



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

## Nutrition

### Quick tips for nutritious, low-fat snacks and meals

- Bread is the original low fat “fast-food”, offering a quick base for an array of toppings, from lean meats and vegetables to jams and fresh fruit.

- Couscous, one of the more “exotic” grains, cooks in just five minutes and comes in a variety of unique flavors, like toasted almond.

- Leftovers are transformed instantly when you wrap them up in a tortilla. It’s so easy to do: simply fill the tortilla with leftovers, roll up, and eat. Favorite sauces or condiments can be added before rolling up.

- Pasta is perfect for “make-ahead” meals.

Cook a large batch at the beginning of the week, toss with a small amount of light oil (to keep it from sticking, store in an airtight container), and take what you need for meals throughout the week. □

## Social Skills

### Growing up to be responsible adults

We all want our children to grow up to be responsible adults.

We want them to feel, think, and act with respect for themselves and for others.

To do this, children need lots of help from parents and caregivers. Learning to be responsible includes learning to:

- Show respect and compassion for others;
- Practice honesty;
- Show courage by standing up for what we believe;
- Develop self-control out of consideration for others;
- Maintain self-respect.

Here are some things you can do at home:

- Watch for the chance to teach your children responsible behavior through everyday situations. Share your moral and religious values with them.
- Show compassion and concern when others are suffering.

- Read stories together that teach lessons: the courage of David standing up to Goliath in the Bible story, or the value of persistence from “The Little Engine That Could,”



- Talk about complicated and difficult decisions. Help children understand how the choices they make will affect them and others.

- Visit with teachers to discuss ways parents, caregivers, and other adults and the school can reinforce the same lessons about good character.

- Talk with other parents and agree on acceptable behavior for children’s play and parties.

Take turns supervising to show that all the parents agree on the standards of behavior. □

## When your child is afraid

All of us have experienced fear. And as caring parents, we want to protect our children from fearful situations.

But we cannot always protect our children, nor can we keep them from being afraid. We can, however, reduce children's fears by:

- Helping them express their fears.
- Distinguish real from imaginary dangers, and
- Become increasingly independent and confident about handling frightening situations they encounter as they mature.

Here are some ideas that will help you help your child deal with fear:

- Talk with your child about a frightening situation. Let him know that he can talk with you about anything—even sensitive subjects.

Don't create an atmosphere in which he feels guilty or ashamed if he brings up a touchy subject.

- Allow your child plenty of time to talk over fears. Don't push her into a scary situation.

Forcing her to stay in a dark room, for example, will only intensify her fear of the dark.

- Accept your child's fears, feelings, and reactions. Don't deny what your child is fearing; these fears are very real to her.

Ridiculing or shaming her will make her hide her feelings from you.

- Tell your child the truth about frightening events.

"Yes, it may hurt when you get a shot. So it's okay to yell and make faces, but you need to hold still."



Don't deceive your child about stressful or frightening events. Providing information about the hospital (or death or a divorce) isn't harmful to a child; deceiving him is.

- Involve your child in decision-making and problem solving about frightening situations to enhance his feelings of power and competence.

Ask, "What do you think would help a child who is afraid?"

- Provide books with stories about other children experiencing fear.

And let your child use art and puppet play to express feelings and rehearse solutions to frightening situations.

- Suggest ways your child can cope with fears: "Some people who are afraid of the dark carry a flashlight or use a nightlight. What would make you feel better?"

Don't limit your child's options for adaptive behaviors by emphasizing the negatives: "Don't cry!" "Don't act like a baby!" Instead, suggest what the child **can** do. □

## Talking about negative feelings

You can help your child learn to put negative feelings into words.

Often, when parents discourage their children's negative feelings, they mean to discourage their behavioral expression rather than the feelings themselves.

Around five years old, children have good enough control of their actions and good enough language to learn to substitute words for actions when they feel angry, frustrated, and otherwise upset.

For example, suppose your child's little brother scribbles in the pages of her favorite book. She has a right to be angry, but she doesn't have the right to hit or yell at him.

You can help her learn to express such feelings in an acceptable way by:

- The way you respond to her when she does something similar, and
- Your putting into words for her how you think she probably feels: "You're mad because Fred scribbled in your book. Feel like talking about it?" □

### 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)

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## Spending time together

Most parents value spending time with their children. But all too often our lifestyle doesn't lend itself to "togetherness." Even when we plan special time with our children, things don't always go smoothly.

Here are some tips for helping make the time spent together happy and productive for all:

- If you spend time at work during the week and your child spends the majority of time in school or at childcare, staying home and having an unstructured day during the weekend might be a better way to nurture a relationship than going to see a movie or visiting the zoo.

- A relaxing time doing what you all enjoy—which may be as simple as fixing pancakes for breakfast or going on a hike—may be the best use of your time.

- Do something with your children that you like to do. If you do something you enjoy, the pleasure is often contagious. What about a game of miniature golf? Go swimming together. Play croquet.

- Consider the basics: hunger and sleep. It's difficult to have fun with a tired or hungry child (or adult, for that matter). Try to keep naps on schedule. Eat an early lunch if you're going out for the afternoon, or take along a simple lunch.

- Sometimes let children join in your projects. The adult world is appealing to children. After all, children want more than anything to be "big." They also want to spend time with their parents.

For example, while you're making dinner, put a plastic tablecloth on the floor. Give your youngster a pan

of water (not very deep) and some potatoes to wash with a vegetable scrub brush.

- Make a short list of four or five activities you can all participate in. Then let the kids choose the one they'd like the most. This helps them feel like they are part of the family, and that their preferences are considered.

We need to manage ourselves to make time for what's important to us. But that isn't always easy. Kids are kids for only a short time. Building a strong relationship with them now means you can enjoy the rewards for a lifetime. □

## Academics

### Learning in real life

It's easier to understand a new idea if the lesson includes real-life objects rather than using pictures or words.

For example, the word "orange" stands for the fruit we eat as well as for the color of certain things.

But that idea may be hard for children to understand if we just tell them about it or show them pictures.

If children touch, smell, peel, and eat an orange, and then look around for objects that match the *color* of the orange peel, the idea will come alive.

Any time a youngster is having trouble understanding something from a picture or from words, try using the real object or action itself. □

## Silent Meal

On a blackboard or a large piece of paper or poster board, write down the items to be prepared for the next meal.

Beside each item indicate what "sign" is to be used for that item.

Diners can help you come up with ideas for the messages you'll need to communicate in order to eat your meal.

For example, "blink both eyes," means: "please pass the potatoes."

"Raise your left hand" means, "please pour me a glass of milk." And so on until all the items on the menu have a "sign."

Use as many or as few "signs" as the kids can manage. Then settle back and enjoy a "silent meal."

Oh, and before you start "being silent", let the children decide what the "penalty" is for talking out loud. □



**Growing Together** is published by Growing Child, Inc., P.O. Box 2505 W. Lafayette, IN 47996 ©2011 Growing Child, Inc. Telephone: (765) 464-0920. Customer Service: 1-800-927-7289.








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.

[www.growingchild.com](http://www.growingchild.com)

# August 2011

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<p>1 Visit a farm.</p>	<p>2 If you could be any animal, what would you be? And why?</p>	<p>3 Draw some flowers and color each one a different color. Don't forget to draw the stems.</p>	<p>4 In which month is your birthday?</p> 	<p>5 Have a parade with your dolls, stuffed animals and cars.</p>	<p>6 Talk about the television shows and videos you watch. What could you do instead of watching TV?</p>
<p>7 Turn on some music and take turns conducting. (Don't forget your baton.)</p>	<p>8 Find four toys that each have four wheels.</p>	<p>9 Sing "Oh, Susannah!"</p> 	<p>10 Who are your favorite people to play with?</p>	<p>11 Talk about what you did today.</p>	<p>12 Sing Frosty the Snowman and talk about the time when the weather was COLD!</p>	<p>13 Visit an outdoor market. What's for sale?</p>
<p>14 Paint a picture using cotton swabs. Adults supervise, please.</p>	<p>15 Count your toes.</p> 	<p>16 Show, read and talk about a board book to the baby.</p>	<p>17 Play "echo"—make sounds and let the children imitate them.</p>	<p>18 What can you draw using only square shapes?</p>	<p>19 Donate some food, time or money to a local soup kitchen or food finder organization.</p> 	<p>20 Play ball outside. Practice rolling, kicking, and throwing the ball.</p>
<p>21 Look for the number 1 in your house.</p>	<p>22 What color are your eyes? Look in a mirror and check it out.</p>	<p>23 Clean out your closet.</p>	<p>24 What are grandpa's and grandma's first names?</p> 	<p>25 Make a purple cow: Put grape juice, vanilla yogurt and ice cubes in the blender.</p>	<p>26 Look at photos of yourself and your family.</p>	<p>27 Visit a new place or something new in your community.</p>
<p>28 Melon balls are a yummy summer treat.</p> 	<p>29 Buy a new book.</p>	<p>30 Count all the pillows in your home.</p>	<p>31 Make a drawing in some dirt or sand using a stick or twig.</p>	