

Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

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Ft. George Community Enrichment Center
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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

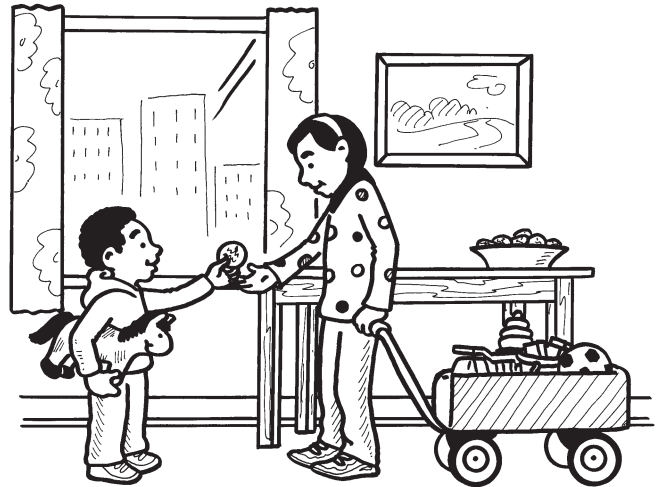
One good deed from your child can snowball into more acts of kindness with a little nudge from you. Encourage him to notice kindness and pass it on with these ideas.

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.

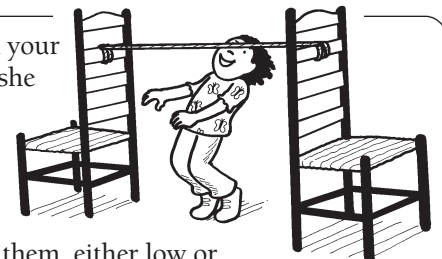
Spread it around

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:

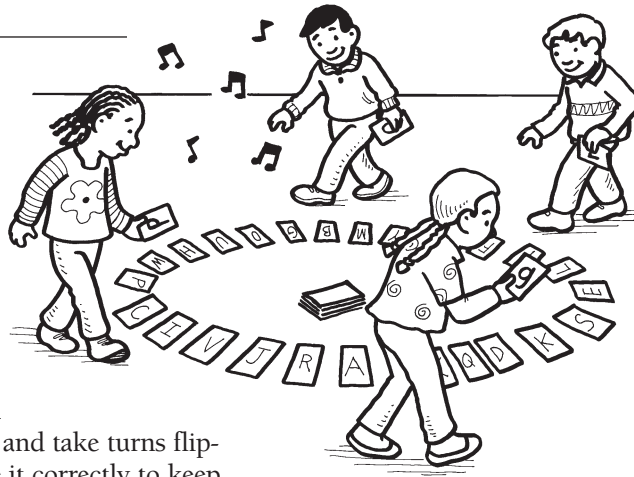
- Arrange paper towel tubes on the floor like the rungs of a ladder—they're "hurdles" for your child to hop over.
- Connect two chairs by tying yarn around them, either low or high. Your youngster could step over or "limbo" under the yarn.
- Put painter's tape or masking tape on the floor in a zigzag 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.



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 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.♥

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.♥

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ways to promote school readiness, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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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.♥

