



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Discipline

Explain your expectations

Let your child know what you expect of her in terms of behavior. Try to keep your expectations fair, reasonable, age-appropriate and sensible, and spell them out to your child.

If she knows what you expect of her, it will be easier for her to please you and avoid your disapproval. For example, at four or five years old, explain that you expect her to be in bed by a time that is acceptable to you.

Let her know that she can lie in bed quietly for a short time before going to sleep.

Offer to read or tell her a story or just talk with her during that time if she wishes. But explain that you will not want to spend the time with her if you have to remind her every night to go to bed.

Let her know what you expect and what she can expect when she doesn't fulfill her part of the bargain. □

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Music

Take advantage of music's charm

Most people like and respond to music—it is one of the most natural things in the world.

All cultures—primitive and advanced—sing and dance and play instruments. But no one knows exactly why music makes us smile, or why it calms children. It just does.

To relax both you and your children, soft, gentle music usually works best. And music also works best for those times when nothing else seems to lower the noise level in a room.

One little suggestion that sometimes works at naptime is to tell kids they don't have to sleep, but they do need to be quiet and listen to the music. In the process of listening, sometimes eyelids just become too heavy.

At other times, music can be a source of great fun with simple games you can make up yourself. Kids will love it if you participate too.

Here are a few not-so-common ideas to get started:

• **Roll around the clock.** Put on a song with a good, strong beat and get down on the floor and roll.

Yes, it sounds silly, and it's even sillier to see a bunch of kids and adults rolling around on the floor. But it's

a guaranteed 'pleaser' activity with the kids and some people have been known to laugh out loud.

• **March to the beat.** Give everybody a hat and a noisemaker (make your own from simple, safe kitchen items) and march in time to the music.

This is an excellent experience for learning about rhythm and matching movement with sound.

• **Line dancing.** Hold hands and teach little ones a few simple steps you can do together.

If you know the words to the song, sing along Kids LOVE to dance with mom or dad!

• **Remember the Bunny Hop?** If you do, teach it to the kids.

If you don't, ask your parents how it goes. Or make up an energetic song of your own and give it a name. Kids will have some ideas, too!

All of these activities are great fun and a good way to get rid of that extra energy (theirs, not yours.)

Happy dancing! □



You don't need their permission

Let me describe a scenario I witnessed yesterday at the preschool.

A four-year-old arrived a bit late, and settled into the large group gathering that is part of the beginning morning ritual.

This is a particular four-year-old about whom you have heard before, one whose Indian name would be She-about-whom-the-world-must-revolve.

A very capable and knowledgeable child, she began to sing the songs they were practicing for the spring festival, and then suddenly you could see a thought dawn.

On his way out the door, Dad lingered for a moment to greet the teacher, and his daughter frantically tried to catch his eye.

Her lip began to quiver and droop, and the face was desperate. Dad glanced at her, and was sucked right in.

Then followed a mini-drama where he returned, took her to one side for yet another goodbye, and literally begged her to let him go.

His daughter, by now reveling in her power, was emphatic that he couldn't yet go.

And so it went, Dad finally dialing on his cell-phone to postpone an appointment in his office, and his daughter looking both triumphant and a tad confused.

Now let me be clear. This was not a four-year-old who was in the throes of separation anxiety or having any kind of personal crisis.

This was a child who just wanted to test again her superior power over one of the adults in her life and discovered, partially to her

discomfort, that she could bend him to her will.

This is just plain not good for kids. The happiest, most secure children in the world know that adults make the big decisions about what must be done.

I heard a pediatrician using the words "running a benevolent dictatorship."

Benevolent, because we behave with love, gentleness, and positive interaction, yet a dictatorship because we know what is best for our lives and for the kids in them.

Benevolent dictators do not have to ask for permission—they simply act with authority and without hesitation.

So, big people, you do not have to ask for a child's permission or beg for their acceptance in order to act. You just proceed with what needs to be done.

In this case, if the dad had just sent another cheerful wave and left for the office, he would have sent several messages to his daughter:

1. I believe you can handle it.

Self-confidence results from the clear message that the adult is confidently leaving the child in a safe and nurturing environment; hesitation sends the opposite message, implying also that the child is not up to it.

2. We each have some power in our actions. Unfortunately in the scene I described, Dad abdicated all his power in favor of his daughter.

It's a bit scary for kids to feel they have all the power and adults have none, yet that is what asking them for permission to go on with our lives implies.

The power he could have given her is to express her feelings, but not allow them to control the situation.

3. I am the adult here, and you are the child; I have my world and you have yours. A more definite leave-taking would have supported this learning.

So, as contrary as it is to contemporary parenting, consider a benevolent dictatorship as a gift to your children. □

Social Skills

Being successful

In order for children to develop feelings of confidence in their ability to be successful, they need practice at being successful. How can parents do this?

Observe your child's present skills and interests. Then introduce activities which will spark her interest and stretch her skill.

Encourage her to stick with activities until she's done what she set out to do. Try not to interrupt her from an activity that she's involved in. Perseverance is an important part of success. If she meets with difficulty, encourage her to "just try again."

If you can suggest a way of simplifying the task, do so. But resist the temptation to take over and show her how by doing it for her. That's a subtle way of telling her she can't do it and will undermine her confidence.

Helping your child learn to feel good about herself is the most important job parents have. □

Growing up is hard to do

As a child grows up during the preschool years, he may seem unpredictable and hard to understand at times.

He may get very excited about an activity, only to leave it suddenly without explanation.

Sometimes you may have to tell him the same thing several times. Still he forgets to do what you've asked.

He can be adorable one minute and whiny or pouting the next. And he may—for no reason—begin to be afraid of all sorts of things that never bothered him before.

In other words, your child is experiencing some rough spots that are normal on this journey to growing up.

Your preschooler is no longer a baby. You have expectations of him taking some responsibilities for himself. This is good. Most of the time he is probably proud to do things for himself.

But there are times when he wishes someone else would take care of his responsibilities. This shows up, particularly, if there's a younger child in the family from whom less is expected.

Try to understand how your child feels. And let him know you understand his feelings.

"You don't want to put away your toys right now. You're tired and you wish I'd do it for you. Let's pick them up together."

By putting yourself in your child's shoes, you can help him get through the occasional rough spots in his life. □

Plan a good day, every day

When stress strikes, it becomes hard, if not impossible, to look toward the upcoming day with joy.

The most effective way to break that kind of negative mind-set is to approach each day in a positive, hopeful, optimistic way.



Wolfe J. Rink, a management consultant and adjunct associate professor at Johns Hopkins University says: "If you don't automatically feel upbeat, look around and find something to feel good about. Start out each day in a positive way."

In order to have more positive days, Dr. Rinke suggests the following:

- Use a clock radio or a phone that plays soft and pleasant music to wake up to. Don't use a loud alarm clock.
- Allow yourself enough time to prepare for the day's activities at a

civilized pace. Don't wait until the last possible moment to get up.

- Think about the positive things you expect to accomplish today. Don't listen to news of the world's problems or worry about your own problems while you are dressing.

- Eat a healthy breakfast. Don't drug yourself with coffee or cigarettes.

- As you go about your day's activities, always expect the best. □

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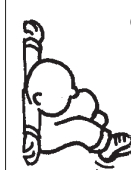








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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns "he" and "she" are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>4</p> <p>Save the daily newspaper each year on your child's birthday to give to her when she's grown up.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Labor Day. Picnic in the Park!</p> 	<p>6</p> <p>Wear something with green stripes today.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Look for and count: 4 things: 4 noses 4 doors 4 trees 4 books</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Make some fruit punch for dinner.</p> 	<p>2</p> <p>What's the name of a good friend of yours?</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Do stretching exercises together.</p> 
<p>11</p> <p>Patriots Day</p> 	<p>12</p> <p>"S" is for September. Name four more words that start with the letter S.</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Sort socks by color and size.</p> 	<p>14</p> <p>Look through the house for objects with the color orange.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>What words rhyme with "coat?"</p> 	<p>16</p> <p>Everyone help clean up the house!</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Eat lunch outside.</p> 
<p>18</p> <p>How about a trip to the ice cream place?</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Practice saying the days of the week. What's today?</p>	<p>20</p> <p>What is rain made of? Draw a picture of a rainy day.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Look at an A-B-C book.</p> 	<p>22</p> <p>Make up a rhyme about Thursday: "Thursday is a very nice day. What will I do? Run and play?"</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Play "Stare Down." See who laughs first.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Go outside and look for bugs and insects. Look—but don't touch.</p> 
<p>25</p> <p>Rosh Hashanah begins at sundown.</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>Will a cracker float? What about a pencil? A piece of paper towel? A marshmallow? A tire from the car?</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Which foot is your left foot? Your right?</p> 	<p>28</p> <p>Can you spell your name?</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Ask three different people what book they're reading now. (Reading is cool!)</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Cut a slice of bread with a cookie cutter. Put some jelly on it. What's next?</p> <p>! I I T V A</p>	