



KEEP YOUR CHILD **SAFE**

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PARENTS

Selected Topics

STRONG FAMILIES

KEEP YOUR CHILD SAFE
PRACTICAL TIPS FOR PARENTS
(SELECTED TOPICS)

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**A resource from Jamaica's FIPA
for families everywhere.**

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One of SPSF's 10 Pillars is **Protection of the Environment**, which helps to keep our children safe and healthy.

On the next page is a poem by **Dr. Ava Maxam**, award winning oceanographer, to her daughter Erin.

THIS POEM IS DEDICATED TO MY DAUGHTER ERIN AND OTHER CHILDREN MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO OUR EARTH'S ENVIRONMENT.



A Whale's Song to the Mermaid

A Poem by Ava Maxam ©

*my little mermaid
loves splashing in the sea
coral gardens, seagrass meadows
living palaces for hide-and-peek
underwater mountains
so grand to explore
teeming, swirling schools of fish
colourful brilliance she adores*

*dolphin ring-around-the-posies
she can play all day and night
where have my manatee friends gone
curiosity soars above her height
searching rivers and coves
she grows restless for their plight
sponge and jellyfish observe silently
millions of years on their side*

*beneath the eternity of the sun
surrounded by the pull of the moon
my little mermaid listens keenly
to the place she calls home
whales sing of changing times
trade winds whisper to dancing waves
waters warming, storms spin more furious
to invisible forces, yield or become resilient*

*they that walk without tails
over disappearing lands
hold keys that can turn
the tide of changing climes
they possess knowledge and power
to keep ice caps whole
restore balance between air and sea
to preserve that place they call home*



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How to Read this Book

Remembering Useful Information

It is much easier to retain useful information when you have a few practical techniques at your disposal. This is not just about collecting facts but about truly understanding and using them. Consider using the strategies below:

- Plan your reading time.
- Limit distractions if you can.
- Remind yourself why you are reading the book.
- Skim over the sections that do not apply to you or your family.
- Try not to be a passive reader. Reflection allows you to develop your critical thinking skills.
- Look for the 3 to 5 most important points for each 1-hour reading session and re-read those points.
- Use your preferred notetaking method.
- Apply what you have learned by completing the Reflect-Act-Maintenance (RAM) Activity. An example of a completed RAM form is included in the book.
- If you are in a Strong People Strong Families group, read and discuss at least 5 to 10 pages of the book on a weekly, biweekly or monthly basis.

EDUCATORS, COACHES & MENTORS:

PLEASE ADAPT THE MATERIAL AS NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE CULTURAL AND CONTEXTUAL RELEVANCE.



Stranger Danger Conversation

BY **Denise Johnson-Anderson**

MBA (Int. Bus); BA(Hons)

Mediator & Conflict Management Consultant



I faltered over the Stranger-Danger conversation. I didn't want to make the world a scary or threatening place for my daughter, so I avoided it longer than I should have.

And then her grandmother presented us with a book entitled "My Body! What I say goes!" and I decided it was time. The book presented a matter-of-fact way of handling situations with people and environments where we felt safe and unsafe; also, how to even recognize if she was feeling safe and unsafe, through her body's reactions and responses.

One of the book's exercises required that my daughter create a Circle of Trust - five trusted adults with whom she felt she could share anything that upset and distressed her. She immediately made her selection- all women interestingly enough, all of whom contacted each other trustee to advise them of their new designation.

Message from Our Patron

**His Excellency
The Most Honourable Professor
Sir Kenneth Octavius Hall ON, GCMG, OJ**



The *Strong People Strong Families* series is the product of over seven years of work, shaped by the voices and experiences of more than 200 voluntary contributors. These men and women—teachers, counsellors, HR specialists, pastors, social workers, scientists, and many others—offered their wisdom with candor, honesty, and courage. Some chose to speak openly under their own names, while others, including a mother who shared a deeply personal account, remain anonymous so that they could tell their truths without restraint.

This work is not merely about theory or best practices. It captures how real people live, struggle, and persevere. The stories are refreshing in their honesty, practical in their guidance, and rich in lessons for building strong, healthy, and resilient families. Alongside these stories are articles that highlight realities many people are simply unaware of—topics that challenge us to think more deeply and act more wisely in our roles as parents, caregivers, and community members.

The project has grown into several books and guidebooks filled with information, activities, and even games and competitions—all designed to strengthen individuals and families. We invite you to read with an open heart and an open mind, and to take from these pages whatever wisdom will serve you, your family, and your community.

Introduction to Safety, Health & Wellness

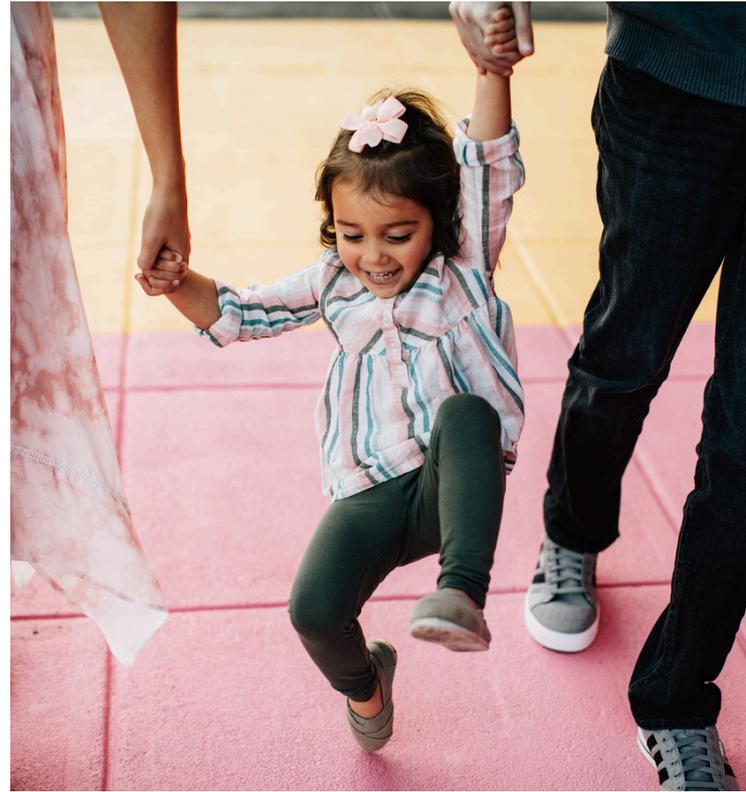


Henri Rousseau – Cattleya Orchid with three Brazilian hummingbirds,
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Safety Matters

We present a carefully curated selection of topics aimed at helping you protect your child from harm while supporting their happiness, well-being, and the development of positive habits that can guide them toward a thriving adulthood.

While this book does not cover childhood illnesses in detail, it briefly touches on the importance of a healthy lifestyle.



FIPA hopes that the contents of Book 2 will spur discussion, and that readers will seek additional information, ideally with the help of trained group leaders.

Brief Definitions of Safety, Health and Wellness:

- Safety:** a state in which or a place where you are safe and not in danger or at risk (Cambridge Dictionary).
- Health:** a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (World Health Organization).
a dynamic process of becoming aware of and making conscious
- Wellness:** choices toward a more balanced and healthy lifestyle. It includes learning new life skills that address both the positive and negative aspects of human existence (Pan American Health Association).

Safety, Health and Wellness are Interrelated



SAFETY IS A GREAT TOPIC. IT HELPS TO KEEP FAMILIES HEALTHY

Okay, So We Make Mistakes

The trick is not to make the big ones, or repeat the big ones.



Definitions: A **Hazard** is any source of potential damage, harm or adverse health effects on something or someone. **Risk** is the chance or probability that a person will be harmed or experience an adverse health effect if exposed to a hazard. It may also apply to situations with property or equipment loss or harmful effects on the environment – Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety.

WE START WITH A DISCUSSION OF ADULTS, NOT CHILDREN.

When I discuss basic safety issues, people sometimes respond along these lines: “I know that already. You mean to say others don’t know that? Oh, they’re stupid!”

This is not about a lack of intelligence. Incidents involving intelligent high school students at social events, as well as young women and men on university campuses (many of which go unreported), often happen because they are not sufficiently aware of the hazards and risks around them..

Much of safety is about learning whom to trust. Where adults are concerned, an AARP study found that victims of investment fraud tend to be married men aged 55-62, tertiary educated, financially literate, and with a higher income than average.

When unexpected events occur, the reaction is often something like: “No one ever really sat me down and explained this to me. I thought things like this only happened to other people.”

If you live a long and vibrant life, you will inevitably make mistakes - though the reasons for those mistakes may vary. Jane Smith might stumble for one reason, while John Brown falters for another. Life is never entirely risk-free, and the real challenge lies in identifying and eliminating high-risk situations while reducing those of medium risk. Staying aware of what is happening in your community is essential. Beyond simply listening to the news, it is wise to become involved in proactive, responsible community groups where everyone contributes to the safety and well-being of the area. Neighbourhood Watch programs, for instance, have proven to be one of the most effective initiatives for fostering safer, more connected communities.

It is suggested that adults, particularly those whose children depend on them, learn about their own safety in the workplace and protect their physical health as much as possible. You will note that many of the safety principles in this book also apply to adults.

Chapter 1 starts with selected topics on overall health, as protecting our health is a vital part of developing and maintaining the alertness that children require for their safety. Chapter 2 addresses the prevention of physical safety incidents, in addition to looking at screen time and Internet safety.

I hope that you find this book useful and enjoyable!

A Reminder

Our HABITS Make or Break Us

Safety requires knowledge, understanding, and good habits. It is easier for children to learn good habits than adults. A survey of almost 50,000 American families indicated that both good and bad habits are set in children by age nine. Clearly, teaching good habits to children is one of the greatest gifts they receive from adults. The rewards are ample throughout life.

Providing the kind of a home environment where good habits can be developed nurtures the brain. Habit formation is associated with a part of the brain called the basal ganglia.

Children and teenagers who develop good habits often excel academically, even when faced with so-called “boring teachers”, and are more likely to achieve lasting professional success throughout their lives. But what about adults? Changing harmful habits can be more challenging for us, yet with determination and a clear strategy, it is entirely possible to replace destructive patterns with habits that serve and support us.



Build good
habits

Here's a helpful habit to consider. If you don't have time to create a plan from scratch, feel free to use this one as a starting point and make it your own.

Most parents already know the basics of child safety: they teach their children as early as possible to know their names, the names of their parents, address, name of their school (if they attend one) and a safe place to go if they are lost in a public place. Most parents do not leave their children unsupervised at any point, but if a problem occurs, they tell their children of safe places to go if lost in a public place.

My To Do List to Keep Me Happier about My Own Safety	Not Done	Half Done	Done	Reminders Needed?
Keep all emergency and other important numbers in a visible place – so everyone can see them				
Install a smoke detector in the home – or test the one I have				
Make sure I have a pair of flat shoes close to me at work in the event of an emergency and I have to move quickly				
Make sure I read up about safety tips once every quarter as a reminder				
Make sure that my child knows the number of an emergency contact.				
Keep my medications out of reach or locked up				

My To Do List to Keep Me Happier about My Own Safety	Not Done	Half Done	Done	Reminders Needed?
Ensure that my romantic interests can be trusted around children before introducing them to him or her				
Let them know to never wander off without a family member				
Do not accept gifts, drink or food from strangers – here’s why				
Do not open the door to strangers – here’s why				
Do not ever move house keys from their rightful place – here’s why				
Tell my child that you have a right to say ‘no’ to strange adults and then tell a trusted grown-up what happened				
I explain why they should not climb on heavy furniture –				
I explain to you the possible problems associated with social media				
I watch educational videos with her on selected safety topics (next time around – electrical safety)				

Good Health Helps Children to be Alert & Safe



Safe with Dad - Drawing by Volunteer artist, Xayvier Houghton



Starting with the Eyes

If your child spends several hours a day on a computer or tablet, it is important to ensure they take regular breaks to protect their eyes. The American Academy of Ophthalmology warns of rising cases of eye strain, dry eye syndrome, and childhood myopia (nearsightedness). Prolonged close-up work, especially when paired with less time spent outdoors, significantly increases the risk of myopia. Outdoor time, on the other hand, allows the eyes to focus on distant objects, giving them a chance to rest and recover.

The Academy also advises parents to set reminders—such as a timer—to encourage children to rest their eyes periodically. This simple habit helps reduce the strain of screen time and teaches children that caring for their eyesight is as important as caring for any other part of their health.

Protecting their Teeth



Cavities (tooth decay) are one of the most common chronic diseases in children. Left untreated, they can lead to infections that compromise a child's ability to eat, speak, and learn.

Children under six should be supervised while brushing, and older children may still need guidance. They need time to develop proper brushing habits and gain confidence with a parent or older sibling nearby. Once teeth begin touching, children should learn to floss to remove plaque a toothbrush cannot reach. They should also understand that poor dental health can trigger other health problems.

Dentists can advise which foods to avoid to protect teeth. Ask if children under two should use fluoride toothpaste, and inquire about dental sealants—thin plastic coatings on back molars that reduce cavities by up to 80%. Your dentist will gladly discuss every aspect of dental care with you.

COMING UP:

Asking questions about your child's general health.

What happens if my child is sickly?

Parents worry that their child seems 'sickly', that is, catching every contagious illness that goes around, taking longer to recover, or just seeming run-down more often than other kids. It is natural to feel concerned. Being sickly often means that the immune system has been affected in some way, making it harder for your child's body to fight off infections or bounce back from illness. This does not necessarily mean there is anything seriously wrong, but it does signal that something might need attention, whether that is lifestyle factors, underlying health issues, or environmental triggers.

Your healthcare professional is the best person to help you decide whether you should be concerned or if this is just a normal phase your child is going through. Some children naturally have more sensitive immune systems, especially during certain developmental stages or times of stress. Others might have underlying conditions that make them more susceptible to illness. Your doctor assesses your child's overall health, growth patterns, and medical history to determine if further investigation is needed or if there are simple steps you can take to support their immune system.

One of the most important factors to consider is nutrition. A child's immune system relies heavily on getting the right nutrients to function properly. If your child is a picky eater, frequently chooses processed foods over fresh options, or is not getting enough nutrients, this could definitely impact their ability to stay healthy.

Even well-meaning parents sometimes unknowingly create nutritional gaps. Maybe your child fills up on milk or juice and does not eat enough solid foods, or they are getting plenty of calories but missing key nutrients like zinc, vitamin D, or iron that are crucial for immune function.

Another factor that many families do not think about is the impact of chemicals in the home environment (also see Page). Children are much more vulnerable to household chemicals than adults because their bodies are still developing and they spend more time close to floors and surfaces where chemicals tend to accumulate. Everything from cleaning products and air fresheners to pesticides and even some personal care items can potentially affect a child's health and immune system. Taking a look at what products you are using around the house and considering gentler, more natural alternatives might be worth exploring, especially if your child seems unusually sensitive to their environment.



My Examples of Good Questions to ask your child's doctor

*By Dr. Tristi Edwards-White
Dermatologist and Internist*



Asking questions when you take your kids to the doctor isn't just helpful, it is important for getting the best care possible. Doctors see many patients every day, and while they're trained to spot problems, you know your child better than anyone else. You notice the little changes in behavior, sleep patterns, or appetite that might not show up during a quick examination. Do not hesitate to speak up about anything that seems off, even if it feels minor. Sometimes those small details help doctors piece together a bigger picture or catch something early that might otherwise be missed.

It is also perfectly okay to ask for clarification if medical terms go over your head or if treatment plans seem confusing. A good doctor wants you to understand what's happening with your child's health and should be willing to explain things in plain language.

Remember, there's no such thing as a stupid question when it comes to your kid's wellbeing. You're their best advocate, and staying informed helps you make better decisions about their care and gives you peace of mind as a parent.

**FIPA HAS A MENTAL HEALTH CENTRE.
Visit www.fipaglobal.com**

Here are examples:

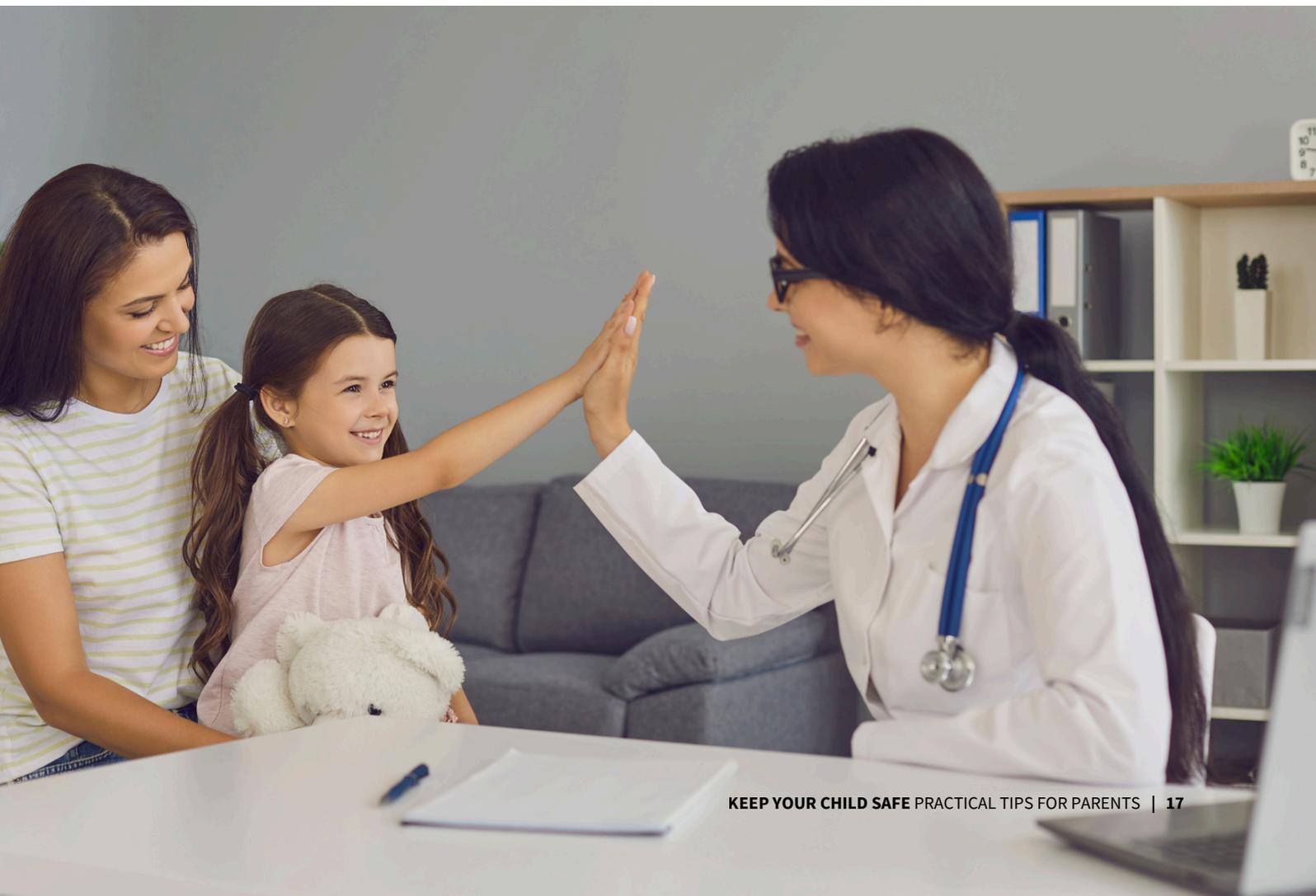
- What can I do to improve my child's illness or condition?
- Are there other ways to treat this illness?
- How can I prevent this illness from recurring?
- Is there anything more I should know about this medication?
- If my child has side effects from the medication, what should I do and not do?
- If my child needs to take a test, what will the results mean?
- When will I know the test results?
- Where do I go for further support if my child has a non-communicable disease (NCD) such as asthma or diabetes?
- What websites provide reputable information on children's health?
- Are there any risks associated with a non-medical person such as my friend trying to diagnose an illness based on information on the Internet?
- What is the total cost of this treatment?
- My father has X condition. Do you think it could be genetic? What are the implications for how I should care for my child, if any?
- May I share my child's diet with you? What do you think of her diet?
- (Example of a General Health Question) I have heard that it is not good to give my five year old too much access to the phone because it affects his brain. Is this true?
- Are there any other questions I should have asked?

“Questions are creative acts of intelligence.”

Francis Kingdom Warr

Below are more examples of questions:

- My child has X condition, what are the odds of my future children also being affected?
- What are healthy alternatives to packaged snacks and sodas?
- My child frequently gets into trouble in social situations. How do I know this is normal or if he/she has a behavioral disorder?
- What are some signs that my child may be using drugs?
- What are some signs that my child is being abused?
- What are some signs that my child is suffering from depression or other mental health conditions?
- My child does not get along with other children, is that normal?



WE WELCOME YOUR DONATIONS!



**To the FIPA Family Foundation
Write to Karan Delapenha, FCCA
at fipafamily@gmail.com**

Exercise Strengthens & Cleans the Body

Research reveals that children around the globe are less fit than their parents were as children. Thirty years ago, children were running a mile 90 seconds faster than children today, according to research from 28 nations. In Australia, researchers found that girls are 19% less active than boys; however, this study may not have included housework, a form of exercise.

With exercise, muscles and bones become more powerful. The heart becomes stronger with all that circulation inspiring the cells. Exercise allows us to obtain more oxygen in our lungs, and you may remember from school that oxygen makes up 65% of our body mass. Inhaling the right amount of oxygen indicates that the body is being gently cleaned. Exercise also develops coordination and reflexes, giving children better command of their bodies. Their skin looks healthier. They are more disposed as adults to maintain an exercise regimen.

Many children who engage in sports or exercise tend to perform well academically. A German study found that the subjects learned words 20 percent faster following a bout of exercise. In addition, 24 experts from eight nations concluded that exercise not only boosts brain power but is critical for mental health.





Duration of Exercise: Cautions about Over-Exercising

A review of the research indicates clear health benefits to children aged 5 to 17 years who do moderate or vigorous activity for at least an hour every day.

It is unwise for anyone to over-exercise, thereby not allowing their body to get the necessary rest. Over-exercising is particularly problematic for children whose joints are more vulnerable than those of adults when repeated stress is placed on muscles and tendons. Pre- and post-exercise routines are also crucial. Also see *Avoiding Sports Injuries* in Chapter 2.

- **Some kinds of play give children wonderful, natural exercise. Play for children and adults has physical, emotional and social benefits, discussed in other Building Strong Family resources.**
- **Evidence is mounting that regular exercise reduces the symptoms of ADHD. Ask your physician about the kind of exercise that is best for children with ADHD.**

Best Kids' Sports Games & Activities

Sign up for Free on the Unicef Kid Power Website



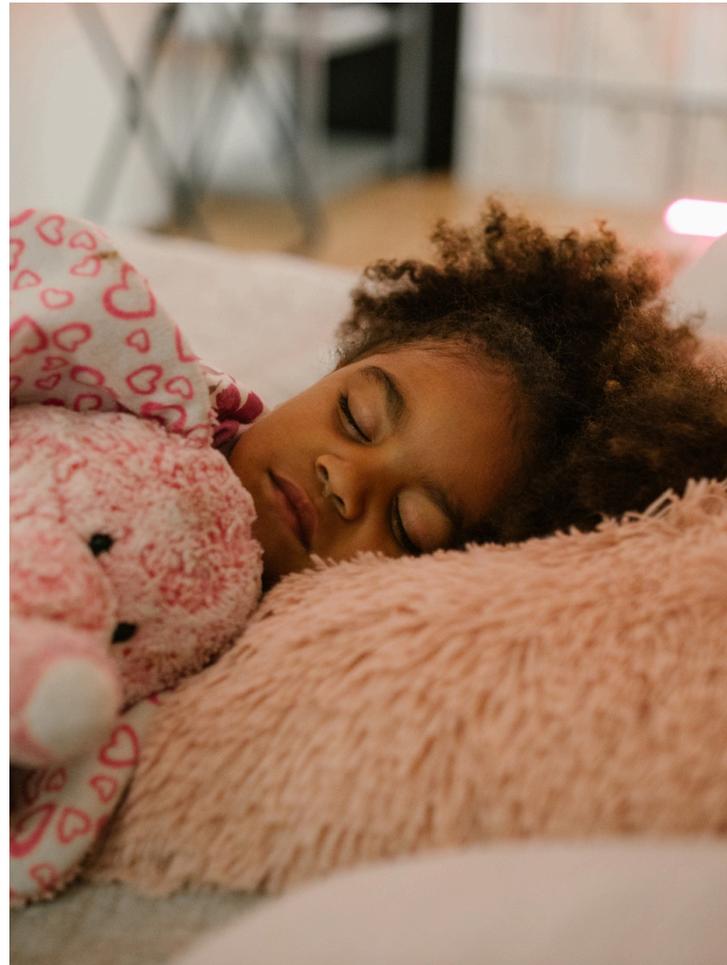
They're lots of **fun** and **safe** activities for kids here!

[Sign Up for Free](#)

SLEEP

nourishes the brain

“When my daughter was a teenager, she often complained that she needed more sleep. I dismissed her concerns, believing she should simply focus on studying. Looking back, I now realize that her lack of sleep affected her grades and her moods more than anything else. Whenever she did get enough rest, she was easier to be around, and her memory noticeably improved. I, too, was irritable with her, partly because I wasn’t getting enough sleep myself. Back then, I even equated getting seven or eight hours of sleep with laziness.



Now that I’m older, I realize that consistent lack of sleep breaks down my body. What I also realize is that different people need different amounts of sleep.” – SPSF Participant

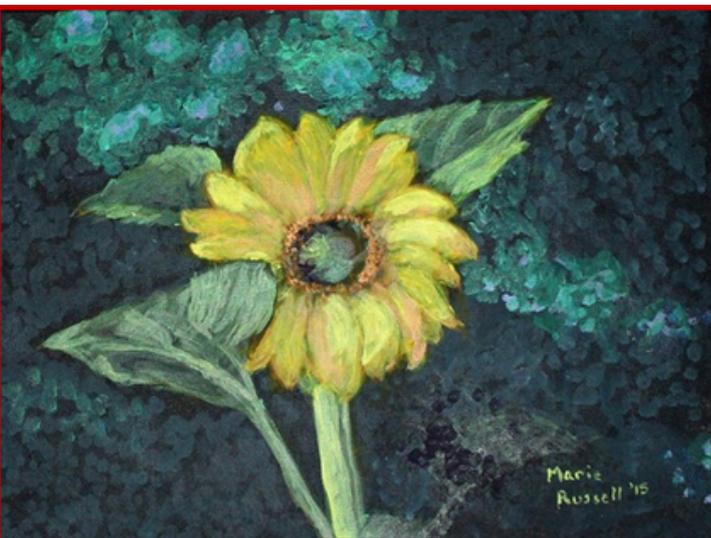
The consistent loss of an hour of sleep may be equivalent to the loss of two years where a child’s school performance is concerned. Small sleep differences may therefore have large academic consequences.

It’s sometimes asked: Why do children need so much sleep? The answer is simple—sleep fuels growth and strengthens the brain’s connections. Just as exercise gently cleanses the body, the brain also needs its own form of cleansing. During sleep, waste is cleared from the brain, almost like giving it a nightly ‘bath.’ This process helps regulate moods and restores fresh energy to the entire body.

Children with consistent bedtimes are far more likely to get the sleep they need than those who head to bed whenever they feel like it. But even with set routines, the intrusion of smartphones, tablets, and social media—along with the increasing pressures of school—often keeps children awake long past the hour their minds and bodies need to rest.

A three-year study conducted with over 9,000 students in several public schools showed that teenagers who received less than eight hours of sleep experienced more depression, drank more coffee, and were more likely to be substance abuse victims. Teens who received As had on average about 15 minutes more sleep than students who received Bs, and B students had more sleep than C students. Another interesting outcome was that car accidents for older teen drivers were reduced by 70% when a school changed start times from 7:35 am to 8:55 am.

Thirteen sleep specialists combed through 800 studies that assessed the sleep of children. They discovered sleep-deprived children had more behavioral and learning challenges and also higher rates of hypertension. Too much sleep led to higher rates of diabetes and mental health problems.



Some people look at calm images just before sleeping.

Painting by Volunteer Artist Marie Russell

Generally speaking, the best way to gauge how much sleep your children need is to observe when they wake up naturally without being prompted or disturbed. Then, notice how bright, alert, and balanced they remain throughout the day. If they tend to be irritable or sluggish, it is a clear sign they need more time on the pillow!

Below are the recommended hours of sleep by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Age Group		Recommended Hours of Sleep Per Day
Infant	4-12 months	12–16 hours per 24 hours (including naps)
Toddler	1-2 years	11-14 hours per 24 hours (including naps)
Preschool	3-5 years	10-13 hours per 24 hours (including naps)
School Age	6-12 years	9-12 hours per 24 hours
Teenager	13-18 years	8-10 hours per 24 hours
Adult	18-60 years	7 or more hours per night

Check out the many videos on the web providing sounds that prompt sleep. Some people like to sleep to rain music, others to other calming sounds.

Your Expectations

Good health goes beyond physical well-being—an essential idea to keep in mind as we continue. In this context, it's also important to reflect on your expectations for your child and how those expectations may affect their overall health.

You naturally have expectations for your child, and for those over the age of 12, it may be helpful to ask them to state or even write down their commitments. Periodically check in to see whether these expectations are motivating them and stay alert to possible signs of anxiety, such as nail-biting, frequent outbursts, or other changes in behavior.

Your expectations for your children are not only communicated through what you say, but through the example you set in your home every single day. For example, if you want your children to handle frustration calmly, but they regularly see you in a temper when traffic is heavy or snapping at customer service representatives, they learn that anger is an acceptable response to problems.

Children do not expect you to be perfect, but they generally get to see your true values through your daily choices and reactions.

When you admit mistakes, or work through problems without losing your temper, you are teaching them far more effectively than any lecture ever could. They notice how you treat your spouse, how you handle money, whether you keep your promises, and how you respond when things do not go according to plan. These everyday moments may become the blueprint for how they will navigate their own life.



It is also important to remember that even if a child does well at school, they are not necessarily happy. There is a persistent myth that success automatically brings happiness, but life is more complex than that.



A child might earn excellent grades, excel in sports, or be popular with peers while still struggling with anxiety or feeling disconnected from their family. Sometimes the pressure to maintain that success becomes overwhelming, or they feel like they have to be perfect to earn love and approval. Parents need to check in with their children about how they are actually feeling, not just how they are performing.

Sometimes parents do not recognize the factors that interfere with the child's wellbeing. In too many homes today, children are introduced to movies, video games, news coverage, and social media content that are simply not age-appropriate, and this exposure can affect their developing minds in profound ways. A seven-year-old watching a thriller meant for teenagers might develop sleep problems or anxiety that parents do not connect to the movie. Children exposed to graphic news coverage or adult relationship dramas on television can become worried about dangers that are not realistic threats in their world, or they might develop confusing ideas about how relationships should work. Their brains are still learning to process information and separate fantasy from reality, so content that might roll off an adult can leave lasting impressions on a child.

What makes this even more concerning is something highlighted in the SPSF book *The Least You Should Know About Children*—that even though an adult may not actually remember what happened to them at three years old, those early experiences could still be affecting their behavior today because the emotional and neurological patterns formed in early childhood become deeply embedded. Trauma, neglect, overstimulation, or even chronic stress during those formative years can shape how someone responds to relationships and challenges for decades to come, even when they have no conscious memory of the original experiences.

SPSF reminds you to pause and reflect on your own childhood experiences to understand how they shaped you before entering into serious relationships or starting a family. Many people unconsciously repeat the same patterns they experienced growing up—whether positive or negative—simply because those behaviors feel familiar and normal to them. Taking time to examine your past helps you make conscious choices about what you want to carry forward and what cycles you might want to break.

KEEPING THEM WELL

Selected Topics



Title: Beauty Loves Company.

Credit: Volunteer photographer Josef Forstmayr, Hotelier

CALM

Like adults, children have their own unique ways of finding calm and dealing with stress. Some children might feel better taking a quiet walk outside instead of sitting still with music, while others love the energy of learning mindfulness techniques with friends rather than trying to practice by themselves. Many children have a special ‘comfort book’ or a story that just makes them feel safe and happy that they turn to when they are feeling overwhelmed.

The key is paying attention to what actually works for your child, not what you think should work or what works for other children. Some children are naturally drawn to physical activities like stretching or dancing when they are anxious, while others need quiet, cozy spaces to regroup. Do not be surprised if your child's preferred calming method changes over time too—what helps a six-year-old might not appeal to them at ten. The best approach is to let your child guide you toward what feels right for them. When kids have a say in choosing their calming strategies, they are much more likely to actually use them when stress hits.

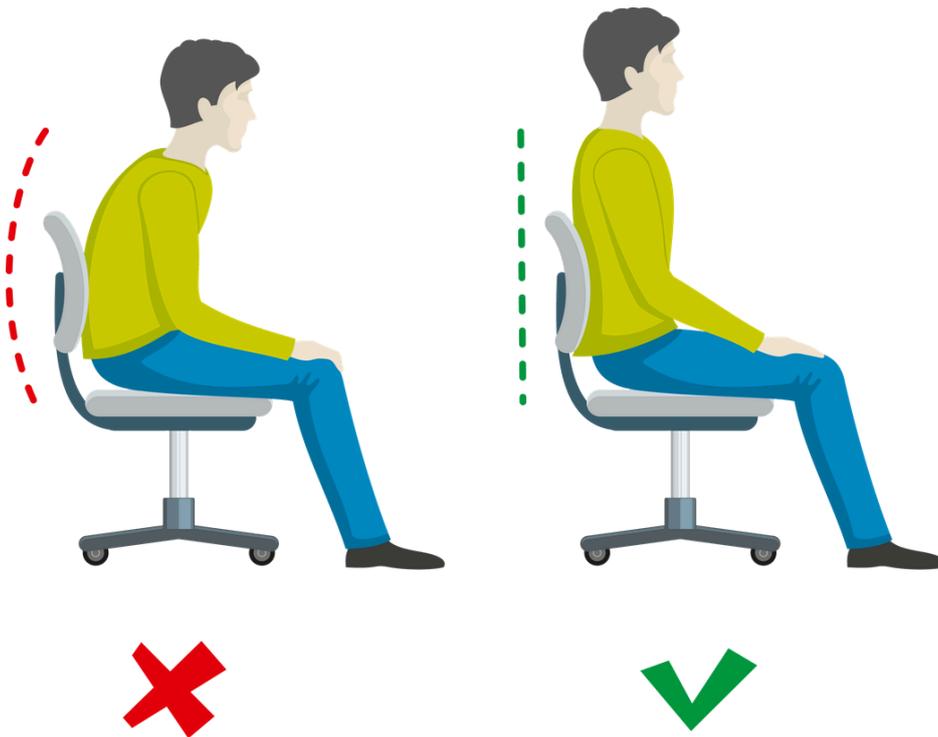
As one SPSF participant observed, "One of the issues with children is that they do not know how to express what is happening in the home." Children often lack the vocabulary or emotional maturity to express when something feels wrong, scary, or confusing. They might not even realize that what they are experiencing is not normal. Sometimes parents are genuinely surprised when their children seem distant or resentful as they get older, because these underlying issues were never openly discussed or even acknowledged.

This is why creating an environment where children feel safe to express their feelings—even negative ones—is so crucial. When children know they can talk about what frightens or confuses them without being dismissed or punished, they are more likely to process difficult experiences in healthy ways rather than burying them.

Soft Belly Breathing

Adapted from Dr. James Gordon’s approach, this calming exercise begins by guiding the child to a quiet, peaceful space. A parent or trusted adult demonstrates how to take a deep breath from the abdomen, and the child follows along. With eyes closed, the child sits quietly and allows their belly to feel soft with each breath. As they inhale, they gently say “soft,” and on the exhale, “belly.” If their thoughts wander, they can imagine blowing them away on the wind and gently return their focus. If the child feels too restless to continue, they learn that it’s okay to take a break such as moving, playing, or exercising a little—and return to the practice when ready.

A GOOD POSTURE IS CALMING and helps us to breathe properly.



We relax most effectively when we maintain a calm, upright posture. Good posture not only benefits your child physically but also helps others to view them in a positive light. It is far easier to teach children proper posture early on than to try to correct poor habits once they are adults.



OVER 200 PERSONS

participated in the development
of the SPSF ebooks and other resources

We refer to these persons as SPSF Participants

Photo above right: Weston McFarlane was our very first participant

We thank our participants

Physical play provides excellent exercise, and all forms of healthy play can also help children — and even adults — sleep better. Research shows that free, spontaneous, imaginative, and creative play significantly boosts a child’s cognitive, social, and emotional development. Educational psychologist Anthony D. Pellegrini emphasizes that spontaneous play fosters greater creativity, noting that opening up the creative mind challenges it more than structured games like soccer or cricket with their set rules. Play also teaches vital social skills. As Pellegrini explains, “you don’t become socially competent by teachers telling you how to behave... you learn those skills by interacting with your peers, discovering what is acceptable and what is not.”



Supporting Your Child Through Stress, Growth, and Mistakes

Be careful about telling a child, “You mustn’t feel that way.” The truth is, they already do. It’s more helpful to acknowledge their feelings with empathy and gently guide them toward other ways of looking at the issue. Phrases like “I understand why you’d feel that way. Let’s talk about it,” open the door to understanding and emotional growth.

If you have more than one child, remember that each child is unique. One child may express stress through tears, while another might go quiet or lash out. Recognize these differences and avoid comparing them. Tailor your support to fit each child’s temperament.

Mistakes are powerful learning tools—for children and parents alike. When your child makes a mistake, help them reflect: “How can this experience help you avoid similar mistakes in the future?” Share your own lessons, too: “This is a mistake I made as a child, and here’s what I learned from it.” This builds trust and normalizes growth through error.

Maintaining a healthy balance of expectations is important. You might ask your child to set goals or write down simple commitments. Check in from time to time to see whether those expectations are encouraging progress, or if your child needs a little support, especially when motivation dips. Stay alert to signs of anxiety, such as nail-biting, restlessness, irritability, or other changes in behavior.

Let your child know that they are deeply loved. Hug them often, listen closely, and create moments of joy together.

Children thrive in families that are warm and emotionally safe. So, make space for family check-ins. Ask your children how they feel about the home environment, and invite their suggestions for making it more supportive. This not only empowers them, it strengthens your bond as a family.

Offer your child age-appropriate choices around the home—what to wear, how to organize their space, or how to help with meals. These small decisions help them feel capable and respected.

Teach relaxation and calming techniques early on like deep breathing, stretching, listening to soothing music, or taking a quiet break. These skills serve them throughout life.

As they grow into older teenagers, consider enrolling them in summer programs or workshops that teach resilience and coping in high-pressure situations, if such programs exist in your community, and if your teen is open to attending. These experiences can boost confidence and prepare them for adult challenges.

I made a
mistake.

Mistakes help
me learn.

Question and Answer

Question:

Boys get into more scrapes than girls. I get that. But John, Tommy's older brother, didn't break the pot when he was Tommy's age. Is something wrong with Tommy?

Answer:

When faced with a question like this, it is helpful to pause and explore a number of important 'sub-questions' before drawing conclusions. Children grow and develop in different ways even within the same family and what appears to be a problem might actually be a normal difference in temperament, learning style, or environment. Consider the following:

- **Is Tommy under more stress than John was at that age?**
 - Children's behavior can be strongly influenced by stressors we may not immediately notice—changes at home, school, friendships, or even simply how the world feels to them.

Also see the SPSF Book [Child Discipline Made Easy](#)



- **Has Tommy been frequently compared to John?**
 - If Tommy is often told that he is "not as sensible as John," this comparison could be affecting his confidence and behavior. Children can internalize such messages, sometimes acting out in frustration or simply feeling discouraged.
- **Does Tommy learn differently?**
 - Some children grasp lessons quickly through words. Others may need hands-on experiences or repeated reminders. Tommy might need a different approach to understand certain rules—like why pots shouldn't be touched or played with. Many highly capable adults were misunderstood or underestimated in childhood simply because they learned differently.



- **Could Tommy's diet be a factor?**
 - Nutrition can significantly affect a child's energy levels, focus, and behavior. Is Tommy's diet the same as John's was at that age? For instance, too much sugar, processed foods, or not enough nutrients could influence behavior.

Sometimes, over time, we forget the scrapes the older child got into or overlook the ways they struggled. It is natural to remember things selectively, but it can help to reflect honestly on how each child has had both strengths and challenges.

Instead of asking "What's wrong with Tommy?"—a better question might be, "What does Tommy need from us right now to grow into his best self?"

The Wellness Piggybank

The wellness piggy bank is a simple but powerful way to build healthy habits by celebrating all the small things you do for yourself throughout the day. Try to fill up the piggybank! No one can tell you what exactly to put in your piggybank because wellness is a personal choice. You simply choose to do something, however small, that enhances your wellbeing. When you have completed the action, insert a slip or a coin in a piggybank or other container.

What makes this approach so effective is that it helps you notice and appreciate the good choices you're already making, rather than focusing on what you're not doing. For some adults, it might be stilling their minds for a few minutes per day or taking the stairs instead of the elevator. For children, it could be eating a fruit instead of candy for a treat, helping with chores without being asked, or spending time gardening and growing plants. There's something magical about watching seeds turn into vegetables or flowers. It teaches kids patience, responsibility, and connects them to nature in a hands-on way. Plus, gardening gets them moving and gives them fresh air, which are both great for physical and mental health.

The beauty of the wellness piggy bank is that every contribution counts, no matter how small. Maybe today you only managed to eat a salad water instead of junk food or pet the dog for five minutes—that still goes in the bank. You reward yourself however you wish with a half full or full piggybank. The visual reminder of your growing collection of wellness choices can be surprisingly motivating, and it shifts your mindset from "I should be doing more" to "look at all the good things I'm already doing for myself."



Traci Wong is the original SPSF artist. Today she works as an artist and also protects dolphins. Some of our SPSF resources feature her incredible art done at the age of 16.



The Quality of Food that a Child eats affects their learning ability, and...

SPSF has an entire book entitled *Food Strong* that is devoted to the urgent need for families to eat healthy foods and to adopt as healthy a lifestyle as possible in their circumstances. Poor nutrition, particularly diets high in sugar, processed foods, and unhealthy fats, can lead to hyperactivity, irritability, and poor concentration. On the other hand, diets rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats provide the necessary nutrients for brain development and stable moods. Research shows that deficiencies in nutrients such as omega-3 fatty acids, iron, and vitamins can contribute to behavioral problems and even developmental disorders in children.

General Guide for Sugar Consumption

FOR ADULTS: The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends: “limiting the amount of added sugars you consume to no more than half of your daily discretionary calorie allowance. For most American women, that’s no more than 100 calories per day or about 6 teaspoons of sugar. For men, it’s 150 calories per day or about 9 teaspoons.”

FOR CHILDREN: Some parents do not give their children added sugar, or carefully choose the type of sugar they use. The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends that children should consume no more than 6 teaspoons of added sugar per day. This limit applies to those ages 2-18 years, a group that takes in more than three times that amount on average.



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Share your photos of friends and family.



strongpeople_strongfamilies

Eleven-year-old Bobby talks about a healthy lifestyle, including food

Kids serve as models to other kids. Kids often have more impact on each other than grown-ups do. Consider asking your children to read articles such as this one about Bobby, who encourages other kids to grow gardens, exercise, and eat healthily.

– An excerpt from the Orlando Sentinel



Fruits from Dominica.

Volunteer Photographer: Melanie Francois

"I get the gardens going, check on them, then I have other kids take it from there," (Bobby) said. "It's a way of leaving a legacy that keeps giving back."

To fund the garden projects, Bobby applied for and got \$7,000 in grant funding from several organizations). Though he's the baby in his family of four, he helps keep his parents and 13-year-old sister in shape, too. "My Dad drives a truck, so he sits all day. When he comes home, I say, 'Let's throw the football.'"

"I used to love soda, but he made me quit," said his mother, Marybelle Doe, who works as a program assistant for special-needs kids at West Creek Elementary. Not all kids share his enthusiasm.

"You don't let that bring you down," he said. "Sometimes they listen to you; sometimes they continue on the same path. Usually all I have to say is, 'I could beat you,' and next thing they are outside playing."

He worries about the impact peer pressure has on kids' food choices.

"When peers tell other children that broccoli tastes bad, they listen," he said. "Kids think unhealthy foods taste better than healthy food. Yes, some healthy food taste bad, but some taste excellent."

Health Activity

Put on your oxygen mask first before putting the mask on your child.

I am doing the following three things (or more) to protect my health.

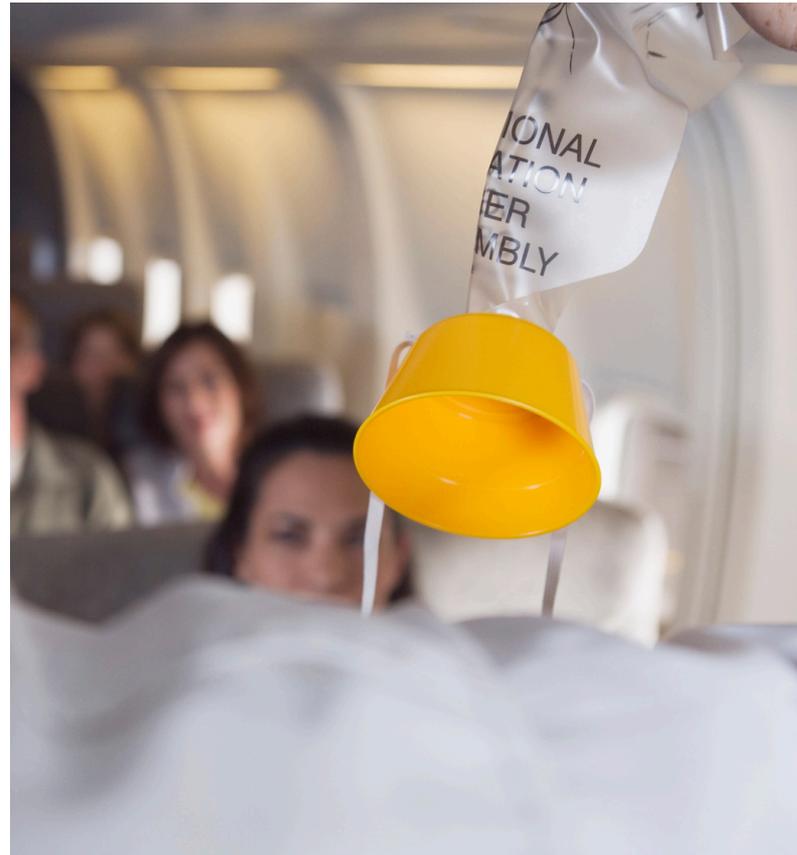
Remind yourself why you are protecting your health (and also to pat yourself big time on the back because some of this stuff is not always easy).

Example:

I avoid greasy, salty and sugary foods, even though that's hard sometimes, because trust me, I'm really busy. Why? I know that even though I may not see the effects on my body today, eating the wrong kinds of foods could affect me next month, next year or later down the line, and I don't need any more problems than the ones I have now.

I am doing the following to protect my child's health.

I make sure Donna does her homework and other responsibilities but I also give her enough time to play where she'll be safe. Why? Play is great for her. She gets exercise, feels happy and learns how to get along with other children.

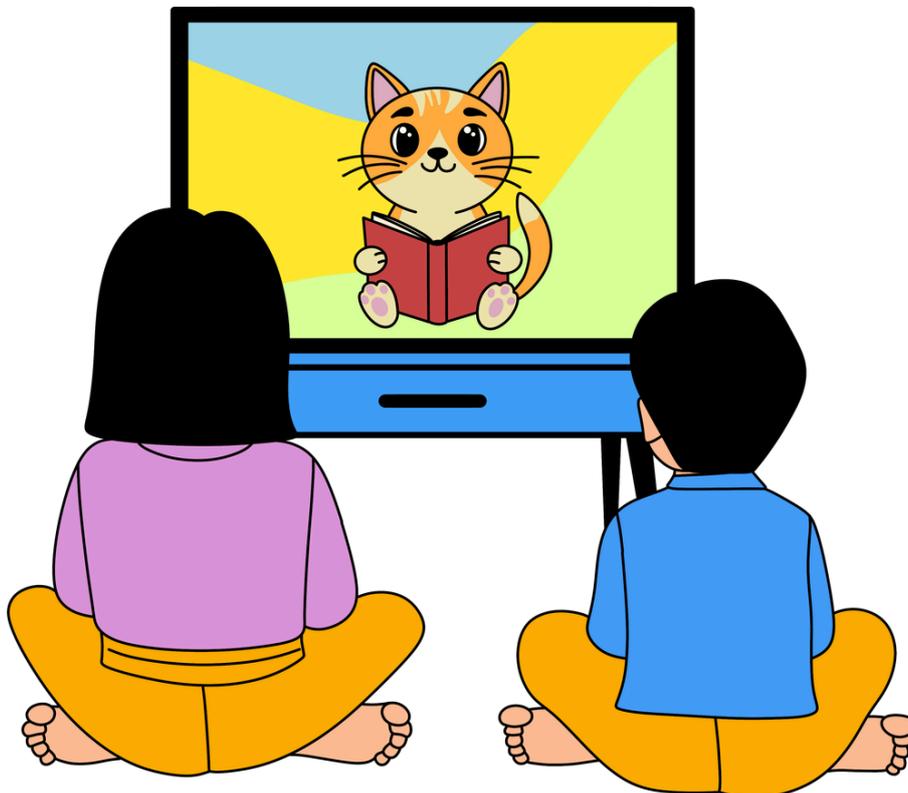


Too much tv time?

Television has two faces. On one side, it can be a remarkable tool, offering high-quality information, education, and entertainment. On the other, it can bombard viewers with relentless and gratuitous violence.

A study that examined the long-term effects of the brains of over 270 children who watched a lot of television discovered that the parts of the brain associated with aggression had thickened. There was also a thickening of the frontal lobe, which meant that reasoning ability had been affected. The more television the children watched, the lower their verbal scores, regardless of income levels, age or gender. Public Health England has found that: “higher levels of TV viewing are having a negative effect on children’s wellbeing, including lower self-worth, lower self-esteem and lower levels of self-reported happiness (and) children who spend more time on computers, watching TV and playing video games tend to experience higher levels of emotional distress, anxiety and depression.”

Higher levels of watching television can affect a child’s self worth



CLEANING HOUSE

The concept of ‘cleaning house’ is used throughout many of the SPSF resources to indicate that a house or organization becomes healthy by using the five elements, the symbolic equivalents to cleaning materials and opening the window for that delightful fresh air to enter.

The elements start with the letters **C-L-E-A-N**. The five elements are interrelated but, for ease of understanding, the elements are often separated in the SPSF e-books. In this book, we see safety as a good habit, and so focus on Everyday Good Habits to clean the house. Like cleaning dust, this cleaning process also needs to be maintained.



KEEPING NICE AND SAFE!

next page

The Community

As you already know, not all safety issues can be solved by one family. Dust blanketing a neighbourhood, for example, is a hazard best tackled by the community, and sometimes requires engineers or other specialists.

Drought worsens dust, but there are simple steps communities can take. Using vegetation and mulch helps keep dust down, benefiting everyone. Since not all households can afford large water tanks—and with droughts likely to intensify in the coming decades—water conservation methods become essential.

Approaches like rainwater harvesting will help many, but awareness must begin before severe droughts arrive. Strong participation from the whole community—not just a few—is key for local associations to thrive, or even survive.

Did you know that the long and happy lives of people who live in the ‘Blue Zones’ in the World is partly attributed to the fact that they live in safe and caring communities?

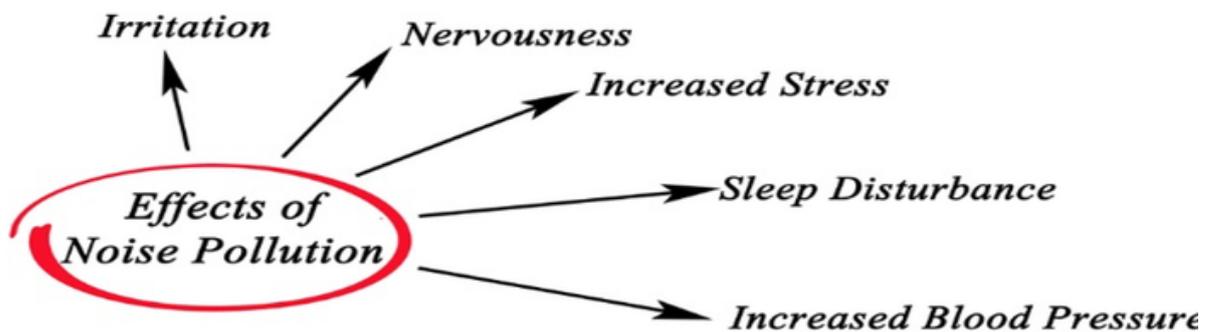


NOISE

This discussion focuses on neighbourhood noise, not industrial noise, which is beyond the scope of this book.

Noise—often called noise pollution—does more than affect children’s hearing. It can impact their wellbeing and behaviour, raising preschoolers’ heart rates and, in some cases, causing hearing loss.

Noise can also harm children’s ability to learn. One study found that about 40% of urban students taking a standardized math test were disturbed by high background noise, with results showing a clear link between noise levels and lower math scores.



Informal reports indicate that heavy noise worsens the symptoms of physical ailments.

Loud sounds that we enjoy are not noisy to us, but could be for our neighbours. So what constitutes noise is personal, and unwanted noise has the potential to become a health hazard.

Remember your ABCs
Always Be Careful



Protecting the young takes knowledge and awareness of safety practices .

An SPSF Participant says

ALMOST ALL ACCIDENTS CAN BE PREVENTED

I he heard that Injuries are the leading cause of death in children ages 19 and younger, and that most of them are preventable. Here are my suggestions:

First. Think Like A Child

Two children, aged four and two, became 'adventurous' after seeing their favourite cough syrup in the medicine cabinet, located a couple of feet above the bathroom basin. The four-year-old climbed up on the basin, reached for the bottle of cough syrup, and shared it with his sister.

Thanks to a nearby nurse's quick actions, they did not fall ill.

A four-year-old can do something now that demonstrates good judgment. Fifteen minutes later, it seems as though he is thinking like a baby again. His brain is still developing. The World Health Organization emphasizes that 'children are not little adults,' regardless of how intelligent they are.

Try to clear your mind as much of adult logic and knowledge for the next minute and think like a young child. You know that the world is an exciting place. You do not have the vocabulary to articulate the thoughts below, but you do things that represent those thoughts.



A child may be thinking:

- Wow, that knife looks appealing, let me touch it.
- Does putting that TV in that plug make it work? Let me play with electrical sockets, (even if my hands are wet).
- Fire is so cool – look at the way it lights the stove!
- I am so excited to swing here that I forget to hold on properly!
- I want to prove to Daddy I can lift that.
- Oh, that doesn't look that far to fall from.
- Mommy is always saying that I should never do this but she doesn't know I can really do it!
- Those chewy orange vitamins really taste good, they look like sweets, let me eat the whole bottle of sweets.

Second. Know When Accidents Usually Occur

- When adequate supervision is lacking or absent
- During school holidays, weekends, and when the child is home from school in the afternoon and evenings
- During situations that create anxiety such as a death in the family, lasting illnesses, moving home, and other anxiety-inducing events
- During or after a change in the normal routine
- During rush times and distractions
- When children are not trained to ignore other children who dare them to take risks
- When children will not listen to parents or essentially disrespect the parent or caretaker.
- When there are hazards in the home that are not addressed or explained.
- When children are in unfamiliar environments
- When children suffer from a lack of alertness due to sleep loss

Protecting Your Child

LT. COLONEL (RET'D) EUKEN MILLS



For the purposes of this discussion and simplicity, the term security is defined as being able to operate or function within an environment (home, school, community) without any form of disruption – being free from danger. Once there is a disruption to any degree, there is a breach of safety or security.

Also, for the purposes of this discussion, security and safety can be used interchangeably, given that they both have to do with preservation of self. To preserve self, one must have the capacity to identify threats (a person or thing likely to cause damage or danger) and vulnerable situations (exposure to the possibility of being harmed).

For emphasis, a threat is something that can cause harm, and vulnerability refers to when someone is exposed in one way or another to danger.

Because children at certain ages are not likely to properly appreciate threats that they are faced with, and do not always know when they are vulnerable to dangerous situations, we can agree that they deserve security. Against the background of the many threats that social media present to young and vulnerable people, the monitoring must be extended to their access and conduct on social media platforms.

When underaged children are left unattended – not properly controlled, there is the potential for negative effects of consequences to flow with severe impacts to the child who can become a victim, as well as to the wider family.

Some examples of situations that children should not be exposed to are:

- A pot with an extended handle on stove with hot contents and the handle is accessible. This can cause an accident resulting in burns.
- The child playing at a secluded area without being monitored. The child can disappear or otherwise harmed.
- The child having free and unsupervised access to the Internet. The child can be lured into dangerous situations, or post something harmful to their reputation which may have far-reaching future impact.
- The child left alone with an adult whose trust quotient is not clearly established. The child can be abused.
- The child having access to a firearm or other dangerous weapons. This can result in a fatal accident or serious injury.



These are just a few of the many threat situations to which children are vulnerable. The degree of monitoring required to mitigate against harm, will be based on the level of maturity and development of the child, and consequently, the capacity of the child to detect threats and to avoid them.

Visit our website at www.fipaglobal.com

**to learn about our SPSF Volunteer Participants
and how many contributed to the ebooks and handbooks.**

AN OPTIONAL QUIZ IS COMING UP!

Can You Get 100% On This Easy Quiz?

All of them are True and False except Number 20 – and though it isn't as easy as the others, you should be able to get at least 90% on this Quiz.

Every correct answer is worth 5 points. Answers are on the following page.

- 1) You should plug more than one high-wattage appliance in a single outlet.
- 2) Keep flammable and combustible materials away from your water heater.
- 3) You do not need to have a fire extinguisher near the kitchen that you have learned to use according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- 4) It is just fine to leave matches or cigarette lighters around the house with young children around.
- 5) You do not need to teach your children about fire safety.
- 6) There is no need to post emergency numbers in a known and visible place.
- 7) Carbon monoxide poisoning can happen at homes with gas stoves and other appliances that use gas. A good idea is to install a carbon monoxide detector, particularly in areas that do not get much open, fresh air.
- 8) Gas safety in the home is easy for everyone to understand.
- 9) You should lock up all hazardous chemicals, materials and medicines if children are in the house.
- 10) You do not need to lock up guns because you already explained to your sensible ten-year-old son that they are not safe for him to use.

- 11) Fencing a pool is a waste of money. If you teach little children to swim, they never take risks underwater, grow tired, or panic.
- 12) You always know when a child is drowning because she will always make a noise.
- 13) You don't need to childproof your home for the new baby - the older child did not have any problems in a house that was not child-proofed.
- 14) Your house number does not have to be visible in the street – emergency personnel should be able to guess it from the other numbers on the street.
- 15) It is not necessary to keep electrical cords away from young children.
- 16) It is good practice to go over safety guidelines at least once per month in family meetings.
- 17) Falls in the home tend to happen in poor lighting situations, near stairs and in slippery areas like kitchens and bathrooms.
- 18) Spray that insecticide anywhere without reading the instructions, and spray for a long time to make sure that fly is truly and properly dead.
- 19) Sensible children know not to fly kites near electrical lines
- 20) What are five of the signs that you might have an electrical problem in your home?

Answers

All statements are false except Questions 2, 7, 9, 16 and 17. No. 11: drownings tend to be silent and can happen in as little as 25 seconds. No. 20: Some of the signs are a burning smell (often a fishy smell), hot outlets, frayed wires, buzzing noises, and having regular outages because the circuit breaker is not working properly. Also, give yourself a big pat on the back if you wrote that rats chew electrical wires.

GOOD FEARS & BAD FEARS

TAKING LIGHTNING AS AN EXAMPLE



Unnecessary fears impact our mental health, hence the saying ‘there is nothing to fear but fear itself.’ Yet fear has two faces. Fear is a most valuable gift in some circumstances, hence the title of the New York Times bestseller *The Gift of Fear* by Gavin de Becker, teaching us how to use our fears to protect ourselves.

Let’s take the fear of thunderstorms as an illustration. Using ‘the gift of fear’, it is wise to follow specific guidelines, such as those given by the National Weather Service below and on the following page.

Image: (USA) National Weather Service, Courtesy of Wikimedia

Lightning: What You Need to Know

- No place outside is safe when thunderstorms are in the area.
- If you hear thunder, lightning is close enough to strike you.
- When you hear thunder, immediately move to a safe shelter: a substantial building with electricity or plumbing or an enclosed, metal-topped vehicle with windows up.
- Stay in a safe shelter for at least 30 minutes after you hear the last sound of thunder.

Indoor Lightning Safety

- Stay off corded phones, computers and other electrical equipment that put you in direct contact with electricity.
- Avoid plumbing, including sinks, baths and faucets.
- Stay away from windows and doors, and stay off porches.
- Do not lie on concrete floors, and do not lean against concrete walls.



SAFETY ON THE ROADS

Road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death among children and young adults aged 5 to 29. It is noteworthy that young males under 25 account for nearly three-quarters of these fatalities.

The economic toll of road accidents on nations worldwide is staggering, consuming significant resources in healthcare, infrastructure repair, and lost productivity. Yet the social costs, often harder to measure and seldom addressed, are equally profound. These include the irreplaceable loss of life, diminished quality of living for survivors, long-term disability, and the burden of ongoing medical and legal expenses.

GOOD TO REMEMBER

- Use child seats correctly and follow instructions for proper installation.
- Speeding is a leading cause of road accidents.
- Skipping helmets, seatbelts, or child restraints greatly increases injury risk.
- Driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or certain medications impairs judgment.
- Distracted driving is dangerous—using a mobile phone makes crashes four times more likely, yet many drivers still do it.
- Poorly maintained or unsafe vehicles contribute to accidents.

Stop. Look. Listen. Think

helps the child to cross the road safely.

Videos and other resources for children and teenagers
British Council Learn English Kids (n.d.) Road Safety, retrieved from
<https://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/category/topics/road-safety>

PESTS, NO WELCOME MAT FOR YOU!

Says an SPSF Participant

The attitude that we live for ourselves alone harms communities. It The belief that we live only for ourselves harms entire communities. It shapes how we handle even the smallest issues—like flies, mosquitoes, and rats.

Thankfully, most homes and businesses stay clean, preventing vermin from breeding unchecked.

Still, three of the fiercest enemies to many communities remain: rats, flies, and mosquitoes.

Preventing mosquito-borne diseases is not just a personal responsibility—it's a community effort. Yet not everyone shares the same understanding of prevention. I might believe I've eliminated all mosquito breeding areas, while overlooking stagnant water in the bottoms of my flowerpots or failing to notice water collecting between the leaves of my bromeliads. You, on the other hand, check everything meticulously.

Rats drink stagnant water, eat virtually everything, and are a perennial danger, spreading leptospirosis and other serious diseases. If you use rat poison, keep it securely placed out of the reach of children and animals.” SPSF Participant



WORKING SAFELY WITH PESTICIDES

“I love the fact that so many people and organizations are promoting home gardening. I think they should talk about the use of pesticides. I use them for my garden, but I read instructions and think about my neighbours. My neighbour would spray all his crops then drive out and leave. The wind would come my way, and I had a baby at the time. I recommend that people who use pesticides inform their neighbours and also check where the wind is blowing” - SPSF Participant

What agricultural pesticide was used to spray these tomatoes?



These tomatoes look beautiful, but pretty doesn't always mean safe. Did your neighbour spray them recently? If she used copper (a fungicide), the wait time is shorter, but with other sprays you may need to wait three or more days before eating them.

Far too many adults who spray insects or tend gardens ignore product instructions.

Organic farming is not always practical, but remember almost all pesticides are toxic. Wear personal protective equipment (PPE)—another term for safety gear. At minimum, cover your head and wear goggles, a mask, and rubber gloves.

Remember that Healthy plants better resist pests and weeds, so try and keep them as healthy as possible.



- **Reading labels.** Get into the habit of reading the labels on everything you purchase. Note the cautions, expiry dates and how to use the product.
- **Toxic products.** If products state ‘for external use only’, store them safely away from young children. Throw out products you no longer need.
- **Medications.** Follow the instructions given by the pharmacist. Read the medication carefully, and if you are asking a relative or childcare assistant to read and understand instructions in your absence, be on the alert if they cannot read English to at least a Grade 7 level. Place medications out of children’s way, preferably by locking them up. As suggested previously in this chapter, be particularly careful when storing sweetened medicines, as children might take them for candies. Make sure that you have secured safety caps properly.
- **Handling food.** Cook food properly. Wash your hands before, during and after cooking. Separate raw meats and eggs from ready-to-eat foods such as sandwiches, fruits and salads. When planning to cook meat the following day, place the frozen meat in the fridge to allow it to thaw gradually. Place cooked food in the fridge within 90 minutes.

If you buy cold foods at the supermarket, head straight home instead of making stops. This helps prevent food poisoning, especially for young children, the elderly, and those with sensitive stomachs.

What to do: Dehydration must be avoided. Phone your health care provider immediately to receive instructions.

In cases of dehydration, your health care professional will likely mention ‘electrolytes’—minerals essential for nerve and muscle health and for regulating blood pressure. Coconut water can be a good electrolyte source in the tropics, but check with your provider before giving it to someone who is dehydrated.



FUN FOOD SAFETY QUIZ FOR FOLKS AGED 10 TO 100

Instructions: complete the quiz in less than 10 minutes without doing a web search

	Questions	Yes!	Not everything is correct!	No!
1	Food poisoning can be caused by meats, poultry, seafood, fruits and vegetables & raw milk, among other foods.			
2	You can get infected with e-coli or salmonella if you eat unsafe fruit and vegetables.			
3	Lettuce is the only vegetable that does not cause food poisoning: scientists have discovered that the leaves are so thin that the wind blows away any kind of potential disease.			
4	You can contract e-coli by coming into contact with the hair and stool of humans and animals.			
5	Though anyone can get sick from food poisoning, the greatest danger are to children under five, pregnant women, adults over 65, and people with health issues.			
6	You can contract Hepatitis A from food.			

	Questions	Yes!	Not everything is correct!	No!
7	Cooks should wash their hands after using the bathroom but it is not necessary after scratching their scalp or rubbing their ears.			
8	Two ways to properly thaw foods is to put them in a refrigerator 310F (50C) or lower or submerge the food in potable running water 500F (210 C) or lower.			

Answer Key to the Fun Food Safety Quiz

- 1. YES.** The kinds of meats, fruits and vegetables that are most likely to cause food poisoning are also dependent on where you live.
- 2. YES.** Washing vegetables and soft-skin fruits carefully is very important. Also buy your produce from reputable establishments.
- 3. NO.** Lettuce is a common source of food poisoning.
- 4. NOT EVERYTHING IS CORRECT.** You contract e-coli by coming into contact with stool, not hair.
- 5. YES.** Persons who fall into these groups should always be given special care.
- 6. YES.** Also note that Hepatitis A is a contagious disease that causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and other symptoms.
- 7. NOT EVERYTHING IS CORRECT.** Cooks should wash their hands after scratching their scalps and rubbing their ears – also after touching any part of their faces.
- 8. NO.** Two ways to properly thaw foods is to put them in a refrigerator 410F (50C) or lower or submerge the food in potable running water 700F (210 C) or lower. (A hint was that the conversions from Fahrenheit to Celsius were also wrong).

DID YOU GET 80% or over without a web search? Excellent!
We hope that this fun quiz whets your appetite for learning more about food safety.

ACCIDENTS AT SCHOOL

Now and again, a preventable incident occurs at school. When the accident is investigated, it often becomes clear that the serious hazard had already been identified, but no action was taken. This failure to follow through can have lasting consequences, both for the injured parties and for the school's reputation. All administrators should, at the very least, have a basic understanding of risk management, while a qualified safety or security specialist should be engaged to assess hazards thoroughly, recommend corrective measures, and ensure that those measures are actually implemented.



A Continuous Interlocked Process—Not an Event

Rating Hazards

The administrator, with the assistance of a risk management or safety specialist, would examine the hazards and rate the probability of their happening thus:

“Frequent: Probably will occur very often

Likely: Probably will occur often

Occasional: Expected to occur occasionally

Seldom: Expected to occur on a rare basis

Unlikely: Unexpected, but might occur”

Naval Safety Center, School of Aviation Safety

(Risk Assessment)

Even when something bad is unlikely to happen, you still need to carefully evaluate whether that rare event could seriously hurt or kill someone if it did occur. It's not enough to just say "probably won't happen"—you have to think through the worst-case scenario and decide if you can live with that risk. This kind of assessment requires proper training because it's not always obvious what could go wrong or how serious the consequences might be.

The training should cover more than just identifying risks, however. People need to learn how to communicate effectively with parents, administrators, and other key people when safety concerns come up. Nobody likes to hear about potential dangers, but clear, honest communication helps everyone make informed decisions. Just as important is learning how to document everything properly—what you assessed, what you decided, and why you made those choices. Good documentation protects everyone involved and creates a record that can help improve safety decisions down the road.



BACKPACKS AND SHOES



Backpacks: The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children do not carry a backpack weighing more than 10 to 20 percent of their body weight. Good posture will also help children to avoid back injuries. Fortunately, health, safety and wellness subjects are a staple on many Parent Teachers Associations meeting agendas.

Shoe Safety for kids and adults: Many falls are caused by attractive-looking shoes that do not have the proper grip. Also, ensure the shoes are not tight and fit properly at the heel so that the foot does not move backward and forward.

There should be about a thumb's width between a child's longest toe and the tip of the shoe when standing, and enough space around the toes for comfort. Young girls should avoid wearing high heels for long periods, as ample research links them to musculoskeletal pain and injuries that often surface later in life.



Avoiding Sports Injuries



Below are important points for avoiding sports injuries.

- Do not play when you are ill or injured without guidance from a health care professional.
- Avoid overworking the same muscle group; balance your activities when possible.
- Stay hydrated before, during, and after play.
- Learn the correct techniques for your sport to prevent injury.
- Include proper stretching, warm-up, and cool-down routines.
- Wear appropriate, well-fitted gear and footwear for the sport.
- Take regular breaks to prevent fatigue and reduce injury risk.
- Seek expert advice—specialized tips exist for every sport.

"As a football player, I've learned that injury prevention is not just about physical strength, but also about smart training, proper technique, and listening to your body. It's crucial to incorporate dynamic warm-ups and cooldowns into your routine, focus on flexibility and mobility exercises, and prioritize rest and recovery to keep your body in peak condition."

Kristopher Donaldson

Past College Footballer | Current Coach at The Hill Academy,
Philadelphia

TOY SAFETY

A FEW TIPS FROM AN SPSF PARTICIPANT



“My friend’s child once ended up in the hospital after swallowing a piece of plastic from a toy that actually belonged to his older brother. The incident was frightening and served as a strong reminder that vigilance is essential when young children are around.

Someone always needs to keep an eye on younger children, and even older children should understand whether a younger sibling is old enough to use their toys safely.

Crayons and other colouring materials, too, should carry clear designations to indicate whether they are safe and age-appropriate.”

The “**ASTM D-4236**” or equivalent designations to show they are not toxic. For more information on toys, see the American Academy of Pediatrics for Toy Safety Tips



DOES YOUR FAMILY KNOW HOW TO USE A FIRE EXTINGUISHER?

Every home should have even a small ABC fire extinguisher, preferably placed in the kitchen. An ABC fire extinguisher is designed to extinguish fires caused by ordinary combustibles (trash, wood and paper), flammable liquids and gasses and energized electrical equipment.

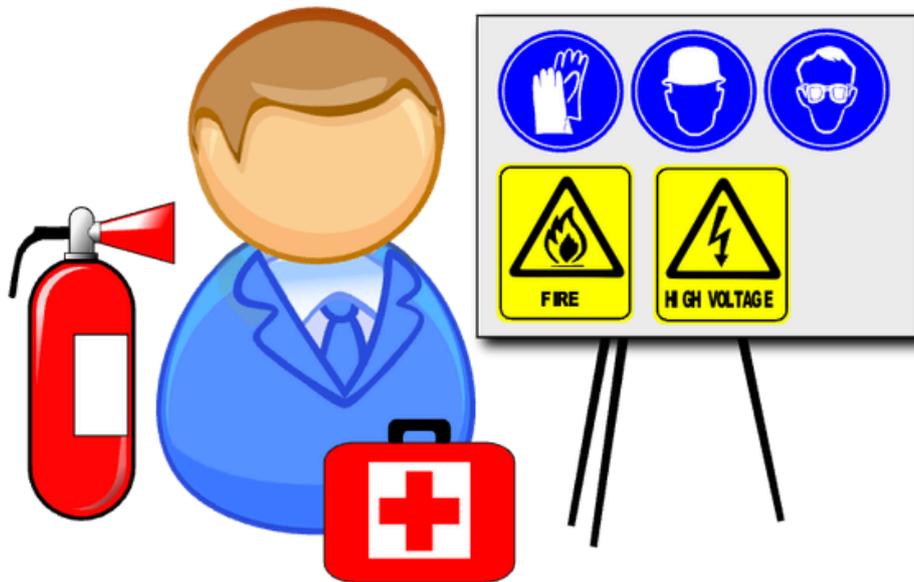
“The acronym **PASS** is used to describe these four basic steps:

- **Pull (Pin)** - Pull the pin at the top of the extinguisher, breaking the seal. When in place, the pin keeps the handle from being pressed and accidentally operating the extinguisher. Immediately test the extinguisher. (Aiming away from the operator). This is to ensure the extinguisher works and also shows the operator how far the stream travels.
- **Aim** - Approach the fire standing at a safe distance. Aim the nozzle or outlet towards the base of the fire.
- **Squeeze** - Squeeze the handles together to discharge the extinguishing agent inside. To stop discharging, release the handles.
- **Sweep** - Sweep the nozzle from side to side as you approach the fire, directing the extinguishing agent at the base of the flames. After an A Class fire is extinguished, probe for smouldering hot spots that could reignite the fuel.

**PLEASE FOLLOW YOUR GOVERNMENT'S
INSTRUCTIONS FOR EARTHQUAKES,
STORMS, AND VOLCANOES.**



OTHER IMPORTANT POINTERS



Teenagers should understand these symbols

- Set up a responsible neighbourhood watch so that neighbours take action when they hear shouts.
- If you are at work, learn the emergency procedures.
- At home or work, everyone should know the location of the fire extinguishers and how to use them. Improper use is wasteful and potentially dangerous.
- Never use an extinguisher if unsafe to do so. If you see that the fire is getting out of control, get out immediately.
- Try to work in pairs when operating extinguishers.
- When leaving the building, feel doors or exits for heat before opening them to make sure there is no fire behind the door.
- Smoke in the air means you should stay low to the ground to reduce the inhalation of smoke, which is potentially toxic and dangerous. Keep hands on the wall so that you have a sense of your bearings.
- Go to your planned refuge area, which could be a neighbour's house. If at work, await instructions from emergency staff or management.

SAFETY WITH DOGS



Most people already understand that potentially aggressive dogs should be kept away from both people and other animals. It is important to emphasize that children who tease animals need to be taught the difference between bravery and recklessness. Stories introduced in grade school can help convey these concepts. Teasing Rover may lead him to develop a general dislike for children, and another child could eventually be bitten because his past experiences with children have been unpleasant.

Here are other guidelines:

1. Always Ask, “May I pet your dog?”

Some dogs are frightened by people that do not belong to their human family.

2. Slowly present the back of your hand first for the dog to smell

Allow the dog to smell your hand first before reaching for the top of his head or muzzle.

3. Tell children not to run toward a dog

Dogs may feel threatened by a strange person running towards them.

4. Do not leave young children and dogs unattended

Young children may tease a dog or pull their body parts or try and take their food away from them. They may try and ride the dog.

Whereas many dogs will allow this behaviour from a child, other dogs will not.

Please teach your dog basic commands, such as come, sit, heel and stop. Try to be patient with Rover even if he's not as smart as Marvel next door.

Dogs have different levels of smarts, so training will take longer for some than for others .



FIRST AID SENSITIZATION: A FEW BASICS



Image: Baby Vayu Sookoo - his Mom, Anganie Sookoo, is an SPSF Voluntary Participant. See her photo in the Introduction to SPSF.

At school or through community organizations, you might request that your child be introduced to First Aid essentials—resources like the British Red Cross’s First Aid Champions website offer an excellent starting point.

However, because children do not always exercise the best judgment in emergencies, it is strongly recommended that at least one adult in the household receive First Aid training. Even knowing what not to do is critical. Serious mistakes can lead to unnecessary pain and expense.

Fortunately, accessible courses and seminars are offered by St. John Ambulance, the Red Cross, and other accredited organizations.

Test yourself: See what you would do immediately if:

- A child choked
- A child was unconscious
- A child got a burn
- A child swallowing a harmful substance

A Red Cross or St. John’s Ambulance website will have the correct answers.

In every country, specific plants and animals potentially affect health or cause injury. Your Ministry or Department of Health will advise you on the steps to take if your child has been exposed to one of these plants and animals.

At least one person in the home should know how to perform CPR and give rescue breaths correctly, without causing further injury. Special care and guidance are required when performing CPR on small children, since their bodies are more delicate and need a gentler approach than what you'd use on an adult.

Many lives have been saved by First Aiders, and many serious injuries prevented! You might save the life of your own child or grandchild with an understanding of First Aid basics.

SAFETY HELPS TO KEEP FAMILIES HAPPY

If your country is susceptible to natural disasters, learn as much as you can about them and share information with your children as soon as they are old enough.



Above: There are many safe activities for children. Stimulating their creativity may keep them too busy to get into trouble.

Internet Smarts for Kids

Recommendations from our SPSF Participants

Our SPSF participants shared many insights about the need for caution when using the internet, especially social media, given the very real risks that exist in today's world.

- Keep in mind that when you use the Internet, you are not only introducing your child to the world but giving the world access to your child.
- Consider why, if and when your child should have a cell phone.
- If you choose to share information about your children, be careful about posting anything that you or the child could be embarrassed about in the future. Think of their needs rather than your needs.
- Remember that not everyone sees your child the way you do. Ensure they are dressed appropriately. Some parents take profile photos rather than full-face photos.
- Avoid giving out confidential or potentially embarrassing information or personal information like birthdates.
- Use the available privacy settings.



- Use Strong Passwords
- Understand how exposure to pornography can shape a child’s behavior. Much of the material available online can be deeply problematic. Many forms of pornography portray misogyny, promote disturbing themes such as incest or rape, and depict acts of violence or other forms of disrespect toward a sexual partner. Repeated exposure to such content can normalize harmful ideas and lead to the objectification of human beings.
- Have regular conversations with your child about the possible dangers of social media.
- Use parental controls, but be aware that some tech-savvy kids may be able to break them.
- Remind your children regularly why, in a child-appropriate way, they should not speak to any strangers on the Internet.
- Teach them to come to you if they feel disturbed by something that they see.
- Explain the possible dangers of social media to lifelong reputations if they post inappropriately.

Children need ample time to play instead of spending hours on the computer.



- Educate yourself about the kinds of information and videos that are accessible to children, and monitor smartphones for this reason!
- Emphasize the importance of keeping friends who uplift them and resisting the temptation to join in gossip or smear campaigns online, or anything else that could harm them now or in the future. Set clear guidelines on what your child can view, how often they can go online, and explain why those limits matter.
- Learn what violence does to the mind of a child. Violence can also create bad dreams for days, months or even over a lifetime in some cases.

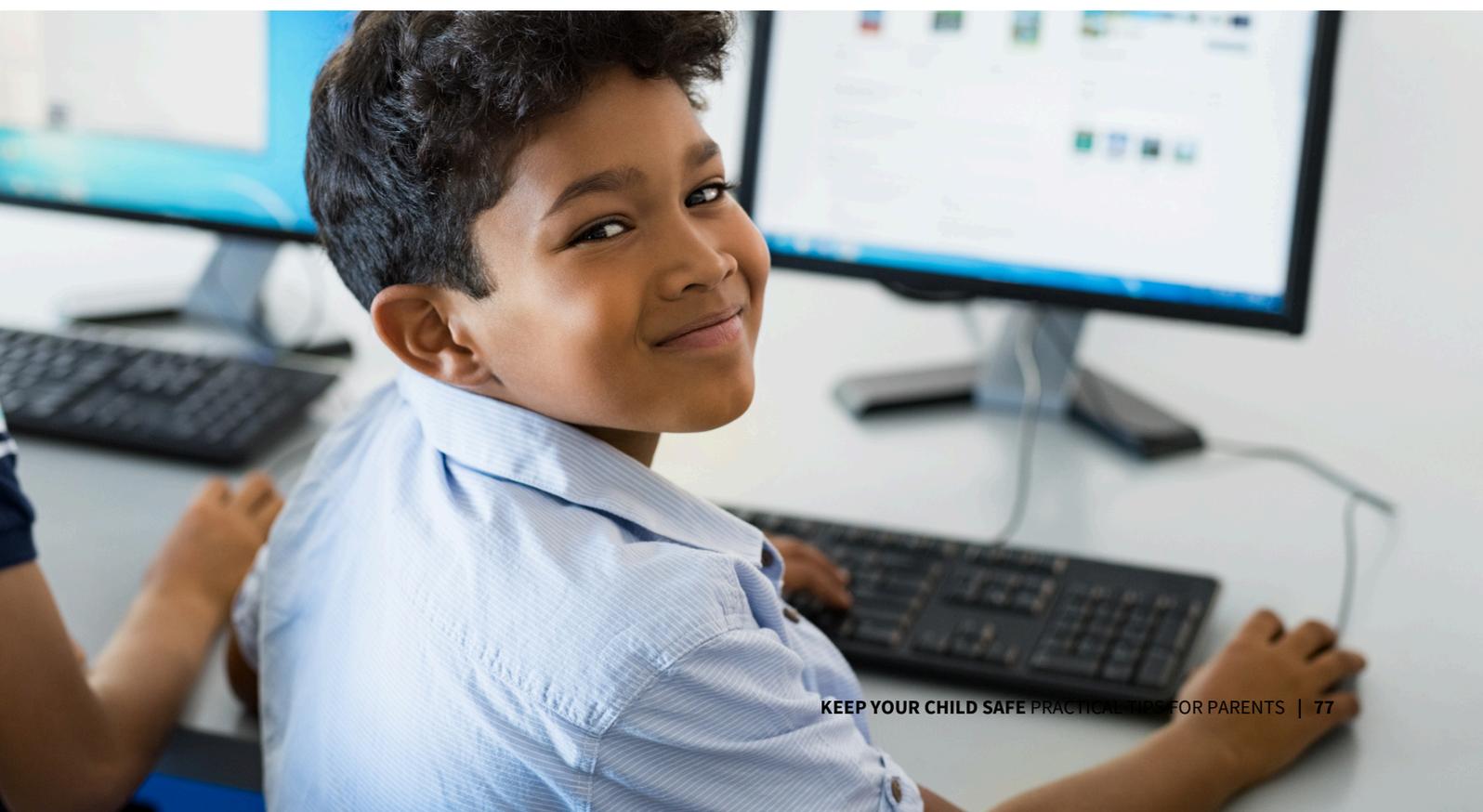


Protecting your child online

BY **Kristina Donaldson**

Over the past few decades, we have seen great advances in technology, impacting every aspect of our society. While we have reaped many positive benefits from technology, it can also have adverse effects on child development and quality of life. Technological devices such as smartphones and tablets are now commonplace for children. It is not uncommon for me to see a relative, who is not yet a pre-teen, spend an entire day on her tablet, where she has access to all the good and bad the Internet has to offer.

Research has shown that the persistent use of social media by both children and adults can lower self-esteem and lead to negative effects such as loneliness and depression. Therefore, it is our responsibility to monitor screen time and ensure that our children are using it appropriately. We should also encourage children to spend time outdoors and have more in-person socialization with their friends. I also believe that parents should take the time to join their children while they use their technological devices. I have seen a huge difference in the way my cousin interacts with the Internet when I am there to help guide her decisions on the videos that she watches.



The Special Section



Art created by Traci Wong at the age of 16

TEACHING SAFETY MEANS TALKING ABOUT SEX

Talking to children about sex should never be treated as a one-time conversation. Instead, think of it as an ongoing dialogue that evolves as your child grows and matures. Frequent, age-appropriate discussions help children build a healthy understanding of their bodies, relationships, and boundaries.

It is important that you feel reasonably comfortable discussing the topic, because your tone and attitude will shape how your child feels about it. Children learn not just from what you say, but from how you say it. That said, if you find the subject difficult to talk about, don't feel guilty. Many parents do. There are excellent books, videos, and other resources available to help guide the conversation.

Children who lack a clear understanding of sex are much more vulnerable to misinformation, peer pressure, and even exploitation—especially if they encounter individuals in the community who do not have their best interests at heart. They may also be influenced by other children at school who have been prematurely or inappropriately exposed to sexual content, often through media or unhealthy home environments.



Start early with age-appropriate conversations. Teach younger children basic concepts about body safety, privacy, and boundaries. As they grow older, include information about reproduction—how babies are made—while also emphasizing emotional readiness, consent, and respect. When children reach the teenage years, it's essential to talk openly about consent, peer pressure, healthy relationships, and personal values. Use real-life examples, and consider role-playing common scenarios if the child is mature enough. This helps them think through decisions in advance.

And remember: educating children about sex does not encourage them to become sexually active. On the contrary, open, informed discussions often lead to more responsible decisions and delayed sexual activity.

Read The Least You Should Know About Children to learn about the important role of responsible adult male figures in children's lives.





Your child's mental health

Mental health is a broad term, encompassing everything from mild anxiety to serious behavioral disorders. While open conversation is often the best starting point for addressing these challenges, SPSF also offers practical guidance on topics such as conflict resolution and supporting family members whose mental health concerns affect the entire household. In this section, we also explore how trauma can be prevented—for example, by taking steps to protect children from predators.

A VERY SENSITIVE - but necessary - TOPIC

Conversations about protecting children from predators reveal a common point: children must be safeguarded from both adults and, in some cases, other children.

Two SPSF participants discussing the issue shared an observation. One remarked, 'When you see them so happy and innocent, it's so hard to tell them that this is part of the real world. You want to keep that innocence for as long as possible!'

The goal is not to take away all of that innocence but to teach essential, age-appropriate information — such as understanding they should never be touched in private places and also learning not to automatically trust every charming or persuasive person. Even adults struggle to resist persuasive individuals, as evidenced by the continued rise of fraudulent schemes.

WAS THIS OVERDONE?

One of the SPSF participants shared a story about a woman who took her ten-year-old son everywhere except to school — and even then, she picked him up immediately after classes ended. The participant questioned whether this level of constant supervision was truly beneficial for the boy.

The reality is that every situation is different; perhaps she was protecting him from a specific concern. However, in most cases, it is healthy for a ten-year-old to have some space in safe settings without a parent always present. Gradually allowing moments of independence helps a child develop confidence and essential social skill.

The topic is equally relevant to teenagers. SPSF Participants know many cases across all income levels. Teenagers may take precautions in one area but overlook others. For example, one teenager believed it was safe to visit a nearby beachfront because it was quiet and empty, not realizing that those with malicious intent often avoid acting in public spaces. In another instance, two young women, aged nineteen and twenty, seeking adventure, attended a party where they did not fit in with the subculture. People can quickly recognize those outside their cultural or social group, and these were perceived as ‘nice girls.’ When they left at 2:00 a.m., they were followed by four other partygoers.

Part of the trauma that ensued was that the victims felt that others get away with these risks – why are they so unlucky? So conversations with both children and teenagers need to be ongoing. Also see the SPSF Book Protecting Teenagers.

SERIOUS TRAUMA CAN BE AVOIDED



To keep your child happy and well adjusted, please be vigilant.

There is often an assumption that someone who does bad things must have a certain ‘look.’ This is not the case — many perpetrators appear entirely ‘reasonable’ on the surface.

Sadly, courtrooms are filled with cases involving traumatized children and parents who are left shocked and angry.

An SPSF Participant related a story about a vendor in a market who had her infant grandchild chained to an item in the stall, so that she could not wander away. The Participant asked the vendor why she carried the child to a busy market such as this one. The vendor responded that she knew of cases where children as young as her grandchild were sexually abused. My friend, who already knew that many children from all income brackets were being sexually abused, said that too many young boys and men have a pathological view of sexuality or manhood itself, and that society needs to address this issue urgently.

– SPSF Participant

Children rarely report abuse

Almost all parents explain to their children why they need to be cautious around strangers. Fortunately, child-appropriate videos reinforcing these messages of caution are available on the Internet.

If you tell a child, “don’t get into a car with a stranger,” enlist the help of a favourite colleague at work or other trusted person whom your child does not know to see if the child would get into a car if offered a treat. Such experiments have been done. If you recall that the brains of children are not yet properly formed (See the SPSF book *The Least You Should Know About Children*), you will not be surprised at the results of some of those experiments. In other words, the child might have forgotten what you told him or her.

This sort of sensitization is necessary because children rarely report abuse.

Rules and guidelines need to be repeated at least once per month, especially for small children. **Let children know that responsible adults who are strangers do not approach children, compliment them, ask them to get into a car, ask them to keep a secret, deliberately touch them, or touch their genitals.**





Every child and teenager should be taught healthy boundaries, which covers how they should touch or speak to others, depending on the individual, group or context.

If a stranger approaches a child, the child should step back, say “no” firmly, move away quickly, and immediately tell a trusted adult what happened. When your children are with you, it’s fine to let them greet people politely as they pass, but they must strictly follow your instructions when you or another trusted adult isn’t present.

It is also important to gently explain that not all dangers come from strangers. Many victims know the person who harms them. This is a sensitive conversation, and how you approach this subject should depend on the child’s age, maturity, and the circumstances.

Remember: please be careful about monitoring new romantic partners around your children. Whereas most people will not harm children, those who do can gravely affect their lives.

– SPSF Participant

Preparation for your **REFLECT-ACT-MAINTAIN (RAM) Activity**

**"It takes less time to do things right
than to explain why you did it wrong."**

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

To prepare for your RAM activity, take a sheet of paper and write down everything you're doing right in life—big or small. Look for patterns in these strengths so you can see how they might help you achieve other goals.

Example: I get up every day and do my work responsibly or I am actively looking for work. Strength: I am disciplined and focused.

Next, aim for short-term wins that build on that strength. Big goals can feel overwhelming, but the good news is that some short-term wins can be achieved in a week. Over time, these small victories add up to moderate or even major accomplishments.

Use the simple form below. Be honest when rating yourself—don't give high scores (8/10 or above) for activities you know, deep down, you won't actually do. Choose a realistic time frame: not so tight there is no room for setbacks, but not so easy that it doesn't challenge you.

Action Step	Why I want to do it	Sense of Urgency from 1 to 10	Due Date for First Action	The 'win'
Speak to Jason about John	I see Jason being influenced by John and I don't like that.	9/10	Tomorrow, December 31	I will have a better understanding of how Jason is thinking.

Your REFLECT-ACT-MAINTAIN (RAM) Form

EXAMPLE

Though Reflection is placed here first, it is also done before and after Action and Maintenance.

REFLECT	ACT	MAINTAIN
<p><i>I do not think that the children are getting sufficient sleep. They are really irritable in the mornings. I give them extra tablet time to play games if they finish their homework, but I wonder if I am doing the right thing?</i></p>	<p><i>Meet with the children to figure out if a point system will work with them, where they get a special treat for completing many tasks instead of staying up late on school nights.</i></p>	<p><i>I need to maintain the point system even though they fuss now and then that they want special treats without earning the points. I am keeping them to their word because I do not want them to take the point system for a joke. They are certainly much more alert on school mornings, and they are paying a bit more attention to their homework.</i></p>

Let's keep our children safe.



From the Strong People Strong Families Community

A Special thanks to Creative Commons, Unsplash, Deposit Photos, Getty Images
and Pexels for the images in this book

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