



PARENT TRUST
FOR WASHINGTON CHILDREN



Strong Families Begin At Home

Child & Teen Services Newsletter

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FAMILY HELP LINE
1-800-932-HOPE

Parent Trust's statewide, toll-free phone number provides callers with a greater understanding and awareness of child development, guidance and resources.

If you have any comments, or suggestions for future articles, please contact:

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BEAN BAG TOSS

Bean Bag Toss is a great game for developing hand-eye coordination and gross motor skills (movements of arms, legs, large muscles). Hand-eye coordination is an innate ability, but can be encouraged and improved through practice. You will need a hula-hoop and a few beanbags for this activity.

The hoop will be the target. For younger children, place the hoop flat on the floor (you can also use masking tape or even chalk for this variation). Mark a starting line, and give each child a turn to toss a few beanbags. *Continued on next page →*

MOVE



Physical fitness is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body, it is the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual activity. ~JFK

PLAY



You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation. ~Plato.

FIVE CHANGES

This game is called Five Changes (although as you'll see below, it could also be called 4,5,6, etc. Changes!) Five Changes can be played during your Circle of Parents Children's Group, with siblings in a car ride, at a birthday party, or even waiting in line somewhere.

Basic Instructions:

Partners sit facing each other and decide who will be the guesser and who will be the dresser. In a moment, all the guessers will close their eyes, but before they do... *cont. on next page →*

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PLAY

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~Plato.*

FIVE CHANGES, CON'T.

they take a good look at their partner(s) -- the dressers. They carefully look them over to see what clothing they are wearing, if they have on glasses, a hat or watch, bow or barrette in their hair, etc. Guessers then close their eyes.

Dressers then make five* number of changes to their appearance. They can roll up a sleeve or remove a ring, switch a watch to the opposite hand, take off their shoes or even socks! The changes are up to them.

When they are finished, guessers are told to open their eyes and to try and guess all the changes that were made. If they have difficulty, clues can be given. Once that round is over, guessers and dressers change places.

Variations:

1. *The number of changes does not have to be exactly five. Very young children can make a single change. More experienced, or older players can make more changes. However, make sure that all players agree on the number of changes.

2. Partners:

Many partner or groups can play at the same time; dressers in different groups can make exchanges with each other. Instead of closing their eyes, partners sit back-to-back when making changes at the same time. Both partners open their eyes and guess each other's changes. Time them as they write changes and see who can find the most changes.

BEAN BAG TOSS, CON'T.

They are aiming to get the bag into the hoop circle. If it's too easy, move the start line back a bit. If it's too hard, move it closer.

For older children, hang the hula-hoop from the ceiling, so they are throwing the beanbags through the hoop as it hangs in the air. If you are outside, you can hang it from a tree branch. To make it even more challenging, swing the hoop as the player tries to throw through the target!

MOVE

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not only one of the
most important
keys to a healthy
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CREATE

*Art washes from
the soul the dust
of every day life.
~ Pablo Picasso*

FAIRY HOUSES

Celebrate spring by building a fairy house! Using only materials found in nature, create cottages, castles, even villages—all on a miniature scale.

Find building materials in your own backyard, a neighborhood park, campground or beach.

Choose your starting location. Nestled against a tree is a good place for a fairy house. You can use the trunk and roots to prop up stick walls.

Once you've picked your location, gather your materials. Sticks, bark, acorns, pinecones, stones... are just a few examples of natural building materials you may find.

Use bark, or other sticks, or whatever you want to make a roof. Add decorations, landscape the area—be as creative as you want.

Once you've finished your first home, you may decide to build a few more. After all, what could be more welcoming to a fairy than seeing a whole fairy village!

There are a few rules you must follow, so as not to offend the fairies:

- ✧ Build where you find your materials. Please don't remove anything from the parks.
- ✧ Use only natural objects. Twigs, bark, flowers, pine needles, leaves, sticks, pebbles...etc.
- ✧ Use only objects found on the ground. Nothing from living plants.
- ✧ Don't disturb any existing animal home.
- ✧ Don't eat anything you find!

Of course, if **you** don't believe in fairies, you can always build a "mystery village". This is what I remember doing as a child—we would find a piece of land and secretly build a stick village. We'd think to ourselves, "maybe when a hiker comes by later, they'll see our village and wonder, 'maybe fairies built this!'"

For pictures as examples, see: http://www.fairyhouses.com/mackworth1_event.htm

EAT

*Tell me what you
eat and I will tell
you what you are.
~ Anthelme
Brillat-Savarin*

SNACKING

Recently, researchers reviewed federal data on over 30,000 children and their eating patterns. They discovered that children are snacking on average 3 times a day, and that more than 27% of their calories come from snacking. The caloric intake of children ages 2-18 increased by 113 calories per day between 1977 and 2006. The researchers stated, "Desserts and sweetened beverages remain the major sources of calories from snacks." The largest increases come from salty snacks and candy.

Constant eating *might* contribute to childhood obesity, but it is clear that *what* children eat is

concerning. Often, children's lunchtime at school is as early as 11:30AM. If dinner isn't until 6PM, no wonder they need to snack. Paying attention to what children eat can make a huge difference.

As children, my sister and I were given an after school snack. Candy was never an option. We were each given a different raw vegetable every day. We were hungry. We ate. Carrot sticks, celery, snap peas, green pepper, string beans, and hunks of red cabbage. Minimal preparation. No food "disguised" as dessert. Picky eaters? You bet. Hungry? We ate. Give it a try!

For more ideas:

http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/food/fab-fruits/fruits.htm

PARENT TRUST READS

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz
by L. Frank Baum, Illustrated by W.W. Denslow
Ages: 9-12 years old

Dorothy is a farm girl living in Kansas with her Aunt Em and Uncle Henry. Prairie life was harsh, and had left Em and Henry sober and joyless.

One day, they "heard a low wail of the wind," and knew a cyclone was coming. Uncle Henry and Aunt Em made it to the storm cellar safely, but Dorothy and her dog, Toto, did not. Before they could get to the cellar, the strangest thing happened--the house whirled around, rose in the air, and with Dorothy and Toto inside, traveled miles away. When the house landed, Dorothy emerged and was greeted by...

...you may think you know how this story goes. But if you've only seen the movie, you're in for a surprise. Sure, Dorothy meets the Munchkins, the witches, and her traveling companions we're all familiar with; but you'll have to read the original to learn about the Dainty China Country, the Quadlings, and the Golden Cap. Dorothy's adventures were too great to fit into one movie! And did you know that there are 13 additional books in the series? That's right--twice as many as Harry Potter! For more books recommendations: www.parenttrust.org

STRESS RELATED INSOMNIA

Children and adults can struggle with stress-related insomnia (difficulty falling asleep or difficulty staying asleep).

If you have ruled out medical problems you can try a relaxation technique before bed. Step one: make a strong commitment to go to sleep. Then, maybe try this breathing technique: on your in-breath, focus on the palms of your hands. On your out-breath, move your attention to the sounds in your environment (clock, cars, wind, etc.). For more ideas:

www.parenttrust.org

LEARN



*Learn from
yesterday, live for
today, hope for
tomorrow.
~ Albert Einstein*

CONNECT



*We need 4 hugs a
day for survival.
We need 8 hugs a
day for maint-
enance. We need
12 hugs a day for
growth.
~ Virginia Satir*

FAMILY WALKS

A simple neighborhood stroll can be an opportunity to connect with your children and enjoy nature at the same time. This "Connect" activity isn't about taking big, plan-in-advance, time off work, hiking trips. Family walks can be great after dinner activities.

Silence And Talk. Walking may reduce anxiety and stress, so children (and parents) may feel more likely to chat with each other. However, walking can also be a time for silent contemplation. You don't need to push either one; just let it happen naturally.

Have Fun. For these family walks, focus on the fun. Not everything has to be a learning opportunity. Take time to enjoy each other's company. Don't bring up school. Don't quiz your kids on nature information. Let this time be about connecting in a positive way.

We're bored. Children who are used to passive entertainment (TV, computer games, etc.) may need some coaching on how to enjoy themselves on these walks. You may need to take the lead on making your own fun. Parent Trust recommends developing "Family Walk Rituals". These are specific walking activities that you do only when you are out walking. They become special family rituals that act to strengthen the cohesion of the family. Try some of the suggestions below, or make up your own! *Continued next page →*



Family Walks, con't.

Sing songs. Leave the iPods at home. Choose a few songs, learn the words together and sing!

Tell stories.

Play word games. Parent Trust's website has some great suggestions in our Early Learning Parenting Tips section. You can also try playing the game "How Well Do You Know Your Family?" Using the following simple questions, take turns guessing each other's answers. There is no right or wrong! The things you learn about each other may surprise you!

- What is your favorite color?
- Who is your best friend?
- What embarrasses you the most?
- Would you prefer a strawberry milkshake, pizza, or chocolate candy bar?
- What is your favorite kind of music?
- What is your favorite book?
- Would you rather--play basketball, run relays, or do exercises?
- If you could be an animal, what animal would you be?

If you have to bring modern technology: Leave the phone and music at home. If you have to bring something, bring a camera (not a camera phone). See if you can create a "family walk" photo album!



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