



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Behavior

When kids fail

Most children can handle success—but how can parents help their children handle failure?

First, your child needs to know that you're on her side, that you accept her for what she is, win or lose. Your comments should reflect on what she's done, not on what she "is."

Second, don't be kind by being dishonest. Your child knows when she has "failed."

When you acknowledge that you know this, too, but it isn't the end of the world; your child has confidence in you to reflect an honest value to her.

Finally, let your child know every day and in many ways that you love her. A child needs a lot of hugging, even at times when her behavior is definitely "unhuggable"

As children try to find their place in the world, they look for guidance and support. Make sure you give your child the room she needs to learn and make mistakes, but also make sure she knows you're on her side—win or lose. □

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Academics

Let's read a story

Numerous research studies have indicated that children whose parents regularly read to them during the early childhood and school years will generally do better in school.

That's why educators continue to encourage parents to read aloud to their children.

A child's parents are generally her first educators and her most important resource for developing a love of reading.

Here are some of the things your child can learn while you read a story aloud:

Vocabulary. As you read, your child is acquiring new words. Let her see the pictures in the book. Point to an object as you read its name. See if she can point to some objects you name.

Information. Your child is also acquiring new knowledge and expanding the horizons of her mind. Reading helps to open a whole new world for her.

Comprehension. From books a child acquires new understanding of her world. She perceives new relationships between words and can relate new knowledge to what she already knows.

Listening and attention skills. Reading helps to sharpen your child's listening skills and improve her attention span.



Mental awareness. As a result of your reading to her, she will also likely become more aware of and take greater interest in her everyday surroundings.

Sequencing. From your reading, she can learn about sequencing in time ("Once upon a time ...") and in space ("In the first place sat ..."), which are important skills for school learning.

Emotions. As she identifies with the characters in the story, she can sometimes gain a better understanding of her own emotions.

Love of books. As you read to your child, you are imparting an important value in your life, namely, your own love of books and reading.

Personal love. Above all, by setting aside uninterrupted, quiet time for reading, you are letting your child know how important she is to you. You are thereby conveying your own personal love for her. □

The opposite of spanking is NOT nothing

Now that I have your attention with that double negative, let's clarify what I'm talking about.

Recently a reader responded to my plea for firm guidance for kids (*Running Amok*) with the comment that it was easier for her mom back in the day when it was okay to hit and psychologically terrorize kids into behaving, and without those tools at their disposal, there is nothing for today's parents to do.

She went on to comment that time-outs don't work with seven-year-olds, nor does a point system where they earn points to get treats or lose points to lose privileges.

"Nothing works," she went on. "They can just ignore their parents and run amok, and there is not a whole lot we can do. These are not bad kids, but our impotence and the way they ignore us until we blow our tops is maddening."

First, let me say how I appreciate this mother's frankness and honesty. Many parents today likely feel the same dilemma and frustration about discipline for their children.

Here's the problem as I see it: The difficulty is in thinking about spanking, timeouts, or other things as the tools to grab when some discipline is needed, rather than developing an over-arching philosophy of guidance that includes these crucial points:

1. Kids thrive on limits, needing help in figuring out the world and appropriate behavior, and understanding that someone else is firmly in charge until they develop their own self-control. Parents have that right and responsibility to be the persons clearly in charge.

When this role is adopted at the start, kids just can't ignore it; the authority of parents is established from the beginning.

Maintaining that role through all interaction with children means that they understand who is in charge.

2. Limits include the big ideas of keeping oneself safe, treating others and their property with respect for their rights, and taking individual responsibility for one's actions.

These ideas are stressed over and over again, as parents help children choose and change actions. As expected behavior begins to make sense to children, some of the daily struggles subside.

3. Discipline and guidance are all about effective communication, about being clear what is expected and allowed, and what is not, and why.

Authoritative, confident adults leave no room for children to wonder or resist, and then reinforce positive behaviors with definite approval.

4. Close, loving, respectful relationships lay the foundation for effective discipline. When children are partners in such relationships, they want to both please and be like their parents.

This provides much of the early motivation to change behaviors to more acceptable ones.

When children's needs and wants are treated with gentle respect, they adopt these attitudes themselves in their dealings with others, so that force and power struggles are not necessary.

These are the important ideas that parents need to consider as they develop their personal philosophy of discipline.

Then there is less attention to the daily struggles with children, but a long-term sense of just what it is that parents are working towards, and how they will meet their goals.

The opposite of spanking **IS** indeed something, but it involves a carefully thought-out set of guiding principles and actions. □

Games & Activities

Quiet activities

Want to spend some quiet, quality time with your child? Here's a short list of things to do that cost next to nothing.

- Prepare a small picnic lunch and eat it together, any place in or out of the kitchen or dining room. (Perhaps a picnic table at a nearby park.)

- Both of you make a clay figure of a make-believe animal.

- Look through a magazine and count the numbers of dogs (or cats or bugs) you can find.

- Play "I wish I was" and explain why. "I wish I was a kangaroo because then I could jump around a lot."

- Teach your child a song from your childhood or a folk tune like "Home on the Range."

- Draw a picture of each other.

- Color together in a coloring book.

- Share a popsicle. □

Helping brothers and sisters get along

Helping your child get along with his brothers and sisters can make the difference in whether your family life is orderly (relatively speaking) or chaotic.

Here are some tips for peace on the home front:

- **Try not to compare one child with another.** They are different people. Each has his or her own way of reacting, individual strengths and weaknesses, rates of growth and development.

- **Notice the things that make each child unique,** and encourage each child to develop special talents. Accept your children's differences and you will help them accept themselves and each other.

- **Try to spend time each day alone with each child.** This "special

time" should be the child's to use as he wishes. You can offer a story, a game, or simply your presence and let him choose what you will do.

These "special times" will help you know and enjoy your children more and help them feel special to you so they won't feel that it's necessary to compete for your attention.

- **Try to provide cooperative activities.** For example, when you go to the supermarket, have one child spot an item you need and then have the other child get it and put it in the cart.

In addition, try to compliment each child any time you see them working and playing together well: "Tommy, thank you for helping Michelle get dressed. You're really a big help to me." □

Discipline

Raising a positive child is an art

Raising children who are fun to be around is an art. Three important parts of that art are speaking positively, encouraging skills, and conveying reasonable expectations.

- **Speaking positively.** Children reflect what they see and hear. If they are surrounded by criticism, pessimistic thoughts and unfriendly talk, they will learn to speak and act accordingly. If they are surrounded by encouragement, praise, and positive thinking, they will learn to reflect those qualities.

- **Encouraging skills.** When children are praised for their efforts, rather than their accomplishments, they learn that the process of learning is important and that mistakes are all right.

- **Reasonable expectations.** Children most often live up (or down) to the expectations their parents have for them. Once you set an expectation, you will consciously and unconsciously convey that to your child.

With positive encouragement and feedback, chances are those expectations will be met. □

A musical instrument that is timeless

What is a musical instrument? Anything that makes music.

Here's one you can make at home that has entertained children for generations: a harmonica.

Take a large comb; cover it with waxed paper, then blow and hum on the paper at the same time with the mouth slightly open.

Try a duet or a trio — a challenge but definitely fun.

The sound is definitely distinctive and quite "brassy." But, is it music?

You decide. □

FREE!

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

Issues are free of advertisements; email addresses are shared with no one.

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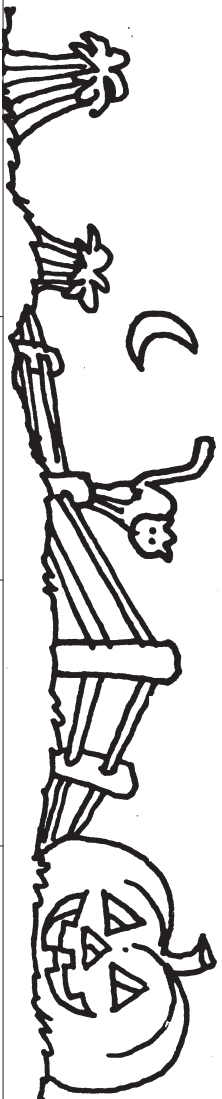

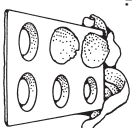


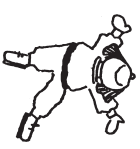







Growing Child also publishes:
Growing Child (birth-six years), and
Growing Up (grades K-12).

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.

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| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|--|
|  | | | | | | |
| <p>2</p> <p>Go apple picking.</p>  | <p>3</p> <p>A snack: apple cider and a muffin.</p>  | <p>4</p> <p>Yom Kippur begins at sundown.</p>  | <p>5</p> <p>Tell mom and dad "The Story of the Three Bears."</p> | <p>6</p> <p>Play "Red Light, Green Light"</p>  | <p>7</p> <p>Save empty plastic bowls and lids to use a bongo drums.</p> | <p>8</p> <p>Head out on a hike.</p>  |
| <p>9</p> <p>Read a chapter from a book each night this week.</p>  | <p>10</p> <p>Columbus Day</p>  | <p>11</p> <p>How many words can you think of that rhyme with: ELEVEN</p> | <p>12</p> <p>Draw a picture of your ears. (This is REALLY hard.)</p> | <p>13</p> <p>Collect leaves and make a leaf collage.</p> | <p>14</p> <p>Plant tulip bulbs now for beautiful blooms in the spring.</p>  | <p>15</p> <p>Read "The Little Engine that Could."</p> |
| <p>16</p> <p>French toast for breakfast.</p> | <p>17</p> <p>What are Grandpa and Grandma's REAL names?</p>  | <p>18</p> <p>Go to the library and look for a book with pictures but no words.</p> | <p>19</p> <p>Give your children his or her own box of tissues to encourage "nose-wiping." Write his or her name on the box.</p> <p>-DENNIS-</p> | <p>20</p> <p>Take a bike or trike ride.</p> | <p>21</p> <p>Sing "Pop Goes the Weasel" and claps hands on the word "Pop."</p> | <p>22</p> <p>How about some pumpkin pie! Yum, yum!</p> |
| <p>23</p> <p>Make a Halloween costume.</p> <p>30</p> <p>Talk about Halloween safety rules.</p> | <p>24</p> <p>Bake some apple crisp together!</p> <p>31</p> <p>Halloween! Carve or decorate a pumpkin.</p> | <p>25</p> <p>George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were past presidents. Who is the president of the United States now?</p>  | <p>26</p> <p>What sounds better to eat than a ice cream cone?</p> | <p>27</p> <p>Prepare a basket of fruit for a shut-in.</p>  | <p>28</p> <p>Watch a favorite video with someone. Enjoy some popcorn.</p> | <p>29</p> <p>Draw a picture that shows what the weather was like in October.</p>  |