



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Science & Nature

Signs of spring

Has spring arrived? Regardless of where you live, there will be signs to watch for and record.

Children love to explore and learn about the wonders of nature. The arrival of spring is an excellent opportunity to introduce youngsters to the renewal of life going on all around them.

On a nice day, take a walking tour of your yard or neighborhood. Keep a watchful eye for changes taking place. Point them out and explain what's happening.

Warmer temperatures mean trees and bushes begin to bud. Look at the ground for signs of flower buds. What happens next?

Days are getting longer, birds are returning from their winter homes, and will soon be looking for new homes. Can you spot any birds at work? □

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Discipline

Learning from mistakes

No matter how hard they try, sometimes children make mistakes.

Whether your child has done a good job or has failed, try to focus on what it is she has done rather than on her personally.



For example, if she remembers to wipe her feet before coming in the house, thank her for wiping her feet rather than simply telling her she's a good girl.

Telling her she's a "good girl" doesn't help build her self-confidence. It makes her dependent on your judgment – and she may not know what being a "good girl" actually means.

The other side of this ex-

ample is that if she were to forget to wipe her feet, tell her you're upset when she does that because then you have to clean it up. This statement focuses on what she **did**, not what she **is** or is not.

Don't tell her she's a "dumb, sloppy person." Such generalized blame and criticism only causes feelings of guilt. It destroys self-confidence and doesn't teach better behavior.

If you learn to say what you mean and mean what you say, you'll help your child learn from her mistakes and at the same time, feel good about herself rather than feeling she's a bad person for making mistakes.

Helping your child feel good about herself is one of the most important jobs you have as a parent.

Don't worry if you sometimes do things that you don't feel are helpful in building your child's self-confidence. What's important is the overall consistency of your behavior.

Teach her to accept and learn from her mistakes; to strive to be the best she can be, and to expect to be successful in whatever she seeks to achieve. □

Growing Up

On a recent plane trip, my seat companions were a mother and her young daughter.

As we talked, I asked the little girl how old she was, guessing she was around two. "Five," she said, looking me straight in the eye, as if daring me to contradict her words.

"No, two," said her mother, smiling and showing two fingers. Pointing to her son across the aisle, she added, "Jason's five."

"No, five," insisted the little girl with a certain gleam in her eye, and we smilingly changed the subject.

This incident reminded me of how eager children are to grow up. I remember my youngest son continually checking when he would be old enough to do some of the things his older brother did.

I listen to my granddaughters discussing their difference in ages. Lila, the older one, is always quick to point out that Rose will never be able to catch up with her in years, while Rose does her part to keep up with her older cousin.

No one has to motivate children to grow, to become. From the beginning, they are striving for the next achievement.

Think of the frustration of the baby who is trying desperately to crawl, yet can't seem to do more than rock back and forth. Then see the plateau of contentment that follows that accom-

plishment. This is how children develop.

Several decades ago, Arnold Gesell referred to periods of equilibrium and disequilibrium throughout childhood. He described the times of contented exploration of achieved abilities (equilibrium) followed by intense striving to move on to newer accomplishments (disequilibrium).

Such an innate pattern really does seem to exist when you think of your own child's pattern of recent development.

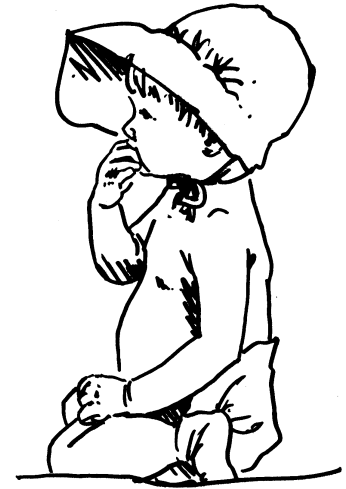
This pattern is rather reassuring for parents in a couple of ways.

One is that the extremes of less desirable behaviors in disequilibrium will not last forever, as the pendulum swings back to the equilibrium side.

The storms of toddler temper tantrums will smooth out to happily agreeable three-year-olds. (In just the same way, don't get too used to the cheerful three-year-old, as she will morph, as if by magic, into a whiny, slightly obsessive three-and-a-half-year-old.)

But not only is the impermanence of behavior comforting, so too is the realization that children truly want to grow bigger, to learn new behaviors and acquire new skills. They are so bent on this knowledge that they will take all opportunities to learn.

One of the reasons that younger children do so well in



mixed-age groupings with older children is that they adopt their understandings and behaviors, expanding their horizons as they grow.

Older children also benefit from spending time with younger children by developing compassion, patience, responsibility, and abilities to communicate.

No wonder families and neighborhood playgroups offer such rich experiences for everyone.

So, without too much effort, that two-year-old will soon become as skillful and knowledgeable as that five-year-old.

Sure, you have lots to do with it, but the motivation to grow and develop comes from within. That little one is learning from every experience, every encounter.

Enjoy it all, and marvel at the process. □

Reading begins at home

Did you know that 50 percent of intellectual development takes place between birth and four years of age?

That means that parents are important teachers. You provide the foundation of your child's learning skills right within your own home.

You can shape the course of your child's educational future by the quality of learning experiences you provide before he or she ever goes to school.

Here are five watchwords designed to help you make the most of your child's early learning experiences:

Listen: Listen to your child. Pay attention to what he or she is saying. Call attention to sounds. Listening and attaching meaning to sounds are essential skills that must be acquired before a child can read or succeed in a classroom environment.

Speak: Talk with your child. Direct conversation to him or her from infancy. Help your child learn to distinguish sounds and imitate them.

Take a walk together. Talk about the things you see and hear. Help the child classify objects as you see them: foods, plants, farm animals, birds, and cars.

Sing to your child. This teaches enjoyment of music and rhythm.

Read: Read to your child every day. Make reading seem enjoyable. Then it will be a skill he or she will want to acquire.

Let the child choose a favorite book or story to read. When you read stories, stop in the middle and ask your child what will happen next.

Talk about the pictures. Have your child point to objects in the pictures.



Take your child to the library. Let him or her see all the different kinds of books there. Buy books that "belong" to your child. Provide a place for your child's books at home.

Remember, if the child sees you reading, then reading becomes something useful in his or her mind.

Move: Help your child roll over, crawl, stand and walk. This develops muscle control.

Let your child explore. Provide safe play objects such as boxes of different sizes, blocks,

scraps of cloth with different textures, spoons and pans.

Interact: Help your child learn that he or she is a part of a family group. Include your child in planning family activities. Give encouragement and praise when it is merited.

Guard: Control your child's television viewing. Search out better TV programs for children and share them with your child. Talk about the programs you watch. Correct any misconceptions that may have developed from them. □

Something New!

"Grandma Says" is a twice-monthly special message that includes general parenting tips, words of encouragement, and children's book reviews. To receive your free issues, go to:
www.GrowingChild.com/FreeGrandmaSays
 and enter your e-mail address.

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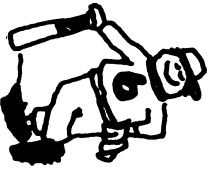





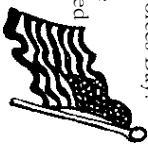





Growing Child also publishes: **Growing Child** (birth-six years), and **Growing Up** (grades K-12).

Growing Together issues may be reproduced in part or in full by participating organizations.

Articles in **Growing Together** refer to both boys and girls. For simplicity, the pronouns "he" and "she" are used interchangeably unless otherwise noted.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>3</p> <p>Talk about the safest way to cross the street. Remember to always look both ways first.</p> 	<p>4</p> <p>Eat some fresh fruit for breakfast!</p> 	<p>5</p> <p>Cinco de Mayo.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>What color is your toothbrush? Find four more items that are the same color.</p> 	<p>7</p> <p>Practice saying the days of the week.</p> <p>MONDAY TUESDAY WEDNESDAY THURSDAY FRIDAY SATURDAY SUNDAY</p>	<p>1</p> <p>May Day. Make a May basket with pretty flowers.</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Plant some flowers in a window box or planter.</p> 
<p>10</p> <p>Mother's Day. Make a special card for Mom.</p> 	<p>11</p> <p>Look at a map of your state. Where do you live?</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Write down how many you have:</p> <p>ears _____ nose _____ tongue _____ toes _____</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Sit outside and watch the people go by.</p> 	<p>14</p> <p>Look for items in your home that come in pairs.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Roll a ball from one end of the house to the other.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Armed Forces Day. Who are the Armed Forces?</p> 
<p>17</p> <p>Draw a special picture for your grandparents.</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Is your home child-proof? Make an inspection for potential dangers.</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Try to form letter shapes with your body. Hint: Some letters are best formed with two people.</p> 	<p>20</p> <p>Sing a silly song to the baby.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Enjoy a snack of fresh fruit.</p> 	<p>22</p> <p>Find ten rocks. Line them up according to size.</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>The Declaration of the Bab.</p>
<p>24</p> <p>Look for butterflies.</p> <p>31</p> <p>Play "Guess which hand."</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Memorial Day.</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>Make a paper airplane. Go outside and fly it.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Go outside in the morning and listen to the birds sing.</p> 	<p>28</p> <p>If you could be any animal, which one would you choose? Why?</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Shavuot</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Walk around the block (or yard or park) and count trees.</p>