



PARENT TRUST
FOR WASHINGTON CHILDREN



Strong Families Begin At Home

Children's Group Newsletter

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FAMILY HELP LINE

1-800-932-HOPE

Live parenting coaches answer Parent Trust's statewide, toll-free phone number and provide callers with a greater understanding and awareness of child development, guidance, and resources.

If you have any comments, or suggestions for future articles, please contact:

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Sneeze in Your sleeve


Adults can learn a lot from kids. I'd like to share with you something I learned a few years ago from a child in my Circle of Parents group.

It was cold and flu season—like now. Almost everyone around us (at his school, at my office, on the bus, etc.) was sick. Like now. This 10 year old was about to cough, and he did something I'd never seen before. Instead of covering his mouth with his hand, he bent his elbow and coughed into the crook of his arm.

What a great idea for adults and children! Most people I observe, when they don't have access to a tissue, cough and sneeze by covering their mouth or nose with their hand. But this encourages the spread of germs, since we then use those very same hands to open doors, press elevator buttons, hold onto straps on the bus, etc.

So sneeze into your sleeve! Cough into your elbow! And teach your child how they can help keep their friends and family healthy.

LEARN



*"Learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow."
-Albert Einstein*

Coping with Stress

Stress management can be thought of as having two main components:

1. *Eliminating stressors when possible.*
2. *How we choose to cope with stressors when it's not possible to eliminate them.*

When it's not possible to eliminate stressors, we can choose positive, healthy coping strategies, or unhealthy coping strategies. Unhealthy strategies, for example, could be overeating, using drugs, short tempers, pouting, yelling.

Healthy coping strategies counteract the stress response with techniques that elicit the relaxation response.

Examples of healthy coping strategies include:

- a. *meditating and yoga*
- b. *exercise*
- c. *eating Healthy*
- d. *getting enough sleep*

RELAX



*"Every now and then go away, even briefly, have a little relaxation, for when you come back to your work your judgement will be surer, since to remain constantly at work will cause you to lose power."
-Leonardo Da Vinci*

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Some good Internet resources about children and gardening

- **Kidsgardening.org**
<http://www.kidsgardening.org/>
- **Earth Easy**
http://www.eartheasy.com/grow_gardening_children.htm
- **Kiddie Gardens**
<http://www.kiddiegardens.com/index.html>
- **My First Garden**
<http://urbanext.illinois.edu/firstgarden/index.html>
- **Colorado State Extension**
(growing plants from seeds)
<http://www.colostate.edu/Dept/CoopExt/4dmg/Children/simple.htm>

Gardening for Fun

Spring is almost here! How will you celebrate spring with your child? Consider growing something as a way to “play” with spring! Even if you don’t have an outdoor garden spot, children can get a tremendous amount of satisfaction growing seeds in a pot.

If you have a sunny windowsill, marigolds and snapdragons are a good choice. More shade than sun? Try impatiens.

If you do have a garden area, you can extend the play later when the weather gets warmer. After all, what better opportunity do we have to play in the dirt no matter what age we are? And those of us who are already gardeners know that a lot more than playing with dirt is involved (although that is a definite plus). Gardening involves creativity, being exposed to the natural cycle of life, making choices (what plants to grow, where to put them...), taking on responsibility, appreciating beauty, and yes—having fun! And as one gardener to potential future gardeners, some of us actually LOVE weeding.

PLAY



“You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.”

-Plato

Cool Veggies

A new study about children and nutrition found that kids eat more vegetables if they think the vegetable has a “cool name”. In the study, 186 preschool children were given regular carrots one day and on another day they were given the same vegetables that had been re-named “X-Ray Vision Carrots”. On “X-Ray Vision” carrot day, the children ate twice as many carrots as on regular veggie day.

After that, even when carrots went back to being called regular carrots, the children’s intake was about 50% more eaten than prior to the study.

The lead author of the study said that the giving food a fun name could make kids think that food will be more fun to eat.

You don’t have to stick to X-Ray Vision carrots—it’s not the specific name, it’s just that kids think

EAT



“Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are.”

-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

it’s fun/cool. You and your child can try using your imagination and renaming all your fruits and veggies! Especially if you have older children, asking them to do a naming project for the littler ones can be a fun job for them.

Study is not yet published; it was presented at an annual meeting of the School Nutrition Association. If you are interested in this organization, they

have a website: <http://www.schoolnutrition.org/default.aspx>

Awesome Veggies

- **Dinosaur Broccoli Trees**
- **Power Peas**
- **X-Ray Vision Carrots**
- **Tomato Bursts**

Coping with Stress CONTINUED FROM PG1

These healthier strategies are for children as well as adults. Getting enough sleep is one strategy that we tend to ignore until we just can't ignore it anymore and we get sick. So how much sleep do we need? Below are averages:

- Birth through about 9 months old: 15 hours of sleep per day.
- 9-12 months old: 10-12 hours per/day
- 1-3 years old: 12-14 hours/day
- 3-6 years old: 10-12 hours/day
- 7-12 year old: 10-11 hours/day
- 12-18 years old: 8-9.5 hours/day
- Adults: 7-8 hours/day

A recent study looked at middle school age children (average age 14 years old) who have a television or computer in their rooms. Researchers found that these children sleep

less during the school year, watch more TV and play more computer games than peers who don't have these in their bedrooms. These children report an average of 7 hours and 45 minutes of sleep per school night. That's below the low end of optimal sleep requirements for this age. These same children reported an average of 6 hours per day screen time (TV and computer use).

Although occasionally sleeping less than we need is inevitable, when it's chronic it can contribute to health problems and make us less able to manage our stress. If you or your child is not getting enough sleep, maybe move that TV and/or computer out of the bedroom. That would be an example of a healthy coping strategy!

Walking in the Park

MOVE



"Physical fitness is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body, it is the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual activity."

-John Fitzgerald Kennedy

A walk in the park may be good for your soul, and apparently it is also good for attention spans! A recent study looked at the effect that walking has on attention, focusing on three different walking environments: a park, a neighborhood, and an urban downtown. All three environments were well-kept, safe environments.

It's been known for a while that spending time walking in nature can increase most everyone's attention spans directly following the walk. **What is special about this study is that they specifically looked at children with ADHD.**

So, does a walk through the park help children diagnosed with attention challenges? The study found that--yes, a 20-minute walk through a park setting would elevate attention performance **significantly** for children with ADHD. The nature/park setting that had the positive impact, **not** the urban setting.

Do you know where the closest park is to your home? Have you ever been? Maybe it's time for a family field trip. Remember that the results are about **a combination** of two things: walking approximately 20 minutes AND a natural setting. Of course, just enjoying a walk together can be nice—now you know you also get the added benefit of increased attention! *Journal of Attention Disorders 2009*

Parent Trust Reads

Good night, Baby by Clara Vulliamy

is a sweet picture book geared towards children 2-4 years old. It is a simple story about a lovely nighttime routine that you can read aloud to your child. Together, baby and Mom pack their toys away, Mom helps baby take a bath, put on jammies, etc. Lovely, cozy, simple rhymes to describe a realistic end of day ritual.

To read other book reviews, please visit our Parent Trust Reads web section:

<http://www.parenttrust.org/index.php?page=parent-trust-reads>

For more information about Parent Trust for Washington Children and its life changing parent education and family support programs call 1-800-931-HOPE(4673).

Family Calendars

CONNECT



"We need 4 hugs a day for survival. We need 8 hugs a day for maintenance. We need 12 hugs a day for growth."

-Virginia Satir

One way you can connect with your children is to share important events with each other. Especially with older children with whom you might not be sharing the actual event with, just sharing the knowledge and anticipation of the upcoming event can create a positive connection.

One way you can do this is with Family Calendar Time. This is a different "calendar" than your daily planner. This is a calendar specifically for marking times that each family member feels is special.

Find a super big calendar (you'll be writing on it a lot!) or draw one out on a piece of poster board. A big dry erase board works really well because then you can reuse it each month.

Each week, sit down together for Calendar Time. It can be as short as 10 minutes.

Each family member gets an opportunity to share one calendar item –something they are looking forward to that upcoming week (it can be more than 1 if you have more time, but make sure each person gets to do at least 1).

Write their item on the Calendar. This makes it special. And it's also a way to keep track of important events for everyone throughout the week.

The item is what is important to THAT person. So for you, as an adult, it might be a potluck at work. But for your child, it might be that their friend's sister is getting a new kitten. You might not understand why that is something your child is happy about. Well—this is your opportunity to connect! You can simply say, "I didn't know that was important to you. How cool! If you find out what kind of kitten she gets, I'd love to hear about it!"

Teach your family members how to celebrate each other's joy. This isn't time for criticizing or questioning. This is time to learn how to connect by appreciating something that each person feels is important and positive in life. Simply validate the feeling and express positive regard.

What if what they share isn't safe or healthy? If your child shares a calendar item that isn't safe or healthy (like they are looking forward to a beer party next week) you can use Calendar Time as a springboard for a different discussion. Find a way to validate the positive (I know you like getting together with your friends and relaxing) and then you can say that you'd like to discuss your concerns with your child AFTER Calendar Time.

