



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Health & Safety

Healthy hand washing

If you have not done so already, now is a good time to help your child develop healthy hand washing habits.

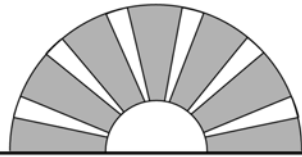
Proper hand washing can prevent the spread of many communicable diseases. Water alone, however, won't kill germs. Soap is needed too.

Drying the hands with a disposable paper towel will help stop the spread of germs.

Here are some appropriate occasions for your child to practice hand washing:

- When he comes into the house after playing outdoors.
- After using the toilet.
- After petting an animal.
- Before eating food.

Good habits—learned early—can last a lifetime. So, help your child develop the good habit of washing his hands. □



Child's Day

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August 2003

Infants & Toddlers

Moving parts in action

When a baby is born, she experiences the effects of gravity for the first time. Her body, head, arms, and legs have weight and she must learn to live in a world where everything she does is affected by her own weight and the weight of objects she handles.

To learn to live in this new world, a baby begins by moving first her arms and legs. Her head weighs about one-fourth of her whole body, so she doesn't move it much at first.

The early fist-clenching, arm-waving and leg-kicking a baby does are mostly responses to hunger or discomfort. When she has been fed, she usually goes back to sleep. But there are a few periods each day that the very young baby spends in just moving. As she develops from week to week, these periods become longer and her movements become stronger and more frequent.

A baby's kicks and waves may seem aimless to you, but she is busy learning about herself and her new world. She learns how her legs feel when she kicks, stiffens or stretches them. She learns how her arms feel as they change position.

She learns that when she

moves against gravity, she must work harder than when she moves with it. She begins to learn that there is a difference between herself and everything else in the world that is not herself.

As she kicks her legs or waves her arms, a constant stream of sensation is fed back into her brain from her muscles, joints, tendons and skin. These are sorted out, matched with similar sensations and filed in her "memory bank." With this "feedback" of sensations from her moving body, a baby learns about her world and about herself.

She is developing patterns of movement on which she will later build such important coordination skills as purposeful reaching and grasping, crawling on her stomach, creeping on her hands and knees, walking, and running.

Moving is learning for the baby. Not only does she learn from movement itself, she also learns that when she moves purposefully, she can make something happen.

This is a giant step toward gaining confidence in her ability to change. □

Be a good role model

How can parents teach their children to be responsible for their own actions? One way is by being good role models themselves.

- **Be predictable.** Children need to know the rules. In a world full of contradictions and change, a parent should be predictable. If a child makes a mistake, she needs to know what to expect. Parents' position should be clear. A few simple rules, firmly enforced, are more effective than many rules loosely enforced.

- **Be respectful.** No one likes to be ridiculed or embarrassed. Within the heart of every child is the potential for greatness. Don't squelch it. It is just as easy to take

a child aside and point out an error as it is to make fun of her for a mistake in front of her friends.

- **Respect the opinions of children and recognize their intelligence.** When making plans involving them, ask for their views and give consideration to their preferences, when possible. Treat children as though they are important because they really are.

- **When you're wrong, say so.** Just because children are smaller doesn't mean they can be easily fooled. You earn their respect when you say, "I goofed. You're right." Children love honesty. Living truthfully and acting truthfully are powerful examples. If you want your children to be able to admit mistakes, show them

how to do it.

- **Be dependable.** As children grow, they need less from their parents and more from themselves, but one need they will always have is dependable parents. They need to know they can count on their parents to be on their side; to show love and concern when things don't go right; to forgive them for mistakes they make; to bake their favorite cookies. Parents are the roots of a child's changing world.

- **Be an example.** Avoid hypocrisy. If you tell a child not to smoke or use drugs but you smoke and use drugs, what behavior can you expect? Children mirror their parents. See them and you see yourself. □

Developmental

Building self-esteem

Self-esteem is something that is learned, not something we are born with. The term "self-esteem" refers to people's evaluation of their own worth as human beings. Persons with high self-esteem think well of themselves. Those with low self-esteem have feelings of inferiority about themselves and about their abilities.

Young children develop a sense of their own self-worth—good or bad—mainly from interacting with their parents and other significant adults in their lives.

Parents who give their child positive messages ("I like what you just did") create feelings of

positive self-esteem. Those who give mainly negative messages ("You're a dummy") create feelings of inferiority in their child.

The early childhood years are a particularly important time for building self-esteem. Research studies indicate that children who have acquired high self-esteem by the time they enter school earn better grades, are more popular with their peers, and need less disciplining at home and in school.

Here are two ways in which parents can help build self-esteem in their child:

1. **Listen to what your child wants to tell you—not just to**

what you want to hear or what you want to say to her. She will know you are paying attention to her by your smile, eye contact, a pat on the back, or nodding your head.

2. **Become more aware of what you say to your child, when you say it, and how you say it.** Imagine your words and actions are being recorded. In that way you will see and hear yourself as your child sees and hears you. If you catch yourself saying or doing things you wish you hadn't said or done, being aware of your own behavior will help you avoid doing the same thing again in the future. □

Praise is like sunshine

Consider this insight from psychologist Jess Lair: “Praise is like sunshine to warm the human spirit; we cannot flower and grow without it. And yet while most of us are only too ready to apply to others the cold wind of criticism, we are somehow reluctant to give our fellow man the warm sunshine of praise.”

Train your eye to see the good in your children, your friends, your co-workers and neighbors. Identify their gifts, talents and skills, and praise them lavishly for them.

The story is told of a 10-year-old boy who labored in a Naples,

Italy factory. His dream was to become a singer, but his first teacher discouraged him, declaring: “You can’t sing. You haven’t any voice at all. It sounds like the wind in the shutters.”

However, his mother, a poor and uneducated woman, placed her arms around the boy and praised him. She told the boy she knew he could sing and could see improvement in the quality of his voice.

That mother’s praise and encouragement changed her son’s life. His name was Enrico Caruso, and he became the most famous opera singer of his generation. □

Learning about big and little

There are many experiences in daily life, which you can use to help preschool children learn the words and idea of size.

For example, when you’re doing the laundry, ask your child whose clothes are bigger—his or yours?

Have him help to put all the big towels in one pile and the small ones in another, or in separating all the baby’s small clothes from his larger ones.

When you’re shopping, ask him to hand you the larger of two boxes or the smaller of two cans of a certain brand.

When putting his toys away on a shelf, have him try lining them up from the smallest to the largest, or put all the small ones on one shelf and all the big ones on another in order of their size.

As you use the words, you introduce him to them and to the ideas of long and short, thick and thin, heavy and light, and so on.

□

Pizza party!

There’s no denying it: Kids love pizza.

You can make these mini-pizzas together. Serve them with grapes, melon balls, orange sections or peeled fruit, such as apple slices.

While you’re eating, read the lively story of *Curious George and the Pizza* by H.L. Rey.

Afterwards, settle the children down for naptime with a quiet activity like drawing pictures of the little monkey on his big pizza adventure.

Here’s how to make the pizza:

Preschooler mini-pizza

Toast whole wheat, English muffins, or pita bread.

Spread with spaghetti sauce (from a jar).

Sprinkle with pre-shredded mozzarella cheese.

Broil until cheese bubbles.

Be careful with little ones—the cheese is very hot, so let it cool before they dig in! □

\$200
Reward



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