



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Behavior

“I’ve told you three times!”

“I’ve told you three times to pick up your things!”

Does that sound familiar? With a certain tone of voice and on the third time you probably get action, even though it is accompanied by a bit of grouting and a dirty look.

Is this normal behavior? Yes, it is. Many children need to be reminded of a thing two or three times before it sinks in enough to spark a response.

You think children can’t hear you? They heard. But it takes a repetition or two sometimes for the request (or sound) to register and penetrate the active, disorganized processing going on continually in a youngster’s brain.

Try this: Go to your child. Gently touch him so that he looks at you as well as listens to you. Make your request quietly and politely.

Why? Sometimes a child’s response may vary with his mood. A sharp demand may arouse the tyrant in him. And, most people respond quicker to a request than a demand. □

Discipline

Praise and criticism

There are two ways to praise a child for something she has done. You can say, as you watch her finish her latest artwork, “Oh, what a lovely picture. It looks just like a sunset. You are a good artist.”

Or you can say, “I like the way the colors drip together. You really used a lot of paint this time.”

When you say her painting is a lovely picture, perhaps the praise fails to match what the child has actually done.

She has been experimenting with how it works. You say it is a sunset. She knows it isn’t, but she keeps that her little secret.

She understands that her picture has to **be something** for you to like it, that practicing with paint isn’t worthy of praise.

She knows she isn’t an artist—but she’ll go along to win your praise.

The second way to praise states the obvious: She has used a lot of paint, and you appreciate that. You like the way the colors drip together. What gives her pleasure gives you pleasure, too.

Her experimenting with color is an admired skill. She did it well. Praising her this way helps her to judge her work appropriately, to feel that what she actually does is valued by people who count.

There are two ways to criticize a child for something she has done. You can say, as her glass of milk spills onto the floor: “Look what you’ve done. You are so clumsy.”

Or you can say, “You put your glass too close to the edge of the table. Now help me clean up this milk.”

When you tell a child **what** she is—a clumsy person—you judge her. She is always clumsy, and will always be.

But when you tell her exactly what she has done, she can judge her action as it really is. She can avoid spilling her milk like that next time.

No parent exasperated by mud tracks on the floor or stepped-on crayons in the rug, can resist saying “careless.” And most times, by the twentieth scribble, no long really interested, we say “beautiful” without a thought.

But if parents can avoid for much of the time praise and criticism that judges the child herself, and instead judge the product or the action, a child will become more able to measure her behavior, to pursue what she is good at, to work on what is difficult, to like herself the way she is. □

Learning to read

All parents would like their children to become good readers. Yet parents are sometimes not too sure what they can do to help.

Some parents, in their desire to develop their child's literacy skills, may push too hard too early.

Pushing a child who isn't ready is usually counterproductive. The parent becomes more and more frustrated, while the child begins to associate learning to read with anxiety and failure.

On the other hand, other parents are so confused and intimidated by conflicting theories regarding the so-called "one right way" to teach reading that they decided to leave it entirely to the teacher and the school.

In so doing, they unfortunately deprive their child of the unique learning environment which only the home can provide.

Is my child ready for reading?

In determining reading readiness, it is essential to take one's cue from the individual child. The child's age alone is not an adequate indicator.

Some children who are not yet ready to begin reading will be content to listen to a story being read or just look at the pictures.

The child who is ready will want you to identify words in her favorite books. When your child starts pushing you, rather than the other way around, it's a good indicator that she is probably ready for reading.

How to foster a love of reading in the home: One of the best ways for parents to foster a love of reading in **all** children is by reading stories aloud. Even after children have learned to read, they still enjoy having a story read to them.

This should always be a fun activity—such as at bedtime—for both parent and child. Even in the daytime, a reading period should be limited to no more than 30 minutes at a time. As soon as the child shows signs of restlessness, it is best to stop and resume the reading at a later time.

Here are some suggestions that will help to make reading to your child at home more beneficial and enjoyable:

- Let your child have input—such as a particular interest or favorite author—in choosing the books to be read.
- Look over the material beforehand before reading it to your child.
- Choose a comfortable and relaxed setting.
- Let your child know the importance of this reading time together by eliminating distractions or interruptions, such as the phone, television or games.
- Read the book in a lively and animated manner, using a different tone of voice for the different characters in the story.

- Look frequently into your child's eyes to maintain active interaction.

- Pause periodically to discuss what is happening in the story or to raise some questions. ("Is the little dog afraid?" "What do you think the girl should do next?")

- Discontinue reading—until some later time—if your child appears bored or restless.

Other ways to stimulate your child's interest in reading: Some parents put identifying labels on objects in the child's room: bed, door,

drawer, chair. Parents can also point out words on vegetable cans, cereal boxes, t-shirts, signs and billboards.

The more a child becomes aware of the written word in everyday living, the more interested she will become in learning to read.

Using the public library: Parents can also make use of the children's section at the local public library. This is a very good way to learn about an individual child's special interests.

Connecting reading with writing: It is also a good practice to connect reading with writing. Help your child develop a story which you can write down. When you read it back to her, point to each word as you say it.

After reading her own story to her a number of times, invite her to read it with you, helping her with the words she doesn't recognize. It is best, at this stage, to ignore any errors she makes as this will only inhibit her desire to learn.

Finally, recognize and encourage her for the good job she's done in writing—and reading—her very own story. □

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Written by a very wise grandmother;
From the publishers of **Growing Child**
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Translating nonverbal communication

Young children understand more than they are able to communicate using language.

Nonverbal language is generally considered to mean hand gestures, body movement, facial expressions, eye contact and voice intonations.

It conveys important information about what children (and other people) are thinking and experiencing.

For example, Molly is drawing a picture when her mother interrupts by asking, "What's that?"

Without saying a word, Molly jumps up, tears up her drawing, throws it into the wastebasket, and runs from the room. Her actions are more powerful than any words she might have said.

Many parents are not aware of the nonverbal messages they give their children.

For example, when young children talk to their parents, the parents' facial expressions reveal how well they are listening.

Our heads nod, we respond with "uh huhs" and fail to make eye contact.

We're not suggestion that parents "hang on" to every actions or word their child emits.

But it is important for parents to:

(1) think about and try to translate their children's nonverbal messages and reflect their understanding, and

(2) be aware of the silent messages parents themselves convey. □

Special time

How can you help each of your children feel special?

Try to spend time each day alone with each of your children. If you can arrange it, it would be good to set aside at least ten or fifteen minutes a day that each child can look forward to and count on as his or her own special time with you.

For example, you might plan to spend fifteen minutes each afternoon with your daughter while her little brother takes his nap. Or you might give her fifteen minutes in the evening after Junior's bedtime.

Don't feel guilty if you can't do this regularly every day. Instead try to find a regular schedule you can stick to at least once a week.

Let this be a time for each child to use as he or she wishes. You can offer a story, a game, or simply an understanding ear, but let the child choose.

These special times with you will help you get to know and enjoy each of your children more. You may find this gives you more time for yourself, too, as your children stop competing for your attention at other times. □

Each child is unique

Here's an idea to help you appreciate the differences between your children:

Try not to compare children with each other. They are different people. Each child has his or her own way of reacting to the things that happen.

Each one has a particular rate of growth and his or her own pace of doing things. Each children is drawn to different activities, things, and people.

It is natural to compare the times at which you first and second child walked, talked, or was toilet trained.

It's understandable to wonder why your third child is afraid of the water when your first two learned to swim quite young.

It's important to let each child be himself or herself. Notice the things that make each of your children unique, and encourage them to develop their own special talents.

Accept your children's differences and you will help them to accept themselves and each other. □

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.

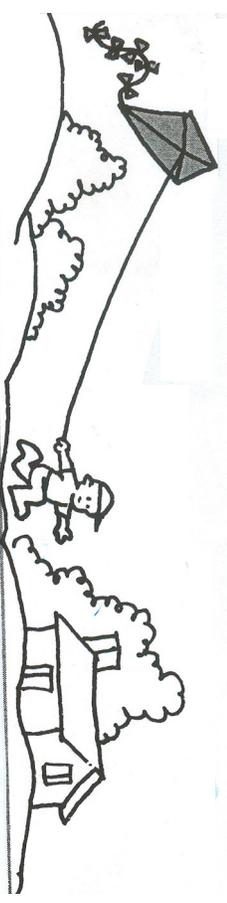
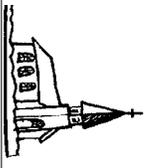
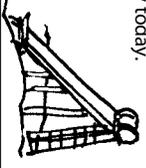
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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns "he" and "she" are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

www.growingchild.com

May 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						
<p>3</p> <p>Eat breakfast outside.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Plan a family get-together time for this weekend.</p> 	<p>5</p> <p>Take a big cardboard box outside. What can you do with it? (Paint it, play in it...)</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Look out the window for robins.</p> <p>A robin is sometimes called a robin redbreast. Do you know why?</p>	<p>7</p> <p>National Day of Prayer.</p> 	<p>1</p> <p>May Day</p> 	<p>2</p> <p>Draw four triangles. Color them: purple, pink, green, tomato.</p>
<p>10</p> <p>Mother's Day</p> 	<p>11</p> <p>Talk about the safest way to cross the street.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Clean out the toys box and donate usable ones to a charity.</p> 	<p>13</p> <p>Draw a picture of your ears.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>A bagful of colorful sponges make an interesting, inexpensive gift for baby.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Read <i>The Little Engine that Could</i>.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Armed Forces Day</p> 
<p>17</p> <p>Order in for dinner.</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Tape a BIG piece of paper to toddler's door to draw on.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Draw a picture of your house. What color is it?</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Show Baby how to touch her nose with her finger.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Go see if the playground is busy today.</p> 	<p>22</p> <p>Have a bagel for breakfast. (What's a bagel?)</p>	<p>23</p> <p>(Eid) al Fitr begins at sundown.</p>
<p>24</p> <p>Play pat-a-cake with someone.</p> <p>31</p> <p>Sing a lullaby before you go to bed.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Memorial Day</p> <p>INDY 500! RACING: 8-12-20</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Sing a silly song together.</p> 	<p>27</p> <p>Can you name the seven dwarfs?</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Tell your teddy bear one of your favorite stories.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Talk about the things that make you happy.</p> 	<p>30</p> <p>How old are you today in years, months, and days.</p>