



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Art

An easy collage that's easy to make

Here's an opportunity for a child to be creative; to organize a variety of different colors, surfaces, shapes, textures and substances into an attractive wall hanging.

What to use: All kinds of discards such as scraps of ribbon, braid, tape, string, feathers, felt, fabrics, lace, old jewelry, buttons, sequins, glitter, beans, nuts, bolts; a large piece of cardboard for background; glue.

All the pieces can be glued onto the cardboard and then shellacked for strength or covered with a sheet of plastic for security. Add a regular picture hook to hang the creation.

An added benefit: Each collage is unique. There's no "wrong" way to put it together. □

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Academics

Learning about the relationship between volume and quantity

How many times have you chosen a container for leftovers only to find that it's the wrong size?

This is just one practical application of an important mathematical concept: The relationship between the capacity of a container or a space (volume), and the number or amount that will fill that container or space (quantity).

Estimating what containers will hold is a skill that requires practice. You can help your youngster develop this skill using items you have around the house.

1. Give your child several different shaped containers which hold the same amount, such as a pan, a jar, and a plastic container which each hold a quart. Ask the child which one will hold more.

Then give her some macaroni, dried beans or similar material to fill one of the containers. Ask her what she thinks will happen when she puts the contents into one of the other containers. Let her try it.

2. Encourage your child to repeat this game of filling, dumping and comparing, using different materials and different sized and shaped containers.



Try sand or water in clear containers so she can see how far an amount that fills a short, wide container will go in tall, thin one.

3. Let your child help with jobs that require estimation of how much will fit in a particular space: choosing a container for left-overs; putting cans away in a small amount of shelf space; finding the right sized box to hold a gift for someone.

Don't expect the "right answer," even when the evidence is right before her eyes. She needs both practice and maturation before she'll fully understand the relationship between volume and quantity. □

Special Time encourages language skills

A child's major incentive for talking is her need to say something to somebody. And parents can be a real audience, even if the child produces only a few words or short sentences at a time.

It is from these informal experiences that more formal language emerges.

Just being with a child most of the time doesn't mean she has an audience. If one examines the routine of an average home, parents are busy answering the door and telephone, washing clothes and dishes, and making beds and dinner.

What is really needed is a "Special Time" for youngsters, no matter how brief.

This Special Time differs from the rest of the day because it belongs to the child exclusively. She isn't interrupting your work just to get attention—she has your full attention.

It's a good idea to plan for Special Times. How much time is needed? Only fifteen minutes a day. That's about the maximum time that parents and preschoolers can stimulate each other.

Here are some helpful planning ideas:

1. Explain what Special Time is—you both will be together and your child can tell or show you what she wants to do. It is important that you do not dictate the program. Otherwise you will defeat the objective.

When she must tell you what she wants to do, her mind is active—she is formulating and expressing ideas and wishes.

2. Help your child to understand

about Time in general. Set a timer or point to the face of a clock and explain where Special Time begins and ends.

3. On those occasions when it appears that she wants your attention and you're occupied, remind her about the approaching Special Time. If it is a regular habit, she will be content to wait.

4. You may want to set limits on what can or cannot be done during Special Time, especially if your child wants to hear the same book read every day for two weeks.

You can still allow her a choice while setting limits if you tell her honestly, "I'm tired of that book. Let's do something different today."

5. As your child grows older, she will want to talk more—to express her feelings and to know that you are truly listening.

Prepare yourself to be a good audience. This means active listening and avoiding the tendency to sermonize.

Finally, because all good things end too soon, prepare her for the end of Special Time.

She may not have an awareness of what you mean when you say, "five more minutes before we finish." However, continued use of such a reminder will alert her to the fact that it is almost over.

So, in planning Special Time, you are also educating Youngster about time—anticipation of Special Time; the length of time she will have your undivided attention; when it begins and ends; and the reminder about how soon it will be over. □

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 burnout 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 or significant other.

Your two-year-old will not be traumatized if you leave her in the YW/MCA nursery for an hour while you swim laps. A 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 adequate sleep. But what about the more subtle elements in your life that may be wearing you down? How much caffeine are you taking in? What about cigarettes? Prescription and nonprescription drugs? Excessive dieting? Diet pills?

- **Talk to other parents.** Talk to older parents and find out how they survived the tough times with young children. Talk to parents who are your own age, and you'll find that everyone has mostly the same problems. Talk to younger parents and offer your wisdom and encouragement.

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 re-direction. □

The importance of reading aloud

You have likely noticed that every month or so I frame my comments about parenting around the current “Book of the Month.”

I do this for several reasons. One is to make sure you are familiar with some of the fine children’s books to enjoy with your children, including some that are old favorites, as well as newer ones that speak to the joys and challenges of childhood in today’s world.

Another reason is that children’s books present, captured in beautiful language and heartfelt illustration, often in just thirty-two pages, universal truths and values. In fact, when I am working with adults, I often read aloud a children’s book, to present an important point.

But perhaps the greatest reason to acquaint you with these books is to entice you to regularly read aloud to your children. There are so many reasons to read aloud to your children of all ages.

Obviously, it is fun, and a way of building intimacy with your children.

Literacy specialists tell us that reading aloud helps with developing language and all its nuances, with building comprehension, building critical thinking skills, and discovering classic text structures.

Beyond that, there are still more advantages to be gained. Good children’s books offer a strong sense of values and responsibilities.

Helping your child learn about things such as friendship, kindness, patience, and bravery in the context of a story is one way to develop shared values.

Stories have power. We share joys



and sorrows through stories. Books allow you and your children to visit many worlds together, and hear many voices.

Through books, children begin to feel the power of many different stories, and learn that their stories matter too.

Books read aloud bring comfort to children. The world outside can be hard, confusing, and scary, as children navigate through social interactions.

A child’s inner world can contain fears, worries, and other strong emotions, and books provide ways to talk about all of this.

Reading aloud to little children gives us all of this. But reading aloud should not stop with children when they learn to read independently, lest we lose some of these valuable things.

I remember a book that our family read aloud when my boys were school-aged children, a true story about a boy who had been lost on a mountain in Maine.

We marveled at his bravery and self-reliance as he struggled to find his way off the mountain, and rejoiced in his lucky rescue.

It was a wonderful shared experi-

ence, and even now, decades later, they often suggest it as reading material to visitors to our home in Maine, saying, “You really should read this, it’s a great story.” I think some of their memories of the shared experience are linked with that recommendation.

My husband has been reading through a set of children’s illustrated classics with our granddaughters Lila and Rose for several years now, and carrying on lively conversations about their likes and dislikes, and the next one they will select to read. Reading aloud creates a kind of energy, becoming a new adventure that bonds adults and children.

Find a good book, and read it aloud. □

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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Growing Together issues may be reproduced in part or in full by participating organizations.

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>Try walking (slowly and carefully) with a book balanced on top of your head. Who can do it the longest?</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Practice washing and drying hands.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Draw a face on your fingertip. Now you have a finger puppet!</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Donald Duck's birthday! Can you talk like he does? Try it.</p> 	<p>10</p> <p>Does your family have a plan in the event of emergency, such as a fire?</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Draw on a chalkboard.</p> 	<p>12</p> <p>What color is the roof of your house? Go look.</p>
<p>13</p> <p>Draw a picture of grandma or grandpa.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Flag Day.</p> 	<p>15</p> <p>Play with magnets on the refrigerator door. (No small pieces for under-threes.)</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Color with a green crayon.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Donate food to a local food pantry.</p> 	<p>18</p> <p>Do you have a garden hose? Get a tape measure and see how long it is.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Play "Follow the Leader."</p>
<p>20</p> <p>Father's Day.</p> 	<p>21</p> <p>First day of summer!</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Go to the library and look for a book about bugs.</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>What are screen doors for? How many at your house?</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Pudding makes a fun (and edible) fingerpaint.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Take turns kicking a ball across a masking tape line.</p> 
<p>27</p> <p>Find a spider web. Is the spider home? Don't touch!</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Play with a Frisbee™ outside.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Do you have a museum in your community? Check to see if there are special programs for children.</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Talk about what things are hot and what things are cold.</p> 	<p>Do three sit-ups; Four toe-touches; Two jumping-jacks; Relax and count to ten; Then, do it all over again!</p> 