



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

Solving problems

Here's a bit of fun that also helps children learn how to solve problems by listening carefully.

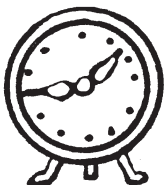
First, set the alarm of an old alarm clock to just a few minutes ahead of now.

Then, hide it — in a closet, a low cupboard, in a boot, in the clothes hamper, under a chair or a pillow, in the refrigerator.

Then, wait until it RINGS. And the race is on to find that alarm clock!

When your child finds it, show her how to turn it off so she can do it the next time.

Several kids can take turns hiding the clock. □



Behavior

Shy or quiet: What's the difference?

There is a fine line between 'quiet' and 'shy.'

Shyness implies inadequacy, an inability to deal with people or situations, an inability to communicate thoughts or feelings.

The major differences between 'shy' and 'quiet' is the child's comfort and happiness.

Is he alone or is he lonely?

Does he prefer not to say anything, or does he want to express himself but is afraid or unable to do so?

Does he have positive or negative feelings about himself. Is he happy?

The shy child is self-conscious and fears others' evaluations and/or rejections.

The quiet child is probably making evaluations of others. (Ask his opinions. His insight might surprise you.)

The shy child is unable to reach out to others, take risks, approach new situations.

The shy child holds feelings and emotions inside. He/she may be unpopular and uncomfortable around peers.

It is important for parents to observe and *know* their child.



Most people are naturally shy to a certain degree. We don't rush into new situations, talk to every stranger we meet, nor share our every thought, idea, or emotion.

But the 'quiet' child has the potential of crossing the line into shyness.

If he is not encouraged to communicate and does not express himself, he could develop self-doubts, real or imagined rejections and misinterpretations of others' comments or lack of communication.

It is important for parents of a 'quiet' child to communicate verbally and non-verbally to support the child's self-worth and to provide a supportive home life. □

Problem solving 101

Someone told me of a college dean who passes out a card to parents during freshmen orientation.

On it these words are printed: “How are you going to deal with that problem?”

He advises parents to keep it beside the phone, and read it exactly as emphasized, in response to the frantic phone calls from their college students complaining about the horrible professor, the difficult roommate, the exams all coming at once.

Important and good advice from the dean, and unfortunately difficult for this generation of parents who have specialized in removing all bumps from the path for their children during their growing up years.

When a childhood has been engineered so that problems are miraculously solved by parents, children are ill prepared to go through their own problem solving process. They will be shocked and paralyzed when concerning issues are thrown back to them.

So to avoid such stunning moments when they leave home, parents need to help them to develop problem solving skills during their childhood.

Guiding children through a problem solving process requires that parents maintain a supportive but distant attitude, recognizing that the problem belongs to the child.

Parents are helpful when they assist the child to identify the problem and understand its relative importance, and then move on to figuring out what they can do about it.

To do so, they ask a series of open-ended questions, designed so that children talk, and therefore think, their own way through a dilemma.

It might sound something like this (any of the options could be appropriate, depending on the child’s age or experience.):

Parent: “What seems to be the problem?” or “What’s going on?” or “What’s bothering you?” With the child’s response, more questions may be needed, to get the issue fully described.

Remember, as the child talks, they are also reflecting on the situation, a necessary step to choosing appropriate actions.

Next, the parent helps the child consider all perspectives of the situation: “Why is this a problem for you?” or “Why do you suppose she did that?” or “How could this have been different?”

Once the state of affairs has been fully described, it is time to point the child towards considering possible courses of action: “What could you say to him about that?” or “What could you do that would fix the problem?” or “Is there something you think could help with that problem?”

More and more questions and reflective responses may help the child consider all possibilities and their ramifications: “What do you think he would do if you said that?” or “What else might you try?” or “Suppose that doesn’t work? Do you have some other ideas?”

One of the purposes of this entire dialog is to help children see that constructive responses require thinking actions through, not just blindly reacting.

Another is to build the realization that “there is more than one way to skin a cat”—most problems have multiple solutions, and that some

responses may be more productive than others.

Enough experience with this kind of problem solving in childhood and adolescence will mean you can get rid of that card by the phone. □

Social Skills

Learning to get along with others

Children get their first lessons in how to relate to other people from your example. She learns how to get along with others from the way you and she relate to each other.

She also learns from seeing how you get along with other people.

You’ll see some of the effect of your “teaching by example” in your child’s life now. Other patterns, although laid down now, may not appear in your child’s relationships until she’s older.

For example, suppose your child hears you and your mate regularly argue and blame each other over how to discipline her. She will learn ways to act with each of you to try to please you and avoid your anger or disappointment with her.

She will pick up from the two of you different ways to act with others who are more or less powerful than she is, which she will use when she’s in conflict situations. And she will learn from observing you, ways of treating her own mate and children.

Even though children don’t always appear to be watching, they learn from the examples of the adults around them. □

Tips for getting kids to bed

Here are some ideas that may help at bedtime:

- Have a set bedtime. “When the big hand is on the six,” or “When the clock says these numbers” ... can be part of the bedtime routine. In this way the clock, not the parent, is announcing the time to go to bed.

A warning of “Ten minutes until bath time” is also useful so that fun or activities aren’t suddenly interrupted.

- Minimize television, media, and rowdy activities close to sleeping time.

- A routine works wonders. For instance, a warm, calm bath followed by a ritual goodnight to the ivy plant, the clock, grandma and grandpa in a picture, the dog, the piano, the sofa ...

If you keep it up long enough, you may find yourself yawning. And speaking of yawns, a few of those don’t hurt either.

- If necessary, provide a small nightlight, a quiet radio or recording, or a trusted companion. (For children under one year old, there should be nothing in the crib except the child.) Nick, age five, has a stuffed penguin fully a foot longer than he is, and no doubt, Penny the penguin helps keep away those things that go bump in the night.

- If your child doesn’t fall asleep at once, there’s no harm in reading or playing quietly in bed even after bedtime. A child can’t go to sleep on demand any more than an adult can.

But often, if you tiptoe in only ten or fifteen minutes later, you’ll find your youngster has been overtaken by the sandman.

The just switch off the light and whisper, “Sweet dreams ...” □

Your self-confidence as a parent

At one time or another, almost all parents question their self-confidence.

Parents want to be able to act decisively and confidently but the influence of neighbors and relatives and what they may think can be very unsettling.

Here’s an idea that may help. Most decisions revolve around two categories — **needs** and **wants** — and it is important to determine which is which.

Needs must be responded to in the interest of children’s development. Children need good nutrition, for example.

Wants may be considered but they may also be rejected in the interest of health, safety or family priorities. So, while children **need** food, they may **want** only ice cream.

Parents who feel obliged to satisfy all the **wants** of their child may find they are harboring a little tyrant in their home.

Many parents are afraid of losing their child’s love if they deny him all he wants — children can become frustrated and often angry when thwarted. Yet it is impossible to satisfy 100 percent without parents becoming irritated and indignant.

A compromise is, first, to recognize the difference between needs and wants.

Then, if you can feel secure in your love for your child, you can accept the consequences of your decisions — without fearing your child’s rejection or criticism from neighbors or relatives. □

Questions, questions!

Does your child continually ask you questions? This is only just the beginning. There are three kinds of interrogative behavior:

1. The question-and-answer game. It’s a device for making conversation with an adult. For example, she asks, “What’s that?” If you reply, “What do you think it is,” she replies, “Orange juice.”

2. She asks questions as a way of checking on the accuracy of what she believes. It is really a primitive form of testing a hypothesis: “Is that a hat?”

3. She asks questions in order to seek information she does not know. It isn’t always possible to separate these kinds of questions, but what does it matter?

It is practice in learning the question form, making a verbal exchange with someone, gaining knowledge and eventually associating the fact that specific types of questions bring forth specific types of responses.

For example, she will discover that questions that begin with “what” supply names; “where” brings information about location; “who” and “why” deliver information about a source or the purpose for an action.

Your child hears others use words that begin with “wh” when they ask questions. As she listens, she learns that “wh” words can be expected to elicit an audience and a response. □

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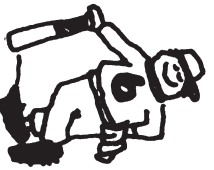
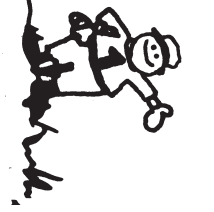









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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns “he” and “she” are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

www.growingchild.com

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<p>1</p> <p>Count your teeth, up and down. 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. . 9. 7. 2. 2. 1</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Make a mark in this space for every day it rains this month.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>What games can you play outside today?</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>Give your toddler a simple chore she can be responsible for.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Talk about something you did yesterday.</p> 
<p>6</p> <p>Visit someone in a nursing or retirement home.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Wear something red today.</p> 	<p>8</p> <p>Recite the days of the week — backwards: Sunday, Saturday, Fri ...</p>	<p>9</p> <p>In the house: Count 4 BIG things and 4 little things.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Can you march? Put on some music and pretend you're in the marching band!</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Look at an ABC book. Trace the letters with your finger.</p> 	<p>12</p> <p>Go for a walk. Take some gloves and a bag to pick up litter.</p>
<p>13</p> <p>Have a cookout. Invite some friends.</p> 	<p>14</p> <p>Learn the words of a new song. World Lizard Day (wow!)</p>	<p>15</p> <p>How many different berries can you name? Is a tomato a berry?</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Eat some fresh fruit.</p> 	<p>17</p> <p>Cheese and crackers for an afternoon snack.</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Before dinner, name all the foods you'll be eating.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Go the library and find a book with pictures but no words.</p>
<p>20</p> <p>French toast for breakfast! YUM.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Where could you make a snowball today?</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Save a big cardboard box for Youngster to play in. It can be a pretend car, tree house, a stagecoach, a buggy, or a boat.</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Find four toys that have wheels. Count all the wheels.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Play a naming game with the baby: my nose, your nose; my ear, your ear; my foot, your foot!</p>	<p>25</p> <p>"If I were a bird, I'd ..."</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>Attend a local baseball game. Eat some popcorn.</p>
<p>27</p> <p>Draw all kinds of circles—big, little medium, tiny, huge, and then color them. You can also draw faces on some of them--make people or animals.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Why not sing in the bathtub?</p> 	<p>29</p> <p>Do you have a museum in your community? Check to see if there are special programs for children.</p>	<p>30</p> <p>How many marshmallows can you stack?</p> 	<p>31</p> <p>What color is the sky today? Are there any clouds?</p>	