



Preschool Connection

The Importance of Saying "No"

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A preschool-aged neighbor came to visit recently with her parents. After the preliminary greetings, as we adults settled to chat, I offered Sarah the basket of books and boxes of toys that I keep for my grandchildren, in the same room where we were.

Rather than amuse herself, Sarah insisted that her mother read to her book after book. Her father visited with us.

After a time, the child decided she needed a favorite book from her own house, two doors down. Her father immediately took her home to get it and that was the last we saw of them. Her mother chatted a few minutes and then left. Thinking about it, I realized that Sarah had controlled the entire episode. What power for a four-and-a-half year old

child! Rather than risk her displeasure—which I have seen displayed on other occasions—her parents agreed to every one of her demands. Not once did they respond with a "No, not now."

I am gloomy in considering the future relationship of these parents and child. For some reason, they have abdicated any rights they ever had in favor of the child's authority. They have become so determined to please her that they have squashed any impulse to give her limits and expectations of behavior. I consider this a sad state of affairs. In my opinion, there is an absolute need for parents to use the word "no" in their relationships with their children. Not all the time, unremittingly, in the manner of the old style authoritarian parent, of course. That naked use of negative power was not healthy for parents or their children. But when

children are never told "no", they are placed in the dangerous position of believing that the world revolves around them alone, and that their every wish will be granted instantly.

In such a child-center world, no one else has any rights at all. What a dangerous lesson to teach! What a rude awakening will come at some point, when teacher and peers do not bend as easily to her every whim, and when they also expect adherence to their requests. When parents want to eliminate the need for too many "no's", they can try a little prevention. In the case I described, they could have reminded Sarah as they walked over for the visit that they wanted to talk with their grownup friends, so she could listen or play with the toys they knew would be available. (con't. pg. 2)



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The structured activities listed below are from Theraplay Activities, Volume 1: published by Therapy Institute, Wilmette, IL, 2003. The purpose is to relieve the child of the burden of maintaining control of interactions. The adult sets limits, defines body boundaries, keeps the child safe, and helps to complete sequences of activities. They are intended to have fun with, not lessons or activities that have to be learned.

con't. from page 1

Such guidelines help children behave more appropriately. Or, they could phrase their decline to read with positive guidance about what the child can do, as "I'm talking with Carol and Ron now. You can read the books by yourself, and we'll read at home later."

Said with an appropriate degree of certainty and firmness, a child would likely concede that this was one of those occasions when her request would not be granted. Instead, Sarah's belief in her preeminence over her parents was reinforced.

While it may be almost too late for Sarah and her parents to restore the balance of power, reflecting on the need for saying "no" may help you in determining healthy relationships for you and your children.

Copied with permission from *Growing Child: Grandma Says* Apr. 18, 2006.

Contact Growing Child and learn more: www.GrowingChild.com.

email : service@growingchild.com

3 Patty-Cake:

Hold the child's hands and lead her through "Patty-cake." Patty cake, patty cake, baker's man. Bake me a cake as fast as you can. Roll it and pat it and mark it with a (child's initial) And toss it in the oven the (child's name and me! You can use feet as well. (page 9)

4 Pop the Bubble:

Blow a bubble and catch it on the wand. Have child pop the bubble with a particular body part, for example, finger, toe, elbow, shoulder or ear. This is a structured way of playing with bubbles. Bubbles readily capture the interest of young children and can be used as an engaging activity either in this structured form or in a manner that invites more spontaneity (for example, by have the child pop all of the bubbles as quickly as she can). (Page 11)

1 Bean Bag Game:

Place the beanbag or soft toy on your own head, give a signal, and drop the beanbag into child's hands by tilting your head toward the child. Take turns. (page 4)

2 Cotton Ball Hockey:

Lie on the floor on your tummies or with a pillow between you. Blow cotton balls back and forth, trying to get the cotton ball past your partner's defense. You can increase the complexity by saying so many blows can be used to get the ball across the pillow, or by both trying to blow at the same time to keep the ball in the middle. You can also use a ping pong ball. (page 5).

5 Peanut Butter and Jelly

Say "peanut butter" and have child say "jelly" in just the same way. Repeat five to ten times varying loudness and intonation. (page 10)

6 Stack of Hands:

Put your hand palm down in front of child, guide child to put his hand on top. Alternate hands to make a stack. Take turns moving the hand on the bottom to the top. You can also move top to bottom. This can be made more complicated by going fast or in slow motion. Lotions hands first makes for a slippery stack and adds an element of nature. (Page 13)

Please take a moment each month to fill out the brief questionnaire that we have included. We would like to know how helpful (or not) these newsletters have been for you, and how we can improve them for future years.

Please complete and return to your preschool teacher.

March 2007 Newsletter:

The information in this newsletter was (check one):

Informative. The right amount of information

Too brief

Too long

Not helpful

Other: _____

The activities were:

Helpful Activities you liked best (which numbers) _____

Not useful Activities you like least _____

The right amount of activities?

Comments: _____
