
AS THEY GROW



Newsletter for parents of preschool children
University of Wisconsin-Cooperative Extension

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Family Living Education

Dear Parent,

Parenting is a tough job! With the crisp days of autumn approaching, it is a good time for you to take a deep breath, relax a little and share some quieter time with your child. This newsletter is for you. We hope you will find useful information to help you parent your growing preschooler.

We know that the most important ingredient in parenting is the parent. A parent who is relaxed, well-rested, well-nourished, and in good health is most likely to be an effective parent. So don't forget to take care of yourself too.

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THE POWER OF POSITIVE WORDS



Have you ever had a boss who was always critical? You know that constant criticism makes you feel angry at the criticizer and unsure about yourself. Children can have the same kinds of reactions to parents who are critical.

Try to "accentuate the positive" with your child. Praise for good work and for trying. "Thank you for helping," "You really worked hard on that," "That was a good try. Next time, just carry one."

Praise too just for being: "I love your laugh," "Please give me a hug. It makes me happy to be hugged by you," "You're the sweetest three-year-old I know."

Your child wants your praise. Your child will do more of those things that get praise, and fewer of those things that don't. Try it, it really works!

Children experience developmental tasks that can be classified in four general areas. Are there times why you might be expecting too much of your children?

SOCIAL

Do you expect your child to be quiet and not disturb the family with noise? Quietness is a difficult idea to teach and a hard thing for a young child to learn.

Do you expect your child to be “grownup” about sharing? Learning to think in terms of others is a concept children learn when they are about 4.

PHYSICAL

Do you expect your child to stay neat and clean? Your child cannot conceive of degrees of dirtiness.

EMOTIONAL

Do you expect your child to be grownup, to not “act like a baby?”



MENTAL

Do you expect your child to understand everything you say?

THE WONDERFUL LIBRARY

Did you know that libraries have more than books? Today's libraries provide many resources and activities. You are likely to find:

- story hours for preschoolers
- toys to check out
- videos, audio tapes or cd's especially for children
- information about other activities for children in the community



Don't forget that your librarian has special training in choosing books for children. Librarians can help you and your child find just the right book.

FEARS



Many preschoolers are frightened by Halloween. The ghosts and witches and goblins they pictured everywhere can be very scary.

You need to remember that your preschooler will need your reassuring presence so that Halloween won't be too overwhelming. Explain that Halloween is a time when people like to dress up.

Tell your child that scary costumes are one way to dress up, but it's o.k. to dress up as something nice and friendly, like a good fairy, a puppy or a school teacher. If your child goes out trick or treating, be sure to hold hands and stay close by. If it gets too scary, it's time to go home.

Trying to talk a frightened pre-schooler out of fears only makes it worse. Put your arm around a frightened shoulder. Say something like, “I think it's too scary now. Let's go home and look at your treats.”

If your child seems to be afraid of masks and costumes, it would be better to wait a year or two before starting the Halloween traditions.



BROTHERS AND SISTERS



Why do children in the same family do so much quarreling? Why can't they love each other? They usually do, as you soon find out if another child picks on one of them, or if one of them is punished.

Often, brothers and sisters quarrel because of natural competition and rivalry. They are in a very real sense competing for the time, attention, and affection of their parents.

Parents can save themselves endless trouble by giving their affections freely. If a child knows he or she will get an equal share of affection, the child will be less likely to struggle and be less resentful when a brother or sister receives affections.

WHY DO THEY ACT THAT WAY?

Sometimes it seems like children do naughty things just to “get” a parent. When you feel like that, it makes the tough job of being a parent that much tougher.

If you find yourself getting angry, and feeling like your child is deliberately trying to aggravate you, take a time out for yourself.

Walk away from the situation. Go to another room and sit down.

Take a deep breath and try to relax. Sometimes a glass of cool water, to sip, will help.

Remind yourself that preschoolers are not capable of plotting or planning. Your child wants your love and approval more than anything.

Small children behave the way they do for many reasons, but trying to “get” a parent is not one of the reasons.

When you are calm, go back to your child. Explain that the behavior is not o.k. *“You may not jump on the couch. I will not let you do that.”*

Direct your child to another activity: *“Let’s go outside and jump. We will take a tape measure and see how far you can jump.”*

Do parents expect too much of themselves as well as their children?



WE CAN'T AFFORD IT!



Sometimes parents don't like to tell children that they can't afford something. Instead of saying “You don't want that” or “No you can't have it – because I say so.” Try saying, “No, I don't have enough money for that.”

Preschoolers can start learning that things cost money, and we don't always have enough money to get them.

APPLES, APPLES, APPLES



This time of year, apples are plentiful and cheap. Most preschoolers love apples. And apples are a healthy snack!

An average sized apple has as much fiber as a bowl of most popular cereals, including oatmeal. An apple contains approximately 80 calories, 5 grams of fiber, 170 milligrams of potassium, no sodium, no cholesterol and virtually no fat.

Let your child wash and dry one apple for each person.

While you remove the core, let your child mash together one tablespoon of margarine and one or two tablespoons of brown sugar for each apple. (You can also add a little cinnamon or nutmeg. Children usually like it plain).

Give the child a small spoon to use to push the margarine/sugar mixture into each apple hole. Put the apples in a microwavable covered dish. Watch carefully while cooking for a minute at a time on full power. Different apples cook at different speeds. You want the apples to be soft, but not turn to mush. Cool well before serving. Hot sugar is very hot. Serve with milk, yogurt, or a scoop of ice cream.

MORE APPLE TREATS

No Cooking Required



Spread apple slices with:

cream cheese ♦ cheese spread ♦ peanut butter

Serve apple chunks with:

raisins and nuts ♦ cheese slices ♦ small pieces of lunch meat

Applesauce:

spoon on a cookie ♦ spoon on cracker & sprinkle with cinnamon ♦ spoon on pancakes or waffles



Touch A Leaf

Many things in the world around us look alike, yet have subtle differences. Take leaves. To a child and to many adults, if you've seen one leaf, you've seen them all. This activity will change that myth forever.

Plan an expedition to the backyard or your local park, and take along two paper shopping bags. Collect a half dozen or so fresh leaves and place them in the bags. Pick the ones that are the most different. Try to find some that are soft, some that have lobes or "fingers", some with long stems, or some made up of many small leaflets, and so on. Make sure you pick two of each type, so that each bag contains an identical set of the same number of leaves. Have your child reach in and feel a leaf in one bag and then reach into the second bag to find the matching leaf.

Discuss the many ways to distinguish between the leaves. How do they differ in shape? Texture? Color? When you finish the game, you and your child might just look at the world around you differently - and find you've turned over a new leaf!



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