



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Relationships

Helping children learn independence

Even though the world may be full of real and imagined dangers, parents need to look for ways to help prepare and train children for the task of growing up and becoming independent.

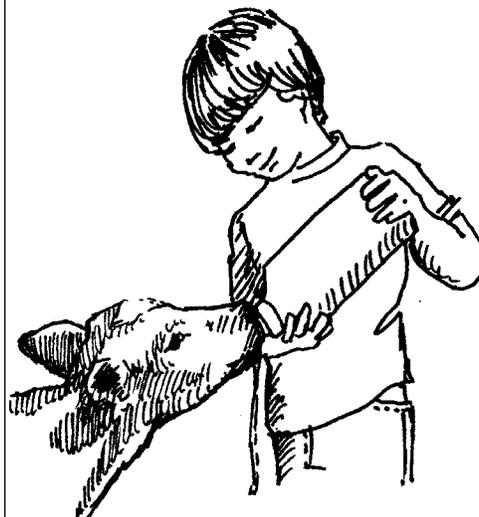
- **Boost self-confidence.** Even toddlers can make decisions. Let a small child choose between two shirts she'll wear that day.
- **Praise efforts and accomplishments,** no matter how small.
- **Talk regularly with her** and really listen. Be interested no matter what she says.
- **Teach her traffic safety** by taking walks and letting her tell you when and where it is safe to walk.
- **It is not enough to tell your child to never talk with strangers.** If she can't talk to strangers, how can she grow up able to deal with all the normal and good contacts that come each day. Tell her instead that you must always know where she is, and that she must never go anywhere with a stranger.
- **Teach her her full name, address, telephone number, and a relative's full name.** □

Developmental

Helping brain development

There is increasing evidence that a young child's environment plays an important part in brain development.

Providing a child with appropriate developmental activities and experiences can lead to an increase in brain cell connections.



By so doing, the child is not only using existing brain cells but these increased connections can actually reshape the brain and enhance the brain's power to learn and remember new material.

Here is a short checklist to serve as a reminder of what parents can do for their child's brain development:

- **Provide opportunities for your child to explore** and gather information both in your home and outside the home.
- **Give your child many opportunities to develop new skills,** such as sorting, putting things in order, comparing, and discovering relationships, such as cause and effect.
- **If your child doesn't know how to get started on a new task, you can provide some guided rehearsal,** but have her become actively involved as soon as possible. She will learn better as an active participant than as an observer.
- **Don't push if your child's behavior indicates that a task is too difficult.** Back off to a simpler task at which your child can experience success.
- **Avoid disapproval, mocking or teasing** if your child makes a mistake.
- **Talk to your child in simple language** to explain new words and concepts.
- **Give praise and encouragement for good effort** and celebrate new accomplishments. □

Helping children deal with their feelings

When adults with psychological problems go to a therapist, they usually must learn how to express their feelings adequately.

Children, on the other hand, have a natural tendency to express their feelings openly—as long as their parents don't try to repress them.

Believe it or not, it is healthy for children to express negative feelings and get them out of their systems. In this way they can learn how to express those feelings in an appropriate manner.

They will also learn how to control the actions that may accompany their feelings.

Just as little children should be permitted to express themselves; they also should be helped to understand that their parents appreciate how they feel. How can parents do this?

Psychologists Carl Rogers and Haim Ginott recommend that parents "reflect feelings." This means to show that you genuinely understand how a child feels by putting his feelings into words and reflecting them back to him, like a mirror.

With a toddler it is easiest sometimes to use his very words. For example, suppose your child comes to you crying and complaining, "Billy hit me!" You answer, "You're crying and you're angry because Billy hit you."

What you have done is put his feelings into words and reflected them back to him. Then he knows you have some understanding about how he feels.

This is particularly important for the child whose vocabulary is not yet adequate to convey his feelings □.

Childhood friendships

During the first three years of life, a young child forms secure attachments with parents and other family members.

Once a child reaches three years, however, attachments to other children outside the family become an important part of social development. But first, a child has to learn how to interact appropriately with them.

Although children at this age can develop genuine friendships, these encounters are quite different from friendships among older children or adults.

For example, two three-year-olds may be laughing together at one moment and struggling with one another for the same toy the next moment.

Adults can do a number of things to foster friendly, cooperative play among children of this age:

1. Provide the children with toys that are developmentally appropriate for their ages. Any child will quickly lose interest if a task is either too easy or too difficult.

2. Have a sufficient number of toys so that each child has at least one toy with which to play.

3. Make sure that toys are in good condition. Trying to pull a truck which has a wheel missing can be a highly frustrating experience for a young child.

It is generally through play that friendships are formed. Although such friendships during the preschool years are often short-lived, their importance in the over-all social development of the child should not be underestimated. □

Effective parenting

Developing effective parenting skills is not easy. It is an endeavor that demands constant effort. But the effort is worthwhile because it will help a child become socially adjusted ... it will also increase the joy of parenting.

Here are four basic principles that are worth repeating:

1. Be prepared. Try to anticipate problems, if possible. Many unpleasant situations can be avoided if appropriate preventive measures are taken.

For example, if you anticipate unacceptable behavior from your child while shopping in the grocery store, be sure to talk with him about what is **acceptable** behavior before you leave for the store.

2. Be specific. Even though a parent knows what unacceptable behavior is, a child may not. Therefore, be as specific as possible in describing the actions that are not acceptable.

For example, at the grocery store, **it is not acceptable** to run in the aisles or grab food containers from shelves.

3. Be fair. As far as possible, make known to the child in advance what specific reward will be given for good behavior and what specific punishment will follow bad behavior, whether it's a trip to the grocery store or a visit with neighbors.

4. Be consistent. Although a parent may be in a good mood one day and in a bad mood the next, children are not able to "read" these feelings. So it is important to maintain consistent behavior from one day to the next and from one situation to another.

If it is unacceptable behavior to run and shout in the grocery store aisles today, it is also unacceptable next Tuesday. □

How can I help you?

Sometimes it seems like children act their worst at just the wrong time ... when time is short; when it's time to go to bed; when it's someone else's turn.

On most of these occasions, an adult's attention is somewhere else and not on the child. And, in most of these situations, the child doesn't have much choice about what's going to happen.

Sometimes a simple way to quiet a fussy, demanding little one is to lower yourself to his or her eye-level, touch the child on the arm or hand and ask quietly: "How can I help you?"

A brief conversation may calm fears, help the child understand what will be happening in the next few minutes or reassure a youngster of your love in the midst of a busy morning.

You may be able to direct the child to the next activity ("We'll be leaving in a few minutes, so please get your coat."); answer an urgent question ("Yes, I know you need a quarter today, and it's right here."); or help fasten a reluctant boot.

If it's not possible to grant the request, you can briefly explain why, and ask for help and cooperation in doing what must be done.

Children don't always understand our words, but they can get a clue about how we feel from our voices and our attitude.

It only takes a few minutes to offer help and understanding in the midst of confusion.

A minute of a big person's time costs nothing, but it is precious to a little person. □

Getting ready for math

How high can your child count? To five? To ten? Higher?

Children can learn to count at early ages but this has nothing at all to do with their understanding of numbers.

It's like you're reading words in a language you don't know. You know the symbol but you don't know its meaning.

In fact, children under the age of about seven have limited understanding of mathematical concepts. This is because their minds aren't yet ready to process information in an abstract form.



They think in terms of what they actually experience with their senses. Therefore, you can best help your youngster get ready for mathematics through simple, real-life experiences.

For example, give your child practice counting real objects. Unlike a "recital" of numbers, counting real things teaches children about numbers. You can count anything, anywhere, any time.

For example, while you're waiting in the grocery line, you and your child can count the number of people waiting in front of you and behind you; the number of cans you're buying;

the number of people with babies, and so on.

Typically, most four-year-olds can count at least three things correctly, most five-year-olds at least five.

This means they can match up the numbers with the objects. Beyond a certain number, they simply recite the numbers they know without specific reference to the actual number of objects there.

The best way to help children practice counting correctly is to have them use objects they can touch and have them put their finger on each object as they say the number. □

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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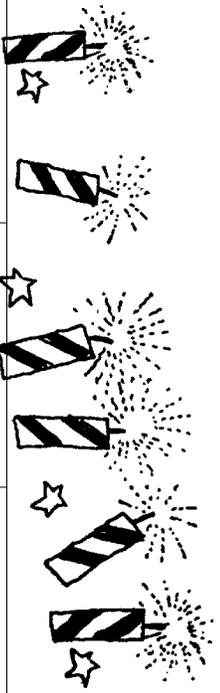
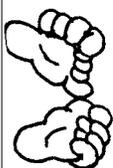
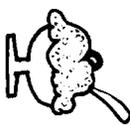
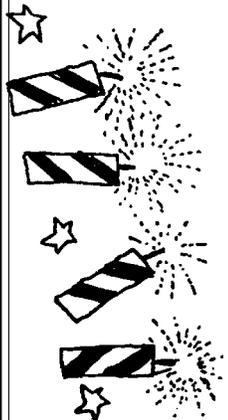
Growing Child also publishes: **Growing Child** (birth-six years), and **Growing Up** (grades K-12).

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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

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| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| <p>5</p> <p>Tell your fellow family members what you like about them.</p>  | <p>6</p> <p>What's a "nickname"? Do you know someone who has one? Do you have one?</p> | <p>7</p> <p>Can you think of a word that rhymes with 'orange'?</p> | <p>8</p> <p>Go somewhere you've never been.</p> | <p>9</p> <p>Walk barefoot in the grass.</p>  | <p>10</p> <p>Get your own library card.</p> | <p>11</p> <p>New words to look up: monstrous, maneuver, moniker, mince, malady</p> <p>?</p> |
| <p>12</p> <p>Try a new ice cream flavor.</p>  | <p>13</p> <p>Go bowling! Line up some empty cans and roll a ball at them. Keep score.</p> | <p>14</p> <p>Fix a favorite snack for mom or dad.</p> | <p>15</p> <p>Name four people you know who wear glasses.</p>  | <p>16</p> <p>Did it snow today? Why not? How many reasons can you think of?</p> | <p>17</p> <p>Make a picture of a face with dry cereal.</p>  | <p>18</p> <p>Sweep the sidewalk.</p> |
| <p>19</p> <p>How can you tell when someone is happy?</p> | <p>20</p> <p>Get permission to play with the hose.</p> | <p>21</p> <p>Ask your parents (or grandparents) to teach you the song: "Mares Eat Oats"</p> | <p>22</p> <p>Smile at everyone you see today. Say "Hello!"</p> | <p>23</p> <p>Act like a chicken. Walking, talking, eating, running.</p> | <p>24</p> <p>Go to the library and find a book about America's National Parks.</p> | <p>25</p> <p>Do you have a children's cookbook? Try a new recipe.</p> |
| <p>26</p> <p>If you had a great big turtle, what would you name it?</p> | <p>27</p> <p>Make turkey-cranberry sandwiches.</p> | <p>28</p> <p>Role reversal: Youngster washes mom's or dad's hair.</p>  | <p>29</p> <p>Draw a picture of a neighbor.</p> | <p>30</p> <p>Make a cape to wear and be a superhero!</p> |  | |