



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Health & Safety

'Shaken Baby' syndrome

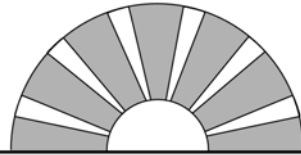
'Shaken Baby' syndrome refers to brain injuries that can occur in infants (under one year) due to shaking the child.

Sometimes this occurs during play and sometimes it is actually the result of abuse.

The skulls of young children are large enough to allow the brain to move, but the child's neck muscles are not strong enough to support the head. As a result, the brain can bang against the skull, causing internal bleeding.

All play and exercise activity with infants should be gentle to avoid injury to the head and neck.

Injuries can occur even in innocent play. Remember this simple rule: Children under one year old should never be tossed in the air; children should not be carried over one's arm or shoulder or across the arms without the head and neck being supported. □



Child's Day

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September 2003

Parenting

Cultivate more joy in your life

Parenting is just one part of being a person. Parents, too, need to find ways to free their spirit, to appreciate all that life has to offer. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Develop a short memory. Practice the fine art of developing a short memory when it comes to hurts, wounds, and wrongs that have been inflicted on you. Doing so will help you let go of yesterday's pain and free you from the burden of anger and resentment.

"Good to forgive; best to forget!" observed poet Robert Browning.

2. Look for the humor in daily events. Joy is the feeling of smiling inside, so laugh a little more. Laughter lightens life and animates the spirit.

Billy Graham recommends it: "A keen sense of humor helps us to overlook the unbecoming, understand the unconventional, tolerate the unpleasant, overcome the unexpected, and outlast the unbearable."

3. Encourage someone who is discouraged. Deliberately seek out someone who needs your words of encouragement and praise. There is great

wisdom in this statement made by Sir James Barrie, author of *Peter Pan*: "Those who bring sunshine to the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves."

4. Make peace with your life. "Take what is given and make it over your way," advised Robert Frost. "My aim in life has always been to hold my own with whatever is going on. Not against, with."

No one has a life that is trouble-free. A parent can fail us; a friend can betray us; a marriage partner may be a source of disappointment; a child can rebel and engage in self-destructive behavior.

Let go of regrets. Embrace the joy of the present. Anticipate the beauty of the future.

5. Count your blessings. Sure, there is a lot wrong in the world and sometimes in our lives. But there is a lot that is right and good as well.

Get out a pencil and paper. Give yourself five minutes to write out as many blessings as you can recall. Add them up. Keep the sheet around and re-view it from time to time. It's bound to elevate your mood. □

Organizing time

Young children organize time on the basis of important events which are repeated. Some events like a birthday or a holiday occur only once a year. Grocery shopping occurs weekly, while eating takes place three or four times daily.

The regularity of these events helps children acquire an internal clock about when things will happen.

Preschoolers can participate in some planning for future events. Such planning will teach two related time concepts:

1. The past, present and future are separated by time.
2. There is a need sometimes to delay gratification of one's expectations and desires.

Some children have difficulty organizing events in time. Activities to promote good time organization at the preschool level can be incorporated into daily events such as dressing, using songs and rhymes, or helping with a daily chore.

Routine activities of daily living, such as dressing or bathing, involve the sequencing of events in time.

Children who dress themselves may occasionally put shoes on before socks. Or they omit underpants because they have not followed the correct sequential order. Discovery of an omission or error is a learning experience.

Equally valuable is the planning, in advance, of what clothes to put on and in what order. For

example, you tell your child to select what she would like to wear tomorrow. Then she places these items in a row on the bed: what comes first, what comes next, what follows this, and so on.

Songs that have a theme that is repeated have always been popular with young children. "The Farmer in the Dell" is an example. The story unfolds in a sequence, while there is a constant, the farmer, who makes decisions about whom to "take."

Rhymes and rhythms have the same role—to teach about events in time. The Dr. Seuss books, for example, often don't make a lot of sense to a young child. But she likes the sounds and the beat, which occur in patterns through time. □

The wonders of water

Preschool children are curious about the world around them. You can use this natural curiosity to help your child learn about the wonders of water.

Begin with three different bowls of water—one cold, one lukewarm, and one very warm (but not too warm for your hand).

Have your child put his hand into each bowl so that he can feel the different sensations.

Next let him fill an ice cube tray with water which can then be put in the freezer. Ask him if he already knows what will happen.

Later let him see and feel the solid ice cubes.

You can also discuss some of the uses of water: (1) To drink when thirsty; (2) To wash with when dirty; (3) To swim in when hot; (4) To cook vegetables; (5) To water flowers and house plants.

Then teach him some other uses, such as to wash clothes or to provide heat by hot water pipes or a hot water bottle.

You child can also learn that some objects float on water while others do not. Let him engage in this scientific experiment: Collect

objects to put, one by one, in a large tub of water: a stick, a stone, a feather, a nail, a piece of paper. Before he drops each object into the water, ask him to predict whether the object will float or sink. (Note: Do not leave a child alone with a tub of water.)

At first his predictions will not be very accurate, but with practice, his ability to predict will greatly improve. By teaching your child about the wonders of water, you are helping him to be more observant and more aware of other wonders of nature in his environment. □

Praising children

Children flourish and thrive when they receive praise from the important adults in their lives. Praise is an essential component of a child's daily life. Through it a child receives positive, ego-building messages that say: "You are unique." "You are important to me." "You can do it!"

Here are some effective ways to offer the gift of praise to your child.

- **Increase your praise level.** Criticism is often long and detailed but praise is short. It's easier to find fault than it is to see and express the many positives in a child. Every family should try to increase the level of praise in their home.

- **Be specific.** Rather than using vague and general terms, shape your vocabulary to be explicit and precise about what you want to commend.

Instead of saying, "I love your painting," try saying "You have a fantastic eye for color." Rather than saying, "You are such a good helper," say "Thank you for putting all of our clothes in the right drawers."

- **Stay honest.** Indiscriminate praise over every act and event will make the child question your sincerity as a parent. Children know when adults are insincere.

- **Identify progress.** Like adults, children want to know that they are developing and improving their skills. Imagine how the young girl felt after she completed a series of cartwheels and heard her mother say: "Wow!

You did four cartwheels in a row. That's something you couldn't have done a year ago!"

- **Don't compare.** Stay away from statements like these: "You are the best reader in your class." "You run faster than the other team players."

While such statements may not be false, they put someone else down. Comparisons can work against a child by promoting unnecessary competition and the fear of failure.



Also, no parent should ever compare his or her child negatively with another child. ("Why can't you be good like your friend Billy?")

Each little comparison may seem unimportant in itself but added together they can cause a child to believe that she will never be able to measure up.

- **Avoid negative compliments.** Unwittingly, some parents undermine their own efforts at praise by offering negative

statements. For example: "It's great to see you being good for a change." "I can't believe you've finally cleaned up your room."

Children believe what they're told about themselves. If you suggest negative qualities, the child may begin to think of himself that way.

- **Commend effort, not results.** Children will be greatly motivated when they are praised simply for the attempt at doing something new.

If a child is unable to dress herself completely, you can point out how nicely she has pulled on one stocking. Then she may go ahead and try to put on her shoes. You should commend the effort, whether she is successful or not.

In addition to words of praise, try reinforcing your comments with a physical act. A warm embrace, a loving kiss and a high five will serve to strengthen words of approval and admiration. □

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