



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Academics

## Practicing ABCs

Here's an easy, fun way to practice making letters and words. Start with a big roasting pan. Pour a thick layer of salt into the pan and shake it from side to side until the salt is spread evenly. Now you're ready to start.

Children get the "feel" of letters better when their fingertips shape them than when a stubborn pencil point does.

They can make letters as big as they like without wasting paper. And if they are unhappy with the way something looks, all they have to do is give the pan a good shake,

If your child is too young for writing, she can make swirl designs with fingers or cookie cutters.

For those kids who love tiny bulldozers and dump trucks, the salt's fine, dry texture works better than sand for moving, dumping, and piling up.

Look at the salt as a new kind of creative surface, and think up a new challenge for the kids at your house. □

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Parenting

## Dealing with stress

Most parents today live stress-filled lives. Their minds go a mile a minute, thinking of all they have to do. Signs of stress include:

- Being easily irritated by things that wouldn't normally bother you.
- Being angry about things over which you have no control such as the weather or being stuck in rush-hour traffic.
- Feeling rushed and pressured to get things done in less time than is realistic.
- Feeling frustrated or helpless because of not being able to keep up with the pace of your life.
- Feeling tightness in your neck muscles, shoulders, or back.
- Finding yourself frequently clenching your jaws or grinding your teeth.
- Feeling constantly tired, even before you start a task.
- Having a headache frequently during or at the end of the day.

Here are some long-term strategies for dealing with stress:

**Develop the habit of making a list of things you have to do.** An unspecific, vague sense of "having a lot to do" can wear you down. Making a list helps organize what tasks need to be done.

**Make a list of what needs to be done immediately.** Be realistic. Trying to accomplish everything at the same time is unrealistic and can be overwhelming.

**Check off tasks as you finish them.** A sense of accomplishment—even in getting small jobs done—can give a person renewed energy.

**Give yourself more time than you think each task will take.** Being rushed creates unnecessary pressure that ultimately saps one's energy.

**Make time for yourself.** This includes planning to take regular breaks and to look after your own interests.

**Keep notes on whatever helps you the most to de-stress.** For some people, listening to music or looking at a particular scene can be relaxing. For others, a mental sound or picture—such as the sound of waves breaking on the seashore is more effective.

**Exercise regularly.** Build some exercise program—even short, brisk walks—into your overall daily schedule. Treat regular exercise as a duty to yourself and others, rather than as an optional activity.

**Find a long-term friend with whom you can share the cause of your stress.** This person must be a good listener whom you trust to protect your confidentiality. □

## Basic principles of effective parenting

Developing effective parenting skills is not easy. It is an endeavor that demands constant effort. But the effort is worthwhile because it will help a child become socially well adjusted ... and will also increase the joy of parenting.

Here are four basic principles that are worth repeating:

**1. Be prepared.** Try to anticipate problems, if possible. Many unpleasant situations could be avoided if appropriate preventive measures are taken.

For example, if you anticipate bad behavior from your child while shopping in the grocery store, be sure to talk with him about what is acceptable behavior before you leave

for the store.

**2. Be specific.** Even though a parent knows what bad behavior is, a child may not. Therefore, be as specific as possible in describing these actions.

**3. Be fair.** As far as possible, make known to the child in advance what specific reward will be given for good behavior and what specific punishment will follow bad behavior.

**4. Be consistent.** Although a parent may be in a good mood one day and in a bad mood the next, children are not able to “read” these feelings.

So it is important to maintain consistent behavior from one day to the next and from one situation to another. □

## What's the best time to begin toilet training?

Toilet training is a learning process and some basic skills are necessary before beginning.

**1. Muscle control.** The sphincter muscles work to control the opening and closing of the bladder and bowel outlets. At the same time, the child must be able to squeeze with the large abdominal muscles.

To be toilet trained, children must be able to make these muscles work when they want them to. This generally takes about two years.

**2. Communication.** Children can't always maneuver their clothing or use the toilet unassisted. So they need to be old enough to be able to

tell you in some way that they want to go to the bathroom.

**3. Desire.** While a child may not necessarily want to be done with diapers, he does want to please his parents or to be like his friends or older siblings who are trained.

Whatever the reason, willingness on the child's part is essential.

As in many other areas of child development, the age to start training is highly individual.

Around the latter part of the second year is a good time to start watching for signs that your child is achieving the skills required. □

## Encouraging a positive attitude

Children learn a lot from the way their parents talk.

When parents talk in a happy and positive way, their children learn to feel content and good about themselves. Positive talk also helps children develop self-confidence.

The way parents talk can also reflect a sense of hopelessness and defeat.

Young children are learning and exploring so many new things, and we want to encourage this by using hopeful words.

These words create a sense of hopelessness in children: “I've had it with you. You'll never learn to help. You might as well quit now. I'm through trying to teach you to be good. All the other kids listen to their parents. Why can't you?”

Children can make adults feel frustrated and it is understandable when some of these phrases slip out, but with careful thought, parents can understand the problem with this kind of communication and avoid it.

Parents have to tell their children how they are progressing. It is important to choose hopeful words even if more progress is needed.

For example, a mother has told her four-year-old to use a tissue instead of her sleeve many times. A hopeful way to remind her is, “I've told you to use a tissue and you are not using it again. You can remember if you try.”

Positive communication gives us the chance to show our caring and respect for children.

It gives us the chance to teach them courteous and creative language as well. □

## Children need time to learn how to fit in and get along

A preschooler is usually full of talk and willing to be friends with other children. But in new or different social situations, even the most outgoing child may suddenly turn anxious, fearful, and clingy.

Parents sometimes expect social skills for their children that they do not expect of adults!

Pushing a child forward and insisting that he make a place for himself in a group of strangers who are already playing is an example.

We forget the sinking feeling that we have when we find ourselves all alone in a group of strangers. In fact, most of us avoid the situation by saying, "If I have to go alone, I won't go at all!" Yet we expect a socially in-

experienced child to feel comfortable under the same circumstances.

It takes time and experience to share toys comfortably, to take turns, to role-play, and to play together in a group. Parents can help by supporting and reassuring children as they strike out into the world. □



## Encouraging responsibility

How can you encourage a child to assume responsibility?

- Let him do things for himself whenever possible.
- Expect him to take responsibilities around the house, as he is able.
- Try to learn to accept his less-than-perfect job rather than doing it yourself because it's easier and faster.
- Enlist his help whenever you're doing something he could assist with.
- When you ask him to learn a new job, break it down into small steps at which he can be successful while he's learning.
- Try to be patient and try not to push him beyond his present capabilities. But do give him the chance to learn to do for himself.
- Follow the dictum: "Give me a fish and I eat for a day. Teach me to fish, and I eat for a lifetime." □

## Healthy cookies

Try these modifications for home-made cookies:

- Skimp on the sugar — use up to ½ cup less.
- Eliminate the salt entirely.
- Use half white flour and half whole-wheat flour.
- Add whatever healthful things you can get away with: wheat germ, bran, raisins, and powdered milk. □

### Read it free!

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

To receive your free issues, go to: [www.GrowingChild.com/FreeGrandmaSays](http://www.GrowingChild.com/FreeGrandmaSays) and enter your e-mail address.

## Growing Together

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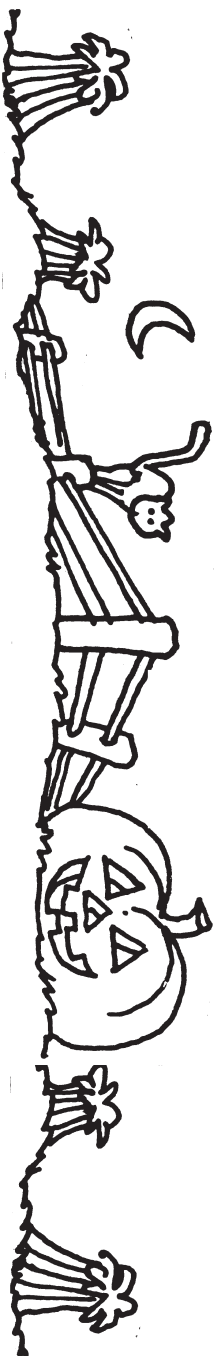
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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns "he" and "she" are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

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# October 2011

Sunday      Monday      Tuesday      Wednesday      Thursday      Friday      Saturday



<p>2 <i>Dress up for dinner!</i></p>	<p>3 Count the potatoes in your kitchen.</p>	<p>4 Play peek-a-boo with the baby with a scarf.</p>	<p>5 Ask Mom or Dad for a special chore to do today.</p>	<p>6 At breakfast, talk about what you plan to do today.</p>	<p>7 Which job would you rather have and why? • zoo keeper • farmer • candy maker • pilot • artist</p>	<p>1 Can you name the days of the week?</p>
<p>9 Everyone take a nap after lunch.</p> 	<p>10 Columbus Day</p> <p>1 2 3 4</p>	<p>11 Play "Guess Who I Am?" using animal sounds.</p>	<p>12 Find 9 words that start with P in the newspaper. <i>potato</i> <i>primary</i> <i>price</i></p>	<p>13 Sukkot</p>	<p>14 Put several toys in a bag. Pull them out one at a time. Can you tell what they are before you see them?</p>	<p>15 Empty wastebaskets.</p>
<p>16 Make a fruit salad for lunch using three different fruits.</p>	<p>17 Draw a rainbow. Find out what colors make up a "real" rainbow. Have you ever seen one?</p>	<p>18 What is the weather like today? Go outside and talk about it. What words would you use to describe it?</p>	<p>19 Play with some building blocks.</p>	<p>20 Talk about what things can be recycled.</p>	<p>21 Have a tic-tac-toe tournament. Invite other contestants. <b>X O X O</b></p>	<p>22 Take a trip to an outdoor market and look at pumpkins, gourds and pretty colored corn.</p>
<p>23 Practice whistling. (A lost art.) Take a walk and look for birds.</p>	<p>24 United Nations Day Halloween</p>	<p>25 Count the doors in your house. </p>	<p>26 Bring home a bird book from the library. See if you can identify the birds in your area.</p>	<p>27 What is your favorite beverage to drink?</p>	<p>28 Make a line with a piece of string. Try to walk it.</p>	<p>29 List all the uses you can think of for a broom.</p>
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