

Growing Together

Newsletter for parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

Kids love puzzles

Puzzles have always had a fascination and appeal for young and old alike.

A child's first puzzle should be a simple one-piece-per-object one, (for example, an apple, a banana, and a pear). Very soon the child will progress to more complex puzzles in which parts must be put together to form a whole.

There are many things a child can learn while working with a puzzle, such as recognizing shape, size, and color. She can also learn new vocabulary.

As your child takes pieces out or places them in a puzzle, she is developing eye-hand coordination skills.

She will also become more aware of the relationships of objects in space (For example, the head is at the top, the feet are at the bottom of the body).

Most puzzles will indicate the age range for which they are appropriate. Public libraries generally have a good selection of puzzles appropriate for different age groups.

This is an activity that is a good learning experience, and it will provide your child with hours of fun.

Academics

Let's read a story

Numerous research studies have indicated that children whose parents regularly read to them during the preschool years will later tend to do better in school.

That's why parents are continually encouraged to read aloud to their children. A child's parents are generally her first educators and her most important resources for developing a love of reading.

Let's consider for a moment some of the things your child can learn while you read a story aloud:

Vocabulary. As you read, your child is acquiring new words. Let her see the pictures on the page. Point to an object as you read its name. See if she can point to some objects which you name.

Information. Your child is also acquiring new knowledge and expanding the horizons of her mind. Reading helps to open a whole new world for her.

Comprehension. From books a child acquires new understanding of her world. She perceives new relationships between words and can relate new knowledge to what she already knows.

Listening and attention skills. Reading helps to sharpen your child's

listening skills and improve her attention span.

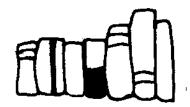
Mental awareness. As a result of your reading, she will also likely become more aware of and take greater interest in her everyday world.

Sequencing. From your reading, she can learn about sequencing in time; ("Once upon a time ... ") and in space, ("In the first place sat ... ") which is an important skills for later school learning.

Emotions. As she identifies with the characters in the story, she can sometimes gain a better understanding of her own emotions.

Love of books. As you read to your child, you are imparting to her an important value in your life, namely, your own love of books.

Personal love. Above all, by setting aside uninterrupted quiet time for reading, you are letting your child know how important she is to you. You are thereby conveying your own personal love for her. \square



In the wee small hours of the morning

Unfortunately, according to studies of kids of all ages, way too many youngsters are up in those hours, just not getting the sleep that growing children need for physical and emotional health.

Starting with the toddlers who resist sleep as a general principle of autonomy, up through older school aged children and teenagers trying to fit so much into their lives, today's children are generally sleep deprived.

Just to remind you of sleep needs, the American Academy of Pediatricians recommends the following to promote optimal health:

Infants 4 months to 12 months should sleep 12 to 16 hours per 24 hours (including naps) on a regular basis.

Children 1 to 2 years of age should sleep 11 to 14 hours per 24 hours (including naps).

Children 3 to 5 years of age should sleep 10 to 13 hours per 24 hours (including naps).

Children 6 to 12 years of age should sleep 9 to 12 hours per 24 hours.

Teenagers 13 to 18 years of age should sleep 8 to 10 hours per 24 hours.

Research shows that regular adequate sleep duration for age leads to improved attention, behavior, learning, memory, emotional regulation, quality of life, and mental and physical health.

Not getting enough sleep each night is associated with an increase in injuries, hypertension, obesity and depression, especially for teens.

Okay, we can all agree that sleep is important and kids are not getting enough of it. What to do? For infants and young children, parents play a vital role in establishing a bedtime routine, strictly adhered to on all but the most exceptional nights.

A time is established that meets family needs, and the slowing down begins—putting away playthings, getting ready for a relaxing bath and tooth brushing time, followed by pajamas, and a book or two read in a quiet bedroom, away from other family distractions.

Parents must turn off their own phones and safeguard this time for a relaxed personal encounter with their little ones, often the most rewarding time of hectic days for both.

Routines not only relax to prepare for sleep, but they also become habits that lead to healthy sleep patterns.

With older children, parents are trying to encourage children to establish their own patterns.

They set a timeframe for children to manage their own winding down of the day, with a firm limit on any screen use after, say 8:00 or 9:00PM. (This is helped by not having TVs, phones or computers in kids' rooms.)

Parents help kids set goals for lights out, being as firm as the situation warrants. In general, they help children with time management and setting priorities, so that they plan their after school time to allow for completion of homework, music practice or other special projects.

It is problems with time management that often interfere with older children getting enough sleep.

But parents help kids see the connection between burning the midnight oil to finish a project, and feeling out of it in school the next day.

And they encourage school systems to consider bus and school start

times that support children's sleep needs.

Healthy, happy children thrive when their sleep needs are met. Do your part to make this happen.

Discipline

Discipline is teaching

Discipline is our way of teaching children about safety and societal norms.

Whatever type of discipline parents choose, the key is that some form of it is essential.

When you are faced with a twoyear-old who is throwing a temper tantrum, or who is being unkind to a playmate:

- **1. Be specific.** Instead of vague instructions like, "Cut it out," use specific ones like: "Don't take Jeremy's toys. It's not nice."
- **2. Use body language.** Move next to your child, put a hand on her shoulder, make eye contact.
- 3. Toddlers like to say the word "no." So, avoid the word as much as you can when dealing with your child. Instead save "no" for times when you describe unacceptable behavior.
- 4. With older children, set guidelines in advance. If your child knows the consequences of his misbehavior, he will think twice about acting up.
- 5. Be consistent, even when it's hard to follow through. Children need to know their parents' word is good—for punishments and for rewards. □

Growing up to be responsible adults

We all want our children to grow up to be responsible adults.

We want them to feel, think, and act with respect for themselves and for others.

To do this, children need lots of help from parents, caregivers and other adults.

Learning to be responsible includes learning to:

- Show respect and compassion for others;
 - Practice honesty;
- Show courage by standing up for what we believe;
- Develop self-control out of consideration for others;
 - Maintain self-respect;

Here are some thing you can do at home:

- •Watch for the chance to teach your children responsible behavior through everyday situations. Share your moral and religious values with them.
- Show compassion and concern when others are suffering.
- Read stories together that teach lessons: the courage of David standing up to Goliath, or the value of persistence from "The Little Engine That Could."
- Talk about complicated decisions. Help children understand how the choices they make will affect them and others.
- Visit with teachers to discuss ways parents, caregivers, other adults and the school can reinforce the same lessons about good character.
- Talk with some other parents and agree on acceptable behavior for children's play and parties.

Take turns supervising to show that all the parents agree on the standards of behavior. \Box

Teaching kids to share and care

How can parents help their children develop a sharing/caring attitude?

• Start early. Various studies demonstrate that even infants have surprisingly generous instincts and like to share.

Most parents have the experience of witnessing their baby, eating in a high chair, spontaneously pick up a piece of food from the tray and offer it to them

Benjamin Spock cites this example: "If a toy is offered but the baby doesn't want to let go, don't try to pull it away from him. That will only bring out his possessiveness.

"Instead, lay your hand on the toy, smile and say 'thank you.' Even if the toy is not actually relinquished, your positive reaction shows him that the impulse is right."

• Love and nurture your child. While this may appear to be obvious, parents are usually surprised to learn the great number of children who grow up feeling unloved by their parents.

In fact, believing they are unloved is the number one reason many teens give for attempting suicide, using drugs and alcohol, and running away.

On the other hand, such issues are almost non-existent in homes where parents consistently work at showering their children with love and respect.

• Commend your child for acts of caring and sharing. This is not as obvious as it appears because children seldom bring attention to their acts of compassion and kindness.

Parents constantly need to be on the lookout for signs of caring and sharing and then praise the child for his or her behavior.

How the future is shaped will depend upon the values children receive in the present.

As parents work at developing caring and sharing attitudes in their children, the world always has a chance at being a brighter, better and safer world.

FREE!

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

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

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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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December 2020

Sing "Jingle Bells" four times.	20 Today wear red and green and a smile!	National Cocoa Day. Make little floating islands with marshmallows.	Warm up some apple cider for a tasty treat!		Sunday
What can you do with an igloo? Find out how to make one.	Winter Solstice Day. The shortest day of the year. You might want to read more about it in a book.	Summer fun! Wear your swim suit in the bathtub.	Talk about animals that live where there is snow.		Monday
Learn how to make some potato pancakes. Following a recipe is a good way to learn how to follow instructions.	Have a candy cane hunt!	15 Oh, boy! Home-made fudge!	B Draw and decorate a Holiday greeting on a paper plate to send to a special friend or relative.	Rosa Parks Day. Find a book about her life at the library.	Tuesday
Invite friends over for soup and games.	Count your toes. How many are on your left foot? How many are on your right foot? How many are there all together?	Draw a Christmas tree and color it with as many colors as you can find. Don't forget ornaments.	Get out the scales and weigh: 1. Yourself 2. Two books 3. 10 pencils	Make paper snowflakes by folding paper and cutting shapes.	Wednesday
31 Make a special hat for New Year's Day.	Christmas Eve	This would be a good time to sing "Winter Wonderland."	Read "The Polar Express."	Play "This Little Piggy."	Thursday
Growir wishes you a happy a New	Merry Christmas!	18 Bake Cookies Day	First day of Hanukkah.	Go outside and count icicles or palm trees.	Friday
Growing Child wishes you and yours a happy and blessed New Year!	First day of Kwanzal	What's mistletoe? What happens if you hang up some?	Read "Beni's First Hanukkah" by Jane Dreskin Zalben	Donate toys, clothes, canned goods, paper products to a holiday charity.	Saturday