

Home & School

CONNECTION®

Working Together for School Success

October 2015

Indian Valley Local School
Talia St. Clair, Coordinator



SHORT NOTES

Enjoy poetry

It's fun to think about what a poem might mean. Let your youngster check out a volume of poetry from the library, and take turns reading aloud from it. Talk about what the poet could be saying. Your child will work on reading comprehension as she discovers the joy of poetry.

Support for special needs

If your youngster struggles with friendships because of a disability, a social skills group may help. He'll practice strategies like starting conversations, listening to what others say, and waiting his turn to speak. Plus, he might make friends he can get together with outside of the group. *Tip:* Ask your child's school counselor, doctor, or therapist to recommend a group.

Promote self-confidence

Nothing builds success like success itself, so give your youngster plenty of chances to shine. Let her pursue her interests—even if they're not what you would have chosen for her. Or encourage her to learn a new hobby. Feeling capable is a great confidence booster.

Worth quoting

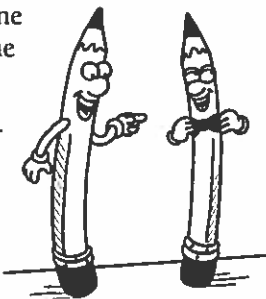
"Be sure you put your feet in the right place, then stand firm."

Abraham Lincoln

JUST FOR FUN

Q: What did one pencil say to the other?

A: You're looking sharp!



Positive attention = positive behavior

A little attention goes a long way toward helping your child behave well. Here are loving ways to inspire better behavior.

Announce a "time-in"

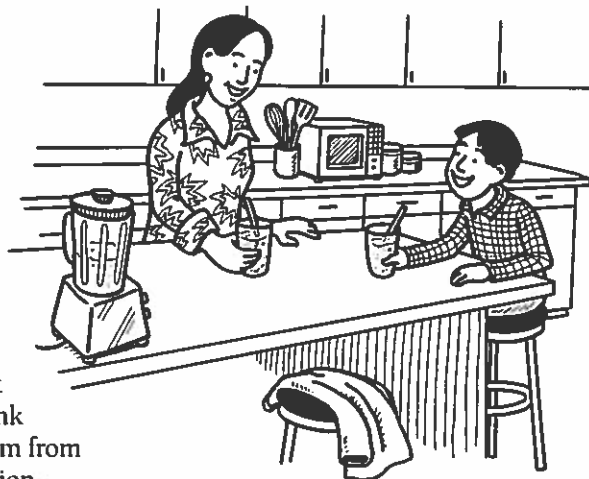
It's the "opposite" of a time-out—you and your youngster take a short break together *before* a situation where he tends to misbehave. During your time-in, you might color, play a quick game, or drink smoothies. This may prevent him from acting out to get negative attention.

Be playful

Pretending or being silly can make things go more smoothly. For example, to prevent your child from dragging his feet while getting ready for school, you could say, "Let's pretend we're astronauts. T-minus 10 minutes to blastoff!" Your playful discipline may not work every time, but your youngster just might discover that it's fun to cooperate.

Inspire a turnaround

Steer your child toward better behavior while you run errands by giving him jobs to do. In a store, you could say, "Okay, you're the leader. Can you find the garden department?" Or at the bank, have him count the coins while you count the bills. He'll feel important—and be less likely to get bored and misbehave.♥

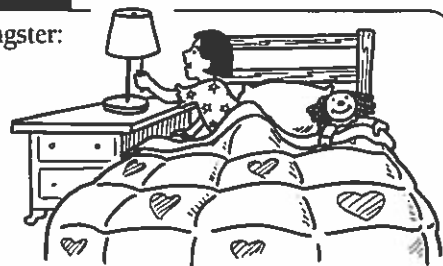


Early to bed, ready to learn

Share this interesting fact with your youngster:

While she's asleep, her brain is busy organizing and storing information she has learned. Use these guidelines to help her get a good night's sleep and improve learning and memory:

- Elementary school students need 9–11 hours of sleep—experts recommend a range because some kids require more sleep than others. If your child has a hard time waking up or feels drowsy in school, move to an earlier bedtime.
- The light from a computer (or any screen) can prevent your youngster from winding down. Have her turn off anything with a screen at least an hour before bed.♥



Hints for homework time

Make homework more pleasant for your youngster with these ideas for starting out strong and staying on task.

Get comfortable. Some children concentrate best by sitting at a desk, while others do better sprawled on a bed or the floor. Kids who tend to fidget might think better while balancing on a big exercise ball. Let your child experiment to see what she prefers. Then, she'll be able to focus on her work—not on getting comfortable.

Get focused. Your youngster could work in her room, away from siblings and the TV. If she shares a room or likes doing



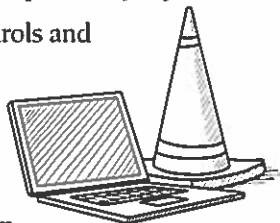
homework in the kitchen or living room, help her set up a file-folder “cubicle” to block out distractions. She should staple together file folders (long edge to long edge) and stand them up to block off her work area. *Idea:* Have her write helpful information on the sides facing her, such as math facts or words she frequently misspells.

Get started. Sometimes beginning her homework is the hardest part. Encourage your child to start with an easier assignment—the satisfaction she feels from finishing it may give her momentum to tackle more challenging work. Or she could tell herself that if she completes one subject, she can take a break to ride her scooter or call a friend.♥

Q & A How to be careful online

Q: My son is just starting to use the Internet. We set up “parental controls,” but I know they’re not perfect. Other than watching him every second, what can I do to help him stay safe online?

A: Parental controls and supervision are important, but it’s also a good idea to teach your son habits to use on his own.



First, explain that “real life” safety rules apply online. For instance, he shouldn’t talk to strangers or go places that you haven’t approved. When he wants to visit a new website, he needs to let you know so you can make sure it’s appropriate. Keep in mind that sites with user comments or chat features usually aren’t good choices because they allow strangers to post or to talk to him.

Finally, just as in real life, he should tell you right away if a stranger tries to contact him or if he sees something confusing or upsetting.♥

OUR PURPOSE

To provide busy parents with practical ideas that promote school success, parent involvement, and more effective parenting.

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ACTIVITY CORNER

Shaky science

Can your child create

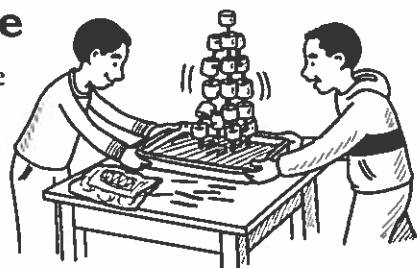
a building strong enough to withstand an “earthquake”? With this activity, he will practice thinking like an engineer.

1. Together, prepare an 8½ x 11 pan of gelatin dessert. Cover and refrigerate overnight, until set.

2. Have your youngster connect toothpicks with marshmallows to create a building that rises out of the gelatin.

3. Grasping opposite ends of the pan, gently shake it back and forth to create an earthquake. Does his building tumble, or do pieces fall off? He can redesign and test again. Which designs work best?

4. Talk about how engineers might make earthquake-proof buildings. For example, a low, wide building may fare better than a tall, narrow one. Also, which shapes (squares, rectangles, triangles) make the base or walls stronger?♥



PARENT TO PARENT

Fun with family photos

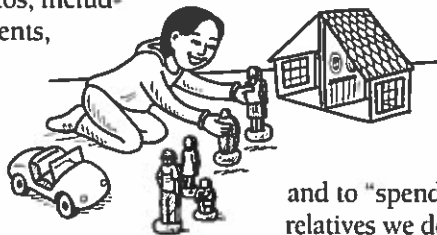
My daughter Annabelle loves storytelling. She often uses her imagination to act out tales with her miniature people and animal figures. When I heard her naming them after our family members and pets, I had an idea.

We gathered family photos, including ones with her grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Then, I helped her flatten empty pasta and cracker boxes and glue photos to them. She cut out around each person

and pet and stuck the cardboard figures in globs of play dough to make them stand up.

Now Annabelle likes to act out family stories using the figures. She reenacts beach vacations, holiday meals, and more. Sometimes we play along with her,

each pretending to be a different person. It’s a great way to build her language skills—and to “spend time” with relatives we don’t see often.♥



STEPS TO Homework Success

When your children do homework, they reinforce what they learned at school and expand their knowledge. But they learn more than the information in their assignments—they also build study skills and habits that they'll need throughout school and life.

Here are ways you can provide support and help your youngsters succeed with their homework.



BEFORE

Create a study area

Many children work best in a special study area, such as at a bedroom desk or the kitchen table. However, some youngsters do better sprawling on the living room floor or sitting on their bed. Consider letting your child decide where he'll work—he's more likely to stay on task when he's comfortable. Regardless, his work area should have adequate lighting and homework supplies, such as pens, pencils, paper, a ruler, a calculator, and a dictionary.

Get assignments

Remind your youngster that it's her job to write down assignments in school. She may need to copy them from the board or write them in her agenda as her teacher talks. When she gets home, check that she has the instructions and handouts she needs—you'll help her get in the habit of bringing home her assignments the day they're given.

Make a daily plan

Glance over your child's homework, and help him come up with a study plan. You might suggest that he tackle tougher or

longer assignments first while he's fresh and alert. He should be able to follow most homework instructions without supervision, but let him know you're available to discuss them.

Break projects into steps

Encourage your youngster to use a calendar to stay on schedule as she works on a project. Have her divide each project into steps and write them on the calendar. A science project, for example, might include steps like: develop hypothesis, conduct experiment, record results, write lab report. *Tip:* She may need your help breaking assignments into chunks and choosing deadlines.



Team with teachers

Ask your child's teacher about homework rules and how she would like you to help (or not help) him. Find out what kinds of assignments your youngster should expect. Provide your phone number and email address, and encourage the teacher to contact you if problems arise. The sooner you are aware of an issue, the more quickly a solution can be found.



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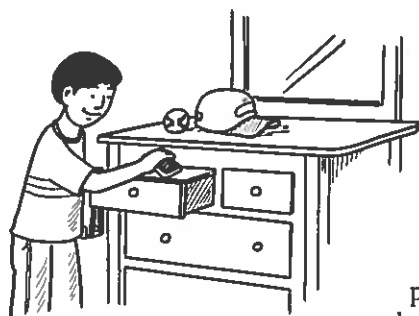
DURING

Keep a routine

Starting homework at the same time each day can make learning a habit for your child. Have her try a couple of different times to see what works best. Possibilities include immediately after school, before dinner (but after she has had time to play), or after dinner.

Increase concentration

Some youngsters need calm surroundings to focus on homework. Others may study better with background music. But television is too much for anyone to ignore. Your child



should keep the set off during study time so his mind is tuned in to his homework. Likewise, if he has a cell phone or a handheld video game system, have him turn it off and put it out of sight so that he isn't distracted during homework time.

Have family quiet time

Whenever possible, try to match your household's schedule with your youngster's study time. If homework is done from 7 to 8 p.m. each day, make this a quiet time for the entire family. Do paperwork or read alongside your child while she studies. This will help her stay focused.

Provide support

If your youngster is stuck, guide him in the right direction rather than providing the answers. For example, instead of answering his question, "Mom, how many feet are in a mile?" ask, "How do you think you can figure that out?" Your child will learn to work independently and to problem-solve. **Tip:** When he would benefit from your assistance, offer to pitch in. For instance, you could quiz him on spelling words or multiplication facts.

Give reminders

A simple prompt ("Finished that poem?") may be all that's needed to encourage your youngster to complete a project. But watch for signs that she's frustrated or seems to be spending too much time on her homework. If she consistently has trouble finishing assignments, ask her teacher for advice.



AFTER

Check homework

Take a moment to inspect your child's work when he's finished. Knowing that you will be looking at his assignments increases the chance that he will finish them *and* do his best. Check to see that his work is neat and complete. If you find several misspelled words or calculation errors, ask him to look over it again. But you shouldn't correct his work—that's his responsibility. Plus, mistakes show the teacher where your youngster needs help.

Boost confidence

Praising hard work as you notice it encourages your child to keep learning. A warm comment ("Nice job on those division problems") can give her confidence when she tackles her next assignment. Remember, the right attitude can make a big difference!



Find ways to improve

When graded homework is returned, look for the teacher's notes. These tell you if your youngster understood the assignment or where he went wrong. If he received a poor grade, ask him to think about the reasons. Did he copy the assignment correctly? Did he follow the instructions? Discovering what went wrong can keep him from repeating mistakes.

Talk about learning

You can stay up to date on what your child is learning in school by talking with her regularly about her homework. For instance, during dinner you could ask, "How is your geography project coming along? What have you discovered so far?" Or while you're in the car, the two of you might look for words on that week's vocabulary list and discuss their meanings.

Save assignments

Help your youngster create a system for filing returned homework. He might keep each subject in a different color folder. Then, he can use the papers to study for tests and quizzes. **Idea:** Suggest that he post ones he did especially well on—they can be a source of encouragement when he struggles with an assignment.

Tip: The key is for you to stay involved and monitor your child's homework without doing it for her. With your guidance and encouragement, your youngster will learn how to work independently and plan for success.

Home & School CONNECTION®

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Raising Respectful Children

When your youngster hears the word "respect," what does she think of? Explain that by being considerate of others' feelings, letting people know she appreciates them, or taking care of belongings, she's showing respect.

Point out that there are different types of respect—for ourselves, for others, for property, and for the environment. Then, try these ideas to help your child understand and practice all kinds of respect.



Respect for yourself

Your youngster may have heard the advice to treat others as she wants to be treated. If she respects herself, following this advice will be easier. Children who have self-respect are also more likely to resist peer pressure. Here are ways for your child to practice self-respect.

● **Know yourself.** Ask your youngster what she does well or is proud of (being a good friend, finishing a big project). Recognizing her traits and accomplishments will boost her self-respect.

● **Ignore put-downs.** Teach your child not to react to a student who makes fun of him or calls him names. It can be hard to say nothing and walk away, but your youngster will respect himself afterward. *Tip:* Role-play this at home so he'll feel more comfortable.

● **Stay healthy.** Encourage your child to take care of herself. Part of self-respect is keeping her body healthy and strong by exercising, eating nutritious foods, and avoiding harmful substances like drugs and cigarettes.

● **Do your best.** When your child works hard in school, he demonstrates

self-respect. Taking advantage of every chance to learn shows that he cares about his own success.



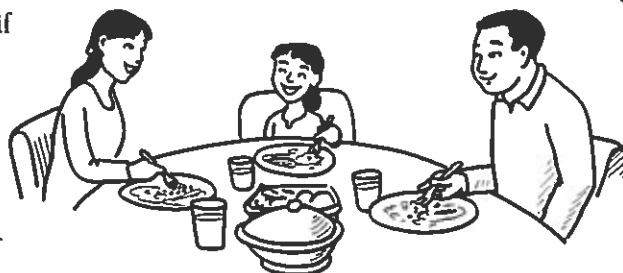
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"Please pass the peas"

Good table manners show respect for others. You can take advantage of family dinnertime to teach your child manners in a gentle way.

● Let your youngster know it's okay if she doesn't like a certain food—but she should show respect for the person who prepared it. If she's not sure she'll like something, suggest that she take a small portion. Or if you're visiting someone else's home, she might simply say, "No, thanks" if she doesn't want a particular food.

● Encourage your child to be considerate of others so they can enjoy their meals. For instance, she should chew



with her mouth closed and ask others to pass a dish instead of reaching across the table to take it.

● Keep conversations pleasant. You can set an example by bringing up appropriate topics (sports, school). Ask your youngster to save certain subjects for another time—for instance, she should steer clear of disagreements or jokes and stories that you wouldn't want to hear while eating.

Respect for others

Your child can show respect for people around him by treating them kindly and fairly. Try these suggestions.

● **Spot examples.** When a person shows consideration for you or your youngster, talk about it. Perhaps someone offered you a cart at the grocery store or opened the door for you at the movie theater. Explain that it's respectful to think about others' needs and feelings.

● **Respect teachers.** Following classroom rules is one way your child can respect her teacher. You can reinforce this at home by talking respectfully about her teacher. If she insists that a grade or a punishment is unfair, you might say, "I know you're disappointed, but I'm sure your teacher had a good reason." You can then calmly follow up with the teacher by phone or email to get more information.

● **Pay attention.** Your youngster can show respect during a conversation by giving the speaker his full attention. Making eye contact, nodding, and not interrupting all show that what the person says matters to him. *Tip:* Model this for your child when he speaks to you—avoid looking at your cell phone or texting while he's talking, for example.



● **Be a good sport.** When your child plays or watches a game, she should be considerate of the coaches, players on both teams, and officials. For instance, even if she disagrees with a referee's call, she should go on and play the game rather than complaining or making a negative comment. Explain that rituals like applauding politely when a visiting team enters the gym or shaking hands with opponents shows that respect is important in sports.

Respect for property

Tell your youngster that taking responsibility for his possessions and being careful with someone else's shows respect. The following tips can help.

● **Care for belongings.** Your child can protect the things you've given him or that he has purchased himself (toys,

clothes) by putting them away when he's not using them. That way, they won't get broken or torn, and they'll last longer. He can also help take care of your home—he shouldn't track mud across the carpet, and he should handle breakable items (vases, plates) carefully.

● **Show respect outdoors.** Teach your youngster to respect public and private property, like parks and lawns. For example, he should clean up after his dog, and walk on sidewalks and paths rather than on the grass.

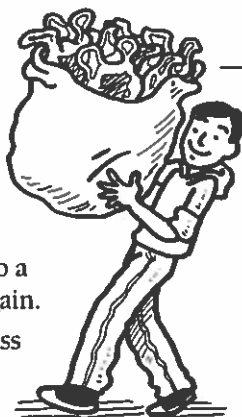


● **Be a good borrower.** The library is a great place to practice respecting shared materials. The next time you and your child go there, ask her to think of ways she can be considerate. For example, handling books carefully (not tearing or marking them) keeps them in good shape for others to enjoy. It's also important to return books on time so others can read them.

Reduce, reuse, recycle...respect

Your child can show respect for the earth by helping to keep it clean and healthy today—and for future generations. Share these ideas:

1. Ask your youngster to help you gather up clothing and toys he has outgrown. Donate them to a charitable organization so the items can be used again.
2. Work together to separate plastic, paper, and glass items for recycling pickup. Explain that recycling reduces the waste that's taking up space in



landfills. And recycling materials instead of making new ones saves natural resources.

3. Let your child carry your reusable shopping bags when you go to the store. Tell him that using these bags means you won't need to waste disposable paper or plastic bags.
4. When you go for walks, take along a trash bag and pick up trash you see along sidewalks and in grassy areas. *Idea:* As a family, participate in a community cleanup.

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Supporting Your CHILD'S EDUCATION

You can help your youngster succeed in school. How? By getting involved in his education. From talking to him about what he's doing in school to staying in touch with his teacher and attending school events, there are many easy ways to support your child's learning. Consider these suggestions.

EVERYDAY STRATEGIES

Encourage your youngster to do his best at school with these ideas for supporting his education at home.

COMMUNICATE EXPECTATIONS. Set high expectations for your child, and he'll be likely to try to meet them. For example, let him know you expect him to work hard in school. Talk regularly about what you expect in the short term (study for a quiz) and long term (go to college). Then, be sure to recognize his successes along the way.



MAKE TIME FOR READING. Reading regularly can help your youngster do well in all subjects. Books introduce her to new words—and new worlds. Plus, developing the reading habit now can help her enjoy reading for a lifetime. Try to read to your child at bedtime each night, and encourage her to read on her own, too.

KNOW WHAT YOUR CHILD IS LEARNING. Have him explain the steps in a science experiment or tell you about a story he's writing. Your curiosity will show him that his schooling matters to you. At the same time, going over the information will reinforce what he is learning.

SEE YOURSELF AS AN "ASSISTANT." You can support your youngster when she does homework...without doing it for her. Look through her backpack together, and find out what her assignments are. Then, help her schedule enough time so she's not rushing to do them at the last minute.



PROVIDE EXPERIENCES.

Each time your child visits a nature center, helps you grocery shop, or attends a concert, he collects new knowledge. For example, he might learn the names of frog species, use a scale to weigh vegetables, or hear classical music. Take him on errands with you, and try to plan family outings that will expose him to new ideas.



AN ACTIVE ROLE

When you stay up to date on what's going on in school, your youngster feels supported. Here's how you can play an important part in her academic life.

KNOW SCHOOL POLICIES. At the start of the year, go over the school handbook together. You and your child will find everything you need to know about policies (discipline, attendance). *Tip:* Help her remember school procedures by reviewing the handbook a few times during the school year.

USE TOOLS. Together, look at the school schedule and write important dates on your family's calendar (test days, class pictures). Also, read school newsletters and websites. *Note:* If your youngster's school offers an online grade service, use it to check on his progress regularly.

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ATTEND SCHOOL EVENTS. Make time to go to book fairs, plays, and other school functions. Take siblings along to events that are open to families, such as a school carnival or family math night. When your whole family gets involved, your child will feel proud of her school.



USE SPECIAL SERVICES. If your youngster gets special services (for a learning disability or because English is his second language), stay in touch with the resource teacher. Attend annual reviews of his IEP (Individualized Education Plan). Talk to your child about what he's entitled to (extra time for tests, preferential seating), and encourage him to take advantage of the services.

HELP STRIKE A BALANCE. When your youngster wants to sign up for extracurricular activities, make sure she will have enough time for schoolwork, family, and fun. You might have her concentrate on one club, after-school class, or sport at a time, for example.

PARENT-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Students are most successful when parents and teachers work together. Use these ideas for communicating with your child's school.



INTRODUCE YOURSELF. Meet teachers at open houses or back-to-school nights. Then, stay connected by saying hello at school events, volunteering when possible, and responding promptly to notes and emails.

SOLVE PROBLEMS EARLY. Contact staff members before small issues grow into large ones. If your youngster is having trouble with a subject or seems frustrated, call the teacher. Ask what you can do to help, and look for solutions together.

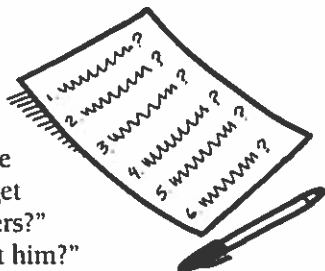
SHOW APPRECIATION. Keep in touch with your child's teacher when things are going smoothly as well as when you have a question or concern. For instance, you might email her to thank her for suggesting a good book to your youngster or providing extra help with math.

GET THE MOST OUT OF CONFERENCES

Parent-teacher conferences give you the chance to find out how your youngster is doing in class. Try these suggestions.

BEFORE THE CONFERENCE

- Prepare a list of questions to take along. For example, you might ask: "What should my child know or be able to do by the end of the year?" "How does he get along with peers and staff members?" "Do you have any concerns about him?"
- Think about information that might help teachers understand your youngster. You can share strengths, weaknesses, hobbies, and interests. Consider letting teachers know about personal news affecting your child (divorce, a death in the family).



AT THE CONFERENCE

- Listen carefully to what the teacher says. Make notes so you can remember points to share with your child or to follow up on later.
- When it's your turn to talk, mention your most important concerns first, in case time runs out. If you need more time, you can ask the teacher to schedule another meeting or a telephone conversation. Be sure to ask for the best way to reach her (email, phone call, note) in the future.

AFTER THE CONFERENCE

- Talk to your youngster about what his teacher said. Be sure to include compliments she gave, as well as areas to improve. Together, work out an action plan, including steps your youngster will take and ways to check on his progress. Post the action plan in his room, and discuss it regularly.

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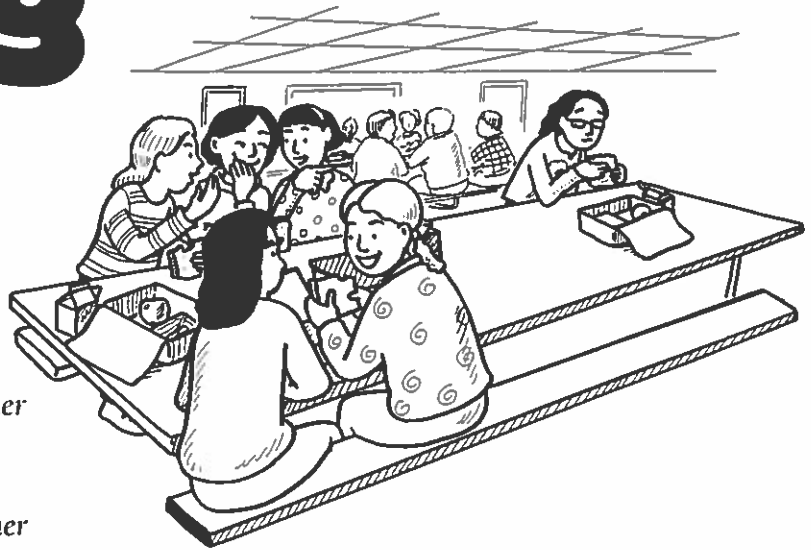
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Bullying Q&As

Jack sits quietly at lunch while his friends laugh at a classmate who has a learning disability. Katie doesn't want to go to school because she says other girls tease her about her glasses. On the basketball court, Christopher and his buddies repeatedly trip a younger boy.

These children are all affected by bullying. And whether your child is a witness, a victim, or a bully, it's likely that she has been touched by the problem at some point, too. So what can a parent do? Here are answers to common questions about bullying.



of self-confidence, or depression. In the most extreme examples, bullying has been linked to violent behavior or suicide.

Q Why do kids bully each other?

A Experts used to believe that most bullies had low self-esteem and that they hurt others to feel better about themselves. While this does happen, it is also common for popular children to be bullies. They're motivated by social power, and they take advantage of less popular kids to gain even more power. For instance, a well-liked youngster might decide who gets to jump rope during recess or where other kids can sit at lunch. On the other hand, a less popular child might bully others in an effort to gain more friends. If a classmate doesn't do what she says, she might push her or call her names.



Q What should my youngster do if she witnesses bullying?

A Bullies love a crowd, so the best thing your child can do is to pay attention to the victim and ignore the bully. If someone is being physically attacked, your youngster should tell the nearest adult. If a classmate is being teased, your child might walk up and ask the child to play. Let your youngster know that you understand it takes courage—but if she stands up to a bully, others might, too. *Tip:* Be sure to explain the difference between reporting a bully and tattling: telling is to help get someone out of trouble, and tattling is to get someone in trouble.

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Q My son and his friends tease each other a lot. Is that bullying?

A Playful teasing that takes place among friends usually isn't considered bullying. A good friend knows if his buddy has had

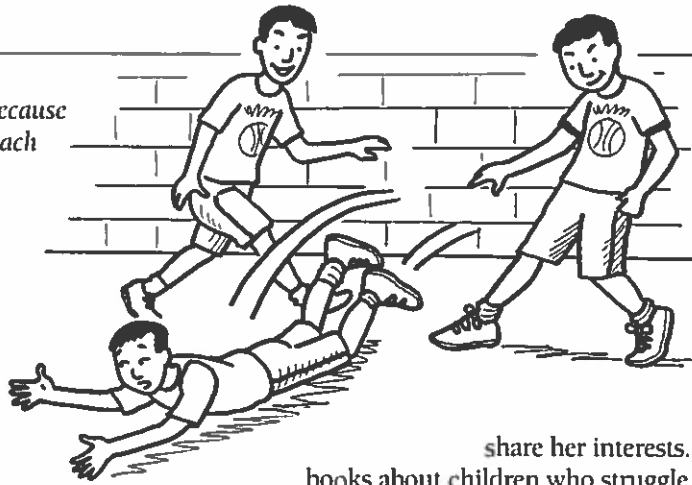
enough and no longer thinks the joking is funny. Bullying, on the other hand, is mean spirited and is not a joke to the victim. In addition, a bully is persistent and has an advantage over his victim. For instance, he might be bigger, older, or more popular. Examples of bullying include making threats, name calling, pushing, or punching. All these behaviors—verbal and physical—should be taken seriously.

Q I've been hearing a lot about bullying lately. Is it more frequent these days?

A Although it's not clear that bullying is on the rise, it's true that the problem is getting more attention as we learn about its serious consequences for both bullies and victims. For instance, youngsters who bully other children are more likely to get into trouble with the law as adults. And victims can suffer from poor grades, increased school absences, lack

Q My son doesn't want to go to school because kids make fun of his weight. How can I teach him to stand up for himself?

A While your son can learn strategies for standing up to his classmates, bullying isn't usually a problem that a youngster can handle alone. He will probably need adult help to solve the problem in the long run. Consider calling or meeting with his teacher or school counselor. She might suggest a support group or an older student—a bullying “survivor”—who can share his experiences with your child. In the meantime, tell your son that most bullying takes place when adults aren't looking, and help him plan ahead. (“Who are you going to play with at recess today?” “Where will you sit on the bus?”) Finally, tell your son to think “SAFE”: Say what you feel, Ask for help, Find a friend, Exit the area. When someone bullies him, he can try one or more of those strategies. For example, he might say, “I don't want to hear this,” and walk away.



way?”) It's likely that your youngster is being excluded from a clique that she wants to be a part of. You can gently suggest that she make friends with children who treat people kindly. Also, she could attend an after-school activity to find friends who

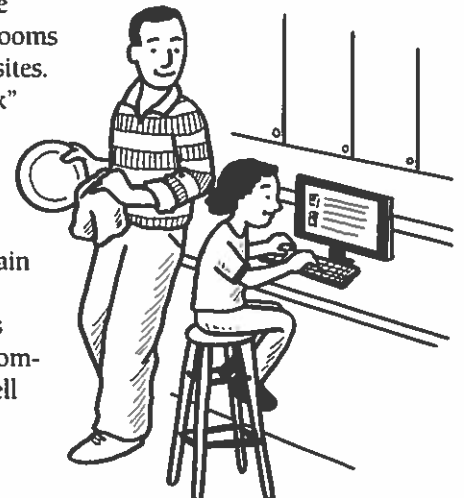
share her interests. *Tip:* Ask a librarian for books about children who struggle to make friends. Knowing that other youngsters go through the same thing can help her feel less alone, and she can read about ways to build friendships.

Q I overheard my son and his friends threatening another child at the playground. How should I handle this?

A Ask your son how he would feel if he was the child being threatened. Let him know that his behavior is unacceptable, and tell him what the consequences will be if it continues. Also, help your youngster become more empathetic by talking regularly about others' feelings (“Your brother is disappointed that his football team lost, so let's try to cheer him up”). Look around for role models (“That actor helped rebuild houses for people who were in a flood”). Also, consider getting involved in community service as a family. Your son might read to children at a shelter, serve food in a soup kitchen, or walk for a cause like autism or cancer research.

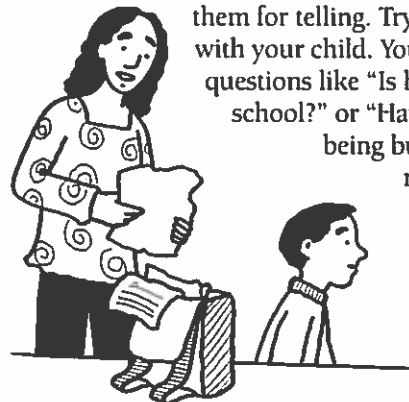
Q I know that cyberbullying is a big problem among older kids. Do I need to worry about it now?

A Keeping an eye on your child's online activities is one of the best ways to prevent cyberbullying. If you have a computer at home, keep it in a common area (kitchen, living room) rather than in your youngster's bedroom. Also, consider writing a list of rules for using the Internet. For example, your daughter might not be allowed to visit chat rooms or social networking sites. You might “bookmark” a list of safe sites and tell her she can't visit other pages without your permission. And explain that if she ever sees something that upsets her or makes her uncomfortable, she should tell you right away.



Q How will I know if my child is being bullied?

A Youngsters often keep bullying a secret because they are ashamed or are afraid the bully will punish them for telling. Try bringing up the subject with your child. You can ask him general questions like “Is bullying a problem at your school?” or “Have you ever seen anyone being bullied?” Also, know the risk factors—children who are overweight, have a disability, or are perceived as different are often targets. Finally, be aware of the warning signs. Keep in mind



that you might not see bruises. More frequently, a victim will avoid favorite activities, ask to stay home from school, misbehave, lose belongings with no explanation, or come home with torn or messed-up papers or books.

Q My daughter has been unhappy lately. She finally told me it's because her classmates don't want her around. Is there anything I can do?

A When a child is repeatedly left out on purpose, it is a form of bullying. First, ask specific questions to learn what is going on. (“Where is this happening?” “Who is treating you this

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Let's Break for Learning

Learning can happen every day, whether your child is reading at the breakfast table, looking up at the moon, or playing on a jungle gym. Here are some fun activities that can help your youngster with reading, writing, math, science, and social studies.



Breakfast read-a-thon



Add a taste of reading to your child's breakfast. Have him draw a circular "track" on a piece of paper and divide it into 26 sections—one

for each "mile" of his book marathon. (*Note:* A real marathon is 26.2 miles.) Depending on your youngster's age and reading level, each of his "miles" could be a page or a chapter of a book. Then, he can read at breakfast each morning and color in a section for each page or chapter he reads. How many reading marathons can he complete?

Money minute

Let your child use spare change to practice addition and money skills. Name an amount that's less than \$1 (say, 16 cents). She tries to use the fewest number of coins to make that amount (1 dime, 1 nickel, 1 penny). Then, she can make the amount using the most coins (16 pennies) or using different combinations (3 nickels and 1 penny, 2 nickels and 6 pennies).

Where is my team?

Give your youngster an excuse to learn a little geography while he's watching his favorite team play. Help him look up the city where they are playing on a map or in an atlas. What can he tell about the *topography* (geographic features) of the area? (Perhaps it is mountainous or flat.) For an extra challenge, have him use the mileage scale to find out how far away the game is from your hometown. *Variation:* Help a younger child locate the state where the team is playing.

Road-sign scramble

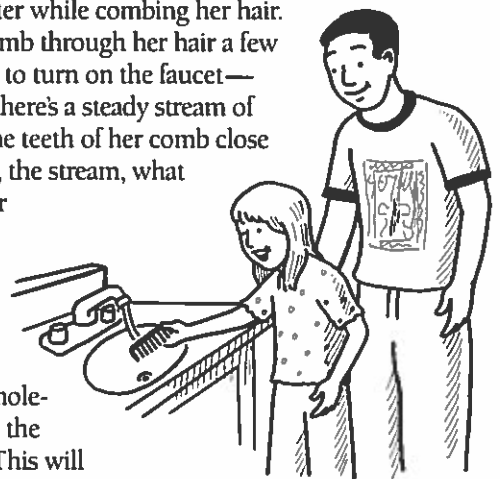
Make a quick word scramble for your child before you go someplace in the car. Think of a few signs you might see (*yield, one way, stop*), and scramble each word or phrase on a piece of paper (*clidy, con ayw, post*). Have your youngster take the paper along and try to spot the signs to help her unscramble the words. As she plays, she'll practice word recognition and spelling skills.

Draw the moon

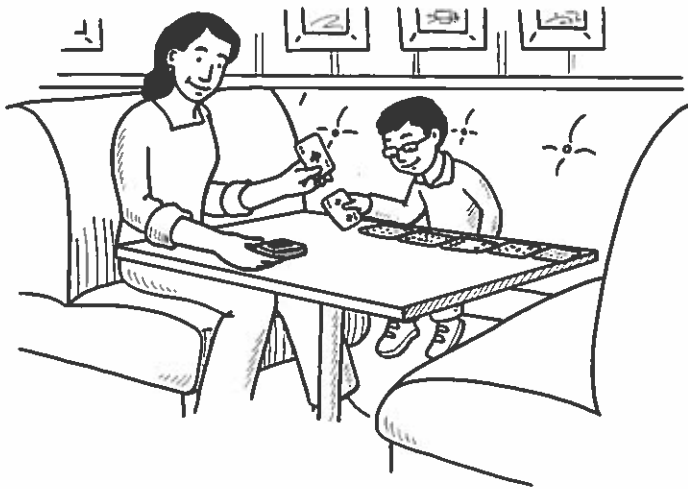
This project will show your youngster how the moon changes from night to night. Just before bed, have him look out a window at the moon. Let him draw what he sees on a sheet of paper. After doing this every clear night for a week or two, what does he notice? (The moon's shape is slightly different each night.)

Bending water

This science experiment lets your child bend a stream of water while combing her hair. Have her pull the comb through her hair a few times. Then, ask her to turn on the faucet—just enough so that there's a steady stream of water. If she holds the teeth of her comb close to, but not touching, the stream, what happens? (The water bends toward the comb.) That's because the comb is charged with static electricity from her hair, and the water molecules are attracted to the charged comb. *Tip:* This will work better on a dry day.



continued



Measure it

Going to a restaurant? Take along a deck of cards (or pad of sticky notes). Your youngster can work on measurement and estimation while you're waiting for your food. Ask him to measure the table, menu, chair, and other items—with the cards. Before he starts, have him estimate the length. ("How many cards long do you think this table is?") Then, he can line up cards end to end to check his guess and tell you how many he used. ("This table is 24 cards long.")

Outdoor geometry

Shapes, angles, lines ... the playground is full of opportunities to discover geometry. Make a geometry scavenger hunt before your next visit.



On separate index cards, you and your child can draw shapes and geometric figures (circle, square, rectangle, triangle, right angle, parallel lines). Then, take the cards with you to the play-

ground—can she find each one? For example, the legs of the swing set form a triangle, and the ladder on the slide has parallel lines.

Rubber-band race

Try this contest to see which family member can make a rubber band fly the farthest. Your youngster will get a lesson in motion and energy. Making sure to stay a safe distance apart, have each person slip a rubber band over his finger, pull it back, and let go to launch it across the yard. Ask your child

what happens if he barely stretches it (it doesn't go very far) or if he stretches it as far as possible (it flies farther). Explain that the more he stretches the band, the more energy he gives it, and the farther it will go.

Memory cards

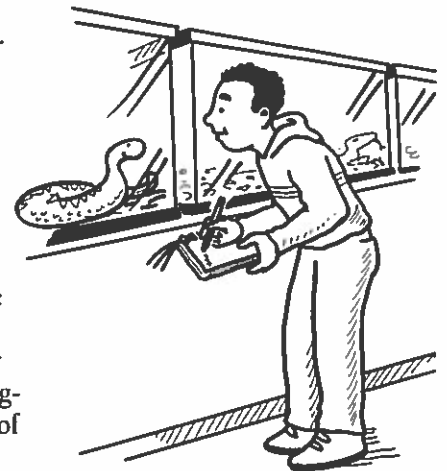
While sorting through outgrown clothing or toys, give your child a reason to write. Suggest that she fill an index card with a memory about the item she has outgrown. ("I remember wearing these jeans to go fishing with Daddy. I caught my first catfish on that trip.") If the outfit will be handed down to a younger sibling or cousin, she can share the memory card—maybe the recipient will be able to add her own memory, and a family heirloom will be created!

Video history

Family movie night can encourage your youngster to explore history. Look for family movies set in other time periods (for example, *Mary Poppins* takes place in 1910). Together, compare how things are in the movie with how they are now. You could also encourage your child to learn about historical events that happened in the same time period by reading library books or searching online at a website like [brainy history.com](http://brainyhistory.com).

Idea notebook

When you're on the go, use everyday opportunities to help your child discover new interests—and boost his motivation to read about them. For instance, he might be fascinated by a snake he spots at the pet store or curious about black-and-white photography he sees at an art fair. Suggest that he keep track of these new interests in a notebook. Then, he could use the notes to help him select books at the library.



What's cooking?

Your youngster can practice descriptive writing by making a dinner menu for your family. Show her a few take-out menus or online menus so she can see how foods are described ("A thick slice of creamy cheesecake topped with plump, juicy strawberries"). Then, let her know what's for dinner and have her draw pictures and write descriptions of each course ("Fresh green salad with ripe cherry tomatoes and sweet, tangy raspberry dressing"). She can post her menu on the refrigerator or write it on a chalkboard.

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