



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

## Where's that clock?

Here's a bit of fun that also helps children learn how to solve problems by listening carefully.

First, set the alarm of an old alarm clock to just a few minutes from now. Then have all the players close their eyes while you hide the clock (a kitchen timer will work also).

Start out with some place fairly easy like behind a sofa pillow, under a chair, or in a closet.

Next, everybody waits—and when the alarm goes off, all players try to find it.

When someone finds it, show her or him how to turn it off so she or he can do it the next time. Now it's someone else's turn to hide the clock.

Difficulty can be adjusted by making the hiding places easier or harder, depending on the players' ages.

You might be surprised at how clever kids can be at finding new and ever more difficult hiding places! □

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Parenting

## Handling anger

How do you handle your anger? Everyone is born with the capacity to feel anger. Our culture may tell us that decent people don't display their anger.

Consequently we work hard to conceal our feelings. But we can't conceal the bodily changes that occur: blood pressure rises; heartbeat increases; blood vessels expand; and the result is a massive explosion of energy!

How we handle that explosion is often related to how we were raised by our parents. Some families practice physical punishment. Other families tend toward verbal punishment such as name-calling or sarcasm.

Still other families suppress and repress their anger. It is still there, however, in the form of headaches, asthma attacks, itching, or perhaps insomnia.

What is the best way to deal with one's anger?

(1) Acknowledge that anger exists. It is a human characteristic. It's all right to be angry with your child and your child can be angry with you.

(2) Agree that it is not acceptable behavior to injure someone as a result of anger. Anger is an emotion. Aggression is not an emotion. It is

an action.

(3) Talk about the anger. It's okay to admit how angry you are. Tell your child, "I'm angry when I see those crayon marks on the wall. I have to clean up that mess." Or, "I know it makes you angry when I have to do this," as you deprive the child of a treat.

(4) Emphasize your own feelings rather than attacking your child. To do this, use statements that begin with the words: "I feel as if ..." or "I feel upset when ..." Don't use words that attack and hurt someone such as, "You always ..." or "You never ..." or "You are a ..."

(5) Avoid anger-producing situations. Sometimes we ask questions that we should know will produce the opposite of our wishes, such as, "Do you want to go to bed now?"

We could anticipate that the answer would be "No! So, to avoid getting angry with our child's negativism, we could use a statement ("It's time to go to bed.) instead of a question.

(6) Seek strategies cooperatively. Encourage your child to generate ideas to solve a problem.

If he or she is involved in developing the solutions to a problem, the solution will more likely be successful. □

## Let's use the library

Most public libraries offer a wide variety of children's books and magazines with many in Spanish and other languages.

Libraries also often lend audiotapes, CDs, and DVDs of children's books and movies. And most libraries now make computers available to the public. Many libraries sponsor special programs, including story hours, summer reading programs, and homework help.

If your child has special needs, be sure to ask about services the library offers for the blind, the deaf, those who are gifted or need remedial help.

Many libraries have specially trained librarians for children. Feel free to ask them for help.

Here are some things you can do to introduce your child to the library:

- Include children—even toddlers—in trips to the library, and go

often.

- As soon as you can, help your child get a library card.

- Borrow recordings of children's stories and songs, cassette tapes, compact discs, videotapes, even puppets and educational toys, if available.

- Find out if your library has computers dedicated to children and how your children can use them to learn or upgrade skills.

- Encourage your children to use the library to find picture books for the youngest ones and information for the older ones' homework.

- Work with the librarian to teach older children how to find things in the library on their own.

- Teach your children how to take care of themselves in public places, especially if they might eventually use the library alone. Stress common sense guidelines for behavior in the library. □

## Developmental

### Praise for the accomplishments of children

A child needs to feel that the significant people in her life notice what she does and are proud of her accomplishments. This message can be given by a hug as well as with words.

A baby's first step, the creation of a pretty picture, or blocks stacked into a tall tower are obvious times for praise.

Less obvious times are good too—for example, when a messy child shows the slightest sign of neatness. Or when she has completed a task without being asked to do it.

It doesn't matter how the accomplishment stacks up in relation to other children. The important thing is that the child accomplished something.

A good rule of thumb is to praise children as often as—or more often than—you correct them. □

## Fairy tales

At one time, parents were advised to avoid reading fairy tales to children because they contain elements of horror. Some educators believe, however, that fairy tales do have a positive effect on young children.

Children from kindergarten age onward who are sheltered from terrors such as those that appear in fairy tales are prevented from learning the strength necessary to cope with them.

Needless to say, some children witness more horrors on television than they encounter in the pages of fairy tales.

Fairy tales also provide a necessary rest from the struggles of dealing with the real world. At around eight years of age, interest in fairy tales peaks.

Fairy tales confirm the child's beliefs about the world:

- The protagonist, or the main character, whom the child identifies with, is the center of the universe.

- The world has magic, and finding the right magic will transform important events.

- A good child conforms to a parent figure's rules. An example is the rule that Snow White is not allowed to let anyone in the house while the dwarfs are at work.

- Adversity or trouble must be confronted but hopefully everything will turn out all right in the end.

- No extenuating circumstances or excuses will save the violator from being punished.

Finally, reading fairy tales and other good literature to children exposes them to a variety of rich language and grammatical patterns which they do not get from television. □

## “Tell me more”

Language is more than the words we use to communicate with one another—it is a shared experience where one person speaks and the other person listens.

Through active listening you can give your child the message that she is important and that what she has to say is important.

First you must listen to what she tells you—about her day; what she had to eat; what didn't work out; what was funny; something new that she learned. Then you can ask her questions that encourage her to tell you more.

Finally you must be patient by waiting for her response to your questions—she may have difficulty finding the words she needs.

We've all had the experience of talking to a poor listener. Just because they're smaller doesn't mean children can be fooled—they know when they are not being heard.

When times are busy, schedules must be met, and there's no time to listen, say so. “I'm sorry, Sally, but we're in a rush right now. Let's remember to talk about this again before bedtime.”

And remember to do it. Shared conversations keep the lines of communications open and active. □

## 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](http://www.GrowingChild.com/FreeGrandmaSays)  
and enter your e-mail address.

## Finger-food safety

Toddlers delight in feeding themselves. However, caution is advised to help prevent food from lodging in small airways.

For children less than three years of age:

- Check baked goods for nuts which are the number one food-related choking hazard for young children.

- Avoid giving hard or difficult-to-chew foods like raw carrots or other crunchy vegetables, hard candy, jelly beans, nuts, and lollipops. Spread thick-and-sticky peanut butter very thinly.

- Modify the shape and texture of firm and round foods. Cook carrots, potatoes and other hard vegetables until soft, then cut into small pieces.

Cut grapes into quarters and hot dogs into lengthwise sticks. Dice meats. Chop apples and firm fruit into very small pieces.

- Keep an eye on small children when they are eating. They might eat in a hurry, stuff too much food in their mouths, or chew their food inadequately.

- Feed small children in a relaxed atmosphere and only while seated. Do not allow children to run and play with food in their mouths or while chewing food.

- Train toddlers to chew food thoroughly before swallowing or trying to speak.

- It is also important for child caretakers and parents, when possible, to receive appropriate emergency training, including how to perform the Heimlich maneuver on children as well as cardiopulmonary resuscitation techniques (CPR). □

## Does your child have an imaginary friend?

If your child has limited access to friends, don't be surprised if he or she creates imaginary companions. This may be a doll, a stuffed animal, or an invisible pal.

Some parents fear they will blur the boundaries between fantasy and reality if they acknowledge or participate with these invisible companions. But these fears are needless.

With few exceptions, preschoolers drop their imaginary pals between the ages of three and a half and four.

If your child creates an invisible friend, listen to the conversation your child carries on with this imaginary companion—it will provide you with valuable information about your child's thoughts and feelings.

Talk to your child's invisible friend as if it's an important member of the family. This can provide playful conversations and help you develop a good friendship with your own child. □

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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](http://www.growingchild.com)

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p> <p>Count the plants in your house. First Day of Ramadan</p>	<p>2</p> <p>What name would you give to a black cat?</p> 	<p>3</p> <p>Print or trace your name.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Send a letter to an elderly friend.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>What color is a green bean? A cucumber? An ear of corn? An apple? A beet? A banana?</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Read or tell a story to the dog.</p> 	<p>7</p> <p>Talk about the television shows and DVDs you watch. What could you do instead of watching TV?</p>
<p>8</p> <p>What flowers are blooming now?</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Go somewhere you've never been before.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>What is your favorite summertime fruit?</p> 	<p>11</p> <p>Can you make a "car" out of a large, cardboard box?</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Take a nap together.</p>	<p>13</p> <p>What was something good about today?</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Attend a local Little League ballgame.</p> 
<p>15</p> <p>Go to the park. Count the steps on the slide. Take a ride on the swings.</p> 	<p>16</p> <p>Look outside after dark. Are there fireflies blinking?</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Close your eyes and try to identify the sounds you hear.</p>	<p>18</p> <p>What is the biggest object you can think of?</p>	<p>19</p> <p>How much do you weigh?</p> 	<p>20</p> <p>Invite a friend over to play.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Help dust a room in the house.</p>
<p>22</p> <p>What is your favorite pie?</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Count your toes. How many? _____ How many thumbs do you have? _____</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Can you crawl backwards?</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Trace (safe) objects from kitchen drawers: lids, spoons, plastic cups and bowls.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>What is a porcupine? Look it up.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Tell a story that makes you laugh..</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Get up early and watch the sun come up!</p> 
<p>29</p> <p>What is an eggplant? What color is it?</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Look at photos of yourself and your family.</p> 	<p>31</p> <p>Make some lemonade to drink.</p>	