



# Child's Day

Preschool · Kindergarten · Child Development Center

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## Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Behavior

### Praise shows you care

One way to foster better parenting skills is to praise more than you criticize. Praise a job well done, but don't dole out "false" praise.

If, for example, your son is struggling to become an average tee-ball player, don't praise him by saying, "You're such a great ball player" just to make him feel good. Instead say, "Your batting has really improved," or "You did a good job." Be specific and fair in your praise. Kids are pretty good at knowing where they stand, and they appreciate an honest appraisal.

Praise developmental milestones and academics, but don't forget to praise attitudes as well. You reinforce good behavior when you tell your daughter, "That was very nice of you to share with Molly."

The behavior that gets rewards gets repeated—so make sure you're praising the positive behaviors you want to see again and again. □

### Language

## Build confidence in the beginning speaker

Two-year-olds are likely to experience feelings of inadequacy with regard to their speech. The late Dr. Haim Ginott championed an approach, a feedback technique, which not only helps the child overcome this sense of inadequacy but also helps to build a strong self-identity.

Let's consider an example. You're having morning coffee with a neighbor when your child rushes in to tell you something that is important to her. Since she's not yet a fluent speaker and she's speaking in a hurry, you don't know what she's trying to tell you.

First, let's talk about what to do:

(1) Echo what she has said as best you can and replace the part you can't understand with one of the "wh" words. For example: Youngster: "Sam broke too me ever." Parent: "Sam broke what?"

(2) Assure her that you truly understand her feelings (even if you do not understand her speech). Reflecting her feelings back to her is very reassuring to a child and helps her develop self-confidence.

None of us ever outgrows the basic need for emotional sup-

port. For a child, this can be expressed by a hug or a squeeze accompanied by some simple feedback: "I know you are upset right now. I understand how you feel. Let's sit down and talk about it."

Treating your child as an individual with her own personal dignity will enable her to overcome her feelings of helplessness or inadequacy. It is also the best way to help her gain self-confidence and thereby build a positive self-concept.

Now, let's talk about what **not** to do.

(1) Don't belittle the child with criticism by saying, for example, things like this: "Who can understand you when you talk like that?"

(2) Don't threaten her. "If you don't talk better, I'll have to send you to your room."

(3) Don't bribe her. "If you say it nicely, you can have a cookie."

(4) Don't command her. "Say it properly so we know what you mean."

(5) Don't overprotect her. "You poor girl—you haven't yet learned to talk." □

## Smoke no more

Not only do children face physical hazards when their parents smoke, but those children suffer emotional distress when they're old enough to know what's going on around them.

Smoking dangers are well-documented on television and in the media. Most school systems teach the perils of tobacco in science, social studies, and health classes.

Children whose parents smoke worry about what their parents are doing to themselves. One single mother of three quit smoking when her youngest sobbed, "Mommy, where will we live when you die from cigarettes?"

Parents who smoke in the face of medical facts are sending the message, "I don't care about me."

They are also sending other messages:

- Pleasure is more important than safety.
- If it feels good, do it—regardless of the consequences.
- And, as the hazards to non-smokers become more apparent, children receive the message: "I don't care about you, either."

Children cannot protect themselves from the preventable health threats. Responsible adults must do that protecting.

We must guard our most important resource, our children, from physical and emotional damage.

Mothers and fathers who smoke need to stop avoiding the truth. They need to stop smoking. □

## One-of-a-kind paintings

Here are a few ideas to help kids create an original work of art.

1. Make a little puddle of paint on a piece of paper. Tip the paper so the puddle runs. Tip it another way. After it dries, see what kind of creature the kids can create by adding legs, an antenna, eyes, etc.

2. Dip a piece of string into the paint and drag it or squiggle it across the paper. What does the picture look like?

3. Use an eyedropper to drop a drop of paint from just above the paper; then drop a drop from way up. What's the difference in

the way the drops look?

4. Make another puddle of paint on the paper. Use a straw to blow the paint outward. The paint will branch out in odd patterns. See what kind of picture can be made with the result.

5. Using a thicker batch of paint, use ordinary objects as printers. What kind of print does a sponge dipped in paint produce? What about a cotton-tipped swab? A cookie?

See what kind of ideas the kids come up with.

When the pictures are complete, have someone guess how they were done. □

## Bird watching

Grown-ups and children can spend some quiet minutes together in contemplation and appreciation of our feathered friends.

First, point out the differences in color—cardinals are red; blue jays are blue; sparrows are brown. See how many different colors you can find.

Birds come in different sizes, too—tiny wrens, small sparrows, medium-size cardinals and robins, and large crows. Can the children name other birds and their sizes?

Watch how the birds walk—pigeons have a unique waddle,

robins skip along, small birds hop. Can you name two more birds and how they move?

Can you tell the difference in the birds' songs? Some have a unique sound like the blue jays' noisy call or a repetitious song like the cardinal. Other birds seem to be making noise constantly. Help the kids isolate and identify different bird songs.

Take along a bird book for identifying local birds and share the information about the birds you locate with your junior birdwatchers. You'll be surprised at how eager they will be to watch—and learn! □

## Making a Treasure Map

This is a challenging and intriguing activity for early school-age children that can be adjusted to an easy level.

To start, arrange checkers on a checkerboard so that they cover every square of a portion of the board.

Under one checker place a small square of paper with the letter "T" written on it. This is the "hidden treasure" and it can stand for itself or represent a more tangible reward.

The player starts with her fin-

ger on the checker you indicate. Then she moves her finger in steps, either right (R), left (L), or straight-ahead (S), according to a set of directions you have written out for her.

Your directions, or "Treasure Map," might look like this: R S S L S.

Each letter is a symbol for the direction of movement for that step. If the child follows the steps correctly, she will lift the checker on the last step and find the treasure beneath it. If not, she will discover an empty square.

At first, as few as two or three steps will be hard enough to challenge her. The number of steps can later be increased as her ability permits.

When she gets good at following the map, she will want to make maps for you to follow, although this may take more time.

The benefits of this activity are many. It helps strengthen a child's sense of direction, both internal and external; it helps a child learn to follow directions carefully; and it uses real letters as symbols. □

## Parenting

### How can I help you?

Sometimes it seems like children act their worst at just the wrong time ... when time is short, when it's time to go to bed, when it's time to eat, when it's someone else's turn.

On most of these occasions, an adult's attention is somewhere else and not on the child. And, in most of these situations, the child doesn't have much choice about what's going to happen.

Sometimes a simple way to quiet a fussy, demanding little one is to lower yourself to his or her eye-level, touch the child on the arm or hand, and ask quietly, "How can I help you?"

A brief conversation may calm fears, help the child understand what will be happening in the next few minutes, or reassure a youngster of your love in the midst

of a busy morning.

You may be able to direct the child to the next activity ("We'll be leaving in a few minutes, so please get your coat."), answer an urgent question ("Yes, I know you need a quarter today, and it's right here."), or help fasten a reluctant boot.

If it's not possible to grant the request, you can briefly explain why, and ask for help and cooperation in doing what must be done.

Children don't always understand our words, but they can get a clue about how we feel from our voices and our attitudes. It only takes a minute to offer help and understanding in the midst of confusion. A minute of a big person's time costs nothing but it is precious to a little person. □

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