



# Role Model

Parent - Family Newsletter



January 2012

## Lead the Revolution

### How to be a Better Role Model for Your Children

**K**ids get their ideas about healthy living by watching those around them. Adult family members serve as major role models for young people through their own attitudes and actions.

According to Emily Coe, HealthTeacher’s resident expert in health behavior, children model

the attitudes and behaviors that their parents exhibit toward health. “Kids generally look to their parents for role modeling until the age of 11 or 12, and then it switches and peers become the most influential,” she said. “So parents should start role modeling from the day they’re born. It’s good to have that foundation from parents from

the get-go, because that will lay the groundwork for their choices later.”

#### What Does It Mean to Set a Good Example for Your Child?

Children need healthy, positive examples to learn how to make good choices in their own lives when they’re at school and hanging out with friends.

A lot of role modeling involves setting goals for nutrition, hygiene

and physical activity, but there is more to it than that. The ways that adult family members handle stress, anger and anxiety influence how kids react to such issues. The same is true of social health,

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which revolves around positive relationships with others.

Role modeling is not just about kids seeing positive behaviors,” Coe said. “Mostly, it involves setting up an environment so that healthier choices can be made—one that includes healthier foods, physical activity and healthy stress management.”



# Are You a Good Role Model for Your Child?

*Positive role models set life expectations and create lessons for many different areas of health and well-being. The following checklist can help bring awareness to what you do well and what you need to work on to be an even better role model for your children.*

## NUTRITION

### Do you serve fruit and/or vegetables with every meal?

✓ Making fruits and vegetables an everyday staple helps children develop healthier eating habits.

### Does your child enjoy nutritious meals with you that include several food groups?

✓ According to Coe, studies suggest that parents' food preferences directly influence their kids' tastes. If you eat nutritious foods, your kids will be more likely to emulate you.

### Do you understand and pay attention to portion sizes?

✓ Pay attention to proper portion sizes. Eat slowly and stop when you're full. Keep food on the stove instead of on the table to keep your family from loading up on seconds or thirds.

### Do you keep healthy snacks easily available in the house?

✓ Convenience generally wins when kids grab a snack. Keep the healthiest cereals and snacks at the front of the pantry, so they grab those first.

### Do you eat on 10-inch dinner plates?

✓ Smaller plates help in two ways—they keep portions smaller and make you feel fuller by seeing a full plate.

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

### Do you limit screen time?

✓ The American Academy of Pediatrics says that children 2 and older shouldn't spend more than two hours each day watching TV, playing video games or using the computer. Turn

the gadgets off and do something active. Play or go for a walk.

### Do you lead an active lifestyle and make time for exercise?

✓ A Center for Disease Control study found that youth learn a lot about physical activity from their families. Kids are more likely to be physically active if their parents frequently engage in physical activity.

### Do you build movement into your family's daily routine?

✓ Be creative! There are many ways to incorporate movement into your family's routine. For example: Take a walk together. At the mall or grocery, take a parking spot that is furthest from the store. Play a game of charades as a family. Let your kids show you how to Double Dutch. Plant some flowers.

## DRUGS & ALCOHOL

### If you drink or smoke, do you talk about the risks of alcohol and cigarettes?

✓ Make it a point to talk to your kids about the health risks if you drink or smoke in front of your kids, so they don't decide to copy you.

### What kind of attitude do you convey toward alcohol and cigarettes?

✓ Studies show that parents' actions, attitudes and opinions on smoking and alcohol have a great deal of influence on whether kids use them later on.

### Have you talked with your child about the effects of substance abuse?

✓ Lay a good foundation now so your children make wise decisions with



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their peers, such as not riding with a driver who has been drinking.

## SOCIAL HEALTH

### Do you talk to your kids about their friends and school relationships?

✓ Children often need advice and support to develop positive relationships with other their peers, especially with difficult ones.

### Are you a good friend?

✓ Do you keep commitments, or do you cancel at the last minute? Do you show positive support to your friends? Children get their cues from family members on how to maintain healthy friendships.

### Do you treat your child with the courtesy that you would treat a friend?

✓ It's like the Golden Rule: The way you treat your children teaches them how they should expect to be treated and, in turn, treat others.

### Do you read to your child?

✓ Reading together is a great form of stress management that helps your child become a lifelong reader.

## EMOTIONAL HEALTH

### Do you manage your own stress well through positive outlets of expression and time management?

✓ The American Psychological Association says that children tend to handle stress the way their parents do. If you cope in healthy ways, you will promote healthy coping skills and better emotional adjustment.