

BACK TO THE BASICS IN PARENTING

As a mother of four and a Social Worker for Northern Gateway Public Schools, I am constantly reading, learning, listening and researching the best information to help me be a better parent and more effective social worker. I have pulled together from a few different articles on basic parenting advice that is simple and easy to follow.

1. **LET YOUR KIDS FAIL**

To learn self-sufficiency, kids need to occasionally dust themselves off (literally and figuratively) without your help. "Most parents know what their children are capable of but step in to make things easier for them," says Sheri Noga, the author of *Have the Guts to Do It Right: Raising Grateful and Responsible Children in an Era of Indulgence*. Remember: Long-term benefits trumps momentary discomfort. For example, teaching your child how to wash, dry and fold clothes is stressful, but a teenager who knows how to do their own laundry is a great thing! Before you rush in to help with any physical task, ask yourself: "Is my child in real danger?" Then apply that question to other challenges (the social studies poster due tomorrow) Does your child have the necessary skills (like dexterity and balance) or simple necessities like adequate sleep and a snack. Yes? Time to back off and see what happens.

2. **ABIDE BY THE THREE RULES OF HOMEWORK**

Rule #1: "Do the hardest thing first," says Ted Theodorou, a middle-school social studies teacher in Fairfax County, Virginia.

Rule #2: Put away the phone. Homework time can't always be totally tech free, but it can at least be free of text messages, Snapchat and Instagram!

Rule #3: As soon as assignments are finished, load up the backpack for tomorrow and place it by the door. This is a clear three-step process that kids can internalize, so there's less nagging from you (Yes!).

3. **MEMORIZE THE ACRONYM H.A.L.T.**

Think: is your child Hungry, Agitated, Lonely or Tired? I don't know about your children, but if mine are any of these things, or worse, ALL of them, I am in for a battle!

4. **BE STRICT ON BEDTIME**

Lack of sleep is often the culprit for difficulty listening to detailed instructions, focusing on planned activities or being slow to react to a question. It also inhibits time management and task prioritization, Dr. Judith Owens M.D. says, coauthor of "Take Charge of Your Child's Sleep". Because of this, a child might miss out on information learned at school.

5. **LET THEM READ WHAT THEY WANT**

Don't worry so much about what your child is reading, if comic books or what you may think is a "silly" series is what gets your child hooked on reading, it's okay! Read to your child, even if they are older. Let them see you read. Make reading part of your daily routine. Visit your public library.

6. **MODEL BRAVE BEHAVIOUR**

Want confident kids? They will be less likely to be easily flustered if they see you taking healthy

risks. "A lot of adults won't go to a movie solo because they would be embarrassed to be seen sitting alone. So do it, then talk to your kids about it," says David Allyn, the author of *I Can't Believe I Just Did That*. Recently, I walked into the men's public bathroom, when a gentleman was using the urinal! When I told my teenager what I did, she was mortified! "Weren't you embarrassed, mom??" I answered, "Not really, I thought it was a funny mistake. No point in being embarrassed!" Maybe she will be able to giggle, instead of feeling embarrassed, when it happens to her.

7. SELECTIVE EATING BOOTCAMP

Tired of finicky food preferences? Try a few of these suggestions:

- 1) Take 3 bites before you say you don't like something.
- 2) Let your child choose their own portions, to give them some control.
- 3) Let your child help plan the menu.
- 4) Let your child help you in the kitchen, as safely as possible!
- 5) Eat together as a family, without any electronics.
- 6) Make ONE meal, not separate meals, but with several choices.

8. PAY ATTENTION ESPECIALLY TO THE ADOLESCENCE

According to a study published in *Developmental Psychology*, **14 years old** is when many kids start to resist peer influence and flex the think-for-myself muscle, rather than simply following the leader. Do you want to help strengthen that muscle at any age? Put screens aside, look your child in the eye and ask, "What's new with your friends?" This will (hopefully) give you a chance to decode what's happening behind the scenes and offer support.

9. THE CHORE CONFLICT: IS IT WORTH THE STRUGGLE?

Even though it is more difficult at the time to persist in having children do chores, kids benefit from the experience. Research indicates that children who have a set of chores have higher self-esteem, are more responsible, are better able to deal with frustration and delay gratification, all of which contribute to greater success in school. Furthermore, research by Marty Rossman, from the University of Minnesota, shows that involving children in household tasks at an early age can have a positive impact later in life. In fact, says Rossman, "the best predictor of young adults' success in their mid-20's was that they participated in household tasks when they were three or four."

This article was submitted by Tammy Charko BA, BSW, RSW. Tammy is Northern Gateway Public School's Division Social Worker. She is a support for schools, students, parents and caregivers to encourage success in school. Tammy advocates for students and provides a link between the student and other supports within the community. Tammy has been a social worker for nearly 20 years and is a mother to 4 children, 3 of which are teenagers.

Sources: www.parenting-ed.org; www.realsimple.com; www.parents.com; www.ahaparenting.com; www.healthstandnutrician.com; www.centerforparentingeducation.org