

YOUNG FAMILY NEWSLETTER



February 2006

Dear Young Family,

Have a Heart – Tips for Parents

During the month of February we see a lot of hearts in decorations, food, clothes, and cards. In your job of parenting, your heart goes into the many interactions you have with your child(ren).

Just think of one day and how many different activities and decisions you make that involve interaction between parent and child:

- Maybe you're reading to your child to help him learn about the world around him and encouraging him to want to learn to read himself,
- Going for a walk for physical activity and the fun of being together,
- Washing clothes with your child's help to role model caring for your things and how working together makes the job go faster,
- Going to the grocery store to buy nutritious food so we can prepare meals and snacks, putting a puzzle together to role model the good feeling of completing a project with someone,
- Helping your child learn about money to prepare your child for those financial decisions she will make as she gets older

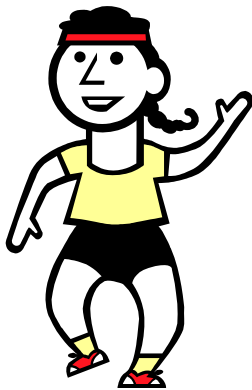
Sincerely,

Mary Wood
Family Living Agent
Buffalo/Pepin Counties

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Keeping Your Child Active . . .

- Helps children build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints
- Builds lean muscle
- Helps decrease body fat
- Helps prevent and reduce high blood pressure
- May enhance self-esteem and reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety
- May increase a child's capacity for learning as it helps teach them about their world



SHOW YOUR HEART WHEN YOU:

- Encourage your child to run, walk, ride a tricycle, dance, skate
- Run, walk, ride your bicycle, dance, and skate with your child
- Provide appropriate and safe equipment for your child
- Provide indoor activities for your child like rolling, making an obstacle course
- Help your child choose safe and organized activities when they are developmentally ready

Choosing a Lifestyle of Eating Healthy

You are a teacher and role model for your child. When you follow healthy eating habits your child sees that and will, for the most part, follow your lead. When you are shopping choose fresh vegetables and fruits and whole grain cereals and breads. Your child will see these foods in your home, watch you prepare them and maybe help, and eat what is offered.



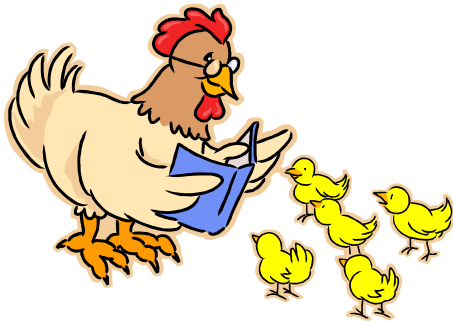
SHOW YOUR HEART WHEN YOU:

- Offer small portions to your child and allow him to ask for seconds
- Give food choices that are healthy, you can live with or have on hand, such as a banana or apple for snack
- Choose the time of meal or snack and what will be served (if a choice is not an option), and allow the child to choose how much
- Provide a relaxing atmosphere for mealtime and a chance for conversation with family members.

Reading Partners: Parents and Children

Books provide an opportunity to strengthen the relationship between you and your child. Most children love the feeling of warmth and security that comes from snuggling up by Mom or Dad while listening to a story.

Besides the pleasure you and your child experience as you snuggle with a favorite book, studies indicate that children who have books read to them at home learn to read more easily than those who don't. The more stimuli a child experiences through touch, sound, smell, and vision, the greater the positive impact on early brain development in children.



SHOW YOUR HEART WHEN YOU:

- You make sure your child is sitting where he can see the book, especially one with pictures. Of course, some children just don't like to sit still and listen. Your child may prefer to draw or play quietly while you read.
- Allow time to talk about the story as you read through the book.
- You read aloud and encourage your child to get into the act by inviting them to describe the pictures, read part of the story (if they are ready for that), or guess what will happen next.
- Encourage your child to value their books by providing a shelf, shoebox, plastic tote where they can store their books for safekeeping.

- You are ready to let your child "read" or tell you the "story."
- Continuing to read to your child even after she has learned to read on her own.

Making Money Sense

Children learn most of their money habits by observing their parents and other significant adults in their life. If they observe adults taking money out of a machine or using a credit card then that is what they will learn.

Children start learning about money when they are preschoolers. They like to get money to put in their piggy banks. They know that the more they have the more they can buy at a store. They can learn that it is important to keep money in a safe place so they know where it is when they want or need it.

As children get older they learn that they will have to make choices because they cannot buy everything. They can quickly learn that something they thought they really needed is not really that important when it come to spending their money.

SHOW YOUR HEART WHEN YOU:

- Help your child make a bank and talk about why we use banks to keep our money.
- Play store with your child so he learns the concepts of buying and selling.
- Let your child pay for small items at the store so she learns that we need money when we are buying something in the store.
- Work on a poster with your child using pictures that show what the family money is used for.

Creating Fun and Imagination with Your Child

Have you ever thought about the creativity you use to teach and entertain your child during the day? Creative play can develop cooperation, concentration, thrifty ways to provide play equipment, self-esteem, and time management for you both.

How would you answer this question – What are your favorite activities to do with your preschooler?

Some parents reported the following: Going to the movies, going to the park, reading his favorite book, make up stories, acting out songs, mixing ingredients for cookies and then eating them, dishes, making animal sounds.

What would be your answer? How would your child answer that question? If your child is talking, find out what a favorite activity may be. If you have to go by your child's actions to guess what a favorite activity is, think of activities that calm your child, keep your child's attention.

SHOW YOUR HEART WHEN YOU:

- Provide a variety of activities for your child – activities centered around music, art, building with blocks, interactive play with others, quiet times when your child wants to be to himself.
- Spend time individually with your children – if you have more than one.
- Observe a child at play before joining in. When the child is deeply involved in play, you may find that watching is the most beneficial at the time.
- Provide “parallel play” between you and your child. If your child is playing with cars and trucks, you can build a ramp for the cars to drive on.

Looking for Some Heart Healthy Breakfast Ideas During This Mid-Winter Season?

Breakfast gives you a head start on the day. Make the Hurried morning hours go more smoothly when you:

- Plan – By setting out bowls, glasses, and cereals the night before. Keep sliced fruit in the refrigerator.
- Prepare – With some grab n' go breakfast foods such as 100% juice boxes, dried or fresh fruit, trail mix, yogurt, bagels, or breakfast bars that can be eaten with little preparation or on the go.
- Offer – Something a little out of the ordinary such as a baked potato, pizza, tortilla, or English muffin.
- Change the Pace – With a weekend breakfast buffet with the children helping to plan and prepare.



Power Breakfast Ideas from Eat Smart. Play Hard.™

Rice Pudding

Mix leftover rice, low-fat yogurt, dried fruit, nuts, and cinnamon.



Fruit Salad

Mix fruit with yogurt or cottage cheese.



Pita Pizza

Fill pita bread with your favorite low-fat cheese, cooked lean meat, and vegetables. Heat in microwave.



Hot Fruit

Top canned or fresh fruit with brown sugar and nuts. Heat in oven or microwave.



Egg Burrito

Fill a soft flour tortilla with scrambled eggs, boiled potato, refried beans, or salsa.



Hot Cereal

Use quick-cooking oats and add dried or fresh fruit, nuts, and brown sugar, or add cheese or soft margarine to grits instead of butter.

Waffles, Pancakes, French Toast

Try ready-made items that can be Toasted or microwaved.



Sandwich Roll-Up

Try peanut butter and banana or jelly on a flour tortilla.

Resources:

North Dakota State University Extension Service, Reading Partners: Parents and Children

UW-Extension, Parenting the Preschooler, Joan E. LaFebvre

USDA Eat Smart. Play Hard™, Power Up With Breakfast