

CATCH THE KINDNESS BUG

Volume: 24
Date: February 2014

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 revolve 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!

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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.
- Assertiveness lets others know your wants and needs respectfully

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 refined, 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 person's 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 your child to notice when others are acting kindly. If someone 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 you 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 your kids

Finding time to spend with your children can be extremely difficult. With jobs, grocery shopping, cooking, cleaning, etc. splitting 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 while working on your weaknesses. Take time out for yourself and choose your battles.



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 helps 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"

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!!**

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.

Raising Respectful, Assertive Children

Teaching children to be assertive in everyday situations will help them to stand up for themselves when dealing with bullying or other peer conflicts. Assertiveness lets others know your wants and needs respectfully while aggression is using force and imposing your ideas and needs on others. For example, an aggressive child who wants a peer's toys would rip it out of their hand while an assertive child would ask for a turn. Looking at these two examples, which child would you want your child to imitate? Below are some tips to helping your child be respectful of others by learning and practicing assertive skills.

Teach children to **RESPOND** not **REACT**

- ❖ Reacting is when we act based on our feelings
 - Tommy is being pushed by Billy in the lunchroom. Tommy angrily takes his lunch and dumps it over Billy's head. Both boys are sent to detention.
- ❖ Responding is when take time (even for a second) to think about the situation and what is the best action
 - Tommy is being pushed by Billy in the lunchroom. Tommy screams "STOP" at Billy and draws the attention of the teachers. Billy is sent to detention and Tommy tells the teachers what happened.

Practice and use **"I"** statements

- ❖ I statements are using the word "I" to clearly and confidently communicate your needs and feelings
 - I feel angry when..., I don't like when..., I think it is hurtful when you... I don't want to play with you when..

The Power **"NO!"**

- ❖ This helps children to learn to feel comfortable saying no forcefully and loudly without having to give an explanation and also shows that they strongly disagree with pressures or bullying against them and others
 - **Say NO!, Get away, Tell someone**

Encourage your child to **think for themselves.**

- Allow them to speak their minds even if you don't agree. Be sure not to overtake the conversation
- Ask open ended questions. This helps your child understand that there is no one right answer and that you value their opinions.
- Having an opinion and understanding that not everyone thinks the same will allow children to better handle conflicts and value others opinions.

Give your child Choices

- Giving children choices allows them to feel like they have some power and control over what they do
- Allowing children to think for themselves will help them to be confident with their choices and be a leader not a follower

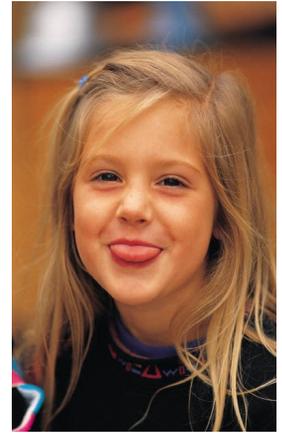
Other tips::

- When children are dealing with tough situations, try to allow them to handle the situation themselves.
- Help your child practice using an effective tone of voice when trying to be assertive
 - Use a firm non threatening tone of voice while maintaining eye contact

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

<http://www.safetykids.org/>

<http://www.pediatricservices.com/parents/pc-56.htm>



ACT RAISING SAFE KIDS PROGRAM

1 Smithfield St.

Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Phone: 412-350-2770

E-mail: safestart@alleghenycounty.us



Office of Community Services

Safe Start Program

Editor: Heather Arentz

Early Childhood Behavioral Health Specialist

Safe Start Program

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/>

ENJOY LIFE
BE SCREEN-FREE

Volume: 25
Date: April 2014

Welcome

Children are exposed to and engaged in different types of media daily, sometimes for hours on end. Whether they are watching television, surfing the internet, using iPods and smartphones, or playing video games; media is a huge part of their lives. Because of its entertainment factor and accessibility, media has the power to influence our children both positively and negatively. Unfortunately media's influence leans more towards the negative side.

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.

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

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.



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Special points of interest:

- Excessive screen time puts young children at risk
- Little ways one can reduce screen time
- Useful things you can do to have a successful screen-free week
- Steps to screen-proof you home
- Fun activities for you and your children
- What 15 minutes can do for you and your child

Impact of Screen Time on Children

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no screen time for children under 2 and less than 2 hours per day for older children.



Excessive Screen Time Puts Young Children at Risk

- ➔ Direct exposure to TV and overall household viewing are associated with increased early childhood aggression.
- ➔ Screen time can be habit-forming: the more time children engage with screens, the harder time they have turning them off as older children.
- ➔ The more time preschool children and babies spend with screens, the less time they spend interacting with their parents.
- ➔ Toddler screen time is also associated with problems in later childhood, including lower math and school achievement, and reduced physical activity.
- ➔ The more time preschool children spend with screens, the less time they spend engaged in creative, imaginative play.
- ➔ Time spent with screens is associated with:
 - ➔ Childhood obesity
 - ➔ Sleep disturbances
 - ➔ Attention span issues
- ➔ Children with 2 or more hours of daily screen time are more likely to have increased psychological difficulties, including hyperactivity, emotional and behavioral problems, as well as difficulties socializing with peers.
- ➔ Adolescents with a television and/or computer in their bedroom spend more time watching TV and playing with the computer and report less physical activity, less healthy dietary habits, worse school performance, and fewer family meals.
- ➔ Children with a television in their bedroom are more likely to be overweight





The Family Guide to a Great Screen Free Week

- ➔ Decide what “screen-free” means for your family. Does it include email and text messaging? It is all based on how you perceive “screen –free.”
- ➔ Make plans together for the week. Make sure that everyone (who can) has specific responsibility and equal vote on key decisions
- ➔ Set a calendar of activities and events for the week
 - ➔ One goal of Screen-Free Week is to allow kids unstructured time to generate their own screen-free play but you’ll want to make sure that you are not left twiddling your thumbs and being bored. Also seeing what is coming up for the week can help keep kids interested and excited.
- ➔ Reclaim family meal as a time for talking together and/or sharing stories.
- ➔ Plan your meals ahead of time and include the entire family and the preparation.
- ➔ Include friends, relatives, and neighbors in activities you are doing even if for just one day or evening.
- ➔ At the end of the week, talk about how you feel, what all of you have accomplished, and what aspects of the week you would like to keep going.

Remember this is something that you can do throughout the year even if it is just for a few hours a day. That is a few hours less that you as well as your children are being exposed to media and more time you can spend together.



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, so use of television, computer and video games has to be planned beforehand, since time can pass very quickly.
- No more than 2 hours per day on weekends of recreational screens and only an hour per day during the work/ school week.
- 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. (For more, see Family Meals: Let's Bring Them Back in this section.)
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 (see, for example, the Family Green Hour in this section).
10. Designate at least one day each week as Family Screen-Free Day. Have fun with any or all of the activities described in Section Five—or think up your own!



Information Taken From Screen-Free Week Organizers Kit.

Screen-Free Week Website: www.screenfree.org



Play is extremely important to development because it helps contribute to the mental, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children and youth. Through play, children get a chance to be creative and interact with the world around them. Parent and child playtime offers a wonderful opportunity for parents to connect with their children and give them undivided attention.

While engaging in play, children will use their imagination to imitate adult behaviors. They do so by pretending and manipulating various objects in their environment. When parents play with their children they add to the benefits of play by making their children feel important and valued.

During this special play time plan to engage in specific activities geared to your child's age and developmental skills.

While engaging in these activities let your child take the lead. For example, if you and your child are making a snowman craft allow the child to place the eyes, nose, and mouth where they want (the craft doesn't have to be perfect). Allowing a child to decide what to play helps them to feel important and give them a sense that their choice matters to you. While you are playing focus on your child, don't let your mind wander to a confrontation at work, the dirty dishes, or what to make for dinner. Your child will realize that they don't have your complete attention and the time you spend will not be as enriching.

Playtime is a time for you to relax and engage with your child. Also, playtime helps you to better understand your child's desires, abilities, and developmental stage. But most importantly, parent and child playtime can build and strengthen the relationship between you and your child. Below are some tips to help you better understand your child's development, how to respond, and ways to enhance playtime.



Tips for Parents

0-18 Months

- Play with your child every day. Make fun playtime part of your time together.
- Provide toys that are designed for your child's age and are safe.
- Talk frequently to your child, use simple direct words, and give positive instructions (Say "Let's play with the rattle" instead of "Don't play with the fork!")
- Read simple books to your child every day; those with familiar objects to stimulate language and communication.
- Create and maintain daily routines to help your baby feel secure and build trust.

3-6 Years

- Teach your children to use words when they are angry, sad. ("You are sad because your toy broke")
- Ask your children to show angry, mad, sad, happy, surprised feeling using their faces and tell you what makes people feel that way
- Ask your children to draw a picture of their feelings & talk about them
- Give your children chances to accomplish something: organizing toys and books, helping with cooking dinner; giving their own ending to a story in a book
- Help your children cope with fantasy fear by pointing out the difference between reality and fantasy
- Remember to show your love and care even though you disapprove of their behavior

18-36 Months

- It is hard for children of this age to share things and take turns. .
- Children of this age are always busy and often cannot do the same thing for long periods of time.
- When children fight over the same toy, teach positive and nonviolent solutions:
 - Provide another toy or remove the toy; or redirect children's attention to something else or take them to another place.
- Always help your child resolve conflicts by using words to express what is happening ("You want to play with your sister's car? Ask her 'Can I play with the car'")
- Adults should try to save saying NO to situations involving safety and emotional wellbeing. In other situations, give

6-8 Years

- Help your children to develop a sense of competence: give them opportunities to master some skills like cooking, building models, making crafts,
- Reinforce the understanding of right and wrong and consequences
- Reinforce prosocial skills such as sharing, empathy, cooperation by asking a child to do things like help care for a baby
- Provide opportunities for your child to develop an understanding of rules by playing games that rely on chance rather than on skills
- Teach by speaking out loud to yourself (so your child will hear) about a problem and how to resolve it.
- Demonstrate that behaviors and actions have consequences for everybody involved in a situation: If you do that, this will happen or when you do this, then you will get this

Spending quality time with your children doesn't need to cost money, be elaborate, or take up your whole evening. You can be amazed at what 15 minutes of your time can mean to your children. For the most part, kids want your attention and could care less about the frills or items that come with your interaction. Let's imagine that you have been running errands all day, cleaning the house, and now getting ready to make dinner. Or you have worked hard all day and your kids run in from getting off the bus. What typically happens? Most of the time, chaos! I know in my house after a long day of not being with my kiddos I can't even walk into the door before I hear "Mommy I want..." If you are in my boat and I am sure a lot of you reading this are, it can be very frustrating and exhausting. Some of you like myself may feel overwhelmed with all your other commitments and at the same time at a loss of how to fit quality time with your kids. By just adding 15 minutes of undivided attention to each of your children can make a huge difference in their lives and yours. Let's look at some of the benefits listed below, how you can add special play time in your routine, and some websites that have lists of activities you can participate in for 15 minutes.

What is Special Play Time and How do I Make it Work?

- It is a 15-minute block of uninterrupted playtime between ONE parent and ONE child.
- It should be scheduled ahead of time so parent and child can plan around it.
- It should take place at least once per week (or more frequently if possible).
- It should be set up so that there are no distractions or interruptions such as TV, computer, or phone calls for either parent or child during this time.
- If there are other children in the family, they need to be taken care of by someone else.

Let your child take the lead and direct the play activities; follow your child's lead.



The Power of 15 minutes

Engaging in this special play tells your child that...

**YOU ARE IMPORTANT TO ME.
I AM INTERESTED IN WHAT YOU ARE SAYING AND DOING.
I HEAR AND RESPECT WHAT YOU ARE FEELING AND SAYING.
I ENJOY BEING WITH YOU.**



Websites to check out!

<http://www.truceteachers.org/guides.htm>

<http://www.commercialfreechildhood.org/resource/screen-free>

http://www.ribena.co.uk/download/Ribena_Plus_12%20minute_manual.pdf

http://www.ahaparenting.com/_blog/Parenting_Blog/post/10_Habits_To_Stay_Connected_To_Your_Child/

These wonderful tips and messages were found on..

<http://www.kathyugster.com/articles/article001.htm>

The various child activities below are some suggestions of things that you can do with your child not only during screen free week but on a regular basis. These adapted activities come from A Guide to Children’s Activities which is used in conjunction with the Parents Raising Safe Kids ACT 8-Week Parent Program. The guide offers suggestions for activities that are fun and developmentally appropriate for children 3 years and older. Some of the goals of the activities are to help children develop a sense of self, understand and communicate feelings, deal with angry feelings, practice being helpful and kind, as well as understand the influence of media on them.

Family Photo Poster or Book

- * Collect pictures of family and friends doing different things together and put them on a sheet of poster board or photo album.
- * Have your children decorate the poster board and place the pictures.
- * Talk about the memories the pictures had for you and allow your children to share as well.
- * Hang the poster on the wall or have the album accessible for your children. This will allow them to show off to friends and family or just reminisce about a good memory.

Kindness Coupon Book

- * Talk with your child about how they can give to others things that don’t cost money (ie. A hug, help setting the table, cleaning up toys, giving a toy, sharing a treat, reading someone a book, etc.)
- * Have children draw pictures, find pictures in a magazine, or write words of various kind actions. An example shown below:
- * Have your children decorate an envelope to hold each coupon. Blank index cards are great to use for this project.



Help

- * For this activity have enough paper napkins for yourself and your children.
- * Place the napkins on your heads and move around the room.
- * If the napkin falls off you have to freeze and politely ask for help. You are unfrozen when another person picks up the napkin and puts it back.
- * Be sure to remind children to say ‘Thank you’ if they forget.
- * This activity not only helps young children practice using their words but can also help build on their manners (“Please” and “Thank You”)

Swimming the Sea (The Peaceful Classroom)

Working on Cooperation

- * Lay a blanket or throw rug in the center of the room and tell your children that you are all going to pretend it is an island.
- * The challenge is that everyone needs to get to the island and that no parts of their body can touch the water once they are on the island.
- * Designate some of you to be “swimmers” and “non-swimmers”
- * Go to one side of the room and let everyone know they have to swim to the island. For those who are swimmers they have to figure out how to help the non-swimmers get to the island
- * Be sure to provide blow up tubes, water wings, card board boxes (boats), etc.

Safe & Unsafe Scavenger hunt

- * Place cards with safe and unsafe situations or objects around the house. Direct children to pick up safe things and to run from unsafe cards and tell an adult.

Submitted by: Heather Arenth

Early Childhood Behavioral Health Specialist

Safe Start Program Allegheny Co. DHS



One Family’s Testimonial

We are now doing Screen Free Week along with Holy Week as a fasting thing. My kids have been absolutely wonderful. A different board game each night. Hanna helped me make some Lenten food this week and showed interest in cooking. She even did the darned dishes while I was making some food one night. I’m not sure why we wouldn’t give up ‘screens’ for good!!!

And the saga continues. We went back to screens yesterday. Not once did I hear, “Can I play on your phone?” And we decided as a family that Saturday would be “Screen Free” from now on. I hope it lasts!



ACT RAISING SAFE KIDS PROGRAM

1 Smithfield St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Phone: 412-350-2770
E-mail: safestart@alleghenycounty.us



Office of Community Services

Safe Start Program

Editor: Heather Arentz

Early Childhood Behavioral Health Specialist
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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.

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Find more about Safe Start on the web at:

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

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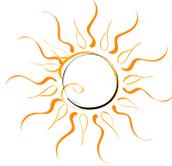
<http://actagainstviolence.apa.org/>

SAFE SUMMER FUN!!!

Volume: 26
Date: June 2014

Welcome

The countdown to summer has finally ended. Throughout the school year, many children nationwide have been dreaming of the time when they can have fun in the summer sun and weeks without school and homework. Now that school has finally ended and the pools have opened children are out and about ready to let loose and enjoy being a child.



For parents, summer can be a time of frustration and worry. With summer comes worries such as who is going to care for the children while I am at work, are they going to be supervised at their friends pool, or is that playground free of hazards.

But summer doesn't have to be stressful. Knowing what wonderful activities are going on around your area, finding some fun and exciting activities to engage in with your children can help make summer less stressful and more fun.

Also, being knowledgeable about the potential dangers children can encounter during the summer months can help you as a parent to take pleasure in your summer as well. First aid preparedness can also relieve your worries when injuries occur. Remember, a safe summer is a more enjoyable one for both you and your children.

Inside this issue:

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Playground Safety Tips	3
Smart Bicycling	4
Cross Smart, Cross Safe	5
Home Alone: Is your child ready?	6
Being Prepared When Emergencies Arise	7

Special points of interest:

- Helping prevent pool related accidents
- Checking the safety of playgrounds
- Stressing the importance of bicycle safety
- Crossing the street smartly
- Having an enjoyable and safe summer
- Tips to help you decide if your children are able to be left home alone.
- Keeping a well stocked first aid kit

Safe Swimming is Fun Swimming!

Pools can be an enjoyable way to keep cool in the summer. Throughout the nation, thousands of children splash around in pools in their neighborhoods, back yards, and community. Although pools are fun for children they can also be deadly. To help prevent pool related accidents parents need to be more knowledgeable about the many hazards that come with owning pools as well as allowing children to swim in pools.

Pool Safety Tips



- * **ALWAYS SUPERVISE CHILDREN** playing in or near water, even if they know how to swim.
- * **DESIGNATE A RESPONSIBLE ADULT** to watch children while they are swimming or playing in or around water. Supervisors of children should provide “touch supervision”, be close enough to reach the child at all times. Adults should not be involved in any other distracting activity (such as reading, playing cards, talking on the phone, etc).
- * **DO NOT** let young children in the pool without an adult.
- * **DO NOT** let safety products like inner tubes or water wings give you a false sense of protection.
- * **CHILDPROOF YOUR POOL** by enclosing it in a fence with a self-closing & self-latching gate. Never prop open the gate.
- * **KEEP RESCUE EQUIPMENT BY THE POOL.** Be sure a telephone is poolside with emergency numbers .
- * **LEARN CPR** (cardiopulmonary resuscitation). Be sure that other caretakers know CPR as well.
- * **IF A CHILD IS MISSING CHECK POOL FIRST.** Seconds count in preventing death or disability.
- * **CLEAR THE POOL AND DECK OF TOYS.** Remove toys from the pool and surrounding area immediately after use. The presence of toys may encourage children to enter the pool area unsupervised or lean over the pool & potentially fall in.

Sources: <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Water-Safety/waterinjuries-factsheet.htm> and Highlands Family Support Center

9 out of 10 children who drown each year are unsupervised.

Source: centers for Disease Control (CDC)

The majority of drownings and near-drownings occur in residential swimming pools and in open water sites.

Source: centers for Disease Control (CDC)

Nationally, drowning is the fourth leading cause of death for youngsters under five.

Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

On average there are 10 drowning accidents every day.

Source: centers for Disease Control (CDC)



More than 1 in 4 fatal drowning accidents involve children ages 14 and younger.

Source: centers for Disease Control (CDC)



Playgrounds can be Fun but also Dangerous



Falls are the leading cause of unintentional injury for children. Children ages 14 and under account for one-third of all fall-related visits to hospitals.

Source: Oregon Health and Science University

Playground Safety Tips

More than 200,000 children ages 14 and younger are treated at emergency rooms each year for playground-related injuries.

Source: centers for Disease Control (CDC)

- * CHECK THE SAFETY of your neighborhood and home playgrounds
- * CHECK FOR SHARP POINTS or edges in equipment.
- * LOOK OUT FOR TRIPPING HAZARDS such as exposed concrete footings, tree stumps, and rocks.
- * MAKE SURE elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, have guardrails to prevent falls.
- * NEVER attach—or allow children to attach—ropes, jump ropes, clotheslines, or pet leashes to play equipment; children can strangle on these.

* DON'T LEAVE CHILDREN UNSUPERVISED at the playground, in the yard, or neighborhood

→ SUPERVISE your children at all times

If you have to leave the area:

Take the child(ren) with you or

Be sure a responsible adult is present and aware they are in charge of your children

Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

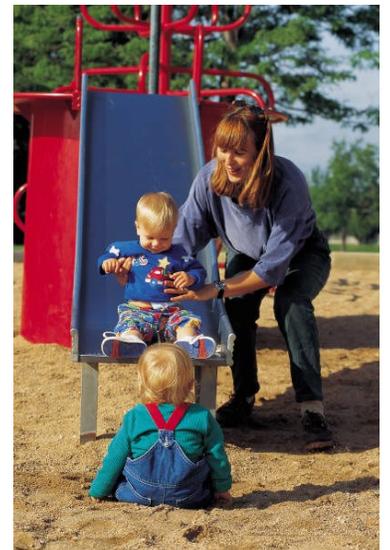
(<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/327.html>) (<http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/pg1.pdf>)

Most injuries occur when a child falls from the equipment onto the ground. Many backyard play sets are placed on dirt or grass-surfaces that do not adequately protect children when they fall.

Source: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Unintentional and accidental injuries are the leading cause of death in children and young adults.

Source: centers for Disease Control (CDC)



Help Children be Smart, Safe Bicyclers

Many children enjoy riding bikes. Unfortunately, for a lot of children bike safety is one that is not stressed enough. This is especially true when children are riding bikes around their neighborhoods and homes. Like their parents, children may feel that there is no point to wearing a helmet or safety pads because they are only riding in the driveway or only riding a few doors up to a friend's house. But bicycle injuries and deaths can occur any time you ride a bike. These injuries can also occur while using skateboards, scooters, skates, etc. So it is extremely important to lead by example and stress the importance of being a smart, safe rider especially at an early age.

More than 130 children die every year in bicycle accidents and approximately 270,000 are treated in emergency rooms for injuries.

Source: Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford

Most child and adolescent bicycle crashes occur between May and August and between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.

Source: Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford



Nearly 50 percent of children 14 and under hospitalized for bicycle-related injuries are diagnosed with a brain injury.

Source: Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford

Bicycle helmets can reduce the risk of a head injury by 85 percent and brain injury by 88 percent.

Source: Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford

Only 15 to 25 percent of children ages 14 and under use bicycle helmets

Source: Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford

The majority of child and adolescent bicycle-related fatalities occur on minor roads, typically within one mile of the home.

Source: Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford

Riding Bikes Safely

- * **ALWAYS** have children **WEAR A BIKE HELMET**. Helmet should be comfortable and snug, but not too tight.
- * **CYCLING** should be **RESTRICTED TO SIDEWALKS** and paths until a child is age 10.
- * **CHILDREN SHOULD NOT RIDE BIKES IN THE DARK**, in the fog or in other low-visibility conditions.
- * **RIDE** your bike **IN A WAY CARS CAN SEE YOU**. Wear bright colored clothes, have a bell to ring, reflectors on the tires, etc.
- * **BUY A BIKE THAT IS THE RIGHT SIZE** for the child, not one he will grow into. When sitting on the seat, the child's feet should touch the ground.
- * **ADULT SUPERVISION** of child cyclists **IS ESSENTIAL** until you are sure a child has good traffic skills and judgment.

Source: Safety Kids USA www.safekidsclarkcounty.org



Cross Smart, Cross Safe



Every day millions of people cross the streets. Although most make it across the streets safely, this activity can also be extremely dangerous. There are many factors one has to take into account when crossing the streets. Cars, light changes, signs, etc. impact our decisions when crossing the street. Pedestrians have to be wise with their eyes and observe their surroundings before crossing busy streets. This too is extremely important for children. Until children reach a certain age, parents and care takers are in charge of helping children cross streets safely. Here are some important tips to help keep your children safe around busy streets.

- * **NEVER ALLOW CHILDREN UNDER 10** to cross streets alone. Adult supervision is essential until you are sure a child has good traffic skills and judgment.
- * **TEACH YOUR CHILD NEVER TO RUN** into a street for a ball, a pet or any other reason.
- * **MAKE SURE** your child plays in safe places away from motor vehicles, such as yards, parks and playgrounds.
- * **NEVER LET** children play in the street.
- * **BE A SAFE PEDESTIRAN** around cars. Watch for cars that are turning or backing up.
- * **WALK ON SIDEWALKS OR PATHS.** If there are no sidewalks, walk facing traffic as far to the left as possible.
- * **TEACH CHILDREN HOW TO CROSS STREETS SAFELY.**
 - > Cross at a corner, using traffic signals and crosswalks.
 - > Try to make eye contact with drivers before crossing in front of them, don't assume they see you because you see them
 - > Look left, right and left again when crossing, and keep looking as you cross.
 - > Walk, don.t run, across the street.

Source: Safety Kids USA (<http://www.safekidsclarkcounty.org/safety-tips/Ped%20tips.pdf>)

Other than in the street, driveways, parking lots and on sidewalks are where young children ages 0-2 years suffer the highest number of injuries as pedestrians.

Source: Safety Kids USA



83 percent of child pedestrian deaths occur at non-intersection locations.

Source: Safety Kids USA

Approximately 50 children are injured or killed every week as a result of vehicles backing up.

Source: Safety Kids USA



Children sustain more than 39,000 nonfatal pedestrian injuries each year.

Source: Safety Kids USA

Home Alone

Is your child ready?

Will they be safe? Do they know what to do?

I have been asked at many parents groups..“At what age can I leave my children at home alone?” This is a valid question to ask when considering whether children are prepared to be home alone. But what I have told many parents is that age is not the only thing to consider. Children’s maturity level and capability to react to certain situations varies. Because of this, many parents are at a loss. Produced by the Allegheny County Department of Human Services in cooperation with the CYF Advisory Board these tips and ideas can help parents make safe, thoughtful decisions about leaving their children home alone.

Is your child physically and mentally able to care for him or herself?

Children staying home alone MUST be able to:

- 👍 Get home from school safely
- 👍 Use the key to get in the door and lock it when they are inside
- 👍 Say their name, phone number and address in case of an emergency
- 👍 Use the phone – if no landline is in the house, a cell phone must be available
- 👍 Call a neighbor and ask for help if needed
- 👍 Know how and when to call 911
- 👍 Follow simple house rules
- 👍 Know how to do simple first aid
- 👍 Safely get or make a cold snack

Does your child obey rules and make good decisions?

Be clear about the “DO NOT” rules for safety, including:

- 👉 Do NOT open the door to anyone
- 👉 Do NOT tell anyone that you are home alone
- 👉 Do NOT touch matches or a lighter – for any reason
- 👉 Do NOT use the stove or toaster oven

How does your child respond to unfamiliar or stressful situations?

Practice what your child should do if:

- ⇒ They cannot reach you by phone
- ⇒ There is a knock at the door
- ⇒ The phone rings
- ⇒ A friend wants to come over
- ⇒ The popcorn in the microwave catches fire
- ⇒ They lose their keys

If your child is ready to be home alone and passes thumbs up, and you feel that your child is ready to be home alone, here are some safety tips to consider:

Prepare your child for the responsibility of being home alone:

- ★ Make a few simple rules about what you expect
- ★ List the rules on paper and post
- ★ Write important phone numbers on a list so your child knows what to do:
 - ★ Your phone number
 - ★ The numbers of trusted neighbors or others who can help
 - ★ 911 – In an emergency your child might not remember it
- ★ Have a cell phone available if there is no landline
- ★ Talk about what is an emergency and what to do
- ★ Practice when to call 911 and what to say
- ★ Outline what to do in case of a fire

If you need help paying for child care:

- * Ask if your employer has workplace incentives – like Family Savings Account programs or inexpensive childcare options
- * See if a local child care center has scholarships or subsidies for after-school care
- * Call Child Care Information Services of Allegheny County at 412-261-2273 to see if you qualify for subsidized child care

If your child is not ready to be home alone

- Here are some places you can look for help:
- ◆ Family, friends or neighbors you can trust or Other parents who also need child care and can take turns with you
 - ◆ After-school care at your child’s school or After-school programs at your place of worship, YWCA, YMCA or the Boys and Girls Club in your area
 - ◆ Child care centers with after-school programs or Qualified people in your area who care for children after school in their home
 - ◆ Dial 2-1-1 or visit pa211sw.org for possible resources

Does your child feel comfortable or fearful about being home alone?

Being Prepared When Emergencies Arise

Keeping a well-stocked first-aid kit is a great way to keep your family safe not only during the summer months but all year round. It is important to keep first aid kits in your house as well as in a car. Having supplies gathered ahead of time and keeping first aid kits easily accessible will help you handle an emergency at a moment's notice. Accessibility to the kit should be out of children's reach but easy for adults to grab during an emergency.

You can purchase a first aid kits at Target, Wal-Mart, drugstores, a local Red Cross office, or make one of your own. If you decide to make one, choose containers for your kits that are roomy, durable, easy to carry, and simple to open. Below are items that are important to have in a first aid kit.

First Aid Kit

Include the following items in your kit and check store bought kits for:

- First-aid manual
- Sterile gauze pads of different sizes
- Adhesive tape
- Adhesive bandages in several sizes
- Elastic bandage
- A splint
- Antiseptic wipes
- Soap
- Antibiotic ointment
- Antiseptic solution (like hydrogen peroxide)
- Extra prescription medications (if the family is going on vacation)
- Acetaminophen and ibuprofen
- Hydrocortisone cream (1%)
- Tweezers
- Sharp scissors
- Safety pins
- Disposable instant cold packs
- Calamine lotion
- Alcohol wipes or ethyl alcohol
- Thermometer
- Tooth preservation kit
- Plastic non-latex gloves (at least 2 pairs)
- Flashlight and extra batteries
- A blanket (stored nearby)
- Mouthpiece for administering CPR (can be obtained from your local Red Cross)
- Your list of emergency phone numbers



You can download a copy of the Red Cross First Aid/CPR/AED manual on line at the link below.

https://www.naz.edu/campus-safety/documents/CPR-AED-First%20Aid-Participants_Manual.pdf



ACT RAISING SAFE KIDS PROGRAM

1 Smithfield St.
 Pittsburgh, PA 15222
 Phone: 412-350-2770
 E-mail: safestart@allegHENYcounty.us



Office of Community Services
Safe Start Program

Editor: Heather Arenth
 Early Childhood Behavioral Health Specialist
 Safe Start Program

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Raising Safe Kids

GEARING UP FOR SCHOOL

Volume: 27
Date: August 2014

Welcome

No matter how old we are or whether it is something we look forward to or dread, change and transitions are stressful and challenging. One of the biggest transitions children make every year is going from summer fun back to school. As a parent you may find this time extremely overwhelming. Especially when preparing preschool aged children for their first "school" experience or getting your child ready for the first day of kindergarten.

Let's not forget that although a child has been through school, that too can play a factor into how much resistance you might experience going back. Some children love going back to school while others never want summer to end. Some things that we as parents do to help children adjust to the school routine is organizing things the night before to alleviate morning chaos, es-

establishing a homework routine, creating calendars, etc.

Remember, not only are your children transitioning back to the school routine but also adjusting to new teachers. Like your children, you too are making a transition to new teachers as well. Ultimately, adjusting to a new teacher will take time for all. Parents play a key role in creating and fostering a positive relationship with those new teachers. This will allow you and your children to have a more enjoyable school year and show your child that you are interested in their learning. Throughout this newsletter, you will find information on many things from preparing preschoolers to supporting your child emotionally while learning. We hope that you find some value in the information provided and use it to help create a smooth transition from summer to school. Good luck and have a wonderful school year!

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Preparing your child for Preschool	2
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Creating a Positive Parent-Teacher Relationship	5
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Special points of interest:

- Preparing children for school at all levels
- Helping children be smart safe school bus riders
- Creating and fostering parent teacher relationships.
- Positively working through parent teacher disagreements
- Supporting Learning and Reading.

Preparing Your Child for Preschool

Use pretend play to help your child know what to expect. Take turns being the parent, child and teacher. Act out common daily routines, such as saying good-bye reading stories, having Circle Time, etc.

Create a countdown calendar. Make a chart that counts down the days until school starts.

Listen to your child's worries. Although it's tempting to quickly reassure your child and move on, it's important to let your child know that his worries have been heard.

Create a special goodbye ritual. Whether it's a silly handshake or a special hug and kiss routine, find something unique to do as you say your goodbyes.

Spend a little extra time on the bedtime routine the night before preschool. Let your child pick out his outfit the night before, pack up the backpack, etc. Also give your child a little more special attention.



Get the sleep schedule on track. During the summer a lot of children's sleep schedules fall off track. Gradually get them back on schedule, moving up their bedtime by 15-30 minutes every few days.

Pack a piece of home. If your child has a comfort item like a blanket or stuffed animal, pack it in his backpack so he'll have a bit of familiarity if he gets homesick.

Celebrate at pick-up. At the end of the school day, make sure you are not late. Be extremely excited and be sure to tell your child how proud you are.

Make a game out of practicing self-help skills like. For example, you might want to have a "race" with your child to see how quickly she can put her coat on.

Read books about preschool

Notice nonverbal messages. Your child may "act out" his worry by clinging, becoming withdrawn, or by being more aggressive, or regressing in acquired skills (ex. Wetting pants).

Do a dry run. Find out if you can visit the classroom with your child the week before school starts. Show them where you'll be doing drop-off, where their cubby is, etc..

Keep it short and sweet. One of the biggest mistakes parents make is to turn school drop-off into the long goodbye. Give them one last hug, take a deep breath, trust the teachers and walk away.

Kindergarten Readiness

Sending your child to kindergarten can be an exciting yet scary time for both you and your child. Many people believe that children are ready for kindergarten when they have mastered or have knowledge of their letters, numbers, colors, shapes, etc. These concepts are very important for children to learn before they enter kindergarten, but they are not the only things children need to be prepared for kindergarten. The kindergarten readiness tips listed below can help to ease the anxiety and allow the transition to kindergarten to go more smoothly. Some of the tips above can help out your soon to be kindergartener as well.

- 📖 Allow your child to become familiar with the school by driving or taking a walk past it.
- 📖 Make a plan to take a tour of the school even if your child visited on registration day.
- 📖 Bring up school in conversations at home as much as possible. Talk about the fun things your child will get to do.
- 📖 Make shopping for school supplies a fun experience and allow your child to make some of the choices.
- 📖 Check out school related books from the library to help ease jitters about starting school.

- 📖 Start the school bedtime routine before school starts. Allow your child to become familiar with the routine so when school begins they will know what is expected.
- 📖 Make sure your child has the necessary immunizations to start school.
- 📖 Attend open houses and meet the teacher events so that you can meet other parents and become familiar with the teachers that are going to be involved with your child.
- 📖 Prepare yourself. Be strong and don't cry in front of your child as this may cause them to become upset and not want to go to kindergarten.

Check out [Preparing Your Child for Kindergarten](#) for more ideas

Goodbye Summer Hello School

Getting your children, and yourself, back on routine after summer break can be a challenge. Preparing for the challenges and resistance from your children can help you to alleviate some of the battles you may encounter. Remembering that it is hard to leave the freedom and fun summer behind and embracing more structured atmosphere the school year brings is difficult for children. Below are some tips to help you beat the school blues.

Tips for...

All Parents

- ✦ Be compassionate. Summer breaks are like vacations. Think about what it's like for you to make the transition back from a great vacation
- ✦ Talk about the value of education. Even if school isn't always easy, that doesn't mean that it's not important. Emphasize how working hard at school helps kids to succeed.
- ✦ Even though summer break is over, continue to have fun with your kids. Set aside some time each week to spend having fun together as a family.

6 to 9 Years

- ✦ Help your child look forward to school. Purchase a "lucky pencil" or "lucky folder" for her to keep track of homework. Be enthusiastic about school. Your excitement will often rub off on her.
- ✦ Be honest about the fatigue that can happen during the first week back to school after a long break. Encourage your child to take a short nap after school, if needed.
- ✦ Talk about the benefits of summer breaks and the benefits of going to school. For example, it's fun to choose what you want to do during breaks. It's also exciting to learn new things and meet new kids at school.

Birth to 5

- ✦ Keep young children on the same daily routine (if possible) whether they're going to preschool or not. This helps to keep their energy and moods at an even keel.
- ✦ Teach your kids the differences between days. Many get confused as to why they go to child care five days a week and then stay home for two. Take a calendar and have them mark off the days. Consider color-coding the days so that "yellow" days mean preschool or child care and "orange" days mean home days.
- ✦ Talk about the importance of "home time" and "school time" so that kids see the value in both (or talk about the importance of "play time" and "work time").

10 to 15 Years

- ✦ Don't be surprised if you find that your child strongly resists going back to school. That's normal. Many kids at this age love spending time with friends and would prefer to hang out with them outside of school. At the same time, other kids really look forward to going back to school.
- ✦ Help your child name what he likes best about school. Even if it starts out only with lunch and recess, go with that. As the school year progresses, see which subjects begin to interest him.
- ✦ Admit that some parts of school are hard. If you didn't enjoy the junior high or middle school years, say so. But then talk about how much better high school is. That often helps kids to stick with the hard stuff.





Discussing school bus safety with your kids is an important part of school preparation. When talking about school bus safety it is important to talk globally about things such as waiting at the stop, behavior on the bus, walking to the stop, etc. Below are some tips and ideas for you to use with your children. Going over them every year is a good way to remind children of good school bus conduct.

Getting on the Bus

-  When waiting for the bus, stay away from traffic and avoid roughhousing or other behavior that can lead to carelessness.
-  Do not stray onto streets, alleys or private property.
-  Line up away from the street or road as the school bus approaches.
-  Wait until the bus has stopped and the door opens before stepping onto the roadway.
-  Use the handrail when stepping onto the bus.

Getting off the Bus

-  If you have to cross the street in front of the bus, walk at least ten feet ahead of the bus along the side of the road until you can turn around and see the driver.
-  Make sure that the driver can see you.
-  Wait for a signal from the driver before beginning to cross.
-  When the driver signals, walk across the road keeping an eye out for sudden traffic changes.
-  Do not cross the center line of the road until the driver has signaled that it is safe for you to begin walking.
-  Stay away from the bus' rear wheels at all times.

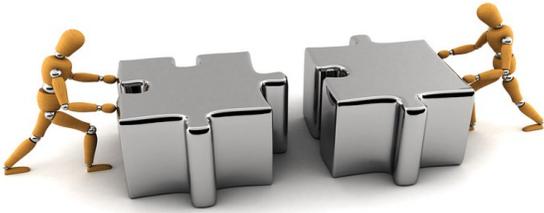
Behavior on the Bus

-  When on the bus, find a seat and sit down. Loud talking or other noise can distract the bus driver and is not allowed.
-  Never put head, arms or hands out of the window.
-  Keep aisles clear – books or bags are tripping hazards and can block the way in an emergency.
-  Before you reach your stop, get ready to leave by getting your books and belongings together.
-  At your stop, wait for the bus to stop completely before getting up from your seat, then walk to the front door and exit, using the handrail.

Correct way to Cross the Street

-  Children should always stop at the curb or the edge of the road and look left, then right, and then left again before crossing.
-  They should continue looking in this manner until they are safely across.
-  If student's vision is blocked by a parked car or other obstacle, they should move out to where drivers can see them and they can see other vehicles – then stop, and look left-right-and left again.
-  Try to make eye contact with drivers before crossing in front of them, don't assume they see you because you see them.
-  Walk, don't run, across the street.

Creating A Positive Parent-Teacher Relationship



Both parents and teachers share a common goal which is improving the quality of life for the children. But, what one person feels is important for the child may not be the same for another. Therefore, team work and talking with teachers on a regular basis is extremely important. This helps both parents and teachers understand each others views and ideas. Here are some things you can do to build a relationship with your child's teacher:

- Get to know the teacher right away
- Keep in regular touch
- Say thank you and pass on compliments
- Stay involved with the class
- Talk about school at home
- Be discreet but take action if problems arise
- Respect the chain of command

Remember what **PARENT** stands for:

- Partner**—Be there for your child and his teacher
- Advocate**—Work for change in the classroom
- Resource**—Provide information to teacher about your child
- Encourager**—Support your child and his teacher
- Negotiator**—Be willing to talk and open to others opinions
- Team Member**—Work together and do your share of the work

Positively Working Through Parent-Teacher Disagreements

It is not uncommon for parents and teachers to disagree. These disagreements can occur at anytime and can cause a huge strain on the parent-teacher relationship. A developmental specialist by the name of Chuck Smith said that "A child's success in school depends on how well parents and teachers cooperate with one another." Therefore, parents and teachers share responsibility in creating a working relationship that fosters children's learning. It is important for parents and teachers to remember that they know the child in different environments. How one child acts at home may not be the same way they act at school or day care. As a result, parents and teachers may be unaware of what the child is like in each setting. For many parents, a fundamental part of the parenting role is to be their child's advocate. This may be difficult, due to some parents being afraid or unsure of how to express their concerns with a teacher. Here are some things you can do as a parent to help make the situation better and to ensure a healthy relationship between you and your child's teacher:

Attempt to keep you emotions in check

Strong emotions are normal when you want to communicate with a teacher about a tough situation. Try to control your anger and frustrations. These negative emotions just stall the resolution process and have a tendency to cause people to put up guards and not compromise on a solution.

Be respectful of your child's teacher

Try to be respectful of your child's teacher no matter how you feel about him or her. Even if you don't feel they are respecting you, you will come out the better person by showing respect and not sinking to that person's level.

Avoid playing the "Blame Game"

Parents and teachers often blame each other for problems that are going on with the child. For example, the teacher may be frustrated with the parent's lack of involvement and the parent may feel overwhelmed with the teacher's expectations. Instead of getting angry with the teacher, why not talk things over with her?

Focus on Your Child's Needs or Your Concerns

Concentrate on your child and the issues/concerns you have. Clearly state your concerns and keep yourself focused on the issue not allowing yourself to get side tracked.

Use discretion when you talk to or about your child's teacher

Be cautious about what you say and whom you say it to. You do not want your child to overhear negative comments made about his teacher. It will cause confusion for the child possibly resulting in the child becoming defiant and disrespectful towards the teacher.

Talk to the teacher directly

It is usually best to talk to the teacher directly. Sometimes the teacher is unaware of the child's difficulty or perception of a situation. It is important to check the facts directly with the teacher before drawing conclusions or blaming.

Choose an appropriate time and place to discuss disagreements

It is probably best to try not to discuss a problem with a teacher in front of other parents or children at the end of the school day when your child is ready to go home and the teacher is most likely tired from the school day. If an extended discussion is needed, make an appointment with the teacher.

Supporting your Child Emotionally While they Learn

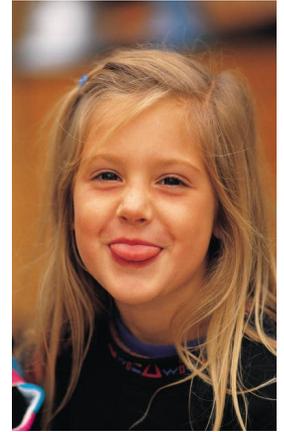
When your child begins their long journey through school they will be learning lots of new information and engaging in new experiences. For many parents how much their child will learn or whether they will fall behind can make them anxious. A child's performance in school can cause a lot of worry for parents. But it is important to promote a positive attitude towards learning and stay patient. For a child to be successful they need positive support, love, and encouragement. Here are some things that you can do to support your child emotionally while they learn:

- Avoid blaming your child when they have difficulties in school
- Make time to listen to your child talk about school and their feelings concerning it.
- Keep your own bad feelings about school (if any) to yourself.
- Get to know your child's teachers and other school personnel.
- Get involved in school projects in some way
- Join with other parents in stating your positions on educational issues and school policy.
- When your child wants to learn something, put them in charge of the topic, the pace, and the approach.
- Ask your child to teach you about something they're interested in.
- Encourage and appreciate their questions.
- Listen when your child talks about things she is learning.
- Encourage your child to take pride in all she has learned
- Ask questions to help your child discover what she already knows.
- Remember that your child is always doing the best she can.
- Respect and appreciate your child's intelligence, and encourage her to appreciate herself.
- Understand that mistakes are an important part of learning.
- Remember that play is an important part of how children learn.

RAISING A READER

- 📖 Use books to bond. When your child sits in your lap as you read, they are not just enjoy in the books but also your undivided attention.
- 📖 Set up a ritual. A regular reading time establishes a calming routine for your child
- 📖 Choose appropriate books for age and attention span. Allow your child to choose.
- 📖 Repeat, Repeat, Repeat. Even if you have read the same book for days, you'll soon find that your toddler has begun memorized phrases and use them at the appropriate point in the story.
- 📖 Ham it up. Lose your inhibitions when you read to your child. Deepen your voice, roar like a lion, make silly noises. This will make reading more enjoyable for the both of you.
- 📖 Follow your child's interests. Choose books about their favorite activities, animals, etc.
- 📖 Go to the library. Children love to pick out books they may not have at home. Expect to read them repeatedly!
- 📖 Don't make books a reward. When reading is associated with systems of reward and punishment, it isn't a positive experience
- 📖 Make storytelling a part of life. Whether you are at the dinner table, driving in the car, waiting in the doctors office you can use familiar stories (ex. Three little pigs) or make up your own
- 📖 Point out words everywhere. While taking a walk in your neighborhood or in the grocery store you can point out words to your child. This will help your child become familiar with the words that are associated with various objects





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1 Smithfield St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Phone: 412-350-2770
E-mail: safestart@allegHENYcounty.us



Office of Community Services

Safe Start Program

Editor: Heather Arentth

Early Childhood Behavioral Health Specialist

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Volume: 28
Date: October 2014

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!

Inside this issue:

Halloween Can be Scary	2
Keeping Halloween Age Appropriate	3
Halloween Safety Tips	4
Dealing with Halloween Candy	5
Why Dress-Up Play is Important	6

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 (ie. 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. (ie. 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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1 Smithfield St.
Pittsburgh, PA 15222
Phone: 412-350-2770
E-mail: safestart@alleghenycounty.us



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