



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Language

## Positive conversations

Positive conversations that can change a child's behavior begin with the words:

I like the way you are ...

I believe in you ...

I know you can ...

I love you, but I don't like ...

I will help you. We will do this together.

You are so (smart, sweet, strong) that I think you can do better.

Most of the time, you do this really well. Can you try harder today?

I am so proud of you because ...

Let's use our quiet voices. You are making a little bit too much noise.

I am disappointed with what you did. I know you can do better.

Are you being a good helper?

Are you doing your best?

Have you shown Olivia how much you like to share?

I need you to ...

I told Daddy (Mother) what a good job you did yesterday. Let's see how you do today. □

## Infants & Toddlers

### Exercises in learning

Around her first birthday, what kinds of things is Baby now doing on her own?

If you watch her carefully, you will notice she is likely to try to do something in a different manner the second, or at least the third time she tries to repeat an action.

For instance, when she discovers the fascination of dropping objects, she doesn't drop the same toy the same way each time.

Instead she holds her arm in different positions. She also tries out all possible surfaces for dropping.

This is quite a change from her younger months when she used to do the same thing over and over like banging an object or shaking her arms and legs to sway the bassinet.

What has happened is that she is no longer so fascinated with the effect she can produce when she simply makes the same thing happen over and over again.

Her interest has shifted to the world of causes and effects outside herself.

She is willing and able to make variations in her actions to learn about the nature of the objects themselves. She has now begun to sort and classify her experiences in a simple way.

Jean Piaget, the noted psychologist, divided a baby's learning experiences into two categories.

First, she tries it out with a number of variations. She exercises the idea, so to speak. Baby's various ways of dropping an object is not just a one-time occurrence but a predictable happening.

Then, along comes a situation where an idea doesn't work. Let's say that Baby is exercising the idea that she can put objects into a box through a hole in the top.

All of a sudden, an object refuses to go through the hole—push though she will. Now comes a tiny crisis.

Baby's idea, which had been so stable, suddenly becomes unsettled. She must either reconcile the idea with this new happening or give it up entirely.

Of course, Baby soon learns to modify her idea slightly. All objects will go through the hole except those that are "too big."

Her process of adapting an idea to new circumstances is the second category of learning experiences and it is really the more important of the two.

By this means, all of us have gained a more highly refined understanding of the world and its ways. □

## Make this a healthier year for kids

Here are some tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics to help make this year healthier for kids.

- **Read to your children every day.** Start by the age of six months. Reading to children shows them the importance of communication and motivates them to become readers. It also provides a context to discuss issues and learn what is on your child's mind.

- **Do a "child-proofing" survey of your home.** A child's-eye view home survey should systematically go from room to room, removing all the "booby traps" that await the curious toddler or preschooler. Think of poisons, small objects, sharp edges, knives and firearms and places to fall.

- **Provide your child with a tobacco-free environment.** Indoor air pollution from tobacco increases ear infections, chest infections, and even SIDS.

If you smoke, consider quitting. Remember that the most important predictor of whether your children will grow up to be smokers is whether you smoke. At least make your home a smoke-free zone.

- **Practice "safety on wheels."** Make sure everyone in the car is buckled up for every ride, with children in the back seat in age-appropriate child safety seats. All bikers, skaters and skateboarders should wear helmets.

- **Prevent violence by setting good examples.** Hitting, slapping and spanking teach children that it is okay to hit other people to solve problems. Nonphysical forms of discipline work better in the long run. Remember that words can hurt, too.

- **Make sure immunizations are up to date.** Review your child's immunization record with your pe-

diatrician. Make sure that your child has had the hepatitis vaccine series, that the "MMR" (measles-mumps-rubella) vaccine is up to date, and that your child has had a chickenpox vaccine by the age of two.

- **Monitor your children's "media."** Monitor what your children see and hear on television, in movies, and in music. Talk to your children about "content." If you feel that a movie, TV program or other media features are inappropriate, redirect your child to more suitable programming.

- **Become more involved in your child's school and your child's education.** Don't leave education strictly to the professionals. Visit your child's school. Become active in the parent-teacher organization.

Volunteer in the classroom or for special projects. Be available to help with homework. If your child's education is important to you, it will be important to her.

- **Pay attention to nutrition.** Nutrition makes a big difference in how kids grow, develop and learn. Good nutrition is a matter of balance. Provide foods from several food groups at each meal. Emphasize foods that are less processed, such as whole grain breads and cereals, and fresh fruits and vegetables. Review your child's diet with your pediatrician for suggestions.

- **Make your child feel loved and important.** Kids develop a sense of self-worth early in life. They get it from their parents. Listen to what your children have to say. Assure them that they are loved and safe. Celebrate their individuality, and tell them what makes them special and what you admire about them. Hug your child every day. □

## Share your knowledge

Most adults, even those raised with a restricted access to nature, know something about nature.

It may be a simple story about why or how something works in nature that you've retained from your high school biology class.

It may be a lesson or story told to you by a relative or friend when you were small. Or it may be a folk tale such as the legend of Johnny Appleseed. Whatever it is, share it with your child.

As adults we tend to believe we can't instruct children unless we are an expert or a teacher. But the stories children love most are those they hear from the parents and family members and their most favorite activities are those that they participate in with their parents.

So, go ahead, tell your youngsters about fireflies trying to attract a mate by blinking their lights. Or talk about the little acorns that could grow up to be great big trees.

Do a little research to find out if there's a park or nature area near your home that has a special attraction or provides nature experiences for families.

Go to the library, check out a book and amaze the kids—and yourself—with a simple explanation of where rain comes from or how birds make a nest. Or choose another idea from the zillions of topics available. Put together your own experiment and learn yourself as you go along with the kids. See if you can come up with a topic that nobody knows much about.

Not only are you learning something yourself, you're imparting knowledge, presenting a positive role model of teaching, and perhaps introducing a budding scientist to the fascinating world of nature. □

## Advice for new parents

The daughter of a friend has just adopted a baby. The whole family is wild with joy, and doing all that they can do to support the new family. My friend asked me for all the advice she could give her daughter.

After first warning her that advice could be the *last* thing the mom wants at this point, I decided to see if I could figure out myself the most important ideas for first-time parents to grasp, and here they are:

- **Get to know your baby.** I'm not talking about the compulsive counting of fingers and toes that seems obligatory, but rather really paying attention to who this new being is.

You've been busy imagining for some months, but it's now time to throw away the fantasies of who you would have liked to arrive, and learn who actually *did*.

Babies arrive wired for a particular temperament and way of interacting with the world and people around them.

Life is so much happier for both children and their parents when we figure out how best to match their style.

Pay attention to what bothers and delights your little one, and soon you will have figured out some of how to support this unique person as you move through years together.

- **Get some sleep—and help when you need it.** Young babies are ceaselessly demanding, with no sense of day or night, and no qualms about disrupting yours.

The exhausting first few weeks makes most parents re-think the choice to become parents, so there is

no shame in either howling or taking naps when the opportunity strikes.

Superwoman didn't have babies, which is why she can bound about so energetically.

Right now, look after your baby's physical and emotional needs and your own, without panicking that everything in life as you knew it has changed forever. (It has, but that daunting idea can be dealt with later.)

As you move through years together, remember that it really does take a village to raise a child, and rested parents can be most effective.



- **Get a life.** Yes, taking on the care and nurturing of another human being is a huge responsibility, and your parenting role will influence your life forever, shaping the kind of person that you are and will be.

Yes, good parenting is not something that can be done in odd moments or in your spare hours. It takes considerable time, effort and thought, and seeps into all other aspects of your life. But it should not become your life.

Those who do let parenting become their sole obsession run the risk of becoming the most uni-dimen-

sional people around, boring those around them, as well as ultimately their own children.

They also are likely to damage their own children, the very people that they would purport to do anything for.

It is not healthy for either parents or children when parents are so focused on their kids that they lose sight of the things around them that should also have meaningful places in their lives:

- Their primary relationships with the other parent as well as others—the relationships that will nurture them emotionally so that they have the wherewithal to nurture their children;

- Their meaningful work;

- Their own development as physically and emotionally healthy persons, and

- Their larger contributions to the world around them.

So that's about it: get to know your child, get some rest and help, and get a life—focus on these three things, and the rest will fall into place. □

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

# March 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p> <p>Peanut Butter Day.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Learn how to polish shoes.</p> 	<p>3</p> <p>Visit a fabric shop.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Sing the A-B-C song.</p> 	<p>5</p> <p>Learn how to make your bed. If you already know how ... and you do it, good for you!</p> 	<p>6</p> <p>World Day of Prayer.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Move around the house like an elephant; like a turtle; a cricket; a fish.</p>
<p>8</p> <p>Visit a neighbor and take along some homemade cookies. Yum!</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Draw pictures of BIG kites. Make designs on them, and color them many colors!</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Purim begins at sunset.</p> 	<p>11</p> <p>Johnny Applesseed Day</p> <p>Read his story if you haven't already. Or read it again anyway.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Girl Scouts' Day</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Cut out words from a newspaper and use them to write a letter to a friend.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Put together a jigsaw puzzle. Get some more people to join you.</p>
<p>15</p> <p>The Ides of March. The What? Look it up.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Hunt for five rectangle shapes in your house.</p> 	<p>17</p> <p>St. Patrick's Day</p> 	<p>18</p> <p>Make a map of your street or road.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Ask someone how you can help them today.</p> 	<p>20</p> <p>First day of Spring. Spring Equinox Day.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>A good day to fly a kite!</p> 
<p>22</p> <p>Help make pancakes for breakfast.</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Chocolate-covered raisin day.</p> <p><b>Yum!</b></p>	<p>24</p> <p>Make a tall tower with blocks.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>How does a cat take a bath?</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>Go for a night walk with your parents and look at the moon and the stars.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Wear something yellow today.</p> 	<p>28</p> <p>Is there a first-aid kit in your home?</p>
<p>29</p> <p>What signs of spring do you see?</p> 	<p>30</p> <p>Go to the park and swing on the swings.</p>	<p>31</p> <p>National Crayon Day.</p> <p>Read a new book: <b>The Day the Crayons Quit</b> by Drew Daywalt</p> 	<p>National Celery Month</p> <p>National Women's History Month</p> <p>Irish Music Month</p> 