



Growing Together

Newsletter for
parents of preschool children

Language

Negative words

There are many unsavory words that attract the attention of young children such as stupid, idiot, dummy and various “bathroom” words.

The first is because they have been told not to use them, and the second is because they do not hear the words regularly used by their parents or caregivers.

It is easy to use a negative word when we feel discouraged or frustrated, but there are some good reasons to avoid this:

- Insulting words make people feel bad; and the use of unflattering words reflects a lack of high standards and values.

- For example, “That stupid, dumb door needs some oil,” could become, “That squeaky, noisy door needs some oil.”

Taking a few seconds to make statements that are as positive as we can make them has a positive effect on everyone—speakers and listeners alike. □

February 2014

Vol. 30 No. 2

Parenting

Increase your self-confidence as a parent

Being a parent is a tremendous responsibility.

Parents are expected to feed and clothe tiny, helpless human beings, to teach them to get along in the world, and to encourage them to like themselves and others.

These and many other responsibilities often lead parents to question themselves and their abilities. Many times parents feel they just don’t measure up to the job they’re required to do.

Sometimes these feelings can chip away at parents’ self-confidence and affect their ability to interact with their children. Therefore, one of the most important things parents can do is build their own self-confidence.

One way to help improve self-confidence as a parent is to evaluate realistically the job they’re doing.

Here are three steps to help improve self-confidence:

First, don’t expect yourself to be perfect. The picture of a “perfect parent”—one who is always kind, patient, loving, intelligent, in control, and so on—is impossible to fulfill. And it may not be so perfect in the first place.

For example, parents who are always patient may not be preparing

their children for a world of impatient people.

Failure is difficult enough to deal with when it is real. But trying to be perfect is simply inviting unnecessary failure.

The important thing is not perfect behavior at all times, but growth toward doing things better more often.

A second factor in realistic self-evaluation is to compare your behavior as a parent to your own past performance rather than to some other person’s parenting.

Instead of feeling like a failure because you did not spend three hours a night working or playing with your children like the parent next door, praise yourself for spending a half hour more with them this week than you did last.

Finally, be specific about your self-evaluation. If you try a new method of discipline for a week and it fails miserably, do not simply decide that you are a failure as a parent.

Tell yourself that you did a good job of sticking to the new plan or that you are a pretty good parent for caring enough to try something new, even though it did not work. Make your failure easier to accept by praising your success.

Then move on. □

Children have emotional needs, too

To grow healthy and strong, children should have good food, plenty of sleep, exercise and fresh air. Children have emotional needs, too.

Love

Every child needs to feel:

- That her parents love, want, and enjoy her.
- That she matters very much to someone.
- That there are people near her who care what happens to her.

Acceptance

Every child needs to believe:

- That his parents like him for himself, just the way he is.
- That they like him all the time, and not only when he acts according to their ideas of the way a child should act.
- That they always accept him, even though often they may not approve of the things he does.
- That they will let him grow and develop in his own way.

Security

Every child needs to know:

- That her home is a good, safe place she can feel sure about.
- That her parents will always be on hand, especially in times of crisis when she needs them most.
- That she belongs to a family or group; that it is a place where she fits in. □

Reward vs. bribe

What's the difference between a reward and a bribe?

A reward is offered ahead of time, before a child is asked to do something.

For example, a child may be promised a reward if she helps her parents bag leaves.

For the child, the reward reinforces her good behavior.

A bribe, on the other hand, is used to encourage a child to do something she has already refused to do.

A parent might offer a candy bar to the child who has refused to clean up her room, for example.

Bribes tend to teach a child that she can get what she wants by refusing to cooperate.

Fortunately, for many young children the best reward for a job well done is an adult's praise. And the more attention and praise you dispense for good behavior, the more good behavior you'll see.

Save the rewards for special occasions. By thinking ahead, you can do away with bribes altogether. □

Kids can make their own dessert

Here's an easy recipe that combines two ingredients that kids love: bananas and chocolate.

Here's what you'll need for four medium-size banana desserts:

1 cup chocolate chips

A quantity of coconut, chopped nuts, or other favorite toppings

4 popsicle sticks

2 tablespoons water

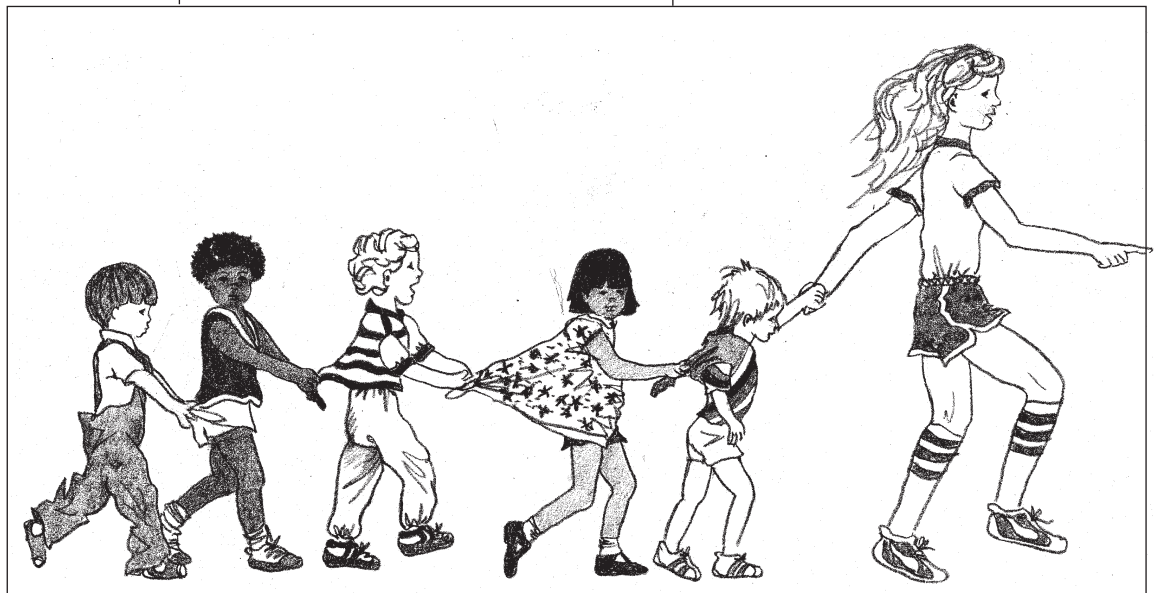
To start, first peel the bananas.

Then melt the chocolate chips (in the microwave or on the stove in a double boiler).

Next insert a popsicle stick into each banana, and then roll it in the melted chocolate until it's completely covered.

Use coconut, nuts or other toppings for sprinkling on the chocolate-covered bananas.

Finally, put the bananas on a plate and stick them in the freezer until they're hard. Then, eat them! □



Bad guys

My book club recently read and discussed the novel *Little Bee*, by Chris Cleve.

In it, there is a wonderful four-year-old character named Charlie, who will neither take off his Batman cape nor answer to any name other than Batman. (I found the book a profound reading experience, but it is not my purpose here to review it.)

I thought of Charlie/Batman and his approach to the world when I received a question recently from a reader about her three-year-old son.

He had recently discovered the pretend world of guns and bad guys, even though never exposed to it on television.

The mother wondered about the limits of pretend violence after her son had drawn a make-believe gun when a passing stranger said hello.

Those of us who want to keep our children away from the real violence in our world are often dismayed when children want to explore it anyway, in their pretend world.

I well recall my sons, being raised in the period right after Vietnam and denied any toy guns, turning every available stick into heavy firepower.

In the book, Charlie is obsessed with the question: "Is you a goodie or a baddie?"

Three- and four-year-olds are struggling with the beginnings of self-control and conscience, now understanding that some actions are definitely right, and others just as clearly wrong.

As we know, most of children's making sense of the world comes via the medium of their pretend

play, where they take the bits of knowledge and experience they have and embroider it into a world they can control and understand.

So, a delineation of good guys and bad guys, and some means of controlling the latter, is a pretty helpful scenario for a young child.

Okay, so we can understand it, but we still don't like it. What to do when the behavior makes us uncomfortable?

Let me share with you possible solutions from generations of preschool teachers who have had to deal with pretend violence on their playgrounds. Then you can decide what response feels right for you.

1. You can outright forbid it, saying something like, "I don't like guns. Guns hurt people, so no gun playing, even pretend." This often elicits creative, wide-eyed responses, like, "Oh, this isn't a gun. It's my magic people freezer." And the need to explore power is still there.

2. You can try to help children draw the line between real and pretend, reminding them that most people don't like real guns, so they have to tell their friends and others that this is just pretend.

3. You can let the play go on, but try to draw children into conversations about what makes people strong and powerful, with real good force, such as real people they know who have done good things.

4. You can just relax and assume the gunplay will fade away when the issues in the child's mind have been resolved. It is such a common childhood phenomenon

that most adults around you will understand.

Always, though, you should feel comfortable in letting your children know of your feelings about violence, as that is all part of the sorting out process.

Lastly, for a splendid and thoughtful exploration of this topic, and examples of comments by a gifted preschool teacher, try to find *Bad Guys Don't Have Birthdays*, by Vivian Paley.

This was written by an adult who understands the importance of pretend play, even when some of it centers on explorations that make us uncomfortable. □

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

and enter your e-mail address.

Growing Together is published by Growing Child, Inc., P.O. Box 2505 W. Lafayette, IN 47996 ©2014 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).

Growing Together issues may be reproduced in part or in full by participating organizations.











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

February 2014

Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday



<p>2</p> <p>Groundhog Day</p>  <p>Super Bowl Sunday</p>	<p>3</p> <p>How many marshmallows can you stack?</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Rosa Parks Day (1913)</p>	<p>5</p> <p>How many cousins do you have? 24,891?</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Waitangi Day (New Zealand). Look it up.</p>	<p>7</p> <p>National 'Wear Red' Day</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Make a valentine for someone special.</p> 
<p>9</p> <p>Go out for lunch.</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Dress up in dad's or mom's old clothes.</p> 	<p>11</p> <p>Foundation Day (Japan)</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Abraham Lincoln's Birthday</p> 	<p>13</p> <p>Talk about the safest way to cross the street. Remember to always look both ways first.</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Valentine's Day</p> 	<p>15</p> <p>Susan B. Anthony Day</p> 
<p>16</p> <p>Play a kazoo.</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Presidents Day Who is our president now?</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Make up a poem about winter.</p> 	<p>19</p> <p>Recite the months of the year. Make a song out of it.</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Draw a picture that shows what the weather was like in January.</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Draw a picture of your ears.</p> 	<p>22</p> <p>George Washington's Birthday</p>
<p>23</p> <p>Cut a grapefruit in half. Scoop out (or eat) the inside. Fill the remaining 'bowl' with birdseed and set it outside.</p> 	<p>24</p> <p>Sing a song together the next time you're in the car.</p>	<p>25</p> <p>A bag of colorful sponges makes an inexpensive gift for a baby.</p>	<p>26</p> <p>Don't throw out those cardboard boxes! Think of ways to adapt them as toys.</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Pretend Play: Pretend your bed is a boat or a ship. Or maybe use one of those cardboard boxes.</p> 	<p>28</p> <p>Help clean up around the house.</p>	