



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Behavior

Learning from mistakes

A child who is constantly called names and criticized for doing the wrong thing will have difficulty acquiring self-confidence in her ability to act correctly.

In fact, she may misbehave simply to get attention.

Children need to learn that making mistakes is a natural part of living and learning.

When a child does something wrong, a parent can explain why it was wrong and suggest some alternative behaviors.

If the mistake was unintentional, it is important to let the child know that everyone makes mistakes and that mistakes should not prevent trying again.

An even better example is for parents and other adults to apologize when they've made a mistake or done the wrong thing. □

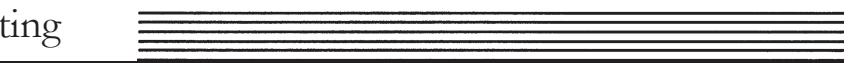


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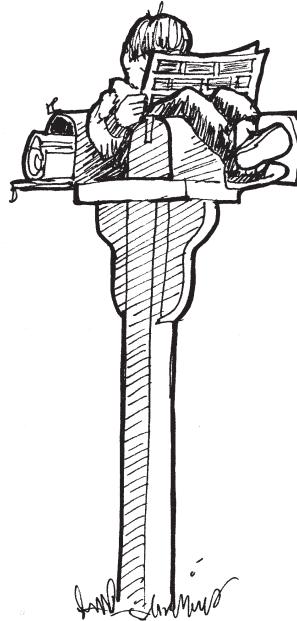
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Parenting



Ten ways to show love for your child

- Use plenty of positive words with your child. Nurture his self-esteem and self-confidence by praising a job well done, and show interest in what he's saying.
 - Help your child's early brain development by setting aside time for reading.
 - Owning a pet can help make children with chronic illnesses and disabilities feel better by stimulating physical activity, enhancing their overall attitude, and offering constant companionship.
 - Respond promptly and lovingly to your child's physical and emotional needs and banish put-downs from your parenting vocabulary.
 - Limit the kinds and amounts of television he watches as well as other media he uses.
 - Enforce his bedtime and homework time, and have meals at predictable times.
 - Make an extra effort to set a good example at home and in public. Use words like "I'm sorry," "please," and "thank you."
 - When your child is angry, argumentative or in a bad mood, give him a hug, cuddle, pat, secret sign or other gestures of affection he favors.
 - Mark family game nights on your calendar so the entire family can be together.
- Put a different family member's name under each date and have that person choose which game will be played that evening.
- Don't forget to say, "I love you" to children of all ages! □



• Talk with your pediatrician to be sure your child's health records are up to date and ensure that all immunizations have been given.

• Provide safe transportation. Be sure your child's safety seat is properly installed in your car, and that it is the appropriate type for the child's height and weight.

Entertaining, easy-to-do games

Games are more fun when kids become involved in making the rules—and the equipment needed to play.

Hole-in-one

With tape, attach a piece of string to a ping pong ball at one end and a paper cup at the other. Then see how many times players can catch the ball in the cup.

The string can be adjusted to make the game harder or easier. Different sizes of cups also add difficulty. Put together some teams if you have enough players for a tournament.

Make-your-own ring toss

Using large paper plates, cut out the center, leaving the outside piece as a ring for tossing.

Kids can decide what games they want to play and what the rules are. Rings can be tossed at stationary ob-

jects (liter bottle) or a moving object (their foot or hand).

The rings can be designed and personalized beforehand using crayons or markers. Or rings can be assigned different numerical values for scoring.

Inside/Outside treasure hunt

Give each player an egg carton that has twelve sections. Their job is to fill each section with a different object that will fit inside the section. Participants can hunt inside or outside (weather permitting).

When everyone is finished, they can compare collections and try to identify each object.

For safety's sake, children under three should be accompanied by an adult since items this small may pose a choking hazard.

There are lots of variations of

this game—participants can hunt in pairs or teams; lists of 12 items can be provided for a scavenger hunt; a time limit can be imposed.

Silent Meal

On a blackboard or large piece of paper, write down the items to be prepared for the next meal.

Beside each item, indicate what "sign" is to be used for that item. Diners can help you come up with ideas for the messages you'll need to communicate in order to eat your meal.

For example, "blink both eyes" means "please pass the potatoes." "Raise your left hand" means "please pour me a glass of milk,"

Use as many signs or as few as the kids can manage. Then settle back and enjoy a "silent" meal!

Let the children decide the "penalty" for talking out loud. □

Social Skills

Practice forgiveness

Almost daily, life brings us all sorts of slights and hurts. As we learn to forgive and forget the lesser slights of life each day, we are more able to extend forgiveness over larger, more painful issues. Withholding forgiveness while harboring resentment and anger simply pollutes life.

One person who recommends practicing forgiveness is Redford Williams, an expert on heart health and author of *The Trusting Heart: Great News about Type A Behavior*.

Dr. Williams says: "By letting go of the resentment and relinquishing

the goal of retribution, you may find that the weight of anger lifts from your shoulders, easing your pain and also helping you to forget the wrong.

"If you find it difficult to forgive, consider this encounter from minister and author Robert H. Schuller.

On one occasion he was counseling a woman who was extremely angry and bitter over her divorce. When Dr. Schuller advised her to forgive her ex-husband, the woman became agitated with him. Dr. Schuller suggested she was confusing forgiveness with reconciliation.

He described the forgiveness process this way: "Forgiveness does not mean you have to approve of his behavior. You could never do that. But forgiveness does mean you are going to put it behind you—and, yes—in practical terms—forget it. Which means you'll bury the hatchet and not leave the handle above the ground.

"To forgive and forget does not mean you have a restored relationship. You don't even need to become friends. You just have to stop being enemies." □

Respecting the importance of play

I was saddened in a classroom this week to see a preschooler in tears, frustrated at her inability to form the letters of her first and last names in the way that the teacher was demanding.

Now, lest you think I am criticizing the teacher, know that the teacher is not only a friend, but also has years of experience and skills.

The problem is that clear demands are being placed on the four-year-old children in my community, so therefore also on their teachers and parents, to prepare children with fundamental skills and knowledge as a kindergarten entry prerequisite.

Time was when preschool and even kindergarten were preparation years, designed mainly to support children's social and emotional adjustment to group learning, time spent mostly in creative play with blocks, dress-ups, art materials, and games.

Alas, in many schools today, those days are gone. As the emphasis on test scores and academic achievement has permeated our educational institutions, drill and skill have replaced play as the medium for learning.

An article in *The Christian Science Monitor* (*Let the Children Play*, Hanes, 1/23/12) highlights additional reasons that today's children are suffering from play deficiency.

Highly scheduled children, moving from one enrichment activity to another, have little time for spontaneous play.

What playtime they do have is often spent using technological devices, pushing buttons or watching screens and flashing lights.

In other words, toys, not imagination, often drive children's play, with the result that in the absence of toys, many of today's children simply do not know how to play.

Experts are agreed that the erosion of children's play constitutes a problem about which something needs to be done.

As adults become concerned with the development of the whole child, they discover that the medium of play provides optimum conditions for social, emotional, and physical development, rather than focusing on narrowly cognitive skills.

In this context, play is not just seen as childish fun, letting kids be kids, but rather a complex method of developing flexible thinking, language development, and self-control.

One hot topic related to play is its ability for children to develop "executive function"—such abilities as planning, multitasking, and reasoning—all more closely linked to academic success than IQ, standardized tests, or other assessments, according to much recent research.

So, what can parents do to encourage curiosity and imagination related to play?

- Become knowledgeable about the ongoing debate about the importance of play in your community schools.

The article cited refers to specific efforts of parents working to bring back recess and decrease academic instruction in kindergarten and preschools.

- Consider carefully the amount of time your child has available for unstructured play, and the choices you

make about toy purchases.

- Analyze the toys in your child's room to see if it is the toys that are doing the work, or already have limiting assumptions built in, like toys based on media characters.

- Limit screen time. Despite the fact that two-thirds of Americans believe that the earlier children can use technology, the better off they will be, numerous studies have found no educational benefit, and potential harm, in early screen time.

Go out and play. It is good for you and your children. □

Something New!

"Grandma Says" is a twice-monthly special message that includes general parenting tips, words of encouragement, and children's book reviews.

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