

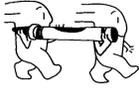
# Early Years

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREAT START

December 2013

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## KID BITS



### Dressed for the weather

When your child picks out clothes for school, suggest that she choose layers, since being too hot or too cold may make it hard for her to focus on learning. She could wear a sweater over a T-shirt or keep a hoodie in her backpack, for example.

### Positive feedback

Your youngster is probably proud to show you finished schoolwork that he brings home. Ask him to tell you about a piece of pottery that he made or to explain what he learned from a science experiment. If he struggled with an assignment, try to compliment him on a part that he did correctly.

### Work and volunteer?

Do you work during the school day? You can still help your child's school. Ask what you could do at home, and then pick activities that fit your schedule. For instance, you might make classroom decorations, find chaperones for a field trip, or call local businesses to ask for donations to the PTA.

### Worth quoting

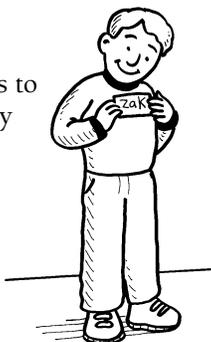
"It is the sweet, simple things of life which are the real ones after all."

*Laura Ingalls Wilder*

### Just for fun

**Q:** What belongs to you but is mostly used by other people?

**A:** Your name.



## Compassion in action

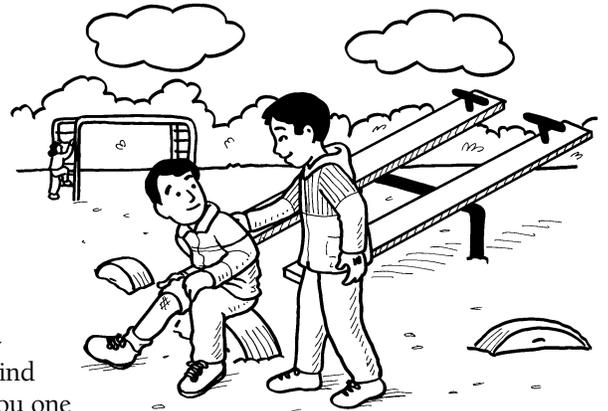
Feelings of compassion can lead your youngster to do nice things for relatives, neighbors, and friends. Consider these ideas for helping your child think about how other people feel and what they need—and encourage him to take action.

### Talk about it

Help your youngster understand the motivation behind kind behavior. First, have him tell you one nice thing someone did for him today. Then, ask why he thinks the person decided to do that. Perhaps his big sister made a paper airplane for him. He might say, "She wanted me to be happy" or "She knows I like to fly them, and she makes good ones."

### Work together

Let your child see you being compassionate, and have him participate. For example, if you make a casserole for neighbors with a new baby, he could stir the ingredients. While you work, discuss the neighbors' feelings, and explain why



you're helping. ("They probably feel tired from taking care of the baby. They'll be glad they don't have to cook tonight!")

### Look for opportunities

Inspire your youngster to feel compassion and act on it. Say a friend falls and scrapes a knee at the playground. You might ask your child how he would feel in that situation and what he would need. Then, suggest that he treat the person the way he'd want to be treated. For instance, he could get an adult to help and keep his friend company.♥

## Learning here, there, and everywhere!

Winter is full of indoor learning activities around town. Here are three places to look.

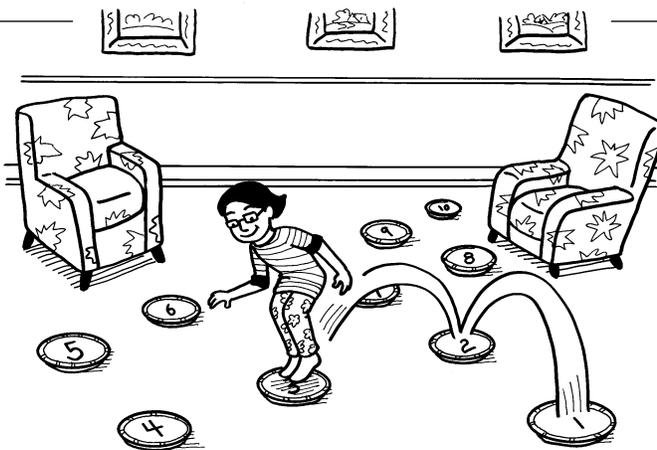
- 1. Museums.** Turn a trip to an art gallery into a safari by asking your child to spot animals in the paintings. At a science museum, she might try hands-on experiments or gaze at the stars during a planetarium show.
- 2. Schools.** Look for free concerts at local high schools or colleges. Your youngster will get to hear different instruments and learn about various styles of music.
- 3. Community centers.** Check the events calendar, and have your child pick an activity or two. She can practice skills like reading, taking turns, or listening during a board game night or puppet show.♥



## Play with math

Combine play with physical activity to give your child's math skills a boost. Try these games.

**Polar bear hop.** Help your youngster number 10 paper plates (1–10). Then, she can arrange them randomly from one side of a room to the other. Now she can be a polar bear jumping from iceberg to iceberg—and counting as she goes. Next time, she can jump and count backward from 10 to 1. *Idea:* Renumber the plates 10–100 to count by 10s, and encourage her to “skip count” as she goes (10, 20, 30...).



finds them all, ask her to arrange them in a pattern (red, green, red, green). Let her try adding a set of snowmen with blue hats. Hide all of them, and have her figure out how to make a pattern when she finds them.♥

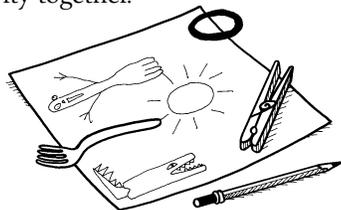
**Snowman hide-and-seek.** Have your youngster draw a snowman on 12 separate index cards—half with red hats and half with green hats. Hide the cards for her to find. She can pretend that she must race to rescue the snowmen before they melt. When she

### ACTIVITY CORNER



## Oodles of doodles

Can your child turn a clothespin into a crocodile or a rubber band into a sun? Everyday objects can inspire creativity in surprising ways. Enjoy this drawing activity together.



First, help your youngster find a dozen small household items, such as a pair of sunglasses, a plastic fork, and a crochet hook. Show him how to trace around the object with a pencil.

Then, remove the item, and have your youngster use the tracing to make a completely different picture. Maybe the outline of the sunglasses will become a motorcycle. Or he might turn the tracing of a fork into a monster.

When he's finished, let him trace something for you to turn into a doodle.♥

## Reduce holiday stress

If you're visiting relatives this month, you can help your youngster handle the excitement and feel less stressed with these tips:

- Before a trip, encourage your child to pack a bag of his own. Give him a small suitcase or a reusable shopping bag, and let him choose toys and other belongings to put in along with his toothbrush and clothes. He might take a stuffed animal, toy cars, books, and a coloring book and crayons. He will feel more comfortable if he has some of his own things with him.
- Look for signs that your little one needs a break. *Examples:* Crying, complaining of stomachaches or headaches, or displaying habits he has outgrown (bed-wetting, using baby talk). Then, try to make sure he has quiet time each day. For instance, you could snuggle up in a guest room for an afternoon story.♥



## I'm telling!

**Q:** My daughter loves to tattle on her little brother. What should I do?

**A:** At this age, kids often tattle to get attention and feel important. Or they report things to adults because they're not sure how to fix a problem on their own.

Together, brainstorm examples of things your daughter *should* tell you about. For instance, you need to know if your son picks

up a pair of scissors or climbs on a table. Then, encourage her to come up with problems she can probably ignore or solve by herself—say, her brother sticks his tongue out or goes into her room without her permission.

When she tattles, you might simply say, “Okay” or “I bet you can figure out what to do about it.” If she doesn't get a lot of attention for tattling, she'll probably do it less often.♥



**OUR PURPOSE**

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

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