



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

## Behavior

### Signs of stress

In a stressful situation, youngsters are likely to behave like younger children.

This is true in such simple situations as when a child is overtired or hungry, as well as in more obviously stressful situations such as getting lost or hurting herself. It's something parents should keep in mind in a highly stressful life-event such as a family separation or a death in the family.

In times of stress, a child may begin to behave in ways similar to how she acts when she's not feeling well.

She may be whiny, clingy, and demanding. She may be more easily frustrated and upset by little things.

She may tire easily and be generally slowed down from her usual pace.

The stress of the situation drains energy and doesn't leave her enough to cope as well as she usually does.

Understanding this will help parents be more patient and supportive. □

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## Nutrition

### Make breakfast a pleasant time of day.

How can parents get children to eat a wholesome meal and still get out of the house on time?

- **Be creative.** For toddlers, straws, colorful plastic spoons, a special bowl or a fancy cup can turn a picky eater into a good one.

A little table and chair set up in the kitchen may be preferable to always being under scrutiny where the adults sit.



For infants who can sit up in a high chair, finger foods such as dry cereal or scrambled eggs in a wafer cone can keep their hands busy while you spoon in their baby food.

Cups with plastic tops can prevent spills as infants slowly but surely master their important task of drinking from a cup.

Avoid battles by offering a variety of foods and praise for any attempts at self-feeding.

- **Think small.** Little children are overwhelmed by bowls of oatmeal that seem to have no bottom or a stack of French toast that never disappears.

Small portions of varied foods such as a fruit cup and silver-dollar-sized pancakes will have them licking off the syrup and asking for more.

Allowing even babies to mix their own dish of oatmeal and applesauce increases the odds that they'll finish it.

- **Try anything that works.** The mother of twins admits: "My girls never did seem interested in a big dinner. So the next morning I would heat their favorite leftover—spaghetti and meatballs—and serve it to them for breakfast. It worked every time."

Many a toddler eats peanut butter and jelly for lunch and breakfast, and one mother reports that the only time of day her child eats green vegetables is in the morning, "... when he's too sleepy to fight about it."

Minimizing food choices in the morning reduces the amount of time you need to stand by the kitchen cabinet while you point to each cereal to a resounding chorus of "No!" □

## What children can't do—yet

I'm always amazed at how much babies and young children can do.

They use their senses and abilities to learn every day. When a few weeks elapse between my visits with a child, the growth and development is noticeable.

It is also important to remember that there are many things that they are not yet capable of doing, certainly under the age of three or so, and perhaps later.

They are not capable because of the way their minds actually work in the early years. Where we grownups often make mistakes is in expecting their minds to develop as quickly as their bodies.

Let me remind you of just some of the things that little ones cannot do.

They can't share. Possession of objects is the child's way of understanding autonomy. Owning comes before sharing.

Young children can't say, "I'm sorry" and mean it. This requires being able to understand how the other person feels, an impossible task for young children.

They can't focus on more than one task at a time. "Pick up your toys, put on your shoes, and wash your face before we go out to play."

These instructions have three more tasks than a young child can act on. Most young children will remember the last instruction, or the one that is most important to them.

They can't understand negative commands. Because young children are incapable of reversing mentally, when you say, "Don't touch," children are confused about how to act.

Instead, when a parent says, "Pull your hand back, that's breakable" children know what to do.

They can't tell the difference between reality and fantasy. Bad dreams are as real as things that actually happen. Rich play experiences will eventually help children sort out real and not real.

They don't understand right and wrong. Young children don't understand cause and effect relationships, or intentional versus unintentional actions. They can only see issues from their perspective.

They can't remember what you told them. Because they remember only what is important to them, instructions to talk quietly or walk indoors may be immediately forgotten.

Children will likely not tell you the truth and deny doing something inappropriate, if you directly ask if they did it.

They are gauging their response on your facial expression and tone of voice.

They can't express themselves in words very well. Children use physical methods of communication because they don't have the verbal skills to express frustration or other feelings.

Adults help when they give children words to use.

They can't wait, nor can they sit still for very long. Short attention spans, along with muscles and a nervous system that tells them to move, contribute to this characteristic.

Lastly, they can't be ready to do any of this until they are ready. As we've said before, children grow and develop at different rates. □

## Explain your expectations

Let your child know what you expect of her in terms of behavior.

Try to keep your expectations fair, reasonable, age-appropriate and sensible and spell them out to your child.

If she knows what you expect of her, it will be easier for her to please you and avoid your disapproval.

For example, at four or five years old, explain that you expect her to be in bed by a time that is acceptable to you.

Let her know that she can lie in bed quietly for a short time before going to sleep.

Offer to read or tell her a story or just talk with her during that time if she wishes.

But explain that you will not want to spend the time with her if you have to remind her every night to go to bed.

Let her know what you expect and what she can expect when she doesn't fulfill her part of the bargain. □

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## Encouraging caring and sharing

The simple fact is that behavior shapes belief.

An act of compassion is a powerful reinforcer for developing attitudes of compassion and generosity.

The opportunities for children to show sharing and caring are ample and easy to find. Children should be encouraged to:

- Carry food to the home of a sick friend.
- Write a brief note of consolation and support to a sick classmate or friend.
- Visit a friend who is hospitalized.
- Donate a part of his or her allowance to a charitable institution.
- Volunteer some time to an organization which helps the needy.
- Assist an elderly person with shopping or lawn work.
- Contribute, even pennies, to a telethon.

## Many toys are good for all ages

All children, regardless of age, need playthings to build physical, mental, language, emotional and social skills.

Some toys will appeal to children of all ages. These include music-related items, plush toys, and books.

For children two years and up, a well-rounded toy selection should also include playthings from each of the following groups:

- Pretend/dress-up play
- Arts and crafts
- Blocks
- Science and nature play
- Outdoor toys for active play
- Puzzles, games, and construction toys.

## Are you my mummy?

When you find yourself in the middle of a rainy day and the kids are howling for “something to do”, here’s a simple game that will keep them occupied and busy.

The only ingredients are several rolls of inexpensive toilet tissue and several lively children.

Divide the group into pairs. One is to be the mummy, the other the “wrapper.” The first pair finished wins.

What’s the best method to wrap the mummy?

Kids will quickly decide if they want the mummy to twist and turn or if the wrapper should do the moving.

It isn’t as easy as it sounds—kids can take turns wrapping and being wrapped. You may want to take a turn yourself!

## Think: Don’t react

When we were children, we vowed we’d never treat our children in some of the ways our parents treated us when they got mad.

Now that we are parents, we find ourselves reacting in many of those same ways we vowed we’d not repeat.

Try to remember how you felt when you were small—how easily you could be hurt and frightened by those you depended on for guidance and comfort.

Try to think before reacting to your child. When you do react in a way you think was unfair or overly harsh, let your child know that.

It’s helpful for her to see that you, too, can make—and acknowledge—mistakes. It will build her trust in you. And it may make her more considerate of your feelings in the future.

It’s not always easy to behave as we want toward our children.

No one can be kind, considerate, fair, patient, and respectful all the time.









Try to accept yourself as you are, and do the best you can. Just by trying you will succeed, and your child will learn from your example.

## 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](http://www.GrowingChild.com/FreeGrandmaSays)

# July 2010

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>4</p> <p>Independence Day.</p> 	<p>5</p> <p>Hard-boiled eggs, toast and jam for a snack.</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Name five people you know who wear glasses.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Sort socks by size, then color.</p> 	<p>8</p> <p>Go outside and look through some binoculars. Look through both ends. What's the difference?</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Find a sandbox to play in.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Count the windows in your home.</p>
<p>11</p> <p>Is it warm enough to play in the sprinkler?</p>	<p>12</p> <p>"J" is for July. Name four more words that start with the letter J.</p> <p>1. Jum_</p> <p>2. Jo_</p> <p>3. Jell_</p> <p>4. _____</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Draw a great big rainbow on a paper sack.</p> 	<p>14</p> <p>Put the baby in a stroller and go for a walk.</p>	<p>15</p> <p>Count some change.</p> 	<p>16</p> <p>Give the baby a massage with baby lotion.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Eat lunch outside.</p> 
<p>18</p> <p>Go out for breakfast.</p> 	<p>19</p> <p>Practice saying the days of the week. What's today?</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Sweep the sidewalk or porch.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>True or false: Apples are blue: Birds can fly: Bananas have wheels:</p>	<p>22</p> <p>Go to the library and bring home a book about airplanes.</p>	<p>23</p> <p>Count the fireflies you see after dark.</p> 	<p>24</p> <p>Put up a tent in the back yard to play in.</p>
<p>25</p> <p>Do you know how to braid? (yarn, hair) Ask someone to teach you.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Name your favorite fruits:</p> 	<p>27</p> <p>Pat baby's hands together and repeat "Patty Cake."</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Find these numbers on a calendar and draw a circle around them: 7 20 13 29</p>	<p>29</p> <p>Put on a blindfold. Draw a picture of a cow. Take off the blindfold. Does it look like a cow?</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Eat a green apple or some green grapes.</p>	<p>31</p> <p>Is there snow outside? Go look.</p> <p>If there isn't any snow, what is the reason?</p> 