



Involved Parents Make a Difference

A simple tip to help children succeed in school: Be part of your child's life in all sorts of ways and show that you care. Kids want their parents to be engaged in their life. Being "engaged" means being a positive force in the child's development and learning, without bullying or being too directive.

One positive step parents can take is to establish a "rhythm of life" at home, such as having scheduled times for dinner and bedtime. And, when parents promise to be at the child's school play or ballgame, they need to come through. It is a statement to the child that your word matters. Your word counts.

Parents also can increase their child's chances for success by establishing a positive relationship with the child's teacher(s), providing support at home, and making space and time for the child to work at home.

For example, look for ways of supporting at home what the teacher is trying to teach at school. If a child is studying a period of history at school, the parent could take the child to the library to learn more. That shows a continuation of learning throughout life that is an important attitude for kids to get at a young age.

The parent's responsibility to be active in his or her child's life and education is especially important when problems arise, such as when the child is teased by classmates, gets a bad grade, or is cut from an athletic team. There may be no "tips" for parents to help children through those times, other than providing a warm shoulder to lean on.

Sometimes it's agonizing to be a child. And as a parent, it's difficult to help your child avoid feelings of not being able to be successful. Dealing with these anxieties is part of growing up. But, a parent's involvement is a critical part of education. The more that a parent can be engaged in the child's life in positive ways, the better chance that child will have to be successful in school and in life.

Chuck Smith

Grilling Safety Tips

Pick a safe area for your grill. Position the grill in a well-vented, flat, level surface away from overhangs, deck railings, and shrubbery. Keep children and pets away from the grill when in use.

Handle charcoal carefully. Never add lighter fluid directly to hot coals because flames could travel up the fluid stream. Instead, place several new briquets in a metal can and apply lighter fluid. Transfer the briquets into the pyramid in the grill with pair of long-handled tongs and light with a match. Use proper utensils for safe handling of food and coals.

Preheat the grill before placing food on the grilling surface. Remove charred food debris to reduce exposure to possible cancer-causing substances formed during high heat cooking.

Avoid fire flare-ups by using lean meats and trimming away all visible fat. Raise the rack to the highest position away from the heat and keep food on one side of the grill and coals or other heat source on the other side.

Marinades enhance flavors, tenderize, and keep foods moist. If you plan to use the remaining marinade later as a table sauce, it must be boiled for at least three minutes to eliminate bacteria.

Try grilling vegetables and fruits such as eggplant, summer squashes, bell peppers, sweet onions, Roma or cherry tomatoes, mushrooms, mangoes, pineapple, or peaches. Cut vegetables into half-inch slices or large chunks. Brush with warmed, seasoned oil. Turn only once, and grill until tender. Fruit should be halved with pits removed. Grill with the pulp side down.

Cook fish in foil packets to retain natural flavors and to protect from smoke and fire.

To put out the fire, place the cover on the grill, close the vents, and allow the coals to burn out completely. Let ashes cool for at least 48 hours and dispose in a noncombustible container.

Karen Blakeslee

PARENTS CORNER

Listening Eases Pain of Loss

Losing a family member, classmate, or special friend can be devastating to a young person.

While sympathy and empathy cannot make up for a loss, acknowledging the loss and listening to the child who has experienced it can be important to the grieving and healing process.

Be patient and listen carefully. Reminiscing about a special time that you spent with the person who has recently died can help the child know that others appreciated their special someone, too.

Charlotte Shoup Olsen

Parents Should Focus on School Lunches

Healthy food may be the last thing on students' minds by the time lunch arrives, which can sometimes be a matter of grabbing anything edible. But students require much more.

The midday meal typically provides a third or more of the total daily calorie intake for children. It should be balanced to satisfy daily nutrition requirements. Packed lunches rarely are as nutritious as those provided by the school. School lunches provide variety and save parents from the work and worry of packing lunches. Also, to operate efficiently, schools need an adequate number of students to participate in school lunch programs.

To help parents gain the full experience of a school lunch, they should have an occasional meal with their kids. Most schools encourage parents to come and learn about school food service.

Most of the complaints from kids are not on menu items, but rather the methods of preparation or choices available. Many improvements have been made in school lunch programs. There are many cases where a parent's comment has initiated changes, whether the issue has been lowering fat in menus or offering more fresh fruit each day. Everyone benefits when parents play an active role.

Most schools print monthly menus to give students and parents an opportunity to plan ahead and talk about alternatives and options.

Sandy Procter

Students Need Nine Hours of Sleep

School-aged children need at least nine hours of sleep each night to ensure good health.

Lack of sleep causes many problems within the school environment. Students can be too sleepy to learn, which contributes to a negative overall performance.

Although children carry much of the responsibility for their evening schedules, parents must set clear guidelines to help children reach nine hours of sleep. Setting a routine with consistent times for going to bed and getting up can be a first step.

About a month before school starts, make a transition into a school-like sleep pattern. Gradually move bedtime closer to the desired bedtime when school is in session. It's important to get started early in setting new sleep habits rather than expecting it to happen overnight. Also, reduce the number of naps taken during the day to ensure kids are tired and will sleep through the night.

Many childhood sleep problems are related to irregular sleep habits. Anxiety about going to bed or falling asleep also ranks as a cause of problems. Persistent sleep problems could be symptoms of emotional difficulties.

Talk with your child about the stressful issues in his or her life. Parents can see what is worrying their children and interfering with a good night of rest.

The consequences of inadequate sleep include lack of focus, irritability, frustration, and impulsive behavior. An untreated sleep disorder can interfere with school and increase the risk of accidents and illness.

Mike Bradshaw

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