



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Parenting

Good mood, bad mood

Preschoolers can sometimes be moody when things don't go their way.

A child's mood can change quickly from joy to anger, for example, if someone doesn't pay attention to her or if she can't make a toy work the way she wants it to work.

Often you may not even know why she's upset. She may have some idea inside her head of what she expects.

When her expectations aren't met, she may pout or stomp around without ever letting you know why.

Try to put yourself in her shoes. See if you can figure out the problem. "I'll bet you're mad because you got tired of waiting for me to get off the phone."

Be sympathetic, even if you think her reason for being in a bad mood is not important.

If she feels you understand, she'll likely get over her moodiness more quickly. □

June 2020

Vol. 36 No. 6

Developmental

Encouraging a positive, healthy self-concept

Self-concept is the way we think about ourselves and the feelings we have about ourselves. These thoughts can be positive or they can be negative.

As adults we can control and influence our feelings about ourselves. We can accept or reject others' opinions.

We can monitor the events in our lives that cause us to feel one way or the other about ourselves.

A young child's self-concept, though, is determined mostly by the "messages" she receives from others, particularly her mother and father.

Sometimes the message the child receives is not what parents really intend. For example, a parent may insist on doing everything for the child, even the most simple things the child could do for herself.

The parent may think he/she is sending the message: "I'm doing all these things for you because I love you."

But perhaps the unconscious, non-verbal message the child may be getting is: "Always rely on Mom and Dad to do everything for you because you don't know how to do things and you're helpless."

To understand a child's self-concept you have to try to see the world from her perspective. A one-year-old is very occupied with developing

competence—that is, learning to do things herself.

It is this continued striving for competence that pushes her to try new challenges—such as learning to feed herself with a spoon.

These challenges—and successes—lead her from one stage of development to the next.

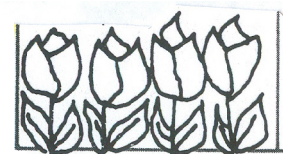
The day a child grabs the spoon and tries to feed herself is a day to rejoice!

Her best efforts to balance food on the spoon are certainly not the neatest or most efficient way to get the food to her mouth.

But to the child, the feeling of accomplishment and self-worth are more important than neatness and efficiency.

So, watch for the things a child can do for herself and encourage her to try to do them—even though she can't do them perfectly.

The more she learns to do for herself, the more positive her self-concept will be. □



If you can't say something nice ...

No matter where your opinions fall on the political spectrum, most of us are agreed that recently we have witnessed extraordinary instances of behavior in adults that would have been enough to get you sent straight to time-out in the typical preschool.

We could start with name-calling and go straight downhill from there. Assuming the adults involved are not about to change their life-habits, I think our only hope is to concentrate on what we can do to instill behaviors of kindness in the children we are raising now.

Becoming a kind person is definitely a key to the path towards happiness. For one thing, the habit of kindness extends to ourselves; it is hard to be happy if you're being unkind to yourself.

Establishing clear guidelines for behaviors that demonstrate being a caring community member is a far more certain predictor of future success than are the good grades that seem so important to so many parents.

So how do we nurture the attributes of kindness and caring in our children?

First and foremost, parents must walk the walk. You know as well as I do that children learn more by example than by any other way. Your kids love you and want to be like you. They need to see that you are a kind person.

They need to see you address others respectfully, whether family, friends or strangers, and no matter how your patience is tried.

There is no way that you can teach kindness when you are making angry gestures at someone, yelling at the representative on the phone, or treating servers rudely. The best side

effect of walking the kindness walk for your kids is that you will yourself become a happier, nicer person as well, carrying far less stress in your daily encounters.

And then, talk the talk. When you are talking with teachers in your children's presence, don't ask only about school work, but inquire whether your kids are good community members. Not only does this demonstrate your value system to the teacher, but it also impresses the children about the importance of kindness to their family.

Who knows what the ripple effect of this would be, as the teacher reflects on how the classroom supports developing prosocial skills.

Make it part of your family dialogue to discuss individuals' actions and their motivations. As children consider cause and effect, they come to understand the effects of caring and kindness in their interactions with others, as well as on their positive sense of self. A child who sees herself as kind will modify her behaviors accordingly.

Expand your circle of concern. As parents model community service, children become aware that their caring community can expand. Gently, parents help children move out of their comfort zone and learn empathy, understanding that others may have vastly different experiences and needs.

Appreciate and pay attention to instances of kindness both small and large demonstrated by your kids, whether within your household or beyond. Such attention acts as positive reinforcement, strengthening prosocial tendencies. When we pay attention to acts of kindness, we are likely to see them increase.

As with everything, this is a process of teaching over time, not

just something we can pencil in on the calendar for next Monday. But think of the impact if every parent concentrated on teaching kindness!

Art

Scribblers just can't help themselves

Scribblers just can't help themselves. They've just got to close their fists around those fat crayons and scribble.

Around and around they go, in circles, zig-zags, blurs, and blobs. Unfortunately, scribblers sometimes like to use walls for their canvases.

If you provide an alternative for the scribbler, like a large chalkboard with colored chalk, an easel with newspaper and paint, or lots of plain paper (a roll of shelf paper) you'll have fewer pictures on your walls.

Scribbling may look like nonsense to adults, but there is some sense in it for a child.

When children start to stop their arm movements in time, those big circles become faces. Tight, round scribbles make eyes, looser ones make curly hair.

Sweeping lines stop short for arms, fingers, mouths, spiky hair. Pounding with the point of the crayon makes snow.

Scribbling is necessary preparation for drawing—and writing, too. But it's hard to know what to say when you're presented with a scribbled work of art. "I really like purple scribbles" is probably the most honest, appreciate, and gracious thing you can say!

Learning to get along with others

Youngster gets his first lessons in how to relate to other people from your example.

He learns how to get along with others from the ways you and he relate to each other.

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

You'll see some of the effects of your "teaching by example" now.

Other patterns, although laid down now, may not appear in Youngster's relationships until he's older.

For example, suppose Youngster hears you and your mate regularly argue and blame each other over how to discipline him.

He will learn ways to act with each of you to try to please you and avoid your anger or disappointment with him.

He will pick up from the two of you different ways to act with others who are more or less powerful than he is, which he will use when he's in conflict situations.

And he will learn, from observing you, ways of treating his own mate and children.

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



Fibs and obscenities

Sometimes during their childhood, most children tell fibs that are real whoppers! Naturally parents become concerned and wonder what they should and shouldn't do.

Before you do anything, try to decide whether the child is creating fantasy—telling fibs to avoid possible trouble—or is simply unable to cope with reality.

There are a very small number in this latter group and they need professional help, not punishment.

Fantasy is going on when Bradley applies colored chalk to his lips and plays "Mother."

It's fantasy when Debbie develops an imaginary playmate, an invisible child or animal.

Bradley and Debbie aren't experiencing delusions, they're aware of whom they are.

As long as parents and children know when it's time to stop, enjoy the tall story and create your own just to see how absurd it may become.

And what about the child who fibs more than "occasionally?" Parents need to first check themselves to be certain that their quota of tall tales is low.

Next, you must convey the fact that there is a pay-off for being forthright. Demonstrate this immediately by rewarding the child for "fessing up" and sparing the punishment.

Youngster's newest vocabulary may well include a variety of swear words and other obscenities.

In spite of your strong desire to put a stop to them, you will not stop them by opposing them. Make it an

issue and your child will curse forever, even if she hasn't the vaguest notion of what the words mean.

The most successful treatment for preschoolers is to do absolutely nothing: Ignore the talk.

Very soon the swearer will weary of her explosive language because it fails to stir you up or shock you. □



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. Get the next issue by signing up at:

<https://growingchild.com/grandma-says>

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

Growing Together is published by Growing Child, Inc., P.O. Box 2505 W. Lafayette, IN 47996 ©2020 Growing Child, Inc. Telephone: (765) 464-0920. Customer Service: 1-800-927-7289.
















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.

www.growingchild.com

June, 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>7</p> <p>Daniel Boone Day. Now, you need to know about this guy!</p> 	<p>1</p> <p>Donut Day!</p> 	<p>2</p> <p>Make up a poem about summer. Since the sun is shining today, I think I'll go outside and play!</p>	<p>3</p> <p>What is the opposite of: fast little off stop in up</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>Play "I Spy ..."</p> 	<p>5</p> <p>What season is it now: Spring? Summer? Fall? Winter?</p> 	<p>6</p> <p>D-Day Find out what this stands for.</p> 
<p>14</p> <p>Flag Day.</p> 	<p>8</p> <p>Cheese & crackers & fruit for a snack.</p> 	<p>9</p> <p>Go outside and construct an obstacle course. Safety first!</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Draw a picture of YOURSELF!</p>	<p>11</p> <p>What's a June bug? Look it up.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Count the plants in your house.</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Eat dinner outside.</p>
<p>21</p> <p>Father's Day.</p> 	<p>15</p> <p>Practice washing and drying hands.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Fresh veggies day. Get some dip for those things.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Sing a song while taking a bath.</p> 	<p>18</p> <p>Talk to each other through a paper tube.</p> 	<p>19</p> <p>Draw a bunch of circles in all different sizes: BIG, little, teeny tiny, medium, GREAT BIG, twins, itty bitty, enormous, as big as your head, as small as an M&M ...</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Summer begins! Wear some that are really cool!</p>
<p>28</p> <p>Count the number of things in your house that need electricity to work: _____</p>	<p>22</p> <p>AFGHANISTAN How many letters are there in this word? What IS this word? Can you say it?</p>	<p>23</p> <p>How many numbers are there on a clock?  (Note: very tricky)</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Play with a flashlight. Use the words on, off, light and dark.</p> 	<p>25</p> <p>Eric Carle's birthday. Read one of his books.</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>How many marshmallows can you stack up?</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Sun Glasses Day. Wear some that are really cool!</p> 
<p>29</p> <p>What words rhyme with ICE?</p>	<p>30</p> <p>My, my, my: This is a good day to bake a _____.</p>					