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Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

What to do when there's nothing to do

Here are some more simple activities for those times when "there's nothing to do."

- Give each person a large piece of paper and some crayons. Sit in a circle. Draw a picture of the person sitting across from you. Then take a vote to see which drawing is the most realistic.

- Locate a trashcan or wastebasket. Crumple up some paper into balls. Take turns tossing the balls into the container. Start up close for the younger players and move farther away to make the task more difficult for older children.

- Using paper (folded in half twice) and scissors, show kids how to cut out "snowflakes."

- Adults and children play a favorite board game together. Afterwards, fix a simple snack of fruit and crackers.

- For a creative evening, turn off the television set and other media. Read a classic book together; play tic-tac-toe; make oatmeal cookies; play Bingo; make a block city. Stretch your imagination. □

Parenting

Being a calm, positive parent

Often, as much as children are loved and wanted, it's easy to develop a negative attitude about them. Influenced by the media, friends, neighbors, and fatigue, parents sometimes come to view children as an overwhelming burden.

It's true that when a baby enters family life, there are many new duties and demands in keeping him or her content and healthy. Naturally parents are anxious and worried about doing everything perfectly.

New moms, especially, often pick up the message that it's their duty to devote every minute to their children, constantly entertaining them and catering to their every whim.

For those parents who work outside the home, the burden seems even more overwhelming. Yet an attitude of devotion and self-sacrifice can work against children and parents and against having a happy and peaceful household. Choosing to be a parent who has a calm and positive attitude is not difficult.

- **Don't view your child as an enemy.** Sometimes parents unknowingly take on their parenting role as if it involved a constant battle of wills.

Let your child know by your touch, voice and words that you love and cherish him. But let him come to know that you, too, are a person with your own needs.

Holding on to who you are while being concerned for your child will prevent unnecessary demands on his or her part and irritation and frustration on yours.

It also gives tots a sense of security and sets the stage for the firm and fair rules of discipline older children need.

- **Adopt an easy-going approach and don't worry about being a perfect parent.** It's not necessary to follow every rule of childcare to the letter. What feels natural to you is usually what's best.

When little ones are cared for in a calm and unhurried way and allowed to develop at their own pace, you can almost be guaranteed they will blossom and thrive.

- **Look forward to each day with joy.** Few things establish bonding more firmly than getting into the spirit of whatever you are doing with your child.

Act as if the bath or mealtime were the most important things in the world to you at the moment. Since daily routines have to be performed anyway, why not make them fun for both of you.

For most of us, being a parent involves on-the-job training, and this can be scary. Yet it helps a lot when our attitude toward our children, and ourselves, is caring and nurturing. □

The world of work

My nearly fifteen year old granddaughter has been living with me for a month this summer while working at her first job, in the store of a family friend.

She has not only been responsible to her employer, but here at home she has kept up with her schedule to get to work on time, made her lunches, and done her laundry.

It has been a wonderful experience for her, with obvious growth as she confidently recounts stories of what she has done during the day.

It has made me think about the importance for even our youngest children of taking on tasks in their world.

After all, the responsible fifteen-year-old had years of earlier experiences that allowed her to assume these new roles in the world of work.

When and how do we help children develop the skills and self-confidence to move into the world of work?

Interestingly enough, it all probably starts in toddlerhood.

This is when most children want to do things like the adults in their lives, imitating their actions and doing just what they do. They are cheerfully willing to help, and do so, to the best of their young abilities.

We do well at that point to encourage this—handing them plates to place in the dishwasher, asking them to carry the waste basket to be emptied, and to carry the napkins and silverware for table setting.

Learning to pick up their toys and dirty clothes each day is an exercise in order, habit, and responsibility.

Especially in the beginning, it is important for parents to do three things. One is to give simple and clear demonstra-

tions of the best ways to accomplish a task. Modeling of desirable behaviors is an important teaching tool at all stages in our children's lives.

The second is to be accepting of the child's level of accomplishment. Yes, there might be some spillage of the wastebasket, but that is easily remedied.

Best at this point for the child to feel a sense of accomplishment.

And third is to indicate simple and sincere—not excessive—appreciation for the child's willingness to join in helping.

By the time they are three or four, youngsters can be taught to set the table with items taken from the cupboards for them.

(Educators tell us that table setting is a math lesson in one-to-one correspondence, as well as providing tangible evidence of their involvement in the chores of the family community.)

They can help with folding and putting away laundry, with washing the family car, with sweeping leaves off the porch.

Six-year-olds can begin to help with kitchen tasks—scrubbing vegetables for dinner, putting away groceries, cleaning and sorting the recyclables.

They can vacuum their own rooms and entertain a younger sibling.

Seven- and eight-year-olds can take out the trash and take a more active role as assistants for yard work and cooking.

In the pre-teen years, kids may be competent enough to take on cleaning jobs for extra spending money.

My oldest son volunteered to clean our bathrooms to help him save for

a special purchase. My boys baby-sat and cut grass for neighbors, all the while gaining both skills and self-confidence.

So start assuming they can develop skills and responsibility when they are very young, and you won't be one of those parents who have to worry about whether your offspring can succeed in the world of work. □

Health & Safety

Healthy hand washing

If you have not done so already, now is a good time to help your child develop healthy hand washing habits.

Proper hand washing can prevent the spread of many communicable diseases.

Water alone, however, won't kill germs. Soap is needed, too.

Drying the hands with a disposable paper towel will help stop the spread of germs.

Here are some appropriate occasions for your child to practice hand washing:

- When she comes into the house after playing outdoors.
- After using the toilet.
- After petting an animal.
- Before coming to the table for a meal, before eating food or snacks.

Good habits—learned early—can last a lifetime.

So, help your child develop the good habit of washing her hands. □

Discipline with kindness and respect

Around three years of age, children are able to understand an explanation of right and wrong.

Younger children may know the difference, but have difficulty understanding how discipline is related to their misbehavior.

A three-year-old, however, is able to understand the relationship between her misbehavior and the form of discipline you choose to impose.

Keep this in mind the next time you reprimand your three-year-old. Think about how you would feel if you were in her shoes.

Would you feel hurt, misunderstood, or angry if people treated you the way you are treating her?

Or would you feel they understood your point of view even though they weren't pleased with what you have done?

If someone yelled at you or made you feel bad because you'd misbehaved, what would you learn?

Would you learn to commit acts for which you were punished when you thought you could get away with it?

Would you learn to hide the truth from your parents in order to avoid punishment?

Wouldn't you prefer that your child trust you rather than be afraid of you?

Wouldn't you prefer that she learn not to do something because she understands why it's wrong rather than from fear of punishment?

A good rule would be to treat children of all ages as you would like to be treated. □

Teaching cooperation

Why do some children seem willing to cooperate while others do not?

In fact, children **learn** to be cooperative and helpful. They do not become that way automatically. They have to learn to work with others to accomplish a job and to help others by sharing materials and information.

Children have to learn how to make someone else's work or play easier. This learning takes place slowly, but the foundations can be laid early in life.

Here are some things parents and caregivers can do that will set the stage for the development of cooperation:

- **Be a model.** This is one of the best ways to teach cooperation because children imitate the actions of people who are important to them.

If young children see parents and other adults cooperating with others, they will be more willing to do the same.

When a parent helps a neighbor install an air conditioner or takes a casserole to the new family next door, he or she is setting an example that is seen by children and recorded for future reference.

- **Provide other models of good behavior.** Children are exposed to lots of models other than parents, including television, movies, books, toys, recordings and videogames.

Make an effort to screen these media and choose those that show good friendships, unselfish giving, or acts of kindness, acceptance and forgiveness.

- **Give suggestions and reasons.** One of the reasons adults sometimes fail to help is that they don't know what to do or how to do it.

Don't expect a child to automatically know how to do anything without specific, concrete suggestions.

For example, tell a five-year-old: "Joan, push the door and hold it open for Mrs. Stanley. She's having trouble doing that and pulling the grocery cart, too."

You are more likely to get help from a four-year-old if you say: "I want you to help me set the table for dinner because I have to finish the salad. Here are the plates. Put a napkin and a knife and fork next to each plate—like this."

Giving reasons along with suggestions helps children understand why another person needs their help and make them more willing to cooperate.

- **Assign age-appropriate but real responsibilities.** We usually get what we expect from children, and they need to know that we expect them to take an active part in the work of the family.

Parents can expect cooperation and helpfulness not by preaching but by giving children real chores to do. □

FREE!

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







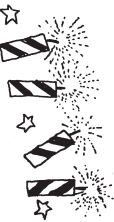

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Written by a very wise grandmother;
From the publishers of **Growing Child**
and **Growing Together**

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p> <p>Happy New Year!</p>	<p>2</p> <p>When is your birthday this year?</p> 	<p>3</p> <p>Take a walk outside and look for things that are only found/seen during winter.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Make some kiddie hors d'oeuvres: banana slices topped with honey, peanut butter, apple butter, little marshmallows ...</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Make a list of things you can do instead of watching TV.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Answer yes or no:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sun is shining. • I love apples. • My name is Oscar. • I can roller skate. • Today is Saturday. 	<p>7</p> <p>What's the difference between mittens and gloves? Which ones did the kittens lose?</p>
<p>8</p> <p>What shape is a pancake? A waffle? An orange? A cucumber? A pretzel?</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Write a poem or story about winter.</p> 	<p>10</p> <p>Think of three words that rhyme with "sunny."</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Think of a new name for your thumb.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Can you sing a song all by yourself?</p> 	<p>13</p> <p>Can you think of three animals that are REALLY BIG?</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Pull a long piece of string ... slowly down the hall ... around the corner ... into a bedroom. Have a child follow it.</p>
<p>15</p> <p>Today is Sunday. What's tomorrow?</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Martin Luther King Jr. Day</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Go through the house and find things that come in pairs.</p> 	<p>18</p> <p>Warm bagels for a snack. Baby will enjoy teething them too.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Play with magnets on the refrigerator. No small pieces for children under three.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Learn how to waltz.</p> 	<p>21</p> <p>Attend a local basketball game.</p> 
<p>22</p> <p>Chinese New Year.</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>Slow dance with your child to soft music before she goes to bed.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Make a snowball shake: milk, vanilla, ice cream and coconut.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Build a barn with some Lincoln Logs™ or put together a log cabin.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Color with an blue crayon. Find 5 (five) things in your house that are blue.</p> 	<p>27</p> <p>When a child is stressed, have him lie on his stomach, and stroke his back.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Read "The Snowy Day" by Ezra Jack Keats.</p>
<p>29</p> <p>Look out the window in the morning. What do you see?</p>	<p>30</p> <p>What is your favorite color?</p>	<p>31</p> <p>Throw a big blanket over some chairs—put your sleeping bag inside and take a nap.</p>	