



April, 2016

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Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Language

Positive conversations

Positive conversations that can change a child's behavior begin with the words:

I like the way you are ...

I believe in you.

I know you can ...

I love you, but I don't like ...

I will help you. We will do this together.

You are so (smart, sweet, strong) that I think you can do better.

I am so proud of you because ...

Let's use our quiet voices. You are making a little too much noise.

I am disappointed with what you did. I know you can do better.

Are you being a good helper?

Are you doing your best?

Have you shown Alice how much you like to share?

I need you to ...

I told Daddy (Mother) what a good job you did yesterday. Let's see how you do today. □

Parenting

Being a good parent

Nobody ever said that parenting would be easy. Being a **good** parent is even more difficult!

Here are six guidelines to help you put into practice some principles of good parenting that you probably already know but for which you may need an occasional reminder:

1. Be consistent in your enforcement of rules. Be certain that your rules have these characteristics: They must be clearly defined, reasonable, and enforceable.

Rules in the home help children feel more secure and comfortable when they are faced later in life with rules in school and the community.

A seven-year study done by the National Institute of Mental Health indicates that self-confident children who succeeded in their undertakings usually came from homes in which there were rules that were reasonable, consistent, and enforced with affection.

2. Permit children to make mistakes and even fail sometimes. Children learn by doing rather than by passively absorbing the experience of others. Making mistakes is one basis for future independence, self-direction, and intelligent decision-making.

3. Keep promises. When children know that they can anticipate

consequences, they are being helped to develop an understanding of cause-effect relationships.

4. Resist the temptation to over-organize. Don't over-structure a child's whole day with lessons, sports, and other activities. Children need time to be leisurely and to enjoy unstructured play.

5. Maintain a sense of humor. When something interferes with the daily routine, try to see a funny side of the situation.

For example, when there are toys, clothes, or other things left about randomly, gather them into a locked box and charge a "fee" (such as a kiss on your cheek) for later retrieval of an item.

If the bathroom becomes a mess, then draw a sad face on the mirror. Ah, but when things look improved, don't forget to reinforce with a happy smile!

6. Take care of yourself. It's important for parents to take care of their own health and psychological needs. A parent who is over-worked or over-stressed will less likely be able to implement the above recommendations.

Thus, taking care of oneself—with adequate rest, leisure time, and proper nutrition—is also an important part of being a good parent. □

Emotional roller coasters

Around three years of age, toddlers generally experience great fluctuations in their self-esteem and self-confidence.

At times they act as though they could conquer the world. At other times, they appear to want to creep back into the safe and protective environment of babyhood.

These fluctuations are a normal part of growing up. For example, as you watch your three-year-old venture into a world of new social experiences—whether in daycare, nursery school or with other playmates at home—it is sometimes difficult to let go of her.

But she is determined to demonstrate to the world that she can do things on her own.

She wants her parents to “Let me do this by myself.”

Within minutes, however, she may panic if she thinks she has been left alone. She comes running to your side for the comfort, reassurance, or encouragement that she needs.

These emotional ups and downs—emotional roller coasters—may test a parent’s patience to the limit. As adults, we prefer emotional stability in our interactions with others.

Toddler, on the other hand, is more accustomed to emotional ups and downs as she learns to deal with her feelings.

Coping with a toddler’s emotional swings demands great patience and self-control on the part of parents.

If they feel that their patience has reached its limit, it is well, if possible, to withdraw from the situation, even for a few moments.

Parents occasionally need a “two-minute time out” to gather their composure. When they return, they can generally deal more effectively with a troublesome situation.

It is often reassuring for parents simply to be aware that their child’s emotional roller coasters are a normal part of growing up.

It is also reassuring to know that all parents, at one time or another, have difficulty in dealing with these situations.

A warm, dependable relationship is the best stabilizer a child can have at a time of emotional turbulence. □

Developmental

Kids love puzzles!

Puzzles have always had a fascination and appeal for young and old alike.

A child’s first puzzle should be a simple one-piece-per-object one (for example, an apple, a banana, and a pear that fit into one puzzle).

Very soon the child will progress to more complex puzzles in which parts must be put together to form a whole.

There are many things a child can learn while working with a puzzle, such as recognizing shape, size, and color. She can also learn new vocabulary words.

As your child takes pieces out or places them in a puzzle, she is devel-



oping eye-hand coordination skills. And she begins to see how colors and shapes match.

She will also become more aware of the relationships of objects in space (for example, the head is at the top, the feet are at the bottom of the body).

Most puzzles will indicate the age range for which they are appropriate.

Public libraries generally have a good supply of puzzles appropriate for different age groups.

This activity is not only a good learning experience; it will also provide your child with many hours of fun. □

Learning all the while

When I visited a preschool this week, I was reminded about how constant and profound is the learning of the early years.

The teacher was reading a story about sea turtles to the children, and she emphasized the stunningly amazing fact that, after years spent at sea, adult sea turtles return to the beach where they were hatched to lay their eggs.

One little girl in the circle commented quietly, "I knew that."

She didn't say it in a bragging way, or really to anyone else, but rather as a happy confirmation of her knowledge.

I thought, what a lucky child.

Already in her short life some adult had read a book or had a conversation about one of the marvels of our world.

She remembered that fact, tucked it away in her little brain, able to be pulled out at will, to fit into her knowledge.

Now wonder along with me at all that your little ones are learning, every hour and every day.

Think about the astonishing process of learning in the early years, a process that combines maturation of the nervous system, experiences, language, memory, models, curiosity, motivation, and an individual child's mental capacities.

By the time the average child goes off to kindergarten, he or she has already mastered control of the body, with skills as varied as swinging from the top of the monkey bars, manipulating scissors and eating utensils, zipping a jacket, and tying shoelaces.

His or her language has developed from making cooing and then babbling sounds to a spoken vocabulary of nearly ten thousand words.

This child can use sentences that follow the grammatical rules of language with such complexities as plurals and past tenses, all to be able to tell a great story or understand how to communicate with others.

There is an astonishing period in language development, around age two or so, when a child hears a word one time, and then later can use it in an appropriate context.

They have also learned the thousands of conventions and niceties of behavior that seem important to the adults around them, and have figured out how to fit into their particular world.

Even more than that, for understanding the world, their brains have categorized knowledge, so that they understand concepts such as:

- Colors ("My favorite color is green," comments Matthew, as he works on a picture).
- Farm animals (Why else would it be so hilarious when Scotty adds an elephant to the singing of Old McDonald?)
- Words that should be sung instead of spoken.

Children are patient when others try to teach them things that may seem meaningless to them, tolerating the lessons about abstractions like letters and numbers.

They are far more excited when they are learning something that catches their interest and imagination:

"My cousins live in New Hampshire," confides Merritt. "Did you know that they make maple syrup out of tree stuff? They cook it and cook it."

We sometimes use the phrase "lifelong learner" to refer to those individuals who keep alive the spirit of curiosity and adventure.

But I guarantee that you will never again see humans learning so much, so quickly and effortlessly, as when you pay attention to your children's daily accomplishments. □

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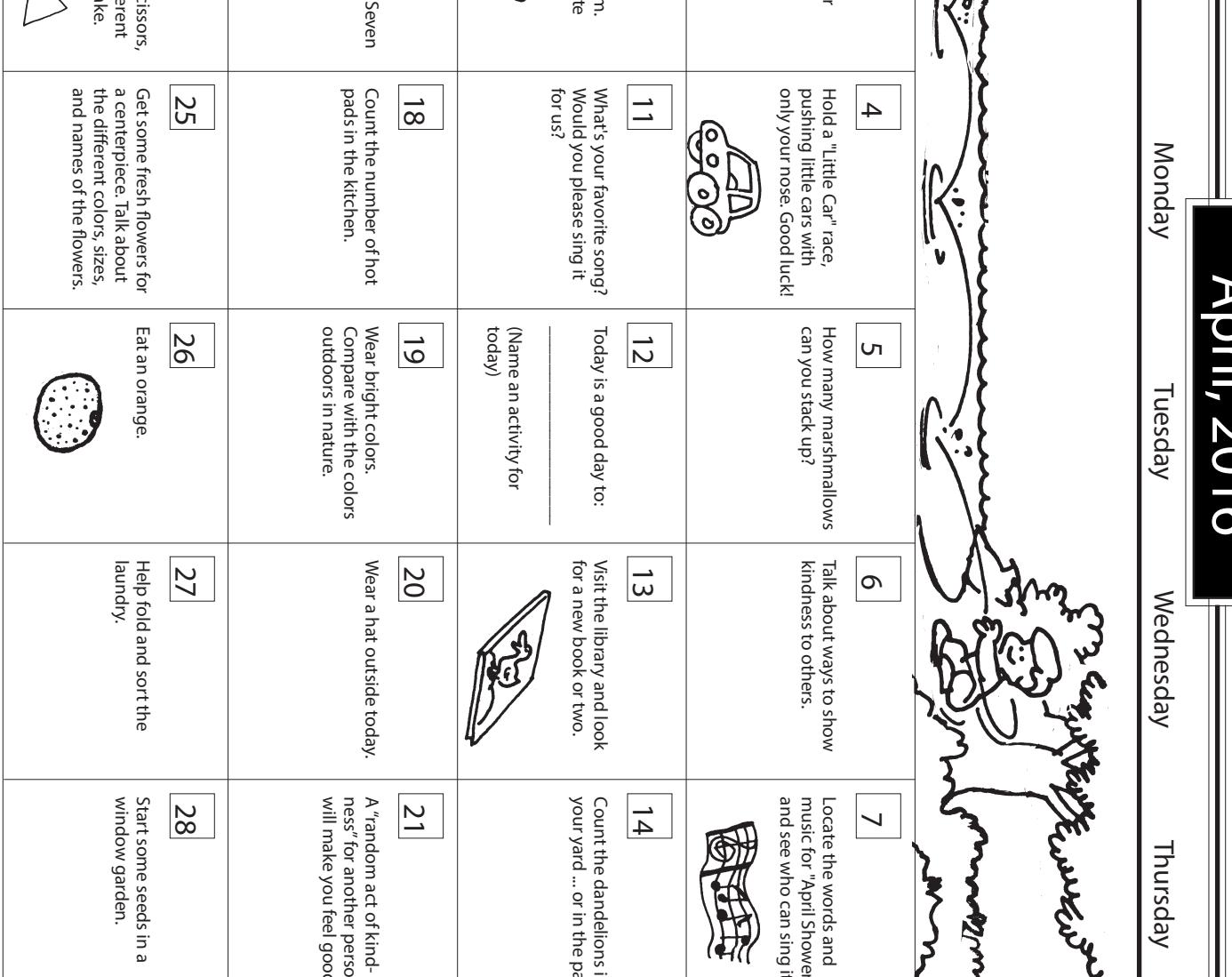
Growing Child also publishes:
Growing Child (birth-six years), and
Growing Up (grades K-12).

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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
						
1 April Fool's Day 						
2 Have a "show and tell" after dinner for everyone.						
3 Cinnamon toast for breakfast. 	4 Hold a "Little Car" race, pushing little cars with only your nose. Good luck! 	5 How many marshmallows can you stack up? 	6 Talk about ways to show kindness to others. 	7 Locate the words and music for "April Showers" and see who can sing it. 	8 Do you know to look both ways before crossing the street? 	9 Look at some baby pictures. Who is the baby? 
10 Go out for ice cream. What is your favorite flavor? 	11 What's your favorite song? Would you please sing it for us? (Name an activity for today)	12 Today is a good day to: 	13 Visit the library and look for a new book or two. 	14 Count the dandelions in your yard ... or in the park. 	15 At supper, talk about what you did today. 	16 Go for a walk and look for: * a green car * a bird flying in the sky * a white fence * an ant
17 Can you name the Seven Dwarfs?	18 Count the number of hot pads in the kitchen. 	19 Wear bright colors. Compare with the colors outdoors in nature. 	20 Wear a hat outside today. 	21 A "random act of kindness" for another person will make you feel good. 	22 Passover begins at sundown. 	23 Catch a ray of sunlight in a mirror and reflect it on the wall. 
24 Using paper and scissors, see how many different shapes you can make. 	25 Get some fresh flowers for a centerpiece. Talk about the different colors, sizes, and names of the flowers. 	26 Eat an orange. 	27 Help fold and sort the laundry. 	28 Start some seeds in a window garden. 	29 Arbor Day. Plant a baby tree. 	30 Tell a story to your parents.