



Growing Together[®]

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Nutrition

Encourage healthful snacking

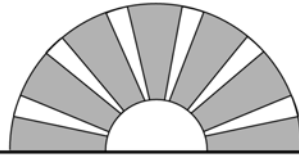
Nutrition experts agree that a wide assortment of nutritionally balanced snacks served in moderation is a healthful, essential part of a child's eating pattern.

Snacks can provide children with up to 20 percent of their daily energy and nutrients; and because children have smaller stomachs than adults, they need to eat more frequently to stay fueled for daily activities.

Some of the best foods for snacking are those containing energy-producing complex carbohydrates like bread, tortillas, crackers, cereal, and other naturally low-fat foods.

A bowl of fortified cereal and milk is a smart, kid-friendly snack that provides key nutrients like iron, vitamin A, B-vitamins, and calcium.

Other options include an English muffin with fruit jam, graham crackers, and fruit (strawberries, bananas, seedless grapes, melon balls). □



Child's Day

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Social Skills

All children need special people

Your growing child needs people. He needs to see, listen to and feel people as a natural part of the world around him.

In addition to his parents, who are the most important people in his world, there are other special people who are very important: grandparents, relatives, friends and caregivers. From them—and his parents—he learns that he belongs and that he matters.

Parents and other special people provide an atmosphere in which the young child learns he is important. They notice the child, talk to him, laugh with him when he is happy and show their concern when he falls and hurts himself.

They say “hello” to him in a special way because he belongs to them and they belong to him. In all these interactions they send a message to the child: “You are important. You matter. We care. You belong.” Long before he can understand specific words, the child gets this message.

But it is a fact of modern life that in today's world, families get scattered. Most often children live in one community while

their special people may be scattered from coast to coast.

When this happens, the child doesn't get all the messages he needs because his special people simply are not part of his daily life.

If this is the case for your family, you may well protest, “But what can I do? There are no special family people here?”

One simple solution is to try for regular visits to your child's special people so that he has a number of contacts with them. Such visits are extremely important and they are well worth the time and effort they require.

Another solution is to find substitute “special people” among your own circle of friends.

Each time they are in your house, they would be especially aware of ways they could pay attention to your child.

You might also have a relationship with one or two older people who could serve as substitute grandparents—and you may be pleasantly surprised at how delighted some older couples would be to play the role. □

Making dreams come true for special needs children

Every parent has dreams for his or her child. If you find out that your child has special needs, your child will need extra help and support to make those dreams come true.

Remember, every child has many strengths. With your help and support, and the appropriate education, your dreams for your child can come true.

Understanding a child's special needs can help you set goals and guide your dreams. Knowing why some goals may be hard to reach can be helpful to parents.

Look for different ways to help your child learn and develop. Information about how your child

learns can also help family, friends and teachers care for and teach your child.

Helping others get to know your child will make it easier for everyone to work together to build on your child's strengths and meet her or his needs.

Your dreams for your child might change over time. This is natural. You and your child will also change. Try to be flexible. Remember that part of making your dreams come true means you may have to work hard to get the right services to meet your child's special needs.

You know your child best. Set goals your child can reach. When

a goal is reached, set a new one and keep trying.

Think about what your child can do and build on each success. Remember, even the smallest achievement is something for which your child and family can be proud.

Work to meet your child's special needs. Think about what would help your child do more. Don't let anything stop you along the way.

You will find that others will support you and share your dreams. You can help make your dreams for your child come true. Don't give up. Remember, your child will also have dreams of his or her own that you can share. □

Organizing time

Young children organize time on the basis of important events which are repeated.

Some events like a birthday or a holiday occur only once a year. Grocery shopping occurs weekly, while eating takes place three or four times daily.

The regularity of these events helps children acquire an internal clock about when things will happen.

Preschoolers can participate in some planning for future events. Such planning will teach two related time concepts:

1. The past, present, and future are separated by time.
2. There is a need sometimes to delay gratification of one's expectations and desires.

Some children have difficulty organizing events in time. Activities to promote good time organization at the preschool level can be incorporated into daily events such as dressing, using songs and rhymes, or helping with a daily chore.

Routine activities of daily living, such as dressing or bathing, involve the sequencing of events in time.

Children who dress themselves may occasionally put shoes on before socks. Or they omit underpants because they have not followed the correct sequential order. Discovery of an omission or error is a learning experience.

Equally valuable is the planning, in advance, of what clothes

to put on and in what order.

For example, you tell your child to select what she would like to wear tomorrow. Then she lays these items in a row on the bed: what comes first, what comes next, what follows this, and so on.

"The Farmer in the Dell" is another example. The story unfolds in a sequence, while there is a constant, the farmer, who makes decisions about whom to "take."

Rhymes and rhythms have the same role—to teach about events in time. The Dr. Seuss books, for example, often don't make a lot of sense to a young child. But she likes the sounds and rhythm which occur in patterns through time. □

Teaching a child manners

Good-mannered people are pleasant to be around, both in public and private. Simple courtesies—saying please, thank you, excuse me—help make our world a little more personal, a little more gentle.

However, the key to good manners is attitude. It is a respect for the rights, ideas and feelings of others, even those with whom we disagree.

When can you start teaching a child manners? The earlier the better. Training in table manners can begin as soon as the child in the high chair starts to use a spoon and cup.

A simple “please” and “thank you” routine can start even before your toddler can say the words correctly. Polite forms of address are well within the ability of a four-year-old.

Of course, parents need to be reasonable. The baby may use his spoon to deposit vegetables on the floor.

The toddler may be so hungry that “please” is just too long to wait.

The four-year-old may have an attack of shyness and refuse to be coaxed out from behind your knees to “say hello to Mrs. Jones.” At times like these, your own good manners tell you not to push.

Start with the basics. Choose the manners that are most important to you personally and concentrate on those.

If you start teaching them

purposefully and systematically in the preschool years, they should be habitual by the time a child enters school.

Here are some examples:

- Respect other people’s property and privacy.
- Behave well at the table.
- Avoid being rowdy in public.
- Don’t interrupt or contradict.
- Don’t demand one’s own way all the time.



How do you go about teaching manners? Manners are being taught by example, instruction, reminding and correcting.

• **Example.** The very best place to start teaching manners is in the home. When parents are respectful to each other and to their children, they are setting an example that speaks much louder than words.

• **Instruction.** As important as a good model is, it is not enough. Children do not automatically pick up the nuances of civilized behavior. Examples must be backed by explanation and instruction. Children need to be told **exactly** what is expected of them.

• **Reminders.** One instruction is not enough. Reminders are necessary—over and over again. Friendly reminders work better than hostile ones.

• **Correction.** Reminding a child of the rules is sometimes necessary and positive remarks work best: “Please use your napkin.”

• Be liberal with praise. This is an effective way to encourage good manners.

Children learn good manners in much the same way they learn to share and to take turns.

These, too, are ways of expressing the same attitudes of caring and consideration. □

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