

Developing a healthy lifestyle by Michael Grose

The benefits of children's healthy living habits are well documented. Healthy kids learn better, have more positive social interactions and have greater potential for success in life.

Children learn what they live so the best place to learn about a healthy lifestyle is at home. The family is the strongest presence in the life of a child, so the habits that a child practices at home become the foundation for life as a teenager and beyond. The school can teach children about good health but the lessons have more strength when practised at home each day.

Parents and caregivers can encourage children to be more active by having them participate in family activities as well as sports. Following are some ideas you can use to keep your kids healthy:

Limit the amount of children's television, computer and electronic games usage to a maximum of two hours a day.

Very little physical exertion is needed to watch TV or use other electronic equipment so for the sake of fitness their use of these needs to be limited. One third of Australian children would prefer to play computer games than play outside so parents may have to be assertive and, at times, over-zealous but so be it.

Encourage children to walk and play outside. Most children would get their required minimum two hours of exercise a week by walking or riding their bikes to school. This is a contentious issue but a recent poll revealed that 60 per cent of Australian 6 – 13 year olds would like to walk to school but only 30 per cent actually do.

Keep unhealthy food out of the trolley and include more fruit.

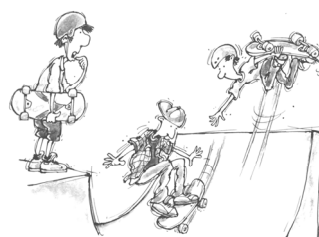
As keepers of the family purse parents have the main stake in what food goes in and what stays out of the shopping trolley. Only 43 per cent of Australian children eat fruit after school so more fruit could be a good place to start.

Parents play with their children or join them in a physical activity. It should be easy for adults to sell their children on the virtues of playing physical games outside as play comes before work in most children's dictionaries.

Make sure you and your children get sufficient sleep. Choose a reasonable bedtime that allows for nine to 12 hours sleep for a school-aged child – some teens need even more sleep than a young child!

Do as I do not as I say is the idea here. It is little use parents telling their kids to go out and play as they tuck into their second wine or they slump into the couch. Modelling is the most important tool in the armoury if we want children to develop sustained healthy eating and exercise habits. **OK**

Michael Grose is a leading parent educator, a trained teacher and author. For further ideas about raising confident kids and resilient teenagers visit www.parentingideas.com.au



Helping children and young people combat peer pressure

by Michael Grose

Children generally want to fit in to their various social groups so peer approval is a significant driver for their behaviour. For children, resisting peer influence can mean isolation or instant ostracism so it sometimes takes great strength of will to refuse to follow the crowd.

As children move toward adolescence the need to fit in with and identify with a group of peers outside their family becomes even stronger.

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Our Kids

'Helping children and young people combat peer pressure ' continued

While the increased influence of peers is a normal part of development they can sometimes use some help to resist the pressure to conform that's placed on them.

The following ideas may assist you to help children and young people resist unwanted peer pressure:

- ... **Talk about peer influence with your children.** Be open and frank about the subject. Let them know that while much of the influence of their friends is positive, some is not in their best interests
- ... **Help young people say no - and still save face and status among their friends.** Allow them to blame you for not letting them do something they don't feel comfortable with but can't admit to.
- ... **Encourage them to think through the consequences of their decisions.** When young people are put on the spot they should think about the risk factors involved and err on the side of caution. Encourage them to think "Is this behaviour smart? Is it in my best interests?"
- ... **Avoid making your children reliant on the approval of others, including you, as the basis of their self-esteem.** Allow them to feel comfortable holding opinions and views that are different to yours. Those children who constantly look for the approval of others are more suspect to negative peer influence.
- ... **Avoid criticising your children's friends, as he or she may take it personally.** Discuss your concerns and talk about behaviours rather than personalities when you discuss their choice of friends.

It is important for parents to understand the value of peer groups and also remember that peers often have a positive influence on children and young people.

OK

Michael Grose is a leading parent educator, a trained teacher and author. For further ideas about getting your family flying in the same formation visit www.parentingideas.com.au

What you should know about.....giftedness

by Dr. Geoff Crawford

Parents often ask if their child fits into the 'gifted' category. It's difficult to answer, as there is no single definition of giftedness. Your child may be gifted if he or she:

- ... Has gained skills such as walking, reading or maths at a very early age
- ... Excels at a wide range of areas
- ... Has some specific deficits – e.g. poor practical skills or social problems
- ... Displays a self-generated passion in an academic area
- ... Undertakes research in an area of interest
- ... Accumulates a library of knowledge or information about a topic or theme
- ... Seeks out like-minded individuals
- ... Is disruptive at school due to boredom or has difficulty communicating with peers

Most parents would match at least one of the behaviours on the list with their child. If you match all of the above then your child may be talented but not necessarily gifted. He or she may be a determined, hard worker who is seeking a goal.

There is no single measure for giftedness and there is a gradation from good to excellent to gifted. If a child taught himself to read or begins writing piano concertos at the age of six then the answer is easy. For most children the answer is problematic. If you think your child is gifted the best solution is to have him or her tested by an expert group such as the CHIP (Children with High Intellectual Potential) Foundation
www.chipfoundation.org.au

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Dr. Geoff Crawford is director (professional communication) of Access Academix who provide a range of mentorship activities for gifted children. He can be contacted at access@academix.com.au or (03) 9812 7280.