

Raising Safe Kids -
Newsletter 2012

FINDING HOLIDAY SUPPORTS

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Welcome

The holidays are a time of giving, sharing memories, being with family, eating good food, and celebrating. Holidays are also a time that brings on a lot of stress, chaos, and the occasional argument.

Becoming overwhelmed is really easy during a time when one has to worry about planning holiday festivities, buying presents, the constant question of “What do you want?”, school parties, and the list goes on. But these feelings of pressure, worry, anxiety don’t have to consume you or ruin your holiday spirit. Knowing your holiday triggers, ways to prevent holiday stress, and relying on your supports are extremely important in keeping your sanity during the holidays.

Remember although you want to make this holiday a wonderful time for family and friends don’t forget to take time to make it enjoyable for yourself.



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Special points of interest:

- Recognizing holiday triggers.
- Staying calm during the madness of the holidays
- Learning the benefits of social supports and how to cultivate those relationships
- Choosing safe non-violent toys for children while knowing which ones to avoid this holiday season



Recognizing Holiday Triggers

The holiday season can be fun, but it can also be a source of great stress. Don't let the holidays become something that's overwhelming and unpleasant. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress with a little planning and some positive thinking.

Learn to recognize common triggers that might occur during the holidays. This will help you to defuse them before they lead to a huge meltdown. Here are some triggers that can be a source of stress during the holidays:

- **Relationships:** Relationships in general can cause stress at anytime, but tensions seem to be escalated during the holidays. Family feuds, misunderstandings, and conflicts can increase especially when you are spending so much time together.
- **Finances:** With added expenses of gifts, travel, food, etc. the holidays can cause overspending and financial worries put a strain on your budget .
- **Physical Demands:** Extra shopping, planning, and entertaining can leave you wiped out. Being exhausted tends to increase your stress levels.
- **Family Obligations:** Many times during the holidays individuals can be pulled in different directions. This can put a lot of stress on you and your family when it comes to having to decide where to go and when.

Recognizing some of these holiday triggers can help you take the step towards ensuring you don't become overwhelmed. Be aware of what situations make you the most stressed, and try work through them. When stressful situations occur, try to put them into perspective. Acknowledging that certain situations during the holidays are triggers for you is the first step in learning how to manage your stress.



Tips to Prevent Holiday Stress

When you feel stressed out it is hard to calm down and regroup. Unlike many other types of stress we encounter in our daily lives, we know when holiday stress will begin and end. Because of this we can make plans to reduce the amount of stress we experience and the negative impact it has on us.

Here are some tips you can try to help reduce holiday stress before it begins:

1. Make realistic expectations for the holiday season. The holidays don't have to be perfect.

2. Understand that unexpected things might occur.

3. Make a list and prioritize the important activities

4. Plan ahead. Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting, etc.

5. Stick to a budget. Decide how much money you can afford to spend and keep track of spending. Don't try to buy happiness with gifts.

6. Set aside differences. Don't discuss conflicts and disagreements during the holidays. Save them for more appropriate times.

7. Live "in the moment" and enjoy the present

8. Learn to say no and pace yourself. Don't take on more responsibilities than you can handle.

9. Be realistic about what you can handle. Let others help with holiday tasks.

10. Spend time with supportive and caring people and acknowledge how you are feeling. Sometimes we just need to vent to someone and get things off of our chests.

11. Make time for yourself and take a breather. Spending some time alone may help you to refresh enough to deal your holiday stress.

12. Seek professional help if you need it. Don't feel that you have to deal with holiday stress alone. If you are feeling the effects of stress for a long period of time talk to a doctor or mental health professional.

Help yourself and family experience the holidays in a more relaxing, enjoyable way. Holidays can be overwhelming but you don't have to let them take a toll on your physical and mental well-being.

Social Support Systems

Creating a social support system is extremely important to combating the effects of stress on your life. Whether you are just having a rough day or dealing with month after month of loss and bad fortune, support systems can impact whether stress is going to consume you or have little impact on your life. Social supports are not usually formed by regular meetings. They can be formed by just a chat with a co-worker during a break, a short conversation with a neighbor, or a quick call to your brother. Whatever your reason for creating or extending your social support system just remember there are great benefits and ways to keep those relationships alive. Below are just some of the benefits and ways you can cultivate the social supports you make.

Benefits of Social Support Systems

* Alleviate Stress

Confiding in others who care about what you say and listen to your problems and can give support by offering ideas or recommendations can be extremely beneficial at bringing down stress levels.

* Sense of belonging

Spending time with people helps ward off loneliness. Knowing that you are not alone dealing with challenges or going through tough times can go a long way toward coping with stress.

* Increases a person's self confidence and feelings of value

Being a part of a strong social support system can make someone feel loved and important. Listening to others challenges and how they overcame those battles can be very uplifting and boost self-confidence. Also, feeling valued by others is a real boost to one's self-esteem.

* Decreases feelings of loneliness and helplessness

Social support systems can also be fun! Members of a social support system can be called on when one just wants to hang out, participate in an activity, or just talk about what is going on in their lives. Without friends and other social supports many people are more likely to feel lonely, isolated, and bored which can increase the effects stress.

Finding and

Ready to build a support system, but not sure where to find people? Here are some ideas for extending your social supports:

Family Support Centers—These centers nurture children, strengthen families, and builds communities. They are a great resource for families and a wonderful place to find individuals that may have things in common with you.

Visit to the park. Whether you bring your dog, your kids or your running shoes, you'll have something to talk about.

Volunteering. Pick a cause that's important to you, and you're sure to meet others who share a similar value system.

Attending Church or Community Events. Events like these generally offer a lot of people with different backgrounds and personalities.

Ask a friend. Next time you meet a friend for lunch, ask him or her to bring along someone else.

To locate family centers in Allegheny County Visit:

<http://www.alleghenycounty.us/dhs/fpsupport.aspx>

Cultivating Support Systems

Stay in touch.

Be proactive. Don't wait for someone else to make the first move.

Know when to say no and when to say yes. Spending time with people who aren't supportive can add stress and take away valuable time. On the other hand, don't decline an invitation because you feel shy or insecure.

Don't compete. Be happy instead of jealous when your friends succeed, and they'll celebrate your accomplishments in return.

Be a good listener. Don't dominate conversations or be inconsiderate of a friends problems.

Don't overdo it. Be careful not to overwhelm friends and family with phone calls and e-mails.

Appreciate your friends and family. Take time to say thank you and express how important they are to you.

Toy Buying: Where to Begin?

Play is extremely important to children's development and learning. Learning to cooperate, take turns and play by the rules are some of the important skills learned through play. Toys are a crucial part of children's play and have an influence on how they play and use their imagination.

Parents are constantly faced with the decision on what toys to buy and which ones should they avoid. Friends, family, advertisement, media, etc. put pressure on parents to buy every toy out there. So it is up to parents and others to make thoughtful decisions about which toys are appropriate and will promote healthy non-violent play. Below are some ideas on toys that provide opportunities for healthy, creative play.

Choose toys that provide opportunities for... Toys have enhanced play value when they . . .

Imaginative play: Helps children be creative and use problem solving skills.

Examples: blocks, dress-up clothes, dolls, puppets, props to recreate real life (restaurant, store, school, etc.) stuffed animals, trains, vehicles.

Manipulative play with small play objects: Develops small muscle control and eye-hand coordination.

Examples: construction sets and toys with interlocking pieces (basic Legos, Lincoln Logs, K'nex, train tracks), puzzles, peg-boards, pattern blocks, car garages.

Game playing: Teaches about taking turns, rules, and cooperation.

Examples: board games, card games, etc.

Art: Encourages self-expression and creativity. Also, develops fine motor skills.

Examples: finger paints, paper of all sizes and colors, crayons and markers, scissors, glue, recycled materials, stamps, clay, playdoh.

Physical play: Promotes exercise, social interaction, and coordination. Gets children out of the house and away from the TV.

Examples: bikes, scooters and other wheeled toys, climbing structures, basketball hoop, balls, baseball bat, roller blades/skates.

Source: TRUCE 2009-2010 Toys, Play & Young Children Action Guide

- Can be used in many ways.
- Allow children to be in charge of the play.
- Appeal to children at more than one age or level of development.
- Are not linked to video games, TV, or movies.
- Can be used with other toys for new and more complex play.
- Will stand the test of time and be part of play as children develop new interests and skills.
- Promote respectful, non-stereotyped, nonviolent interactions among children.
- Help children develop skills important for further learning and a sense of mastery.
- Can be used by children to play alone as well as with others.
- Can be enjoyed by both girls and boys.

Source: TRUCE 2009-2010 Toys, Play & Young Children Action Guide



Children, especially young ones have difficulty separating fact from fantasy. Children learn through play, by example, and by modeling others. It is through imaginative play that children begin to learn some of the behaviors of society. For these reasons it is important that parents and others are more aware of toys that promote violence and have limited play value.

Toys have limited play value when they . . .

- Can only be used in one way and/or encourage all children to play the same way. Cause children to use less imagination.
- Are limited to a single age or level of development.
- Are fun for the first 1/2 hour and then rarely get played with again.
- Do the play "for" children, instead of allowing for children's unique exploration and mastery.
- Lead children to spend more time with TV or other media, and/or let the screen take control of their play.
- Promote violence and stereotypes, which can lead to aggressive and disrespectful behavior.

Violent Toys...

- Encourage children to act out aggressive scenarios like hurting and killing
- Teach violence is the best way to settle a dispute
- Depict violence as fun, harmless and "cool."
- Glamorize war and combat
- Promote excessive materialism
- Foster aggressive competition
- Lead to anti-social behavior
- Condone environmental destruction
- Can lead to aggressive behavior
- Provides violent heroes to imitate
- Shows that violence is OK

The toys listed in each category below are dramatic examples that illustrate harmful toy trends. When you shop for toys this year, make sure to ask yourself if the toy fits into one of these categories.

Toys that make sexiness & appearance the focus of play.

Channeling girls' play into looking and acting sexy, these toys promote a harmful standard of what it means to be a girl.

Monster High Dolls (Mattel)

- Dolls with dangerously thin bodies and highly provocative attire that normalize eating disorders and early

Electronics aimed at Infants and toddlers.

Electronic toys that teach babies to push buttons rather than actively interact and explore.

Vinci (Vinci)

- Tablet computer for babies. Replaces interaction with people and the world with screens from birth.

Toys and games linked to media.

Encourages children to imitate what they see on the screen instead of using their own imaginations and ideas

Dora the Explorer Playdoh (Hasbro)

- Playdoh with molds to make figures of Dora and her friends focuses activity on Dora instead of creative play.

Toys that make violence the focus of the play.

Toys teach that violence is fun, easy and the way to solve problems.

Nerf N-Strike Raider Rapid Fire Dart Blaster

Dark of the Moon-Robo Power Bash Bots (Hasbro)



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Office of Community Services

Safe Start Program



American Psychological
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Find more about ACT on the web at:

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HAPPY HALLOWEEN!!

Volume: 17
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Welcome

Halloween is a holiday full of ghosts and goblins, pumpkins, costumes, and don't forget trick or treating. For some children and adults, Halloween is a fun-filled holiday where we get to find the best costume and get as much candy we can get. But there are some that find Halloween to be extremely scary and overwhelming. This is why it is important for parents and guardians to recognize when children are fearful of certain situations and help prepare them for Halloween.



For children to have a fun memorable Halloween experience it is essential that parents stress safety to children on this night. During trick or treating many children are walking on dimly lit streets and tend to be more focused on getting the treats than remembering safety. One way to help your children focus on safety during Halloween is to go over safety rules before they head out the door and stress the importance of being safe.

After trick or treating many parents tend to be overwhelmed by the amount of candy their children come home with. Remember one of the main agendas on children's Halloween list is to get as much candy in the two hours they have to trick or treat. So with the arrival of your little superheroes and princesses also comes the

arrival of pillow cases and bags full of sweet treats! But what do we as parents do with all this CANDY!!!

As you read through this special Halloween edition of the

ACT Parents Raising Safe Kids you will learn about what is age appropriate for your children at Halloween, ways to keep your children safe during trick or treating, as well as what to do with the over abundance of candy. Enjoy!

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Why Dress-Up Play is Important	

Special points of interest:

- Tips to help your child feel safe during Halloween
- Halloween from your child's eyes
- Keeping Halloween safe and fun!
- Ideas about how to ration Halloween candy
- Understanding the impact dress-up play has on children's development



Halloween Can Be Scary



For some of us, Halloween is a most exciting and fun-filled holiday. We are thrilled by the ghosts and goblins; we love the decorations and the costumes. However, if you are a young child or a child with special needs this may not be as much fun as we grown-ups may think. Young children and children with special needs may not have yet developed the ability to distinguish a pretend world from the real world. Monsters and scary things are very real. This is why it is important to be aware of how children are reacting to the Halloween festivities around them. Being sure to not push them is extremely important to how they are going to experience Halloween. Remember Halloween is experienced differently for every child. What one child likes another one might not.

Tips to help your child feel safe during Halloween

- 🎃 Do not allow your young children, even elementary school age children, to watch the Halloween horror movies that are popular this time of year.
- 🎃 Avoid gore. Having a black cat sitting on the porch is one thing but having a bloody knife laying next to a headless black cat is another. These horrific images can be extremely disturbing to many children young and old.
- 🎃 For the child's safety as well as to help them not be frightened, attend community sponsored parties rather than door to door trick-or-treating in the dark.
- 🎃 Manage your child's expectations. Talking with your child and giving them an idea of some of the things they will encounter on Halloween can help to ease anxieties. Discuss trick or treating, costume parties they may attend, and images they may see during Halloween. Be sure to stress the difference between fantasy (pretend) and reality (real).
- 🎃 Allow a child to play with the costumes ahead of time so that they become familiar with them. Also, be sure to stress that people dressed in costume are playing a pretend game just as they are.
- 🎃 If you as an adult are costuming for some event, let your child help you get dressed, and select non-scary costumes. Go as a butterfly rather than a witch.
- 🎃 Ask people to take off their mask so that the child can see who is behind it, rather than being confused.
- 🎃 Do not force an anxious child to participate if they don't want to. Forcing children to participate in activities that scare them will only add stress to an already stressful situation. Be sure to use encouraging, soothing words to remind them that they are safe and that it is o.k. not to participate.

Do not rush your child into Halloween. Children are easily frightened and confused. Remember to reassure your child you will always keep them safe.



Keeping Halloween Age Appropriate

When it comes to Halloween it is important to keep in mind the age of your child or children. What may be good for your 6 year old may not be suitable for your 2 year old. Loud noises, unfamiliar sounds and people hidden in costumes tend to scare younger children more easily than older children. If you're attending a party or local event it may be a good idea to call ahead to ask about scary activities or decorations so you and your child can know what to expect. If you're having a Halloween party with children of different ages try to focus your decorating and activities to younger guests and provide some spooky fun for older kids in a separate area. The tips offered in this article are just suggestions. You as a parent know your own child and what they can handle. But keep in mind some of these tips and try to take a moment to look at Halloween from your children's eyes.

Generally children less than 2 years of age need not go trick or treating. Often the experience is overwhelming and although it makes a great photo opportunity for family and friends, it's probably not a great idea to dress them up and take them out

Children less than 2 years

3 to 5 years of age

At this age it is best to avoid masks, as they may be both scary and dangerous by restricting vision. Similarly, it is best to stay away from extremely dark and noisy areas (for example, haunted houses). Allow them to express their concerns and fears and provide reassurance that your job as their parent is to protect them. Do NOT tell them "don't be afraid," this doesn't allow them to express their fears. If you are going to take them out on Halloween, try to go early in the evening before dark, and before their older peers venture out.

At this age range most children are less sensitive to irrational fear (witches and ghosts) but more sensitive to rational ones (mutilated bodies, blood and gore). While some children profess an enjoyment of being scared and are fascinated with such costumes, they often have more fear than they let others know. So it is important to avoid movies or TV shows which emphasize such content.

5 to 8 years of age

8 to 11 years of age

This age range (and through adolescence) anxiety about "fitting in" is manifested by concerns regarding social embarrassment and peer acceptance (for example, being teased for not going in the haunted house or playing a trick on someone to fit in). Halloween also provides an opportunity to wear outlandish or fear inducing costumes with the goal to shock adults while inadvertently scaring young children. It is important to remind them that destructive behavior (for example, destroying property, destroying pumpkins, "egging" cars, etc.) is illegal and will not be tolerated

Halloween Safety Tips



- 🍁 Remind older children to use common sense.
- 🍁 Young children should always go trick-or-treating with an adult.
- 🍁 Never let children trick-or-treat alone. Be sure they have at least 2 buddies to go with.
- 🍁 Plan out the trick or treating route and make sure the entire family knows what it is.
- 🍁 Make sure that your child is wearing a flame retardant costume that is short enough to prevent children from tripping and falling.
- 🍁 Stress that your children wait until they get home and you have checked the candy before they eat it.

- 🍁 Remind children to visit houses with lights on, to accept treats only in the doorway, and to never go inside a house.
- 🍁 Stress the importance of respect and saying thank you for treats.
- 🍁 Remind children to not play near lit jack-o-lanterns.
- 🍁 Emphasize walking not running and staying on sidewalks and driveways.
- 🍁 Be sure to stress the importance of looking both ways while crossing the street at corners or crosswalks.
- 🍁 Send a cellular phone with older children if possible.
- 🍁 Have older children wear a watch.
- 🍁 Always have children carry a flashlight or wear reflectors or glow sticks.
- 🍁 Never walk near lit candles or luminaries. Be sure to wear flame-resistant costumes.
- 🍁 Teach your children to only enter homes with your prior permission and only approach homes that are well-lit both inside and outside.
- 🍁 Remind children to always stay in well-lit areas, never take shortcuts, and never go into isolated areas.
- 🍁 Teach your children if anyone tries to grab them to draw attention to themselves and loudly yell “This person is trying to take me,” or “This person is not my father/mother.”

—>Instruct your children to make every effort to escape by running or pulling away, yelling, kicking, screaming, attracting attention, and resisting.



Dealing with Halloween Candy

With obesity on the rise, many parents are stumped when it comes to dealing with their children's Halloween candy. Saying no to those pouty faces after their eyes sparkle with delight at their large abundance of candy can be very hard. Being sure that your children consume their Halloween candy at a slow pace is extremely important. Letting your children know that their candy is a treat and that they cannot have access to it all day long is something that needs to be established before Halloween. It is also important to remember that it is Trick or TREAT not Trick or FEAST. Here are some ideas about how to ration the candy or use it for other things throughout the year.

- 🎃 Be sure to feed children dinner before trick or treating so candy doesn't become their dinner.
- 🎃 Remind children that they can have two pieces of candy when they get home but that the rest has to get put away.
- 🎃 Don't let the candy just sit where children can have easy access.
- 🎃 Send a piece in their lunch boxes as a special treat or let them choose a piece after dinner.
- 🎃 Bake with it. Allow your children to bake with you. Kids are more willing to let go of their Halloween stash if they are involved and know that it is being used for a yummy dessert.

Here are some examples:

Biscuits filled with tootsie rolls

Cookies with peanut butter cups

Brownies with "fun size" chocolates

Peppermint Patties or Milky Ways mixed into hot chocolate

- 🎃 Have a movie night with homemade ice cream sundaes. Use crushed up candies as a topper
- 🎃 Make your own trail mix by adding pretzels, nuts, raisins, and small pieces of chocolate candies.
- 🎃 Save it for Christmas. Use the candy on a Gingerbread house or put some in their stockings.
- 🎃 Make a Countdown to the Christmas Holiday Calendar. Tape pieces of candy to a December calendar and every day the children can pull off the piece revealing a Holiday themed picture.
- 🎃 Reuse it. Save Halloween candy for a piñata. Make party favors for your children's holiday parties.
- 🎃 Donate the candy. Have children choose a few select pieces of candy they wish to keep (set a number or be prepared to battle) and donate the rest to a women's and children's shelter, food bank, senior center, homeless shelter, etc.
- 🎃 Send it to the troops. There are many organizations that will collect candy for the troops.



Why Dress-Up Play is Important

Whether or not you celebrate Halloween, costumes play a huge role in your child’s development. From pretending to be a firefighter to having a tea party with stuffed animals, the impact on your child’s life is invaluable. You may already know that dress-up play can expand your child’s creativity and imagination but below you might find some things you may not have associated as a benefit of dress-up play.



- ◆ **Aids in developing empathy**—Through pretend play children often “walk in someone else’s shoes” which gives them a chance to see what it feels like to be someone else and get another perspective.
- ◆ **Support self regulation**—Role play helps children know what is expected of them when they take on role. This helps them to regulate their behavior (i.e. Eating in a restaurant, waiting to be served, staying seated during a meal, paying the check, etc.)
- ◆ **Develops language**—during pretend play children learn to use language to explain what they are doing. They learn to ask and answer questions and use the correct words to express their role.
- ◆ **Promotes physical growth and life skills**—Dramatic play helps strengthen both fine and gross motor skills. (i.e. Pretending to dress a baby, putting on and buttoning a costume, sliding boots on, clipping berets in their hair, etc.) *Think of how these pretend actions can be used in your child’s daily life.
- ◆ **Supports communication**—Dramatic play promotes the use of speaking as well as listening. When trying to figure out how to play grocery store, children must talk to each other in order to organize the play. This is also when you might hear your words imitated during a certain role play situation (so be aware of your actions!)
- ◆ **Enhances cognitive skills**—When children make believe, they reenact past experiences by making use of pictures in their memory (abstract thinking). They also build math skills by counting out change as a cashier, setting a table for 6, adding food boxes, etc.
- ◆ **Reduces stress**— Lets face it, play is FUN and is a joyful outlet for children to sit back, relax, and be a kid!

Snapshot of Pretend Play

Children
Learn to...

Explore Imagination	Think in the abstract
Acquire language skills	Build social skills
Problem solve	Understand other’s perspective
Learn essential life skills from adults	Discover leadership skills
Safely explore and practice real life situations	Acquire confidence and a sense of self
Understand the world around them and daily activities	Build concentration and attention skills
Act and story tell in sequential order	Be flexible, cooperate, and compromise



<http://www.fredrogers.org/pro-dev/October-2012.html>

http://www.earlychildhoodnews.com/earlychildhood/article_view.aspx?ArticleID=751

http://www.onestepahead.com/custserv/shop_smarter_article.jsp?pageName=Role_Play



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Tough Times

Volume 17
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Welcome

Life has its ups and downs. The things that we experience throughout life help to shape us as the person we are and continue to be. How we react to those experiences especially during hard times can have a huge impact on us emotionally, physically, and socially. But what happens when you are not the only one experiencing the pain. We as adults tend to get preoccupied with the challenges that come our way that we may stop to forget how this may affect children.



only think about how this hurts and impacts your life but your children's lives as well.

Your response to your children through these terrible experiences can have a huge impact on how it will affect them. Children depend on their parents for not only their basic needs being met but for emotional security. When you are struggling emotionally and being unaware or unresponsive to your children's emotional needs, that security is gone leaving your



Children are equally affected by the struggles they experience directly and indirectly. How they respond to those tough times is determined on them personally and through your actions. Being a parent is hard especially when you yourself may be dealing with divorce, loss of a loved one, or an addiction problem in the family. This is when it is crucial that you not

children alone and helpless. We are hoping that some of the tips and information in this edition of the ACT newsletter will assist you in helping your children cope with tough times.



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Special points of interest:

- Children's overwhelming emotions and behaviors during stressful events
- Breaking the news about divorce: what children worry about
- The Seven Cs of parental substance abuse
- Understanding concepts and beliefs about death at different ages and how to help
- What children need when a parent is incarcerated



Children's Reactions to Stress

Children’s reactions to stressful events are very similar to adults. And just like adults they can struggle with how to deal with the emotions that occur while they are experiencing a difficult situation. When faced with stress children become overwhelmed and flooded with emotions and feelings that they may not understand how to express or handle. This is why we see various behaviors occurring that seem “uncharacteristic” of your child. Below are various reactions children might have in reaction to stressful events.

Emotional Reactions

Reactions may include:

- **Shock** — Not believing the problems are really happening.
- **Physical Symptoms** — Experiencing headaches or stomach problems.
- **Anger** — Focusing on their own needs, or be angry at parents or others who are responding to stress.
- **Guilt** — Worrying that they have contributed to problems in some way.
- **Fear** — Wondering what will happen or fear being alone.
- **Sadness** — Showing decrease in activity and withdrawing.



Symptoms of Stress

- ◇ **Crying and whining** — Children may become upset easily, cry frequently or unexpectedly.
- ◇ **Aggression** — May yell, threaten, hit, kick or throw things, even without reason, due to feeling out of control and angry.
- ◇ **Sleep problems** — Children may be afraid of sleeping alone or being left alone, causing bedtime difficulties and frequent waking during the night due to nightmares.
- ◇ **Fear of being alone** — Children may fear being alone or separated from loved ones, causing school refusal, increased attachment to parents, and anxiety when away from caregivers.
- ◇ **Regressive behaviors** — Children may exhibit behaviors they did while younger, such as thumb sucking, bed wetting, clinginess, etc.
- ◇ **Illness** — May exhibit nausea, vomiting, headaches, stomach problems, fever or other symptoms of physical illness.
- ◇ **Withdrawal or restlessness** — Children may become quiet and socially withdrawn, or the opposite may occur and they become more active and restless than usual.
- ◇ **Feelings of loss** — Children may express extreme reactions of sadness or grief due to loss of a favorite toy, blanket or animal.
- ◇ **Academic Problems and/or loss of focus**— Children may start to have an increase in academic problems. Can become easily distracted and unfocused.

When to Consider Professional Help

Ages 1-5

Any reactions that are prolonged or severe
 No improvements despite extra care from caregiver
 Unusually quiet and detached

Ages 5-11

Any reactions that are prolonged or severe
 Overly anxious, unable to relax
 Unable to leave parents
 Bouts of crying unrelated to any event

Ages 11-14

Any reactions that are prolonged or severe
 Profound depression (continual sadness)
 Preoccupation with death, talks of suicide
 Defiance, acting out, frequent aggression
 Refusal or inability to take care of basic needs
 Drug or alcohol abuse

Children and Divorce

Divorce is a stressful event not only for parents but for their children as well. It can be an overwhelming event for parents flooded with hate, loss, sadness, etc. Parental separation can also have your children feeling that their whole lives are flipped upside down. Many children experience divorce across the globe but it is how you, as parents, deal with the divorce that has an impact on your children's ability to cope and live with the separation and life changes.

Breaking the News

Nine Guidelines for Talking With Kids About Divorce

- If at all possible, have both parents present for the discussion.
- Timing is key. Pick a relaxed time of day, when there are no impending commitments.
- Use simple language, and don't talk on and on. For example: "Your father and I have grown apart. We care about each other, but we don't want to be married anymore."
- Acknowledge that it's a sad situation and that your child is likely to experience big, painful feelings.
- Let kids know that you also feel sad. At the same time, reassure them that you and your ex-partner love them and will keep them safe, whether you're together or not.
- Reassure your children that the divorce is not their fault.
- Give concrete details, if you can, about the new living arrangement. For example: "You'll be living with me every other weekend."
- Avoid blaming the other parent. Even if the break-up was triggered by one partner's affair or a substance abuse problem, this isn't the time to share adult problems with a child.

<http://children.webmd.com/kids-coping-divorce>

Questions You Might Hear

Who will I live with?

Will I move?

Where will each parent live?

Where will we spend holidays?

Will I still get to see my friends?

Where will I go to school?

Will I have to go to a different school?

Can I still play soccer?

Why can't you stay together?

What did I do wrong?

Are you mad at me?

Do you still love me?



What Children Worry About

Children worry:

- ◇ About the parent who is leaving: Where will Dad live? How will Mom manage? Will Dad be safe? Will Mom be comfortable and happy?
- ◇ That they will be forced to take sides by their parents, grandparents, or other family members.
- ◇ That they will have to choose one parent over the other.
- ◇ About how family occasions such as birthdays and holidays will be celebrated.
- ◇ About disrupted routines. Who will take care of them when they're sick? Who will take them to soccer practice or piano lessons? Who will sign their report cards?

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1638.pdf>

Helping Kids Cope with Divorce



Reassurance

- * Assure your children that the divorce was not their fault.
- * Assure your children that both parents love them.
- * Tell your children that it's OK to feel sad because they miss their other parent.

Stability

- * Maintain the individual relationships you have with each of your children. Encourage the other parent to do the same.
- * Stick to a daily routine with your children.
- * Make changes in your children's lives slowly, letting them discuss these changes with you.
- * Continue to parent and discipline like you always have.

Encouragement

- * Encourage your children to play with friends and participate in activities.
- * Encourage your children to continue to pursue their interests.

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1638.pdf>

Support

- * Support your children's need to visit their other parent.
- * Support your children's desire to love both of you. Tell them it's OK.

Security

- * Don't use your children as a counselor or source of emotional support. Seeing parents needy and dependent may make children feel insecure.
- * Remind your children that you and your former spouse will still take care of them.

Trust

- * Show your children that you trust their ability adapt to these changes.

Fairness

- * Do not ask your children, either directly or indirectly, which parent they love more.
- * Be fair in sharing your children's time with their other parent.

Honesty

- * Acknowledge that your children may want you and your former spouse to reunite. Do not encourage or support this wish.
- * Talk with your children honestly about any changes that will affect them before they occur.

Things Parents SHOULD NOT Do

- Don't confide in your children about adult concerns like disagreements with your spouse or money worries.
- Don't "bad mouth" your ex.
- Don't expose your children to your conflicts or frustration.
- Don't quiz your child about the other parent or what goes on at the other parent's house. It's fine to ask general questions about your child's time there, but don't snoop.
- Don't introduce major changes in your child's life if you can help it. Try to keep to your usual family routines and community ties.
- Don't make accusations against your spouse in front of your child.
- Don't force your child to choose sides.
- Don't use your child as a messenger or go-between.
- Don't argue or discuss child support issues in front of your child.
- Don't use your child as a pawn to hurt the other parent.



<http://children.webmd.com/kids-copeing-divorce>

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/divorce/HO00055/>

Impact of Parental Substance Abuse

Effects of Parental Addiction

Although many children of substance abusive parents tend to grow into fairly healthy adults there are still long term effects that stick with them. Some of these behaviors are listed below:

- Children of alcoholics and addicts often feel responsible for their parents' troubles. This can produce feelings of guilt and shame.
- Due to a lack of positive adult role models, children of addicts often struggle to figure out what it means to be a "normal, moral" adult.
- Children may feel an all-encompassing sense of bitterness and anger toward the world, which makes them prone to negativity.
- Children may have missed out on fun experiences of a normal childhood. As a result, they often have difficulty loosening up and enjoying themselves as adults.
- Children are often withdrawn and quiet as a result of years of staying out of their parents' way and keeping to themselves.
- Children develop defense mechanisms for dealing with their parents' emotional inconsistency, causing them to be emotionally reserved adults.
- Children are often insecure and tend to seek approval from others.
- Because households affected by addiction often use lying as a way to avoid conflict and protect family, as adults they are comfortable lying even when it is unnecessary.

<http://www.drugalcoholaddictionrecovery.com/?p=119>

Emotional Impact

- **Guilt.** The child may see himself or herself as the main cause of the substance abuse.
- **Anxiety.** The child may worry constantly about the situation at home.
- **Embarrassment.** Parents may give the child the message that there is a terrible secret at home. The ashamed child does not invite friends home and is afraid to ask anyone for help.
- **Inability to have close relationships.** Because the child has been disappointed by the parent many times, he or she often does not trust others.
- **Confusion.** The parent may suddenly change from being loving to angry, regardless of the child's behavior. No consistency or structure in the child's life
- **Anger.** The child feels anger at the parent for drinking or taking drugs and may be angry at the non-alcoholic parent for lack of support and protection.
- **Depression.** The child feels lonely and helpless to change the situation.

The Seven Cs

Remind Children That They:

Didn't	Cause it
Can't	Cure it
Can't	Control it
Can take better	Care of themselves
By	Communicating feelings
Making healthy	Choices
	Celebrating themselves

http://www.nacoa.org/pdfs/ondcpbro_rev.pdf

Children can have difficulty expressing their emotions. When dealing with the absence of a loved one be it expected or unexpected, children may feel confused, scared, sad, angry, or lost. Helping children through the hard times associated with a loss is where adults can play an important role. When you begin to talk to your children about the death of a loved one be sure to take into account their developmental level as well as being sensitive to their ability to understand the situation. Hopefully some of the tips and information below will help you through the grieving process with your child.

Informing about a Death

- ◆ Keep it simple. Use “died”, not “He is sleeping.”
- ◆ Allow your child to express raw feelings freely or ask questions.
- ◆ Answer questions honestly and simply. Do not go into detail, unless asked.
- ◆ If the death was due to a violent crime, explain how the child will remain safe.
- ◆ If the body is suitable for viewing, allow the child to see your deceased loved one. Tell your child what will be happening in the next few days.
- ◆ Reassure your child that he or she will be cared for and explain the plan.

<http://childgrief.org/documents/InformingofDeath.pdf>



Concepts & Beliefs by Age

Birth-2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No understanding of death • No words for feelings • Aware of the absence • Notices changes in routine and family emotions
3-5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No understanding of permanence of death • May wonder what deceased is doing • Death is perceived as abandonment, temporary, and reversible
6-9 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands death is final • Interested in the biology of death • May believe they caused the death • Feels death to them is punishment • Thinks about life’s milestones without the deceased (graduation, birthdays, etc.)
9-12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same concepts as 6-9 years but also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands the finality of death • Has strong denial response • Fears that death may happen again

<http://childgrief.org/documents/HowtoHelp.pdf>

How to Help

Birth-2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical contact, cuddling and reassurance • Maintain routines • Meet immediate physical needs • Include the child in the mourning process when possible • Be gentle & patient
3-5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow the child to regress • Encourage children to play & have fun • Allow safe ways to express feelings • Give simple & truthful answers to questions • Maintain structure & routines • Let the child cry • Include child in family rituals & mourning
6-12 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as 3-5years but also: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have intentional times together • Allow expression of feelings through verbal & physical outlets • Encourage drawing, reading, playing, art, music, dance, acting, sports • Let child choose how to be involved in the death & mourning • Find peer support for the child • Expect and accept mood swings

<http://childgrief.org/documents/HowtoHelp.pdf>

Incarceration of a Parent

Many children across the United States experience the incarceration of a parent. This can be an extremely difficult situation for children to be in. Unexpected loss of a parent due to incarceration can generate a lot of feelings consistent with grieving. Some children are extremely traumatized by the arrest, some may have not contact with the parent, and others consistently talk about the incarcerated parent or wish to visit regularly. No matter the circumstances, incarceration of a parent has an impact on children in some way. What we need to do as caregivers is watch out for any warning signs of a problem as well as being prepared for common questions asked by children regarding incarceration and be aware of the child's needs.

The Impact

- Children of incarcerated parents mourn the loss of their parent.
- Witnessing the arrest of a parent intensifies the child's loss, sense of helplessness and creates additional trauma.
- Many children of incarcerated parents exhibit symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
- Social stigma causes families to avoid discussing the absence of a parent. Being kept in the dark can influence children emotionally and psychologically and impact the restoration of parent-child relations when the parent in prison is released.
- Literature suggests that parental incarceration can have profound consequences for children including:
 - Feelings of shame, grief, guilt, abandonment, and anger
 - Disconnection from parent
 - Impaired ability to cope with future stress and trauma
 - Negative perceptions of police and other authority figures
 - Social stigma
 - Poor school performance
 - Potential addiction

<http://fcnetwork.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/fact-sheet.pdf>

What Children Need

- Consistent caring adults who understand that, in general, children love their parents, even when they have committed a crime
- People who will not condemn the incarcerated parents as worthless
- People who will understand that children of prisoners feel angry, sad, confused, and worried
- A chance to express these feelings and learn to cope with them
- A chance to learn and practice skills and keep busy with activities
- Faith or affiliation with a community that can provide meaning for the child beyond their own crisis
- People who can help them to maintain contact with their incarcerated parent or parents or explain to them why they cannot maintain contact

<http://www.fcnetwork.org/cpl/CPL203-WhatDoChildrenNeed.pdf>

Common Questions

- Why did Mom or Dad go to jail? What will happen to me?
- Is it my fault that Mommy or Daddy went to jail?
- Will I go to jail too? Where do people in jail live?
- Where do people in jail eat or what kind of food do they eat?
- What do people in jail wear? Do people in jail work?
- How do people in jail spend their time? Can they go outside?
- Are people in jail safe and healthy?
- Can I see or talk to Mom or Dad when they are in jail? Do I have to?

http://www.ifound.org/docs/files/IOC_CaregiversGuide_Dec09.pdf

Tips for Caregivers

- ◆ Talk about feelings with your children
- ◆ Be as honest with children as possible but don't be too detailed
- ◆ Remember to keep your feelings separate from your child
- ◆ Set up family discussion times
- ◆ Talk about the family's choice to tell others or keep it a secret from certain people
- ◆ Encourage children to write or talk to their parent whenever possible
- ◆ Help children to start a picture or story that their parent adds onto, then the child adds on, and so forth mailing it back and forth to and from jail
- ◆ Read and spend special time with your children
- ◆ Get support and help for your children and yourself through friends, counselors, church, etc.



<http://www.fcnetwork.org/cpl/CPL204-TipsFromCaregivers.pdf>



ACT RAISING SAFE KIDS PROGRAM

1 Smithfield Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Phone: 412-350-2770

E-mail: safestart@allehgenycounty.us



Office of Community Services

Safe Start Program



American Psychological
Association

ACT

ACT Raising Safe Kids Program, is an anti-violence program that educates communities and families on how to raise children without violence. The focus is to help parents learn ways to create safe, healthy environments that protect children and youth from violence.

The Allegheny County Safe Start Program

Safe Start is an outreach program which supports and assists families to provide safe, nurturing care for children. Through the use of a family and neighborhood based approach, Safe Start seeks to reduce exposure to and the negative impact of violence by identifying and supporting parents and young children within communities affected by violence.

Find more about Safe Start on the web at:

<http://alleghenycountypa.gov/dhs/safestart.aspx>

Find more about ACT on the web at:

<http://actagainstviolence.apa.org/>

Jumping on the Healthy Train

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Welcome

Eating right and getting more exercise is easier said than done. The easy accessibility and commercial appeal of sweets and junk food cause many to jump on the not so healthy train. The rise in childhood obesity has almost tripled in the past 30 years.¹ Children who are overweight and obese are at risk for developing medical problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure and cholesterol, shortness of breath, sleep apnea, depression, the list goes on. This is why it is extremely important to get your children into healthy habits as early as you can.¹



For children, parents are the key to starting them on a healthy, active path. But with the ease of low cost, pre-packaged meals and appealing television commercials it is extremely hard for parents to start off healthy let alone attempt to change unhealthy behaviors that have already been put in place.

If you are one who has unhealthy

tendencies for yourself and your family, don't worry you are not alone. Much to your children's displeasure, I am sure that there have been times when you have attempted to switch to more healthy food choices or tried to get them more active. Was it successful? The answer is most likely no. Being able to successfully change unhealthy eating behaviors and low activity levels takes the 3 Ps; planning, persistence, and of course lots and lots of patience.

Why not start today? With summer in full swing this is one of the easiest times to start. Summer allows chil-

dren to have the opportunity to get away from electronic media and the confines of their homes and out into the fresh air and out of your hair. The readily available fresh produce gives you more of a chance to find low cost fruits and vegetables while hitting the farmers markets. So let's get out there and get working on changing our unhealthy habits into healthy ones. Enjoy!

Inside this issue:

Building Healthy Habits	2
Getting Active	3
Children's Dietary Health	4
Healthy Eating on a Budget	5
Picky Eaters	6
Family Fun Around Pittsburgh	7

Special Points of Interest:

- Tips and tricks on how to build healthy habits
- Importance of being active
- Ways to encourage activity
- Children's dietary guidelines
- Eating healthy doesn't need to break the bank
- Ways to break picky eating



¹<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/ob>

Building Healthy Habits

We all know the benefits of eating healthy and getting exercise. But knowing how to build a healthy lifestyle for you and your family can be a huge challenge. Children, like many adults, have a tendency to prefer foods and activities they enjoy the most. So where do we begin? Being able to build healthy habits in you and your children takes more than buying healthy food and getting them away from the television, although that is a start. We all know it is hard to change any unhealthy behavior. But once we accept that it will be a challenge and move on we can start working on the first P: Planning. Below are some tips and tricks on how to build healthy habits.

- **Be a good role model** - Children love to imitate, try eating right and getting physically active.



- **Keep things positive and praise** - Children respond better when they are told what they can do rather than what they can't. Celebrate children's successes when trying new foods or making healthy choices.

- **Be realistic** - Take small steps and make changes gradual. Starting out small increases your chances of being successful and motivated.

- **Limit TV, video game and computer time** – When children stay seated for long periods of time they do not engage in physical activities their bodies need, don't use their muscles, and don't burn stored energy or calories¹

- **Encourage physical activities and let them choose** – Children will stick with activities longer when they are able to choose and engage in ones that they enjoy.
- **Get the whole family involved** – Plan for times when everyone can get active together. You are more likely to have fun and be successful in continuing a healthy active lifestyle when you work together.
- **Make dinnertime a family event** - Sitting down to eat not only allows you to have good quality family time but it also causes less chance for children to graze & snack during the day causing them to not want to eat your nutritious dinner.
- **Get kids involved** – Children enjoy being helpers. Have them help select what goes into their lunchbox, plan out a family dinner, prepare dinner, etc.
- **Teach and Learn** - While you are preparing meals and choosing snacks explain to your children the benefits of the nutritious food they are choosing. For older children you can have them read food labels. (If you need information about nutrition values in food check out your local library).
- **Limit portion sizes**– Don't insist that your child finishes and cleans their plates. Remember they have little stomachs and are able to tell you they are full whether it is an infant spitting up after a big bottle or your 5 year old saying his belly is full.

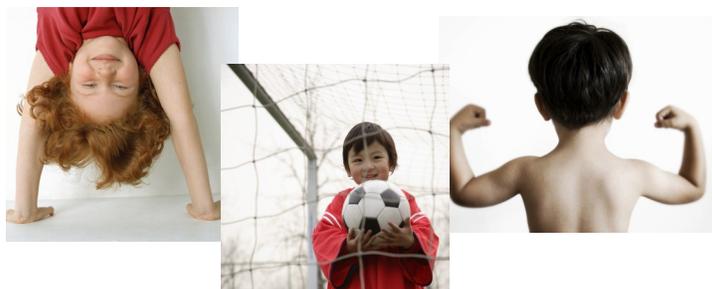


<http://www.billhowe.com/healthy-heart-tips/help-children-develop-healthy-habits>

¹ Act Raising Safe Kids Program– Day 5 <http://actagainstviolence.apa.org/>

GETTING ACTIVE

Being physically active is an extremely important part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Starting children on an active path early in life will improve their chances of staying healthy and active as adults. Understanding and caring about the many benefits of being active are most likely not important to your children so the task of convincing them to exercise might be a challenge. This is why it is important for you as the parent to make exercise feel like play so that you and your family can enjoy this active time rather than feel like it is a chore. But remember you as the parent play an important part as a role model so be sure to find ways that you can be more active every day.



Why is being active important?

Being physically active can:

- * Promote healthy growth and development
- * Build strong bones and muscles
- * Improve balance and develop motor skills
- * Maintain and develop flexibility and balance
- * Help achieve and maintain a healthy weight
- * Improve cardiovascular fitness
- * Help relaxation
- * Improve social skills (helping children interact with peers)
- * Provide opportunities to make friends
- * Improve self-esteem and self-confidence
- * Teach them sportsmanship and understanding of boundaries and rules (when involved in team sports)

[http://www.goodforkids.nsw.gov.au/sitefiles/GoodForKids/documents/ActiveKids\[1\].pdf](http://www.goodforkids.nsw.gov.au/sitefiles/GoodForKids/documents/ActiveKids[1].pdf)

Putting it into Practice

*Children need about 90 minutes of physical activity a day

- Aerobic (running, jumping, biking, dancing, etc.)
- Muscle-strengthening (climbing or other actions that “overload” muscles beyond their normal work)
- Bone-strengthening (jumping, running, hopscotch, etc.)

Be Different: Engage in assorted activities in different locations – in the backyard, at the park, at the pool, etc.

Keep their Attention: Due to children’s varying attention spans try to change the length of each session.

Try New Things: Encourage development in all skills not just the ones that your child is good at.

Have fun!: Keep it light-hearted and remember to be patient, praise, and encourage your child’s efforts.

Make it Achievable: Include activities you know your child can do.
Success->Confidence->Continuing Activities

Let them Choose: Include activities that your child suggests. They will take ownership and be more motivated to engage in the activity.

Work Together: Planning active time will help to strengthen your bond and enjoy your time together. Get up and join in instead of watching them play.

Reduce Non-Active Time: Set limits on the time spent with electronic media and encourage daily quiet reading time.

Go Outside: When possible, encourage your children to play outside and provide them items that encourage outdoor play (bikes, balls, bubbles, etc.).

Help to find fun things to do: Plan active outings with family and friends. Go bowling, swimming, to the park.



*<http://www.babble.com/kid/kids-activities/kids-exercise-guidelines/>

Children's Dietary Health

Being a mother of two young children (a 2 and soon to be 4 year old), I am always concerned that my children are not eating enough nutritious food items. Yes they eat their fruits and sometimes vegetables but it is the whole grains, protein, and vitamins that tend cause me great confusion. Are they getting enough? One of the other challenges for not only me but other parents is knowing how to limit sugar and salt intake and how much daily intake children should have. If you are like me then you might be interested in the dietary guidelines, facts about sugar and salt, and how to limit the intake. Below is some information about children's dietary health.

Limiting Salt & Sugar

Limiting Sugar:

The American Heart Association recommends that sugar intake for children is limited to 3 teaspoons (12 grams) a day. You may think that cutting back on candy and cookies is the solution but you need to be sure to look at food labels. Large amounts of added sugar can be hidden in foods such as bread, canned soups and vegetables, frozen dinners, fast food, etc..

A few pointers:

- ◆ Don't ban sweets entirely. Having a no sweets rule is an invitation for cravings and overindulging when given the chance.
- ◆ Give recipes a makeover. Many recipes taste just as good with less sugar.
- ◆ Avoid sugary drinks. One 12-oz soda has about 10 teaspoons of sugar in it, more than three times the daily recommendation.
- ◆ Cut down on processed foods, such as white bread, which cause blood sugar to go up and down, and can leave kids tired and sapped of energy.
- ◆ Create your own popsicles and frozen treats. Freeze 100% fruit juice in an ice-cube tray with plastic spoons as popsicle handles. Or try fruit, then topping with a little chocolate sauce or whipped cream.

Limiting Salt:

One teaspoon of salt contains about 2,300 mg of sodium. Some guidelines for the maximum salt intake for children:

If a child is...	They should eat less than...
1 to 3 years old	1,500 milligrams a day
4 to 8 years old	1,900 milligrams a day
9 to 13 years old	2,200 milligrams a day

- ◆ Avoid processed, packaged, restaurant, and fast food. Processed foods are loaded with or contain hidden sodium.
- ◆ Opt for fresh or frozen vegetables instead of canned vegetables.
- ◆ Cut back on salty snacks such as potato chips, nuts, and pretzels.
- ◆ Choose low-salt or reduced-sodium products.

Food Guide Pyramid for Young Children A Daily Guide for 2- to 8-Year-Olds



Grains

Make half your grains whole
Look for the word "whole" in front of the grain name on the list of ingredients



Vegetables

Vary your vegetables
Eat more dark vegetables
Eat more orange vegetables
Eat more dry beans and peas



Fruits

Focus on and eat a variety of fruits
Choose fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruit
Go easy on fruit juices



Oils

Make most of your fat sources from fish, nuts, & vegetable oils
Limit solid fats like butter, stick margarine, shortening, & lard



Milk

Get your calcium-rich foods
Go low-fat or fat-free
If you don't or can't consume milk, choose lactose-free products or other calcium sources



Meat & Beans

Go lean on protein
Choose low-fat or lean meats and poultry
Bake it, broil it, or grill it
Vary your sources with more fish, beans, peas, nuts, & seeds

Healthy Eating on a Budget



Eating healthy doesn't need to break the bank. There are many ways that you can save money when shopping for groceries and make life easier for you so that you are not grabbing those pre-packaged quick not so healthy meals. There are three main things you need to do before stepping out of your house and into the grocery store; Plan, Purchase, Prepare.

- **Plan** before you shop so you can avoid impulse buying of food that is not completely necessary.
- **Purchase** items at the best price and clip some coupons.
- **Prepare** meals that will stretch your food budget

PLAN

- ◇ Plan meals and snacks for the week according to an established budget.
- ◇ Find quick and easy recipes online, prepare them ahead of time, double or triple the recipe so you can freeze it for a later time.
- ◇ Include meals that will "stretch" expensive food items (stews, casseroles, stir-fried dishes, etc.).
- ◇ Make a grocery list.
- ◇ Check for sales and coupons in the local paper or online and consider discount stores like Bottom Dollar and Aldi's.
- ◇ Be sure to use your loyalty cards (Giant eagle card, Shop n Save card, etc.)

PURCHASE

- ◇ Buy groceries when you are not hungry and rushed.
- ◇ Stick to the grocery list and stay out of the aisles that don't contain those items
- ◇ Buy store or generic brands if cheaper.
- ◇ Purchase some items in bulk or as family packs which usually cost less.
- ◇ Choose fresh fruits and vegetables in season; if you buy canned vegetables choose ones with less salt and fruits in natural juices
- ◇ Good, healthy, low-cost items available all year include:
 - ◇ Protein — beans (garbanzo, black, cannellini)
 - ◇ Vegetables — carrots, greens, potatoes
 - ◇ Fruit — apples, bananas

PREPARE

- ◇ When able prepare meals in advance; pre-cook on days you have time.
- ◇ Double or triple up on recipes and freeze meal-sized containers of soups and casseroles for later use.
- ◇ Try a few meatless meals by substituting with beans and peas or try "no-cook" meals like salads.
- ◇ Incorporate leftovers into a subsequent meal.
- ◇ Be creative with a fruit or vegetable and use it in different ways



<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/downloads/PlanPurchasePrepare.pdf>

<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-groups/downloads/TenTips/DGTipsheet16EatingBetterOnABudget.pdf>

Picky Eaters



Picky eating children are extremely common and is something that I am sure most of you have dealt with. Some of you might be picky eaters yourself. This may be a time to look back and see if your parents tried some of the items listed below or tended to give in to your pickiness. Being sure that your child is nourished with nutritious food is something that has been a theme throughout this newsletter. But when your child completely refuses to try new things and continues to eat chicken nuggets and mac and cheese, you can be driven to your wits end. With how frustrating it is to deal with a child that is picky, we hope that the tips and tricks provided can help you to try so that you do possibly break the picky eating cycle and bring the stress levels down at meal times.

Respect your child's appetite

— or lack of one

Remember that your child's stomach is small. Children will eat when they are hungry. Don't force a meal or snack on them - this will just cause power struggles.

Be patient with new foods

Your child might need repeated exposure to a new food before he or she takes the first bite. Encourage your child by talking about a food's color, shape, aroma and texture — not whether it tastes good which is a matter of opinion

Stick to the routine

Serve meals and snacks at roughly the same times every day. Offer water in-between meals and serve juice or milk with the food. Juice and milk can be very filling and may spoil their appetite.

Be creative

Try to sneak various vegetables into favorite foods like mac and cheese, tomato sauce, or put fruit slices on cereal, etc.

*The Sneaky Chef has wonderful books and a website www.thesneakychef.com with familiar recipes with a healthy yet tasty twist.

Avoid bribing please!

"If you eat your vegetables, you can have dessert later." Think about the message that sentence is sending your child. Dessert= reward, fun, happy, success. Vegetables= not fun, requires a condition in order to eat them

Don't be a short-order cook

Preparing a separate meal for your child after he or she rejects the original meal might promote picky eating. Encourage your child to stay at the table for the designated mealtime — even if he or she doesn't eat. It's good for kids to see their parents and siblings eating together and eating healthy foods

Make it fun

Try serving veggies and fruits with favorite dips or using cutouts to make fun shapes in their favorite cheese or sandwich

Minimize distractions

To help keep your child focused on eating be sure to turn off the television and other electronic gadgets. This will also allow you to have quality family time and discussion.

Take it slow

Introduce one new food at a time and with a preferred food. Even offering one bite is sufficient enough. If your child refuses, be patient and stick with it. Keep bringing that vegetable back to mealtime every several days so your child can get used to seeing and smelling it.



Family Fun Around Pittsburgh

Cinema in the Parks – TONS of free outdoor movies in Pittsburgh's local parks this summer.

http://pittsburgh.about.com/od/movies/p/cinema_park.htm

Pittsburgh Neighborhood Community Festivals – Various neighborhoods in Pittsburgh hold FREE festivals throughout the 2012 Summer and Fall season. <http://www.livingpittsburgh.com/2012/05/201-pittsburgh-neighborhood-community-festivals>

African Arts in the Park – Free cultural event at Point State Park this August 11-12.

Three Rivers Regatta - This is the largest inland regatta event in the United States, and ALL activities and performances are free to attend. June 30-July 4th.

Wings Over Pittsburgh – Celebrate patriotism, and enjoy this spectacular show for free, oh- and parking is free too.

South Side Works Exposed – This annual event has free live music, **I Made It! Market**, food vendors & lots of fun activities. July 13th-July 15th.

Pittsburgh Spray Parks – Cool down this summer with these free city spray parks - no swimming required!

Troy Hill Spray Park

Next to the ball field on Goettman Street – Troy Hill

Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Vanucci Playground

End of the 1200 block of Orangetown Ave. — Beechview

Pittsburgh, PA 15216

Roving Art Cart - Kiddos take can take advantage of free arts & crafts... in various locations around the 'Burgh.

Date: June 19 – August 10, 2012 **Time:** Tuesday-Friday, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

http://www.city.pittsburgh.pa.us/parks/roving_art_cart.htm#schedule (Check out website for locations & information)

Kids Days at Schenley Plaza – Enjoy FREE rides on the PNC Carousel plus balloon animals, face-painting, puppets, and more.

<http://www.pittsburghparks.org/plaza-public-programs> (Check out website for dates and times)

Library Tuesdays at Market Square - So it's not free, but for 50 cents to a buck a book, it's close enough. May 15, 2012 and running every Tuesday through October 9, the Downtown branch of the Carnegie Library will set up a mobile branch in Market Square to sell used paperback and hard cover books from 11 am until 2 pm.

KidsPlay at Market Square – Free stories, crafts, treats, and special guests for kiddos at Market Square in Downtown Pittsburgh. Takes place every Tuesday, 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., Now through August 21.

Learn-to-Swim Camp – Free swimming lessons at select City of Pittsburgh pools this summer.

Location: Session 1: Ammon, Bloomfield & Ormsby Pools.

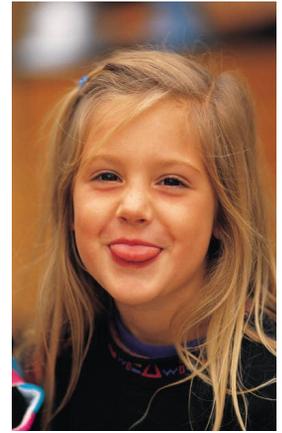
Session 2: Homewood & Sue Murray Pools.

Date: Session 1: June 25 through July 6.

Session 2: July 9 through July 20. Monday through Friday

Time: 10-10:45 am, or 11-11:45 am

Keystone State Park's DISCOVERE Nature Programs held on Thursdays and Fridays May-August 9th. This low-cost program is for children 3-13 years old. Broken down into age groups (3-5, 6-8, 9-13) children will learn about nature and can earn an award for attending three or more programs.



ACT RAISING SAFE KIDS PROGRAM

1 Smithfield Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Phone: 412-350-2770

E-mail: safestart@alleghenycounty.us



Office of Community Services
Safe Start Program



American Psychological
Association

ACT

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Find more about Safe Start on the web at:

<http://alleghenycountypa.gov/dhs/safestart.aspx>

Find more about ACT on the web at:

<http://actagainstviolence.apa.org/>

SCREEN-FREE WEEK

Volume: 15
Date: April 2012

Welcome

Life without screens and technology is something everyone struggles to imagine. Many parents can just hear it now, "We are so bored" as there is an increase in sibling battles and fights.

parts of a child's life—family. However your family is constructed, screens battle for attention with family time and can challenge family bonds.

But time without screens really isn't that difficult to achieve. Screen-Free Week tries to help families realize they too can be screen free by trying to "turn off televisions, computers, and video games for seven days and turn on the world around them."



Screen-Free Week was established to combat the negative impact screens have on children such as; poor school performance, childhood obesity, deficits in reading, and problems with attention, just to name a few. Despite all of these concerns, excessive screen time prevents children from engaging in creative play which is the foundation of learning, creativity, problem solving, and has a huge impact on their overall development.

And let's not forget how excessive screen time decreases one of most important

I am sure that you are skeptical of some of the things you have read regarding the impact of screens and whether you and your family can actually follow a week without screens. But I challenge you to join the thousands of schools, libraries, and families nationwide who will turn off televisions, computers, and video games for seven days and give children and families a chance to read, play, think, create, be more physically active, and to spend more time together.

Inside this issue:

Why Choose to Be Screen-Free?	2
Ways to Reduce Screen Time	3
Celebrate Screen-Free Week	4 & 5
10 Steps to Screen-Proof Your Home	6

Special points of interest:

- Less Screen Time = Positive Growth
- Being aware of how to reduce screen time
- Activity ideas to use during Screen-Free Week and beyond
- Continuing to be Screen-Free by Screen Proofing

screen-free week
April 30-May 6



Less Screen Time Opens Doors to

Combating the Problem for Screen-Free Week and Beyond:

- Books! Books! And more books!
- Visit the library or your local book store.
- Eat screen-free meals together and talk!
- Play word games.
- Tell stories.
- Draw pictures and tell stories about them.
- Encourage young children to dictate stories.
- Read poems out loud or make up poems.
- Create songs and music.

Less Screen Time = Less Marketing to Children = Less Family Stress

On average, kids see more than 25,000 commercials each year on television. They are also exposed to other screen-based marketing, including:

- **Brand licensing:** Media characters appear as toys, as food, on clothing or on packaging designed to entice children to want a particular product.*
- **Embedded advertising:** Products are often interwoven into media programs as props or part of a plot.
- **Advergaming:** Games built around brands so that kids spend lots of time “interacting” with products like candy and other junk food.
- **Behavioral targeting:** Companies track children’s online behavior in order to better understand what products to market to them.

Less Screen Time = More Time for Creative & Active Play Time = More Fun, More Learning & Better Health

Children play creatively to:

Have fun, express their fantasies and feelings, gain a sense of competence, and make meaning of their experience.

Hands-on, creative play promotes:

Intellectual growth, critical thinking, constructive problem solving skills through chances to explore, and self-control.

Screen-Free Week is a chance for children and families to experience the joys of play:

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------|
| Play with art supplies | Play with words | |
| Play with music | Play cards and board games | |
| Play with blocks | Play alone | |
| Play indoors | Play outdoors | |
| Play tag | Play sports | Play together |

And when Screen-Free Week is over...keep on playing!

Less Screen Time = Less Materialistic Values = More Life Satisfaction & More Concern for the Environment

Screen-Free Week is a time to step outside of the commercially-driven media culture.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Do a craft | Learn to knit/sew | Enjoy nature |
| Go hiking | Garden | Have a picnic |
| Take a nature walk | Bake cookies | |
| Make a cake from scratch | Engage in spring cleaning | |
| Have a yard sale | Clean up around your neighborhood | |
| Have a pot luck dinner with neighbors. | | |
| Donate things you don't use anymore to people who need them. | | |

WAYS TO REDUCE SCREEN TIME

It is hard to imagine your family's lives without screens. Knowing that completely eliminating screens from your lives is for the most part not going to happen is fine. Being aware of how to reduce screen time can help to have a lasting positive impact on you and your family. Below are some ways you can reduce screen time.

1. Make sure your television set doesn't become the center of attention in your home. Try putting the TV behind a screen or closed doors.
2. Keep the TV off during dinner. Meals are a great time for talking.
3. Make some days of the week TV-free days.
4. Avoid using TV as a baby-sitter.
5. Don't use TV as a reward or punishment.
6. Move around to your favorite music instead of watching TV.
7. Cancel your cable subscription. Use the money saved for a fun family outing.
8. Hide the remote control.
9. Plan ahead for TV viewing.
10. Remove the TV set from your child's bedroom.



Active Bodies Active Minds

http://depts.washington.edu/tvhealth/waabam_materials/top_10_ways.pdf

www.waabam.org

Celebrate Screen-Free Week

Celebrate Screen-Free Week by trying some of the items listed on the calendar below. This calendar is geared toward **pre-school children**, but not limited to that. You can even prepare you and your family for a week without screens by doing one activity a day or follow the calendar to continue your quest of being Screen-Free. By adding one activity a day you will increase family time and decrease screen time. Even if it is only for 30 minutes. But remember, starting **April 30th through May 6th** try to be completely Screen-Free! **GOOD LUCK!!!**

May 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>29 TAKE A WALK What colors do you see? Blue sky, Green leaves How many flowers can you count?</p>	<p>30 WARM DAY FUN Blow bubbles on the porch. Use a large bowl, liquid dish soap, and straws. (Teach child how to blow the bubbles not inhale).</p>	<p>1 GO GREEN Do a room-by-room Scavenger Hunt for items you can recycle or use for fun projects.</p>	<p>2 KITCHEN DUTY Let the kids help to prepare a meal. That includes, setting the table, and cleaning up. *See sample recipe below..</p>	<p>3 KID'S CHOICE Set out three activities and allow your child to make his/her choice of what you will play /make together.</p>	<p>4 TEACH-SAFETY Teach The Charlie-Check First Rule. Check First before going anywhere with anyone. Talk about LURING.</p>	<p>5 LIBRARY TRIP Check for story day at your local library. Spend the morning choosing books . About the Zoo, The Circus, etc.</p>
<p>6 CREATE A STORY Paper, markers or crayons & imagination. Make a story about YOU, your family or about your favorite things.</p>	<p>7 MAKE AN INSTRUMENT— Shakers. Toilet paper rolls, dried beans, tape ends closed. Glue on colored paper.</p>	<p>8 READ TOGETHER— Spend the evening reading your favorite children's stories and enjoying your favorite snacks. Healthy snacks of course!</p>	<p>9 LET'S PRETEND— Imagine you are at the zoo. Become the animals. How does the elephant walk, sound, eat? Etc.</p>	<p>10 PLAY DOUGH Together make a batch of dough *(See below). Use cookie cutters, plastic spoons, rolling pin or small can. Keep in fridge.</p>	<p>11 PRACTICE FIRE SAFETY WHAT TO DO? On fire! Stop, Drop, and Roll the flames out. Where to meet outdoors.</p>	<p>12 TAKE A TRIP TO THE LOCAL FIRE STATION... Meet fire fighters, see the engines, look at the equipment.</p>
<p>13 HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY— This is mom's special day. Help clean, make a special picture, help cook breakfast.</p>	<p>14 DRESS UP DAY Beads, earrings, hats, scarfs, fancy duds, etc. and use your imagination.</p>	<p>15 IN HOME PICNIC— Kids can help. Tablecloth on the floor, dinner: sandwiches, fruit, juice boxes. Talk about your day on blankets.</p>	<p>16 LET'S PRETEND— Imagine you are at the CIRCUS What do you see? What is there to do? What can YOU do at the zoo?</p>	<p>17 FINGER PAINT Dish liquid, a drop or 2 of food coloring and a smooth washable table top and your good to go.</p>	<p>18 EMERGENCY -911— What is an emergency and what community workers come when 911 is called?</p>	<p>19 LIBRARY BOOKS ARE DUE. Go and choose 4 more. -Ride the Bus and see new sights. Listen to different music.</p>
<p>20 ZOO TRIP Take a pad & draw different animals. Count how many you see. Make sounds.</p>	<p>21 MAKE AN INSTRUMENT— Bells, yarn & paper plates make good castanets. Punch holes in plates attach bells.</p>	<p>22 FAMILY FUN NIGHT— Play a board game, musical chairs, make a new board game. Or cards. GO FISH!</p>	<p>23 USE YOUR IMAGINATION I was on a train to the North Pole and on the way I saw ...</p>	<p>24 MUSIC DAY Play your instruments to music. Pots and spoons make good drums. Two metal tops good cymbals.</p>	<p>25 KIND AND CARING is the way to be.- Perform a Random act of kindness. Make cards for tomorrow.>>></p>	<p>26 DAY OF CARING Use paper with stickers, glue on parts of old cards and take to a senior or local nursing home.</p>
<p>27 FUNNY FACES Decorate a large or small brown paper grocery bag with tissue paper, buttons, makers, beans, etc. MAKE A MASK.</p>	<p>28 ON STAGE Everyone gets to perform: say a nursery rhyme, sing a song, do a magic trick, play an instrument.</p>	<p>29 EMOTIONS Cut faces from magazine pictures and talk about emotions. Ask: What makes you happy, sad, mad, etc.</p>	<p>30 USE YOUR IMAGINATION When I grow up! I'm going to be.... Talk about each profession.</p>	<p>31 LIBRARY BOOKS AND TAPES ARE DUE THIS SATURDAY.</p>	<p>*Biscuit Pizza Recipe Roll out frozen biscuits, add pizza sauce, shredded cheese, and any other toppings you like. Cook following biscuit directions Brown in oven</p>	<p>*Play Dough Recipe 2 cups flour, 1 cup table salt, 1/4 c. cooking oil 1/4 c. water or enough cold water to make mixture hold together.</p>

Celebrate Screen-Free Week

Here are some more things to try out. These items are geared more towards elementary aged children, but preschoolers can also try with adult help.

May 2012

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>29 Safety Sun-days Teach the Safety Kids, Rule: Check-first Before you go Anywhere With Anyone</p>	<p>30 MAKE A GAME Make a bowling or toss across game from water bottles (weight & tape tops) & bracelets or canning sealers and an old ball.</p>	<p>1 Design a Poster for Screen Free Week</p>	<p>2 Friend's Day Read a Book with one or two friends. Discuss the story and what you liked or didn't like. Which is your favorite character? Why?</p>	<p>3 Family Fun Night Play table games; Monopoly, Charades, etc.</p>	<p>4 Library Trip Choose books about occupations you are considering.</p>	<p>5 Trip to the Museum -Visit the Museum of Natural History.</p>
<p>6 FIRE SAFETY— Practice Fire Safety— Find an outdoor meeting place-Stop, Drop & Roll; front & back exits.</p>	<p>7 TOGETHER CRAFT MAKE A FAMILY COLLAGE USING OLD MAGAZINES</p>	<p>8 Clean up your room and donate clothes & toys that you've outgrown.</p>	<p>9 Friend's Day Scavenger Hunt for items to make a craft project, i.e. a Robot, a village, a superhero... let your project be a surprise.</p>	<p>10 Family History Night Interview family members about your family history. Record their answers.</p>	<p>11 Create a Story Write a story with YOU as the main character... your likes, dislikes, etc.</p>	<p>12 SCIENCE ANY-ONE? Visit the Science Museum Play with the hands on exhibits. Too busy? Make a science exhibit at home. *See Below.</p>
<p>13 HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY -This is mom's special day. Thank her for the things she does for you. Do something special for her today.</p>	<p>14 TALK, TALK, Talk Call a relative to see how they are ? Call a friend that you haven't talked to in awhile. Talk to your PARENTS about their day.</p>	<p>15 Community Awareness— List your local agencies : Libraries, Police Stations, Churches, Centers, Schools. How do they help?</p>	<p>16 Friend's Day Bring your Craft item to your Friend's meeting and talk about your project. What is it? How does it work?</p>	<p>17 Family Food Night All family members contribute to making the menu, choosing the items and preparing the food.</p>	<p>18 Back to the Library— Your Library Books Are Due. Check out a word book and learn a new word and it's meaning for the next 2 weeks.</p>	<p>19 Rainy Day MUD Instant chocolate pudding, Use package directions. Add ant (Raisins), worms (Gummy candy) & Oreos Dirt—Oreo cookie crumbs.</p>
<p>20 Random Act of Kindness Day— Show Kindness. Do something special for someone else.</p>	<p>21 FAMILY WALK— Walk to, or at, a park; to an ice cream store, walk around a mall or wherever you feel comfortable.</p>	<p>22 Dress Up Dinner Invite a friend for dinner. Set the table in your best. China. Dress in costumes.</p>	<p>23 Friend's Day Let's Dream- With paper and markers , write or draw your dreams. What do you wish for? What do they look like?</p>	<p>24 Family Fun Night That's Entertainment! Everyone performs: read a poem, sing a song, create a play, etc.</p>	<p>25 CRAFT- Make a friendship or memory bracelet. Cardboard, colored paper and glue.</p>	<p>26 Take a trip to the Pittsburgh Zoo. How many animals do you see? Can you draw any of them?</p>
<p>27 Emergency Situations. What is an emergency? Role play. Who will come when 911 is called? What information should be known?</p>	<p>28 Spring Is Here Clean up your yard. Plant some seeds. Help a neighbor or get friends to clean up your school yard.</p>	<p>29 Almost There Pick your favorite activity of the month and do it again.</p>	<p>30 Friend's Day Neighborhood Clean-up Day. Gloves, bags and Adults if you can. Clean up your community.</p>	<p>31 YOU MADE IT! Celebrate Screen Free Month. Cupcakes all around! Make them. and decorate like Spring BUGS. *See suggestion.</p>	<p>Cupcakes *Box instructions. Glob soft icing into ball add raisins for eyes, cinnamon hearts for mouth & licorice twists for ears. Use your imagination.</p>	<p>*Science: A large Balloon, starch & newspaper make a paper mache' world globe. Starch= Adults only.- 1 c. flour, 1/2 c. water cooked on the stove.</p>

10 Steps to Screen-Proof Your Home

1. Rearrange the furniture. Turn your living room and family room into places for interaction, games and conversation, not mini-theaters. Put the screens away, cover them, or at least make them less central to the room and your life. Make sure that the furniture is facing away from the screen, so if you want to watch, you have to make an effort.
2. Make children's bedrooms—and your own— screen-free.
3. After Screen-Free Week, set consistent limits about children's screen time. Here are some categories of commitment that have worked for lots of other people:



- No more than 2 hours per day of recreational screens 7 days per week. This includes all screens. Use of television, computer and video games has to be planned beforehand, since time can pass very quickly. –Or–
- No more than 2 hours per day on weekends of recreational screens and only an hour per day during the work/school week. –Or–
- No more than 2 hours per day on weekends and no recreational screens during the school/work week.

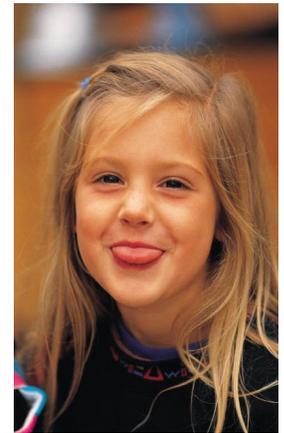
The above categories are not set in stone; the key is to find the balance that works for you and your family. And remember, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for babies and toddlers under age 2.

4. Set limits on your own screen time. The example you set is as important as your rules.
5. Keep the remote in a drawer.
6. Institute screen-free (and phone-free) meals. Talk, laugh, tell stories, and enjoy your food.
7. Try not to rely on screens as a babysitter.
8. Involve children in household chores, projects, and meal preparation.
9. Carve out a block of screen-free time for the whole family every day.
10. Designate at least one day each week as Family Screen-Free Day. Have fun with any or all of the activities—or think up your own!



Information Taken From Screen-Free Week Organizers Kit.

Screen-Free Week Website: www.screenfree.org



ACT RAISING SAFE KIDS PROGRAM

1 Smithfield Street
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Office of Community Services

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Find more about ACT on the web at:

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CATCH THE KINDNESS BUG

Volume: 14
Date: February 2012

Welcome

Treating others how you would want to be treated is a saying that is widely used by parents all over the world. Whether you have heard it a million times or have found yourself saying it to someone else, this quote has powerful meanings. As adults we understand this meaning pretty clearly even if we at times find ourselves struggling to follow it. Children on the other hand may not understand this quote quite as clearly. This is why we as parents often need to give a further explanation right after using it. Such as, "if you want people to be nice/respect you then you need to be nice/respect others."



Helping our children appropriately socialize with others around them is extremely important to their overall well being. This is why the topics for the February edition of the ACT newsletter revolves around how we can help foster kindness in our children not only by teaching but in how we evolve as a parent. Creating a kind and caring world starts with one child at a time. Teach Carefully and Start Early! Enjoy!

Inside this issue:

Nurturing Kindness Ways to Promote Kindness	2
Raising a Caring Child	3
Keys to Kind Parenting	4
Setting Limits	5

Special points of interest:

- Kindness is one of the most important basic virtues.
- There are things you can do to foster empathy in your children and help them to be kind and caring
- Using kind parenting is a start.
- Limits help to guide and teach our children, while letting them know what is expected of them.



Nurturing Kindness in Children

As a parent we would like our children to have characteristics that allow them to be capable, successful, well rounded individuals. Characteristics like having good self esteem, being confident, and communicating effectively are just some of the traits parents want their children to acquire. When looking at these traits one might see that for children to achieve these characteristics they must be able to appropriately interact and socialize with others. One of the most basic but important virtues we can help to cultivate in our children is kindness. Helping our children act in kind ways will not only benefit others around them but themselves as well. They will feel good about who they are as person while enjoying the many kind interactions they will be engaged in.

Ways to Promote Kindness

- * Teach empathy
Help your children put themselves in others shoes and encourage them to look at how the other person is feeling
- * Teach manners
Help your children understand that manners are ways of showing respect and acknowledging someone else's efforts. For ex. Saying thank you shows that they are grateful for what the other person has given them.
- * Be kind to your children
Show them that you love them and respect their opinions and feelings. Be sure to model good manners and other kind gestures. Remember they are always watching!
- * Set limits with your children
Being kind doesn't mean always being nice and letting them get away with everything. Limits help children understand what is expected of them and allows them to make choices (whether good or bad) based on the rules that are set in place.
- * Reinforce acts of kindness
Be sure to praise your children and tell others about their kindness. Children love to hear your excitement about their appropriate behaviors.
- * Encourage your children to be kind to the world and be "Earth Friendly"
Volunteer in the community, recycle, help to clean up a local playground, walk dogs at a local animal shelter, etc.



Raising a Caring Child

Developing empathy is an important cornerstone to becoming more kind to others. Understanding how someone else is feeling helps you to get a better understanding of how your actions may have produced that feeling in someone else. Helping your children put themselves in others shoes allows them to see a situation from that persons eyes. This in turn will give your children the opportunity to change their inappropriate behaviors while continuing more desirable kind behaviors. Below are some ways that you can foster empathy in your children and help them to be kind and caring.

Label the feeling

Putting a name to your child's behavior helps them to recognize the emotion that resulted from their actions

Ex. "It made your sister really sad when you pushed her. What can you do to make her feel better?"

Praise empathetic behaviors

Be sure to be as detailed as possible when you are praising acts of kindness

Ex. It was so kind of you to share your cookie with Jason. Look at the big smile on his face. He must be so happy.

Point out other's behaviors

Help you child to notice when others are acting kindly. If some one holds the door for you be sure to say thanks then label the action, "It was so nice of that man to hold the door for us."

This helps to reinforce to your child how people's actions can affect others emotionally.



Teach verbal and non-verbal cues

Help your child understand what others tones of voice mean emotionally. Point out others body and facial expressions when they are exhibiting emotions.

You can do this by watching people when out in the community or even playing a game where your child has to guess your emotion based on body and tone of voice.

Encourage your child to talk about their feelings—Share yours too

When your child shouts "I hate this puzzle" and stomps off, respond by saying "I see that you are feeling angry, can I help you with the puzzle?"

Be sure to share your feelings too. "I feel very proud when you share your toys with others"; or share something unrelated to your child "I get so annoyed when drivers cut me off"

Teach rules of politeness

Something as basic as saying "please" and "thank you" can help your children to begin to show caring and respect to others.

Don't use anger to control your child

Even though many behaviors your children do may cause you to become extremely angry try to remember that when you yell and blame, children have a tendency to shut down.

Rather than getting angry and screaming when your child hits his brother, take a step back and using a calm but firm voice try saying

"I know that you are mad but you really hurt your brother when you hit him and made me very sad. Please tell him you are sorry"

Keys to Kind Parenting



Getting our children to use kindness in their daily interactions starts with kind parenting. It can be extremely difficult for children to understand why they need to be kind if their parent isn't modeling kind behaviors or is using a parenting style that at times can be extremely harsh and uncaring. Below are some keys to parenting that can help children gain a better understanding of kindness.

◆ Nurture your child's self esteem

Praise, love, and respect are just some ways of cultivating your child's self esteem. Letting your child accomplish things themselves then being their cheerleader helps them to feel capable and proud of themselves.

◆ Catch your kids being good

When looking back on a typical day with your children you may find that you tend to criticize more often than complimenting. Don't worry you are not alone. Being aware of this will allow you to start to work harder to catch your children doing something appropriate versus reprimanding them for acting inappropriately.

◆ Set limits and be consistent with parenting

The ultimate goal of discipline is to help your children choose acceptable behaviors and learn how to control themselves. Limits help children be more responsible for their actions and begin to choose wisely.

◆ Make time for you kids

Finding time to spend with your children can be extremely difficult. With jobs, grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, etc. spitting up your time can be trying. Wanting your undivided attention is something that many kids look forward to. When they aren't getting the attention they crave, inappropriate behaviors tend to increase. So creating some special time for your children can be rewarding to you and your children.



◆ Make communication a priority

Be sure to make your expectations clear and age appropriate. If problems arise, describe them to your child, express your feelings, allow your child to express their feelings, and work through the problem together.

◆ Be flexible and willing to adjust your parenting style

Children are always changing. A discipline technique that worked yesterday may not work today. Because of this it is extremely important to be flexible and know your children's personality. Be prepared to change your style. Your child's forever changing moods and personality is what makes parenting challenging but fun.

◆ Show your unconditional love

Just like we as adults make mistakes, children make mistakes as well. You can let your children know when they have let you down but be sure to tell them that it is "ok" and you still love them.

◆ Know your own needs and limitations as a parent

Nobody is perfect. Understand that you will make mistakes but try to focus on your strengths.



Setting Limits

Disciplining our children whether they are 2 or 16 years of age can be extremely frustrating. Just when you think you have it right new challenges arise. Setting limits is an important aspect of effective discipline. Limits help to guide and teach our children, while letting them know what is expected of them. Having limits set in place also help you as a parent stay consistent in your disciplining. Being sure that limits are age appropriate and reasonable are keys to limit setting success.

Benefits

Limits:

- May protect children and others from physical harm. Ex: "Don't run in the street, you could get hit by a car."
- Keep your child from having to make decisions they may not be mentally capable of. Ex: "Bedtime is at 8:00."
- Help your child to understand what is acceptable social behavior. Ex: "You cannot scream in the library."
- May help to protect from property harm. Ex: "You can only kick the ball when we are outside"

Successful

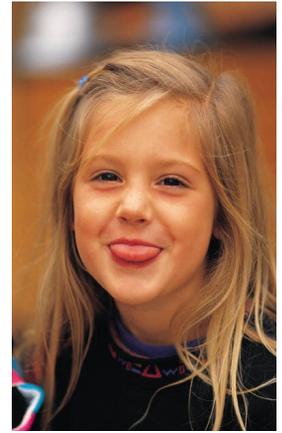
Limit Setting

Limits:

- That are too severe may cause children to become angry and try to sneak behind your back to avoid the limit
- That are too easy may cause children to be confused and uncertain. Ex. Allowing a 12 year old to stay out till 10p.m. without checking in can cause them to become fearful due to not being able to handle the situation.
- Should be set for important things. Remember to choose your battles.
- Should be age appropriate. Ex. Requiring that your 2 year old put their dinner dishes in the dish washer is too advanced for their abilities.
- Must be clear and concise. Ex. If you tell a child to kick the ball outside they may start kicking it down the street into a neighbors yard. You may want to try: "You can kick the ball outside in our backyard."
- Must be enforced . If you have a rule about no snacks before dinner then you need to stick with it, even if there is a tantrum.

Tips for Effective Limit Setting

- **State rules clearly**
- **Use as few words as possible:** Arguing, trying to reason with your child, making warnings, or giving second chances will cause confusion with the rule
- **Comment on the unacceptable behavior.** Never make comparisons or comment on the child's character. Ex; Instead of "Why can't you be like your older brother? He knows how to take care of his toys." Try "Please be careful with your toys they might break."
- **Use logical consequences.** These are consequences that make sense to a child and helps to teach them a lesson. Ex. "If you don't clean up your cars then you will not be allowed to play with them for the rest of the night."
- **Consequences need to be applied immediately** after the rule being broken. Saying that your child can't go to a birthday party on the weekend when they broke a rule on Monday doesn't make sense. When time passes the consequence has less influential power over the behavior
- **Don't assert a limit that you are not prepared to enforce.** When you have a rule in place and don't enforce it, you are sending mixed messages to your children.
- **Don't state a consequence that cannot be reasonably implemented:** Ex. "I am going to turn this car around and you will not go to the beach."
- **Consequences should be followed by a fresh start.** When a child has followed through with the consequences be sure to forgive them for the rule that was broken. Don't resent your child or hold onto the stressful moment.
- **Allow for mistakes.** Limits and rules can be extremely difficult for children to follow especially when you go from having no rules to having limits set in place. This can be very frustrating. **STICK WITH IT!!**



ACT RAISING SAFE KIDS PROGRAM

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Office of Community Services

Safe Start Program



American Psychological
Association

ACT

ACT Raising Safe Kids Programs, is an anti-violence program that educates communities and families on how to raise children without violence. The focus is to help parents learn ways to create safe, healthy environments that protect children and youth from violence.

The Allegheny County Safe Start Program

Safe Start is an outreach program which supports and assists families to provide safe, nurturing care for children. Through the use of a family and neighborhood based approach, Safe Start seeks to reduce exposure to and the negative impact of violence by identifying and supporting parents and young children within communities affected by violence.

Find more about Safe Start on the web at:

<http://alleghenycountypa.gov/dhs/safestart.aspx>

Find more about ACT on the web at:

<http://actagainstviolence.apa.org/>