

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

January 2019



KID BITS

I'm curious...

Curious children make eager learners. Support your little one's "let's find out" spirit by wondering aloud about everyday things. If she likes watching the garbage truck, for example, ask, "Where do you think the trash ends up?" Consider taking your trash to the landfill one day so she can see the answer for herself.

Downtime for parents

Parenting is a full-time job, and as with any other job, it's okay to take breaks. In fact, children thrive when their parents are relaxed and happy. Give yourself permission to spend some kid-free time doing things for yourself like having coffee with a friend, enjoying a favorite hobby, or taking a hot bath.

Drug safety

It's never too early to talk to your youngster about drugs. Anytime he needs medication, turn it into a teachable moment. Explain what it's for ("This medicine will bring down your fever"). Let him see you carefully read the label and measure the right amount. *Note:* Keep all medication in a locked cabinet.

Worth quoting

"Among the things you can give and still keep are your word, a smile, and a grateful heart." Zig Ziglar

Just for fun

Mom: Why are you running around your bed?

Trevor: I'm trying to catch up on sleep!



Spread a little kindness

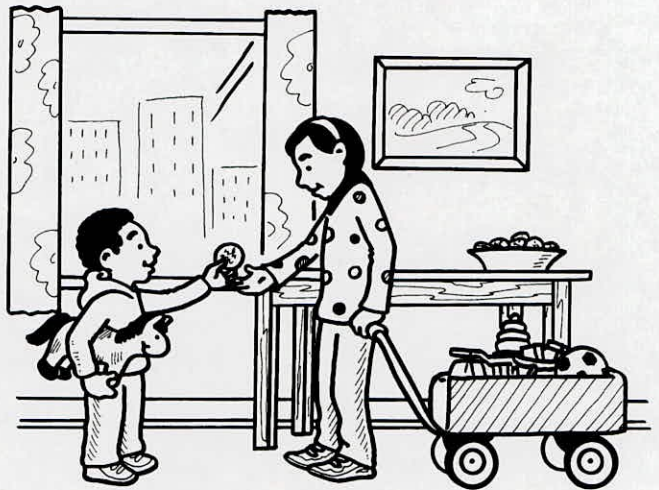
One good deed from your child can snowball into more acts of kindness with a little nudge from you. Encourage him to notice kindness and pass it on with these ideas.

Hand out buttons

Recognize good deeds as part of your family's daily routine. Help your youngster cut out paper circles and write "I was kind!" on each one. Keep the buttons in a bowl, and when someone spots a family member showing kindness, have him give that person a button. Maybe your child will present a button to his big sister for sharing a favorite toy.

Tell stories

Make up stories that could inspire your youngster to be kind. Start with a problem. "Once upon a time, a little boy lost his shovel in the sandbox." Then, your child thinks of a kind deed and adds it to the story. *Example:* "I stopped playing and helped him look for it."



Take turns adding to the story until the problem is solved.

Spread it around

Tell your youngster that the two of you are kindness "ambassadors" and your job is to find ways to be kind. Agree on a special signal (wiggle your fingers, give a thumbs up) to use when you spot an opportunity. Maybe you'll give the signal when you notice that a shopper dropped her grocery list and your child can pick it up for her. ♥

Over, under, and through

Set up a homemade obstacle course with your youngster. She'll build large motor skills as she jumps, crawls, and tiptoes. Here's how:

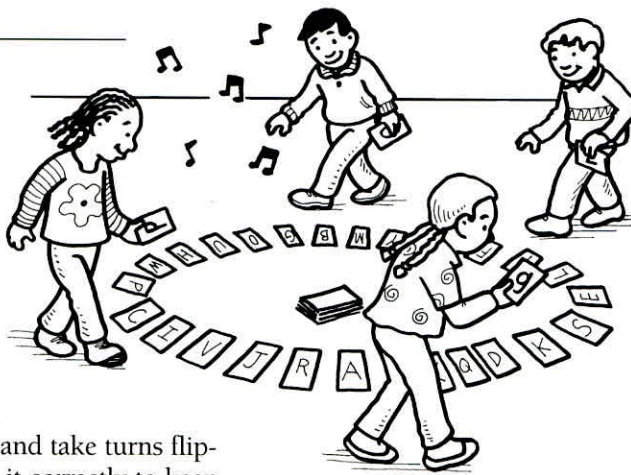
- Arrange paper towel tubes on the floor like the rungs of a ladder—they're "hurdles" for your child to hop over.
- Connect two chairs by tying yarn around them, either low or high. Your youngster could step over or "limbo" under the yarn.
- Put painter's tape or masking tape on the floor in a zigzag pattern. Have your child tiptoe across the "balance beam."
- Scatter paper plates on the floor, tape them in place, and let her leap from one "lily pad" to the next. ♥



ABC card games

Learning the alphabet is fun! Write each letter (uppercase and lowercase) on a separate index card for your youngster, and play these games that let her practice recognizing her ABCs.

Animal swipe. Have your child draw animals on five index cards. Shuffle the lowercase alphabet cards with the animal cards. Then, lay them facedown in rows, and take turns flipping over a card. If you get a letter, name it correctly to keep the card. But if you turn over an animal card, make that animal's sound, and swipe a letter card from the other player. Collect the most cards to win. Play again with the uppercase letters.



find it before the person turns off the music, they keep both cards. When all the cards have been claimed, the person with the most wins. ♥

Alphabet walk. Randomly arrange the uppercase letters faceup in a circle on the floor, and stack the lowercase ones facedown in the center. Each player takes one lowercase letter. Have one person turn on music, while the others walk around the circle and try to find the uppercase letter that matches their card. If they

ACTIVITY CORNER

Make a snow globe

This homemade snow globe lets your child explore chemistry.

Materials: clear jar with a lid, small plastic animals or other toys, glue, rubbing alcohol, glitter, vegetable oil

Help your youngster glue toys into the bottom of the jar to design a wintry scene. Then, fill the jar about $\frac{1}{4}$ full with rubbing alcohol, and let him sprinkle in "snow" (glitter). Have him pour in vegetable oil to the top of the jar. Now he can screw on the lid, shake the jar, and set it on the table.



It's snowing inside the jar! Shaking the jar broke the oil into tiny drops. The drops and the glitter sank to the bottom because they're denser—the particles in them are packed together tighter than those in the alcohol. ♥

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Q & A

Ready for kindergarten

Q: I received a notice about kindergarten registration for my preschooler. What can I start doing to help her get ready for elementary school?

A: In preschool, your daughter is learning many of the readiness skills she'll need, such as getting along with others, expressing emotions appropriately, and listening and following directions.

At home, make sure your daughter has basic self-help skills. For example, she'll need to take care of all her restroom needs independently. If she will use a backpack, help her practice putting it on and taking it off as well as zipping and unzipping it. She could also work on skills she will need in the cafeteria, like carrying a tray of food and opening her milk carton. And if your daughter still takes a nap, gradually ease her into staying awake all day by making her naps shorter. You could have her go to bed earlier to help her adjust.

Finally, at registration, find out about important events like open house or kindergarten-readiness programs. ♥



Handling anxiety

Little ones have big imaginations, and sometimes that can lead to worries. These suggestions will help your youngster cope with situations that make him feel anxious.

● **Accept his feelings.** Your child's concerns are real to him, even if they seem minor to you. Instead of telling him not to worry, you could say, "I know you feel nervous in crowds. I'll hold your hand the whole time."

● **Talk it out.** Often, simply discussing your youngster's anxiety

can lessen it. "That thunder really is loud, isn't it? Do you know what causes thunder?"

● **Offer options.** Give your child power over a source of anxiety. If he's anxious about "monsters under his bed," let him look underneath with a flashlight or draw a picture of a friendly monster to hang by his bed.

Note: If your youngster's anxiety interferes with daily activities, consult his pediatrician. ♥



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KID BITS

Safety first

Help your child stay safe at school with these clothing tips. Make sure she wears shoes that fit properly and either tie or have Velcro. They're less likely to cause accidents than floppy shoes like sandals or clogs. Also, avoid baggy clothes and cords or strings on clothing that can get caught in playground equipment.

Sizing things up

Take a walk around your neighborhood with your little one, and use objects you see to encourage him to compare sizes. Ask questions like "Is that mailbox *taller* or *shorter* than you?" or "Is the white rock *bigger* or *smaller* than the gray one?"

Helping hands

Trace around your child's hands on paper, and ask her to name different ways she is helpful. Maybe she takes care of your dog by feeding him and helps you by dusting. Together, write each example on a separate finger. Then, hang up her "helping hands" to remind her how helpful she can be.

Worth quoting

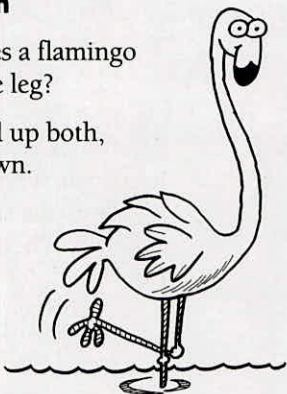
"Wonder. Go on and wonder."

William Faulkner

Just for fun

Q: Why does a flamingo hold up one leg?

A: If he held up both, he'd fall down.



Keys to self-control

How can you teach your little one to handle big emotions like anger, frustration, and disappointment? Work on increasing his self-control with these strategies to help him think before he acts.

Talk it out

Give your child words to use when he is upset. For example, if you can't find your glasses, you might say, "I feel so *frustrated*! Where did I last have them?" Then, when he's aggravated (say, he misplaced his favorite book), encourage him to use similar words. ("I feel *upset* because I want my book. I was looking at it in the living room—maybe it's there.") He'll learn to talk through his problems and be less likely to cry or whine.

Think ahead

Prepare for situations where self-control comes in handy. You could say, "We're going to your cousin's house. Let's think about what you can do if she's playing with a toy you want." He may ask to join her, or he could ask to play



with another toy until she's finished. Having a plan can help him avoid grabbing the toy or yelling at his cousin.

Calm down

When your youngster begins to get upset, help him find ways to keep his cool. For instance, he might take a deep breath, count to five, or draw a picture of how he is feeling. The distraction may be enough to settle him down. And once he's used to these techniques, he'll be able to do them without a reminder from you. ♥

Family playtime

Has the grown-up world left you too tired to play? Consider these ideas that will let you connect with your youngster—and unwind after a long day:

- Show her what you liked to play when you were her age. You could teach her a card game, a jump rope rhyme, or a magic trick, for instance. Next, ask her to teach you a game or an activity she enjoys.
- Step into a role. You might each pretend to be someone else (a cashier and a customer, a bird and a squirrel) while carrying on a conversation. Encourage your child to think about what her character would sound like and what she would say.
- At bedtime, shine a flashlight on the walls, ceiling, and floor. Have your youngster "chase" your beam with her own flashlight. Then, trade roles. ♥



Let me think...

When your youngster is faced with a challenge, it's fun for her to come up with more than one solution or possibility. Stretch her thinking with these activities.

Puppet problem-solving. Offer a pretend dilemma for puppets, and help your child act out the solution. You could make your puppet say, "Oh, no! I have too many dishes to carry! How can I get them to the party?" (Put them in a bag, ask a friend to take some.)



Answers and questions. Tell your youngster, "The answer is a blanket. What is the question?" Take turns coming up with as many questions as possible. ("What keeps you warm at night?" "What do we sit on at a picnic?") When you run out of ideas, let her think of a new answer to make up questions for.

What doesn't belong? Look around the room, and name any four objects (T-shirt, book, hat, lipstick). Then, have your child decide which doesn't belong and explain why. For instance, she could say that the book is the only one you can't wear. *Variation:* Name three objects, and tell her to choose a fourth and explain how it's related to the three you picked. ♥

"I love my school"

Encourage your child to have a positive attitude toward school with these tips:

- Let him hear you say good things about his teacher and his school. *Example:* "Mrs. Jackson always has such fun projects for your class to do."



- Attend special school events together. Going to family nights and on field trips helps your child see school as an important part of his life.

- Volunteer when you can. You might help with school carnivals, book fairs, and fund-raisers if you have time. If your schedule is tight, look for quick ways to show support like saving magazines for class projects or sending in fruit for a snack. ♥

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PARENT TO PARENT

That's my name!

My daughter has learned to read and write her first word: "Sarah." When she started school this year, the teacher sent home a list of ideas to help her recognize her name—and the suggestions worked!

For example, I wrote her name in pencil and let her use a different-colored marker to trace each letter as she said it out loud: "S-a-r-a-h." We also made a name puzzle. She printed her name on cardboard and drew squiggly lines between the letters. I cut them apart, and she put the puzzle back together.

Her favorite activity is listening to stories about characters named Sarah. At the library, we checked out *Sarah's Story* by Bill Harley and *Sarah's Room* by Doris Orgel. She loves pointing to her name as I read.

Now Sarah is learning to read other names in our family. She made puzzles for her sisters, and she wants to find library books with their names, too. ♥



Q & A

Getting enough sleep

Q: My son has a hard time falling asleep at night. How can I make it easier for him?

A: Getting enough sleep—10–13 hours a night—will help your child grow, stay healthy, and do well in school.

First, have him stick to a nightly bedtime routine.

Your son might take a bath, brush his teeth, and listen to a story, for instance. Repeating the routine each night helps him recognize

it's time for sleep. Also, research shows that watching TV or playing video games close to bedtime can get kids wound up and keep them from sleeping. If he uses electronics, have him turn them off at least an hour before bedtime.

Finally, encourage the rest of the family to read or do other quiet activities after he says good night. Your youngster may have an easier time going to bed—and staying there—if he doesn't feel like he's missing out on the fun. ♥

