



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Social Skills

## Being successful

In order for children to develop feelings of confidence in their ability to be successful, they need practice at being successful.

How can parents do this?

Observe your child's present skills and interests. Then introduce activities which will spark her interest and stretch her skills.

Encourage her to stick with activities until she's done what she set out to do. Try not to interrupt her from an involving activity.

Perseverance is an important part of success. If she meets with difficulty, encourage her to "just try again."

If you can suggest a way of simplifying the task, do so. But resist the temptation to take over and show her how by doing it for her. That's a subtle way of telling her she can't do it, and will undermine her confidence.

Helping your child learn to feel good about herself is the most important job parents have. □

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## Parenting

### Tips for countering parent burnout

The qualities of sensitivity, commitment, enthusiasm, and compassion that most good parents possess also make them more likely to burn out.

Here are some steps to help you avoid the burnout trap.

- **Distance yourself from the role of parent sometimes.** It is impossible to remain fresh and responsible as a parent unless you periodically take a break from the job.

You need time alone, and you need time alone with your spouse or significant other.

Your two-year-old will not be traumatized if you leave her in the YW/MCA nursery for an hour while you swim laps.

The six-month-old infant, given a bottle and a loving sitter, will not mind when you and a friend go out for Chinese food.

- **Care for yourself physically.**

Burnout is both a physical and

emotional illness. One obvious suggestion is to get adequate sleep.

But what about the more subtle elements in your life that may be wearing you down?

How much caffeine are you taking in? What about cigarettes? Prescription and nonprescription medications? Excessive dieting? Diet pills?

- **Talk with other parents.** Talk with older parents and find out how they survived the tough times with young children.

Talk with parents who are your own age, and you'll find that everyone mostly has the same problems.

Talk with younger parents and offer your wisdom and encouragement.

Becoming a parent makes you part of a unique group of sometimes-highly-stressed, emotionally needy individuals.

Talk is cheap. Yet it can bring you the richest rewards in terms of relief, rejuvenation and re-direction. □



## A sense of order

Here are some ideas to help teach your child a sense of order in her life:

**1. Provide for the order of toys and possessions.** Make easy-to-reach boxes and shelves available for playthings to be sorted and separated.

**2. Provide for the order of space,** particularly if you have more than one child and a limited area.

Decide what goes where—sports equipment here, doll corner there, a place for pens, markers, paint and materials, library books, cars and trucks, building blocks and so on.

You will find fewer conflicts about toys when the territory is divided in advance.

**3. Provide for the order of time.** This will help children to anticipate events, to plan them and learn how to postpone what they are currently involved in and do it later.

How do you teach this by providing order of time?

- **Plan meals at the same time each day;** try to have the family eat together whenever possible.

- **See that bedtime is consistent as is the sequence leading up to it.** A bedtime story helps a child anticipate a happy experience. A quiet talk before bed is also very calming to a child.

- **Well-established habits will make a child's day predictable and secure.** A snack, a walk, a shared picture book.

Many families cannot arrange their affairs in such a way that everything is always in its proper place or that everything always happens on schedule. This is a description of the ideal.

A good general rule is to try to get things in their proper place and try to work out a schedule where events in your family's day occur with dependable regularity.

This will help your child as she comes to grips with school learning tasks. □

## Discipline

### Who's the boss at Grandma's?

When you and your children go to visit grandparents or other relatives, who will do the disciplining? Whose rules apply—your or Grandma's?

Most of the time it makes sense for the house rules to apply—rules of the house you're visiting. You can decide with your children that some behavior may be all right at Grandma's, but not all right again when they get home.

For example, grandparents may permit children to stay up later than is allowed at home. Or allow two helpings of dessert.

This doesn't mean that grandparents should undercut parents' authority. Some behavior is not acceptable no matter where it takes place. For example, jumping on the bed or furniture is a no-no. Period.

As parents you are the protectors of your children, even when it means your wishes go against grandparents' or other relatives wishes. Sometimes you must insist on your own rules for your kids' sakes. □

## Fairy tales

At one time parents were advised to avoid reading fairy tales to children because they contain elements of horror. Some educators believe, however, that fairy tales do have a positive effect on children.

Children from kindergarten age onward who are sheltered from terrors such as those that appear in fairy tales are prevented from learning the strength necessary to cope with them.

Needless to say, some children witness more horrors on television than they encounter in the pages of fairy tales.

Fairy tales also provide a necessary rest from the struggles of dealing with the real world. At around eight years of age, interest in fairy tales peaks. Fairy tales confirm the child's beliefs about the world:

- The protagonist, or the main character, which the children identify with, is the center of the universe;

- The world has magic, and finding the right magic will transform important events;

- A good child conforms to a parent figure's rules. An example is the rule that Snow White is not allowed to let anyone in the house while the dwarfs are at work;

- Adversity or trouble must be confronted, but hopefully, everything will turn out all right in the end; and

- No extenuating circumstances or excuses will save the violator from being punished.

Finally, reading fairy tales and other good literature to children exposes them to a variety of rich language and grammatical patterns which they do not get from television. □

## Becoming a trustful parent

I ran across this phrase in a book the other day, and it gave me pause. Certainly parents today seem anything but trustful—peering fearfully at strangers and situations, anxious to guard their children from any harm, whether real, potential, or imagined.

You've all seen the lists that marvel at how your parents managed to grow up, without decent car seats or the laws that require them, without kneepads and helmets, and so on.

It is not my intention here to compare or to belittle the attitudes of caution and surveillance that are so prevalent.

Rather, I just want to raise the issue of how chronically untrustful parents can affect the healthy development of their children, and to consider some of the ways parents can become a bit more trustful.

This helps our children get the message that they can become capable people who can look out for themselves.

Eventually, parents must strive to find opportunities for children to play freely, to explore, and to test developing skills independently of total supervision.

Think back to your own childhood and remember some of your happiest moments.

Where were you and what were you doing? Who was with you? Where were the adults in your life at the time?

Now think some more—do you not want these same kinds of experiences for your own kids?

So perhaps the first step to becoming a trustful parent is to access your own values—what characteristics do you

value and hope for in your children? How can you help them develop?

And then, quite practically, try to find or create safe places and opportunities for children to play freely and to explore their growing abilities.

Here's an example. An elementary-aged girl in my neighborhood came to the door selling Girl Scout cookies, accompanied by both of her parents, neighbors I know.

(Obviously I live in a fairly safe neighborhood, where cookies can be sold door-to-door.)



The parents did most of the conversation, so I'm not sure what the child gained from this experience.

Imagine it set up differently: the parents sit in the car, and let the child approach the door, and handle the situation by herself.

This would be a happy compromise, and a move towards more trustful parenting: the parents are reassured

by their supervision, but the child has the chance to try out her ability to cope on her own.

Now consider your own scenarios, and how you could modify your direct supervision to allow for more freedom.

A second step might be to resist the temptation to be in continuous contact with your children.

With today's technology, it is too easy to be hovering and overly-involved. Consider what you could do—responsibly—to cut back on contact.

I consider it a good thing that kids go to summer camp without devices, so that parents can't continually text or email.

A last thought: let go of the idea that you determine your child's future. If we value freedom and personal responsibility, we must respect children's rights to direct their own lives, benefiting from our guidance but not total control.

I would love to hear your thoughts and/or practical suggestions as we explore this concept of more trustful parenting. □

### FREE!

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








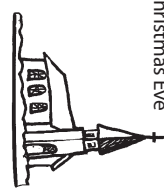
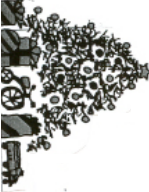
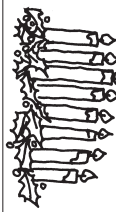
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Written by a very wise grandmother;  
From the publishers of **Growing Child**  
and **Growing Together**

# December 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						
				1 Count the number of Saturdays in this month.	2 Napoleon is crowned Emperor of the French at Notre-Dam on December 2, 1804. Look it up. Read more.	3 Visit a neighbor and take along some home-baked Christmas cookies.
4 Santa's List Day	5 Do morning exercises together. 	6 Talk about opposites and what they mean. Name some: Hot _____ Big _____ Long _____ Up _____	7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. Who do we remember and honor on this day? 	8 National Brownie Day	9 If you have snow, build a snow family. If you don't, go back inside and draw a picture. (Don't forget snowdog.)	10 A cookbook for children makes a nice gift.
11 Mawlid al-Nabi begins at sundown.	12 What games can you play outside in the winter?	13 Make a new Christmas tree ornament. Ice Cream Day	14 How do you make an icicle?	15 Everybody in the house play a board game together. 	16 Hard-boiled eggs, toast and jam for a snack.	17 Wright Brothers' First Flight Anniversary Day Look it up!
18 Hanukkah begins at sundown. 	19 Practice saying the days of the week. What's today?	20  What's mistletoe for anyway? How can you find out?	21 First day of winter. Brrrr! National Hamburger Day	22 Read "The Power of Light: Eight Stories for Hanukkah" by Bashevis Singer. 	23 Wear red, and green, and a smile today!	24 Christmas Eve 
25 Christmas Day 	26 KWANZAA begins. 	27 Enjoy some potato pancakes.	28 Bake and decorate Christmas cookies.	29 Have you been sledding or ice skating yet?	30 <i>Growing Child wishes you and yours a happy and blessed New Year!</i>	31