



## Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

### Social Skills

### Each child is unique

Every child, whether yours or someone else's, deserves to be appreciated for himself or herself. Try not to compare children with each other. They are different people.

Each child has his or her own way of reacting to the things that happen. Each one has a particular rate of growth and his or her own pace of doing things. Each child is drawn to different activities, things, and people.

It's natural to compare the times at which your first and second child (or the neighbor's child) walked, talked or learned toileting.

It's understandable to wonder why your youngest is afraid of the water when your first child learned to swim quite young. But it's important to let each child be himself or herself.

Notice the things that make each child unique and encourage each one to develop his or her own special talents.

Accept children's differences and you will help them to accept themselves and each other. □

### Behavior

### Childhood fears

All children experience fear at one time or another. Experiencing fear is a normal part of growing up.

Fear has many positive qualities. Fear of heights, for example, can help a child avoid accidents. Fear of strange animals provides protection from a possibly dangerous bite.

But fear can also have negative qualities. Irrational fear can prevent a child from gaining valuable experiences.

Fortunately, studies have greatly increased our understanding of children's fears. These studies indicate that children's fears generally differ from one age to another. Furthermore, at each age level there is a certain range within which fears are considered normal.

The most common fears experienced by three- and four-year-olds are fear of the dark, fear of separation from parents, and fear of some animals, such as large dogs.

As children mature, they generally outgrow these specific fears. With increasing age, their fears often become more abstract (such as fear of supernatural or imaginary figures) and more future-oriented (such as fear of failing a test).

Three-year-olds who experience childhood fears that are considered within normal limits can generally be helped by their parents to deal

effectively with those fears. Here are some specific recommendations for parents:

- Treat your child's fears with respect.
- Listen to what your child wants to tell you without being critical of what he says.
- Give your child reassurance of your love and protection, if needed.
- Allow your child to withdraw from the fearful situation for a period of time, if possible.
- Help your child become gradually more accustomed to the fearful situation. (For example, showing him a picture of an animal he fears.)
- Be aware that most childhood fears are normal and are eventually outgrown.
- Seek professional help if you consider your child's fears are abnormal.

Here are some questions that are helpful in determining if your child's fears are abnormal:

- Has the fear been persistent over an extended period of time?
- Is the fear considered inappropriate for the child's age?
- Is the fear out of proportion to the circumstances under which it occurs?

If you answered yes to these questions, your child may need professional help. □

## Remember, we've talked about this

I met a neighbor's visiting granddaughter out walking her dog.

The puppy jumped up on me, and Katie said to her, with elaborate patience, "Now, remember, we've talked about this!"

It was hard not to smile at the exact intonation she duplicated from hearing those same words from a parent.

And isn't that just our problem? We talk about something and explain to our youngsters just why they should not engage in a particular activity.

Then later we talk some more. And we keep on talking, eventually becoming exasperated with the children's failure to heed our perfectly logical and beautifully expressed guidelines.

What's wrong with this picture? Well, it depends on the children's age, of course. There are certain times in the first two or three years that we should depend far less on talk and more on action.

That's the time to redirect children's actions and behaviors to more suitable activities, and realize that their self-control is so weak or non-existent that they need us to help them change behaviors. And this can be done best without much in the way of lecture or commentary.

Learning to be exquisitely brief is a parental art. So the parent of the toddler who is involved in a fracas with another child over a beach shovel simply moves the toddler, hands her another implement, and says, "Gently, Becky. Let's dig here. Sophie wants to dig there."

Even later, when children are coming to understand a bit more about limits and expectations, most parents undoubtedly talk too much.

I hear parents reason, justify, explain, repeat, nag, and just keep on going long past the point of reasonable expectation that they still have the child's attention.

Every child is born with invisible ear flaps, that are lowered when an individual's self-esteem is under attack.

And after all, that is what is happening when parents keep talking too much, since the implication is that children are just too plain dumb to get it, and therefore parents have to keep talking.

When I used to teach student teachers of preschoolers, a tool that we used was to set up a tape recorder and just let it run.

When the students later played back their words, they were usually astonished to hear themselves speak.

Often both their tones and words seemed like an affront to respect of the children, rather than the well-meaning guidance they had intended.

I remember one child's comments: "It sounds like I don't think they understand anything at all. I'm talking way too much."

While it may not be practical to tape yourself on a regular basis, it can be useful to consider how much you are talking, and how your child is receiving your words.

It is useful to consider what is the minimum amount of information that would be helpful, both for your child's learning and for your own sanity.

Giving instruction and setting limits are areas where truly less is often more.

So remember, parents, we've talked about this. □

## Plan a good day, every day

When stress strikes, it becomes hard, if not impossible, to look toward the upcoming day with joy.

The most effective way to break that kind of negative mind-set is to approach each day in a positive, hopeful, optimistic way.

Wolfe J. Rink, a management consultant and adjunct associate professor at Johns Hopkins university, says: "If you don't automatically feel upbeat, look around and find something to feel good about. Start each day in a positive way."

In order to have more positive days, Dr. Rinke suggests the following:

- **Use a clock radio with a station that plays music that is soft and pleasant to wake up to.** Don't use a loud alarm clock.

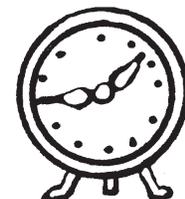
- **Allow yourself enough time to prepare for the day's activities at a civilized pace.** Don't get up at the last possible moment.

- **Think about the positive things you expect to accomplish today.** Don't listen to news of the world's problems or worry about your own problems while you're dressing.

- **Eat a healthy breakfast.** Don't drug yourself with coffee, sugar or cigarettes.

- **As you go about your day's activities, always expect the best.**

You have a choice about your attitude every day. Start out with a positive outlook and expect the day will be a good one. □



## Influences on children's lives

There are many influences on a young child's life. It is important to give some thought to some of the most important ones.

**1. Understand and accept yourself.** Because you have such an important influence on your child, it is vital that you know yourself. It is a quality you can develop through self-understanding and self-acceptance.

You can develop self-understanding by asking yourself questions like: "What makes me react or feel the way I do?" "What things make me happy?" "How do I react to other people?"

Self-acceptance requires a realistic view of what you can and cannot do. Perhaps you've had an important goal that you now know you can never reach.

If you accept the fact that you will never attain this goal, you can face other people, with respect for yourself and without the feeling that your child must do what you never could.

If you and your spouse have self-understanding and self-acceptance, your child will probably have these characteristics, too.

Your understanding and acceptance of yourself can influence your child to try to understand and accept himself.

**2. Understand your influences on your child.** Have you ever noticed your child's reaction to your happiness? Your sadness? Your anger?

Children tend to display the same mood or disposition you feel. In fact, they may learn your behavior by imitating what you do or how you react to things.

**3. Understand children in general.** A knowledge and understanding

of child development helps you to have standards or criteria with which to understand your own child.

For example, you cannot determine whether your child is developing at a normal rate unless you know what can be expected of a child his age.

**4. Understand the uniqueness of your own child.** He has specific desires, interests, and abilities as well as problems and difficulties.

Each child has a unique personality, so try to understand each child as an individual.

What one child means by his actions may be entirely different than what another child means by the same actions.

**5. Sibling influence.** Brothers and sisters often play a big part in influencing a child. They may be companions while playing but rivals for your attention and love. Little brothers and sisters sometimes become troublesome to an older child.

The interaction and sharing between brothers and sisters is an important aspect of the learning process. Such relationships help your child develop basic attitudes toward himself and toward other people.

**6. Environmental influences.** People outside the home also have an important influence on children.

Teachers, relatives, and children in your neighborhood can help your child learn how to get along with others.

Of course, television, media, computers and other means of communication present opportunities for your child to see and hear many types of behavior. The physical, mental, and social development of a child

are all affected by the environment in which he lives.

A home that provides a child with such things as educational toys and interesting music helps to stimulate his development.

A simple toy made from objects in your home, for example, may have helped your child learn about sounds, learn how to hold an object, or learn how metal feels.

Your interrelationships as husband and wife, brother and sister, parents and children strongly influence the types of relationships your child will seek outside the home. □

### 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)  
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**You can review a current issue at: [www.blog.growingchild.com/the-joy-of-parenting](http://www.blog.growingchild.com/the-joy-of-parenting)**

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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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# February, 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>7</p> <p>Draw a picture of someone who lives at your house.</p> 	<p>1</p> <p>Find something purple in your house. Is it bigger than your shoe?</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Groundhog Day. What exactly is a groundhog? Look it up.</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Send a letter to an elderly friend.</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Draw a picture of a magic worm. Color it purple, green and yellow.</p> 	<p>5</p> <p>Sort your toys. Repair or dispose of broken ones.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Talk about the television shows and videos you watch. What could you do instead of watching TV?</p>
<p>14</p> <p>Valentine's Day.</p> 	<p>8</p> <p>Chinese New Year.</p> 	<p>9</p> <p>Mardi Gras Day.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Ash Wednesday.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Play hide-and-seek inside. Quietly.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Abraham Lincoln's birthday. What was his nickname?</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Pretend it's summer! Spread a blanket on the floor and have an indoor picnic!</p> 
<p>21</p> <p>Do you have winter birds? Watch for them outside.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Presidents' Day.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Reach up toward the ceiling—reach and stretch as far as you can.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Find out everyone's favorite song and sing one or two.</p> 	<p>18</p> <p>Wear something purple today.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Play dominoes.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Try to do something with your left hand (or your right hand if you're left-handed.)</p>
<p>28</p> <p>Get out the building blocks. Make something simple like a house, a tower, or a road for small cats.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>George Washington's birthday.</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Share a book with a friend.</p> 	<p>24</p> <p>Draw a map of your neighborhood. Put a big X on the spot where you live.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Make a purple cow: put grape juice, vanilla yogurt and ice cubes in the blender.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Sing "Yankee Doodle"</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Find two clocks in your house. Is the time the same on both?</p> 
<p>29</p> <p>This is a Leap Year. Ask somebody what that means.</p>	<p>29</p> <p>This is a Leap Year. Ask somebody what that means.</p>					