



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

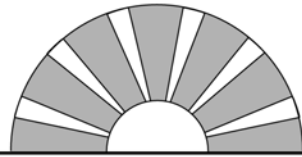
Academics

## Get ready to write

Children are naturally curious and want to know about the mystery of writing.

Parents can build on this natural curiosity and encourage them to explore the world of the written word. One way to do this is to create a writing corner.

- It must be your child's own place. Any flat surface with elbow room will do.
- Stock it with "grown-up" items such as tablets, erasers, envelopes, markers, and pencils.
- Encourage gifts to your child associated with writing—pencils, colored pens, markers, special paper, and stickers.
- A typewriter, even a battered portable from a garage sale, will delight a child.
- Chalkboards and dry eraser boards in the corner provide hours of exploration with writing.
- Establish writing across the miles with letters to grandparents or cousins. Children love to receive mail back. □



## Child's Day

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Parenting

## Dealing with mistakes

Do you sometimes worry about the mistakes you make as a parent? Do you fret about possible harmful effect your mistakes might have on your child? Have you lost the ability to relax as a parent?

These questions need to be addressed because they are of concern to so many parents.

Some of the anxiety parents experience is no doubt due to being bombarded with so much information—sometimes contradictory—about child development. So we can consider each of these questions in turn.

First, do you sometimes worry about mistakes you might make as a parent? Actually, everyone—even the most renowned child development expert—makes mistakes at one time or another. It's part of being human. So, there is no need to be consumed by guilt or blame yourself unnecessarily if you make a mistake.

Do you worry about possible harmful effects your mistakes might have later on your child? Fortunately most child development experts tell us that a young child is a highly resilient creature.

This means that mistakes generally will not harm her if you are being reasonable and are genu-

inely trying to help her.

As long as parents continue to strive to do what they think is best for their child, their love—even with some mistakes—will eventually triumph over all else.

Have you lost the ability to relax as a parent? If so, step back from what you are doing. Give yourself a break so that you can enjoy raising your child.

By doing yourself this favor, you are also doing your child a favor. Your child needs a relaxed and happy environment in which to grow and develop.

So, if you answered "yes" to the questions at the beginning of this article, here is a threefold message for you:

- (1) Realize and accept that you will make mistakes.
- (2) Focus your attention on what is good for your child rather than on guilt for what you may have done wrong.
- (3) Give yourself and your child the gift of a relaxed home environment.

Finally, at the end of a long and trying day, look back and consider all the good things you've accomplished today. It will help you end the day in a positive frame of mind. □

## Climbing safely

As a toddler approaches the ripe old age of two, you may begin to wonder whether she could be part mountain goat!

When Toddler explores her surroundings from an upright position, her world begins to look quite different. Now she can see objects which remained hidden from her while she was lying in a horizontal position. And seeing those objects stimulates her desire to explore.

Once she begins to creep up short flights of stairs, it isn't long before she graduates to walking up short flights when her hand is held or when she is holding onto a convenient railing. Of course, she brings one foot, then the other, to each step in turn in what is called "marking time."

However, she cannot go back down the stairs that way for some time. Instead she will creep down backwards.

Even after Toddler develops the coordination necessary to achieve the left-right, left-right alternate foot movement that adults use, she may prefer to back down on her hands and knees.

Chances are, Toddler won't stop with climbing stairs. She will climb onto chairs and from there to a table to reach what she wants.

Of course, some children are by nature more daring than others and will climb anything climbable, moving from chair to bookcase or dresser or chest of drawers.

Climbing *up* comes soon after walking. The ability to climb *down* comes some time after the ability to climb up. The adventurous spirit

leads the child to reach upward and explore vertically. Once there she may cry indignantly because she does not know how to get back down.

How can you handle the panic that strikes when you find your child on a table or atop a chest of drawers? You don't want her to fall and hurt herself—but neither do you want to dampen her enthusiasm for exploration. Certainly you don't want to make your child a "fraidy-cat," too timid to explore or to try out new skills,

So, be calm. Don't communicate your fright to Toddler. Help her down but don't snatch her up, comforting and scolding simultaneously.

Do communicate the fact that tables and chests are *not* for climbing. But reserve your instruction until after your child is safely on the ground and after you have had an opportunity to calm down.

In that way, your words of instruction will more likely be helpful to your child.

Instead of discouraging climbing, provide Toddler with safe climbing experiences. Toddler's urge to climb is your clue to provide climbable objects other than furniture.

Outdoor play equipment with a short ladder to climb or steps up to a slide would be good. Slides are ideal because a child climbs up—but slides down.

As she climbs, Toddler is learning about height and depth, about how to work her arms and legs together, about balance and holding on, and about how things look from "up there." □

## How does your child see himself?

Self-concept or self-image is how a child thinks of himself in relation to the people and things in his world. What is your child's concept of himself? Is he a very important person in his own eyes?

It is very important that a child have a genuine feeling that he matters in the world, and that he is important.

Parents can influence their child's self-concept development. Here are three general principles:

**1. Let your child know that you love him.** A child needs to know that he is important to you, that he has your love—even when he has engaged in some unlovable activities. (In this case, a parent can say, "I love you, but I don't like what you've just done.")

**2. Help your child handle his failures.** What messages are you giving him when he fails? He needs to know that you're on his side, that you accept him—win or lose—for who he is. Your corrections should deal with what he's done, not what he "is".

**3. Don't be dishonest.** Your child knows when he hasn't done well, when he has failed. If you let him know that you know this, but that it isn't the end of the world, he gains confidence in you to reflect an honest value to him.

Preschoolers try to find their place in the world by experimenting with different ideas and concepts. They look to their parents for guidance and support. Make sure you give your child the room he needs to learn and make mistakes. Also make sure he knows you're on his side—win or lose. □

## Help children deal with their feelings

When adults with psychological problems go to a therapist, they usually must learn how to express their feelings adequately.

Children, on the other hand, have a natural tendency to express their feelings openly—as long as their parents don't try to repress them. Believe it or not, it is healthy for children to express negative feelings and get them out of their systems.

In this way they can learn how to express those feelings in an appropriate manner. They will also learn how to control the actions that may accompany their feelings.

Just as little children should be permitted to express themselves, they also should be helped to understand that their parents appreciate how they feel.

How can parents do this? Psychologists Carl Rogers and Haim Ginott recommend that parents “reflect feelings.” This means to show that you genuinely understand how a child feels by putting his feelings into words and reflecting them back to him.

With a toddler, it is easiest sometimes to use his very words. For example, suppose your child comes to you crying and complaining, “Billy hit me!” You answer, “You're crying and you're angry because Billy hit you.”

What you have done is put his feelings into words and reflected them back to him. Then he knows you have some understanding about how he feels. This is particularly important for the child whose vocabulary is not yet adequate to convey his feelings. □

## Dealing with a picky eater

Dealing with a picky eater can be difficult for parents, but be patient. Continue to offer a variety of new foods, and avoid getting into power struggles.

Some helpful tips include:

- Remember your responsibility ends with the serving of nutritious foods. You cannot make your child eat. He must decide that for himself.

- Keep a regular schedule for meals and healthy snacks. Don't allow your child to make you a short-order cook.

- Avoid serving snacks close to mealtimes. New foods seem most attractive when a child is hungry.

- Place small ‘one or two bite’ portions of the new food on your child's plate alongside more familiar foods

- Be patient. Make no comment whether or not your child eats the new food. After five or ten exposures, the food may not seem so ‘new.’ Then he may decide to try it on his own. If he does, begin serving the new food on a regular basis.

- Invite your child to help prepare meals. Children are more likely to eat foods that they have helped prepare.

- Be a good role model. Children notice what their parents eat. So, eat your vegetables and your child may, too. □

## Make a mummy

When you find yourself in the middle of a rainy day and the kids are lobbying for “something to do,” here's a simple activity that will keep them occupied and busy.

The only ingredients are several rolls of inexpensive toilet tissue and several lively children.

First, divide the group into pairs—one is to be the mummy and the other is the “wrapper.”

The object is to completely wrap up the mummy from head to foot, leaving slits for eyes and nose, of course.

Once everyone is ready, start them off at the same time. The first pair finished wins.

What's the best method to wrap a mummy? The kids will have to decide if they want the mummy to twist and turn, or if the wrapper should move around and around the mummy.

It's not as easy as it sounds—you may want to take a “turn” yourself! □

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