

ASK P&C

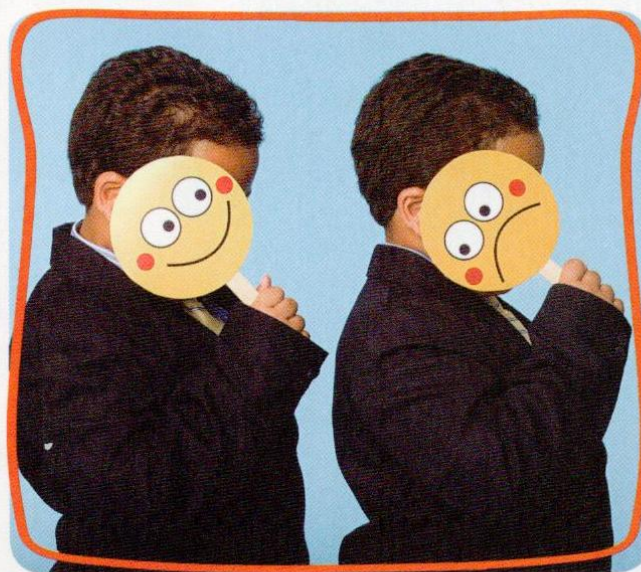
TWIN TROUBLE: *My 10-year-old boys do almost all extracurricular activities together and are always invited to the same parties. On the two occasions that only one was invited, I treated the other to a special activity with me. Does that seem right, or should I let each son learn to deal with not being included?*

—Tracey K., Pueblo, CO

At this age, children begin to differentiate themselves from siblings and parents, and supporting this process of becoming individuals is important. It will benefit both your children for you to begin to talk to them, separately or together, about the things you notice in each that is unique. Create a dialogue about how different interests and talents are likely to mean different activities and friends as they get older. When one gets invited to something that the other does not, shift from doing a special activity to emphasizing the one-on-one time you get to spend with that child. Or support him to find an activity of his own. This will lift the burden off you to provide entertainment when each child heads out in his own direction with his own friends.

BUY US STUFF! *It's getting impossible to take my kids (10, 8, and 5) anywhere without them demanding a treat.*

Developmental psychology expert Michelle Anthony answers your questions about your child's social, emotional, and behavioral development at home and in school. **THIS MONTH:** twins go their own ways, begging for souvenirs, and mom's grocery shopping exhaustion



Even going to a museum has become a nightmare! The second we arrive they ask me if they can get something in the gift shop or at the food court. I'm not made of money and I'd rather not get in the same argument over and over again. What should I do?

—Stacy R., Oak Park, IL

It's not uncommon to buy children a memento to remember a special time. Yet we balk when they begin to demand item after item or to get "something special" each time we head out on a family excursion.

Next time you're planning a trip to the museum, sit your children down and explain to them that sometimes when you all go on a trip, it will be a day for getting special items, and sometimes it will not. Be clear that you'll make these decisions in advance, so they will always know what to expect before the trip, but that no new decisions will be made while you're on the trip. Then, stick to your guns. If your children test you, simply tell them, "We already discussed this. Today is not a treat-buying

day." If they continue to beg, tell them that if it is too hard to adjust, you will all go home. And then be prepared to do just that.

SHOPPING MADNESS: *I'm a parent of a 3- and a 5-year-old. The day is very packed and I hardly have time to breathe, much less shop with two tired children in tow. I usually give them snack after snack just to make it to the checkout line . . . and it still feels impossible!*

—Cheryl M., Plano, TX

If giving your children snacks works, there's nothing wrong with a few nutritious, well-earned rewards. Two other ideas:

Let your child select one or two items that he can eat once they're paid for. The faster he helps you get through the store, the sooner he'll get his treats.

Give him his own list of things to find (with you right there, of course). Make rough drawings of grapes or apples for him to "read" and find. Turn it into a game and ask your child to find the box with the bear on it or the cans with the man with the funny white hat on them. Even tired children do better when they are engaged in being helpers or feel powerful in collecting the items the family needs. **P&C**



Have a question you'd like P&C to answer? E-mail it to AskPC@scholastic.com.