



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Developmental

## Signs of stress

In a stressful situation, youngsters are likely to behave like younger children.

This is true in such simple situations as when a child is overtired or hungry, as well as in more obviously stressful situations such as getting lost or hurting herself. It's something parents should keep in mind in a highly stressful life-event such as a family separation or a death in the family.

In times of stress, a child may begin to behave in ways similar to how she acts when she's not feeling well.

She may be whiny, clingy and demanding. She may be more easily frustrated and upset by little things.

She may tire easily and be generally slowed down from her usual pace.

The stress of the situation drains energy and doesn't leave her enough to cope as well as she usually does.

Understanding this will help parents be more patient and supportive. □



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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 moments. The phone won't stop ringing; an appointment is missed; traffic is horrible and 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. □

## Listening with the third ear

Recently I received a query from a mother who was concerned about the behavior of her middle child.

The child behaved harshly with her younger sister, and complained bitterly about her parents' preference for the oldest sister.

This older sibling seemingly could do no wrong, whereas her own shortcomings were frequently pointed out.

In her e-mail, the mother detailed her problems with the middle child:

She had altered a note of complaint from her teacher, lest she get in trouble with her parents, and was behaving in other "cheating" ways.

The mother wondered if she should be hard or soft on this child.

As an outsider, it is nearly impossible to know what is going on within any family.

There are many possible dynamics that could be at work.

Certainly birth order affects children's personalities and behavior, as diverse environmental dynamics within the family can affect children differently.

Individual temperaments influence how sensitive children are to slights, real or imagined.

Parental preferences, often unconscious, may influence how they relate to individual children.

Not knowing the answers to any of these questions, the only response I can make to any parent is to listen with the third ear.

Our usual two ears hear the words that are actually spoken. But the third ear is the one that allows us to become

sensitive to the unspoken needs and feelings of our children—the unsaid words that often lie behind the actions.

Listening with the third ear would allow this parent to hear more than the child's words that her parents would be mad at her for the teacher's comments, and to hear in addition the idea that she is concerned about her parent's ability to hear her side of the story.

Listening with the third ear would help the parent hear that there are unresolved feelings of jealousy and rivalry with the younger sibling who displaced her as the baby in the family.

Listening with the third ear would help the parent understand that the child in question does not need to hear parental protests that they are being fair to all children and indeed love them just the same, but rather needs to hear that she is loved uniquely, for herself.

Listening with the third ear would help a parent focus less on the immediate problem of cheating or sibling harassment, and focus instead on the cry of the need for attention.

Listening with the third ear is only possible when we leave logic, rationalization, and the need to prove ourselves right as parents out of it, and focus only on the needs and feelings of the other.

In most cases, this kind of listening helps us get to the root of the matter, and helps solve the problems, which are often only manifestations of unmet needs and feelings.

For every parent, listening to the unsaid may be the most important skill we develop.

Learn to listen with your third ear. □

## Shy children

Many parents worry that their children will be shy. You can avoid this by instilling a sense of self-pride in your children.

Recognize each child's individual integrity. Children who receive support when they attempt new things feel confident.

One way to do this is by showing enthusiasm for small accomplishments.

Remembering to turn a television set off when leaving a room is no small task for a preschooler to remember and deserves praise.

Remembering to leave wet boots or shoes on the mat is also worth recognition.

A pleasant smile in the morning from a sleepy child or a meal at which your toddler feeds herself should all be met with a positive comment. This makes a child feel successful.

It's not necessary to force a child into social situations that make him or her uncomfortable.

By all means encourage your child to play with friends and attend parties and get-togethers.

But if they appear reluctant to socialize, try inviting one or two children to your home.

A child who seems to be shy outside his home may flourish on his own turf.

By accepting children as they are, and providing them with comfortable opportunities in which to socialize, parents can provide a foundation from which their children can go into the world with confidence rather than with hesitation. □

## 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.

Although 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:

1. Given in and turned her loose among her brother's new things;
2. Handed her one of her brother's new notebooks and markers to scribble with, or

3. 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 attention 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 a rough sailing each time it's not her turn for a treat!

## Think: Don't react

When we were children, we vowed we'd never treat our children in some of the ways our parents treated us when they got mad.

Now that we are parents, we find ourselves reacting in many of those same ways we vowed we'd not repeat.

Try to remember how you felt when you were small—how easily you could be hurt or frightened by those you depended on for guidance and comfort.

Try to think before reacting to your child. When you do react in a way you think was unfair or overly harsh, let your child know that.

It's helpful for her to see that you, too, can make—and acknowledge—mistakes. It will build her trust in you. And it may make her more considerate of your feelings in the future.

It's not always easy to behave as we want toward our children. No one can be kind, considerate, fair, patient, and respectful all the time.

Try to accept yourself as you are, and do the best you can. Just by trying, you will succeed and your child will learn from your example.

## Health & Safety

### Crossing the street

With warmer weather, kids are out and about more often. Help them learn good safety rules and practice crossing the street safely.

Teach your child to:

1. Cross at the corner.
2. Look left, right, and left again before crossing.
3. Watch in particular for cars that are turning.
4. Stay in the crosswalks.
5. If there is a traffic light, cross only when the facing light is green or when the walk sign is on.
6. Always follow the directions of the crossing guard or safety patrol.

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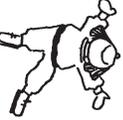
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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns "he" and "she" are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

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

# May, 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<p>1</p> <p>May Day</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Wear something blue today.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Look in a mirror and draw a picture of yourself.</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>Help sort and fold the laundry.</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Cinco de Mayo</p>	
	<p>6</p> <p>Learn some simple words in sign language.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Play with a shape sorter. Say the name of the shape as you drop in it.</p> 	<p>8</p> <p>Where do pickles come from? Look it up.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Skip rope outside.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Eat a snack of cheese and frozen grapes.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Look at an ABC book. Trace the letters with your finger.</p> 
<p>13</p> <p>Mother's Day</p> 	<p>14</p> <p>Pick a dandelion bouquet.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Ramadan begins at sundown.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Eat some fresh fruit.</p> 	<p>17</p> <p>Count all the pillows at your house: big, little, round, and square ones.</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Name four foods you ate today.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Armed Forces Day</p> 
<p>20</p> <p>Put a small ball in a paper cup and play "catch" with someone who also has a paper cup.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Can you build a house with cards?</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Learn to jitterbug!</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>Find four toys that have wheels. Count all the wheels.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Play a naming game with the baby: my nose; your nose; my ear; your ear; my foot; your foot!</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Count ALL of your socks.</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>Have a family sleep-over.</p>
<p>27</p> <p>Sing a lullaby before you go to bed.</p> 	<p>28</p> <p>Memorial Day</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>Go outside and bounce a ball against a wall.</p>	