



# Growing Together<sup>®</sup>

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Games & Activities

## Add 'em up!

Here's a fun ball game that can be easily assembled from materials on hand.

First, start with several containers that will hold a tennis ball (or another similar ball) such as cans, plastic containers, small wastebasket.

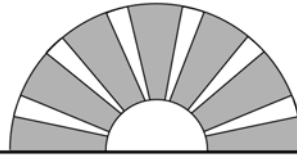
Next, assign points to each container and then arrange the containers in some order.

The object is to toss the tennis ball into the containers that have the largest value so that the highest score can be accumulated. (Likewise, players can reverse the game and try for the lowest score.)

The game can be made easier or harder, depending on the players' skills. For example, a soft, sponge ball is easier to toss; smaller containers are harder to hit.

Players can divide up into teams or everybody can try to score a combined number of points in a given time period.

Make up your own rules for your own version of the game. □



## Child's Day

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## Developmental

### 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, he 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 him for a mistake in front of his 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. I'm sorry. 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?

With children, one living example is worth 10,000 empty words. Children mirror their parents. See them and you see yourself. □

## 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 reflex-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 or 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 sensations 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.

"Exercise periods" for the young baby should be encouraged. Loose clothing should allow a baby free movement of arms and legs. At least once during the day she should have some time in a warm, draft-free place where she can play in just her diaper.

Roll her gently from side to side. Gently hold one foot, then the other, then both feet so she must pull or push to free herself.

Don't restrict her movement to the point of frustration or anger. When she pushes or pulls, resist her gently, then let her move. Talk to her all the while and make a happy game of it.

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. □

## Take advantage of transition time

Most families spend a great deal of time "in transition" — getting from here to there or getting ready to do something else.

Some examples are the time spent in the car, getting ready for school, getting ready for bed, preparing meals, and bathing. These are transition times. It is during these times that relationships between parents and children are built and strengthened.

You have a choice during each transition time. You can treat it like a task and concentrate only on getting it done, or you can make some of these transition times "relationship-building" times.

You might want to schedule five minutes extra for bath time so you can play "boat" with your child. Or talk about your day when you pick up your youngster so he, in turn, will feel comfortable talking about his day.

You might use the time for casual conversation instead of talking about chores to do when you get home.

Sometimes you can have conversations about "wishes" or favorite things to do or places to go.

Children have a lot to say about what they like and don't like, and what's happening in their lives, for example, if we just take the time to ask questions ... and then listen. □

## Recognizing fear in children

What can you do to recognize fear in your child and help him to overcome it?

An infant may cry loudly and exhibit a startle response—arms thrust outward, body rigid—when frightened.

Older children's reactions are more varied. They may run, cling to an adult, scream, close their eyes, or freeze in panic in a frightening situation. It is easy to recognize that these children are afraid.

But the child who shows an excessive fascination with spiders—for example, constantly asking questions about them and always looking for them—may be just as worried as a child whose fear is obvious in his behavior.

When does a child's fear get to the point that it prevents him

from growing toward independence?

Sandy may be afraid to go walking in the woods because he may see a snake. That is not unusual. But if he is afraid to go out of the house because he believes he may see a snake in the yard or in the street, he has developed a fear that keeps him from growing toward self-confidence.

If you suspect that your child has such a fear, talk with adults who see your child in other situations—a nursery school teacher, a childcare person, or another parent in your neighborhood. They can tell you if they've observed signs of fearful behavior.

Then you or other familiar adults can talk with your child about his fear. □

## How to help a child get along with others

Children are more successful in their relationships when they feel comfortable than when they are self-conscious.

Parents can help by being supportive and encouraging rather than critical or discouraging. Here are some dos and don'ts:

**DON'T** suggest she has trouble getting along with others. ("Nobody really likes you.")

**DO** give her positive feedback for getting along well with others. ("I really like it when I see you helping Joey put on his shoes.")

**DON'T** insist she "make up" with someone she's still angry at.

**DO** allow her to work out her own relationships with a minimum of interference.

**DO** respect her wishes about how and with whom she wants to spend time.

**DON'T** compare her with other children.

**DO** stand up for her, especially with adults. Everyone needs someone they can depend on, no matter what. □

## Bells make musical fun

For a fun musical game, collect several different types of bells—a sleigh bell, a cowbell a dinner bell, a desktop bell, a birdcage bell.

As your child plays with the bells, encourage her to listen to the unique sound each one makes.

Then play a game. Have her turn around or close her eyes. Ring one of the bells and see if she can tell you which one it is.

Games like this help children learn to discriminate between one sound and another. □

*Born Musicians*  
Discover the Gift of Song

Ask about  
music classes  
for your child