



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children®

Games & Activities

## Can you find a stone that looks like Abe Lincoln?

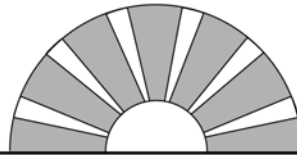
Here's an outside game that requires sharp eyes. When you're taking a walk, ask your child to bring you the smallest stone she can find.

Next, ask her to look for the whitest stone she can find, or the roundest stone, or the smoothest stone.

You can continue to think of more characteristics to look for—a stone that looks like the moon, a stone with a hole in it, a stone too heavy to carry, a stone that looks like a dog, and so on.

Finally, ask her to select a stone that looks different from the rest, and have her explain to you how it is different. Or she can pick a stone she really likes and talk about why she likes it.

For kids who are really interested, this could be the beginning of a rock collection. □



## Child's Day

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Academics

Discipline

## Learning math concepts can be fun

Children begin to learn math concepts long before they go to school—by determining the difference between these things and those things, for instance, or sorting objects which belong together, or ordering objects in space.

An example of how children order things in space is when your preschooler helps put away the pots and pans in the kitchen.

At first he may push them into the cupboard any old way. But when he does this, the door won't close. Then you might suggest: "Why not try putting the cookie sheets in first? I always put them on the bottom."

When the child does that, the door will close. And he has expanded his knowledge of order—of how parts fit together.

Children also learn math concepts by cooking. Sugar, flour, and eggs can be measured, mixed, sifted, and stirred.

There are all sort of abstract mathematical concepts in the kitchen—heavy, light, long, short, more, less, a little bit, a lot, spoonful, cupful. □

## Raising a positive child is an art

Raising children who are fun to be around is an art. Three important parts of that art are speaking positively, encouraging skills, and conveying reasonable expectations.

• **Speaking positively.** Children reflect what they see and hear. If they are surrounded by criticism, pessimistic thoughts and unfriendly talk, they will learn to speak and act accordingly. If they are surrounded by encouragement, praise, and positive thinking, they will learn to reflect those qualities.

• **Encouraging skills.** When children are praised for their efforts, rather than their accomplishments, they learn that the process of learning is important and that mistakes are all right.

• **Reasonable expectations.** Children most often live up (or down) to the expectations their parents have for them.

Once you set an expectation, you will consciously and unconsciously convey that to your child.

With positive encouragement and feedback, chances are those expectations will be met. □

## Doing a good job as a parent

Many parents want very much for their children to be well accepted, to be “popular” in school. But most parents recognize that it is not possible to produce a perfect child just as it is not possible to produce a perfect cake.

Children cannot be molded like dough. If we could, there would be many identical children!

Some children are outgoing, aggressive, or sensitive while others are quiet, compliant or passive.

Parents should not blame

themselves or their children if the children’s personalities or characteristics are not similar to the parents. In fact, a characteristic, which may be seen as a weakness in early life, can be a virtue later on.

For example, the serious, quiet kindergartner may be the scientist or scholar of the future.

On the other hand, what may appear as an asset in the early years can interfere with effective maturation.

An example is the child who is great in Little League because of a competitive nature, competitive

parents, and/or physical strength.

The same child, however, may be unable to overcome his or her stardom in order to become a productive adolescent or adult.

Stress emerges when children are unable to meet particular standards set by parents who want their children to excel socially.

Since there is no way to predict how—or which—parental characteristics will be most influential, the best thing parents can do is to feel secure that they have done a good job as parents, then relax and allow their child to feel the effects of their relaxation. □

## Dress and dance

How would a clown dance to rock ‘n roll music? What does a favorite dinosaur character do when the band plays a waltz?

Here’s a good way to find out—dress up and dance.

First, have each child select a favorite role—clown, cowboy or cowgirl, superhero, dancer, and so on.

Next, help each one put together a costume to represent that role. The costume can be as simple as a hat, or more elaborate with a dress, cape, gloves, boots, and accessories.

Then, put on some favorite music.

The idea is that each person

dances as he or she believes his or her character would dance.

Vary the music so that more than one kind is represented—march, polka, slow dance, rock ‘n roll, waltz.



This kind of activity calls for some imagination in putting together a costume and in interpreting the role into dance moves.

As you’re putting together an outfit, talk about how and why the character would dress and act.

The kids will want to trade costumes and keep dancing, but stop after a few costume changes to leave some ideas for next time.

Secret tip: Want to make the affair really entertaining? Design a costume for yourself and a few favorite adults and join the dancing yourself!

Nothing tickles kids more than for parents and other adults to join in the fun. □

## Helping brothers and sisters get along

How your child gets along with his brothers and sisters can make the difference in whether your family life is orderly (relatively speaking) or chaotic. Here are some tips for peace on the home front:

- **Try not to compare one child with another.** They are different people. Each has his or her own ways of reacting, special strengths and weaknesses, rates of growth and development.

- **Notice the things that make each child unique,** and encourage each child to develop special talents. Accept your children's differences and you will help them accept themselves and each other.

- **Try to spend time each day alone with each child.** This "special time" should be the child's

to use as he wishes. You can offer a story, a game, or simply your presence, and let her choose what you will do. These special times help you know and enjoy each child more and help them feel special to you so they can stop competing so much for your attention.

- **Try to provide cooperative activities.** For example, when you go to the supermarket, have one child spot an item you need, and then have the other child get it and put it in the cart.

In addition, try to compliment each child any time you see them working and playing together well: "Tommy, thank you for helping Michelle get dressed. You're really a big help to me." □

## When kids fail

Most children can handle success—but how can parents help their children handle failure?

First, your child needs to know that you're on her side, that you accept her for what she is, win or lose. Your comments should reflect on what she's done, not on what she "is."

Second, don't be kind by being dishonest. Your child knows when she hasn't done well, when she has "failed." When you acknowledge that you know this, too, but that it isn't the end of the world, your child has confidence in you to reflect an honest value to her.

Finally, let your child know every day and in many ways that you love her. A child needs a lot of hugging, even at times when her behavior is definitely "unhuggable."

As children try to find their place in the world, they look to their parents for guidance and support. Make sure you give your child the room she needs to learn and make mistakes, but also make sure she knows you're on her side—win or lose. □

## Social Skills

### Should parents take children to a funeral?

Since death is a part of life, it is something about which all children must learn.

The death of a family friend can be a learning experience. It is important that parents handle the matter with sensitivity so the child's words or actions do not cause undue pain for the bereaved family.

- How old is the child? Seven is not the magic number for all children, but most can reason and understand at that age.
- How well did the child know the deceased?
- Does the child want to go to the service?
- Is the child capable of respect for the ceremony?
- Have you talked to the child, explaining what to expect, what he or she will see, how other people might react, and why the service is important?

Parents must decide what the best procedure is for the individual situation and child. □

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