



TAKING CARE OF OURSELVES

June, 2018

Topic of the Month

Free - Help Yourself!

Veggie Love



Vegetables are the most foundational part of any healthy diet, and it's important to help kids develop a love of them. Luckily, it's also possible. 😊

- ✓ **Dip** - Try mixing Ranch dressing with some plain yogurt. How about some hummus? Black bean dip? Salsa? Guacamole? Nut butter? Go wild!
- ✓ **Roast** - Chop sturdy vegetables (carrots, sweet peppers, brussel sprouts...) into chunks, coat with a little olive oil, and bake at 400 until tender. Mmmmmmm...
- ✓ **Blend** - Most kids love smoothies. If they're in charge of the veggie that's added (a carrot, maybe a handful of spinach...), they'll feel some control, and be more likely to give it a try.
- ✓ **Salads** - Toss some fruit into your salads: blueberries, strawberries, peach slices, or orange sections.
- ✓ **Art** - Play with your food! It's fun to make a picture with veggies, and its delicious to eat that picture up.
- ✓ **Skewer** - Veggies on a toothpick just seem better somehow. Be sure to supervise as they're devoured.
- ✓ **Sweet** - If you're just introducing your child to trying veggies, start with the sweet ones: sweet potatoes, peas, carrots, squash....
- ✓ **Tiny** - Little kids like little veggies. Try buying the "baby veggies" or cutting big ones into cute little pieces.
- ✓ **Tender** - Don't overcook! Cook just until tender-crisp.
- ✓ **Toppings** - Add some butter or olive oil and tiny sprinkle of salt. Maybe a little parmesan or shredded cheddar? A splash of vinegar or soy sauce?

Want a second helping of nutrition tips? Check out www.jillcastle.com
She's a registered dietician and a mom!

Getting Pre-Schooled

You've got to move fast to keep up with 4 & 5 year olds!

Preschoolers are doing **important work**. They're laying foundations that can help them to be more (or less) happy and healthy as they move through life. There's a lot we can do to help our little explorers step out into the world, with them feeling safe and strong.



Photo by Markus Spiske on Unsplash

Life with a preschooler can be fast and furious, and constantly trying to make the best possible decisions about your child's wellbeing can be exhausting. Letting some things just run on "auto pilot" can be helpful, if those habits are healthy. Set your family up for success by locking in routines that make life easier.

Set up good food habits.

- Limit junk food and sugary drinks: soda, sports drinks, lemonade, sweet tea & even juice drinks. Stick to water and milk (non-dairy is great).
- Pre-schoolers don't have to love every fruit or vegetable, but they do need to taste at least one bite.
- Eat meals together - phone off, TV off, hearts and minds ON!
- Offer child-sized portions of many different healthy foods, but don't force membership in the "Clean Plate Club." This helps them expand the number of foods they like and supports them in listening to their own hungry/full cues.
- Manners matter. It's time to start practicing how to: hold utensils, use a napkins, chew with a closed mouth, ask instead of grab... Meals can be a time to connect and enjoy each other, if we all behave enjoyably.

Set up good emotional habits.

- Control your temper, so that they can learn to control theirs. Yelling, scolding, or hitting all damage growing bodies and minds. For tips on effective discipline, flip this page over.
- Become a behavior detective. Is your child misbehaving? Explore causes, and your response will be more effective.

Did your child have a great day? What contributed to that and how can you help it happen more often?

- Give your child your full attention as often as you can. Put down the phone and turn off the TV, make eye contact, listen to what she's saying and respond thoughtfully.
- Hugs, snuggles and love are as important for a child's growth as healthy food and clean water. Most kids need and enjoy lots of affection. Add some words that tell him why he's so special to you, and you've got the building blocks of a strong relationship.
- Praise effort, not end results. When kids only focus on outcome, they more often choose only the tasks that have guaranteed success. When they identify as being hard workers, they're willing to tackle bigger challenges.
- Take good care of you, too! Not only will you feel better and be a better parent, you're showing your child that it's okay to value one's own wellbeing.

Taking care of ourselves can take a lot of support.
We're here to help!
Ask a nurse or provider if you'd like to talk.

Punishment Or Discipline?



When we talk about raising children, these words are often used interchangeably, but, in fact, they're very different. Punishment is a penalty inflicted for an offense or fault. Discipline is training. It's the activities or exercises that develop or improve a skill. While parents use both to try and change children's behavior, one of these options has potential risks that the other doesn't.

Punishment can stop an "offense," but it can also lead to obedience that's situation specific. Think about cats that learn to stay off the kitchen counter, but only when their owner is standing nearby with a spray-bottle of water. Punishment also has the potential to cause lasting damage to the parent/child relationship. Fear and distrust can grow when someone is on the receiving end of punishment.

Discipline, on the other hand, offers a way for parents to guide their child's behavior with loving, appropriate, and consistent expectations. Discipline preserves and strengthens the parent/child relationship, while allowing the child to learn life-lessons and apply them in a variety of settings. The experience of discipline allows the child to focus on their own behavior and the consequences of that, instead of shifting their attention to the parent's anger.

Here are some tips for effective discipline:

1. Examine your expectations.
 - Are they developmentally appropriate? Three-year-olds can't be expected to act like 5-year-olds.
 - Are they situationally appropriate? Kids that are tired, hungry, or anxious will be less able to control themselves.
 - Are they clear and consistent? A child can't obey rules that he doesn't understand or follow them if they're always changing.
2. Let him know exactly the behavior you're wanting, and then offer genuine praise when he gets it right. We all stand a better chance of hitting the target when we know what that target looks like.
3. If it's safe, let natural consequences be the teacher. For instance, if someone doesn't wear mittens when it's cold outside, his or her hands get uncomfortable.
4. Logical consequences are outcomes that a parent creates. For instances, if a child won't pick up a toy when asked, let her know that if you have to pick it up, it will be put away for the rest of the day. No anger is necessary, just calmness and consistency.
5. Time-outs can be effective for pre-schoolers, if they're done right: clear rules, consistent time-out spot, appropriate length of time (one minute per year of age), then back to playing without lectures.

For more tips on effective discipline for pre-schoolers, check out www.parents.com/parenting/better-parenting/positive/disciplining-with-natural-consequences/ or [Love and Logic Magic for Early Childhood](#) by Jim & Charles Fay.



Building Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is built by children for themselves, not given to them by adults. What adults *can* give though are:

- opportunities for independence,
- developmentally appropriate challenges, and
- loving, supportive feedback both in times of success or failure.

How can we create an environment where children can build self-esteem?

1. Give them opportunities to contribute to the family.

Even preschoolers can help with family chores. Let them choose from tasks like:

- Setting/clearing the table at meals
- Putting dirty clothes in a basket
- Separating light laundry and dark laundry
- Putting away their toys
- Feeding pets

2. Give them opportunities to get themselves ready for their day.

It might take longer than if you did it for them, but it's a great place for them to practice taking care of themselves.

- Before bed, let them pick out the next day's clothes.
- In the morning, they may need a reminder of the steps:
 - First, use the bathroom,
 - Then, take off your PJs
 - Then put on your clothes
 - Wow! You did a good job of getting yourself ready!

3. Give them opportunities to make nutritious choices.

They don't get to choose between junk food and healthy food, but they can choose between nutritious options.

- Would you like carrots or snow peas?
- Would you like those cooked or raw?
- Shall we have whole wheat pancakes or waffles?

4. Give them opportunities to prepare nutritious food.

This builds the self-care skills that build self-esteem. Preschoolers can:

- Tear up lettuce leaves for salad
- Stir pancake batter
- Assemble a pizza
- Add ingredients
- Pound bread or pizza dough

For more information:

www.kidshealth.org/en/parents/cooking-preschool.html

5. Give them opportunities to provide for themselves and others.

Plus, veggies that they've grown are more interesting and tasty! These plants grow easily and quickly:

- Sugar Snap Peas
- Sunflowers
- Radishes
- Cherry Tomatoes
- Carrots
- Green Beans
- Lettuce
- Cucumbers

For more gardening tips, go to: www.kidsgardening.org