



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

## Developmental

### Teaching values

A child learns by observation, especially by observation of parents and other adults in his life.

If he is told, “Don’t do as I do, do as I say,” he is all the more likely to try out the behavior he sees. And a child who is told what to do all the time grows up either dependent on other for advice about every one of his actions—or rebellious.

Parents can encourage the development of values in a variety of ways. They can encourage children to watch television programs and listen to stories which teach moral lessons, and then talk about those lessons.

The discussions that are most helpful are those that allow a child to ask questions and try to come to some of his own conclusions about morality and values.

When children see values being cast aside—as when a parent or other adult swears or tells a lie—the child can be given a reason why the value is not at work—such as anger, or a desire not to hurt someone’s feelings.

This teaches that no one is perfect all the time. □

## Language

### Encouraging good communication skills

In previous generations, people didn’t have to worry about good communication skills because they had time to talk to one another.

With so many changes in today’s fast-paced world, many things can interfere with good interaction between parent and child.

Here are some good ways to encourage good communication with your child.

- *Be an attentive listener.* When your child has something important to tell you, give her your undivided attention. Even if the topic seems trivial to you, it may be very important to her.

- *Be patient.* Even though you may want to interrupt what your child is telling you, be patient. Let her finish what she has to say.

- *Paraphrase.* It’s helpful to repeat to your child, in your own words, what you *think* you heard her say.

This will avoid misunderstandings and will give her an opportunity to clarify what she wants to tell you.

- *Be sensitive to your child’s body language.* Pay attention not only to your child’s words, but also to her body language, such as nervous behavior or facial expression.

- *Focus on one topic.* When you have something important to say to

your child, focus on only one issue at a time.

It’s better to convey a clear message on one topic than to confuse your child by addressing several issues at one time.

- *Be brief.* Keep your message as short as possible because young children have a rather limited attention span.

- *Keep your message simple.* Use simple words—one or two syllable words, if possible—which your child will understand. Use no more than nine or ten words in a sentence.

- *Deal with the here and now.* The concepts of time which young children have are different from those of adults.

Young children tend to live in the present rather than the past or future. Reopening old wounds from the past will only get in the way of what you want to communicate right now.

- *Be aware of your own body language.* When talking to your child, be aware of the non-verbal messages your body may be communicating.

Use good eye contact, for example, to convey your message. Young children pay more attention to your facial expression and to the emotional tone of your voice than to the actual words you use. □

## Positive guidance

Many parents seem to believe that there are two alternatives in child rearing.

One is to become the kind of ogre that we may remember from our own childhoods, the adult who rules absolutely by producing fearful responses in children.

Since this is not an appealing role for most parents (harmful as it is to parent-child relationships) they often adopt the other alternative.

This is to become a kind of “anything goes” adult, who seems powerless in the face of children’s learning behaviors.

You have likely seen these adults, usually coaxing or cajoling an out-of-bounds child while receiving the obvious disapproval of others around.

There is actually a third alternative: The kind of adult who helps children slowly learn how to live within the parameters of acceptable and respectful behavior, without fear or the absence of self-control.

These adults use positive guidance strategies. Let’s consider several of these.

1. Parents offer two choices that are acceptable to both child and adult.

Choices support children’s need to be independent, as well as define the limit and acceptable behavior. This gives children some control over what is happening.

“Do you want to walk to the car by yourself, or do you want me to carry you?” This is an example of positive guidance.

Either way, the child is getting to



the car, but the parent is allowing the child a measure of control.

2. Another positive guidance strategy is to provide alternatives to the unacceptable direction of behavior.

In early childhood-speak, we call this “redirection”, which is simply offering an acceptable alternative to an unacceptable behavior.

It is completely unacceptable to kick little sister or the dining room table leg.

Providing a big Nerf ball allows the child to redirect the kicking impulse and energy to the backyard where it belongs.

“Those are Daddy’s books,” Mom says to the toddler. “Here, let’s find your books to look at instead.”

3. Help children understand “when”... “then.” This kind of statement helps children know the next appropriate step or behavior, and places the child firmly responsible

for what happens next.

“**When** you put on your jacket, **then** you may go outside.” “**When** you stop screaming, **then** you may come back and join us in the family room.”

4. Tell children how you feel and why.

“I statements” (like “I feel scared when you climb on the shelf, because you could fall and get hurt,” or “I feel angry when you yell names at your brother, because that hurts his feelings.”) describe what is going on, your feelings, and the reason for your feelings.

Such communication teaches children that their actions affect others, giving them a reason to modify their behavior.

After all, the relationship you have with your child means that your child is happier knowing his/her behavior has been pleasing to you, so your less positive feelings become motivations to change.

5. The last strategy for today is being quite specific in your comments when you see your children behaving appropriately.

Explaining exactly what it is that children are doing appropriately, and why, means you will see that behavior repeated.

“You are picking up the baby’s toy for her. That makes her happy, because she couldn’t reach it herself.”

There is power in positive guidance, the power of helping your children learn appropriate behaviors, and the power of helping you become an authoritative, effective parent. □

## Praise is like sunshine

Consider this insight from psychologist Jess Lair:

"Praise is like sunshine to warm the human spirit; we cannot flower and grow without it.

"And yet, while most of us are only too ready to apply to others the cold wind of criticism, we are somehow reluctant to give our fellows the warm sunshine of praise."

Train your eye to see the good in your children, your neighbors. Identify their gifts, talents, and skills, and praise them lavishly for them.

The story is told of a ten-year-old boy who labored in a Naples, Italy factory.

His dream was to become a singer, but his first teacher discouraged him, declaring: "You can't sing. You haven't any voice at all. It sounds like the wind in the shutters."

However, his mother, a poor and uneducated woman, placed her arms around the boy and praised him. She told the boy she knew he could sing and could see improvement in the quality of his voice.

That mother's praise and encouragement changed her son's life. His name was Enrico Caruso and he became the most famous opera singer of his generation. □



## Let's do history!

When your children ask, "Where was I born?" or "How old was I when I started walking?" they are asking questions about history. These two questions contain the two meanings of "history":

1. The story of people and events.
2. The record of times past.

History helps us understand the past and how we got here. Here are some "history" things you can do at home:

- Share family history with your children. Share your memories and help your relatives and friends share family stories, too. Encourage children to tell their own stories.

- Read with your child about people and events that have made a difference in the world. Help your child pick other people and events you both find interesting to learn more about.

- Watch television programs about topics related to the past with your children.

Search the Internet for the most recent information on-line. Go to the library and find books on the same topics. Ask the librarian for help.

Then ask this question: Do the books, websites and television programs agree?

- When you celebrate holidays such as Independence Day, Christmas, Passover, or Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, explain to your child what is being celebrated and why

Help your child find stories or speeches about these holidays online, at the library, or in a newspaper or magazine.

- Get to know the history of the town or city where you live.

Your newspaper may list parades, museum and art exhibits, children's theater, music events, history talks and walks under "things to do."

Choose some of these activities to do with 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.

To receive your free issues, go to:

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

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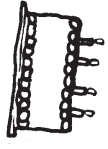
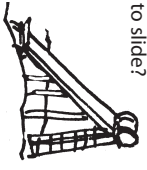


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Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns "he" and "she" are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

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

# January 2013

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><b>HAPPY NEW YEAR!!</b></p> 	<p>1 Happy New Year! New Year's Day</p> 	<p>2 Talk about New Year's resolutions. What does that mean?</p>	<p>3 What is the weather like today? Is it calm or windy? Compare at the end of the month.</p> 	<p>4 A sturdy easel is an excellent investment to promote creativity and a love of art.</p>	<p>5 Put on some fast music and dance. This is great exercise.</p> 	
<p>6 Have tea about 4 p.m.</p>	<p>7 Name some red vegetables. (This is a hard one.)</p> 	<p>8 Volunteer some time to a good cause.</p>	<p>9 Decide what's important to do today. Do it.</p>	<p>10 Does your family have a plan in the event of emergency, such as a fire?</p>	<p>11 Play a board game.</p> 	<p>12 Look in the pantry or cupboard and name four foods.</p>
<p>13 Telephone a relative and have a chat.</p> 	<p>14 Go on a hike.</p>	<p>15 Clean out a messy drawer.</p> 	<p>16 Daydream about going on a winter vacation. Where will you go?</p>	<p>17 Help decorate a cake.</p> 	<p>18 Count the legs in your family. Write the total here: ____</p>	<p>19 Look for things outside that are green.</p>
<p>20 Make a snow family. No snow? Make a snow family poster.</p>	<p>21 Martin Luther King Jr. Day</p>	<p>22 Learn a new word. <i>sasafas tumbledweed floribunda camouflaje</i></p>	<p>23 Check out the park. Too cold to slide?</p> 	<p>24 Oil a squeak.</p>	<p>25 How far can you walk on your knees?</p>	<p>26 Go to a basketball game.</p> 
<p>27 If the sun is shining, take a walk.</p>	<p>28 Find the color blue on your toys.</p> 	<p>29 Do you have a museum in your community? Check to see if there are special programs for children.</p>	<p>30 Cut out three circles and make a snowman.</p>	<p>31 Learn where polar bears live! How big do they grow to be? Do they swim in the water? Brrrrrr!!</p>	<p>What is the weather like? Calm or windy? Is it different from the beginning of the month or is it the same? Warmer? Colder?</p> 