

## Making the Transition

Many of you will be sending your children off to school for the first time. This can be difficult for some children, and in turn, for the parent. Before the first day, plan to visit the classroom with your child during a day when there are programs running so she can know what to expect. Visitors Weeks are set up for this purpose.



Make a special day of your child's first day. Have a special breakfast.

If your child would like to bring his/her favorite doll or stuffed animal to keep him/her company, let him.

On the first day, tell your child that you will be back in one hour. "That is how long Sesame Street is on." When you come back, you will have a special date and go out for lunch. Parents sometimes coordinate this, giving you a chance to get to know other parents, and letting your children know that you are making new friends too.



Have your child pick something (crackers, fruit, cheese, juice) to bring for snack. Explain that if they don't eat it on that particular day, they will have it on another day. The children love to be the one to share snack, because on the day we share it, s/he is the special helper, and center of attention during group thank you

Talk about your child's feelings. ("It's a little bit scary when..." or "I feel that way sometimes too, but you know what? It always, always gets better.") Having them validated lessens the pain.

Tell your child that some children become upset when their parents leave, and suggest that if that happens, they can make a special effort to make friends with that child.

When you bring your child in the morning. Explain that when the teacher says it's time for you (the parent) to leave, you will leave, but will be back in time for snack and story, or some other predetermined time, on that day. Then leave! Even if a child is upset, it is much easier for all of us if you do just that.



Sometimes a child likes to see how much power s/he can exert over you, or your hesitation just proves that there is reason to be afraid! Do not let your child see you cry! A child's upset passes much more quickly if you make a clean break. And if you notice another parent experiencing the pain of their child, walk over, put your arm around them, and take them out for a cup of coffee. Many lasting friendships have been created on the first day of school!- RDW (2005)



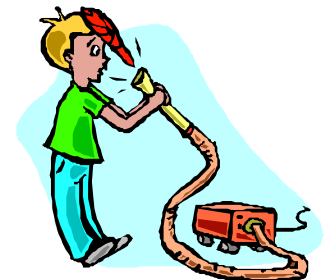
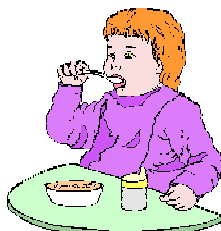
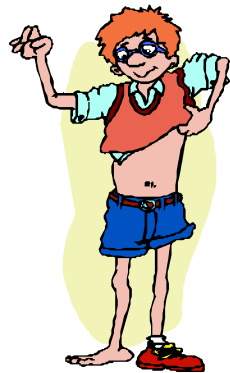
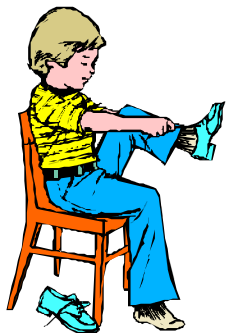
## Children Seek Independence

I remember when my youngest was 2 years old, he used to exclaim "Self!" whenever we tried to assist him with getting dressed or putting on his shoes. It was great, unless we were in a hurry!

Many of us tend to help a child with a task, either because we don't realize that they are old enough to do something themselves, or because we don't have the patience to wait around while they do it. If we miss the window of opportunity when they are eager to try things for themselves, then we find ourselves doing things for them—seemingly forever.

Three and four-year-olds are old enough to do lots of things (get dressed, put on their own shoes and jacket, blow their nose!), but we must show them how, sometimes more than once because they don't have the experience to have gained that knowledge.

We ask parents to help their child in asserting his/her independence by buying clothes that can be put on independently (pants with elastic waist bands, Velcro shoes), avoiding buttons and buckles wherever possible. It is helpful to everyone if you send your child out into the day with pull-up, elastic waisted pants, as it not always convenient to interrupt what we are doing to buckle overalls or put together complicated outfits. Teach them, with patience, as many times as it takes, how to use buckles, buttons, etc. Three and four-year-olds are old enough to learn these things. It will improve your quality of life as well!





## Learning to be Social

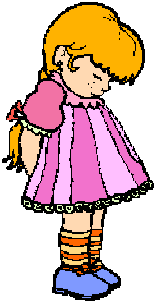
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If we take a child, particularly an only child, and put him (or her!) into a group of kids, we can't expect that child to be able to get along with the others just because we tell them to. We have to model how to work out disagreements. Children need practice in learning to behave in a socially acceptable manner. We do this during circle time by discussing what we should do in certain instances by asking:



- \* "What should you do if someone has something that you want?"
- \* "What should you do if someone takes something that you are using?"
- \* "What should you do if someone takes something that you are planning to use when you are finished what you are doing?"
- \* "What could you have done differently?"



By having these discussions at a time when they are not in the throes of emotional reaction to a situation, they are able to stop a disagreement (usually!) long enough to think through what we have talked about. Growing Places is a great place for them to begin to learn this skill, because it is such an intimate setting. It is so much harder in a large group, where (especially shy) children are likely to feel overwhelmed, isolated, and out of place. Providing further opportunity for practice of social skills, through play dates with classmates and other children, will help to prepare a child for Kindergarten. By allowing him to feel more comfortable with his place in the world, he is more likely to be able to live up to his fullest potential. - RDW (2005)

