

**A Kid Is
So Special
(KISS)**

LEARNING TOGETHER Handbook



Helping Your Child Learn At Home

The best way to help your child learn is to make learning fun. You can do lots of things at home to support the education your child is getting in school. Here are some ideas:

- ✿ **Reading is the single most important activity your child can do for his education.** Have your child read the recipe while you cook. Ask him to find a particular brand when you shop. Give children a magazine subscription for their birthday. Take him to the library. When you take a bus, have your children read signs, street names and direct you where to go. Have him play computer games that require reading.
- ✿ **Increasing your child's word knowledge will help him do well in school.** Take turns sharing a "word of the day" at meal time and make it a game by having everyone slip it into the conversation.
- ✿ **Math skills can be easy to teach at home.** Let your child keep score when you play cards; in Monopoly, let him be the banker. Games requiring logic, like chess, Connect Four, Battleship and Othello will help prepare him for higher level math.
- ✿ **Broaden your child's knowledge of the world.** Discuss current events at the dinner table, visit museums, choose historical or current movies and videos. Stop at historical landmark plaques when you're driving and read about the places you visit.
- ✿ **Teach about science with hands-on learning.** Give your child broken appliances to take apart. Buy a book of science experiments that he can do at home. Study the constellations with a book about the stars.

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Are Your Children Ready To Be Home Alone?

There is no magic age at which a child can be home alone, though many experts think 12 is about right. Ask yourself:

Are they ready? Can your children.....

- ✿ Be trusted to go straight home after school?
- ✿ Easily use the telephone, locks, and kitchen appliances?
- ✿ Follow rules and instructions well?
- ✿ Handle unexpected situations without panicking?
- ✿ Stay alone without being afraid?

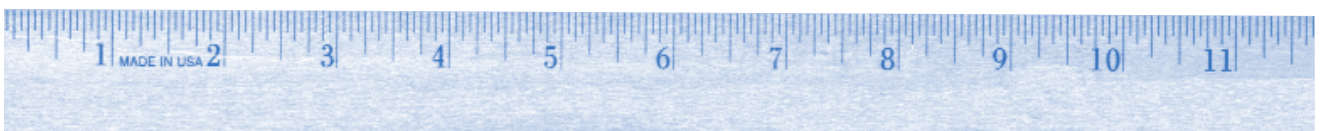


Teach Your “Home Alone” Children:

- ✿ To check in with you or a neighbor as soon as they get home.
- ✿ To never accept gifts or rides from people before checking with you or another trusted adult.
- ✿ How to call your area’s emergency number and how to give directions to your home. Know their address.
- ✿ To never let anyone into your home without asking your permission and never let anyone know they are home alone. Teach them to say “Mom or Dad can’t come to the phone (or door) right now.”
- ✿ To carry a house key with them in a safe place. Don’t leave it under a mat or on a ledge outside the house.
- ✿ How to get out in case of a fire and practice with them.
- ✿ To let you know about anything that frightens them or makes them feel uncomfortable.
- ✿ How to dial 9-1-1 and if they can’t stay on the phone or are too scared to talk, to put the phone down but not hang up.
- ✿ Practice safety tips (e.g., What if Game).
- ✿ Safety planning if the abuser comes to the house.

When To Keep Your Child Home From School

Most parents aren’t sure when to send their child to school if she’s sick. Your doctor or clinic is the best place to call to find out whether or not to send your child. Generally, don’t send your child to school if she has a fever, if she is not well enough to participate in classes, or if you think she is contagious (“catchy”) to other children. If your child has a runny nose or a slight headache, for example, you can send her to school. Just make sure the school and your child have a number where you can be reached in case your child needs to come home from school early.



A Child's Safety Plan

As a parent of children who have lived with a batterer, you have done your very best in keeping your children safe. Whether you have left the abuser or are still living together, or the batterer has supervised or unsupervised visitation, safety may be an on-going concern. Depending on the ages of the children and the past behaviors of the batterer, it is appropriate to talk about ways for children to be safe. A child's safety plan is a concrete way to do this, and can be adapted for older children and teens.

My Child's Own Safety Plan

My Safety Plan

When I get scared I can think about _____

When I get scared I can go to _____

When I am feeling down or afraid I can talk to _____

These are safe exits from my house _____

In an emergency I can _____

My Important Numbers

My phone number _____

The police _____

A neighbor, friend or relative's number _____

Safety On The Information Highway

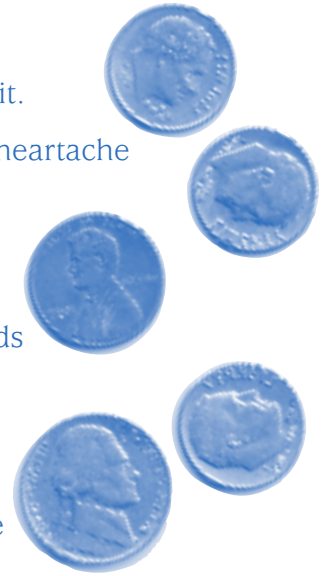
Just like you teach your child to be safe on roads and highways, you can teach safety when using the Internet at home, school, or public places. Kids can even access the Internet from cell phones and some gaming devices.

The Internet is a great tool for learning and experiencing the world in ways your child can not access any other way. There often are articles in the newspaper or newsclips on TV about children being exploited or victimized when on the Internet, but that doesn't mean that every child will have a bad experience. It's important to keep things in perspective, while teaching your child to be safe. You can't keep your child away from all inappropriate language and pictures, but you can do a lot to see that your child is safe. Just because some crimes are committed on the Internet is no reason to tell your child to stop using it. Instead, make some family rules about computer use:

- ❁ **Never give out identifying information.** Home address, school name, or telephone number should not be shared in a public chat room, and be sure you're dealing with someone both you and your children know and trust before giving out this information. Be careful about giving out information such as age, credit card numbers or marital status. Do not post photographs of your children on Web sites that are available to the public.
- ❁ **Get to know the Internet sites your child uses.** Have your child show you what he does online. Find out if your child has an email account, and learn his user name and password.
- ❁ **Never allow your child to see, in person, someone they "met" on the Internet without you being present.** Teach your child not to respond to any message that is obscene, threatening or that makes him uncomfortable, and to tell you if he gets such a message.
- ❁ **Instruct your child not to open any emails from people he doesn't know.** These could lead to sexually explicit or otherwise inappropriate Web sites or could be a computer virus.
- ❁ **Remind your child that people online may not be who they seem.** Because you can't see or even hear the person, it is easy for someone to misrepresent him- or herself. Someone saying that "she" is a "12-year-old girl" could, in reality, be a 40-year-old man.
- ❁ **Set reasonable rules and guidelines for computer use for your children.** Discuss these rules and post them near the computer as a reminder. Remember to check that your children are following these rules, especially when it comes to the amount of time your children spend on the computer. If your child uses the Internet a lot, especially late at night, there may be a problem.
- ❁ **Check out blocking, filtering, and ratings software.** Consider keeping the computer in a family room rather than the child's bedroom. Get to know his "online friends" just as you get to know all of his other friends. If your child has a cellular telephone, talk with him about using it safely. The same rules that apply to computer use also apply to cellular telephones.

What I've Learned In Life

- * **I've learned** that no matter how much I care, some people don't care back.
- * **I've learned** that no matter how good someone is, they are going to hurt me at least once, and I can forgive them for that.
- * **I've learned** that money is a lousy way of keeping score.
- * **I've learned** that it takes years to build up trust and seconds to destroy it.
- * **I've learned** that you can do something in an instant that will give you heartache for life.
- * **I've learned** that it's not what you have in your life, but who you have that's important.
- * **I've learned** that we don't have to change friends if we know that friends change.
- * **I've learned** to leave loved ones with loving words; it might be the last time you see them.
- * **I've learned** not to compare myself to the best others can do, but to the best I can do.
- * **I've learned** that it's not where I am that's important, but where I am going.
- * **I've learned** that no matter how you slice it, there are always two sides.
- * **I've learned** that it takes a long time to become the person I want to be.
- * **I've learned** that it's a lot easier to react than to think.
- * **I've learned** that you either control your attitude or it controls you.
- * **I've learned** that patience takes a lot of practice.
- * **I've learned** that there are people who love me dearly but just don't know how to show it.
- * **I've learned** that my best friend and I can do anything or nothing and have the best time.
- * **I've learned** that the people you expect to kick you when you are down are really the ones who will help you get back up.
- * **I've learned** that I have the right to be angry, but I never have the right to be cruel or abusive.
- * **I've learned** that just because someone doesn't love you the way you want to be loved doesn't mean they don't love you with all they have.
- * **I've learned** that maturity has more to do with experience and less to do with birthdays.
- * **I've learned** that you should never tell a child his dreams are unrealistic because he might believe you, and that would be a tragedy.
- * **I've learned** that it isn't always enough to be forgiven by someone else; sometimes you have to forgive yourself.
- * **I've learned** that no matter how bad my heart is broken, the world doesn't stop.



A Mother Tree

Think about your life since you became a mother – what you knew on the day your child was born, and what you know about being a parent now. What have you learned?

These lessons are like branches growing from a tree. They reach out from inside of you and touch many different parts of your life and your child’s life. Write something you have learned about being a mother on the branches of the tree.



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- ❁ **What do you enjoy as a parent?** _____
- ❁ **What are your struggles as a parent?** _____
- ❁ **What did you think about being parent before you became one?** _____
- _____
- ❁ **What do you think now?** _____

When There Is Hurting At Home

Growing up around domestic violence can affect the way children grow and develop, and changes the way they learn and think about themselves and the world. Here are some things that children who witness violence at home often struggle with:

- ✿ Being afraid to explore their world at home – infants and toddlers learn by crawling, putting things in their mouths and just getting into everything! It's normal for them to do this. But if they are afraid to explore, they won't learn and develop as well. They may be afraid in many situations outside of the home as well.
- ✿ Young children are learning a lot about how relationships form and how people talk with each other. When they witness violence, children begin to see that as an acceptable way of interacting.
- ✿ Consistency is very important to children. If you don't respond to your child in the same way, in a reasonable amount of time, or with the same type of caring whenever he needs you, he may not feel as secure or close to you. He may learn not to trust adults that care for him.
- ✿ Children who witness violence may believe they caused the violence and may try to stop it. They have a hard time learning that adults make decisions and act in ways that have little or nothing to do with how kids behave.
- ✿ One important thing children learn in their early school years is how to express feelings in appropriate ways. When kids witness violence, they may learn unhealthy ways to express anger and other emotions.

You can help your child learn about the world by making sure he has some safe times to play and explore, either at home, at child care or school. Teach your children ways other than violence to relate to people and how to express anger without hurting others. Reassure your child that he did not cause the violence, and he can not stop it from happening.

Take The Pledge!

- ✿ **I pledge to listen to my children** – Take time to really hear them. Look them in the eye and feel what they are saying.
- ✿ **I pledge to communicate with my children** – Ask them hard questions and get into their business. They won't like it, but it's my responsibility.
- ✿ **I pledge to teach my children right from wrong** – Since children pay far more attention to my actions than my words, I will practice what I preach.
- ✿ **I pledge to pay attention to my children** – Even though I am often racing against the clock, I will create opportunities to focus on my children and make them the center of my attention.
- ✿ **I pledge to educate my children in mind, body, and soul** – As their first teacher, I have the obligation and the opportunity to set the stage for lifelong learning.
- ✿ **I pledge to work to provide a stable family life** – Stability is one of the most important factors in a child's well-being. I will keep as much stability in my children's lives as possible, and, if and when change occurs, I will think first about their needs and teach them to cope in healthy ways.

Stress Reduction Strategies

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

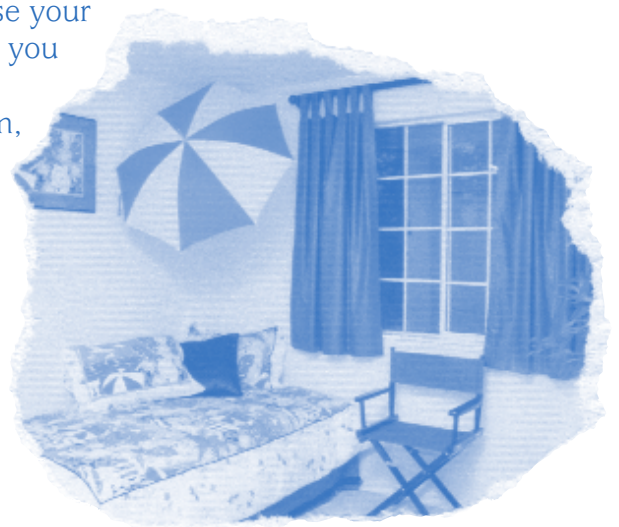
This technique involves first relaxing and then tensing your muscles. Begin by clenching your fists, then relaxing them. Do this two or three times. Then, bend your right hand back as far as possible and maintain this position for 5 to 7 seconds. Notice the strain in your palm and wrist. Then, relax your hand, and feel the difference. Do this two or three times. Then, slowly tense and relax each set of muscles in your body – your neck, shoulders, stomach, backside, thighs, and lower legs – and concentrate on the feeling of relaxation as you go. You may eventually be able to relax just by recalling the feeling of relaxing your muscles after straining them.

The Clasp

With your chin to your chest, clasp the fingers of both hands together behind your head with your elbows outstretched. Hold this position for about 30 seconds, then slowly bring your head up until you're looking at the ceiling while gently pulling down with your hands. This technique works because the neck is often the first place you feel stress. Applying gentle pressure to the neck muscles while stretching them is the same as giving yourself a relaxing massage.

The "Favorite Room" Visualization Exercise

This exercise requires that you first get comfortable, then close your eyes and imagine your favorite room. Maybe it was the room you had as a child or another room in your house or at your grandparents' home. You don't have to picture an actual room, either; you can create this room and place within it all your favorite things. Spend some time walking around your room, picking up the objects that you see, enjoying being in this room. This technique works because the room you picture calms and comforts you, which is what you need to conquer stress. Vary this technique by picturing yourself doing what you like to do most of all, such as reading, taking a quiet walk or spending time alone.



Self-suggestion

Sit in a comfortable chair or lie down with your arms at your sides. With your eyes closed, tell yourself, "I'm relaxing. My right arm is becoming heavy and feeling relaxed." Focus on your arm relaxing. Repeat this process with each part of your body until your entire body is in a relaxed state.

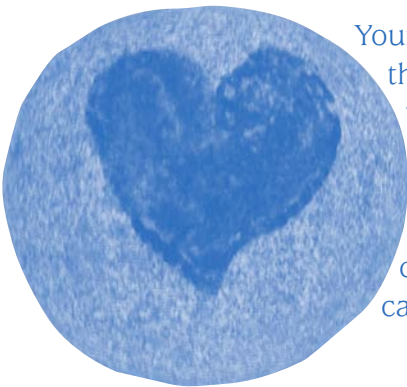
Mommy And Me

Free And Easy Ways To Have Fun (And Teach) Your Kids

- * Draw pictures of your family members.
- * Tell stories like you're around a campfire or at the barbecue.
- * Play freeze-tag.
- * Go for a walk.
- * Take a bike ride.
- * Get ice cream and go for a walk.
- * Learn to play the guitar together.
- * Listen to music, lights off, lying on the floor, and take turns saying what it sounds like.
- * Visit the library.
- * Lie on the ground and describe what you see in the clouds, like an animal.

* **What did you do with your kids this week?** _____

Love Rocks



Your children can have a permanent reminder of your love to keep close to them at any time. When you are out on a walk together, have your child pick up a small rock – small enough to fit in a pocket – and bring it home with you. Wash and dry it. Use craft paint or nail polish to add a heart or your initials, or any design you like that will make your child think of you. You can use a piece of wood if you don't have a rock. Let the paint dry and cover it with clear acrylic sealer or clear acrylic nail polish. Your child can carry it around as a reminder of how much you love her!

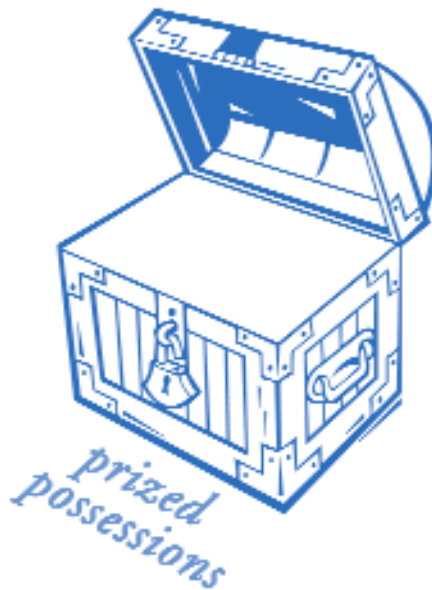
Family Time: Two Truths And A Lie

Object of the Game: Guess which of the three “facts” is the lie.

- * **Items Needed:** None
- * **Preparation:** None
- * **Directions:** Everyone comes up with two truths about themselves and one lie. The others have to guess what the lie is.
- * **Example:** The three things I could say about myself are, “I have been to Africa. I am allergic to horses. And I am one of 11 children.” The people guess which of the three is not true. Then, when everyone has made their choices, the person reveals the lie, “The lie is I am allergic to horses.”

Discover Your Family

Find out what each member of your family likes and thinks.



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Who Will Talk For Us?

(From the Words of Cricket, a 10-year old)

She looked up at me with round dark eyes, her long hair neatly pulled into a french braid, and asked “Who will talk for us?”

“Somebody has to talk for the kids, 'cause we don't always know the words to tell our pain.

So... tell them... Watch for our signals...

Are we scared?

Are we shy?

Are we always acting bad?

Do we hurt inside and out?

Are our screams coming out in our dreams?

Can we pay attention to what you are saying?

Or are we spacing out?

Are we too active?

Or don't we play enough?

Are we always hanging around you?

Or do we push you away too much?

Ask us questions, let us know that we are not alone.

If you think we are lying just to cover up, then ask someone who will know.

We need your help.

We just need your understanding.

Just always remember, we are kids!

We are doing the best we can.”

She paused, flung the braid over her shoulder and said, “Talk for us – just make sure they listen. Grownups have a hard time with that.”

What does this mean to you? _____

What would you say to Cricket? _____

