



# The Parental Involvement Connection

## Home & School: Together We Can Make a Difference

December, 2008

### PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT NEWSLETTER

Issue XVI

#### Moments with Margaret



As a parent, you automatically accept the role of a leader. You have the ability to model for your children the way to live life by setting a positive example. To quote Jon Gordon, "Being a leader is not just about what you do but what you can inspire, encourage, and empower others to do."

A valuable lesson to teach your children is to develop a "servant's heart." If you truly want your children to understand the importance of doing for others, it's not enough to just talk about it. Lee Meyerhoff Hendler was raised by parents who were well known for their charity work. She said, "My parents never made a point of lecturing us on what they were doing. They taught by example. We knew to do what we saw our parents doing: taking responsibility for the community in which they lived." There was a strong belief that charity doesn't just mean giving away money; it also means giving your time.

As a family, there are many opportunities in your community to volunteer and help others. Some examples are:

- ♦ Pick up trash at a park, playground or beach.
- ♦ Get involved in building, repairing or renovating efforts for low-income or elderly.
- ♦ Work at a food bank or soup kitchen as a family.
- ♦ Take food to homebound people and visit with them.
- ♦ Volunteer at the local animal shelter.

Whatever you choose to do, volunteering and community service can benefit both the community and your family. What a wonderful time of year to serve others. Get involved today!



#### Love Giving

Someone taught you how to love,  
and probably didn't know it.  
And in return, with every day,  
It's now your turn to show it.

When you love, you give a gift,  
And when you're gone it stays  
To be passed on by the ones you loved  
To make someone else's day.

So remember someone who loved you,  
And show how much you care,  
By sharing all the love they gave  
With people everywhere.

When you give away your love,  
That doesn't mean it's gone.  
Love will last forever,  
so open your heart...  
and pass it on.

Author Unknown

"Sometimes we're so concerned about giving our children what we never had growing up, we neglect to give them what we did have growing up."

Dr. James Dobson

## Everything We Do

We may not always realize that everything we do  
 Affects not only our lives but touches others too.  
 A single happy smile can always brighten up the day  
 For anyone who happens to be passing by your way.  
 And a little bit of thoughtfulness that shows someone you care  
 Creates a ray of sunshine for both of you to share.  
 Yes, every time you offer someone a helping hand,  
 Every time you show a friend you understand.  
 Every time you have a kind and gentle word to give,  
 You help someone to find beauty in this precious life we live.  
 For happiness brings happiness and loving ways bring love,  
 And giving is the treasure that contentment is made of.



Author Unknown

## Conversation Starters

Want to get your kids talking? Below are some questions to stimulate conversation between parents and children. Some are fun questions and some are serious, but as a parent the answers can help you better understand your child and encourage him/her to open up to you. Truly listen to the answers to improve your relationship and make sure your son or daughter feel you are interested in what he/she has to say.

- ◆ Today, the best part of my day was \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◆ What is the most important thing to you in the world?
- ◆ Have you ever been bullied or threatened? Have you ever taken part in bullying?
- ◆ Some things we can do together this weekend instead of watching TV are \_\_\_\_\_.
- ◆ If you could change one thing about me, it would be \_\_\_\_\_.

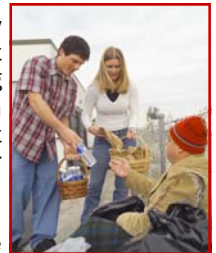
Watch for more Conversation Starters in each issue of *The Parental Involvement Connection*.

## What Kids Can Learn From Volunteering

If volunteering begins at an early age, it can become part of kids' lives—something they might just expect and want to do.

It can teach them:

- ◆ **A sense of responsibility.** By volunteering, kids and teens learn what it means to make and keep a commitment. They learn how to be on time for a job, do their best, and be proud of the results. But they also learn that, ultimately, we're all responsible for the well-being of our communities.
- ◆ **That one person can make a difference.** A wonderful, empowering message for kids is that they're important enough to have an impact on someone or something else.
- ◆ **The benefit of sacrifice.** By giving up a toy to a less fortunate child, a child learns that sometimes it's good to sacrifice. Cutting back on recreation time to help clean up a beach tells kids that there are important things besides ourselves and our immediate needs.
- ◆ **Tolerance.** Working in community service can bring kids and teens in touch with people of different backgrounds, abilities, ethnicities, ages, education and income levels. They'll learn that even the most diverse individuals can be united by common values.
- ◆ **Job skills.** Community service can help young people decide on their future careers. Are they interested in the medical field? Hospitals and clinics often have teenage volunteer programs. Do they love politics? Kids can work on the real campaigns of local political candidates. Learning to work as a team member, taking on leadership roles, setting project goals—these are all skills that can be gained by volunteering and will serve kids well in any future career.
- ◆ **How to fill idle time wisely.** If kids aren't involved in traditional after-school activities, community service can be a wonderful alternative.



Source: [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)



Your children need  
 your presence more  
 than your presents.

Jesse Jackson



### After a Disaster: Things Parents Can Do to Help Children Cope

- ◆ Talk with the children about how they are feeling and listen without judgment.
- ◆ Let the children take their time to figure things out and to show their feelings. Do not rush them or pretend that they do not think or feel as they do.
- ◆ Help them learn to use words that express their feelings, such as happy, sad, angry, mad and scared. Just be sure the words fit their feelings – not yours.
- ◆ Assure fearful children that you will be there to take care of them. Reassure them many times.
- ◆ Stay together as a family as much as possible.
- ◆ Go back as soon as possible to former routines or develop new ones. Maintain a regular schedule for the children and include them in planning routines and outings.
- ◆ Reassure the children that the disaster was not their fault in any way.
- ◆ Remember to take care of yourself so you can take care of your children.
- ◆ Children should not be expected to be brave or tough, or to “not cry.”
- ◆ Allow the children to grieve losses.
- ◆ Do not give children more information than they can handle about the disaster. Limit their exposure to additional trauma, including news reports.
- ◆ Do not be afraid to “spoil” children in this period after a disaster.
- ◆ Children cope better when they are healthy, so be sure your children get needed healthcare as soon as possible.
- ◆ Make sure the children are getting healthy meals and eating enough food and getting enough rest.
- ◆ Let them have some control, such as choosing what outfit to wear or what meal to have for dinner.
- ◆ Help your children know that others love them and care about them by visiting, talking on the phone or writing to family members, friends, and neighbors.
- ◆ Encourage the children to give or send pictures they have drawn or things they have written.
- ◆ Help your children regain faith in the future by helping them develop plans for activities that will take place later—next week, next month.
- ◆ Spend extra time with your children at bedtime. Read stories, rub their backs, listen to music, talk quietly about the day.
- ◆ If you will be away for a time, tell them where you are going and make sure you return or call at the time you say you will.
- ◆ Find ways to emphasize to the children that you love them.



### Standing Up to a Bully

If your child is verbally bullied, teach him or her how to respond effectively. Discuss the following strategies with your child. Practicing the strategies with you or another trusted adult will help develop the confidence to end the bullying. If the bullying is happening at school, speak to your child's classroom teacher or advisor so they can help.

#### Ignore the Bully

Teach your child to ignore the bully. Your child should not make faces, cry, sigh, or make any gesture signaling distress. Often, when bullies don't get a reaction, they stop.

#### Walk Away

Your child can choose to walk away in a confident manner—head up, back straight and with a normal walking pace. Your child needs to be aware of being followed and walk to a safer place, usually near adults. If the bully says mean things, continue to ignore and walk away.



#### Tell the Bully to “Stop”

Keeping a distance of 1-1/2 to 2 arm lengths, have your child say, “Stop!” or, “Cut it out!” Teach your child to:

1. Make eye contact.
2. Express confident body language; head up, back straight, arms down in front or on the side of the body and feet at shoulder width. No fidgeting!
3. Speak clearly—a steady tone, not too loud, too soft, whiny or sarcastic.
4. Make short statements such as, “Stop!” or “Cut it out!”
5. Then turn and walk away.

#### Go to a Trusted Adult

When other strategies fail, or there is immediate danger, tell your child to go to a trusted adult. This is not tattling; this is requesting assistance with a serious problem.

Source: [www.BalanceEducationalServices.com](http://www.BalanceEducationalServices.com)

Source: [http://www.fema.gov/kids/tch\\_aft.htm](http://www.fema.gov/kids/tch_aft.htm)

**“What children need most of all to be healthy is a parent committed to giving them unconditional love.”**

Dr. Walt Larimore

### Upcoming Workshops & Trainings

#### Learning for a “Change” Summit III

Hilton Austin Airport Hotel, Feb. 2-4, 2009

Austin, Texas

#### First Two Days: School Support

Jane Pollock

*Improving Student Learning One Principal and One Teacher at a Time*

Kevin Tutt and Michael Daggs

*Engaged Leadership: Secret to Student Success*

#### Third Day: Parental Involvement

Char Wenc

*Teachers Are Heroes Too*

For additional information and registration:

<http://www.esc16.net/dept/isserv/title1swi/index.html>

## 10 Ways to Help Your Child Succeed

### Let's talk—Talk with your child.

If we talk early and often with our children, providing them with information and behaving in ways that reflect our values and beliefs, they will come to us first before going elsewhere for information.

### Reach for the sky—Set high but realistic expectations.

Taking some time to really look at our children and notice their strengths, talents, and interests, as well as areas where they need assistance, will help them develop realistic self-expectations, thus making them feel and be successful.

### I'm OK, you're OK—Build your child's self-esteem and confidence.

As children act independently, make choices and mistakes, they learn and grow. Thinking positively about accepting our children unconditionally as they move through this process helps them develop a positive self-concept.

### An apple a day—Keep your child healthy.

It is important for children to come to school emotionally, physically, and socially healthy. When children feel good about themselves, are well rested, and well nourished they are more ready to learn.

### Parents, the first teachers—Support learning at home.

In today's changing economy the need for advanced skills and technical knowledge is growing. Showing our children that we value learning and education is important and will pay off in the long run as they mature.

### Getting connected!—Communicate with your child's school.

Frequent communication with your children's teachers and school is the key to academic success. Attending parent-teacher conferences, school events, and PTA meetings, and sending notes or e-mail messages to pertinent school staff helps foster good relationships that support your children's learning.

### Oh, the places we'll go!—Encourage exploration and discovery.

The world is your children's oyster. By encouraging your children to develop their interests and seek out opportunities to try new things, you help them make the most of the world around them.



### Circle of friends—Help your child develop good relationships.

All children want to fit in, be accepted, and feel like they belong. Helping your children develop good relationships can have a positive impact on their future development.

### Stayin' alive—Keep your child safe.

By identifying potential risks and giving clear instructions to your children on how to avoid such risks, children can side step danger by knowing what to do in threatening situations. Talking to children about safety also increases their understanding of violence and the need for practicing behaviors.

### Can I help?—Participate in community service.

Your children's knowledge and talents, while nourished in the classroom, are recognized when put to good use. Children learn valuable lessons when helping others through volunteerism and community service.

Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.

James Baldwin

## Moms

### Being a Mommy

Are you too busy being a mother to be a mommy? No matter how old our kids are, they still need a mommy — even if they haven't called us that in 10 years! Being a mother can have us going in a hundred different directions at once. Remembering that we're mommies helps us focus in one direction — on the heart of our child.

Mothers drive kids to soccer practice; mommies listen to why soccer practice was so tough. Mothers get everyone to bed; mommies spend a few extra minutes at bedtime holding their little ones — even when there are dirty dishes waiting in the sink. Mothers make sure their kids are taking the college prep classes they need; mommies know when their children need an ice cream break from studying for the SAT. The best moms know how to be mothers and mommies. This article shares the key for doing our best at both.



## Dads

### Champion Father

At three years old, Tiger Woods shot a legitimate 48 on nine holes. He then went on to become perhaps the best golfer in history. But the most impressive thing in his life isn't what he's done on the golf course, but what's been done for him at home. Tiger Woods credits an unlimited love from his parents with giving him the confidence to succeed. The heart of a champion starts with the loving heart of a father.



These tips are found at [www.FamilyFirst.net](http://www.FamilyFirst.net) and/or [www.AllProDad.com](http://www.AllProDad.com). Watch for Mom and Dad tips in each issue of the *Parental Involvement Connection*.

# 10 EASY WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR FAMILY'S EATING HABITS

Keeping up with your family's lifestyle can be quite the juggling act—there's school, work, family activities and of course, family health. What's a busy, loving parent on the run to do when you want to provide the best nutrition for your family, but don't have a lot of time?

The key to healthy eating is to be aware of food choices at every meal and snack time. Planning your family's menu might require a little extra thought and effort at first, but that doesn't mean it has to be difficult. In addition to your own ideas, try one of these tried-and-true strategies as a starting point to keep your family headed in the right direction.

## 1 WHAT'S FOR LUNCH AT SCHOOL?

Look for your school district's weekly lunch menu, or eat a meal at school with your kids. If you don't like what you see, make sure to discuss it with the local principal or foodservice director. Talk with your kids about choosing the healthier options at school meals.

## 2 CHOICE IS EVERYTHING

Let kids be part of the shopping process to help them feel more in control of their food choices, which can help them make better choices when they're on their own. Write a shopping list together with your kids, organizing it by food group, and then take them with you to the store. Be sure to include healthy snacks.



## 3 PLAN AHEAD

Meals tend to be healthier when planned. Try planning weekly menus, and keep track of the healthy meals your family likes best to "rerun" them in future menus.

## 4 TAKE IT SLOW

It takes 20 minutes for our brain to register that our body is satisfied with food. When we eat too quickly our body needs more food to be satisfied. Slow down by putting forks down between bites and swallowing one bite before taking another.

## 5 VEGGIE CAMOUFLAGE

Can't get your kids to eat more veggies? Try chopped carrots, squash, broccoli, mushrooms or celery in meatballs, lasagna, casseroles or pasta salads. Serve vegetables in a stir-fry with chicken and rice, and add tomatoes to omelets.

## 6 FRUITY TWISTS

Slip more fruit into diets by mixing them into popular foods your family already eats and likes; muffins, yogurt, oatmeal and cereal. Make a colorful dessert of chopped fruit and mix with nuts. Keep raisins or dried fruits for snacks, or make fun, creamy smoothies with fresh fruit, milk and ice.

## 7 NEW ADVENTURES

Make new food discoveries! Most of us buy the same things every time we grocery shop, so work to incorporate one new, healthy item each time. Who knows? You might find a new favorite!

## 8 DRINK SMART

Squeeze out sugar-filled sodas and serve 100% fruit juice, milk or water instead. Choose juice carefully—some juice has only 10% fruit juice, and the rest is sugar and fillers. Try strawberry or chocolate 2% reduced-fat milk, refreshing ice water or fun, fizzy carbonated water instead of soda or punch.

## 9 nature's way

Take kids on a field trip to a farmers market, or plant an herb or vegetable garden at home. Knowing that food isn't "born" on supermarket shelves builds a better appreciation of healthy, fresh foods. Call your local county extension office for ideas and tips for top growing plants in your area.

## 10 Beware of the pantry shelves

Take a look at your cabinets, fridge and pantry, and clean them out. Get rid of any old foods as well as unhealthy choices. If you want to keep some cookies or candy around, make individual-sized portions in sandwich bags instead of keeping large quantities.

TDA has several sources that should help make things easier for you to provide good nutritious choices for your family. For the latest in dietary guidelines as well as delicious, healthy recipes to prepare, you can visit the Team Nutrition Web site by the U.S. Department of Agriculture at [www.fns.usda.gov/tn](http://www.fns.usda.gov/tn). For more information regarding the foodservice program at your local school, visit [www.squaremeals.org](http://www.squaremeals.org) or call the Texas Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Division at (888) TEX-KIDS.



## Families Fighting to Fit it All In

Late night sports practices, fast-food dinners, cramming for tomorrow's schoolwork, music lessons, sports events, errands, housework, now repeat. If this routine rings familiar and you can't give anything up (right now), how do you reduce family stress? Those who've done it say the trick is to implement "family management rules."

- 1) **The Huddle:** Organize a family meeting to discuss how to make the week less stressful.
- 2) **Map It Out:** Agree on the weekly routine. Include completing homework and getting ready for school (the night before); doing chores—who, what, and when; what times activities happen; and when the lights go out for bedtime. This organizing effort will reduce stress; it won't turn you into robots. Live by a master calendar.
- 3) **Recharge:** The weekends are busy too, but find several hours of family alone time and just have fun. If it can't be all day, try only a few hours.
- 4) **Weekly Summit:** Meet to analyze and make adjustments for the following week. Pass out kudos (and cookies).

Source: Working Solutions, March 2008, Alliance Work Partners

## Enjoying the Simple Things

Author Dan Millman says, "The key to happiness isn't in seeking more, but in developing the capacity to enjoy less." How true! Enjoying the simple things and teaching your kids to do the same enlarges the soul and uncorks the wellspring of joy. Some examples are:

- ♦ Watching the sun set as a family
- ♦ Going on a picnic this weekend
- ♦ Fishing
- ♦ Bike riding
- ♦ Looking at leaves under a microscope
- ♦ Laying out in the backyard and identifying the constellations

The possibilities are endless. Commit to do one simple and fun thing with your kids for the next four weekends — and enjoy!

Source: [AllProDad.com](http://AllProDad.com)



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<http://www.esc16.net/dept/isserv/title1swi/index.html>

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