



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Language

## Singing conversations

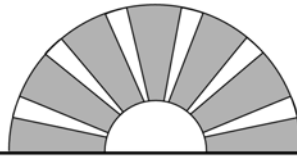
An important part of good language skills is the ability to listen. Here's a simple activity that sharpens listening skills and keeps kids on their toes while making conversation.

First, tell the children that conversations for the next 10 minutes (or some specific time period) must be put to music.

Then select some tune you all know well, such as "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," and give an example by singing a few lines.

Begin the conversation by "singing" a question and waiting for the answer. You might sing, "What did you eat for lunch today?"

Younger children may need some help to get started—offer a practice session and don't expect perfection! □



## Child's Day

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Music

## Learning and music

Music is more than fun; it is education.

As a youngster sings along, dances, or "plays" an instrument, here are the sorts of things she learns:

1. **New vocabulary.** Many songs, particularly folk songs and nursery tunes, repeat words or refrains over and over again. For example, think of the words for "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush."

This type of repetition strengthens associations between new words and their meanings.

2. **Time sense.** When swinging the arms, moving the body, or tapping an "instrument" in time with music, the child is exposed to time relations between musical notes.

She becomes aware of order—this comes first, this comes next, and this comes last.

This kind of order is important in both understanding and using speech. It is also extremely important later in learning to read.

The importance of the order of words is demonstrated by

what happens to a sentence when just one word is put into a different order—"Now, I want to go"/"I want to go *now*."

3. **Counting.** While children first learn to count by rote, they will learn to count from such rhymes as "One, two, buckle my shoe."

4. **Self-control.** It is necessary to really listen and attend to what a song says in order to carry out the actions.

When it says, "clap," "jump," or "stop," she must translate what she has heard into a physical movement and clap, jump, or stop.

We urge you to make music a family affair. Before the days of television, families created their own entertainment, and singing together was very popular.

Develop your own songbook from current rhythms, folk-rock, and old-timers. And don't forget to teach your children the songs you love and remember from your own childhood. □

## The pre-tricycle period

Toddlers will not be ready to ride a tricycle until they're almost three years old. But at two, a toddler is ready to learn about wheels and how to make them go.

She will delight in a wagon to pull. She will busy herself loading, unloading, and transporting toys, blocks, and assorted objects. And, of course, she will love having Dad or Mom give her a ride in the wagon!

Many children will be ready to tackle riding a kiddie-car by two. Kiddie-cars are the little three-wheeled "trikes" without pedals.

The child sits on the seat and moves herself along by "walking" her feet and steering with the handlebars.

Be sure to get a sturdy kiddie-car because it will take a lot of punishment in the next six to 12 months!

Don't be alarmed if your toddler pushes herself backward at first. It is much easier to push with the thigh muscles that straighten the knees than it is to pull yourself along by muscles that bend the knee. Toddler may also push or pull herself along using both feet together.

Using the legs alternately will come as she tries to imitate tricycle or bicycle riders in the neighborhood.

Some children may push the car around for several months before even being willing to sit on the seat.

Other toys ridden by children this age include wooden engines, trucks, horses, etc. These are not guided by handlebars. Toddler can push or pull herself around on them using her legs and feet. They are good toys because your child will enjoy them in many different ways for several months to come. □

## Learning about relationships

Your child needs experiences with other children in order to put into practice what she has learned from you about getting along with others.

She learns how to act with others from family members. But she needs to try out these ideas with other children in order to gain competence and self-confidence.

With other children, she can work out different ways of acting and reacting that she probably wouldn't risk trying with you or other adults.

She can get practice being the boss as well as being bossed by

another. She can be a leader as well as a follower, a teacher as well as a learner, a caregiver as well as the one receiving care.

With you and other adults in her life, she is limited to certain behaviors that are appropriate because she is a child. With other children, her options are more open.

Further, just as you need time away from a child-centered life she needs to get away from the adult-oriented world.

She needs to be with other people whose view of the world and orientation toward life are similar to her own. Through her

relationships with them, she can learn to cooperate, compromise, and strike bargains.

She needs to be able to work out satisfying relationships with other children in her own way, at her own pace, in terms of her own needs. This is why "free play" time or recess can be the most important part of a child's day.

Try to work out an arrangement with other parents to get your children together on a regular basis, to play or go on outings.

Give your child the opportunities, support, and encouragement she needs to work out satisfying relationships with other people. □

## Make a bird from birdseed

Here's a clever project that older kids can do themselves and younger kids can do with some supervision.

Start with one piece of paper towel and about 2-3 tablespoons of birdseed.

Place the birdseed in the middle of the paper towel, pull the corners together and hold the birdseed closed securely in the paper towel with a rubber band. This process makes a ball.

Next find a tall, narrow glass jar and fill it with water.

Place the paper towel with the birdseed ball on top of the jar with the ends of the paper towel sticking inside the jar in the water. The birdseed ball rests on top of the jar, not in the water.

Now, place the jar in a window or on a table where it will get some sunlight, wait a few days and see what happens.

Once the birdseed sprouts, the birdseed ball and jar look like a bird with feathers on its head!

Take a few minutes to talk about how it all happened. □

## MusiKids

music classes  
are available at  
Child's Day

## Dealing with stress

Most parents today live stress-filled lives. Their minds go a mile a minute, thinking of all they have to do. Signs of stress include:

- Being easily irritated by things that normally wouldn't bother you.
- Being angry about things over which you have no control, such as the weather or being stuck in rush-hour traffic.
- Feeling rushed and pressured to get things done in less time than is realistic.
- Feeling frustrated or helpless at not being able to keep up with the pace of your life.
- Feeling tightness in your neck muscles, shoulders, or back.
- Finding yourself frequently clenching your jaws or grinding your teeth.
- Feeling constantly tired even before you start a task.
- Having a headache frequently during or at the end of the day.

Here are some long-term strategies for dealing with stress:

**Develop the habit of making a list of things you have to do.** An unspecific, vague sense of "having lots to do" can wear you down. Making a list helps organize what tasks need to be done.

**Make a list of what needs to be done immediately.** Be realistic. Trying to accomplish everything at the same time is unrealistic and can be overwhelming.

**Check off tasks as you finish them.** A sense of accomplish-

ment—even in getting small jobs done—can give a person renewed energy.

**Give yourself more time than you think the task will take.** Being rushed creates unnecessary pressure which ultimately saps one's energy.

**Make time for yourself.** This includes planning to take regular breaks and to look after your own interests.

**Keep notes on whatever helps you the most to de-stress.** For some people listening to music or looking at a particular scene can be relaxing. For others a mental sound or picture—such as the sound of waves breaking on the seashore—is more effective.

**Exercise regularly.** Build some exercise program—even short, brisk walks—into your overall daily schedule. Treat regular exercise as a duty to yourself and others, rather than as an optional daily activity.

**Find a long-term friend with whom you can share the cause of your stress.** This person must be a good listener whom you trust to protect your confidentiality. □

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## Reward



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