



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Science & Nature

Environmental pick-up

The next time your family is ready to take a walk, take along a litterbag.

As you stroll along, keep an eye out for litter and trash and pick it up. (It's not a bad idea to wear some gloves for safety.)

This gives you a good opportunity to talk about our planet and what we can do as individuals to help preserve nature's resources.

Talk about the positive examples you see as you walk, such as containers for trash or recycling, as well as problems that need to be addressed such as litter and pollution.

Children who grow up aware and respectful of their world are in a much better position to help in its preservation. □



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Social Skills

Helping brothers and sisters learn to help each other

Parents can help brothers and sisters learn to help each other by providing them with opportunities to cooperate in activities or daily routines.

For example:

- At the supermarket, one child (sitting in the cart or walking) can locate an item and the other child can get it.
- An older child can help a younger one use the toilet when he or she is ready.
- An older child can make simple toys for the baby, such as a touch-and-feel book or a stuffed mitten "reach and grab" toy.
- An older child can teach the younger one a favorite song or fingerplay.

Be sure to notice and compliment your children any time you see them working and playing together cooperatively: "Tommy, thank you for helping Michelle get dressed. You're really a help!"

Or "Ann and Angie, I'm so glad to see you're enjoying playing dress-up together." □

Games & Activities

Snake tag

Here's a simple game to play outside when the weather is nice and there are several children on hand to participate.

First, select one person to be "it." The rest of the players are divided into groups of at least three.

One person is the head, another is the middle, and the third person is the tail of the snake.

More children can be added to the middle of the snake if there is an uneven number of players.

To make the snake, children hold onto each other at the waist.

When the game starts, the person who is "it" chases the snakes and tries to hold on to a snake tail, the last person.

When "it" manages to hold onto a tail, he or she calls out "snake!"

Then the head of the snake becomes "it," and the middle moves up to become the new head.

Players will quickly learn how to maneuver, twist, and turn to avoid the person who is "it." □

Four words to discipline

Dozens of books have been written on the subject of discipline, but perhaps the best guidance comes from four words from Dr. Grace Mitchell, author of "A Very Practical Guide to Discipline for Young Children" (Telshare, 1998). The words rhyme for easy recall: anticipate, hesitate, investigate, and communicate.

ANTICIPATE

After all, we are bigger and smarter than children are. Anticipate reminds us to look ahead, to prevent problems from happening.

Parents anticipate when they baby-proof the house to avoid collisions of will.

They anticipate when they realize that waiting at the restaurant will be hard for the two-year-old, and bring some paper and crayons to occupy the time.

They anticipate when they provide extra rest and comforting quiet time for the child under stress who is beginning a new school experience.

Anticipation also means recognizing how individual children might react in particular situations. Parents know that one child will need more time to adjust to transitions than another.

They anticipate when they realize that a visit to the dentist's office will be frightening for the preschooler, and they explain the visit carefully beforehand.

They realize that adjusting to a new sibling may mean that an older child will need special attention from a parent.

They help children remember

ground rules for behavior before visitors arrive.

Anticipation allows parents to head off many difficulties, rather than simply standing by to fix things after disaster occurs.

HESITATE

Parents are most effective in guidance when they spend time calming themselves emotionally and thinking about how best to teach lessons. Discipline is not about just showing children how upset we are by their mistakes, but rather about considering what each situation allows us to teach.



Rather than reacting swiftly and later regretting hasty actions, parents who hesitate give themselves permission to think first.

"I'm pretty upset right now that the dog got hurt," says Mom to the toddler who pulled the dog's tail. "We need to sit down over here while we think about how to help Dewey feel better."

A calmer head will find better teaching methods to help the toddler learn gentle actions than an impulsive smack on the hand.

INVESTIGATE

There are always reasons for

children's behavior, whether or not we are wise enough to discern them. Children may behave in undesirable ways because of developmental limitations. For example, toddler temper tantrums are unattractive but effective ways of expressing emotion when one has limited vocabulary or self control.

Children make mistakes because they have not been taught better behaviors. They may be out of bounds when stress builds up in their lives, or needs for attention and security are not met.

When parents figure out reasons for behavior, they can find appropriate responses. One-size-fits-all discipline methods, such as time out for every offense, fail to respond to particular needs or situations.

The behavior of the three-year-old who is testing limits after all the attention has been given to the new baby might benefit far more from some one-on-one time with Mom than being sent again to his room.

COMMUNICATE

Good discipline is about helping children see the sense in acting in a particular way. Clear, specific communication geared to the young child's level of understanding is needed for children to learn why some behaviors are better than others. "Ouch, that hurts Dewey," says Mom to the toddler. "Pat instead," as she demonstrates gentleness.

Anticipate, hesitate, investigate, and communicate—four words to consider for effective discipline for young children. □

Expressing feelings

How can you let your child know you genuinely understand her feelings?

One method is to put your child's feelings into words and reflect them back to her, like a mirror.

Sometimes it's easier with a small child, whenever you can, to use her own words. For example, your child comes to you crying because an older sibling hit her. A typical response is to call a conference and conduct an interrogation: "Now, tell me, who started it?"

However, with the approach of reflecting feelings, a parent can avoid the role of police officer or referee by saying, with more understanding: "You're crying and you're angry because your sister hit you."

What you have done is put her feelings into words and reflected them back to her. When you do this, she knows that not only do you know what happened, you understand how she feels.

This is particularly important for the child who doesn't yet talk well enough or who doesn't have enough vocabulary to say what she feels.

When you say the words for her, she is reassured that you understand her and her feelings.

This not only helps your child get rid of her negative feelings, she also learns how to express her feelings in an appropriate manner and eventually, how to control the negative actions that sometimes may accompany her feelings. □

Tips for countering parent burnout

The qualities of sensitivity, commitment, enthusiasm, and compassion that most good parents possess also make them more likely to burn out. Here are some steps to help you avoid the burn-out trap.

- Distance yourself from the role of parent sometimes.

It is impossible to remain fresh and responsible as a parent unless you periodically take a break from the job. You need time alone, and you need time alone with your spouse.

Your two-year-old will not be traumatized if you leave her in the spa nursery for an hour while you swim laps.



The six-month-old infant, given a bottle and a loving sitter, will not mind when you and your friend go out for Chinese food.

- Care for yourself physically. Burnout is both a physical and emotional illness. One obvious suggestion is to get enough sleep. But what about the more subtle elements that may be wearing you down?

How much caffeine are you taking in? What about cigarettes?

Prescription and non-prescription medications? Excessive dieting? Diet pills?

- Talk to other parents. Talk to older parents and find out how they survived tough times.

Talk to parents who are your own age, (or who have children the same age as yours) and you'll find that most everyone has the same problems.

Becoming a parent makes you part of a unique group of highly stressed, emotionally needy individuals. Talk is cheap. Yet it can bring you the richest rewards in terms of relief, rejuvenation, and redirection. □

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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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>1</p> <p>Draw a line on the sidewalk and practice jumping over it.</p> 	<p>2</p> <p>Help water plants, grass, shrubs, bushes, and trees outside.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Learn how to shake hands.</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>How many times can you touch your toes?</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Play "Follow the Leader."</p> 	<p>6</p> <p>Which one is: Your right hand? Your left hand? Your right foot? Your left foot?</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Lay objects on a piece of paper (such as a small ruler) and trace around them.</p>
<p>8</p> <p>Eat dinner outside.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Shavuot</p>	<p>10</p> <p>What is your favorite color? Can you find five things that are that color?</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Take a nap together.</p> 	<p>12</p> <p>Count all the windows in your home. How many?</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Play with clay or play dough.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Flag Day</p> 
<p>15</p> <p>Father's Day. Make Dad or Grandpa a card.</p> 	<p>16</p> <p>Circle all the 5's on this page. How many did you find?</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Are there any dandelions in your yard? What color are they?</p>	<p>18</p> <p>A styrofoam® tray can be a boat in the bathtub.</p> 	<p>19</p> <p>Can you think of words that rhyme with your name?</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Sing a song everyone knows. Sing it again.</p> 	<p>21</p> <p>Play outside with a water hose. (Adult supervision recommended!)</p>
<p>22</p> <p>No TV today. Enjoy family activities together.</p> <p>Singing Finger painting Board games Hiking</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Go camping in the backyard.</p> 	<p>24</p> <p>Warm bagels are comforting for babies getting new teeth. Or older folks with older teeth.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Play with a flashlight. Use the words on, off, light and dark.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Wear something purple today.</p> 	<p>27</p> <p>Take the baby for a ride in the stroller.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Take in an outdoor concert or festival for kids.</p> 
<p>29</p> <p>Have a tea party!</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Count hot pads in the kitchen.</p>	