



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Developmental

## Building confidence

Parents can encourage their child to demonstrate confidence in herself. How? By helping her to look positively at her own accomplishments and good qualities.

Self-pride is essential to self-confidence. If she's doing a good job at something, make a point of asking her how she feels about what she's doing.

Let her know that you think she should feel good about herself "for working so hard," "for helping out with her little sister," "for sticking with such a hard job," and so on. Be specific in your feedback—and be honest.

Think about having a time every day, perhaps at mealtime, when each family member can report on something they did or something that happened to them that they feel good about.

Think about how you feel when someone compliments you on a job well done. That's one way to encourage children to have confidence in themselves. □



## Child's Day

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December, 2002

## Parenting

### Increase your self-confidence as a parent

Being a parent is a tremendous responsibility. Parents are expected to feed and clothe tiny, helpless human beings, to teach them to get along in the world, and to encourage them to like themselves and others.

These many responsibilities often lead parents to question themselves and their abilities. Many times parents feel they just don't measure up to the job they're required to do.

Sometimes these feelings can chip away at parents' self-confidence and affect their ability to interact with their children. Therefore, one of the most important things parents can do is build their own self-confidence.

One way to help improve self-confidence as a parent is to evaluate realistically the job you're doing. Here are three steps to help improve self-confidence.

First, don't expect yourself to be perfect. The picture of a "perfect parent"—one who is always kind, patient, loving, intelligent, in control, and so on—is impossible to fulfill. And it may not be so perfect in the first place.

For example, parents who are always patient may not be preparing their children for a world

of impatient people. Failure is difficult enough to deal with when it is real, but trying to be perfect is simply inviting unnecessary failure.

The important thing is not perfect behavior at all times, but growth toward doing things better more often.

A second factor in realistic self-evaluation is to compare your behavior as a parent to your own past performance rather than to some other person's parenting.

Instead of feeling like a failure because you did not spend three hours a night working or playing with your children like the parent next door, praise yourself for spending a half hour more with them this week than you did last week.

Finally, be specific about your self-evaluation. If you try a new method of discipline for a week and it fails, do not simply decide that you are a failure as a parent.

Tell yourself that you did a good job of sticking to the new plan or that you are a pretty good parent for caring enough to try something new, even though it did not work. Make your failure easier to accept by praising your success. Then move on. □

## Practice writing

Kids love to write, even if it's just crayon squiggles on a big piece of paper.

For early writers or those who are truly beginning, here are some ways to encourage children to share their writing:

- Establish writing across the miles with “letters” to grandma or cousins. Children love to receive mail back as well.
- Help children write their own greeting cards as well as design the wrapping paper for gifts with their own scribbles.
- Play post office at home. Utilize advertising mailing.

- Go to great lengths to display children's writing on the refrigerator, bulletin board and in scrapbooks.

Build a supportive and encouraging environment of words with your child at home. Good writing starts with good talking.

Go places and see things with your child, then talk about what has been seen, heard, smelled, tasted, and touched.

Young children grow into a stronger control of language when loving adults share experiences and conversation about those experiences. □

## Learning to share

Sharing is an important skill youngsters need to master. And parents sometimes worry that their children won't learn how. Here are some tips to encourage sharing:

- When friends come to play, help your child put away the special toy she doesn't want to share.
- Help your child select “share toys” that won't break or get used up.
- Buy or collect toys that are good for sharing, such as construction sets and outdoor play

equipment.

- Model sharing. Show your child how to share by your example.

You might say, “This apple is good. Would you like some of mine?” Or ask your child to share and then say, “Thank you for being such a good sharer.”

- Play games that require taking turns. This will help children learn the concept and practice taking turns.
- Don't expect perfection. Learning to share takes time . . . and practice. □

## Catch your child being good

There is a great deal of information available about how to handle children when they are misbehaving. But parents don't hear often enough about the value of praising children when they are *behaving*.

One educator has said, “What gets rewarded gets repeated.”

This means that if you want to see better behavior from your child, watch what she's doing and comment on her positive behavior.

When she carries her plate to the sink, tell her: “Good job, Sarah!”

When he is sharing his toys with a playmate, say: “Jason, I like the way you share your toys with Bryan.”

When she goes to bed quietly and with no fuss, tell her: “I noticed how helpful you were about going to bed this evening. That's a good thing to do.”

Listen to what you're saying to your children. If your comments are more negative than positive, it's time to make an effort to change.

Watch what kids do, catch them being good—and reward them with a smile and a “Well done!”

It only takes a minute, and it can make a difference in your child's behavior. □

## Tips for safe holidays

With the holidays coming up, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Consumer Product Safety Commission have some safety tips.

### Toy Safety

- Follow recommended age ranges on toy packages. Toys that are too advanced could be a safety hazard for younger children.
- Before buying a toy or allowing your child to play with a toy that he has received as a gift, read the instructions carefully. If the toy is appropriate for your child, show him how to use it properly.
- Be careful of holiday gift wrapping, like bags, paper, ribbons and bows. These items can pose suffocation and choking hazards to a small child.
- Children under age 4 can choke on small parts contained in toys or games and balls with a diameter of one and three-quarters of an inch or less.
- Children under age 8 can choke or suffocate on uninflated or broken balloons. Remove strings and ribbons from toys before giving them to young children.
- Watch for pull toys with strings that are more than 12 inches in length. They could be a strangulation hazard for babies.

### Food Safety

- Bacteria are often present in raw foods. Fully cook meats and poultry, and thoroughly wash raw vegetables and fruits.
- Be sure to keep hot liquids and foods away from the edges of counters and tables, where they can be easily knocked over by a young child's exploring hands.

- Wash your hands frequently, and make sure your children do the same.
- Never put a spoon used to taste food back into food without washing it.
- Always keep raw foods and cooked foods separate, and use separate utensils when preparing them.
- Always thaw meat in the refrigerator, never on the countertop.
- Foods that require refrigeration should never be left at room temperature for more than two hours.

### Happy Visiting

- Clean up immediately after a holiday party. A toddler could rise early and choke on leftover food or come in contact with alcohol or tobacco.
- Remember that the homes you visit may not be childproofed. Keep an eye out for danger spots.
- Keep a laminated list with you of all the important phone numbers you or a baby-sitter are likely to need in case of an emergency. Include the police and fire department, your pediatrician and the poison control center.
- Before sending your kids over to play at someone's house, ask if there is a gun in the house. If the answer is yes, you need to make absolutely sure that all guns are stored unloaded and locked - ideally in a gun safe - with ammunition locked separately. Include the question along with other things you might normally discuss before sending your child to someone's house. □

## Accent the positive

To see an increase in your child's positive behavior, try to notice and pay more attention to the things she does well rather than to her mistakes.

Without thinking we often take for granted those behaviors of others that please us. Then we exaggerate out of proportion the things they do wrong.

This approach can backfire with children because they tend to repeat those behaviors that get the most attention.

For example, the more you ask a child to stop an annoying habit, such as playing with her food, the more she may do it.

Try ignoring the behavior instead. Then when you notice her eating neatly, compliment her. It won't be long before you begin to see a change in her behavior.

Of course, there are some behaviors that are dangerous or destructive that must be stopped immediately. Your good sense will tell you the difference. □

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