



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

“Nothing to do ... ”

Here are some simple activities for those times when “there’s nothing to do.”

- Give each person a large piece of paper and some crayons. Sit in a circle. Draw a picture of the person sitting across from you. Then take a vote to see which drawing is the most realistic.

- Locate a trashcan or wastebasket. Crumple up some paper into balls. Take turns tossing the balls into the container. Start up close for the younger players and move farther away to make the task more difficult for older children.

- Using paper (folded in half twice) and scissors, show kids how to cut out “snowflakes.”

- Adults and children play a favorite board game together. Afterwards, enjoy a simple snack of fruit and crackers.

- For a creative evening, turn off the television set. Read a classic book together; play tic-tac-toe; make oatmeal cookies; play Bingo or make a block city. □

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Parenting

Reducing stress

Life is filled with many opportunities to become stressed out. But there doesn't seem to be as many chances for peaceful, serene moments.

The phone won't stop ringing; an appointment is missed; traffic is horrible; a child is sick.

Yet there are ways to take action and develop strategies for building a little serenity into our lives.

- **Review your thoughts.** Carefully consider your mental attitude. The mind is like a garden. Good thoughts produce good fruit. Bad thoughts produce bad fruit.

Review your thinking to be certain that the focus is upon hope and triumph, not despair and defeat. Often a shift in thinking can open the door to serenity.

- **Use music to soothe and relax.** Today there is scientific evidence that music can soothe frayed nerves. Studies show that music can lower blood pressure, metabolism, and respiration rates. This in turn lessens physical responses to stress.

To increase peaceful times in your life, think about the music that you truly enjoy and find calming. Then make it a point to listen to that music during times of high stress.

- **Don't expect perfection from yourself.** Some people are their own worst enemy. They simply cannot forgive themselves if they miss an

opportunity, commit an error of judgment, lose a job, or damage a relationship.

Remind yourself that being human means making mistakes. If you do make a mistake, forgive yourself and take the necessary steps to reclaim your life.

- **Live life one day at a time.** Many people are deprived of peace of mind because they live with anxiety over the past and fear of the future. The way to eliminate such anxiety and fear is to take one step after another and live one day at a time.

- **Take a mini-break.** Life must never be reduced to movement from one appointment to another and from task to task. The daily grind of life should be broken by doing something different and pleasant periodically.

Some suggestions include going for a bike ride on a quiet road; playing a favorite childhood game, or visiting a local tourist site.

- **Eliminate the negative.** Simply begin by eliminating some of life's irritations and frustrations. Study your environment and see what can be improved.

Finally, try to look at life philosophically. Remember that some parts of life can be managed, controlled and shaped while others cannot be. Serenity is always found in the lives of people who know the difference. □

Memos from your child

This little gem has been around for a while. I know it circulated among my friends when I was a young mother.

I have no source to attribute the author's credit, but the clear messages are as timely today as they were a generation ago.

Don't spoil me. I know quite well I shouldn't have all I ask for. I'm only testing you.

Don't be afraid to be firm with me. I prefer it; it makes me feel secure.

Don't let me form bad habits. I have to rely on you to detect them in the early stages.

Don't make me feel smaller than I am. It only makes me behave stupidly "big."

Don't correct me in front of people if you can help it. I'll take much more notice if you talk quietly in private.

Don't protect me from consequences. I need to learn the painful way sometime.

Don't make me feel my mistakes are sins. It upsets my sense of values.

Don't be too upset when I say, "I hate you." It isn't you I hate, but your power to thwart me.

Don't take too much notice of my small ailments. Sometimes they get the attention I need.

Don't nag. If you do, I'll have to protect myself by appearing deaf.

Don't make rash promises. I feel badly let down when promises are broken.

Don't forget that I can't explain myself as well as I'd like. This is why I'm not always very accurate.

Don't tax my honesty too much. I am easily frightened into telling lies.

Don't be inconsistent. It completely confuses me and makes me lose my faith in you.

Don't put me off when I ask questions. If you do, you'll find I stop asking and seek information elsewhere.

Don't tell me my fears are silly. They're terribly real.

Don't ever suggest that you're perfect or infallible. It gives me too great a shock when I find out you're neither.

Don't ever think it's beneath your dignity to apologize to me. An honest apology makes me surprisingly warm toward you.

Don't forget I love experimenting. I can't get on without it, so please put up with it.

Don't forget how quickly I'm growing up. It must be hard to keep pace with me, but please try.

When you read this carefully, you realize the important truths that lie behind each reminder.

Pass it along to your friends who are parents. Post it up on your bathroom mirror for helpful support when the days with your preschoolers seem too much.

Children would tell us these things, if they could only articulate them. □

Learning to be fair

On the first day of school, 15-month-old Elizabeth's father sat down with her older brother to help him unwrap and sort his new school supplies.

Though she'd been settled at a nearby table with her own new crayons and a coloring book, she quickly abandoned them for her brother's more intriguing loot (and Daddy's attention).

After removing item after item from her inquisitive hands, her father finally put Elizabeth, her crayons and coloring book in her high chair.

Within seconds, she dissolved into hysteria, screaming, kicking and flinging her new things to the floor. She wanted what her brother had!

Elizabeth's father could have:

(a) Given in and turned her loose among her brother's new things.

(b) Handed her one of her brother's new notebooks and markers to scribble with, or

(c) Explained again that the school supplies were her brother's, but she could play with the empty packages.

Young children have to grasp the concept of me/mine before they can understand you/yours.

It's unrealistic to expect a toddler to willingly share a toy much less relinquish the spotlight and attentions of those around her to an older brother or sister. This will develop over time as she develops into a social being.

Eventually she'll be able to see situations from a point of view other than her own and even begin to take other's feelings into account as she starts to understand what fairness is all about.

Until that time, however, continual parental guidance will be needed for there's bound to be rough sailing each time it's not her turn for a treat! □

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 it 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 can be avoided if appropriate preventive measures are taken.

For example, if you anticipate unacceptable behavior from your child while shopping in the grocery store, be sure to talk with her about **what is acceptable behavior** before you leave for the store.

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

For example, at the grocery store it is not acceptable to run in the aisles or grab food containers from the shelves.

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.

If it is unacceptable behavior to run and shout in the grocery store aisles today, it is also unacceptable next Tuesday. □

Explorer in diapers

Once a baby begins to creep, a whole new world of space exploration is open to her.

A baby is increasingly curious about everything she sees, hears, or touches. This curiosity is a precious thing. It leads Baby on exciting trips of discovery across the floor, behind chairs, under tables.

Sometimes her curiosity leads her into the dead end or corner or perhaps behind a door. What to do now?

Perhaps Baby has never crept backward before except by accident. Now she must shift into reverse to solve this problem.

If she has not been creeping long, she may not be able to do this easily. She may just keep trying to push her way ahead until she becomes frustrated and begins to cry.

If this should happen, of course you would go to her rescue—but make this a learning experience for her. Comfort her with your voice and hand. Gently coax her backward until she is free. Then praise her for her bravery and her learning.

A playpen makes a fine protected area for play. But if a baby is frequently confined to her playpen, she will soon lose some of her wonderful curiosity. The restricted space will not give her enough room to perfect her creeping and to learn the many things about herself that creeping will teach her.

Unless Baby can experience the various distances between objects, she will be slower to learn about judging distance and time. These early lessons form part of the solid foundation for later learning at school.

If Baby is to explore safely, you must take a good look around your house, at low cabinets and drawers,

at the tops of low tables and at any containers, which may be standing on the floor.

Remove all cleaning materials from lower and under-counter kitchen cabinets (and in the bathroom). That means soaps, detergents, window or oven cleaner, cleansers, furniture polish, disinfectants, floor wax, bug spray, sink and bath cleaners—anything that Baby might break, pour over herself, put in her mouth, or swallow.

Replace these items with safe, unbreakable objects such as pots, pans, pie tins, lids, plastic bowls and the like.

Now, if Baby pulls open a cabinet door, she can explore and learn in safety. □

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.

Growing Together

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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

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
<p>1</p> <p>New Year's Day</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Build a snowman. Give it a name.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Use a soft brush to brush baby's hair</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Show the baby how to touch her finger to her nose.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Look out the window. Can you see any icicles? What are icicles made of? How do they get that way?</p>	<p>6</p> <p>At breakfast, talk about what you plan to do today.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Practice threading pieces of pasta on red yarn or thread.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Go through a magazine and look for circles. How many can you find?</p>
<p>9</p> <p>How many marshmallows can you stack up?</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Play "What am I?" and the category is animals.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Give Toddler his or her own box of tissues to encourage "nose-wiping." Write his or her name on the box</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Play catch with a sponge ball.</p>	<p>13</p> <p>What color is the roof of your house? Go take a look.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Draw four rectangles. Color one red, one yellow, one green and one purple.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Invite someone over for dinner.</p>	
<p>16</p> <p>Go out for lunch.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Martin Luther King Jr. Day</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Yogurt with fruit for a snack.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Practice saying your telephone number.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Look in the refrigerator and count: the number of carrots; the number of eggs; the number of basketballs.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Can you "walk" and "talk" like a duck?</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Is it too cold to play outside? Bundle up and go to a neighborhood park anyway.</p>	
<p>23</p> <p>Drink some orange juice.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>What color is a polar bear? Why?</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Draw a picture of your nose.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Find four circle shapes in the house.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Move an object back and forth for Youngster to follow with her eyes.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Find four BIG things and four LITTLE things in your house.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Teach Youngster how to call 911 in an emergency.</p>	
<p>30</p> <p>Take a walk and look for birds.</p>	<p>31</p> <p>Play stare-down. See who laughs first!</p>						