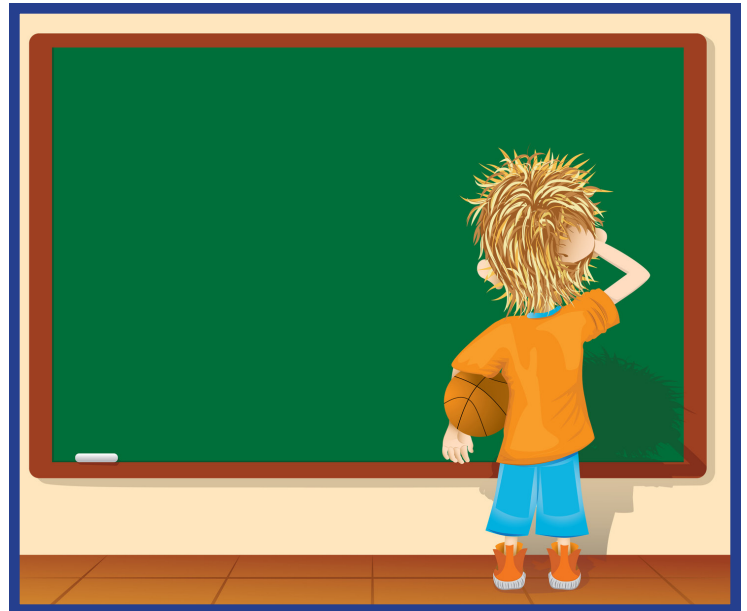


Helping Hand

Volume 21, Issue 2

Children with Learning Disabilities

Children with learning disabilities have a neurological disorder that causes them to learn in a different way than other people. The most common learning disabilities are dyslexia and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Most children with learning disabilities are of at least average intelligence. When they have trouble at school, the cause is neither social, emotional, visual/hearing, nor motor disturbance. Instead, the cause is a different learning style or aptitude. So if your child is doing poorly in school, don't assume he or she is lazy or is having emotional problems. Learning disabilities also affect children outside of the classroom. They can affect your child's daily activities, playtime and friendships.



What to do if you suspect that your child has a learning disability.

If you suspect your child has a learning disability, it is essential to get assistance as early as possible. Children whose problems are recognized early can overcome or learn to compensate for their disabilities. Here are some tips for help starting the process of coming to terms with a learning disability:

- **Contact your child's school.**
Public schools are required by federal law to evaluate children who may have a learning disability. The school also is required to provide special education for your child.
- **Learn more about your child's learning problems.**
Build on his or her strengths and adjust to weaknesses. Help minimize stress and develop your child's self-esteem by thinking ahead when it comes to limitations. Pay attention to your child's talents, skills and interests, and encourage him or her to develop them. Help your child understand that, just like all people, there will be some things she or he won't be able to do.
- **Emphasize the things he or she can do.**

Possible signs of a learning disability:

- your child fails to speak by age three
- your child has difficulty with motor skills (buttoning, tying, climbing) by age five
- your child dislikes school or is having difficulty learning

How to Recognize a Suicidal Teenager

Here are clues to LOOK and LISTEN for to tell if you might be dealing with a potentially suicidal teenager.

What to LOOK for

- Isolates self from friends and family
- Exhibits personality and behavior changes
- Has declining performance in school
- Tends to try to skip out on school
- Shows negativity towards self and world
- Shows a lack of energy or enthusiasm and/or is very irritable
- Seems unable to concentrate or sit still
- No longer cares about friends, hobbies or school
- Tends to sleep more or have extreme difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep
- Loses or gains a significant amount of weight
- Uses drugs or alcohol to numb pain
- Is increasingly attracted to dark and depressing music and movies
- Gives away prized possessions
- Hides rope, knife, pills or gun
- Visits Internet sites having to do with suicide or death-related subjects
- Does not make any plans for school breaks or summer vacations
- Has a history of suicide attempts

What to LISTEN for

- Talks about feeling different from everybody
- Talks about thoughts of ending life
- Talks about life not being worth living
- Talks about death, dying or life after death
- Hints that he or she will not be around in the future
- Talks about hopelessness or how everything is pointless
- Is cynical and sarcastic about almost everything

Other factors that increase suicidal risk

- Loss of an important relationship, such as a boyfriend or girlfriend
- Poor grades and fear of parent disapproval
- Divorced home
- Alcohol and drug abuse by teen or parents
- Physical or emotional abuse or neglect
- Continuous tension in the home, where teen feels resentment towards overbearing parent and contempt mixed with pity towards submissive parent
- Family history of suicide or suicide attempts

Some options for seeking help

Call 911 if the youth is actively trying to harm him- or herself. If the situation is not at that stage, contact your local mental health crisis line or your insurance company for help accessing urgent or emergency treatment.

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PRP Media, Inc.
PO Box 99515
Troy, MI 48099-9515
248-588-7733; 1-800-453-7733
www.PRPonline.net

Creative Director: Russ Roozeboom
Publisher: Jane Adams

Please send suggestions or contributions to the editor at the above address or through your student assistance program.

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Healthy Snacks for After School

Having the kids back to school also means making certain they have healthy snacks to come home to. Kids are more likely to grab healthy snacks if you have them ready and waiting. If left to start digging for their own snacks, they're less likely to reach for healthy alternatives.

Here are some great healthy snack suggestions:

- Unsalted nuts
- Crackers and cheese
- Applesauce
- Oatmeal raisin cookies
- Chips and guacamole
- Trail mix
- Vegetables and dip
- Whole grain bread and peanut butter
- Pretzels
- Light popcorn
- Yogurt
- Fruit



Help Children Build Character Through Sportsmanship

Children who play sports score higher in self-esteem and self-confidence. They also learn how to lead, set goals, compete under pressure, work hard and play as a team. Statistics even show that kids who are involved in sports are less likely to abuse alcohol and drugs or engage in other destructive behaviors.

Those are all great life skills, but are they character-building? The well-publicized crimes and misdemeanors of professional athletes and media reports of heartless coaches and screaming parents have caused many to take a look at the relationship between sports and character.

The result is a new theory on the block—that it's sportsmanship, not sports, that builds true character.

This type of character is defined by integrity, honesty and respect for self and others.

Winning isn't everything

How can you help your child build character through sportsmanship? First, emphasize that sports should be fun as well as serious. Winning at all costs doesn't build character; in fact, it may destroy it. Instead, encourage children to try their best. If they win, they see the connection between hard work and results. If they lose, they can still hold their heads up high because they gave their best effort.

According to professional coaches, respect is the key ingredient in sportsmanship. Children show respect for their opponents when they play well, avoid "trash talk," and celebrate respectfully. Under the rules of sportsmanship, children are also taught to show respect for fellow teammates and coaches, for officials, and for the rules and spirit of the game.



TIPS FOR PARENTS AND COACHES

- Talk about the concept of sportsmanship
- Use the word "respect" often
- Expect sportsmanship in practice as well as games
- Establish team rules and customs that encourage sportsmanship
- Talk about news stories that show sportsmanship or the lack of it
- Model sportsmanship as a spectator
- Consider a child's physical and emotional readiness for organized sports before signing up
- Check out the Parents' and Coaches' Code of Ethics, established by the National Youth Sports Coaches Association

The Dangers of K2 "Incense"

K2 is a legal herb laced with a synthetic chemical called *JWH-018*. It is similar to THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, though *JWH-018* is actually more potent. *JWH-018* is sprayed onto tobacco leaves, flowers or dried herbs which can then be smoked. The result is a legal substance, sometimes sold as "incense" under the name K2, though it is also known as demon, Zohai, spice, or genie.

While little is known about its long term effects, K2 has been banned in many states because of its dangerous side effects such as:

- severe hallucinations
- psychotic behavior
- seizures
- loss of consciousness
- increased heart rate
- dilated pupils
- paranoia
- vomiting

Helping with Homework

For young children, homework helps foster self-discipline and good study habits. It reinforces skills taught in school and provides in-depth or creative activities to stretch your child's thinking. As children get older, homework may expand the teaching opportunity beyond the limited class time. For example, a teacher may assign background reading to help students prepare for the next day's lesson. Here are some tips for homework success:

Make homework a priority

Show your child how important education is to you:

- **With your child, set up a daily routine for completing homework at a specific time.** The entire family can be supportive by designating a household-wide quiet time for reading and completing homework.
- **Ensure that your child has a quiet place to work with sufficient light.** This might be a desk in a bedroom or the dining room table.
- **Make sure your child has the tools to get the job done.** Provide pencils, paper, a dictionary or whatever else is needed. If you have trouble providing something your child needs, ask your child's teacher or a school administrator for help.
- **Never use homework as a form of punishment.**

Be involved

You don't have to know all the answers. It's more important to show interest:

- **Talk to your child's teacher early in the year to establish homework expectations.** Will homework be assigned every day? How long should a typical assignment take your child to complete?
- **Ask your child questions**, such as "Do you understand what you need to do?"
- **Provide encouragement by praising effort, rewarding progress and displaying good work.** Find a positive, constructive way to provide criticism.
- **Review your child's homework for completeness.**

Teach important skills

Instead of telling your child answers, use homework to teach your child skills he or she needs to become a lifelong learner. Look for opportunities to help your child learn to:

- **concentrate and solve problems**
- **use resources**
- **divide large tasks into smaller steps**
- **get organized and plan**
- **persevere and complete a task**

For more information, contact: