



# Building Blocks II

A newsletter for Acushnet, Berkley, Dartmouth, Dighton, Fairhaven, Freetown, Lakeville, New Bedford, Rehoboth, Seekonk and Swansea families with children birth ~ age 8



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## Cultivating Empathy

Empathy, the ability to understand and share the feelings of another, is a valuable skill for us to develop early in life. Empathy gives you other people's perspectives and allows you to step in and improve the lives of others. Children are not born with empathy and tend to understand only themselves and their own needs.

Preschool is a good time to start teaching empathy because that's when children start to develop relationships with other kids.

To teach your child empathy:

- Read picture books together. Look at the faces and talk about what each person is feeling. Then ask, "Can you make a face like that?"
- Use colored fridge magnets to convey how you're feeling each day. Green can mean happy, blue can mean sad, and red can mean angry. Change your magnet every day.
- While you are watching a movie and have emotions, tell your child. For example, "When Dory got lost in *Finding Dory*, I was really upset because I was concerned she wouldn't find her way home."
- Talk with your kids about how everyone has an invisible bucket. When we are happy, our bucket is full. When we are sad, it's empty. When we do nice things for others, we add to their bucket and to our own. When someone is mean to us, water drips out.



Helping people fill their bucket feels good!

## Mindful Parenting

Mindful parenting, with its roots in Buddhism, can significantly strengthen the parent-child bond by providing strategies for being more present and openhearted. When we train the mind and body to notice what's happening in

the moment, we become more aware of little details. Start by spending five to 15 minutes a day practicing mindful breathing. Pay attention only to your breath. When practiced regularly, it becomes easier and more

natural to use this type of breathing during tense situations when you really need it. If you want to practice mindful breathing with your family, try a "three-breath hug," in which you embrace

your child and take three deep breaths together. This helps your child learn to use breathing to manage strong emotions.

Source:  
[www.kiwimagonline.com](http://www.kiwimagonline.com)

## Carbon Monoxide

Carbon monoxide (CO) is a gas that you cannot see, taste, or smell. Its poisoning can result from faulty furnaces or other heating appliances, portable generators, water heaters, clothes dryers, or cars left running in garages. At its worst, carbon monoxide can cause severe side effects or even death.

Young children are especially vulnerable to the effects of carbon monoxide because of their smaller bodies.

Make sure your home has multiple

carbon monoxide alarms in addition to a smoke alarm.

This winter, if you need to warm your vehicle, remove it from the garage immediately after starting it. Don't leave a car, SUV, or motorcycle engine running inside a garage. When removing snow off your car, make sure



the exhaust pipe is clear before starting the vehicle.

Source: [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)

Make sure the exhaust pipe is clear of snow before starting your vehicle.

## Playing With Snow

Young children find snow magical. It's unique. They can control how it changes and do whatever they want with it. There's no right or wrong way to play with snow, so perfection doesn't matter.

Here are a couple activities you can do with your family to explore how snow melts.

Snow Melting: Fill several containers

with snow and bring them inside. Put them in several places around your home - on a table, in the freezer, in the refrigerator, near a sunny window, under a light bulb. Ask your child to guess which will melt first, last. Set a timer for every 10 minutes to check their progress.

Snowball Thermometer: On a mild day, make snowballs of the same size and place them on different surfaces

like a rock, patch of grass, sidewalk, or parked car. Observe which one melts first. Ask your child why?

**Science experiments to discover how and why snow melts.**

Source: [www.truceteachers.org](http://www.truceteachers.org)

## Bath Safety

January is National Bath Safety Month. When it comes to splish-splashing in the tub, make sure you keep your wee ones safe!

Avoid all distractions that could take you away from the bath and cause you to lose track of time. Get everything



Get everything ready in advance so you can stay with your child.

ready in advance so you can stay with your child. If you must leave the room, take your baby with you. Accidents can happen in an instant.

Always test the water temperature before putting your child in the tub, and once bath time

is over, remember to let all the water out right away.

If bath time is stressful because you're doing this at the end of the day when you have lots of other things to do, consider changing your routine to make things easier for you. When too many things are happening at once, it can increase the risk of injuries.

Source: [www.toronto4kids.com](http://www.toronto4kids.com)

## Infant Activities

**Change of Scenery:** Provide baby with opportunities to see and hear things from different perspectives. For a portion of the day, place baby on a soft blanket on the floor. An infant seat is also ideal for moving baby around with you from one room of the house to another. Baby will be able to see family members at work or play.

**Snowy Vocabulary:** Place some snow

in a container and let your baby feel it. While your baby is handling the snow, talk about how it feels by using words like *cold* and *brr*.

**In and Out:** Give your baby a small plastic dishpan or other container and a few easy-to-hold toys. Show



Use words like *cold* and *brr* to describe how snow feels.

your baby how to place all of the toys in the pan and then take them out again.

Source: Totline: A Year of Fun

## Toddler Activities

**Tracks in the Snow:** Take your toddler outside to an open patch of snow where there aren't any footprints. Let him run and walk over the snow, creating his own tracks. Encourage him to make tracks and then retrace his own steps.



**Snowball Toss:** Arrange several

plastic containers on a ledge outside. Make snowballs with your toddler. Show her how to throw her snowballs at the plastic containers to knock them off the ledge.

**Mitten Catch:** Have your toddler put on his mittens

inside, then give him a ball to toss or roll back to you. Use a large ball, easy for toddlers to handle.

Source: Toddler Games

## Preschool/School-Age Activities

**Playing With Cups:** Turn on some music. Sit on the floor with your child, and hold two cups upside down. With a cup in each hand, tap the floor to the beat of the music. Then make up rhythms and create a pattern for your child to copy. Then, switch and have your child create rhythms and patterns for you to copy.

**Moon Journal:** With your child, look out a window every night for a few

weeks. Ask your child what she sees and have her draw pictures of the moon or anything else she sees.

**Story Surprise:** With your child, read a story half way through. Then, make up a different ending to the story together. Have your child dic-



Pay attention to the moon for several weeks. Were there any changes?

tate as you write it down (or have her write certain words/letters if she can) and ask your child to illustrate it.

Source: [www.brighthorizons.com](http://www.brighthorizons.com)



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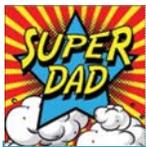
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## Talking About Family History



If you need a subject of conversation for your next mealtime, consider talking with your children about their family's history. Children who know about their family's history have a stronger sense of control over their lives, higher self-esteem, and feel more connected to their families than children who don't know their family's history. In fact, the best single predictor of a child's emotional health and happiness is their ability to answer questions about their family history, such as:

- Do you know where your grandparents grew up?
- Do you know where your mom and dad went to high school?

- Do you know where your parents met?
- Do you know what went on when you were being born?

Knowledge of personal family history provides a child with a strong "intergenerational self," which makes them feel like they're part of something bigger than themselves. As they hear stories of family struggles and triumphs, kids learn about family narratives that instill resilience.



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Knowing that great-great-grandpa managed to create a thriving business even after suffering hardship and the death of family members along a wagon trail in the middle of nowhere can help a kid understand that life will be okay even if he doesn't get into his college of choice. If grandpa thrived during adversity, he can thrive, too.

Source: [www.artofmanliness.com](http://www.artofmanliness.com)