Building Strong Families

Relationships: Resolve to Promote Self-Esteem

Children begin to understand who they are very early in life. Parents and caregivers can help children develop healthy self-esteem by showing them love and support. To build stronger relationships with your children in 2008, here are a few ways to build this self-esteem.

› When you children misbehave, focus on the behavior and how it was wrong, not how your child was wrong. Let your child know you love him no matter what.

› Encourage your child with hugs and kisses.

› Allow children to think and work creatively and help them to grow with new experiences. When a child feels confident in who they are, their self-esteem is much higher.

› Listen to your child and show him/her support.

› Let children help do things that they can do safely even when you are able to do these things faster and better.

› Listen to your children and show them that you care about their ideas and concerns.

› Always offer unconditional love and the gift of your time.

› And finally, be a positive role model for your child. Do only those things that you wish for your children to do. Remember, kids are like mirrors - they do and say those things which they see or hear.
Holidays the Healthy Way

The holidays are in full swing, which means lots of family, fun and food. But it doesn’t have to mean extra pounds. Even holiday treats can fit into a healthy eating plan. The key is balance and moderation. To avoid holiday weight gain, balance the calories you consume with the calories you burn. Physical activity and moderate food choices will help. The tips below are gifts you can give yourself and your family to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Let the Holiday Spirit Move You!
If you make your family time active, you will become healthier and have fun doing so. Be adventurous and try something new, but also choose something you enjoy.
• Stick to your regular exercise routine as much as possible. Especially during the holidays, plan your physical activity routine in advance. Mark it on the calendar and consider it as important as any other appointment. Get at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity daily, and more if possible.
• Cut back on your family’s television viewing time. Limit the number of hours your children spend playing video games. Instead make a new holiday tradition. Take a brisk walk around the neighborhood to see the holiday decorations or grab your bike, walking shoes or snow shoes and head out to the nearest walking trail.
• Play some backyard football or Frisbee with children and adults before the big holiday dinner or during football half-time.
• Dance or exercise to your favorite holiday music.
• Make a New Year’s resolution with friends to start a daily walking group.
• Be physically active to avoid or relieve the holiday stress.

Healthy Holiday Eating
• Overcome the urge to overeat. Standing by the buffet table is temptation to overeat. Remember, holiday parties are a time to celebrate with family and friends, not just food.
• It’s easy to overindulge during the holidays. Make sure to watch portion sizes and select one or two of your favorites from the host of tempting foods.
• Leave those extra calories behind – limit your intake of foods high in fat or added sugar.
• If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.

Holidays the Healthy Way
Holidays are a great time to enjoy a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables.
• Bowls of fresh fruit are a festive and sweet substitute for candy or chocolates.
• Remember, calories add up! This is especially true during the holidays when we snack more.
• You’ve tried the leftover turkey sandwich; now try the leftover turkey salad! Add a few pieces of turkey to a generous portion of mixed greens, cucumbers, mushrooms, peppers, or any other vegetables you like. Sprinkle with dried cranberries for that authentic holiday taste.
• Check out http://cdc.gov/5aday for great ideas to serve your guests a variety of fruits and vegetables!

A Present Packed with a Colorful Variety
• For a great holiday gift, try going to your farmer’s market or grocery store and selecting fresh fruits and vegetables. Place all your tasty treats in a basket, and you have a present packed with tasty fruits and vegetables.

Bringing a Dish to the Holiday Party
In our "oh-so-busy" world, holiday entertaining is often a communal affair, with friends and relatives contributing to the feast. But bringing a dish to share can be an unintentional invitation to unwanted guests – bacteria that can cause foodborne illnesses. To be sure these party crashers don’t make it through the door, The Soap and Detergent Association, offers some tips for traveling safely with prepared foods.

Prepare with Care - Safe food travel starts with safe food preparation. That means clean hands, utensils and food preparation surfaces. Use hot water and soap to effectively get rid of bacteria. Thoroughly wash your hands before and after food preparation. Never ever go directly from working with raw meat, poultry or seafood to working with other foods without washing your equipment – cutting boards, dishes and utensils – and your hands with soap and hot water. If you
don't do this, you run the risk of transferring the bacteria that live in these uncooked foods to other items on your menu.

**Cooked Foods** - Divide cooked foods, including meats, gravy, dressing, stews and casseroles, into small containers and refrigerate or freeze immediately, as appropriate to the item. Using multiple small containers, rather than one large one, has many benefits. Cooked food will cool or freeze faster and more evenly, and can be thawed or thoroughly reheated in less time. When it's time to travel, smaller containers are easier to fit in a cooler. And don't worry if they take up more space – that's a good thing. A fully packed cooler maintains its cold temperatures longer than one that is partially filled.

**Uncooked Foods** - Even uncooked foods require some special attention. If you're bringing raw fruits or vegetables, remember that they don't receive the safety benefits that cooking provides.

- Before purchasing or packing these items, check for visual signs of spoilage. These include unusual odors or colors, or shriveled, moldy or bruised items.

- If possible, rinse just before preparing and serving. Use running water. If standing water is used, the microorganisms that have been rinsed off one item can be transferred to another.

- If you need to bring them ready-to-eat, rinse, then blot dry with a paper towel and pack in containers or plastic bags. Make sure there is no excess liquid in the containers. Store them in the refrigerator until it's time to leave, and then pop them in the cooler.

**Pack Safely** - Pack the cooler as close to departure time as possible.

- If the cooler is only partially filled, pack the remaining space with more ice packs or plastic bags filled with ice cubes. Use sealable bags so that if the ice begins to melt, the liquid is contained.

- Once the cooler is packed, consider the best location in your car. If you are traveling in a warm climate with the air conditioner running, keep the cooler in the car; in a colder climate with the heat running, store it in the trunk.

*Source: The Soap and Detergent Association*

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**Food Hotlines**

- **USDA’s Meat and Poultry Hotline** - (888)674-6854 from 10 am to 4 pm Eastern Time, Monday through Friday. All other times, you can get an automated message system that lets you pick topics and get general information. Closed weekends and holidays, except Thanksgiving. Special hours of operation on Thanksgiving are 8 am to 2 pm, Eastern Time.

- **Reynolds Turkey Tips Line** - (800)745-4000 Open through December 31st, 24 hours day, 7 days a week.

- **Butterball Turkey Talk Line** - (800) BUTTERBALL (800-288-8373) Available November 8th through December 25th - Weekdays 8 am to 6 pm CST; Saturday and Sunday, 8 am to 6 pm CST; Thanksgiving Day - 6 am to 6 pm CST.

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**Ensuring a Calm, Bright Holiday Season**

Strands of holiday lights seem innocent enough; but when too many are plugged into a single outlet, you run the risk of overloading a circuit. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, 6,000 people are injured by holiday decorations and accidents involving Christmas trees each year. The Leviton Institute urges consumers to use caution both when decorating their homes for the holidays or leaving home for a holiday vacation and offers the following safety tips:
1. **Avoid Circuit Overloads** - Signs of an overloaded circuit include lights that flicker or dim, an outlet or switch that feels warm to the touch, and a tripped circuit or blown fuse. Never plug more than three strands of lights into one another or into a single extension cord. If a strand of lights, or an extension cord feels warm to the touch, unplug some of your decorations or use a thicker extension cord.

2. **Check Decorations and Wiring** - Always check the condition of each light strand before you use it. Check for broken or cracked sockets, loose connections, and frayed or cut insulation. Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. And always be sure to turn off your lights when going to sleep or leaving the house.

3. **Follow Rating Guidelines** - Outdoors, use only lights rated for outdoor use; and indoors, those designed to be used inside. Make sure outdoor lights are plugged into a GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter) receptacle, preferably one with a weatherproof cover. Another option is to purchase an inexpensive extension cord set that has a built-in GFCI receptacle. When connecting the lights, first plug the GFCI cord set into the outdoor outlet. Next plug your extension cords and holiday lights into the GFCI cord set. GFCI cord sets are available at hardware stores and home centers for approximately $25.

4. **Protecting Your Children** - String the lowest strand of holiday lights out of the reach of infants and toddlers and avoid putting small, breakable ornaments on lower branches. Installing outlet caps over exposed outlets will prevent your child from coming in contact with the receptacle. Keep extension cords out of the way so they can’t be pulled, stepped on or tripped over.

5. **Protect Your Home** - If you are going out of town this holiday season, make sure you protect your property from burglary and theft. The number of burglaries rises dramatically during the holiday season. There are many steps homeowners can take to protect their homes. Most are simple, like installing deadbolts on all outside doors and making sure doors and windows are securely locked before leaving home. Adequate nighttime outdoor lighting is an important deterrent that will make your house less attractive to a burglar. Install inexpensive motion detectors. These automatically turn on lights when human presence is detected anywhere within their sensing range, and turn them off once the person leaves. Use timers inside your home to turn room lights, a radio, and even the TV on or off when you’re away.

By following these tips you can protect your home and family and ensure that all will be calm and bright during the holidays.

Source: Helpful Hints on Home Electricity, Vol. 10, Fall Safety Issue.

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**Five Ways to Get a Jump Start on Your Taxes**

Earlier is better when it comes to working on your taxes. Taxpayers are encouraged to get a head start on tax preparation, especially since early filers avoid the last minute rush and get their refunds sooner. Here are five easy ways to get a good jump on your taxes long before the April deadline is here:

1. **Gather your records in advance.** Make sure you have all the records you need, including W-2s and 1099s. Don’t forget to save a copy for your files.

2. **Take your time.** Don’t forget to leave room for a coffee break when filling out your tax return as rushing can mean making a mistake.

3. **Double-check your math and verify all Social Security numbers.** These are among the most common errors found on tax returns.

4. **Get the fastest refund.** You will receive your refund faster by filing early and choosing direct deposit.

5. **Don’t panic.** If you have a problem or a question, remember the IRS is there to help. Try the IRS Web site at IRS.gov or call the IRS customer service number at 1-800-829-1040.

Source: Internal Revenue Service, Washington, DC