems, if possible. Many unpleasant situations could be avoided if appropriate preventive measures are taken.

For example, if you anticipate bad behavior from your child while shopping in the grocery store, be sure to talk with him about what is acceptable behavior before you leave for the store.

**2. Be specific.** Even though a parent knows what “good” behavior is and what “bad” behavior is, a child may not. Therefore, be as specific as possible in describing these actions.

**3. Be fair.** As far as possible, make known in advance what specific reward will be given for good behavior, and what specific punishment will follow bad behavior.

**4. Be consistent.** Although a parent may be in a good mood one day and a bad mood the next, children are not yet able to “read” these feelings.

So, it is important to maintain consistent behavior from one day to the next and from one situation to another. □

## Reading stories to preschoolers

Most picture books with real beginning-middle-end stories are not really designed for preschoolers but rather for five- and six-year-olds.

However, given a little help, a two- or three-year-old may use certain books longer and get more out of them than the older child.

A well-chosen storybook becomes first a workbook, then a concept book and eventually a connected story through which the child has adventures and discovers possibilities for herself.

While an older child may toddle off on his own firsthand explorations, the lap-sitter, less free to roam, benefits greatly from the discoveries she makes in books.

To get the most from a first storybook, forget about reading the words and “read” the child instead. Watch to see what interest her, what she does and does not understand.

The first trip through the book consists almost entirely of conversations about the pictures.

Most useful are questions and answers that invite the child to participate actively and give you clues about what she wants and needs to find out.

*Where is that bear? There he is! What is the bear doing? Is he riding? Yes, he's riding a bike! Oops! He fell off!*

Move through the book as rapidly as your child desires. As much as possible use her own vocabulary (words she's familiar with) to introduce new ideas.

Speak and read with expression. With your finger point out and demonstrate what's happening. Animation

makes the reading more interesting and provides clues to the meaning of the pictures and words.

Once the child is familiar with the basic words and concepts in a book, she is ready to become aware of the story.

Unless the text is really simple, you will still not read the words on the page.

Usually it is necessary to boil down the story into words and events she can understand.



Sum up key events, gradually bringing the child to the discovery that one thing leads to another.

Important phrases are: *and now ... and then ... and suddenly ... and after that ... who is that? ... and then what do you think happened?*

Once you've set the pattern, you can read and tell the story again and again—loaded with language and rhythm and ideas to enrich every aspect of your child's life and especially your times together. □

## Helping siblings avoid squabbles

To prevent small disagreements between brothers, sisters, or brothers and sisters from escalating into major engagements, set limits that you think are fair for each of your children.

Let them know what the limits are and what the consequences of breaking them will be.

Then try to stick to these rules as well as you can, changing them (with your children's knowledge) when they no longer seem appropriate.

This kind of “planning ahead” can avoid many fights and jealousies over such things as who goes to bed at what time and who gets to do what.

You will probably still get some protests of “it's not fair that I can't stay up as long as she does,” and so on. But it is fair for children of different ages to have different limits, privileges, and responsibilities.

When they know what to expect, each child can look forward to growing into new limits, privileges, and responsibilities. □

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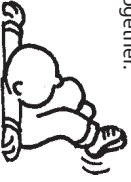





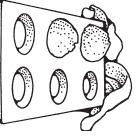

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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns “he” and “she” are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

[www.growingchild.com](http://www.growingchild.com)

# October, 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p> <p>Cuddle up with mom or dad under a cozy blanket—read a story—then take a nap together.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Help with the laundry: match up socks.</p> 	<p>3</p> <p>Where is the Great Wall of China? Look it up.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Do morning exercises together.</p> 	<p>5</p> <p>Blow bubbles outside.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Make up a rhyme with your name in it.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Comb your hair in a different style. Everybody try it!</p> 
<p>8</p> <p>National Children's Day</p> 	<p>9</p> <p>Columbus Day</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Draw different ideas for pumpkin faces on a piece of paper.</p> 	<p>11</p> <p>If you had a pet mouse ... what would you name it?</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Can you sing a song all by yourself?</p> 	<p>13</p> <p>Check out a CD from your local library.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Play an old-fashioned game: dominoes.</p>
<p>15</p> <p>Today is Sunday. What's tomorrow?</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Make something out of clay: a snake, a ball, a cup, a letter.</p> <p><b>M N O</b></p>	<p>17</p> <p>What is a key? What does it do? Where can you find one?</p>	<p>18</p> <p>How many noses in your house? Are you sure? Count again.</p> <p><u>14</u></p>	<p>19</p> <p>Play "SPY"</p>	<p>20</p> <p>What color are your shoes today?</p> 	<p>21</p> <p>Sweetest Day. This holiday is celebrated in the Midwestern and parts of the Northeastern United States and is a day to share romantic deeds or expressions.</p>
<p>22</p> <p>Have muffins for breakfast.</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>Breast Cancer Awareness Day</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Draw a picture of a tree beside a house.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Build a barn with some Lincoln Logs™ or put together a log cabin.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Can you spell your name?</p> <p><b>ARNOLD</b> <b>SUSAN</b></p>	<p>27</p> <p>What is your favorite toy? Why?</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Dance or march with a flag or a scarf.</p>
<p>29</p> <p>Read the Sunday comics out loud.</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Halloween</p> 	<p>31</p> <p>Help dust a room in the house.</p>	