



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Parenting

Characteristics of a good parent

Margaret Mead, the noted anthropologist who studied children, parents, and methods of child-raising among many races of people, was asked what she thought were the characteristics of a good mother.

She replied with a short list of what she considered “valuable capacities for a mother to have.”

These capacities would be equally valuable for fathers!

- To treat each child as an individual person; to realize that children are not adjuncts to their parents but are individuals in their own right.

- To set a child’s feet on her own path and allow her to follow it, yet to be there when that path seems hard to follow.

- To be willing to listen, and listen, and listen. □

Behavior

Fibs and obscenities

Sometime during their childhood, most children tell fibs that are real whoppers! Naturally parents become concerned and wonder what they should or shouldn’t do.

Before you do anything, try to decide whether the child is creating fantasy—is telling fibs to avoid possible trouble—or is simply unable to cope with reality.



There are a very small number in this latter group, and they need professional help, not punishment.

Fantasy is going on when Bradley applies colored chalk to his lips and plays “Mother.”

It’s fantasy when Debbie develops an imaginary playmate, an invisible child, or animal.

Debbie and Bradley aren’t experiencing delusions, they’re aware of who they are.

As long as parents and child know when it’s time to stop, enjoy the tall story and create your own to see how absurd it may become.

And what about the child who fibs more than “occasionally?” Parents need to first check themselves to be certain that their quota of tall tales is low.

Next, you must convey the fact that there is a pay-off for being forthright.

Demonstrate this immediately by rewarding the child for “fessing up” and sparing the punishment.

Youngster’s newest vocabulary may well include a variety of swear words and other obscenities.

In spite of your strong desire to put a stop to them, you will not stop them by opposing them.

Make it an issue and your child will curse forever, even if she hasn’t the vaguest notion what the words mean.

The most successful treatment for preschoolers is to do absolutely nothing; ignore the talk. Very soon the swearer will weary of her explosive language because it fails to stir you up or shock you. □

Book of the Month: Knock Knock: My Dad's Dream For Me

By Daniel Beaty Little, Brown, & Co., 2013

Many of you may have no interest in this book, tender as it is. But with about half of marriages today ending in divorce, and many of those marriages involving children, you should know about this wonderful book for yourself or your friends.

One author, writing about children and divorce, says: "For adults, divorce brings a world to an end; for young children, whose lives are focused in the family, it seems to bring the world to an end" (Heatherington & Kelly, 2002).

Divorce changes the reassuring rhythms and structures of family life, especially those that give a child's life order and predictability.

And so it is for the little boy in **Knock Knock**. "Every morning," he says, "I play a game with my father. He goes **Knock Knock** on my door, and I pretend to be asleep till he gets right next to the bed. And my papa, he tells me, 'I love you.'"

But what happens when one day the knock never comes, and Papa's not there to play the game?

Readers share (and see, in the delicate illustrations) the child's sadness and loss when day after day his father is not there to help him get ready for school, or cook scrambled eggs or help with homework.

Finally he writes his dad a letter about all the things he's missing, finishing with the poignant words, "Papa, come home, 'cause I want to be just like you, but I'm forgetting who you are."

One day he comes home from school to find an answer to his letter, and here the illustrations change to give us a sense of hope ahead as the

boy moves on: "No longer will I be there to knock on your door, so you must learn to knock for yourself... **Knock Knock** to open new doors for your dreams... **Knock Knock** for me, for as long as you become your best, the best of me still lives in you... **Knock Knock** with the knowledge that you are my son and you have a bright, beautiful future... **Knock Knock**, who's there? You are."

Many families today are crafting lives after divorce for their children so that fortunately they don't experience the complete absence of a parent from their lives.

But the perceived absence that comes with changed living circumstances must be recognized and dealt with.

While parents are feeling their own sense of loss, they likely also feel a measure of relief with the end of a troubled relationship.

This relief is not a part of children's experience usually, and it is important that parents understand how differently children grieve with the change in the family than do adults.

To children, it is difficult to know how to proceed with the loss of some of their source of strength.

The power of this book is in recognizing both the pain and sense of loss within the child, and the ways parents can remind them of their inner strength and brighter days ahead.

This is a sensitive handling of a complex topic, and I recommend it to you as a resource where needed.

The quote I used is from: Heatherington, M., & Kelly, J. (2002). *For Better or Worse: Divorce Reconsidered*. □

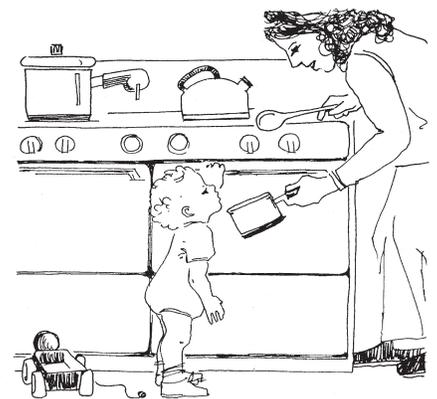
Promote math readiness

To help preschoolers get ready for math, give them practice by using number, size, and quantity words.

Make a point of using these words yourself and asking Youngster questions so that he has to use them in his answers.

For example, at mealtime, ask your child if he wants a **lot** or a **little**, **less than** this or **more than** this, and so on.

Cut an apple in half and say, "Here's **one half** for you and **one half** for me."



Ask him **how many** pieces he wants, if he wants a **big** piece or a **little** piece.

Show him a picture of himself with others. Ask: "Who is the **tallest**?" "Who is the **shortest**?"

Let him help in the kitchen. Show him how to measure out **two tablespoons**, mix in **one-half cup**, and so on.

Give him the measuring cups and spoons and a pan of dried beans to experiment with to see how many teaspoons in a tablespoon, how many half cups in a cup and so on. □

Your self-confidence as a parent

At one time or another, almost all parents question their self-confidence.

Parents want to be able to act decisively and confidently but the influence of neighbors and relatives and what they will think can be very unsettling.

Here's an idea that may help. Most decisions revolve around two categories: **needs** and **wants**. It is important to determine which is which.

Needs must be responded to in the interest of youngsters' development. Children **need** good nutrition, for example.

Wants may be considered but they may also be rejected in the interest of health, safety or family priorities. So, while children **need** food, they may **want** only ice cream.

Parents who feel obliged to satisfy all the **wants** may discover they are harboring a little tyrant.

Many parents are afraid of losing their child's love if they deny her all she wants—children do become frustrated and often angry when thwarted.

Yet is impossible to satisfy 100 percent without parents becoming irritated and indignant.

A compromise is, first to recognize the difference between **needs** and **wants**.

Then if you can feel secure in your love for your child, you can accept the consequences of your decisions—without fearing your child's rejection or criticisms from neighbors or relatives. □

Discovering and exploring feelings

Sometimes when a child is upset, there's a specific cause. Someone may have said something unkind to her.

Other times it may be hard to pinpoint the reason for her unhappiness.

For example, a child might feel a little blue without knowing why when an older brother or sister starts school and as the youngest, she is left alone at home.



Still other times, a youngster may be a little whiny, clingy or cranky for no apparent reason.

She may be overtired, hungry, sick, or just going through too many changes in her life.

Whatever the problem, you can help your child feel better by helping her explore her feelings.

If you know what the problem is, you can start the conversation by trying to put the child's feelings into words: "Your feelings are hurt because Tom called you a baby."

If you think you know or have only a general idea of what the problem may be, try something like: "It's

tough for you to be the only one who doesn't go to school, huh?"

When you really don't know what the problem is, try something like this: "You seem a little sad (mad, upset, etc.) today. Can I help? Want to talk about it?"

You may get a little resistance at first, but be patient and don't push her to talk if she's not ready.

Just let her know that you're willing to listen if she wants to share her feelings with you.

Once she's started talking, say back to her what you think she's said to help her continue to explore her feelings. "Okay, so it made you feel mad when the kids didn't ask you to play ball with them."

Try to resist giving advice or telling her how she should feel.

Just listen, accept what she says, and help her express what's on her mind by showing her that you understand and care. □

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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

MAY, 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<p>1</p> <p>MAY DAY</p> 	<p>2</p> <p>NATIONAL TEACHER APPRECIATION DAY</p>	<p>3</p> <p>READ "PAT THE BUNNY."</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>CINCO DE MAYO</p> 	<p>6</p> <p>KENTUCKY DERBY DAY!</p>
<p>7</p> <p>MAKE A TENT WITH CHAIRS AND A BLANKET. THEN, TAKE A NAP IN YOUR TENT!</p>	<p>8</p> <p>WHISPER A SECRET IN SOMEONE'S EAR.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>NATIONAL SLEEPOVER DAY</p>	<p>10</p> <p>GIVE SOMEONE A COMPLIMENT TODAY.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>FIND SOMETHING ORANGE COLORED IN YOUR HOUSE. WHAT IS IT?</p>	<p>12</p> <p>SING "FROSTY THE SNOW-</p>	<p>13</p> <p>LEARN HOW TO WASH AND DRY YOUR HANDS.</p>
<p>14</p> <p>MOTHER'S DAY</p> 	<p>15</p> <p>CAN YOU GO SLEDDING TODAY? WHY NOT?</p>	<p>16</p> <p>DRAW SOME LINES ON THE SIDEWALK AND PRACTICE JUMPING OVER THEM.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>MAKE AND EAT AN ICE CREAM SUNDAE.</p> 	<p>18</p> <p>NAME EACH OBJECT IN THE LIVING ROOM.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>GO OUTSIDE AND FIND FIVE ROCKS. LINE THEM UP ACCORDING TO SIZE: LITTLE -----BIG</p>	<p>20</p> <p>ARMED FORCES DAY</p> 
<p>21</p> <p>TAKE YOUR PARENTS TO THE PLAYGROUND DAY.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>KEEP A BOX OF OLD CLOTHES FOR DRESS UP PLAY.</p>	<p>23</p> <p>LEARN A NEW WORD TODAY AND WHAT IT MEANS. ELECTRICITY</p>	<p>24</p> <p>JOG AROUND THE BLOCK WITH SOMEONE.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>TALK ABOUT SOMETHING FUNNY THAT MAKES YOU LAUGH.</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>GO TO THE LIBRARY AND LOOK AT THE NEW BOOKS.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>GO TO THE PARK AND SWING!</p>
<p>28</p> <p>INDIANAPOLIS 500 RACE! WHO WON?</p>	<p>29</p> <p>MEMORIAL DAY PICNIC ANYONE?</p> 	<p>30</p> <p>PET A CAT DAY</p>	<p>31</p> <p>LOOK FOR THE NUMBER 2 ON THIS PAGE. HOW MANY DID YOU FIND? 412</p>			