

Helping Hand

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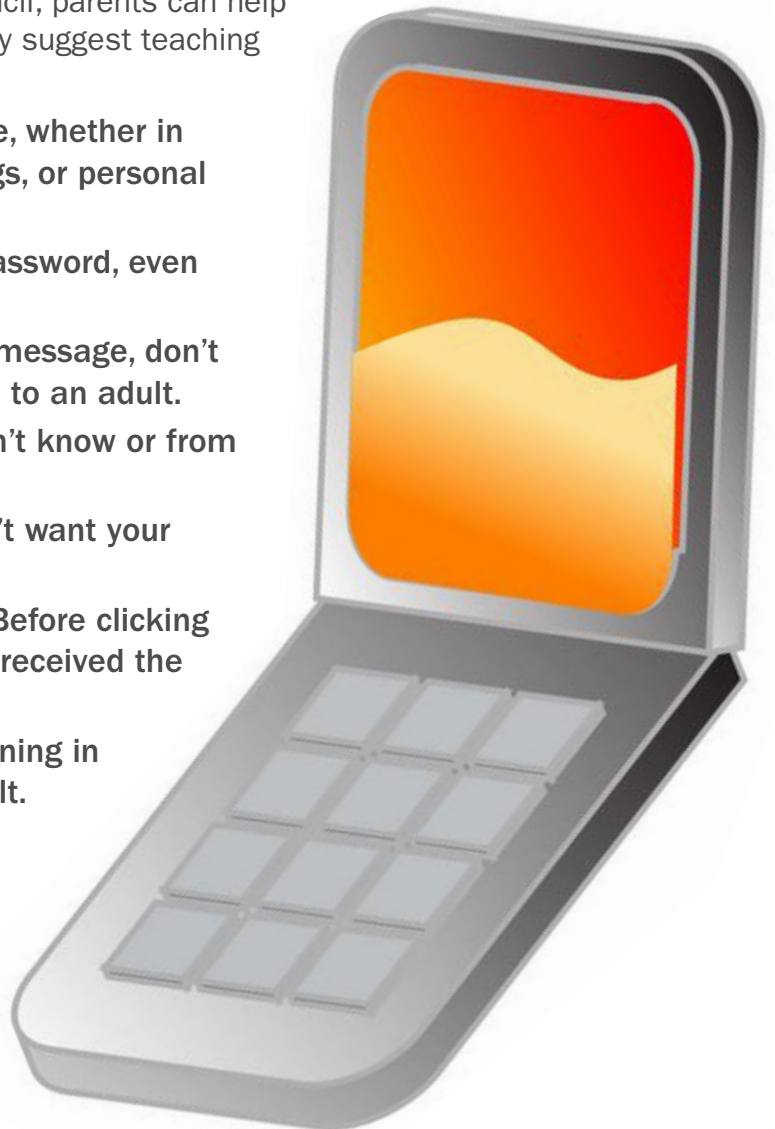
How can I help prevent cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is the use of cell phones, the internet and other electronic devices to embarrass or humiliate another individual. While a target of cyberbullying can be of any age, it is most prominent among teens. Many times bullies post slanderous comments or photos on popular social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace or send embarrassing text messages.

According to the National Crime Prevention Council, parents can help stop cyberbullying by talking with their kids. They suggest teaching children following rules:

- Never give out personal information online, whether in instant message profiles, chat rooms, blogs, or personal websites.
- Never tell anyone but your parents your password, even friends.
- If someone sends a mean or threatening message, don't respond. Save it or print it out and show it to an adult.
- Never open emails from someone you don't know or from someone you know is a bully.
- Don't put anything online that you wouldn't want your classmates to see, even in email.
- Don't send messages when you're angry. Before clicking "send," ask yourself how you would feel if received the message.
- Help kids who are bullied online by not joining in and showing bullying messages to an adult.
- Always be as polite online as you are in person.

It's important to discuss these ground rules with children and monitor their use of the internet. Ask your child if they've ever been cyberbullied or know someone who has. Reassure them that they won't lose internet privileges for sharing their experiences with you.



Preventing Your Child from Smoking

Talking with children about the dangers of smoking can help prevent them from smoking, but it is difficult for kids to relate to diseases that may not occur until middle and late adulthood.

So what can a parent do? Some of the best data regarding teens smoking and parental involvement comes from a 1997 study published in Journal of American Medicine titled "The National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health." This study looked at protective and risk factors associated with nicotine use among teens.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Protective factors for decreased nicotine use in grades 7 through 12 include:

- **Increased parental presence in the home**
- **Teens with high levels of "connectedness" to their parents**
- **Teens that reported a greater number of shared activities with their parents**
- **Personal importance placed upon religion and prayer**
- **High self-esteem - high levels of feeling "connected" at school**

How do I promote physical activity in my child?

Help reduce your child's sedentary time like watching television, playing computer video games or talking on the phone, by planning fun alternatives. Parents should try to be role models for active lifestyles and provide children with opportunities for increased physical activity.

SOME IDEAS

- **Try family adventures like hiking, fishing or kayaking. Visit the zoo or check out outdoor tourist attractions in your area.**
- **Plan an active family vacation. Hike in the mountains or swim at the beach. If that's not in your budget, take a walking tour of a city in your state.**
- **Give your children gifts (when appropriate) that encourage activity, like a swimsuit or pair of athletic shoes. Select toys that motivate kids to move, like a soccer ball or tennis racket.**
- **Benefit others while benefiting yourself. Volunteer as a family and help clean up a favorite park or rake a senior's yard.**

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Traits of a Healthy Family

We've tended in the past few years to focus on what goes on in families that aren't functioning very well. However, researchers agree that for most people, learning what works is more helpful than dwelling on what doesn't work. Healthy family practices transcend culture, economic situation or race.

HEALTHY FAMILIES...

- Communicate, listen and value time to talk together
- Affirm and support one another
- Develop trust among family members and take care and time to mend breaches of trust
- Have a sense of play and humor
- Exhibit a sense of shared responsibility
- View problems as a normal part of life and develop problem solving techniques and seek help when necessary
- Share leisure time together
- Teach a sense of right and wrong
- Value and practice service to others
- Share a spiritual/religious belief that is passed on in positive and meaningful ways
- Respect the privacy of one another's confidences
- Mutually negotiate rules and compromises and can let go of a position when it's for the family's greater good



Your Child's Education: How can I become more involved?

1. Note important dates in the school year.

(examples: parent/teacher conferences, testing dates, etc.)

2. Think of five things you can do to help your child do better in school.

(examples: set up a study hour, review homework with child, buy/check out books from library, visit school, ask child about school each day)

3. What are 5 things your child wants you to do this school year?

(examples: attend extracurricular activities, help with homework)

4. List five different enrichment activities you plan to do with your child in the next year.

(examples: visit the local museum, talk to a friend about his/her job, take a nature walk at a nearby park, attend children's programs at the library)

5. Think about how you can contribute to the classroom and help the teacher.

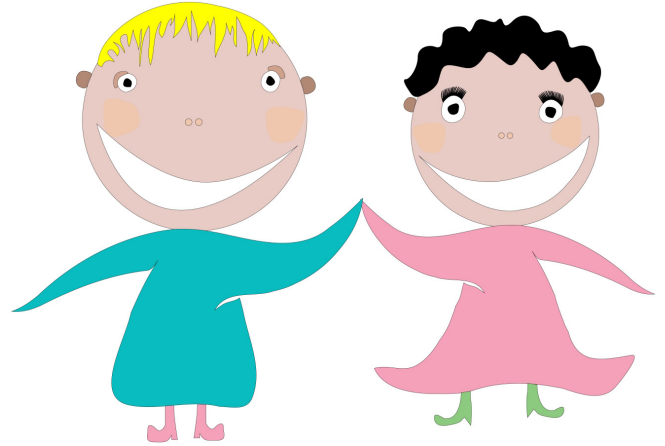
(examples: chaperone on field trips or dances, volunteer in the classroom, share your talents and hobbies with the class, join the PTA, purchase needed supplies, help at school functions)

What is Stuttering?

Stuttering is a condition that usually begins in childhood between the ages of 2 years and 7 years, and is characterized by disruptions in the fluency of speech. Some degree of stuttering and word repetition is normal among pre-schoolers who are practicing new words. Many children who stutter will simply outgrow the problem.

Children who are developing a stuttering problem, are more likely to repeat parts of words and also often have difficulty in maintaining normal breath flow and voicing during their speech. These disruptions may take various forms. Common disruptions in speech fluency among children who stutter include:

- sound/syllable repetitions (I have a pu-pu-pu-puppy.)
- sound prolongations (I have a puuuuuuuppy.)
- interjections (I pu- have a puppy.)
- broken words (I have a pu py.)
- word avoidance (I have a pu- dog.)
- excess tension with some words (I have a PUPPY.)
- whole word repetitions (I-I-I-I have a puppy.)



A common assumption about stuttering is that it is caused by anxiety, and can be worsened by situations that are anxiety-provoking. Yes ... and no. The causes of stuttering are believed to be complex, and involve a combination of genetic factors, and environmental variables. There are, however, situations that seem to increase stuttering in those individuals who have this problem. In addition, some children who stutter do develop fears and anxieties related to speaking in front of classmates and in other situations in which they may be criticized.

In children two treatment approaches are often employed:

- Direct focus on teaching proper respiratory control by a speech-language pathologist and practice of difficult words and phrases in order to increase fluency. This technique is advocated by some to begin as early as pre-school age in children who are struggling with fluency.
- Less direct approaches include techniques that begin with parents modeling slower and more relaxed speech at home, and attempts to diminish stressors related to communication in the home.

If you feel your child is having difficulty with stuttering, ask you teacher, school administrator or school counselor for help.