

# The Parent and Family Engagement Connection

Home & School

*"Together We Can Make a Difference"*



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Terri Stafford

## ***Tidbits from Terri***

Giving is a habit — cultivate it.  
Anonymous

### **Teaching Children to Give**

Sharing the experience of giving can be the most rewarding present you give your child this holiday season. It can be tough to teach children the value of giving in a season when they're surrounded by messages about the value of getting. Here are five ways to start:

- **Start small when the kids are small.** Your young child might be happy to help bake cookies for a friend but end up wanting to keep the gift for themselves. Plan for this by baking enough cookies to keep and enough cookies to give.
- **Teach the value of giving time.** Help your child make gift certificates good for "one free car wash" or "breakfast in bed" that he can give to others in the family.
- **Involve your child in selecting the gift.** This is a great time of year to select from angel trees. Pick children the same age/gender of your children and let them pick out the gifts and, when possible, involve them in the gift delivery. They will appreciate the experience.
- **Be a role model.** Volunteer your family's time at a soup kitchen or senior center. Gather small-size toiletries, such as toothpaste and shampoo, and pack them in decorated gift bags to take to a homeless shelter. Ask your child if she will help you baby-sit for a neighbor's toddler so she can do her shopping or help you rake the leaves for an elderly friend.
- **Personalize giving.** It's faster for busy parents to write a check to a charity, but it has little impact on a child who can't see where the money is going or imagine the people who benefit. Delivering canned goods to a food bank is more meaningful than dropping a check in the mail. Your family could "adopt" a needy family through a community organization, choose the gifts and wrap them.

Have a family conversation about what you're thankful for. That will help your children realize that what they value may be missing in other people's lives.

Author, Ellen Sabin offers these activities to try. These things don't take huge amounts of time. They just take a few moments of thoughtfulness.

## ***Snowball***

*I made myself a snowball,  
As perfect as could be,  
I thought I'd keep it as a pet,  
And let it sleep with me.  
Made it some pajamas,  
And a pillow for its head,  
Then last night it ran away,  
But first — it wet the bed!*

~ Shel Silverstein



# How Youth Can Help Communities Respond To & Recover From the Coronavirus Pandemic

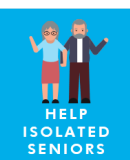


Volunteering and service are more important during a crisis than ever. Social distancing does not mean social isolation. We're all in this together, so be a helper. Let's all do our part to contribute to the common good, so that when this crisis is over, we're proud of how we came together to keep our young people, our communities, and our democracies thriving.



Check with your local school system to see if they need volunteers to distribute food (or other items) to children and families in need.

⇒ Donate to and volunteer with your local food banks or food pantries.



Check in with them to see what they need; then run errands, deliver food and medication, etc. Make regular phone or video call visits to combat social isolation/loneliness. Make cards or write letters, emails, or social media messages to seniors in nursing homes who can't have visitors.

⇒ Connect with a local mutual aid group through AARP Community Connections.

⇒ Support social connections with these Ideas to Maintain Social Connections Between Generations.

⇒ Contact your local Meals on Wheels to learn ways to volunteer.



Spread facts and promote the behaviors individuals should be doing to stop the spread of the virus, including staying at home, hand-washing, mask-wearing, and social distancing.



Take a break from the news and go outside, play a game, watch your favorite TV show or a movie, etc. To support others, rather than telling someone not to worry, consider asking what they are doing for self-care. And stay in touch if you can.

⇒ One great way to #BeKind to someone who is struggling is to #BeThere.



Fundraising can be a fun activity to spend time doing while schools are closed. Make cards, artwork, jewelry, or other handcrafted items to sell virtually. Organize virtual "thons" (walk, skate, bowl, swim, bike, rock, read, dance) of an activity that people can do and track individually.

⇒ Create a neighborhood task force. Google doc shows how to create a contact sheet, a group chat, and a list of questions around how to help each other during crises like the coronavirus. You can also connect via neighborhood email list-servs, [Facebook](#), [Nextdoor](#), or [Slack](#).



Older teens and college students can provide childcare for family/friends/neighbors if schools are closed, but parents still have to work. Organize a neighborhood childcare co-op to share the responsibility.



With blood drives cancelled, blood banks are facing severe shortages. Donations from healthy individuals are needed now to maintain a sufficient blood supply.

⇒ The following organizations can help you identify a location to donate in your community:

[The American Red Cross](#)

[America's Blood Centers](#)

[AABB.org](#)

Taken from an article by YSA (Youth Service America) Youth Changing the World

## Guarding Your Teen Online

The Internet is a great learning tool for teenagers. However, it can also expose them to predators eager to exploit their vulnerability. As a parent, it is important to monitor your teen's online activities. While some teens may feel this is an invasion of their privacy, parents need to be vigilant, just as they do when they allow their teens to stay out late at night with friends. You should know whom your teen talks to and when. Monitor all of your teen's online activity, such as use of chat rooms, blogs, bulletin boards, instant messaging, and e-mail. Predators often meet unsuspecting teens in chat rooms prior to communicating with them via other means. If you find that your teen is receiving inappropriate communications from a potential predator, contact your local law enforcement agency for assistance.

Source: Working Solutions, Alliance Work Partners

## Symptoms of Gang Involvement

As your child matures, drugs and alcohol are not the only dangers you must watch for. You must also be aware of the potential for gang involvement. Signs your child may be involved include the following: secrecy about activities away from home; new, uncomfortable friends in their life; possession or use of weapons; a new "street" name; graffiti on personal belongings; gang symbol tattoos or drawings on their skin; lower school grades or declining interest in school activities; diminished interest in the family; possession of unexplained money or things they can't afford; wearing the same colors every day or wearing certain articles of clothing specifically to one side; and negative contact with law enforcement officials. If you notice these types of changes, seek help for gang intervention, available through your child's school as well as through local law enforcement agencies.

Source: Working Solutions, Alliance Work Partners

## Does Your Teen Have Digital Dirt?

**Digital Dirt** refers to all the personal information,—hobbies, photos, rants, raves, etc.—about an individual that is available on the Internet through personal web sites, profiles on social networking sites, and comments on blogs. What you—and certainly your teenagers—might not realize is that **colleges and universities, as well as employers, are reading what's out there** and, in many cases, what they find can derail an applicant before they're even called for an interview.

Many college admissions offices are now reviewing online profiles of high school seniors when determining their eligibility for admittance. Additionally, some employers report they routinely review the online profiles of applicants. Ask your sons or daughters if they would want to miss out on the college or job of their choice because they're boasting about skipping class and underage drinking.

**Clean up online profiles.** Instead of ordering your teens to remove their profiles, encourage them to have fun expressing themselves—within reason. Talk to them about the consequences of the information they post and request not only to review the contents, but also require that they remove any questionable material. Teens can be creative without jeopardizing future opportunities.

**Implement Safety Controls.** Many of the popular social networking sites allow users to post comments about fellow members. This means photos and other content that may be posted. To avoid having such comments, which could be damaging or less than flattering, make sure that the features that block or screen such comments are activated.

Taken in part from an article in: Partnership to End Addiction. Written by Partnership Staff.



**Deep**  
in the  
Heart of Texas  
2021

Mark Your Calendar  
December 9-11, 2021  
Statewide Parental Involvement Conference  
Waco Convention Center  
100 Washington Ave. | Waco, TX 76701

Host Hotels

Waco Hilton  
113 S. University Parks Dr. 254-754-8484

Countyard by Marriott  
191 S. Washington Ave. 254-752-8886



If you want others  
to be happy,  
practice compassion.  
If you want to  
be happy,  
practice  
compassion.



## How To Teach Children Gratitude

**Gratitude is an attitude** toward living. Children learn gratitude by watching their parents, teachers, grandparents and other adult role models in their lives. These role models set the tone. Children mirror the values they see on a daily basis. If children are shown and experience the value of gratitude in daily life, appreciation will become a part of their attitude.

### Count your blessings every day.

Start each morning with a bountiful dose of gratitude, setting the tone for your day as well as that of your children. Your attitude and appreciation of the gift of each day demonstrates that every moment is what you make of it.

- Begin each day with a good morning smile.
- Acknowledge there is another wonderful day ahead.
- Tell the children in your life, "I'm happy that you're my kid/grandkid/niece/student, etc."
- Make a habit of beginning the day by listing the tiniest blessings. A bed to sleep in, food to eat, a roof over your head.
- Make a gratitude poster together and hang it where family members or students can see it.
- Make your own gratitude poster and have children add to it each day. Ask them, "What are you grateful for right now?"

### Practice random acts of kindness.

Adult role models set examples of gratitude by behaving kindly. Show children kindness in how you act toward them as well as others. Encourage them to participate in your acts of kindness as the situation allows and soon they will exhibit their own random acts.

Some examples are:

- Allow the person with one item to move to the front of you in the grocery store line.
- Let another driver merge in front of you in traffic, or wave and smile when someone does this for you.
- Hold the door for people entering or exiting a store or building.
- Share with others by letting a friend or neighbor borrow a book, tool, etc.
- Help someone in need by bringing them a home cooked meal or volunteering your time.

### Offer sincere praise.

Praise teaches children more about giving and sharing than lectures. As adults, we should extend genuine praise to the children in our lives for their accomplishments.

- Let children know their drawing was colorful or creative, their help was appreciated, their act of kindness was thoughtful.
- Praise is important when a child has a success, resolves a problem or makes a concerted effort.
- Praise them for noticing the beauty and all the wonder of nature and their vivid imaginations.

### Say "Thank You"

Every action and every word has an effect. Be mindful of your attitude and behavior toward family, friends and strangers. Treat everyone with the utmost kindness and appreciation. Children see and mimic that behavior. When adults are liberal with handing out simple "thank yous," children will follow suit.

Taken from the Gratitude Habitat Blog by Carol Adamski



## What Kids Can Learn From Volunteering

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

It can teach them:

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



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

### PARENT INVOLVEMENT RECIPE

- 1 cup of **positive attitudes**
- 2 1/2 cups of **professional courtesy**
- 3 1/2 cups of **reflective listening**
- 4 tbsp. of **open communication**
- 1 3/4 cups of **honesty and fairness**
- 5 cups of **respect**
- 1 cup of **positive school climate**
- 1 1/2 cups of **meaningful parent activities**
- 6 cups of total **staff commitment**
- Blend carefully to involve parents in your school today.**



*"Do not take anything for granted — not one smile or one person or one rainbow or one breath, or one night in your cozy bed."*

~ Terri Guillemets

# ABCDE Tips for Acting Boldly to Change Diet and Exercise for Kids

As parents and caregivers, you are critical to establishing the necessary and lifelong habits of healthy eating and exercise in children.

## Act boldly as a

- Role model — Make sure to eat healthy, wholesome foods and get plenty of exercise yourself. Be consistent; this should be a permanent part of your lifestyle. **Set a good example.**
- Gatekeeper — you have the power to monitor and control what your kids eat, what exercise they get, and how much time they spend watching TV, surfing the web, or playing videogames. **You're in charge.**
- Taste-setter — you can influence your kids' appreciation for the flavors of healthy food very early on, which can last them into adulthood. **Start them off right.**
- Advocate — use your voice to push for positive changes in child care, schools and your communities that facilitate healthy eating and exercise. **They have the right to be healthy.**



## Change their diet

- Use healthy, wholesome foods (i.e., fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat dairy) that are nutrient-dense when cooking family meals or preparing snacks. Limit consumption of empty calories in the form of sugary, processed, and fast foods.
- Use Go, Slow, Whoa as a guide.
- Go foods — low in fat, sugar and calories and nutrient-dense, e.g., fruits and vegetables. Great to eat anytime.
- Slow foods — higher in fat, added sugar and calories, e.g., white bread, pancakes, fruit canned in syrup. Should be eaten less often.
- Whoa foods — very high in fat, added sugar and calories while low in nutrients, e.g., candy, soda, French fries. Eat once in a while in small portions.
- Make sure that calorie intake and portion sizes are matched to your child's age and activity level.
- Find ways to make over family favorites by using healthier ingredients (e.g., more veggies, less fat) or healthier methods of cooking (e.g., grilling or baking instead of frying).
- Connect kids to their food by continually introducing them to new types of healthy food and allowing them to participate in food shopping and preparation so that they can understand what goes into their meals and maintain healthy cooking habits as they grow up.
- Protect the time you eat with your kids — children who dine at regular family mealtimes get better nutrition, perform better in school and bond better with their families.
- Change their media diet — limit TV time to one to two hours of quality programming per day, monitor internet use and make sure they avoid snacking during TV time.

## Change their exercise routine

- Make time to play or be active with your kids — set aside 60 minutes everyday to play catch; go for a walk, jog, bike ride or swim; or play tag.
- Make sure your kids get enough activity to balance the calories that they take in.
- Give them gifts that encourage activity — e.g., sporting equipment, active games or enroll them in community sports teams.
- Walk as much as possible — e.g., walk with your kids to school, after dinner, instead of watching TV.
- Move around at home with your kids — e.g., yard work, gardening or work around the house.

<https://www.apa.org/topics/children/healthy-eating>

# Ways to Be a Fantastic Parent

## SET SMART LIMITS

**Take charge.** Children crave limits, which helps them understand and manage an often confusing world. Show your love by setting boundaries so your kids can explore and discover their passions safely.

**Don't clip your child's wings.** Your toddler's mission in life is to gain independence. So when she's developmentally capable of putting her toys away, clearing her plate from the table, and dressing herself, let her. Giving a child responsibility is good for her self-esteem (and your sanity!).

**Don't try to fix everything.** Give young kids a chance to find their own solutions. When you lovingly acknowledge a child's minor frustrations without immediately rushing in to save her, you teach her self-reliance and resilience.

**Remember that discipline is not punishment.** Enforcing limits is really about teaching kids how to behave in the world and helping them to become competent, caring, and in control.

**Pick your battles.** Kids can't absorb too many rules without turning off completely. Forget arguing about little stuff like fashion choices and occasional potty language. Focus on the things that really matter -- that means no hitting, rude talk, or lying.

## KNOW THE BEST WAY TO PRAISE

**Give appropriate praise.** Instead of simply saying, "You're great," try to be specific about what your child did to deserve the positive feedback. You might say, "Waiting until I was off the phone to ask for cookies was hard, and I really liked your patience."

**Cheer the good stuff.** When you notice your child doing something helpful or nice, let him know how you feel. It's a great way to reinforce good behavior so he's more likely to keep doing it.

**Gossip about your kids.** Fact: What we overhear is far more potent than what we are told directly. Make praise more effective by letting your child "catch" you whispering a compliment about him to Grandma, Dad, or even his teddy.

## TRUST YOURSELF

**Give yourself a break.** Hitting the drive-through when you're too tired to cook doesn't make you a bad parent.

**Trust your mommy gut.** No one knows your child better than you. Follow your instincts when it comes to his health and well-being. If you think something's wrong, chances are you're right.

**Just say "No."** Resist the urge to take on extra obligations at the office or become the Volunteer Queen at your child's school. You will never, ever regret spending more time with your children.

**Don't accept disrespect from your child.** Never allow her to be rude or say hurtful things to you or anyone else. If she does, tell her firmly that you will not tolerate any form of disrespect.

**Pass along your plan.** Mobilize the other caregivers in your child's life -- your spouse, grandparents, daycare worker, babysitter -- to help reinforce the values and the behavior you want to instill. This includes everything from saying thank you and being kind to not whining.

Article from Explore Parents



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### The Parent and Family Engagement Connection

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"Together We Can Make a Difference"

The Parent and Family Engagement Connection is posted on our website four times a year for parents and educators of Texas. This newsletter is available in Spanish, Vietnamese, German, Tagalog and Korean.



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