



# Growing Together

Newsletter for  
parents of preschool children

Art

## Kids love 'slime'

Of course, parents think that 'slime' is gross, and that's probably the truth!

But kids love to mess around with it, and sometimes play like they're "sculpting."

Here's how to make your own slime:

Start with a quantity of water, and slowly add cornstarch, mixing with your hand (or your child's hand).

Add enough cornstarch so that the slime feels wet when you're pouring it, but feels dry when touched.

Color can be used but do it first by adding powdered tempera to cornstarch before mixing or add food color to the water before mixing.

Is this really art?

Who knows, but the kids enjoy it enormously! □

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Parenting

## When parents and grandparents disagree

If there are disagreements between generations about childrearing, there are several things to consider:

- How important is it? If children seldom see their grandparents, a simple conversation about different rules at different houses may suffice. If there are major differences and children spend a lot of time with grandparents, the situation will have to be addressed.

- Many new parents are understandably insecure in their decisions about rearing children. An authoritative grandparent may make it hard to stand up for one's own beliefs.

- Some grandparents who were strict with their own children prefer to simply "enjoy" the grandchildren, indulging whims and undermining discipline.

- Grandparents who've struggled to raise their children may see different child-rearing methods as disapproval of their own practices or a repudiation of their values.

When differences of opinion about children are impossible to resolve or in cases where there are problems of sickness such as untreated alcoholism or a severe mental disorder, hard choices must be made. It is painful for grandparents and grandchildren to be cut off from each other, but there may be no other solution.

In some cases, however, visits may be made with the parents or a responsible third party present.

Often differences between generations are the product of misunderstandings and faulty communication. A frank discussion of the parents' philosophy of child raising can often lead to a sharing of ideas.

Between the two extremes of response—suffering in silence or denying all contact—there is usually a meeting ground.

- Parents should discuss between themselves their philosophy, goals, and plans for their children. Disagreements should be ironed out before approaching grandparents.

- If there is a particular child development book you are consulting, provide the grandparents with a copy.

- Decide whether there is one specific area of disagreement, such as television viewing or going to church or if there is a strikingly different philosophy.

- Meeting without the kids on neutral ground may lend itself to a productive discussion.

Whether you are the parent, step-parent or the grandparent, state your case, then *listen*. The other generation may have some good ideas. □

## Assertiveness training

A mother writes with a question that will be familiar to many of you, I'm sure.

At a recent gathering of children ages 2 to 2-1/2, another child grabbed a toy from her son. She wondered how she should handle a situation like this the next time.

Her questions: "Is it too early to teach my child to speak up for himself and try to take the toy back? Should I intervene on his behalf?"

As she said, she didn't want her son to become a bully but she wants him to be able to stand up for himself.

No doubt many of you are nodding your heads in recognition.

The first distinction we should make is in our understanding of being assertive or being aggressive.

Aggressive is the bully who goes on the offence; assertive is the individual who can stand up for his own rights.

Aggressive is the child taking the toy back forcefully; assertive is the child who can advocate for his needs and rights appropriately, with words.

Having said that, it is certainly not too early to begin to teach her child how to be assertive.

In their third year, children are struggling with understanding how to interact with others, and need guidance and coaching from their parents in learning helpful strategies.

If by "intervention on his behalf" the mother means moving in to restore the toy herself, this is not helpful for either child, as it only solves the problem temporarily without teaching the children any skills for solving similar problems in the future.



Such actions also tend to reinforce children in passive roles, allowing them to become victims later when no one is there to rescue them.

Instead, appropriate intervention is for the parent to step in to help the children learn words to use in instances where they want to convey their needs and wants to others.

She might ask her son, "Were you finished playing with that?"

This demonstrates to both children the idea that people can give something up when they are finished.

If he says yes (which he may, and accept that), suggest to the other child that he say, "May I play with that now that you are finished?"

If, more likely, he says no, Mom can say, "You can tell him: 'I need that back until I'm finished.'"

With the parent standing right beside him, even the quietest child feels emboldened to say those words. And in the face of such calm assertiveness (supported by the adult's presence) even the most belligerent child is liable to comply.

The parent could then complete the lesson by telling the other child, "You can ask David for a turn with that when he's finished."

In all of this exchange, there is the expectation that clear communication with others will be heeded.

If the first child seems reluctant to part with the toy, the parent could say, "Did you hear Jonathan's words? He's saying something important to you."

As adults give children the words to use in such situations, children develop confidence that words will give them power to assert themselves.

Even with less verbal younger children, adults can say, "You can say, No, or Mine." Giving words is giving permission to stand up for yourself.

Often parents and teachers throw out the cliché phrase, "Use your words."

It takes patient teaching and demonstration before youngsters learn the words to use, and feel empowered to communicate their needs and wants appropriately. □

## Learning to deal with stressful situations

In order for children to learn how to deal with stressful situations, they need practice now when they have your help and support.

Your behavior in stressful situations will affect your child's reactions.

If you are able to remain calm, despite feeling upset, this will give your child a feeling of security.

This is especially important in very frightening situations such as a car accident, a fire, or a natural disaster.

It is also important in the case of more routine problems such as when your child has made a mistake and is afraid of disappointing or angering you.

Naturally, you will have your own feelings to contend with and you should be honest with your child about them.

Let him know, for example, that you feel frightened, too, in a bad winter storm, or that you feel sad about leaving behind friends and favorite things when you move.

This helps him feel more comfortable about such feelings in himself. But try to teach your child by example to put these feelings into words rather than becoming immobilized by them.

Your child depends on you for comfort, reassurance, and stability, especially in stressful times. □

## Discipline

### Who's the boss at Grandma's?

When you and the children go to visit the grandparents or other relatives, who will do the disciplining?

Most of the time it makes sense for the house rules to apply. You can decide with your children that some behavior may be all right in grandma's house, but not all right when they get home again. Or maybe the other way around.

But grandparents shouldn't undercut the authority of the parents.

And it's important for grownups not to use questions of control of the children to fight out their arguments with each other.

As parents, you are the protector of your children, even against the grandparents or other relatives or family friends.

You also have to protect your children from the unrealistic expectations or standards that relatives may have for them. □

## You can't peek!

Tell the kids you're going to play a game that involves writing words, and they absolutely, positively cannot peek.

The reason is you'll be writing words on their backs!

Start by having one child lie face down or sit with knees pulled up. Then, slowly draw a letter (or word) on the child's back with your finger.

The child's job is to guess the letter (or word) you're drawing.

Adjust the game to fit the children's capabilities. Younger children can recognize one letter or number. Older children can try words.

When everybody's had a turn (including the adults!), why not suggest S-N-A-C-K-S! □

## 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/](http://www.GrowingChild.com/)  
**FreeGrandmaSays**  
and enter your e-mail address.

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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
<p>6</p> <p>Have a family version of show and tell.</p> 	<p>7</p> <p>Blow through your lips and make a noise like a horse.</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Vasant Panchami.</p>	<p>9</p> <p>Play hide-and-seek inside.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Give Toddler safe, empty cans with lids to match up.</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Draw a picture of a sunny day.</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Abraham Lincoln's birthday.</p> 
<p>13</p> <p>Build something big with your blocks or construction toys.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Valentine's Day.</p> 	<p>15</p> <p>Teach your child a song from your childhood.</p>	<p>16</p> <p>Play "Guess which hand!"</p> 	<p>17</p> <p>Count Baby's fingers and toes out loud.</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Make shapes or letters with stick pretzels. Add some long, skinny cheese pieces and eat them up!</p>	<p>19</p> <p>Look for things outside that are green.</p>
<p>20</p> <p>Practice humming.</p> 	<p>21</p> <p>Presidents' Day.</p>	<p>22</p> <p>George Washington's birthday.</p> 	<p>23</p> <p>Read a story about summertime before bedtime.</p>	<p>24</p> <p>How many nursery rhymes do you know? Sing your favorite.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Count the closets in your house.</p> 	<p>26</p> <p>Talk about ways to show kindness.</p>
<p>27</p> <p>Do you have a museum in your community? Check to see if there are special programs for children.</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Can you find the color blue on any of your toys?</p> 