



District I Parenting News

Extension Nutrition Program

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Characteristics of Strong Families

Living in a family means living with constant change and change can cause stress. Some families are better than others at coping with stress. Strong families usually have a variety of common characteristics. As you read over the following traits, keep in mind that no family is perfect. Think about what can make your family stronger.



Commitment: Strong families commit themselves to promoting each member's happiness. Commitment comes from sharing meaningful experiences, from involvement to setting family goals and seeing these goals carried out.

Expressed Appreciation: Strong families do much more than feel appreciation, they express it. They let each other know through words and actions that they are special.

Time Together: Strong families work, play, eat and attend social functions together. They share chores and structure their lives so they can spend time with one another.

Good Communication Skills: In strong families, all lines of communication are open. Members put forth the effort to hear what the other person says and feels. They are comfortable voicing opinions of their own and are open to change. Though they don't always agree, they do get everything out in the open.

A Healthy Lifestyle: Proper nutrition, enough rest and exercise are essential for optimal wellness. Stress management skills, quiet time and a healthy balance between work and family are important.

When all individuals within a family function at their best, the result is a strong family.

A Positive Outlook: Strong families deal with crises in constructive ways. They search for the silver lining in each dark cloud they meet and stick together. They believe they can manage and survive any crisis that comes their way. They know it will pass and resources are available to help.

Acceptance of Individual Uniqueness: Members of strong families look beyond each other's faults and see each other's needs. Family members feel free to be themselves. They accept, appreciate and support each other as "one-of-a-kind" persons.

Involvement With Friends and Community: Strong families stay in touch with friends and relatives, are friendly with neighbors and willing to help others in time of need. They admit problems and are willing to reach out to professionals and others for help.

Forgiveness: Mistakes, misunderstandings and hurts are part of life. Healthy families teach and

House Rules That Limit TV Time

Rule #1 - Eat meals together, especially dinner, with the TV off.

Benefit: You learn more about each other's day.

Rule #2 - Rooms must be straight before the TV comes on.

Benefit: Your child may be more willing to pick up their stuff.

Rule #3 - All homework must be completed before the TV comes on.

Benefit: Your child stands a better chance of finishing their homework.

Rule #4 - No TV is the sun is shining.

Benefit: Your kids may get outside and exercise more.



Children and Stress

Are you pushing Your Child Too Hard? - Stress is a part of life and growing up, but parents need to watch for the possibility that their child has assumed too much responsibility, is overscheduled and is being pushed too hard. Children may feel pressure from within themselves, from parents, from teachers and friends and from society to participate in too many activities.



Parents should intervene when they sense something is undermining a child's physical or psychological well-being. Here are some signs that stress may be having a negative impact on a child:

- Physical symptoms, such as headaches and stomach pains.
- Restlessness, tiredness and tenseness.
- Depression and lack of communication, especially their feelings. Lack of interest in an activity that was once important, i.e. baseball or dance class.
- Grades begin to fall and he has less interest than usual in attending classes and doing homework.
- Anti-social behavior such as lying or stealing, forgets or refuses to do chores and is too dependent on the parent.

Most children need help balancing their activities. As a parent, observe your child for changes in behavior. If your child appears to be overcommitted, you can help by offering suggestions as needed. Here are some ideas to try:

- ⇒ Help your child evaluate activities that are producing a problem. For example, is it a problem with the activity itself or with something linked to the activity, such as a friend who is there?
- ⇒ If your child has too little free time, help him change his schedule to make time for relaxation and play.
- ⇒ Spend time together every day, even if it is only 10-15 minutes. This time will help you better understand your child's needs and give her the confidence sometimes needed to tell you that she wants to quit an activity.
- ⇒ Parents may want to look at their own schedules. Often a parent's hectic schedule will cause a child to be stressed or nervous about the things he is doing.
- ⇒ When a child becomes involved in an activity, it is important that parents be supportive but not pushy. A parent can offer praise and show interest by attending the activity, but allow the child the opportunity to change interests based on her desires. If you feel your child needs professional help, contact her health care provider.

Activities

Tie-Dye Easter Eggs

You Will Need

- A colander
- 10 hard-boiled white eggs
- 1/2 cup white vinegar
- Vibrant food coloring (i.e. McCormick Neon Food

Psychedelic Eggs add a fun, funky touch to a traditional basket. And the decorating technique is so simple, even the littlest egg artists can help.

1. Place several hard-boiled eggs in a colander in the kitchen sink and splash them with the vinegar.
2. Dip yellow food coloring on the eggs.
3. Gently agitate the colander for a few seconds to help the color spread. Let the color set on the eggs for 30 seconds.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 with up to two shades (any more and your colors may get muddy), allowing each to set for 30 seconds.
5. After the last color has set, give the eggs a light rinse with water and let them drain for a minute or two. Air-dry them on paper towels

