



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

Can you find a stone that looks like Abe Lincoln?

Here's an outside game that requires sharp eyes. When you're taking a walk, ask your child to bring you the smallest stone she can find.

Next, ask her to look for the whitest stone she can find, or the roundest stone, or the smoothest stone.

You can continue to think of more characteristics to look for—a stone that looks like a moon, a stone with a hole in it, a stone too heavy to carry, a stone that looks like a dog, and so on.

Finally, ask her to select a stone that looks different from the rest and have her explain to you how it is different. Or she can pick a stone she really likes and talk about why she likes it.

For kids who are really interested, this could be the beginning of a rock collection.

Music

Learning and music

Music is more than just fun: it's education.

As a youngster sings along, dances, or "plays" an instrument, here are the sorts of things she learns:

1. New vocabulary. Many songs, particularly folk songs and nursery tunes, repeat words or refrains over and over again.

For example, think of the words for "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush."

This type of repetition strengthens associations between new words and their meaning.

2. Time sense. When swinging the arms, moving the body, or tapping an "instrument" in time to the music, the child is exposed to time relations between musical notes.

She becomes aware of order—this comes first, this comes next, and this comes last.

This kind of order is important in both understanding and using speech. It is also extremely important later in learning to read.

This is demonstrated by what happens to a sentence when just one word is put into a different order: "**Now**, I want to go." / "I want to go, **now**."

3. Counting. While children first learn to count by rote, they will learn



to count from such rhymes as "One, two, buckle my shoe."

4. Self-control. It is necessary to really listen and attend to what a song says in order to carry out the actions.

When it says "clap," "jump," or "stop," she must translate what she has heard into a physical movement and clap, jump or stop.

We urge you to make music a family affair. Before the days of television, families created their own entertainment, and singing together was very popular.

Develop your own favorite song book from current rhythms, folk and rock, and old-timers. And don't forget to teach your children the songs you love from your own childhood.

No arguments

I am about to share with you the magic secret that can prevent 90 percent of the arguments in your household.

The fierce battles where every kid is convinced he is in the right, the limits you try to set daily that are continually ignored so you turn into a nag, the same old arguments that give you a headache...all of these will disappear with this idea I am about to let you in on.

Seriously. And it's not even Christmas, so this gift is free for the taking. For many years, I shared it with the preschool teachers I was preparing, and they used it effectively in countless classrooms for young children.

Just this week, I was reminded of its power with visiting teenaged granddaughters.

Think for a minute about the scenarios of recent disagreements, whether they have occurred between siblings, or between kids and parents. I'm guessing that most of them involve peoples' rights to property, space, or other hard to share commodities.

All too often with such disputes between kids, parents are put in the difficult position of being judge and jury, meting out decisions that are sure to be disapproved of in the losing sector.

And when the dispute is between parent and child, the adult is often placed in the unhappy spot of being The Old Meany. Nobody wins.

This solution I will offer avoids all of these pitfalls. Not only that, but it will foster self-control in your youngsters, encourage a sense of fairness, and it only costs about 10 bucks.

I'm talking about buying for yourself a household timer. Recently I

acquired a simple digital device, easily set for particular times, with a piercing alarm that signals when time is up.

How does this work? Okay, first scenario. Jacob and Adam are fighting yet again about the _____.

Doesn't matter what it is, but sooner or later, you will hear, "MOM!" in just the tone that you know means you are being called to arbitrate.

In the past, you might have appealed to logic, lessons about fair play, or just solved the problem... (Nobody is going to play with it, do you hear me?) I guarantee you nobody comes out of this situation feeling like a winner.

Think of trying this instead: Calmly respond with, "Looks like you both want the _____."

"Here's the timer. Decide if you want to set it for 5 or 10 minutes." (At the beginning, they may need help deciding who gets the first turn on the timer.)

One thing I guarantee you is that when the timer goes off, the kid will relinquish the toy or the space, or the whatever.

Nobody argues with a timer. That arbitrary, definitive alarm draws the line.

I remembered this recently when dealing with teenage girls staying in the shower for eons, a problem when there is one shower in a summer cottage with a septic system.

Years of reminders about short showers only produced very clean girls and a very frustrated grandma. But now the digital timer goes off and I hear the shower door open immediately after. Nobody argues with a timer.

You're welcome.

One-year-olds want to explore

One-year-olds are learning about mobility and independence. They are curious adventurers who wants to find out "why"—yet they aren't ready for fantasy or imagination—they need toys that deal with the real world.

One-year-olds need toys to take apart and put together, parts* to put on and take off, stack and unstack.

Some examples:

- Pull and push toys
- Small, lightweight blocks.
- A soft, safe ball.
- Sand and water toys
- Plastic links
- A first shape-sorter
- Simple, "holdable" dolls or stuffed animals.
- Imitation toys such as a telephone or housekeeping toys.
- Toys to push on the floor when crawling

*Safety note: Small parts from toys or games pose a strangulation hazard for kids under three years old. Use an empty toilet tissue roll to test parts and pieces—if the piece goes through the roll, it's too small for the child to play with.



Dealing with stressful situations

In order for children to learn how to deal with stressful situations, they need practice now when they have your help and support.

Your behavior in stressful situations will affect your child's reactions. If you are able to remain calm, despite feeling upset, this will give your child a feeling of security.

This is especially important in very frightening situations such as a car accident or a natural disaster such as a bad storm or an earthquake.

It is also more important in the case of more routine problems such as when your child has made a mistake and is afraid of disappointing or angering you.

Naturally you will have your own feelings to contend with and you should be honest with your child about them.

Let her know, for example, that you feel frightened, too, in a bad winter storm, or that you feel sad about leaving behind friends and favorite things when you move.

This lets your child know that it's okay to have feelings like fear and sadness. It helps her feel more comfortable about such feelings in herself.

Try to teach your child by your example to put these feelings into words rather than becoming immobilized by them.

Your child depends on you for comfort, reassurance and stability, especially in stressful times.

Learning how to help

How do you get a child to do what he or she is capable of doing?

Motivating any child of any age to do anything hinges on praise. You cannot over-praise a child. And praise comes in many forms.

Saying, "You've been a big help!" is better than saying nothing. But saying, "That refrigerator shines! You pulled out the shelves and wiped the tray!" is much more ego-stroking.

Also, such specific praise serves the purpose of clarification. The child knows why you are pleased and is likely to repeat the noticed actions.

Clarification means letting a child know what he or she is expected to do, and what will happen if that expectation isn't filled.

Charts with gold stars or stickers are also excellent praise vehicles. The most hardened lazy-bones will do things for tiny bits of paper that a week of yelling won't produce.

Charts are handy for clarification as well as praise. A chart posted in the kitchen might read:

1. All dishes washed, dried, and put away.
2. The floor swept and spills wiped up.
3. The sink cleaned out with cleanser.

If the dish-doer checks each point with a pencil attached to the chart, no leeway is left for a difference of opinion about what "finished" means.

An unchecked chart and an unfinished job can mean no phone use, no overnight friends or whatever punishment fits your family.

While a chart or list works for older children, younger ones often need a job to be demonstrated several times.

Instead of saying, "Clean up the bathroom," take a six-year-old into the bathroom and show him how to wipe in, around and behind the toilet. Show him what else needs to be cleaned and how to do it.

After the demonstration, let him do the job while you watch. At that point, when you say, "Clean the bathroom," you know his definition of clean is the same as yours.

Demonstrating, praising and following through take incredible amounts of time. Many parents are too exhausted at the end of a work day to struggle, so they just do it themselves.

But if you expend extra energy now, you'll save a bunch later.

And, you'll have taught your children valuable lessons about being responsible, contributing to the welfare of the family, and finishing what they've started—the right way.

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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.

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Sunday

Monday

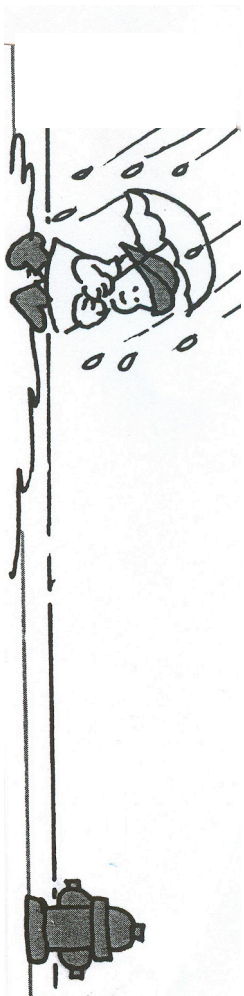
Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



3

Pretend to be an animal and see who can guess what you are.



4

Tell a story after dinner with each person adding a part.

5

Draw a picture with colored chalk dipped in water.



6

Ash Wednesday

7

Count the change in Mom's purse.



8

Do you know to look both ways before you cross the street? Practice with an adult handy.

9

Make some oatmeal cookies. Add some raisins but not for kids under three.

1

Sing together: "I'm a Little Teapot" and do the motions, too.

2

Look for signs of spring!

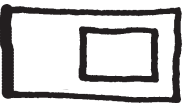


10

Cottage cheese, fruit and crackers for a snack.

11

Look out different windows in your house and talk about what you see.



12

Draw a picture with lots of kites in the sky. Color them imaginatively. *
*Look it up

13

Make your bed.

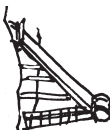


14

Give baby a safe bell to ring.

15

Talk about what you're going to do tomorrow.



16

Can you whistle a tune?

17

St. Patrick's Day. Look him up and see why he has a "Day."

18

How are dogs and cats different?

19

Blow up a balloon and see how long you can keep it in the air.

20

Purin begins at sundown.

21

Comb your hair. Then comb it again with the other hand. Which way is easiest?



22

Pack a light lunch. Eat it (carefully) any place except the kitchen (or the bathroom, perhaps).

23

Soup for supper.



24

Go out for lunch.

31

Have a bagel for breakfast.

25

Play a board game with someone older than you.



26

What time did you get up this morning?



27

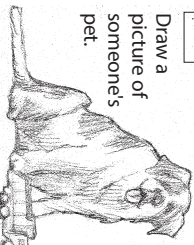
Look at a picture book. What figures and items can you and baby name?

28

Make funny faces at each other. See who laughs first!

29

Draw a picture of someone's pet.



30

Help clean out the refrigerator.