



## GWINNETT COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

750 S. PERRY STREET, SUITE 400  
LAWRENCEVILLE, GA 30046  
PHONE: 678-377-4010

May 2012

Vol. 28 No. 5

# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Discipline

## Parents can be cranky, too!

Even the best parents have days when they're ready to give up.

But instead of trying to be perfect, allow yourself to step off the pedestal once in a while.

Sensitivity, warmth, and enthusiasm are all admirable, desirable qualities for parents.

But parents are also human beings, and human beings are subject to fatigue, illness, and emotional stress.

While it is never acceptable to become abusive with your child, it is okay to be cranky or maybe just worn out.

Parenting is a demanding job. And just like any other job, you'll have good days ... and not-so-good days.

Son, don't be so hard on yourself when your child gets on your nerves. Give yourself a break. Be cranky if that's what works today.

Tomorrow is another day. □

## Developmental

### Children love to pretend

An important form of play in early childhood is sometimes called fantasy or pretend play. This type of play usually involves imaginary roles for the child as well as imaginary companions.

By three years of age, children want to try out many different roles experienced in the real world: father, mother, doctor, nurse, police officer or fire fighter.

A child may use pretend play to assume the role of some superhero that he has seen on television or in a movie. Or maybe he makes up his own character.

Sometimes a child may reenact a previous experience, positive or negative, that he changes to suit his own purpose. For example, if some monster on television frightened him, he might later change the part to a kind monster for the story to have a happy ending.

Preschool children frequently create imaginary companions in their play. At this age it is perfectly normal to have make-believe friends.

Usually by the time a child goes to school, his interests will shift from imaginary to realistic activities.

Imaginary companions are useful for several reasons. They provide comfort and support for the young child when needed since they always

behave as the child wants.

For example, when a young child has to deal with the conflict between the need for being cared for and the need to be independent, it's possible for him to be both a baby and a baby doll's caregiver.

Imaginary companions can also serve as useful scapegoats that can be blamed and corrected as needed (for having soiled pants, for example).

It doesn't help to tell a preschooler that his imaginary companions don't exist.

They enable him to experience his own developing sense of self. And he does this in the safe environment of imaginary friends over whom he can exercise complete control.

In this safe pretend world, a young child will often display strong expressions of emotion. This provides both a release of tension and a means to explore a whole new world of feelings. □



## The power of a word

If someone told you that you could shape your young child's orientation towards becoming a successful adult by doing one thing during his or her early years, my guess is that you would do it.

Who doesn't want their children to become successful, well-rounded adults?

Well, here is that one thing: Respond firmly when necessary with the word, "No."

Even more specifically, be clear about the "no" when your youngster is having a temper tantrum to try to get his/her own way about something. There is specific teaching power in that one word.

Now this is not as simple as it first sounds. In life's stressful moments, many parents may be tempted to give in to the demands and tantrums employed by youngsters to get what they want—think of the classic grocery store exhibition, of the red-faced child screaming to get the candy she/he wants.

After all, who wants to be subjected to the embarrassment of the stares and comments of others when the little ones create a scene?

It is often difficult to maintain a long-term perspective when the short-term event is so challenging.

Think for a moment about the character traits that are developed when parents use, and stick to, that one little word: "no." Peace at any price may be a very high cost indeed to pay for not saying, "no."

Self-control, the ability to swallow one's impulse and restrain one's actions when they are not appropriate, is a vital component for successful adult lives.

As children learn to rein in their words and actions, they develop the ability to master their urges, rather than give in to them immediately.

This is a first step to being able to take over aspects of one's life, rather than have those aspects rule the individual.

Learning that "no" means something helps children slowly develop respect for others.

The original request or temper tantrum centers only on the child herself, what it is that she wants.

By not allowing children to win through temper tantrums, parents help children learn to show consideration for others.

Temper tantrums disregard anyone except the child himself. Children may not agree with the parent's viewpoint, but they are asked to respect that others have rights.

Understanding that we don't get everything in the world we want, or when we want it, helps children to develop patience.

Delayed gratification lies at the base of learning to wait for desirable things, of learning that a goal may not come immediately.

"No" judiciously applied helps children learn something about the realities of life, that the world does not in fact revolve around their needs and wants, and that others may not quickly grant their every wish.

These are valuable lessons to learn before venturing into college, or the world of work and relationships.

So, ignore the stares of fellow shoppers, and stick to your guns. That "no" has long-term, lasting value. □

## Recognizing fear in children

What can you do to recognize fear in your child and help her to overcome it?

An infant may cry loudly and exhibit a startle response—arms thrust outward, body rigid—when frightened.

Older children's reactions are more varied. They may run, cling to an adult, scream, close their eyes, and freeze in panic in a frightening situation. It is easy to recognize that these children are afraid.

But the child who shows an excessive fascination with spiders—for example, constantly asking questions about them and always looking for them—may be just as worried as the child whose fear is obvious in his behavior.

When does a child's fear get to the point that it prevents him from growing toward independence?

Sandy may be afraid to go walking in the woods because he may see a snake. That is not unusual.

But if he is afraid to go out of the house because he may see a snake in the yard or in the street, he has developed a fear that keeps him from growing toward self-confidence.

If you suspect that your child has such a fear, talk with adults who see your child in other situations—a nursery school teacher or childcare person, or another parent in your neighborhood. □

## Respecting the rights and feelings of others

The patterns for a child's relationships with other people are learned in his early years.

He learns how to respond to others and how to treat them from the way he is treated. These patterns are carried into his adult life.

You can help your child learn to respect the feelings, needs and rights of others without sacrificing his own feelings, needs and rights.

The place to start is with your relationship with him.

Do you sometimes keep your feelings to yourself when your child has done something that annoyed you or made you angry because you didn't want to hurt his feelings?

Do you hesitate to say no when he asks you to do or get something for him, even though you really don't want to do what he's asked?

This kind of well-meaning sacrifice of your own needs to those of your child is unfair to both you and him.

You don't give him a chance to learn to respect your needs when you don't let him know what they are.

Being either overly demanding of other people or overly sacrificing of one's own needs usually creates problems in relationships.

The continuous sacrifice of your own needs creates negative feelings that don't go away just because you

don't want to express them.

They may boil beneath the surface, causing you to resent the things you used to do for your youngster with pleasure.

Or they may eventually explode in anger over an apparently unimportant matter.

Either way, they will interfere with your relationship.

It's important that you treat your child in ways that encourage him to express his needs and feelings.

It's equally important that you be honest with him about your own needs. □

### Parenting

## Promoting a good self image

Helping your child learn to feel good about herself is the most important job you have as a parent.

Don't worry if you sometimes do things that you don't feel are helpful in building her self-confidence.

What's important is the consistency of your behavior. If you're usually helpful and supportive, you won't do any permanent damage if you occasionally do something that makes your child feel bad.

In fact, you can use these occasions as opportunities to talk to her later about her feelings, thus becoming more tuned in to her needs and perceptions.

Your example of turning your mistakes into opportunities for learning will teach your child to do the same.

Your confidence in yourself will give her confidence not only in you, but in herself as well.

By your example you will teach her to accept and learn from her mistakes, to strive to be the best she can be, and expect to be successful in whatever she sets her mind to. □

## 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/)

**FreeGrandmaSays**

and enter your e-mail address.

**Growing Together** is published by Growing Child, Inc., P.O. Box 2505 W. Lafayette, IN 47996 ©2012 Growing Child, Inc. Telephone: (765) 464-0920. Customer Service: 1-800-927-7289.




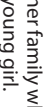




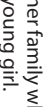




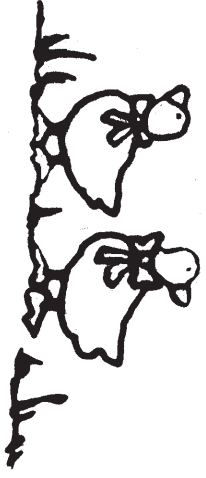

Growing Child also publishes: **Growing Child** (birth-six years), and **Growing Up** (grades K-12).

**Growing Together** issues may be reproduced in part or in full by participating organizations.

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)

# May 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>6 How many green vegetables can you name?</p>	<p>7 Who can count to twenty today? 1 ..... .....20</p>	<p>8 National Teacher Day </p>	<p>9 What sound does a rooster make? </p>	<p>10 Look for a flag flying outside. </p>	<p>11 Can you wiggle your nose? </p>	<p>12 Draw some circles and make some happy faces, sad faces, funny faces, and curious faces.</p>
<p>13 Mother's Day. Make mom a card. </p>	<p>14 If you had a horse, what would you name it?</p>	<p>15 Look for different shades of green—light, dark ... </p>	<p>16 Find a picture of another cow. </p>	<p>17 Touch your nose to your knees. </p>	<p>18 Everyone name their favorite dessert. </p>	<p>19 Armed Forces Day. </p>
<p>20 Pay an "opposites" game: old? _____ fast? _____ tall? _____ down? _____</p>	<p>21 How many words can you think of that rhyme with "may"?</p>	<p>22 Make up a new game to play with a ball and a small wastebasket. </p>	<p>23 Who is the youngest person at your house? </p>	<p>24 Which one is best to fill up the bathtub to take a bath: • strawberry milkshake • orange juice • water • chocolate milk</p>	<p>25 Draw a GREAT BIG figure 8. Use it as a racetrack for small cars. </p>	<p>26 How many things can you name that can fly? (Superman doesn't count.) </p>
<p>27 Count up all the ears at your house.</p>	<p>28 Memorial Day: Honor our Veterans! </p>	<p>29 Do you have a museum in your community? Check to see if there are special programs for children.</p>	<p>30 Have Dad tell you about a vacation he enjoyed as a child.</p>	<p>31 Count the flags on this page.</p>		



THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA  
**COOPERATIVE EXTENSION**  
Colleges of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences & Family and Consumer Sciences

*Growing Together* is a monthly publication sent to you by Gwinnett Cooperative Extension . If you would like to receive notification of newly published newsletters by e-mail, please send us your e-mail address to: [extensionservice@gwinnettcountry.com](mailto:extensionservice@gwinnettcountry.com) or contact Tricia Smith at 678-377-4010.

**Learning** *for* **Life**

Ines Beltran  
FACS Agent and Radon Educator  
Gwinnett Cooperative Extension

The University of Georgia and Ft. Valley State College, the U.S. Department of Agriculture and counties of the state cooperating. The Cooperative Extension Service offers educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, sex or disability. An equal opportunity/affirmative action organization committed to a diverse workforce.