Is It the Same or Different?

Age: Preschool-age (3-4 years)

This activity helps your child's development in this domain: Social-Emotional, Cognitive

What You Need:

- Small items such as cotton balls, scraps of cloth, buttons, and uncooked rice
- Paper plates
- Glue stick or white glue (such as Elmer’s Glue®**)
- Blunt, child-sized scissors

What To Do:

1. Ask your child to tell you how two objects or people are alike. For example, you could ask, “How are you and your cousin alike? Yes, you’re both boys.” Or “How is saimin like spaghetti?” Then talk about how they are alike.
2. Then name two items and ask how they are different. For example, “How are you different from a fish? Yes, you have two legs and a fish doesn’t have legs.”
3. Draw a line across a paper plate to divide it in half.
4. Ask your child to sort the items into two piles: those that are alike and those that are different from the first pile. For example, he might put all the soft things in one pile and everything else in the second pile.
5. Ask him how he decided what went in each group.
6. Show him how to use the glue and let him glue the two groups of items onto separate halves of the paper plate.

VARIATIONS:

1. Cut out a variety of pictures from old magazines or have your child cut them.
Have him sort the pictures into two groups; for example, pictures of people in one group and everything else in another. Encourage him to tell you how the pictures in each group are alike. Talk about different ways the pictures could be grouped. Invite him to glue one group onto one sheet of paper and the other group onto another.

2. Gather familiar household objects and toys. Put items that have a common characteristic into one group. For example, separate the toys with wheels from the rest of the items. Ask your child to guess the rule you used to separate the one group of items from the others. You might use color, size, texture, or use of such as items; for example, items that we cook with or items that we play with. After he guesses, explain your reasoning for sorting the items the way you did. Switch roles. Have him create a group of items. Now it’s your turn to guess what the one group has in common. Ask for his explanation.

! Safety Alert: Adult-size scissors are not safe for young preschoolers. Let your child practice cutting with blunt, child-sized scissors. Monitor your child as he uses the scissors. If you do not have appropriate scissors or the paper is too thick for your child to cut, do the cutting yourself. Discuss the dangers of moving around with a pair of scissors in hand.

! Safety Alert: Remind your child not to put small objects in his mouth. They can get stuck in his throat and cause choking (and even death). When you are done using small objects, put them away where your child cannot reach them. Childproofing your home creates a safe place for your child to explore and learn.

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