



Child's Day

Preschool · Kindergarten · Child Development Center

2525 Wallingwood Drive # 100 • Austin, Texas 78746
Phone: (512) 327-3274 • FAX (512) 327-3281

July 2006

Growing Together[®]

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

What's wrong?

Here's a game that calls for observation skills. First select a room where the game will be played. Ask the kids to stay in another room while you "set the stage."

Next, do silly things to the objects in the room by rearranging them, putting things in the wrong place, or combining objects that don't belong together. For example, move a footstool in front of a door. Place magazines or books under a chair.

Then ask the children to come in and look at the room without touching anything. After everyone has had a good look, ask them to tell you "what's wrong?" Give some hints if there are puzzles they haven't noticed.

Adjust the difficulty to fit the ages and abilities of the players. Keep safety as the number one rule—don't move or involve objects that could fall or break.

After the kids get the hang of it, play another game with harder puzzles, then ask if they want to arrange a puzzle for you (with adult supervision)! □

Social Skills

Shy children

Many shy parents worry that their children will also be shy. You can avoid this by instilling a sense of self-pride in your children. Children who receive support when they attempt new things feel confident.

One way to do this is by showing enthusiasm for small accomplishments. Remembering to turn a television off when leaving a room is no small task for a preschooler and deserves praise.

A pleasant smile in the morning from a sleepy child or a meal at which your toddler feeds herself should all be met with a positive comment. This makes children feel successful.

It's not necessary to force a child into social situations that make her uncomfortable. Encourage her to play with friends and attend parties. But if she appears reluctant to socialize, try inviting one or two children to your home. A child who seems to be shy outside her home may flourish on her turf.

By accepting children as they are and providing them with comfortable opportunities in which to socialize, parents can provide a foundation from which their children can go into the world with confidence rather than with hesitation. □

Art

The ecological sculptor

Collecting junk is fun for kids, especially when there's something to do with it after it's collected. With an abundant supply of (safe) junk, strong glue and paper, almost any frivolity can be created.

Start collecting paper towel rollers, reels from sticky tape, spools from thread, scraps of material, gift wrap and kitchen foil, paper sacks, ribbons, elastic, shells, pebbles, anything that is reusable and safe.

As children sort and assemble the junk, ask: "Where do you think this came from?" "What was this used for?" "What's another way to use this?"

Questions like this encourage children to organize their ideas and to think creatively.

Some of their answers will be incorrect or absurd, but you can provide new information without discrediting their answer. "Well, that's interesting. Do you want to know something else about this object?"

You can also talk about ecology and the fact that by collecting junk you're helping to reuse waste rather than discard it. □

The importance of play

It is generally through play that a preschool child learns about the world around her and then assimilates what she has learned into her concept of reality. Preschool children enjoy three different forms of play: physical, manipulative, and symbolic.

Physical play refers to activities that involve use of the muscles. These activities emphasize action and include running, hopping, jumping, climbing, throwing, sliding, and playing with a ball.

Manipulative play refers to activities by which a child learns to gain better control over her environment. These activities include the use of puzzles and building blocks (which also require some physical play skills) as well as games that involve social manipulation (“What can I do to make Daddy come to me?”).

Symbolic play involves manipulation, not of people, but of events and objects. These play activities would include the use of fantasy; pretend play, and nonsense rhymes. In symbolic play, a child can change events, identities and emotions for the sake of her play, thereby gaining more complete control over her newly created world.

In a child’s life, play has many important effects on development.

Physical development. Play activities that involve physical exercise help to promote a child’s general health. Specific activities that involve, for example, per-

ceptual-motor skills also help to develop a child’s eye-hand coordination.

Cognitive development. Through play a young child is able to try out her understanding of how the world works. What we see in a child’s play is not just trucks, dolls, teacups and saucers. It is the child’s cognitive conception of the world as she experiences and understands it.

Emotional development. Perhaps the single most important contribution of play to emotional development is the role it has in the formation of a child’s self-concept. Play is also a means by which a child can deal with emotional conflicts (for example, by using puppets to talk about hurt feelings).

Social Development. In play activities, a child has an opportunity to experiment with different roles, power relationships, and rules. For example, a young child may tell a doll or teddy bear to “sit in a corner” for some type of misbehavior.

Because young children enjoy play, it becomes a very natural way for them to learn about themselves and about the world in which they live.

So the next time you see your child engaged in play, you will know that she is not just “goofing off.” She is engaged in the “work of childhood,” namely, promoting her physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. □

Love with no strings attached

Unconditional love means that you love your child with no conditions. You love her today and tomorrow, and you will continue to love her in spite of the fact that her behavior is unacceptable sometimes.

You can show unconditional love by hugging your child. Tell her specific things you like about her or her behavior. “Thank you for helping your brother up the steps—I like to see you being kind to him.”

Tell her how much she is loved. It doesn’t have to be big words or long sentences. Just a simple “I love you” can do wonders for a child’s self-image.

If your child knows you love her, she has the freedom to grow. Knowing she is secure and loved will give her the confidence to try something new, to try harder to meet your expectations for her.

Your child needs to know she is loved even though her behavior may not always be lovable. You may at times discipline her for negative behavior and at other times praise her for positive behavior, but you can love her all the time.

That’s why it is important for her to understand how you can love her but not like her behavior. “I love you, Tina, but I don’t like your behavior right now. Don’t push your brother—he’s smaller than you are and he could get hurt.”

To your child, you are the most important person in her world. Your love is the best gift you can give her—today and tomorrow—so be generous. □

The Seven Irreducible Needs of Children

Two of the most recognized names in child development in America today are Dr. T. Berry Brazelton and Dr. Stanley Greenspan. For decades these two men have worked with young children and their families, and have become trusted experts on the importance of the first three years of life.

Several years ago, they published a joint work, "The Irreducible Needs of Children: What Every Child Must Have to Grow, Learn and Flourish." If you have not yet read this book, let me summarize their key points.

Irreducible needs — interesting words — mean the most basic needs, less than which it is not possible for children to develop well, to "flourish." Here's what they said children must have.

- The need for ongoing nurturing relationships. In the first three years of life, children need to have steady, warm relationships with at least one or two individuals. This is far more important than educational games and cognitive stimulation. Children's emotional growth precedes and is critical to their intellectual and moral growth. Parental choices about work and childcare need to be considered in the light of this need.

- The need for physical protection, safety, and regulation. Children need assurance of their physical security and protection from all harm. This links with psychological security

- The need for experiences

tailored to individual differences. By nurturing the nature of each unique child, parents help children reach their full potential.

- The need for developmentally appropriate experiences. Parents must have realistic expectations for their children. Too much, or too little, or inappropriate stimulation for children's age level or stage of development hinders the process of growing and learning.



- The need for limit setting, structure, and expectations. Children have to be shown how to live positively with others and how to solve problems. Parents need to understand children's weaknesses and empathize, as they set clear limits.

- The need for stable, supportive communities and cultural continuity. Children need to grow up in a stable environment that provides a continuity of values from family, peers, and the community at large.

- The need to have their fu-

ture protected. The authors point out that nations and society must commit to protecting these irreducible needs for all children, in our own country and in less developed parts of the world. Without this commitment, they argue, all children's futures will be in jeopardy.

In their writing, Brazelton and Greenspan raise difficult questions and challenges about how our current choices in family roles and structures, in work and lifestyle all impact on meeting these irreducible needs. Read more about their very specific recommendations about working parents spending evening time with children, limiting television, and helpful divorce custody. Hopefully, this brief summary will whet your appetite to read this important book.

Resolve to read "The Irreducible Needs of Children: What Every Child Must Have to Grow, Learn, and Flourish." By T. Berry Brazelton and Stanley Greenspan. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2000. □

Born Musicians

Discover the Gift of *Song*

Ask about
music classes
for your child