

Helping Hand

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Staying Fit

A + B = C

Activity

With school back in session and the long summer days behind us, it's important to make sure opportunities for physical activity aren't left behind as well. According to the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, kids ages 6-17 should get at least 60 minutes of exercise each day. Sure, the days probably seem busier now, but what is more important than good health? Here are some ways you can help encourage your students to squeeze in some physical activity each day:

- Having them walk or ride a bike to and from school.
- Going for an after-dinner walk as a family.
- Having their parents sign them up for a local recreational activity, such as a sports team or dance lessons.
- Turning on the music and having a dance party in the kitchen while making dinner and setting the table.

+ Balanced Meals

Another important element of staying fit is making nutritious food choices. This is especially important during the school year because a healthy lunch recharges and prepares students for their afternoon classes. Whether they're packing their own lunch or picking something out at school, students need to start practicing what it means to make healthy food choices. They should be eating whole grains, protein, fruit, and veggies at each meal. Some ideas include:

- A turkey, cheese and lettuce sandwich, baby carrots, and an apple.
- A hummus, cucumber and tomato bagel, string cheese, and a peach.
- A banana, peanut butter and honey wrap, cottage cheese, and red pepper slices.

= Classroom Success

Being active and eating right will help set the stage for success in the classroom this year. And remind parents that they can set a great example for children at home by modeling healthy food choices and being active.

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Excelling Academically

Skills for Success

As the new school year begins, encourage parents to partner with you in setting students up for academic success. Let's review some skills students will need to excel in the classroom this year, and how parents can help.

Organization. Many times not being organized is more to blame for academic challenges than lacking intellect.

Tip: Advise parents to take their kids shopping for items to help organize their schoolwork. Suggest items such as a calendar or assignment book, binders, folders, and different colored pens.

Motivation. Even when kids say they want to do well in school, often they just don't put in enough time or effort to excel.

Tip: Tying their interests into school can help. For example, if a student is passionate about sports, have them keep track of some statistics during a game to help them with their math skills. Or if they like to cook, they can work on their math skills by doubling or cutting recipes in half.

Setting priorities. Sometimes not knowing where to begin can cause a student to fall behind.

Tip: Have students write down everything they need to do that day or week and label each task with a rank from 1-3. Parents can then review the list with them to help them see that school activities should be ranked the highest and put at the top of the list.

Time management. Have parents help their child learn to schedule enough time to finish assignments on time. Teach them how starting assignments early will give them more time for fun activities when they finish.

Tip: Keep track of due dates on a calendar and work backward to break the task into smaller chunks. Then decide which chunks can be done each night during a designated homework session.

Concentration. Schoolwork is best done at a time and place that offers limited interruptions and distractions.

Tip: Encourage students to work in a space that is quiet and comfortable. This means a room with no TV or phone in it.

Last but not least, remember to celebrate even small successes. You don't need to wait for that "A" to celebrate. Reward children for working quietly for 30 minutes or starting their homework without being reminded. Positive reinforcement works wonders.



Thinking Well

Breakfast Boosts Brain Power

We've all heard breakfast is the most important meal of the day, but when parents are running around in the morning trying to get everyone out the door on time, they might get distracted. However, kids and teens that eat breakfast have more energy, do better in school, and eat healthier throughout the day. Healthy breakfasts can boost students' attention span, concentration, and memory – all things needed to do well in school. On the other hand, skipping breakfast can make them feel tired, restless, or irritable.

It's not just eating breakfast though, what you eat is important, too. While toaster pastries and some breakfast bars are portable, easy, and tasty, they're often just as unhealthy as a candy bar. Instead, choose foods rich in whole grains, fiber, and protein while low in added sugar. Try low-fat yogurt, whole grain waffles, oatmeal, fresh fruit, or eggs.

Starting the day with a healthy breakfast isn't always easy. Parents are bound to hear complaints or even have some of their own. But we know that students should have the best start to their day. To help, we've listed some tips for parents on the right – please share these ideas!

Healthy Relationships

PARENT FOCUS: Building a Bond

Most parents I know want their kids to be able to come to them with any questions, problems, or concerns they have. To help facilitate this, you need to have a healthy relationship based on respect, trust, and love with your child. Building this kind of relationship might not be the easiest task in the world, but it will be well worth it. Here are a few ideas to help build a bond with your child that can last a lifetime.

Do what they do. Watch shows with your child on TV or take them to the movies. Have them show you funny YouTube clips online. If they ask, explain that you're not spying, you just want to spend time hanging out with them. Go a step further and strike up a conversation by asking questions about the story line or characters.

*A relationship based on
respect, trust, and love.*

Breaking Breakfast Barriers

I have no time in the morning!

- Get breakfast ready the night before. Have the table set with bowls, utensils, and cereal boxes. Leave a bowl of fresh fruit on the counter or cut up in the fridge.
- If there's no time to sit down, make sure you have something your child can take on-the-go like a granola bar and piece of fruit, or make easy-to-grab breakfasts like a peanut butter and banana wrap.
- Try getting your child up 10 minutes earlier or teach them to get their own breakfast.

My kids aren't hungry in the morning.

- Breakfast doesn't need to be big, so try making smoothies. They can be packed with tons of nutrients to get their body going, and it may be easier to get them to drink than eat.
- Pack little snacks like fruit, trail mix, or nuts that your child can snack on if they get hungry.

Share stories from your childhood. Help your child see that you're not perfect. Reflect on a time you made a bad judgment call so they can learn from your mistakes. You can also share some of your favorite memories, embarrassing stories, or things you wished you had done differently. Show them pictures from your childhood.

Be together. Pick a time of day that is dedicated to your family, for many that's dinner – even if it's only 15 minutes. Take turns sharing something you learned that day or something that made you smile. Be attentive to your children during this time; don't be checking your e-mail or the score of the game. Rather, focus on each other.

Goof around. Maybe not in public, you don't want to be *that* parent. But when you're at home, be silly. Your child might roll their eyes, but you will seem more approachable. Just as there is a time and place to be serious, show your kids that you can also be fun and silly.



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Career Building

Career Path Exploration

With so many different professions to choose from, it can be challenging to know what direction to guide a child in as they progress through their academic career. While your students may not be applying to colleges just yet, it's never too early to cultivate their interests in certain fields. Below are some suggestions for broadening the scope of potential career opportunities.

- Take your classes to a variety of venues such as history museums, art galleries, planetariums, botanical gardens, concerts and plays, or anywhere else that can pique your students' curiosity.
- If a student has expressed interest in a particular career, see if you can arrange for them to visit or talk with a person in that profession.
- Encourage parents to watch documentaries or movies with their child that showcase different careers or fields of interest.
- Tell students or parents about websites, such as kids.gov or driveofyourlife.org, that let children play games and explore interesting jobs in a virtual world.

Even though children can change their minds countless times before deciding on a career path, you can actively support them by introducing professions they may never have considered before.



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