



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

The Same Game

The Same Game is a simple and quick game that helps polish classification skills. Play it anytime, anyplace.

Start with something easy: A shirt and a shoe. What's the same about them?

A pencil and a crayon: What's the same about them?

A pickle and a popsicle?

Get harder: A cookie and a plate. They're both round, they'll break if you drop them, both belong in the kitchen. Would they both roll down a hill?

Switch the game. A cup and a glass. What's different about them? Remember color, size, shape, and what they're made of, what they're for, and what they're called.

Think of something yourself. Take two objects close at hand. There will always be something the same about them, even if it's only that they're in the same room.

Don't make it a test with set questions and answers. Just grab two things spontaneously and talk about them. Here again, what's different about them? □

Developmental

There's a handy helper right in your home

When you're tidying up the house and your youngster is underfoot, instead of fabricating play activities, invite your child to share in family chores and responsibility.

For example, when preparing a meal, provide your child with real tools. Show how to operate a hand egg beater or a carrot peeler, with careful instructions.



If the equipment and the item being prepared is placed at a proper height for the child, there will be fewer spills—of child or equipment.

While you are preparing to wash dishes or load the dishwasher, your helper may be assigned the job of sorting the silverware.

When you move on to the dining room, offer a damp cloth to remove

finger marks from the woodwork or tabletop. Wastebaskets may be emptied into larger receptacles.

In the bathroom, there may be a tendency to splash in the water unless you suggest genuine work. Allow your child to wipe off glass cleaner from mirrors, windows, or tile.

There are many reasons for recommending practical experiences in the home:

- With your supervision, children can learn to handle glasses, cups, plates and other items in the kitchen safely—and at an appropriate age

- Table-setting is one of the early chores children can handle.

- The exercise is equal to, if not superior to, such things as push-ups or knee bends.

- The need to pay attention—to listen and follow instructions, to choose, arrange, use equipment—are school-readiness skills.

- The importance of making decisions and changing them when they turn out poorly is essential for cognitive learning.

- The recognition and confidence gained for a job well done builds up good feelings about oneself. □

Keeping the balance

As I was discussing a problem that a first-time parent had brought to me recently, it occurred to me that being a parent is largely a matter of balance.

I'm not exactly referring to the task of juggling all the roles a parent must, while acknowledging freely that keeping the multiple balls of spouse, parent, worker, and home care aloft takes astonishing stamina and vigor, to say nothing of a pretty good sense of humor.

No, rather I mean the kind of balance that is needed not to take a hard and fast position in many of the parenting situations that arise in the course of any given day.

Consider the matter of bedtime. You know the importance of a regular routine in creating hassle-free bedtime practices and rituals for a peaceful end of the day for you and your children.

But there's absolutely no reason to adhere to that rigidly when staying up later might allow you and the kids to go out to marvel at the blood-red full moon.

Similarly, you are determined to provide healthy and nutritious food experiences for meals and snacks.

But that's no reason to deny yourselves the pleasure of a stop at the ice cream store or the joy and wonderful smells of baking chocolate chip cookies together.

I'm sure you can see the wisdom of these kinds of balance and flexibility.

But consider other occasions where parents should not consider an either/or stance on decisions, but rather adopt a both/and approach.

Reflect on the matter of keeping children safe. Between government regulations for seatbelts, helmets, and other precautions, parents understand

the importance of keeping their children safe.

But unfortunately, with the ready availability of knee- and elbow-pads and the implied messages of danger everywhere, it is all too easy to swing the pendulum to such an extreme that your children never get an opportunity to skin a knee.

Believe it or not, such over-protection is not really healthy for them. Learning to survive a skinned knee involves learning that life will indeed provide some bumps when lived with gusto, and we heal and go on.

Yes, I am speaking metaphorically as well as physically. When parents take a position of balance, they understand the importance of providing safe environments, as well as allowing kids to take on physical risks and mental challenges.

And then there's the matter of helping kids with tasks, whether they be homework assignments or even the basics of self-care.

To do it all yourself keeps children dependent on your assistance, not a good preparation for their futures. But to adopt a rigid hands-off policy does not demonstrate respect for individual needs.

Some middle ground of balance is healthy for all. Same with when they ask you to play with them.

Playing with them all the time defeats the purpose of play for young children—to become creative, imaginative, self-sufficient at problem solving, etc.

To never play with them robs you of joyful moments, as well as the opportunity to subtly introduce or demonstrate new ideas. You get it—balance, some of the time.

Find that rational sweet spot. □

Learning math concepts is fun

Children begin to learn math concepts long before they go to school—by determining the difference between these things and those things, for instance, or sorting objects which belong together, or ordering objects in space.

An example of how children order things in space is when your preschooler helps put away the pots and pans in the kitchen.

At first she may push them into the cupboard any old way. But when she does this, sometimes the door won't close.

Then you might suggest: "Why not try putting the cookie sheets in first? I always put them on the bottom." Or, "Let's put the biggest pan in first so some smaller ones will fit inside them."

When the child gets the picture, the door will close. And she has expanded her knowledge of order—of how parts fit together.

Children also learn math concepts by cooking. Sugar, flour, and eggs can be measured, mixed, sifted and stirred.

There are all sorts of abstract mathematical concepts in the kitchen—heavy, light, long, short, more, less, a little bit, a lot, a spoonful, a cupful. □

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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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Do you love me—best of all?

Every parent of two or more children has been, or will be, faced with some variation of this age-old question. Often the question will take the form of an accusation: “You think everything is always **my** fault. You never pick on him! You just love him more than me!”

How can you explain to your child that you love both (all) of your children equally, that babies and toddlers need more care, that you are proud of your child’s growing independence (or other fine quality)?

Often the first impulse is to respond to an accusation with a counter attack: “How can you say such a thing? Of course I love you as much as I love your brother/sister.”

But a counter-attack doesn’t solve the problem or reassure the child. It can only make him feel worse—more rejected, less worthy.

Well, how about giving a put-down response like this: “That’s a silly question! Of course I love you both the same!”

That’s not very convincing to the child and feeling silly is not a good feeling.

Here’s another off-hand response that isn’t much better: “Oh, Jerry—you **know** Daddy loves you both the same!” Jerry isn’t sure about that at all or he wouldn’t have felt compelled to ask the question or make the accusation.

So, what can parents say or do to make things better?

First, listen what the child is really saying: “You don’t give me as much attention as I need and I’m afraid that the new sister/brother will take my place. I feel abandoned and alone. I’m

too little to be all alone. I need you!”

Then reflect some of those unsaid feelings back to the child: “You’re feeling sad (angry), aren’t you, because Mommy has been so busy with your little brother/sister.”

Or, you might say, “It’s hard, isn’t it, to share Daddy’s time and attention with someone else?” Or, “Sometimes it seems like I spend more time with your (older) brother and sister than I do with you.”

Let the child know that you understand how he’s feeling by putting his feelings into words. Take time to hug him and reassure him.

As you talk with him about his expressed fears and resentments, you might find one of the following approaches useful.

“Mommy’s (Daddy’s) love for you is special for **you** and always will be. I didn’t have to take any of my love for you to give to your little brother/sister. I grew a whole lot of new love for him/her. This new love is different because you and the baby are different—but it’s no bigger and no better—just different.

“I love each (both) of you best of all! I love you best of all because you are my oldest boy and because you look like _____ (or have blue eyes or any other specific distinguishing characteristic).

“And I love Marsha best of all because she’s a girl and because she has brown eyes and a sweet smile.”

“And I love Jimmy best of all because he’s so tiny and needs me the most right now!

“So, I love each of you best of all because each of you is so special!” □

Favorite playthings have additional benefits

In the preschool years, children learn much from repetition.

They will return again and again to a favorite toy, book, or puzzle or a favorite set of materials, such as blocks.

Each time children play with these familiar objects, they learn something new about them. That information was always there to be learned, but the child who returns to the familiar toy is not the same child who played with it a month ago.

Now he brings to his play everything that he has experienced and learned since the last time he handled the toy or material.

Because of this added experience, he is now ready to learn more from his present play than he could have learned a month before.

The toy, puzzle, book or set of blocks is the same—but as the child brings more to the activity, he learns more from it. □

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**

October 2020

Sunday

Monday

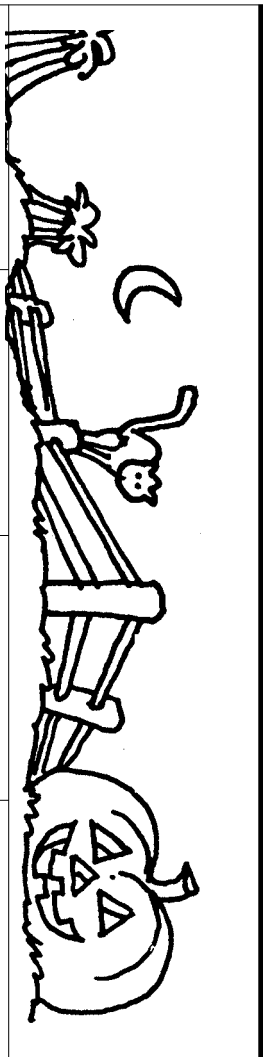
Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday



1 Cinnamon Toast for breakfast today!

2 Sing a song while riding in the car.

3 Is the sun shining? If so, go outside for a walk. Watch for migrating birds. Wait! What does "migrate" mean?

4 Learn the words to the song: "You Are My Sunshine"

5 Go to the library and bring home a book about trees.

6 What words rhyme with "nose"?

7 Play "Show and Tell!"

8 Check out a hard-boiled egg. What can you do with it?

9 Lay small objects on a piece of paper and trace around them.

11 Say "I love you" to someone today.

12 Plan a menu for a meal tomorrow with youngster's help.

13 Make some red Jello.™ Talk about each step.

14 Play "Follow the Leader" and take turns being the "Leader."

15 Little ones help water plants today! How are the plants different? How are they the same?

16 Look in the newspaper for something special to do this weekend.

17 Check outside to see if any leaves need to be raked.

18 My, my! Make some pumpkin pie!

19 Look for the color blue while riding in the car today.

20 What's a yo-yo? What do you do with it?

21 Wash all of baby's toys. Rinse well so the soap is all gone.

22 Make a trail with string to follow.

23 Count the numbers on a clock.

24 Play "Follow the Leader!"

25 Go outside and count all the squirrels you see. What are they busy collecting?

26 Plant bulbs for flowers to bloom next spring.

27 Color some things on this page YELLOW!

28 Warm some bagels for a snack. Baby will enjoy teething on them too.

29 Snack on banana slices and peanut butter.

30 Everybody wrap up, put a sock cap on the baby, and go for a walk.

31 Halloween: The night of October 31, the eve of All Saints' Day, commonly celebrated by children who dress up in costume and solicit candy or other treats door-to-door.