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Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Parenting

Cultivate patience

No matter how much you love your child, there will be times when her behavior will exasperate you.

Try to remember that she will never be this age again and that this, too, will pass.

Let her know how you feel when what she does upsets you. But try to keep your sense of humor and perspective.

Be patient with her attempts to do things for herself. She may not do them well at first, but she'll learn with practice.

Like every other skill, responsibility for oneself takes practice and lots of room for mistakes before it's mastered. □



Social Skills

Learning kindness

Children don't learn kindness by accident. They learn it by the teaching they receive, the way they see others interact, and by practicing gentle treatment of others.

Teaching children to think of others takes very little effort. There are plenty of opportunities in an average day to instruct youngsters how to be nice.

For example, while waiting in the line at the post office, you can explain that you wait your turn because others are in front of you.

You can teach children how to answer politely when someone asks them a question. You can even pose quizzes for them when situations arise: what would be helpful for that man on crutches?

The first and often most challenging place to teach children to be kind is at home. Daily interactions with siblings can be used as learning situations.

Encourage little ones to express anger in ways that don't hurt anyone, and to find solutions to problems that are fair to everyone.

Although family members will always have times of disagreement, they can begin to think of how other people feel.

Kids who are raised in an "anything goes" atmosphere cannot be expected to know how to play nicely with other children.

Even more powerful than teaching is modeling. If you are rude to others, your children will quickly learn to be discourteous also.

If you yell at sales people because you aren't waited on promptly, or mutter obscenities at fellow drivers, your children will treat others with contempt.

Young people treat others the way they are treated. How many times do we thank toddlers for helping, or ask that they walk faster instead of demanding it?

Children need to be listened to and taken seriously, even if their ideas seem a bit trivial to us.

By respecting children's points of view and really listening to what they have to say, we help them learn how to react to others.

When youngsters are treated with love and respect at home, they will be much more likely to be kind to friends away from home. □

Teasing

Parents frequently ask how to help their child combat teasing from peers or older youngsters.

Children who engage in a cruel kind of teasing of other children usually come from homes where sarcasm and hostility are used constantly—sometimes fashioned in joke form

Even though some adults engage in gentle teasing with other adults, it is inappropriate to engage in this practice with a preschool child.

The adult may consider it funny or well-intentioned. But the young child has not developed the sophistication needed to handle this practice. So, it becomes a form of emotional cruelty.

What can parents do to help their child deal with teasing from another child?

A parent's presence is an effective way to keep older children in line. When trouble appears to be developing, the parent can redirect the children to some other form of play or introduce a new activity.

Children usually take their cues from their parents' behavior. If parents do not appear to be upset themselves, the child will likely remain calm.

However, if parents become angry in front of their child or retell teasing or bullying incidents, these experiences may become magnified in the child's mind. This tends to reinforce the child's feelings of fear and timidity.

When parents are over-protective, they intervene to "rescue" their child too soon or too often. This teaches the child that the only defense is the parents' presence.

Over-protective parents may inhibit their child's development of self-

confidence and positive self-esteem. It is important for parents to maintain a healthy balance between watchful concern and unnecessary intrusion.

So, what can you do to help your child combat teasing and its effects?

1. Eliminate teasing from your own behavior.
2. Be present but quietly out of the way when your child is playing with other children.
3. Let your child deal with problems he is capable of handling without your immediate intervention.
4. Keep cool and don't become agitated when your child tells you stories about how he was tormented. Listen to his story, comfort him for a minute and then observe more carefully how the children are playing together.
5. Avoid discussing the episode with others in your child's presence.
6. Maintain a good sense of humor which is good both for you and your child. □

Plan a family clean-up day

Young children can learn responsibility and cooperation by pitching in to help clean up the place they live.

Set aside a certain period of time — an hour perhaps — when everybody pitches in to clean up, pick up, and put away the objects and clutter at your house.

Explain that everybody has a job and carefully explain what each job involves. Try to match the job with the child's abilities and capabilities.

For example, two-year-olds love to put things in other things. You can utilize this by having them pick up and put away toys, trash and clutter.

Three- and four-year-olds can clear the table, dry dishes, and vacuum the middle of a room and dust.

Five-year-olds can pick up junk, fold clothes, sort laundry, wash law windows. The trick may be getting them to do it.

When the time limit is up, everybody can join in to finish up jobs that need a little more time and then everybody heads out for a treat! □



Helping children be brave

We can't expect a child to stop being afraid just because we say there is nothing to be afraid of.

No matter how confident a child is, she may be afraid of new and strange situations. An unknown relative who snatches her up for a hug may reduce her to tears. A large, noisy, although friendly dog may panic her.

These fears, although they may seem trivial to you, are entirely sensible and realistic from a child's point of view.

She wants to explore new things gradually, on her own terms and in her own good time.

To help your child be brave, begin by seeing her worries and fears for what they are: questions.

Will this hurt? What is this? What should I do?

Talk to her calmly. Don't force her to hug Aunt Mary or pet the nice dog. Give her a chance to recover her balance, and plenty of opportunities to experience new things. □

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Building trust in children

How can you encourage trust in your child?

- **Keep your promises.** To begin with, make only promises which you can keep.

Suppose your son wants you to take him to the zoo on Saturday, but you know you might be called to work that day.

Explain the predicament. Reassure him that you do want to take him to the zoo, and set a definite date when you will go, regardless of what comes up.

- **When the answer to a request is no, explain why.** If your child asks for something you don't want him to have, be honest with yourself and him.

One child asked to go to play video games with a friend. His parents didn't approve of some of the games but were tempted to soften the negative answer by saying, "Not today, dear."

If they had said that, their son could have reached the conclusion that they might allow him to go on another day.

Instead they discussed the reasons for the decision and planned some alternative activities which he might enjoy.

- **Answer honestly.** Try to answer all questions honestly. Choose words to suit the child's level of understanding.

For example, when a four-year-old asks what the moon is made of, it's not necessary to launch into geological terms and explanations.

A simple answer about rock and sand will be easy for him to understand. If he needs more information, he'll ask.

- **Don't evade.** Sometimes we're tempted to give our children evasive answers because we're afraid they won't

grasp our meaning or they may be upset by the answer.

Death and sex, for example, are both topics that make parents uneasy.

Both death and sex are realities about which all children must learn eventually.

Protecting a child from learning about the experience of death may hinder his ability to cope with the experience in the future.

Holding back information about his sexual nature won't prevent your child from misusing it.

The less he knows, the more likely he is to have problems. When appropriate, share your knowledge and values with him.

This doesn't mean you need to tell children everything you know about these topics, but you can answer questions simply, truthfully, and with awareness of age appropriateness.

- **Admit shortcomings.** When you don't know the answer to a question, admit it, then offer to find out.

The reality is that no one has all the right answers. □

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

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>2</p>  <p>Sing "Row, Row, Row, Row Your Boat" and make up your own motions.</p>	<p>3</p>  <p>Say the ABCs.</p>	<p>4</p>  <p>Independence Day. U.S.A.</p>	<p>5</p>  <p>Remember never to litter. This is a way to help keep our country beautiful.</p>	<p>6</p>  <p>Try this tongue-twister: rubber baby buggy bumpers</p>	<p>7</p>  <p>Eat something good for you today!</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Do you know how to hunt? Play a game: "What's That Song?" Someone hums a song and everyone else guesses what it is.</p>
<p>9</p> <p>National Sugar Cookie Day!</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Wear something with flowers on it.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Find a small cardboard box with a lid. Decorate it with crayons, markers, stickers and glitter.</p>	<p>12</p>  <p>Ask about the names of flowers you see in bloom now.</p>	<p>13</p> <p>National French Fry Day!</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Find a hat to wear and then go for a walk.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Sweep the sidewalk.</p> 
<p>16</p> <p>Spend some time at a park today!</p> 	<p>17</p> <p>Buy an inexpensive poster of a famous work of art and hang it in your bedroom.</p>	<p>18</p>  <p>Count the fireflies you see after dark.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>How many colors can you name?</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Which would you rather be: a cat or a dog? Why?</p>	<p>21</p>  <p>Read a board book to the baby. Talk about the pictures.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Go to a local baseball game.</p>
<p>23</p> <p>National Hot Dog Day!</p> <p>How high can you stack your blocks?</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Count your fingers and toes.</p> <p>Practice whistling.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Help put the dishes away.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Count the doors in your house.</p> 	<p>27</p> <p>National Bagpipe Day! What is a bagpipe?</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Use plastic containers to stack and play with.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Talk about ways to show kindness to others.</p>