



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

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Behavior

Does your child have an imaginary friend?

If your child has limited access to friends, don't be surprised if he or she creates imaginary companions.

Some parents fear children will blur the boundaries between fantasy and reality if they acknowledge or participate with these invisible companions. But these fears are needless.

With few exceptions, preschoolers drop their imaginary pals between the ages of three and a half and four.

If your child creates an invisible friend, listen to the conversation your child carries on with the imaginary companion—it will provide you with valuable information about your child's thoughts and feelings.

Talk to your child's invisible friend as if it's an important member of the family. This can provide playful conversations and help you develop a good friendship with your own child.

Best friends are important, even when they're imaginary. □

Social Skills

Respecting the rights of others

Young children need to learn a balance between standing up for their own rights and needs and being concerned for others.

You can help your child learn to respect others' feelings, needs, and rights without sacrificing his own.

The place to start is with your relationship with him. Do you sometimes keep your feelings to yourself when your child has done something that annoyed you or made you angry because you don't want to hurt his feelings?

Do you hesitate to say no when he asks you to do or get something for him, even though you really don't want to do what he's asked?

This kind of well-meaning sacrifice of your own needs to meet those of your child is unfair to both you and him.

You don't give him a chance to learn to respect your needs when you don't let him know what they are.

Being either overly demanding of other people or overly sacrificing of one's own needs usually creates problems in relationships.

The continuous sacrifice of your own needs creates negative feelings. These feelings don't go away just because you don't want to express them.

They may boil beneath the surface, causing you to resent the things you used to do for your child with pleasure.

Or they may eventually explode in anger over an apparently unimportant matter. Either way they will interfere with your relationship.

It's important that you treat your child in ways that encourage him to express his needs and feelings.

Listen to his requests and take time to explain the reason why it may not be possible to grant them. Your attention shows him you respect his needs and feelings.

It's equally important that you be honest with him about your own needs. In the same way, let him know that sometimes your needs come first.

This kind of interaction works well when you treat your child – and his feelings, needs and rights — in the same way you would like to be treated. □



Things to do on a rainy/snowy day

• **Spaghetti sculpture.** Put an old sheet or tablecloth on the floor. Give the child a fistful of uncooked long spaghetti or other pasta shapes. The spaghetti can be used to make geometric designs and shapes.

When the play is over, the spaghetti/pasta can be retrieved and saved for another day. The sheet or tablecloth makes clean-up of small pieces easier.

• **Post Office.** Save old envelopes and anything that can be used for pretend stamps such as stickers from product or sales offers. Let the child stamp her own envelopes or make sticker trains, sticker animals, or sticker designs.

• **Ghost puppets.** Make ghost puppets from a square scrap of cloth, a handkerchief or a paper towel.

Crumple a piece of tissue into a small ball for the head. Put it in the middle of the square and tie it with a string, yarn, or thread. Draw a face with markers, watercolors, or a pen.

Make the spook a home from a box or grocery bag with holes cut out for doors and windows.

• **Texture book.** Give each child a crayon and eight or ten pieces of scrap paper. Show them how to make imprints of texture by laying the paper over a surface and rubbing with the crayon.

Indoors try linoleum, leaves of a plant, a placemat, edging or wallboard, garage floor. Outdoors suggest tree bark, sidewalk, bike tire, screen.

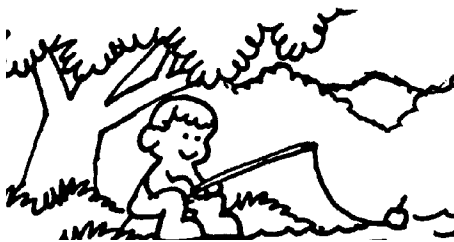
Staple the pages together into a book and use it as a recall game later as children name the object that produced the imprint. □

Observing, thinking, and speaking

Here are some suggestions for activities to help a young child learn to observe more accurately, to think more clearly, and to speak more effectively.

1. Activities which encourage accuracy in observation. “What will happen if we drop this ball on the floor?” “What will happen if we set the little truck on the top of this slope?”

2. Activities which require organization. “How many things can you name that fly?” “Things that walk?” “Things that are green?” “Things that have four legs?”



3. Activities which encourage sensitivity to the environment. “Can you act like one of these: A dog? A bunny? A lion?” “Pretend you’re a bus driver (doctor, farmer, firefighter). What would you be doing today?”

4. Activities that call for a theory. “What would happen if we mixed this green paint with this yellow paint?” “If we let all the water out of this bathtub, where would this little boat go?”

5. Activities which provoke creative imagination. Begin a story and invite your child to make up an ending. Or ask: “What are some of the things we could make from this ball of clay?”

6. Activities to promote flexibility. Give your child some shapes

(triangles, rectangles, semicircles, etc.) that you have cut out of paper and ask her to make as many things as she can out of them.

Give her some wooden blocks to make a road, a tower, and a bridge. Help her cut up different pictures from magazines and paste them into designs.

We’ve listed just a few ideas. You can make up new ones of your own to help your child observe, think and speak.

These kinds of activities encourage active learning—good preparation for school later on. □

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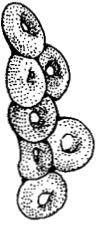














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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns “he” and “she” are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<p>1 Donut Day!</p> 	<p>2 Count all the mittens and gloves in the house.</p>	<p>3 Play someone's favorite game.</p> 	<p>4 Play "Guess Who I Am?" using animal sounds.</p> 	<p>5 What season is it now: Spring? Summer? Fall? Winter?</p>	<p>6 Find five things that roll.</p> 
<p>7 Where does cotton come from? What does it look like? What it is used for? Get busy looking it up.</p>	<p>8 Cheese & crackers & fruit for a snack.</p> 	<p>9 Think of all the names that begin with the letter "N": Norman, Naomi, Nell, Nick ...</p>	<p>10 Draw a picture of YOURSELF!</p> 	<p>11 Check dental records. When were the last check-ups?</p>	<p>12 Sing a Marching Song and do a bit of marching yourself.</p> 	<p>13 Have a home "fire drill!"</p>
<p>14 Name some animals that might live on a farm.</p> 	<p>15 Can you make a toy from an empty cardboard box?.</p>	<p>16 "Everything You Do Is Right" Day.</p> 	<p>17 St. Patrick's Day.</p> 	<p>18 Make your bed.</p> 	<p>19 Draw a picture of a BIG happy monster. Give the monster a name. And a smile ...</p>	<p>20 Take a hike.</p> 
<p>21 Where can you see a "working" train?</p>	<p>22 Name an animal for each letter of the alphabet: A = ape B = bird C = camel D = dolphin</p> 	<p>23 What things come in twos: socks, gloves ... ?</p>	<p>24 "Chocolate Covered Raisins Day." Enjoy some.</p>	<p>25 Count all the blue towels in the house today.</p>	<p>26 Sing a song at bathtime..</p> 	<p>27 Show the baby how a small stuffed animal can sing and dance.</p>
<p>28 Why is a car without a top called a "convertible"?</p>	<p>29 What words rhyme with DO?</p>	<p>30 Put tissue paper over a comb to start your own Kazoo Band! Get some folks to join you.</p> 	<p>31 Plan ahead: Tomorrow is APRIL FOOLS DAY!</p>	