

Enhancing the Skills of Parents Program II

January 2009

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Adding Fitness to Family Time

Two of the most common New Year's resolutions are to lose weight and to spend more time with family. Here are some ways to combine family time with an active lifestyle to help you keep your resolutions.

- Each week let a different family member pick an activity for everyone to do together.
- Use a notebook to record daily exercise for each family member.
- Create a schedule to make physical activity a part of your family's lifestyle.

Teaching your family about nutrition and ways to eat healthy meals can be a family activity as well.

- Allow your children to help with the grocery shopping and talk with them about healthy food choices that they enjoy.
- Let your children help prepare and create healthy meals or snacks.
- Make grocery shopping an exciting scavenger hunt for younger children.

Reference

"Family Fitness Fun." *Child Care Aware*. Dec. 2005. National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies. 4 Nov. 2008
<http://www.childcareaware.org/en/subscriptions/areyouaware/article.php?id=36>

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February 2009

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Take Charge of Your Finances

Keep track of everything that you earn and spend for a typical month or two to help you determine whether cash flow is positive (income is greater than expenses) or negative (expenses are greater than income).

Try to save money by reducing flexible household expenses, such as food, clothing, and entertainment. The trick to “finding” money is to identify expenses that can be reduced.

When you go food shopping, take a good look at what is in the cart before you check out.

- Are there expensive snacks or convenience foods that you can do without?
- Are you comparing the cost of store and “name” brands and taking advantage of coupons and promotions?

You can also decrease food expenses by eating at home more often and avoiding restaurant and fast-food dining.

Review all your household expenses: clothing, gifts, entertainment, personal care, etc. to determine which items can be reduced.

- Plan your trips and errands in the car more efficiently to save on gas.
- Borrow books and videos from the library rather than purchase them.

If you combine savings in several expense categories, you can save money without feeling deprived.

References

Badenhop, S. *Think Balance-Not Sacrifice* (June, 2008) University of Kentucky Extension. Retrieved October 24, 2008 from <http://www.ca.uky.edu/HES/fcs/FACTSHTS/frm-ssb-66.pdf>

Bankston, J. *Pay Yourself First: Have an Emergency Fund for a Rainy Day* (November, 2006) University of Kentucky Extension. Retrieved October 24, 2007 from http://www.ca.uky.edu/HES/fcs/khc/On_Your_Own_Newsletter-Vol_1_Issue_6.pdf

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March 2009

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Family Mealtime

Family mealtime is much more than something good to eat! It nourishes the body, mind, and soul. Sharing foods in a pleasant, social environment is healthy for families in many ways. The whole family benefits from family mealtime by:

Having better nutrition – Studies show that people eat more balanced meals and a variety of foods when they eat with family or friends.

Improving family communication – Time to share ideas, thoughts, and feelings builds relationships. Research shows that children who often hear adult conversation improve vocabulary, reading test scores, and speaking skills.

Fostering family traditions – Foods and memories created around the family table help shape and give meaning to our cultural heritage.

Teaching life skills – Children learn cooking skills, appreciation for foods, and other important life skills.

Bowen, E. *Family Mealtime*. West Virginia University Extension Service. Retrieved on November 7, 2008 from <http://www.wvu.edu/~exten/infores/pubs/fypubs/wlq129.pdf>

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Babies and Language

Babies learn language by hearing other people speak and by practicing those sounds. You can help your baby learn language:

Talk to your baby! This is the most important step you can take. Some parents feel silly talking to a baby who can't talk back. Your baby is listening to your speech and learning from it even before he can answer your questions.

Play language games with your baby. When she makes a sound, repeat it and add a new sound. Take turns talking with your baby. Sing to her. Recite nursery rhymes. Interacting with you is one of the best ways for a baby to experience language.

Read aloud to your baby. Even before he can understand the story, he hears the sounds. Sharing a book helps build a lifelong love of reading.

Don't use the TV as a substitute for you. Babies need interaction with real, live people to learn language. Canned TV sounds aren't the same.

Have your baby's hearing checked. Babies with hearing problems don't get the language experience they need. The earlier hearing problems are identified and corrected, the better.

Teach multiple languages early. If you want your child to speak more than one language, start early! Children growing up in bilingual homes often speak both languages fluently.

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Bales, D. (1998). *Building Baby's Brain: Learning Language*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia, College of Family and Consumer Sciences.

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Routines for Rest

Routines are important for children. There are several things a parent/caregiver can do to establish a calming naptime/bedtime routine. Although each child and family situation is unique, the following ideas may be helpful.

Give children some transition time. Say, "it's naptime in 10 minutes" or "after I read you a story, it will be time to go to sleep." It may help to use a timer so children will know when time is up.

Set rules about number of stories, drinks of water, getting out of bed, etc.

Plan a wind-down activity. Read a story, turn down the lights, play quiet music, or just talk. TV, movies, roughhousing, or active games are not good choices prior to naptime or bedtime.

Provide children with security. Let her have her favorite stuffed animals, blankie, night light, flashlight by the bed, or the door open.

Talk about fears and anxieties. Do a "monster check" if that seems to be a concern.

Avoid activities that compete with resting or going to sleep. Have adults and older children observe similar quiet time. This will encourage the little ones to go to sleep.

Decide on a regular bedtime. Set bedtime 10 to 12 hours before the child needs to get up. If a child is getting up too early, he may be going to bed too soon. On the other hand, if a child is grumpy or drowsy, he may not be getting to bed early enough.

Reference
Donald, D. *Children and Sleep*. Iowa State University Extension. Retrieved Nov. 7, 2008 from <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Publications/PM1529O.pdf>

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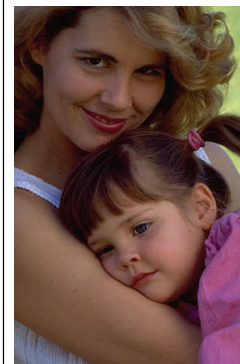
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Communicating with Your Child

Talking and listening to your children can help create healthy relationships. Here are tips for communicating with your child:

Be interested & attentive. A child can tell whether she has your interest and attention. Maintain eye

contact. Get down on her level; don't stand and tower above her.

Encourage talking. Some children need an invitation to start talking. You might begin with, "Tell me about your day at school." Ask questions that will require more than yes or no answers.

Extend conversation. If a child says, "I like books," you can respond by using some of the same wording. "What are some of the books you like best?" Follow up with questions about characters in the books, etc.

Listen patiently. Hurrying children, or calling attention to the wrong use of a word while they are talking, is upsetting and confusing. Avoid cutting children off before they have finished speaking. Avoid correcting grammar or pronunciation. Correction can take place in a different context and you can model correct grammar in your own speech.

Reflect feelings. Sometimes reflecting a child's feelings encourages him to tell you what's on his mind. Saying, "You're really feeling sad today, aren't you?" is more likely to invite a child to share his feelings than asking, "What's wrong?"

Be an example. Parents who listen to their children with interest, attention and patience set a valuable example. The greatest audience children can have is an adult who is important to them and interested in them.

Reference

Communicating with Young Children. Harrelson, Peggy. July 1996. Virginia Cooperative Education. 6 Nov. 2008 <<http://www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/family/350-022/350-022.html>>.
October Parenting Pipeline: Communicating With Your Child. North Dakota State University Extension Service. 18 Nov. 2008 <http://www.ext.nodak.edu/extnews/pipeline/k-oct-w.htm>

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Keeping Positive Keeps Kids Involved

The beginning of the summer sports season is a good time to stop and remember what is important about kids playing sports. In reality, it is not possible for

everyone to win every event. Young people need to be taught the skills to cope with losing. Research has found that when adults were positive there was a higher level of enjoyment by kids. Here are some ways to keep kids interested in sports or other programs:

Encourage them. Keeping children active keeps them healthy and helps them develop healthy habits to last a lifetime.

Be a good role model. Children learn by example, so show them how to practice good sportsmanship. Don't expect them to win at everything. Show them how you handle losing (shake hands and congratulate the winner, for example).

Keep it fun! Asking "Did you have fun?" versus "Did you win?" says a lot to a young person. Get their input about what sport to sign up for. Don't force them to play the sport you played, or the sport you always wanted to play.

Teach personal responsibility. Young people can take personal responsibility for their actions if it's modeled and expected. If a child made a bad play, so what? Don't point fingers or pass blame.

Get involved. Sports teams need adult volunteers as well as encouraging parents.

References

McNeill, B. *Encourage Youth in Sports this Spring* (April, 2008) University of Minnesota Extension. Retrieved April 14, 2008 from <http://www.extension.umn.edu/extensionnews/2008/childreninsports.html>

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Traveling with Children



After hours of frazzled car travel, missed meals and naps, and frequent potty breaks, a car trip might seem like a mistake you don't want to repeat. By planning ahead, you can often make traveling a fun experience for both yourself and your children.

Involve Children in the Planning. Children handle the schedule changes of travel better when they know what to expect. Explain ahead of time what day and time you are leaving, how long you will stay, and what you will do while traveling. Talk about the people and places you will visit. Order brochures and maps of your destination, or even make a colorful map with your children so you can mark where you go each day.

Be Prepared. Traveling can be part of the fun of a vacation, if you come prepared. Pack a travel bag for children with favorites such as crayons, story-books and drawing paper. Add a few new things, or even wrap them up to be distributed at different stages in the trip.

- Start each day with a good breakfast, and plan nutritious snack breaks at least twice a day.
- Schedule naptime if you possibly can, whether in the car or at your destination.
- Plan rest stops at least every two hours so your child can stretch and burn off energy. Make these stops part of your vacation fun: toss a frisbee, play catch, jump rope or blow bubbles.

Re-entry. Settling back into routines after a vacation can be difficult for both parents and children. Give your family at least a day of unpacking and resting before re-entering everyday life.

Reference

LeFebvre, J. *Traveling with Children* (April, 2007) University of Wisconsin-Extension. Retrieved on April 14, 2008 from <http://www.uwex.edu/news/2007/04/tips-can-help-reduce-stress-when-traveling-with-children>

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School Bus Safety

School buses are nearly 8 times safer than passenger vehicles, but children must take care when boarding or leaving the bus. Most deaths occur when children are getting on and off the bus. Children are hit in the danger zone around the bus either by a passing vehicle or by the school bus itself.

Young children are most likely to be hit because they:

- hurry to get on or off the bus
- have little experience with traffic, and act before they think
- assume motorists are watching and will wait for them to cross
- don't always stay within the bus driver's sight, or they may drop something and run into the path of the bus to pick it up.

Teach your child to get on and off the bus safely:

- When getting on the bus, stay away from the danger zone and wait for the driver's signal. Board the bus one child at a time.
- When getting off the bus, look before stepping off the bus to be sure no cars are passing on the shoulder (side of the road). Move away from the bus.
- Before crossing the street, take five "giant steps" out from the front of the bus, or until the bus driver's face can be seen. Wait for the bus driver to signal that it's safe to cross.
- Look left-right-left when coming to the edge of the bus to make sure traffic is stopped. Keep watching traffic when crossing.

Reference

Tip #10 School Bus Tips. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Retrieved 19 November 2008 from <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/CPS/newtips/pages/Tip10.htm>

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Dealing with Morning Madness

The rush to get everyone off to school and work is a challenge to every family. Here are a few tips for managing morning madness:

Set your clocks ahead. It may be all psychological, but having your clocks and watches set 5 to 10 minutes ahead can keep you on schedule.

Lay out clothing for everyone the night before—including shoes and socks. This puts an end to those last minute searches for the missing shoe.

Have a cubby for your children to keep items they need to take to school. Keep a box or basket near the door for children to keep their books, lunch money, hat, gloves, and anything else that they need to take to school.

Start going to bed earlier. It may take your body a few weeks to get used to going to bed an hour or so earlier, but in the long run, you will find it easier to get up in the morning.

Get up earlier. Setting your alarm clock for 15 minutes earlier than usual will go a long way in easing morning madness. For working parents, plan to get up 1 1/2 hours prior to the time you must leave for work. This extra time will allow you to arrive at work relaxed and prepared to face the day.

Take time for breakfast. Make sure you allow 15 minutes in the morning for a wholesome breakfast. If you must eat on the run, choose nutritious foods.

Prepare lunches while preparing breakfast. If your child takes a lunch to school, pack it at the same time you are preparing breakfast and place it in the child's school cubby or by the front door.

Collins, E. *Dealing with Morning Madness*. Ohio State University Extension. Retrieved on November 7, 2008 from http://ohioline.osu.edu/bb-fact/pdf/bb_f_1.pdf

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Turn Off the TV



Interaction, reading, and playing are always better than watching television. These activities are important in the healthy development of social, emotional, and intellectual skills. Here are some ideas from the Parents as Teachers National Center for activities to do with your child instead of watching TV:

Explore. Baby-proof an entire room and put an assortment of toys and safe household objects in the room to play with.

Watch. Hang a bird feeder outside a window where the child can see the birds and squirrels.

Listen. Play music at a moderate volume and encourage your child to sing and dance.

Touch. Toddlers like to dig, scoop, and mold, exercising their emerging fine motor skills. Provide some play dough or a bowl half filled with beans, and cups for scooping.

Splash. Let your child play in the bathtub. However, *never* leave your child alone even for a minute when he is in the tub.

Look at Books. Read a book or just look at the pictures with your child. Have some books that are unfamiliar so they will hold your child's attention.

Help. Since toddlers like to be where the action is, let them play alongside while you work. Think creatively about how she can help you with a task.

Find a Friend. Trade babysitting time with other parents of toddlers so your child can experience being with other children. This interaction will contribute to healthy development.

Graham, J. *How Television Viewing Affects Children*. University of Maine Cooperative Extension. Retrieved on 11/7/08 from <http://www.umext.maine.edu/onlinepubs/htmlpubs/4100.htm>

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Stress-Free Family Holidays



Have the family join in and share the extra demands that come up during the holiday season. Create activities that make things fun instead of stressful. Preparing for the holidays as a family and tackling the extra tasks together can greatly reduce stress.

Tips for reducing holiday stress

- Create lists of various jobs that need to be done during the holidays, then delegate these tasks to family members.
- Plan easy meals.
- Keep children's routines stable; especially eating and sleeping. This will allow for children to remain feeling secure and comfortable.
- Plan fun activities for the family, such as decorating holiday cookies, looking at light displays, and decorating the tree.
- Each day do something relaxing.
- To avoid "burnout," don't start holiday activities too early.

References

Todd, Christine. "Making It Through the Holidays." Connection Newsletter. Feb 1996. National Network for Child Care. 6 Nov. 2008. <http://www.nccc.org/Curriculum_fdc12_making_holiday.html>.

Jelly, Kathy. "Holiday Stress Busters for Big and Little People." Backpack Buddies Fact Sheet Index. The Ohio State University. 6 Nov. 2008 <http://ohioline.osu.edu/bb-fact/pdf/>bb_k_4.pdf>.