

Hello!

Everyday is bombarded with enticements to eat loads of junk food, guzzle sodas, upsize everything, and be “happy.” Added to this are our busy schedules when fast food seems so convenient and when it feels nearly impossible to establish a normal schedule with our children. It’s no wonder why childhood obesity is on the rampage and why illnesses due to poor nutrition abound.

And then there’s the media. When left to their own devices, children spend way too much time playing video games and watching television. Media addiction has added enormously to children’s health problems.

No one wants this for his or her child, but there isn’t a lot of support out there for helping our children to live healthier lives and be truly successful in school and extra curricular activities.

HealthierKids, SmarterKids is a simple, intuitive guide to helping your child eat healthily, get enough rest, feel secure in a routine, and be successful at school and in extra curricular activities. And it’s fun to use!

HealthierKids, SmarterKids is about teaming up with your child rather than admonishing him or laying down the law. The tips inside are pure protein! Joining forces with your child to follow them will result in a healthier, happier and more successful child on all fronts.

Happy fun parenting!

Dave Kovar

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Sample - Not for Sale

Your Most Important Role

The most important role you will ever have is that of parent. Parenting can be extremely rewarding, but it's extremely challenging, too. Just when you think you have it figured out, something happens and it's back to the drawing board.

Ben Zoma, an early spiritual sage, often asked his students, "Who is a brave person?" Zoma described "a brave person" as "someone who is smart enough to be afraid, but does whatever needs to be done anyway."

To me, "being afraid" means that certain things are to be taken seriously. Parenthood is a real responsibility. Like it or not, we're responsible for helping to shape our child's life. We should not take this lightly.

Sow a thought, reap an action.

Sow an action, reap a habit.

Sow a habit, reap a character.

Sow a character, reap a destiny.

The above quote, attributed to Ralph Waldo Emerson, is one of my favorites. First and foremost, a parent's job is to do his best to raise his child to become a confident, healthy, happy and contributing member of society. And, in order to do this, parents need to help their children think in proactive, positive ways and develop strong self-images that will guide them through rough times.

The following Parenting Guidelines are designed to support your and your child's success.

You have probably heard most of these guidelines before. Most of them are common sense. However, knowing what to do and understanding how to do it are often two separate challenges.

HealthierKids, SmarterKids unites the “what” with the “how” for a logical, easy-to-use guide to parenting.

As you read, you might think that I’m exaggerating the importance of being positive with your child. Guilty as charged! In my experience of working with thousands of parents over the course of more than thirty years, rarely have I come across parents who are too positive with their children. I have, however, frequently seen parents spend way too much time criticizing and being negative with their children. At the other end of this spectrum, though more rare, are parents who believe their children can do no wrong. Both approaches are off kilter.

HealthierKids, SmarterKids teaches positive, logical and effective parenting and communication skills in an intuitive format so that you will be able to begin to apply them immediately.

We’re all busy. Even with the best of intentions, days or weeks might slip by in which we haven’t used any of our parenting tools. If these tools make sense to you, you might try calendaring them into your phone or computer, even setting the alarm clock on your phone as a reminder or writing yourself notes placed in strategic locations.

Your Child's Health Puzzle

Your child's Health Puzzle has three different pieces.

1. Exercise.
2. Get enough rest.
3. And eat healthy foods.

Each of these pieces is vital. Together they make for a healthy child. If one piece is missing, then your child's health is compromised. Too much junk food, lack of exercise or staying up too late can lead to your child getting sick.

Can you do everything in your power and still have your child experienced poor health? Of course. Some things are out of your control but there are plenty of things you can control. Why not stack the odds in favor of your child's health?

As parents, we tend to overcomplicate things – including our children's health. In most cases, it's so much simpler than we make it. We can keep our children pretty healthy if we stick to a few basic concepts.

Sometimes it's difficult to know how to begin to build the Health Puzzle with our children. No worries. The Health Puzzle is simple, practical and fun! You can have a great time teaming up with your child to be healthy. Here are some practical, simple ideas to complete your child's Health Puzzle.

Health Puzzle Piece 1 - Exercise

This section on exercise probably wouldn't have been necessary thirty years ago. Just like many of you, I spent my childhood outside riding my bike, climbing trees or playing in the street. There was no need for public service announcements to tell children to exercise.

When I was a child, there weren't as many overweight children. We didn't have video games, computers or cable TV.

In the last three decades, I've witnessed the deteriorating level of physical fitness in children firsthand. My research shows that children spend an average of five hours a day on media-driven activities. Also, that one-third of children in America are overweight or obese and that these children are much more likely to develop serious illnesses.

Early on in my martial arts program, I used the same warm-up in my classes for all my students, regardless of level. Over the years, however, I've found it necessary to lessen the physical requirements for beginners because they're starting at a much lower level of fitness. This is due to the increasing lack of exercise in children's daily lives.

Description

Engage with your child in general physical activity. Not only is general physical activity important to keep your child at the right weight, physical activity is essential to your child's development emotionally, intellectually, socially and physically. In short, children need to keep their bodies moving. The human body thrives on movement and a child's developing body especially so. Children need to run, jump, climb, fall, crawl, roll and cartwheel to develop correctly.

Exercising can be a great opportunity to play and interact with your child. Make it fun. Everyone needs to play, regardless of age. Having a child is a fabulous excuse to do just that...to be a kid again.

Your child needs at least one hour of physical exercise each day. Do your best to incorporate activities for the entire family into your everyday. Instead of making exercise something your child has to do, make it something you and your child get to do. And remember that your child's long-term health is in the balance. Your attitude and example will set the tone. You're wired to protect your child. What better protection can a dad provide than to make sure his child grows up healthy and strong? What can you, do to help your child develop a lifelong habit of exercise for a healthy future?

Tool : The possibilities for incorporating exercise into your and your child's daily routines are endless. Come up with a few ideas of your own and then brainstorm with your child. Create a simple plan. The key is to keep it simple and be consistent.

Tips:

Limit access to media. How you spend your time has a lot to do with how much you exercise. You can encourage more exercise simply by eliminating or lessening access to media at home. Make sure your plan includes the types of exercise you and your child choose to do, but also what you need not to do in order to be more active and fit.

Make exercise fun. Probably the single two most important factors in developing a healthy exercise for your family are consistency and fun. If it isn't fun, your child will not want to do it. Team up with your child to design exercise or "play" time. The gift of exercise is one of the most valuable gifts you can give your child.

Power Walking. Instead of driving to the park or to the store, power walk. Power walking is "to walk with attitude." Your child will respond right away if you ask him to have attitude. You can make it into a game. Time your walks. Each time, try to match or beat your last time. For example, "Alright kids, the last time we walked to the park it took twelve minutes. Let's see if we can do it today in ten."

Bicycling. When your children are younger, go on frequent rides with them. It doesn't have to be an all-day expedition. Even a short ride around the neighborhood on a regular basis can do wonders for everyone in your family. As your child gets older, encourage him to turn off the TV and video games and get out on her bike. She might need a push at first but once she gets outside you probably won't see her for a while. Children need to be reminded. Changing habits takes practice. And it's easy to forget how much

more fun bike riding is than watching television, at least until going outside becomes second nature.

Swimming. Swimming is a great activity. Nearly every child loves to swim. The challenge with swimming is that it seasonal for most of us. If you don't have a pool of your own, I'm sure you know where there is one. Make this part of your family's summer routine.

Bleachers. Take your kids to the high school football stadium in your town to walk or run up and down the bleachers. You can make it fun by taking turns hiding a prop or toy around the bleachers. Once one person finds the prop, he hides it somewhere else and the next person gets to look for it. It's a treasure hunt with sweat.

Playground Equipment. Even the most addicted video gamer will have a great time on the jungle gym once he gets there. The trick is to get there. You can have a blast making up goofy games like "zombie tag."

Obstacle Course. An obstacle course can be indoors or outdoors. If you're indoors, design a course around the house that includes over the couch, under the table and around carefully placed chairs. Outdoors, you have a lot more options based on your environment. You can go under the picnic table, around the car, up the ladder and through the trees. You might want to use a stopwatch and time each round through the obstacle course against your child's previous times. Your child will enjoy competing against himself. Siblings are already competitive enough though. Comparing your children's times will just cause animosity.

Classic Childhood Games. Tag, hide-and-seek, jump rope and hopscotch are fun regardless of your age. Get the whole family involved. These games are so much fun that it will be hard to stop once you get started.

The Family Fitness Challenge. Devise a family fitness challenge that everyone can participate in one a week. It could be a one or two mile run, a mountain hike, a bike ride or a set of calisthenics upon which everyone has

agreed in advance. Have your child help pick next week's family fitness challenge.

TV Time. Once your children are old enough and you've taught them some basic exercise routines (push-ups, crunches, air squats, jump rope, etc.)

Challenge them to exercise during every commercial of a one-hour program. It may not sound like much but it's amazing how many push-ups you can do in 16-minutes of commercials. If you're not convinced, try it for yourself first.

Household Chores. Encourage your child to do his chores with vigor. Add some music to keep things alive. It's fun to mix exercises with the chores sometimes. For example, your child could vacuum for 2-minutes and then do 10 jumping jacks.

Why Your Child Needs Martial Arts

The benefits of enrolling your child in a martial arts program extend far beyond self-defense. Martial arts will help your child in nearly every aspect of her life. It will improve your child's health, fitness, athletic abilities, confidence, concentration and behavior.

Does this sound too good to be true? It's not. Many experts agree that martial arts are good medicine for the escalating childhood obesity, increased violence at school, and deterioration of the family structure.

There is a reason why Dr. Phil, Jillian Michaels (expert from the television show, The Biggest Loser), Tony Robbins, pediatricians, child physiologists and educators the world over all recommend martial arts as one of the most valuable activities in which your child can participate.

The Benefits of Martial Arts

Self-Defense. The self-defense benefits of martial arts could be described as practice the fight so that you don't have to. As your child trains he will become more confident in his ability to defend himself. As this confidence increases the need to defend himself will decrease naturally because he will begin to carry himself in a more confident manner. He'll project confidence to everyone around him and will be less vulnerable to predatory behavior. Martial arts training includes strategic or preventative self-defense as well as physical self-defense. Your child will learn how to recognize potentially dangerous situations and how to avoid confrontations.

Athletic Enhancement. There is a reason why every professional sports team in every major sport supplements their training with martial arts. Martial arts training offers several advantages. It is amazingly effective in enhancing general coordination because it uses every part of the body in a balanced way. Upper body, lower body, right side, left side, forward movement, lateral movement and rotational movement are all included in martial arts training.

Fitness. Fitness has three components: strength, flexibility and endurance. Martial arts training demands a balance between the three. Therefore, a child who trains in martial arts will find her weakest areas greatly improved. Because of her greater balance of strength, flexibility and endurance your child will be less likely to injure herself while participating in other athletic activities.

Health. While martial arts training improves health for people of all ages, it is especially effective for children. It's great exercise and it's fun so kids don't mind doing it. And part of martial arts training includes discussing diet and lifestyle habits so children who grow up training develop healthy habits that stick with them for life.

Concentration. Very few activities engage the mind, body and spirit more than martial arts. Because of this a child's ability to concentrate is greatly enhanced by his martial arts training. He'll bring this ability to concentrate to other activities, too.

Respect and Courtesy. Martial arts techniques are, by nature, designed to injure others when applied. Because of this, martial arts instructors greatly stress the importance of respect, courtesy and restraint. It has been proven time and again that children who are skilled in martial arts tend to be extremely respectful, considerate and composed.

Confidence. Martial arts training always increases a child's confidence for two specific reasons. First, there are no bench sitters. Every child participates and competes against her own potential rather than against the other students. Second, martial arts training is built on the concept of setting your child up for success by giving her a series of realistic, short-term goals that she can attain quickly while keeping her focused on an exciting long-term goal. Each time she experiences success her confidence improves until she begins to believe that she can accomplish just about anything with hard work and dedication.

Keeping It Simple

More an art than a science, raising children is both challenging and incredibly rewarding. Each child comes into this world with his own agenda. Oftentimes our children throw curves at us that we never saw coming and, when that happens, it is hard to know exactly what to do.

I'm reminded of a story I once heard about a famous landscape architect, a master. He traveled the world creating amazing gardens and landscapes at prestigious locations. On days when he felt particularly challenged, he would pull out a mysterious piece of paper from his pocket, glance at it, nod, fold it back up and get to work with renewed inspiration and energy, resulting in another masterpiece. People were astounded by his brilliant designs that would seem to appear from thin air after he studied that piece of paper.

Eventually, the master died. His curious colleagues approached his widow and asked to see that mysterious piece of paper as they were convinced it contained the secret to his success.

After much to-do, she allowed them one glance at the old slip of paper. As they gathered around, she carefully unfolded the paper. They looked at the writing. It simply said, "When laying sod, always put the green side up."

I love this story! It reminds me how easy it is to overcomplicate things, especially parenting. In my experience, the answers to most children's health and fitness challenges are in *HealthierKids*, *SmarterKids*. We only have to remember to call upon them in times of need.

I hope you'll find *HealthierKids*, *SmarterKids* to be a valuable resource for years to come.