



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Snack Time

Create new, tempting snacks

Here are a few tips to create tempting snacks for your family:

- Keep fresh fruits and vegetables at eye level in the refrigerator or in a bowl on the table.
- Keep dried fruit—such as apricots, figs, prunes, bananas, and raisins—ready to go and handy for snacking.
- Use fruits as toppings on pancakes or low-fat waffles.
- Have the kids help pick out and prepare the snacks.
- Try something new each week. Look for different items at the market—kiwi, melons, pineapple, pea pods.
- Use vegetables for a quick snack. Try something different like zucchini or sweet potato sticks, cucumber wheels, or green and red pepper strips. Add a low-calorie dressing for dipping. □



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Developmental

How does your child see herself?

Self-concept or self-image is how a child thinks of herself in relation to the people and things in the rest of her world.

What is your child's concept of herself? Is she a very important person in her own eyes? Or does she think she's not too good of a person?

It is very important that a child have a genuine feeling that she matters in the world.

Psychologists have developed several ways to measure self-concept. Research about school-aged children shows that a child's self-concept is directly related to later achievement in school.

Children who have a poor self-concept tend to do poorly in school learning tasks. Those who feel good about themselves generally do well in school.

Parents can influence their child's self-concept development. Here are three general principles which will help your child develop a good self-concept.

1. Let your child know that you love her. A child needs to know that she is important to you, that she has your love—even when she has engaged in some unlovable activities (“I love you but I don’t like what you have just done.”)

2. Let your child handle her failures. What messages are you giving her when she fails?

She needs to know that you’re on her side, that you accept her—win or lose—for who she is. Your corrections should deal with what she’s done, not what she “is.”

3. Don’t be dishonest. Your child knows when she hasn’t done well, when she has failed.

If you acknowledge that you know this, but that it isn’t the end of the world, your child gains confidence in you to reflect an honest value to her.

As a child grows, she tries to find her place in the world. She experiments with different ideas and concepts, looking to you from time to time for guidance and support.

Make sure you give her the room she needs to learn and make mistakes. But also make sure she knows you’re on her side—win or lose.

Helping to develop a positive self-concept is one of the most important things any parents can do for a child. □



What I didn't know

With the arrogance of youth, my husband and I prepared to become parents.

Because this was in the mid-60s, long before you were on the earth, we didn't do the intense, intellectual research that many of you have done. We read a bit, talked with a few people, and got some stuff ready.

Now that our first child has passed his half-century mark and is living a life that fills me with awe, as is his younger brother, I look back on those beginnings, and am amazed by what we didn't know, and what no "What to Expect" books could have given me. Let me muse a bit about some of that now.

There is nothing that can tell new parents that their lives are forever changed.

I think at the beginning, we tend to think of finite periods of time—when the baby starts sleeping through the night; when she starts walking; once he begins to talk; when they're off to kindergarten.

We believe that at a certain point, we will be able to rediscover those earlier days when we did not have to obsess over both the minute details and big picture of another's life.

We just don't comprehend fully that we're in it for the long haul.

Throughout our lives, we may have former jobs, homes, friends, hair color and shapes, even ex-spouses, but there is no such a thing as ex-children. This is a lifelong and life-defining relationship.

Another idea that took me some time to learn is that I as a parent was not the most important thing in creating the outcomes for my children.

I am not saying that good parenting is not crucial to healthy development. There is no question that raising human children well takes vast amounts of time, energy, creativity, patience, and unwavering love, to say nothing of quantities of coffee and aspirin, and without the unstinting outlay of these commodities, children will not fare well.

What I am saying is that, given the appropriate environment of support and acceptance, kids will become the persons they are meant to be.

They are born with their own wonderful potential, and unless they are thwarted or stunted along the way, they will continue on their unique paths, sometimes in spite of our efforts.

Someone once said that good parenting involves a lot of getting out of the way.

That gives us a different image for a parenting role than having to push, prod or pull them forward into their lives, doesn't it?

The other thing I didn't know at the beginning was how very much being a parent would teach me—about myself, about my husband, about the depth of love and pain, about what is really important in this life, and about what values I wanted to demonstrate in my life and pass on to my children and later grandchildren.

When I was in the midst of all those carpool schedules and family dinners, I wasn't contemplating all this.

But trust me, you are learning life lessons right there in the thick of it. Nobody, and no book, could prepare you for this wonderful life of parenting. □

Let's do math

Math is a very important part of life. We use math to set an alarm clock, buy groceries, keep score or time a game, wallpaper a room, or wrap a present.

We all need math in the world of computers and electronic communication.

It is important to encourage children to think of themselves as mathematicians who can reason and solve problems.

Here are some things you can do to encourage your child:

- **Show your children that you like numbers.** Play number games and think of math problems as puzzles to be solved.

- **From the time your child is very young, count everything.** When you empty a grocery bag, count the number of apples. Count the number of stairs to your home. Count the number of clean socks you take out of the dryer.

- **Put things into groups.** When you do laundry, separate items of clothing: all the socks in one pile, shirts in another, and pants in another.

Divide the socks by colors and count the number of each. Draw pictures and graphs of clothes in the laundry: 4 red socks, 10 blue socks, 12 white socks.

- **Tell your child that anyone can learn math.** Point out numbers in your child's life in terms of weight (pounds and ounces) measurements involving cooking, temperature and time.

- **Help your children do math** in their heads with lots of small numbers. Ask questions: "If I have four cups and I need seven altogether, how many more do I need?" "If you have three apples and give Sharon one, how many do you have left?" □

Learning to talk isn't easy

Parents are often concerned when their child doesn't talk as clearly—and as quickly—as they believe she should. But learning to say words, understanding what they mean, and knowing how to put them together into sentences is a challenge for most children.

Here are some tips for helping preschoolers say what they mean:

- **Don't belittle a child** with criticism when words come out in a rush, and don't mean anything. Don't say, "No one can understand you when you talk that way."

- **Don't threaten.** "If you don't talk better, no one will ever understand you."

- **Don't bribe her.** "If you say it nicely, you can have a cookie."

- **Don't command her.** "Say it like this so we know what you mean."

- **Don't overprotect her.** "Go out and play and we'll talk about it later."

What to do:

- **Echo what you can understand** and replace the rest with one of the "wh" words (who, what, when, where). Youngster: "Sam broke to me ever." Parent: "Sam broke what?"

- **Assure her that you do understand her feelings**, even if you do not understand her speech. None of us ever outgrows an appreciation for emotional support.

For a child, this can mean a hug or squeeze, accompanied by simple feedback: "I know you're upset now. I understand how you feel. Let's have some orange juice and talk about it."

Treating a child as a sensitive individual with her own sense of personal dignity will result in cooperative behavior. And it will encourage the beginning talker to keep trying. □

Be a good role model

How can parents teach their children to be responsible for their own actions? One way is by being good role models themselves.

- **Be predictable.** Children need to know the rules. In a world full of contradictions and change, a parent should be predictable.

If a child makes a mistake, he needs to know what to expect. Parents' position should be clear. A few simple rules, firmly enforced, are more effective than many rules loosely enforced.

- **Be respectful.** No one likes to be ridiculed or embarrassed. Within the heart of every child is the potential for greatness. Don't squelch it. It is just as easy to take a child aside and point out an error as it is to make fun of him for a mistake in front of his friends.

- **Recognize the opinions of children** and recognize their intelligence. When making plans involving them, ask for their views and give consideration to their preferences, when possible. Treat children as though they are important because they really are.

- **When you're wrong, say so.** Just because children are smaller doesn't mean they can be easily fooled. You earn their respect when you say, "I goofed. You're right." Children love honesty. Living truthfully and acting truthfully are powerful examples. If you want your children to be able to admit mistakes, show them how to do it.

- **Be dependable.** As children grow, they need less from their parents and more from themselves, but one need they will always have is dependable parents.

They need to know they can count on their parents to be on their side; to show love and concern when things don't go right; to forgive them for mistakes they make.

- **Be an example.** Avoid hypocrisy. If you tell a child not to smoke or use drugs but if you smoke and use drugs, what behavior can you expect?

Children mirror their parents. See them and you see yourself. □

Self-esteem for parents

Strong self-esteem is an important part of healthy parenting. Parents with healthy self-esteem have a vitality, energy, and confidence which enables them to fulfill goals, overcome hardships and problems and experience fulfillment in life.

One way parents can build up their self-esteem is by writing down a list of accomplishments at the end of the day.

That daily list becomes written proof that every day—despite any controversies or hardships you faced—you made something good happen.

It is also important to do at least one thing each day for your own personal pleasure.

This can be something as simple as making yourself fresh-brewed coffee in the morning, or reading a chapter in a book at lunchtime.

The objective in such an exercise is to remind yourself that it is worthwhile to do things you enjoy regardless of what anyone else thinks.

If you feel good about yourself, you'll feel better about your role as a parent. □

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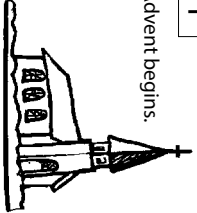






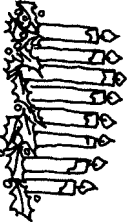
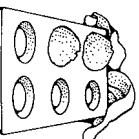
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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1 Advent begins.</p> 	<p>2 Take a break together today.</p>	<p>3 Talk about the wisdom of kindness.</p>	<p>4 National Cookie Day. Eat a you-know-what.</p> 	<p>5 Make some original Christmas cards to send to friends.</p> 	<p>6 Celebrate something that someone achieved today.</p>	<p>7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day.</p>
<p>8 Make a holiday picture and put it on the fridge.</p>	<p>9 What is a good gift at this time of year? snowball, candy cane, lawn mower, potted plant, hammock.</p>	<p>10 Bake some sugar cookies and decorate them.</p>	<p>11 Teach mom or dad something you learned today.</p>	<p>12 Draw a bunch of snowballs, make them different sizes, and color them different colors.</p> 	<p>13 Sing Frosty the Snowman</p> 	<p>14 Talk about a time when you helped someone.</p>
<p>15 Make a snowman—if you don't have snow, draw a picture of one. And, dress up that snowman for the holidays!</p> 	<p>16 Use some long, skinny pretzels to spell your name.</p>	<p>17 Remind yourself to smile. It can be contagious. (Look it up.)</p> 	<p>18 Ask someone how you can be of help today.</p>	<p>19 Give someone a compliment.</p>	<p>20 Donate a box of non-perishable food to a collection center.</p>	<p>21 First day of winter. brrrrrrrr brrrrrrrrr</p>
<p>22 Do you have winter birds? Watch for them outside.</p>	<p>23 Learn how to fold and cut paper to make a giant snowflake.</p>	<p>24 Read your favorite holiday story.</p>	<p>25 Christmas.</p> 	<p>26 Kwanzaa begins.</p>	<p>27 Children can give homemade gifts in celebration of Kwanzaa.</p>	<p>28 Make some muffins together.</p> 
<p>29 Fix something special for breakfast.</p>	<p>30 Make confetti for New Year's Eve. (What is confetti made from?)</p>	<p>31 New Year's Eve! Make yourself a festive, snazzy hat!</p>	