



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

## What is it?

Here's a simple word game you can play any time, any place, and with children of a variety of ages.

Name several objects that all fit into one category and have the children try to guess what the category is. In other words, what do the objects you name have in common? Here are some examples:

Robin, cardinal, blue jay — all birds.

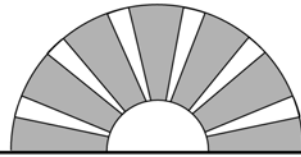
Shoe, sweater, shorts — all articles of clothing.

Cow, pig, horse — all animals found on a farm.

Make the game easy or hard depending on the players and their ages.

When things get dull, turn the game around and name a category. Players then have to name objects that fit into that category. Or name several items and include one that doesn't belong.

Games like this help children learn about sorting into categories, and about how things differ and how they are the same. □



## Child's Day

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## Behavior

### All that energy!

You have probably been amazed by your preschooler's high level of energy. He dashes across the room just to pick up a piece of paper. He wriggles and giggles while you read him a story.

Studies of children's activity levels indicate definite age-related patterns. A child's activity level increases from birth until about three or four years of age. After that age, there is generally a notable decrease in activity each year.

In other words, three-year-olds are usually more active than one-year-olds. But seven-year-olds are likely to have a lower activity level than four-year-olds.

Within any age group, of course, there is likely to be considerable variation. Some of this variation appears to be genetically based. For example, boys of all ages are generally more active than girls.

Environmental influences also play a part. For example, it has been observed that some very active children become even more restless whenever adults try to restrict their activity level.

What implication for parenting can be drawn from these studies? It should be reassuring for parents to know that:

- A fairly high level of activity is normal in children during the preschool years.

- Most preschool children have a short attention span and can't sit still for a prolonged period of time.

- Boys tend to be more active than girls.

- Trying to force a restless child to sit still will generally not be effective in settling him down.

- Making minor adjustments in the environment — such as shortening the length of a story being read — will generally produce better results.

- Being sensitive to your child's unique characteristics and making reasonable accommodations to fit his own level of activity will generally be in his best interest.

- If you feel that your child's energy is too much for you, remember that there is light at the end of the tunnel: most children's level of activity decreases throughout the childhood years.

- In the meantime, being patient with your child's level is most important during the preschool years, even though at times it may be a great frustration to you. □

## Dealing with problems

In today's world parents are confronted with a wide variety of problems and stressful situations. The National Association for Mental Health has suggested 11 positive steps which an individual can take for dealing with problems.

**1. Talk it out.** When something worries you, don't bottle it up. Confide your worry to some level-headed person you can trust. Talking things out helps relieve your strain, helps you to see your worry in a clearer light and often helps you to see what can be done about it.

**2. Escape for a while.** Lose yourself in a movie or book or a game or a brief trip for a change of scene. But be prepared to come back and deal with your difficulty when you are more composed.

**3. Work off your anger.** If you feel like lashing out at someone who has provoked you, try holding off that impulse for a while. Let it wait until tomorrow. Meanwhile, do something constructive with the pent-up energy. Pitch into some physical activity.

**4. Give in occasionally.** If you find yourself getting into frequent quarrels with people and feeling obstinate and defiant, remember that that's the way frustrated children behave.

Stand your ground on what you know is right, but do so calmly and make allowance for the fact that you could turn out to be wrong. If you yield, you'll usually find that others will too.

**5. Take one thing at a time.** For people under tension, an ordinary work load can sometimes seem unbearable. Take a few of the most urgent tasks and pitch into them, one at a time, setting aside all the rest for the time being. Once you dispose of these you'll see that what remains is not such a horrible mess after all.

**6. Do something for others.** If you feel yourself worrying about yourself all the time, try doing something for somebody else.



**7. Shun the superman urge.** Some people expect too much from themselves and get into a constant state of worry and anxiety because they think they are not achieving as much as they should.

Decide which things you do well and then put your major effort into these. Then, perhaps, come the things you can't do so well. Give them the best of your efforts but don't take yourself to task if you can't achieve the impossible.

**8. Go easy with criticism.** Some people expect too much of others, and then feel frustrated, let down, and disappointed when another person doesn't measure up.

Remember, each person has his or her own virtues, shortcomings, values, and the right to develop as a individual. Instead of being critical about the other person's behavior, search out the good points and help that person develop them.

**9. Give the other fellow a break.** When people are under emotional tension, they often feel that they have to get there first — to edge out the other person. Competition is contagious, but so is cooperation. When you give the other person a break, you often make things easier for yourself.

**10. Make yourself available.** Many of us feel that we are being left out, slighted, neglected, or rejected. Instead of shrinking away and withdrawing, it is much healthier, as well as more practical, to continue to make yourself available — to make some of the overtures instead of always waiting to be asked.

**11. Schedule your recreation.** Many people drive themselves so hard that they allow themselves too little time for recreation. For such people a set routine and schedule will help, a program of definite hours when they will engage in some recreation. And, in general, it is desirable for almost everyone to have a hobby that absorbs them in off hours. □

## Most child poisonings result from common household products

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reports that about 78,000 children under five years old visited U.S. hospital emergency rooms due to unintentional poisonings in 2003.

Most of these poisonings included products commonly found in the home. More than 9 of every 10 suspected poison exposures occur at home with readily-available household products. About 30 children die from poisonings each year, down from 450 in the 1960s.

What can parents and other adults do? Keep harmful products and medicines out of children's reach, storing items in their original containers, and properly using child-resistant packaging.

Poison centers nationwide received more than one million calls about poison exposures involving

children five years and younger in 2003. Among the potentially toxic household products involved with calls to the poison centers were:

- Personal care products, including baby oil and mouthwash containing ethanol;
- Cleaning substances, drain openers and oven cleaners;
- Over-the-counter pain relievers — including ibuprofen, acetaminophen, and aspirin — and cough and cold medicines.
- Hydrocarbons, such as lamp oil and furniture polish; and
- Adult-strength vitamins and supplements containing iron.

When repackaged at home in non-child-resistant containers, medicines and potentially hazardous household products become even more accessible and dangerous for young children.

Rose Ann Soloway, chair of the Poison Prevention Week Council, noted that "Grandparents who keep their prescription drugs in non-child resistant pill boxes should be especially aware of this risk. Child-resistant packaging doesn't work if it's not used properly."

Many poisoning incidents occur while the products are in use and a parent or caregiver steps away or is distracted for a moment. Children can get hold of a product and swallow it during the short time it takes to answer a phone call or the doorbell.

If a child swallows or handles a potentially dangerous product, immediately call the poison center hotline at 1-800-222-1222. Your call will be answered by experts at your local poison center.

To get a free packet of poison prevention publications, write to "Poison Prevention Packet," CPSC, Washington, DC 20207, or visit [www.poisonprevention.org](http://www.poisonprevention.org). □

## Art

### Kids love 'slime'

Of course, parents think 'slime' is gross, and that's probably the truth! But kids love to mess around with it, and sometimes play like they're "sculpting."

Here's how to make your own slime. Start with a quantity of water, and slowly add cornstarch, mixing with your hand (or your child's hand). Add enough cornstarch so that the slime feels wet when you're pouring it, but feels dry when touched.

Color can be used but do it first by adding powdered tempera to cornstarch before mixing or adding food color to the water before mixing.

Is this really art? Who knows, but the kids enjoy it enormously! □

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