



Fresh Ideas * For the New Year



Plan for Peace

Parents know about choosing battles. If you don't, your home is likely to become a daily battlefield. Kids are not perfect—they're learning. They won't always remember to use their inside voices. They will spill their juice. They may cut the dog's hair (or their own). They may leave out their toys or forget their homework.

During the early years, the need to explore and the need to test limits often outweigh a child's ability to stop himself and do as he has been told. The good news is, children can learn to clean up their own spills, scissors can be kept out of reach, and homework can be finished and ready for school the night before. The trick is to create an environment that backs up, as much as possible, their chance to succeed.

Help Others Out

Mother Teresa said, "We cannot all do great things, but we can do small things with great love." Kids have done amazing things to help others. Four-year-old Alexandra Scott battled cancer for three years. She decided to set up a lemonade stand to help raise money for cancer research. During her short life, she raised more than \$1 million. Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation is still going strong, with over \$20 million raised. Her Web site is: alexlemonade.org.

LetsSayThanks.com gives kids an easy way to send a free postcard to military personnel serving abroad. On their Web site, kids and parents can

choose a postcard and write a message. Xerox will print the card and send it overseas.

Keep Faraway Family Members Connected

Family ties are important. Try this idea to stay connected to parents who are traveling or are in the service. This also works well for faraway grandparents or older siblings who live away from home. Have your child begin a picture—scribbles for the younger set; an original or a page from a coloring book for older kids. But do not finish the artwork. Mom, dad, grandparents, or older siblings get to "finish" the masterpiece and mail it back.

Get a Grip on Family Chores

It may not be speed cleaning, but getting kids involved in household chores promotes a sense of responsibility. Let children dust with a sock-covered hand. Small spaces and baseboards are a cinch for kids. Make picking up toys into a game by having a race. Ask children to pick up all of the wooden things or all of the red things or all of the construction toys. Work side by side with them and see who wins! Parents are allowed to give children a bit of an edge in this game.

Ease Kids Into A Good Night's Sleep

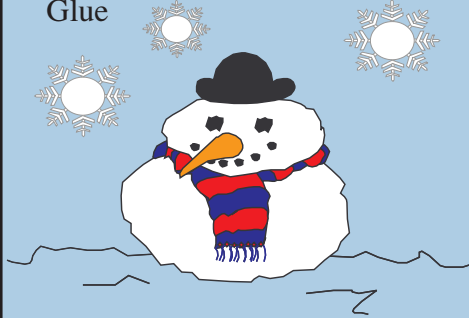
Play a whisper game before bed to get little ones onto the road to slumber. After reading or telling a bedtime story, leave them with a pleasant memory—something to think about. You can suggest peaceful, happy images such as the fun you all had eating popcorn in front of the fireplace, or the fun you had at Grandma's birthday party. Don't forget to dim the lights as you get closer to bedtime. Bright lights are not at all conducive to sleep. And if you find yourself rushing around, purposefully slow down and breathe. A calm environment helps a lot!



PERSONAL PARENTING

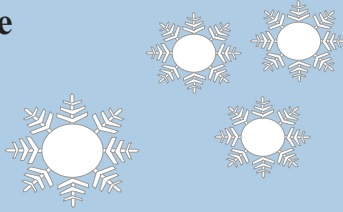
Three Dimensional Snow Scene

For this activity, you will need:
White Styrofoam meat tray or cup
Paper hole puncher
Dark blue or black construction paper
Glue



Let your child create winter snow scenes. Punch holes in the Styrofoam tray or cup with a hole puncher. These holes will be tiny and may be used for stars or snowflakes. Cut some large circles out of the Styrofoam to use for making snow sculptures or snowmen. Let children stick the

pieces onto the construction paper by dotting or spreading glue on the paper. This artwork is even more fun if it's turned into a 3-D activity by gluing on sprigs of pine branches for trees or a strip of material for a snowman scarf or hat. The process of creating is fun!



Catch that Sneeze



Teach your child to use the crook of her elbow to cover her nose and mouth when she coughs or sneezes.

- Germs are quickly spread to our mouths and

eyes and other objects or people when we catch them in our hands.

- Contents of a sneeze can travel roughly 95 miles an hour!
- Another good idea—throw out tissues instead of stuffing them into pockets.
- Germs can stay on tissues for two to six hours.
- And remind children to wash their hands after a sneeze.

Quotes for the Heart

If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.

Booker T. Washington

♥ *We learn the rope of life by untying its knots.* Jean Toomer

♥ *Like snowflakes, the human pattern is never cast twice.* Alice Childress

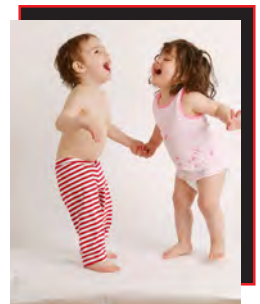
♥ *Children are like wet cement. Whatever falls on them makes an impression.* Haim Ginott

Lighten Up

Living with children is quite hilarious at times. It's funny when a toddler comes walking down the hall in your shoes. It's funny when your three-year-old says, "Mom, I need some goose tape," instead of duct tape. And it's funny when a school-ager cracks up at his own knock-knock joke that no one else remotely understands. *When things get all serious and uptight, a little humor goes a long way to improve the situation.*

Busy Bodies

- * Our hearts beat about 60 times a minute.
- * We breathe about 15 times a minute.
- * We blink five to 15 times a minute.



Cutting Practice Makes Perfect

Cutting skills are important for children to learn so give them plenty of paper to practice on. At first, they will just cut bits of random paper that will fall on the table or floor, but are easily picked up. Cutting does not come easily for most children. It takes a lot of eye-hand coordination and concentration. Think how

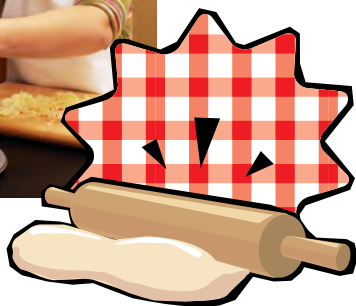
complicated it is to hold something in one hand and maneuver something (like scissors) in the other. It's quite a feat. The next step is usually fringing paper by cutting straight lines close to each other. Eventually, children learn to actually cut around a pattern such as a car or a flower.

Cutting Tips:

Use the correct scissors for your child's age. Never substitute adult scissors.

- * Supervise young children.
- * Get left-handed scissors if your child is a lefty.
- * Keep scissors clean and free of sticky stuff by wiping the blades with a cloth dipped in vinegar.





Cooking With Children: Keep It Simple!



Mixing and measuring, stirring and sampling—it doesn't get much better than this for children.

Cooking teaches kids everything from science and math to social and safety skills.

Learning is at its best when children cook, but it's no secret that it can be a bit tedious and messy.

The main thing to remember is to keep it simple and plan ahead.

* Children hate waiting, so if you're trying a complicated recipe that takes ingredients you haven't even located yet, try something different.

* Have everything ready, including the recipe, and show kids a picture of the finished product, if possible.

* Safety always comes first when working with children in the kitchen, so start by going over a few basic rules and make sure they're never too close to hot pans and liquids.

* Have fun! Who knows, you may be raising the next Rachael Ray or Emeril Lagasse.

Tortilla Snowflakes

Creating tortilla snowflakes is just like creating paper snowflakes, only you use tortillas instead of paper. And, of course, you get to eat them.

- Flour tortillas
- Butter
- Sugar

Fold the tortillas in half and then in half again. Cut small shapes out with scissors. When you've created the perfect snowflakes, carefully unfold the tortillas and place on a cookie sheet. Brush lightly with melted butter and heat them in the oven until lightly browned (about 4 minutes). Sprinkle sugar on top of warm snowflakes. Yummy!

Sweet Potato and Pineapple Balls

Try this nutritious snack.

- 1 16-oz. can sweet potatoes
- 1 8-oz. can crushed pineapple
- 1 cup cornflakes

Drain the sweet potatoes and the pineapple and place in a large bowl. Mash with a fork. Roll the potato mixture into 1-inch balls. Place the cornflakes in a zip-lock bag and crush with a rolling pin (kids love this part). Place the crumbs on a cookie sheet and coat the potato balls with the crumbs. Chill the potato balls in the refrigerator to firm up. Place them on a foil-lined cookie sheet. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 to 20 minutes, or until heated through and cereal starts to brown.

Fancy Baked French Toast

Serve a crowd with this easy recipe prepared the night before.

- 1 (1-pound) loaf of French bread, cut into 1-inch slices
- 8 eggs
- 3 cups milk
- 2 tsps. vanilla extract
- 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup brown sugar

Place the bread in a single layer on a greased 9x13 inch glass pan. Beat together the eggs, milk, vanilla, and cinnamon sugar, and pour over the bread. Dot each slice of bread with a pat of butter, cover and refrigerate overnight. The next morning, preheat the oven to 350 degrees. In a small saucepan, combine butter and brown sugar, heat until bubbling. Pour over bread. Bake uncovered for 40 minutes. Remove from the oven and let set for 5 minutes.

