



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

Hard or soft?

Here's a game that is easy to put together. First, collect a variety of objects around the house that are either hard or soft.

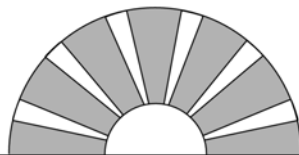
Examples: Hard—rock, block, book, toy truck, comb, bar of soap. Soft—tissue, cotton ball, eraser, scarf, sock, pillow, towel.

First have the players divide the objects into two piles by identifying each one as hard or soft.

Next, to make the task more difficult, put the objects into a bag or box and identify them by feeling only, without looking, and saying whether they're hard or soft.

Finally, the players can locate and identify a new set of objects to play another round.

The game can be made easier or harder, depending on the objects you choose and the ages of the players. □



Child's Day

Preschool · Kindergarten · Child Development Center

2525 Wallingwood Drive # 100 • Austin, Texas 78746
Phone: (512) 327-3274 • FAX (512) 327-3281

May, 2002

Parenting

Spending time with children

Most parents value spending time with their children. But all too often our lifestyle doesn't lend itself to "togetherness." Even when we plan special times with our children, things don't always go smoothly.

Here are some tips for helping make the time spent together happy and productive for all:

- If you spend time at work during the week and your child spends the majority of time in school or at childcare, staying home and having an unstructured day during the weekend might be a better way to nurture a relationship than going to see a movie or visiting the zoo.

A relaxing time doing what you all enjoy—which may be as simple as fixing pancakes for breakfast or going on a hike—may be the best use of your time.

- Do something with your children that you like to do. If you do something you enjoy, the pleasure is often contagious. What about a game of miniature golf? Go swimming together. Play a game of croquet.

- Consider the basics: hunger and sleep. It's difficult to have fun with a tired or hungry

child (or adult, for that matter). Try to keep naps on schedule. Eat an early lunch if you're going out for the afternoon, or take along a simple lunch.

- Sometimes let children join in your projects. The adult world is appealing to children. After all, children want more than anything to be "big." They also want to spend time with their parents.

For example, while you're making dinner, put a plastic tablecloth on the floor. Give your youngster a pan of water (not very deep) and some potatoes to wash with a vegetable scrub brush.

- Make a short list of four or five activities you can all participate in. Then let the kids choose the one they'd like most. This helps them feel like they are part of the family, and that their preferences are considered.

We need to manage ourselves to make time for what's important to us. But that isn't always easy.

Kids are kids for only a short time. Building a strong relationship with them now means you can enjoy the rewards for a lifetime. □

The perfect child

Many parents want their children to be well-accepted and to be “popular” in school and among their peers.

It must be recognized that it is not possible to produce a perfect child in the way it is possible to produce a perfect loaf of bread. Children cannot be molded like dough—if we could, there would be many identical children!

Some children are, by nature, outgoing, aggressive, or sensitive while others are quiet, easier to manage, or passive.

Parents should not blame themselves, or their children, if their children’s personalities or characteristics are not similar to their own or those they wish to encourage.

In fact, a characteristic which may be seen as a weakness in early life can be a virtue later on. For example, the serious, quiet kindergartner may be the scientist or scholar of the future.

On the other hand, what may appear as an asset in the early years can, in fact, interfere with effective maturation. This point is something often observed in children who are great in Little League because they have a competitive nature, competitive parents, and/or physical strength, but who are unable to overcome their stardom in order to become productive adolescents or adults.

Since there is no way to predict how and which parental characteristics will be most influen-

tial, the best thing that parents can do is feel secure that they have been good parents. Then they can relax and allow their child to feel the effects of their relaxation.

The opposite is to experience stress which emerges when children are unable to meet particular standards set by parents who want their children to excel academically, socially, athletically, or in other ways. Surely the most enduring social characteristics are good manners exhibited in respect for others and respect for the environment.

Most importantly, children should have freedom to enjoy being themselves—each with unique personal characteristics. □

Toys

Keep the toy box up-to-date and interesting

Many toys—like dolls, trucks, building blocks and stuffed animals—just seem to accumulate over the years.

Sometimes children’s playthings aren’t toys at all but the same simple household items you enjoyed as a child.

To expand a child’s play horizons, provide a variety of cardboard boxes big enough to crawl into, hide under, paint, and finally demolish with pleasure.

Old items of clothing for dress-up will provide endless entertainment. So will a box of art supplies or sewing materials like buttons,

(not for kids under two) empty spools, string, and glue.

Instead of “new” toys, consider expendable gifts such as bath cosmetics, stickers, markers, and modeling clay. They’ll probably be enjoyed and used up in a year, and they’re inexpensive.

Is the toy box full? Get rid of toys your child no longer uses. Nothing bores or confuses a child more than an overwhelming collection of toys.

With young children, it’s a good idea to “rotate” toys, putting away a few that haven’t been played with for a while, and bring-

ing them back when you take a few of the current toys out of circulation.

As a child outgrows toys, you can quietly put them away, and if the child never asks for them again, give them away, sell them, or save them for another child.

Older children can become involved in the process, helping to sort out those they no longer want to give to a charitable organization or sell in a garage sale.

A used toy sale or kids’ flea market can be fun and shows children the value of recycling their possessions. □

Healthy eating without fuss

Nutritionists tell us that if children are consistently presented with items from the major food groups, they will choose a healthy diet.

This doesn't mean they will eat the same amount of food each day or even that they will eat a balanced diet.

Teething, colds, or a slow growth period can cause a lack-luster appetite. It's quite common for a child to temporarily reject meat or go on a banana binge.

It does mean that given the chance (and an absence of prodding and tension about the foods they eat) kids can develop reasonable eating habits.

Make it easier for your child to enjoy eating by trying some of the following:

- Sidestep potential conflicts by substituting "likes" for "dislikes" whenever possible.

If Becky hates roast beef but

loves hamburger, why fight it? They have the same nutritional characteristics.

Lean on fruit during an "I-don't-like-vegetables" phase or offer cheese instead of eggs.

- Take advantage of your child's "hungry time." In one family the oldest son awakened very hungry each morning and could easily consume almost a day's supply of nutrition at breakfast.

His parent supplied large quantities of oatmeal, fruit, eggs, and toast—and ignored his "pickiness" about food choices during the rest of the day.

- Provide a choice of nutritional snacks on those "I-don't-want-anything-to-eat" days. Good snacks are better than nothing.

- Change the setting. A "bored-with-food" preschooler may regain her appetite with a bang if allowed to picnic in the park or back porch or eat in a tent (a sheet

thrown over a card table) or on a tray while reading or building blocks. Where is it written that food must always be consumed at a table?

- Once your child is more agreeable about food, let him or her help you in the kitchen. You'd be surprised what kids will eat if they can make it themselves.

Two-year-olds may "hate" salads but let them tear up lettuce or other greens for a taco and they may soon change their minds.

Slightly older children can shape dough for cookies, slice bananas, or assemble cheese sandwiches for toasting.

When children help with meal preparation, you can expect some spilled milk and flour-coated floors. But keep a happy, encouraging attitude and children will soon associate food with good times and maybe even fun! □

Health & Safety

Crossing the street

With warmer weather, kids are out and about more often. Help them learn good safety rules and practice crossing the street safely. Teach your child to:

1. Cross at the corner;
2. Look left, right, and left again before crossing.
3. Watch in particular for turning cars;
4. Stay in the crosswalks;
5. If there is a traffic light, cross only when the facing light is green or when the walk sign is on; and
6. Always follow the directions of the crossing guard or safety patrol. □

MusiKids

is available at
Child's Day

\$200

Reward



for referrals!
Ask for details!