



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

Quiet activities

Want to spend some quiet, quality time with your child? Here's a short list of things to do that cost next to nothing.

- Prepare a small picnic lunch and eat it together, anyplace in or out of the house, anyplace except the kitchen or dining room. (Perhaps a picnic table at a nearby park.)
- Both of you make a clay figure of a make-believe animal.
- Look through a magazine and count the number of dogs (or cats or bugs) you can find.
- Play "I wish I was" and explain why. ("I wish I was a kangaroo because then I could jump around a lot.")
- Teach your child a song from your childhood or a folk tune like "Home on the Range."
- Draw a picture of each other.
- Color together in a coloring book.
- Share a popsicle. ☐

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Social Skills

Learning kindness

Children don't learn kindness by accident. They learn it by the teaching they receive, the way they see others interact, and by practicing gentle treatment of others.

Teaching children to think of others takes very little effort. There are plenty of opportunities in an average day to instruct youngsters how to be nice.

For example, while waiting in line at the post office, you can explain that you wait your turn because others are in front of you. And others are waiting behind you for their turn.

You can teach children how to answer politely when someone asks them a question. You can even pose quizzes for them when situations arise: What would be helpful for that man on crutches?

The first and often most challenging place to teach children to be kind is at home. Daily interactions with siblings can be used as learning situations.

Encourage little ones to express anger in ways that don't hurt anyone, and to find solutions to problems that are fair to everyone.

Although family members will always have times of disagree-

ment, they can begin to think of how other people feel.

Kids who are raised in an "anything goes" atmosphere cannot be expected to know how to play nicely with other children.

Even more powerful than teaching is modeling. If you are rude to others, your children will quickly learn to be discourteous also. If you yell at sales people because you aren't waited on promptly, or mutter obscenities at fellow drivers, your children will notice and perhaps be more likely to treat others with contempt.

Young people treat others the way they are treated. How many times do we thank toddlers for helping, or ask that they walk a little faster instead of demanding it?

Children need to be listened to and taken seriously, even if their ideas at times seem a bit trivial to us. By respecting children's point of view and really listening to what they have to say, we help them learn how to react to others.

When youngsters are treated with love and respect in the home, they will be much more likely to be kind to friends away from home. ☐

Children love to pretend

An important form of play in early childhood is sometimes called fantasy or pretend play. This type of play usually involves imaginary roles for the child as well as imaginary companions.

By three years of age, children want to try out many different roles experienced in the real world: father, mother, doctor, nurse, police officer, teacher or fire fighter.

A child may use pretend play to assume the role of some superhero or favorite character he has seen on television. Or maybe he makes up his own character.

Sometimes a child may reenact a previous experience, positive or negative, that he changes

to suit his own purpose. For example, if he was frightened by some monster on television, he might later change the part to a kind monster for the story to



have a happy ending.

Preschool children frequently create imaginary companions in their play. At this age, it is perfectly normal to have make-believe friends.

Usually by the time a child goes to school, his interests will shift from imaginary to realistic activities.

Imaginary companions are useful for several reasons. They provide comfort and support for the young child when needed since they always behave as the child wants.

For example, when a young child has to deal with the conflict between the need for being cared for and the need to be independent, it's possible for him to be both a baby and a baby doll's caregiver.

Imaginary companions can also serve as useful scapegoats that can be blamed and corrected as needed (for having soiled pants, for example).

It doesn't help to tell a preschooler that his imaginary companions don't exist. They enable him to experience his own developing sense of self. And he does this in the safe environment of imaginary friends over whom he can exercise control.

In this safe pretend world, a young child will often display strong expressions of emotion. This provides both a release of tension and a means to explore a whole new world of feelings. □

Parenting

Praise shows you care

One way to foster better parenting skills is to praise more than you criticize. Praise a job well done, but don't dole out "false" praise.

If, for example, your son is struggling to become an average tee-ball player, don't praise him by saying, "You're such a great ball player," just to make him feel good.

Instead say, "Your batting has really improved" or "You did a good job." Be specific and fair in your praise. Kids are pretty good at knowing where they stand, and they appreciate an honest appraisal.

Praise developmental milestones and academics, but don't forget to praise attitudes as well. You reinforce good behavior when you tell your daughter, "That was very nice of you to share with Molly."

The behavior that gets rewarded gets repeated—so make sure you're praising the positive behaviors you want to see more of. □

Two types of discipline

Parents frequently ask, “When do I start disciplining?” or “How should I discipline?”

You start disciplining a child as soon as she can understand *what* you are doing and can learn *why* you are doing it. This occurs usually about 18 months, although some children may be nearer two years of age before discipline can become effective.

One type of discipline involves changing behavior that is undesirable. Just be sure that the behavior is bad enough to justify disciplining.

An example would be if your child ran into a busy street. Since being hit by a car can have serious consequences, this type of behavior has to be stopped.

How parents discipline a child for undesirable behavior may vary a great deal. Some children have very sensitive feelings and respond to a simple “no-no.” For others a loss of some privilege may be more appropriate.

Remember, however, the punishment should fit the crime. Don't

use your most forceful methods for minor misbehavior such as sibling rivalry or not sharing toys. Save it for the really serious problems. Otherwise it won't work when you really need it.

A second type of discipline is a little more difficult to teach. It involves training your child to control behavior in order to reach a certain goal. That goal might be mastery of a skill, success in sports, arts, or a craft.

The attainment of any of these goals requires discipline. Sometimes a very talented child may not have the discipline to train for the thing she desires. At the same time, a less talented child may reach a desired goal because she has learned how to discipline herself.

Self-discipline becomes even more important when a child becomes a young adult. It is the disciplined teen-ager who can get good grades in school, and can successfully resist the attractions of drugs, skipping school, and other forms of juvenile delinquency.

How do you teach this second form of discipline? It is best to start as early as with the first type. Encourage your child not to give up on a task just because it is hard or long.

Show her that practice and hard work pay off with increased rewards. These rewards need to be very tangible at first, such as praise, a favorite treat, or extra allowance. Later the satisfaction of “doing well” will be its own reward.

So, remember both types of discipline. The first type keeps your child out of trouble. The second type teaches him how to live successfully. Both are very important, and both require your active involvement as a parent. □

Notable Quote

Toddler's Creed

If I want it, it's mine.
If I give it to you and change my mind later, it's mine.
If I can take it away from you, it's mine.
If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
If it's mine, it will never belong to anybody else, no matter what.
If we are building something together, all the pieces are mine.
If it looks just like mine, it is mine. □

From Ann Landers

Something New!

“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 and enter your e-mail address.

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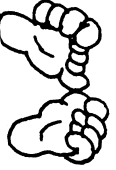




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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns “he” and “she” are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>6</p> <p>Name your aunts, uncles and cousins.</p> <p>Aunt Mary Uncle Calvin Cousin Sam</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Have a "conversation" with the baby. Repeat every sound she makes.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>How softly can you speak?</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Look at the bottom of your feet.</p> 	<p>10</p> <p>What are earmuffs for? Do you need some today?</p>	<p>11</p> <p>When you put your toys away, sort them by color. Red ones here, blue ones there.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Go to a bookstore and look at cookbooks for kids.</p>
<p>13</p> <p>Find four things in your house that are soft.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>How many days until your birthday?</p> <p>3</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Share some quiet time. Rock the baby and sing a gentle song.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Find four things that come in pairs.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Play with a toy that makes noise.</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Help sort socks, match them up, and put them away.</p> 	<p>19</p> <p>Go to the park. Count the steps on the slide. Take a ride on the swings.</p>
<p>20</p> <p>At bedtime, talk about your favorite parts of this day.</p> 	<p>21</p> <p>Trade chairs for dinner.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Play an echo game by clapping different patterns.</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>Count your toes. How many are on your left foot? How many are on your right foot? How many are there all together?</p>	<p>24</p> <p>How many times can you bounce a ball without stopping?</p> 	<p>25</p> <p>Go to the library and look for a book about summer.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Play musical chairs.</p>
<p>27</p> <p>Invite a friend for dinner.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Put the baby on her stomach and gently help her turn around in a circle.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Gather some rocks and line them up by size, starting with little and going to big.</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Show the baby how a stuffed toy can dance and sing.</p>	<p>31</p> <p>Try to form letter shapes with your body. Adults try it, too.</p>	