

Parents in the Know

Healthy Families

How Can You Tell if Your Family is Overscheduled?

Does your family eat together most nights? Research shows that this increases students' achievement, strengthens families, and reduces the risk of substance abuse. However, many families are overscheduled and consider time spent with family a luxury rather than a necessity. If you feel like your family doesn't have enough time to enjoy one another, then consider the following questions regarding each extracurricular activity your child is involved in:

1. Does your child really enjoy the activity?
2. Is your child involved in the activity because you feel like she should be?
3. Does your child continue on with the activity out of habit more than enjoyment?
4. Does your child spend so much time in activities that you don't feel like you really know your child?

Try to decide which activities are the most fun and beneficial for your child and concentrate on those. Many experts recommend that children not be involved in more than two different activities at a time. So, it may be time to cut back on time in the car with your child, and focus on time at the dinner table!

Based on: "Finding Balance for Busy Families", Schoolfamily.com, <http://www.schoolfamily.com/school-family-articles/article/739-finding-balance-for-busy-families>



"The family is one of nature's masterpieces" ~ George Santayana

Eating Healthy

Eating healthy begins with having the right ingredients. Examples of foods that are good to keep on hand include:

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| whole wheat pasta | low fat milk |
| instant brown rice | low fat cheese |
| whole grain crackers | fresh fruit |
| lean meats | fresh vegetables |
| fat free turkey franks | garden burgers |
| turkey bacon | eggs |
| dried herbs | low fat vegetable dip |
| olive oil | baked tortilla chips |

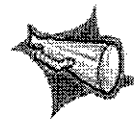
Based on: Keeley Drotz, RD, "Kitchen Staples for Healthy Family Meals", HealthCastle.com, http://www.healthcastle.com/healthy_kitchen_staple.shtml

Getting Exercise as a Family

We all know that exercise is important. However, it can be hard to get motivated to get on the move after a long day at work or taking care of the kids. However, you don't need to exercise alone. Childhood obesity is at an all time high. Children need daily exercise also. So, get out there and move with your child!

- * Go on a picnic and play in the park.
- * Go for a bike ride in the evening instead of sitting in front of the television.
- * Take your dog for a walk. This provides healthy exercise and a great time for you to chat with your child!
- * Go for a swim. The neighborhood pool is a great place to get exercise and get to know your child's friends.

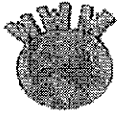
What Research Says



Parent involvement is essential to children's academic success. Parents who set high expectations for their children have children with higher achievement. Children who succeed academically usually come from families that establish healthy routines, set limits on television and video game time, model the importance of hard work and discipline, have high expectations, show an interest in their child's school work, and practice literacy skills at home with their child. Keep in mind that your child spends 70% of his time outside of school. Therefore, what is done in the home is vitally important.

Based on: "What Research Says about Parent Involvement in Children's Education in Relation to Academic Achievement", Michigan Department of Education, www.mi.gov/.../Final_Parent_Involvement_Fact_Sheet_14732_7.pdf

Focus on Healthy Families



Internet Resources for Families

About.com: Parenting & Family

(<http://www.about.com/parenting/>): Includes information on ages & stages, family activities & products, health & development, and other special topics.

Child Development Institute

(<http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/>): Provides information for parents on child development, parenting, family life, teenagers, learning, health & safety, child psychology, and mental health.

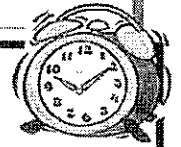
Child & Family WebGuide

(<http://www.cfwtufts.edu/>): Includes research-based sites related to family/parenting, education/learning, typical child development, health/mental health, and resources/recreation.

Family Education

(<http://www.familyeducation.com/home/>): Offers topics of interest to parents from birth to age 18. This is an extremely extensive website with a wide variety of articles related to issues today's families are dealing with.

More4Kids (<http://www.more4kids.info/>): Has information for parents including a broad range of parenting topics such as: child care, child development, child safety, parenting, discipline, and product reviews. It also has a detailed list of websites for children including academics, crafts, games, and experiments.



Making Time for Family

Family meetings are a great way to improve communication. They are scheduled periodically to help your family members share their thoughts and feelings with the entire family. Hosting a family meeting is easy:

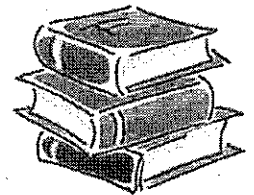
- * Choose a time when everyone can attend.
- * Make sure that everyone has a chance to share their ideas and feelings.
- * Ask questions after people speak to make sure that everyone understands each person's point of view.
- * Encourage everyone to speak using statements beginning with "I . . ." rather than "You . . .".
- * Make positive suggestions about ways your family can address concerns.
- * Acknowledge that some decisions are solely up to you as parents.

Based on: Robert Needleman, M.D., F. A. A.P., "Making Family Communication Work", <http://www.drspock.com/article/0,1510,5759,00.html>

Books for Discussion

There are many children's books designed to help parents start discussions with their children about character choices.

It's Up to You. . .What Do You Do?, by Sandra McLeod Humphrey
10 Minute Life Lessons for Kids, by Jamie C. Miller
What Do You Stand For?, by Barbara Lewis
Speak Up and Get Along, by Scott Cooper
Hot Issues, Cool Choices, by Sandra McLeod Humphrey



Look for these and other books to discuss with your child at your local library.

Healthy Families / Healthy Planet

Keeping your family healthy is important. You need to make sure that your children get plenty of rest, exercise, and eat right. Teaching your children to keep our planet healthy is also important. The choices that we make today influence the air that they will be breathing, the water they will be drinking, and the food that they will be eating tomorrow. Some things that you can do as a family to help the environment include:

1. **Reduce, reuse, and recycle.** If you haven't found the time, now is a great time to start!
2. **Buy items in recycled containers.** Take your own bags to the store and reuse them.
3. **Donate things that you don't need.** Help your children learn the value of helping others by going through the house at least once a year and gathering things to donate to others in need.
4. **Be a good example.** Your children learn more from what you do than what you say. So, if you want them to respect the planet, you have to.



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