



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Social Skills

Showing love

All the toys and special learning activities in the world are not as important to your child as your time, your attention, and your love.

Your life is very full and busy. You probably don't have as much time as you'd like to spend with your child, so try to make the best possible use of the time you do have together.

For example, if you're cooking breakfast for him, take a moment to *be* with him—look into his eyes and squeeze his hand, tell him good morning and let him know how glad you are to see him.

It doesn't really take that long to let him know you care. Thirty seconds here and there during the day to share a few moments of love and conversation can make the rest of his day—and yours—more rewarding. □

January 2006

Vol. 22 No. 1

Academics

Childhood learning doesn't always mean book learning

It's true that some children, with parental guidance, are able to read and write at very early ages. But this doesn't mean that they are able to make proper evaluations of the things they do because what they do, many times, is just a conditioned response.

Only when a child has developed the capacity to think, to direct her natural curiosity to find answers to meaningful questions, has true learning for that child been accomplished.

Instead of being directed in all their activities, children learn a great deal as they play. They search for answers to their own questions, and they find answers in their make-believe games.

Children come to a deeper understanding of themselves and others by pretending to be doctors, storekeepers, truck drivers, artists, and athletes.

When a child shares or takes turns with others, recognizes another's frustrations, acts out her own anxieties and conflicts—all in a world of make-believe—she is doing the plain, hard work of growing up through the

natural processes of childhood.

When we rush children into clever performance of skills, when we organize their daily lives so that there is not a moment for inner contemplation, we decrease the possibilities for genuine thought and individual growth.

Most of us have happy recollections of our childhood days. When life hurts, when the way grows weary, when we are vexed and baffled by unattainable but deep desires, or saddened by losses, so many times we find solace in remembering something out of our yesterdays.

The truth of this is demonstrated by the hold that songs and poems we learned as children have upon us. These songs and poems appeal to us because their major note touches one of the deeper and elemental things in human nature: childhood.

Let's let children be children for the few short years of childhood. Let's let them accumulate precious memories that will serve them well in adult life. □

Let's do science!

When you learn science, you build on what you already know. Children need to start learning early, at home, so that they have a firm base of knowledge to build on when they get to school.

As parents, what's important is that we share the knowledge we have with our children. Science is in everyday activities: cooking, washing dishes, and growing plants. So, look around the house and you'll see that science is everywhere. Here are some things you can do:

- Ask your children questions: How do think the clock works? Why does a bird make a nest and what is the nest made of?
- Have children look at what's happening around them and have them tell you what they see.
- Have your children make predictions about the weather or how fast a plant will grow or how high a piece of paper will fly with

the wind. Have the children then test to see if their hunches are correct.

- Remind your child that it may take many tries before you get an answer. Keep trying.
- Have your children start collections of shells, rocks, or bugs so that they can see similarities and patterns.
- Have your child look at how things are different. He or she can look around the neighborhood to see the different animals and plants that live and grow there.

- Help your child look at what causes things to change. What happens when a plant doesn't receive water or sunlight?

These are just suggestions. By looking at the world around you, by trying to answer questions that YOU wonder about, you can come up with activities suitable for older or younger children. □

Games & Activities

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

Let the children decide what the "penalty" is for talking out loud.

□

Talking about negative feelings

You can help your child learn to put negative feelings into words. Often, when parents discourage their children's negative feelings, they mean to discourage their behavioral expression rather than the feelings themselves.

Around five years old, children have good enough control of their actions and good enough language to learn to substitute words for actions when they feel angry, frustrated, and otherwise upset.

For example, suppose your child's little brother scribbles in the pages of her favorite book. She has a right to be angry, but she doesn't have the right to hit or yell at him.

You can help her learn to express such feelings in an acceptable way by:

- The way you respond to her when she does something similar, and

- Your putting into words for her how you think she probably feels: "You're mad because Joey scribbled in your book. Feel like talking about it?" □

Growing Together is published by Growing Child, Inc., P.O. Box 620, Lafayette, IN 47902 ©2006 Growing Child, Inc. Telephone: (765) 464-0920. Customer Service: 1-800-927-7289.





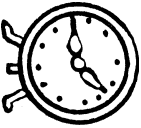





Growing Child also publishes: **Growing Child** (birth-six years), and **Growing Up** (grades K-12).

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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

January, 2006

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1 Happy New Year! Kisses for good luck! Do you have a family tradition to begin the new year?</p>	<p>2 Place three or four large rubber bands around a tissue box—you have a guitar!</p>	<p>3 Sing a song in a silly voice.</p> 	<p>4 Send a letter to an elderly friend.</p>	<p>5 Can you make a snowball today?</p>	<p>6 Talk about a toy you got for the holidays. What can you do with it?</p> 	<p>7 Talk about the television shows and videos you watch. What could you do instead of watching TV?</p>
<p>8 Elvis Presley's birthday. Ask Mom or Dad to sing the hound dog song.</p>	<p>9 Whisper in someone's ear.</p>	<p>10 Talk about what you did today.</p>	<p>11 Look in the mirror and smile at yourself.</p> 	<p>12 National Handwriting Day.</p>	<p>13 Sing <i>Frosty the Snowman</i>.</p>	<p>14 Paint or color a rainbow and hang it up in a window.</p> 
<p>15 Birth date of Martin Luther King, Jr.</p>	<p>16 Do you have winter birds? Watch for them outside.</p>	<p>17 Count the numbers on a clock.</p> 	<p>18 Can you do the "Hokey Pokey?"</p>	<p>19 Wear something purple today.</p> 	<p>20 Make a crown with construction paper, markers, glue, glitter and sequins.</p>	<p>21 Have a race rolling across the floor.</p>
<p>22 Answer Your Cat's Question Day.</p> 	<p>23 National Compliment Day. What's a compliment?</p>	<p>24 Look through a magazine for people expressing emotions. Can you name them? Happy, sad ...</p>	<p>25 Play with a flashlight. Use the words on, off, light and dark.</p>	<p>26 Can you walk like a: Giant? Spider? Flamingo? Turtle?</p> 	<p>27 Birthday of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, 1756. How old would he be today?</p>	<p>28 Talk about right and left.</p> 
<p>29 Chinese New Year</p>	<p>30 Make a snowman — if you don't have snow, draw a picture of a snow family.</p>	<p>31 Sing "Old McDonald Had a Farm ..."</p> 	<p>International Creativity Month National Clean Up Your Computer Month Celebration of Life Month National Hot Tea Month National Poverty in America Awareness Month</p> 