



# Growing Together<sup>®</sup>

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Discipline

## Watch for good behavior

If you want to see some problem behavior disappear, pay more attention to the things children do well than to their mistakes.

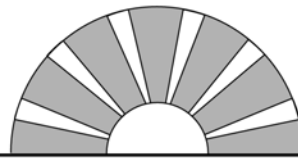
Without thinking, we often take for granted those behaviors that please us. Then we exaggerate out of proportion those things children do wrong.

Unfortunately, this approach backfires because children tend to repeat those behaviors that get the most attention.

For example, the more you ask a child to stop an annoying habit, such as playing with his food, the more he may do it.

Try ignoring it instead. Then when you notice him eating neatly, compliment him.

As you watch for and compliment children on their positive behavior, you can begin to see some changes in the behavior you don't like. □



## Child's Day

Preschool · Kindergarten · Child Development Center

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Language

## Encouraging good communication skills

In previous generations, people didn't have to worry about good communication skills because they had time to talk to one another.

With so many changes in today's fast-paced world, many things can interfere with good interaction between parent and child. Here are some good ways to encourage good communication with your child.

- *Be an attentive listener.* When your child has something important to tell you, give her your undivided attention. Even if the topic seems trivial to you, it may be very important to her.

- *Be patient.* Even though you may want to interrupt what your child is telling you, be patient. Let her finish what she has to say.

- *Paraphrase.* It's helpful to repeat to your child, in your own words, what you think you heard her say. This will avoid misunderstandings and will give her an opportunity to clarify what she wants to tell you.

- *Be sensitive to your child's body language.* Pay attention not only to your child's words, but also to her body language, such as nervous behavior, or facial expression.

- *Focus on one topic.* When

you have something important to say to your child, focus on only one issue at a time. It's better to convey a clear message on one topic than to confuse your child by addressing several issues.

- *Be brief.* Keep your message as short as possible because young children have a rather limited attention span.

- *Keep your message simple.* Use simple words—one or two syllable words, if possible—which your child will understand. Use no more than nine or ten words in a sentence.

- *Deal with the here and now.* The concepts of time which young children have are different from those of adults. Young children tend to live in the present rather than in the past or the future. Reopening old wounds from the past will only get in the way of what you want to communicate right now.

- *Be aware of your own body language.* When talking to your child, be aware of the non-verbal messages your body may be communicating. Use good eye contact, for example, to convey your message. Young children pay more attention to your facial expression and to the emotional tone of your voice than to the actual words you use. □

## Reducing sibling rivalry

Sibling rivalry is an inevitable and normal part of life in any family in which there is more than one child. Nevertheless, there are some actions parents can take to help reduce sibling rivalry.

The recommendations presented below deal mainly with the first occasion for sibling rivalry, namely, the arrival of another offspring. These same general principles will also apply—while taking into consideration each child's unique characteristics—when dealing with rivalry among older siblings.

- *As much as possible, avoid disrupting the older child's routines and lifestyle.* Some changes will be inevitable, such as, perhaps, having to share a room. It will help to keep other changes at a minimum.

- *When the older child is between three and five years of age,* it is wise to provide him with his own private space in which he can feel secure with his own possessions. Toys that are used in common can be kept in a different, shared area. This works with older children, too.

- *When taking care of a newborn baby, invite an older sibling to help,* such as by assisting at bath time or changing a diaper. This is a good time to treat the older child as a *partner*, rather than by assigning him a chore which may cause resentment of the baby.

- *With so much attention being given to the baby, it is important to be sensitive to how the older child may be feeling.* For example, if friends bring lots of

gifts for the baby but nothing for the older child, it would be a good idea to provide the older child with some special treat.

- *Plan ahead for the older child to have something enjoyable to do* whenever you are going to be actively involved in caring for the younger one. This might mean the older child can spend time with the other parent or relative watching a favorite TV program.

- *Talk with the older child about the younger one's needs and feelings.* It has been found, for example, that when mothers talked about the newborn as a person with specific desires and needs, preschool-age siblings displayed greater interest and caring toward the baby.

- *When older siblings get into a minor conflict, it is generally best to let them settle their own quarrels.* Otherwise they may use the parent to escalate the conflict. Obviously parents should intervene if the situation is likely to become violent.

- *It is a good idea for parents to try to spend some uninterrupted quality time with each one of their children individually.* A child who is assured of a parent's love and attention is less likely to provoke sibling rivalry.

Remember that some degree of sibling rivalry is to be expected in every family. Feelings of jealousy and resentment are a young child's normal reaction to the attention given to another family member. Parents may be relieved to know that research studies indicate that sibling rivalry rarely persists into the adult years. □

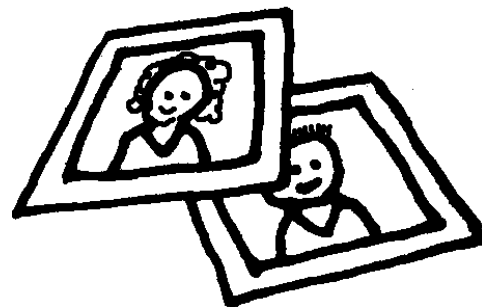
## Teaching respect

As early as possible, children should learn to respect people, property, parents, and the elderly. The best way to do this is to *extend* respect to children and then *expect* respect in return.

Here is a good tip from authors Linda and Richard Eyre:

“Create the proper climate for respect in your own home,” they write in their book, *Teaching Your Children Values*.

“We often speak to and deal with our children with less respect than we show to strangers. We treat them as though they have no rights and deserve no explanations. We say, ‘because I said so,’ and we give them no benefit of the doubt and assume they are guilty until proven innocent.”



The Eyres advise changing this approach, “even if it requires imagining that they are strangers and speaking to them accordingly.”

Parents and other adults should use the words ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ more frequently, as well as asking children rather than always telling them.

These types of actions show that parents respect their children's opinions. □

## Let's read!

When parents or other readers help children learn to read, they open the door to a big, exciting world.

As a parent, you can begin an endless learning chain like this: You read to your children; they develop a love of stories and poems; they want to read on their own; they practice reading; and finally, they read for their own information or pleasure.

When children become readers, their world is forever wider and richer. Here are some things you can do:

- Read aloud to your child: books, newspaper and magazine articles, the back of the cereal box, labels on cans, signs, directions and so on.
- Read poems aloud together to learn about rhythm and repeated sounds in language.
- Point to the words on the page when you read. Move your finger from left to right.
- Listen to your child read homework or favorite stories to you every day.
- Go to the library together and check out books. Be sure to ask the librarian for good books or to help you find what you need.
- Have books, magazines and papers around the house, and let your child see that you like to read, too.
- Encourage older children to read to younger children.
- Help experienced readers talk and write about what they read. □

## Trying to impress others

A child may sometimes tell lies to impress friends or family members. These types of lies are often told in an after-the-fact situation when a child wishes he had performed better in a game than he did.

He may report a story based more on what he *wishes* his skill level had been than on what actually happened. In such reporting, he is more preoccupied with who he *wants* to be than with who he *really* is.

What to do? The child who lies to impress others has somehow learned that, in order to be considered a worthwhile person, he must excel in whatever he does. Rather than focus on the lying behavior, it is more important to determine why the child feels such pressure to excel.

Without intending to, parents and other adults may sometimes convey the message—in subtle, unconscious ways—that winning is everything and that good effort, without success, counts for nothing.

To help a child overcome this pressure—and thereby overcome this type of lying—parents should focus on the child's own good qualities without making comparisons with others.

Helping a child improve the basic skills he wants to develop—if done in a fun-filled manner—will also help him abandon lying as a way of trying to impress others. □

## Problem solving is an important skill

A child needs to develop problem-solving skills. If she is constantly told what to do by her parents, she will continue to depend on someone else to give her the answers.

A child who is encouraged to think about possible solutions and pick those that might work develops a method for thinking about a problem.

At times, she may need suggestions, but as long as these are given as suggestions and not orders, the child learns to take responsibility for the solutions she chooses.

If the problem is satisfactorily solved, the child can feel proud that she solved it. If the solution she chooses was not the best, but she is praised for trying, she will want to try again.

It is good practice to give even very young children exercises in making choices. A two-year-old might be given a choice between the green shirt and the blue one. A four-year-old might choose between two restaurants.

Having a say in decisions can have enormously positive influence on a child. □

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