



Terri  
Stafford

For kids, it is hard to say goodbye to the lazy days of summer and to get back to the school routine. I was one of those kids that always got excited about a new school year. I used to love to cover my textbooks with brown paper bags at the start of each year and then spend the rest of the year drawing on the covers. I loved all the new stuff...new shoes and clothes, pencils with erasers still intact, pen caps that were still attached. New faces in the classroom. New teachers. New start. The start of the year was always a good time to reflect on the summer. It always seemed as though years had passed during those few months away from school and that my summer adventures had made me more mature, smarter, and stronger.

But returning to school can also be a difficult time for many students. Instead of just rolling in to school with no plan, set your child up for a year of fun times and success with these simple tips:

- Set your kids' sleep schedule for "school time" at least two weeks before the first day. Switching from a summer to a school schedule can be stressful to everyone; avoid first day mayhem by practicing your routine in advance.
- Connect with friends...a familiar friend can make all the difference when heading back to school. Refresh these relationships before school starts.
- If they are starting a new school – moving from kindergarten to elementary or elementary to middle school, visit the school ahead of time to give them the layout of the building.
- Get your kid's class schedule ahead of time and walk through it with them.
- If a combination lock is needed, practice opening and closing ahead of time. It can be a panicking thing for kids if their locker sticks and they can't open it.
- Make sure medical and shot records are up-to-date.
- Have the proper school supplies that your child needs for their classes. If finances are tight, contact the school for a list of local places that donate supplies.
- Sometimes getting your child excited about the new school year can be as simple as letting them pick out a special item when you're doing back-to-school shopping. If the latest backpack helps them feel included and you can afford it, buy it...it can make a world of difference.
- Talk to your kids about bullying. Make sure they understand the right way to treat their peers, and when to speak up if they see someone else being bullied. Also make sure they know when to come to you if they feel they are being bullied.

A little preparation before the big day can go a long way in easing your child's transition back to school. Be empathetic, be compassionate and be firm; but most of all breathe. Your children pick up on your anxiety, so if you seem worried then they'll wonder if they should worry too. Your children need to see that you are calm and confident in their abilities to be successful. Best of luck...I believe you are off to a great start!



## POWER OF POSITIVITY

One day, as a small child, Thomas Edison came home from school and gave a paper to his mother.

He said to her, "Mom, my teacher gave this paper to me and told me only you are to read it. What does it say?"

Her eyes welled with tears as she read the letter out loud to her child....

*"Your son is a genius. This school is too small for him and doesn't have good enough teachers to train him. Please teach him yourself."*

His mother did just that, until she fell ill and passed away.

Many years after Edison's mother died, he became one of the greatest inventors of the century.

One day he was going through some of her things and found the folded letter that his old teacher wrote his Mother that day. He opened it...

The message written on the letter was *"Your son is mentally deficient. We cannot let him attend our school anymore. He is expelled."*

Edison became emotional reading it and then wrote in his diary:

*"Thomas A. Edison was a mentally deficient child whose mother turned him into the genius of the Century."*

***A positive word of encouragement can help change someone's entire life.***

It should come as no surprise that success — or failure — at school starts at home. Studies have linked poor academic performance to factors such as a lack of sleep, poor nutrition, obesity, and a lack of parental support.

The good news is that those same studies also show higher test scores for students who live in homes where healthy habits, regular routines, and good communication exist. How can you ensure your child heads off to school this fall with the best possible foundation? Follow these tips and watch your child thrive.



## 1. ENFORCE HEALTHY HABITS

You can't perform well when you don't feel good. To help your child have the best chance at doing well in school, make sure she follows healthy habits at home. Choose a bedtime that will give your child plenty of sleep, and provide a healthy breakfast each morning. Encourage exercise and limit the amount of time she spends watching TV, playing video games, listening to music, or using the computer.

## 2. STICK TO A ROUTINE

Most kids thrive on structure and will respond well to routines that help them organize their days. In our house, for example, my son gets dressed, makes his bed, and eats breakfast while I make his lunch and pack his school bag with completed homework and forms. When he gets home in the afternoon, I serve him a snack and he does his homework while I prepare dinner. Your routines may differ, but the key is to make it the same every day so your child knows what to expect.

## 3. CREATE A "LAUNCH PAD"

Veteran parents know it's important to have a single place to put backpacks, jackets, shoes, lunchboxes, and school projects each day. Some call it a "launch pad," while others call it a "staging area."

Whatever you call it, find a place where your child can keep the items he needs for school each day and keep him organized. Then you'll know right where to find everything during the morning rush.

## 4. READ, AGAIN AND AGAIN

It is often said that children spend the first several years learning to read, and the rest of the lives reading to learn. The written word is a gateway to all kinds of learning, and the more you read to your child, the better chance he has of becoming a proficient and eager reader.

Try to sit down with your child to read a little bit every day, give him plenty of opportunities to read out loud to you as well, and above all have fun. While the importance of reading with your child cannot be stressed enough, it should not be the cause of stress.

## 5. TALK OFTEN

Do you know how your child feels about her classroom, her teacher, and her classmates? If not, ask her. Talk with her about what she likes and doesn't like at school. Give her a chance to express her anxieties, excitements, or disappointments about each day, and continue to support and encourage her by praising her achievements and efforts.

## 6. SHOW INTEREST

Don't limit your support to your child; extend it to her teachers as well. Meet the teachers and stay in regular contact by phone or e-mail so that you can discuss any concerns as they arise. Not only will it pave the way for you to ask questions, but it will also make the teachers more comfortable with calling you if they have concerns about your child.

## 7. EXPECT SUCCESS

Perhaps the most important way you can support your child's efforts at school is to expect him to succeed. That doesn't mean that you demand he be the best student or the best athlete or the best artist. Rather, let him know that you expect him to do "his best" so that he'll be proud of what he can accomplish.

If you make that expectation clear and provide a home environment that promotes learning, then your child will have a greater chance of becoming the best student he can be.

Taken in part from <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/school/Pages/Ten-Tips-for-Your-Childs-Success-in-School.aspx>

# WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD NUTRITION FOR KIDS?

*How your child eats today will have a striking impact on her health throughout adolescence and adulthood. Consuming nutritious foods helps children and teens grow, develop, do well academically and feel good about themselves. Good nutrition also helps prevent child and teen issues such as eating disorders, obesity, dental cavities and iron-deficiency anemia.*



## CHILDHOOD OBESITY PREVENTION

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 25 percent of all children aged 2 to 18 years now meet the criteria for being overweight. Overweight and obese children are at greater risk for major health issues such as Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, joint pain, high cholesterol and cardiovascular disease. Teaching your child good nutrition habits from a young age can decrease the likelihood he will become overweight. Choosing nutrient-dense foods such as fresh fruit and vegetables over empty-calorie foods such as cookies and sodas can help prevent childhood obesity and provide your child a much higher quality of life.

## SUPPORT OPTIMAL GROWTH

Children require a variety of nutrient-dense foods such as fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, meat, fish and adequate calories in order to grow and develop properly. It's crucial that your child is consuming the essential nutrients she needs to grow. Calcium is of particular importance for children. An adequate calcium intake promotes optimal bone density which will assist teen growth and reduce the risk of bone loss in later life. The way children eat influences their growth and health during childhood, during adolescence and for the rest of their lives.

## IMPORTANCE OF A HEARTY BREAKFAST

Studies show that children who eat breakfast perform better in school. According to reports from the American Dietetic Association, students who eat breakfast have better problem-solving abilities, recall, memory, verbal fluency and creativity. They are also less likely to be absent. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that children who do not eat breakfast, or eat an insufficient breakfast, are more likely to have behavioral, emotional and academic problems at school.

## POOR NUTRITION CONSEQUENCES

A healthful diet and good nutrition are crucial in preventing some of the issues inadequate nutrition can cause, such as short stature and delayed puberty, nutrient deficiencies and dehydration, menstrual irregularities, poor bone health, increased risk of injuries, poor academic performance and increased risk of eating disorders. Teaching children the importance of good nutrition throughout childhood will lay the foundation for a healthier more fulfilling life.

<http://healthyeating.sfgate.com/importance-good-nutrition-kids-6236.html>

## Here are the top 10 reasons why helping kids become active once again is worth the disruption to our adult lives:

- Children who are active 60 minutes per day demonstrate lower rates of obesity.
- Greater rates of activity in children have been associated with higher test scores in reading and math.
- Physical (body) and cognitive (brain) development go hand-in-hand. While this continues for life, this relationship is most critical at a young age. When kids are active, their brain develops, allowing for new types of activity.
- Play-based activity that requires a high degree of sensory input (sight, sound, touch, etc.) helps develop a broad array of skills that make physical activity more enjoyable later in life.
- Frequent physical activity has been associated with improved behavior in the classroom and beyond.
- It appears that active children are more likely to become active adults.
- Aerobic activity has been shown to increase the size of essential brain structures and number of neural connections.
- Frequent activities requiring a high degree of balance and coordination have been associated with improved emotional response.
- Frequent exercise decreases symptoms of depression and anxiety in children.
- Regular exercise with children promotes self-efficacy with regard to health and self-image.

<https://www.acefitness.org/acefit/healthy-living-article/60/6441/top-10-reasons-children-should-exercise>





# HUMAN TRAFFICKING

The average American believes that slavery ended when the transatlantic African slavery trade died out in the 1800's. Many mistakenly believe that slavery is a thing of the past.

**But unfortunately, they are wrong.**

When we talk about trafficking, most people assume we are just talking about sex. But there are actually more people enslaved through labor trafficking. Millions more. Impoverished communities, migrant workers and children are all at risk. Nearly a fifth of homeless youth in the United States and Canada are victims of trafficking.

According to reports, 71% of the labor trafficking victims came to the U.S. legally with working visas. These are the most common industries where forced labor occurs:



## 1. Agriculture 2. Fishing 3. Construction 4. Factory work 5. Domestic servitude

These victims are often separated from others with no documentation, keeping them under the radar. A study by San Diego State University found that 31% of undocumented, Spanish-speaking migrant workers had experienced labor trafficking.

- There are an estimated 313,000 victims of human trafficking in Texas.
- Approximately 79,000 minors and youths are victims of sex trafficking in Texas.
- Approximately 234,000 workers in Texas are victims of labor trafficking.

Modern day slavery exists everywhere, in every social sphere, in every age group. It happens right here, right now.

**Someone once said:**

**“Trafficked victims are disposable people: you can buy them cheaply, use them, crumple them up and throw them away. They are just like used batteries, once they lose their usefulness another can be procured at no great expense.”**

Today, slaves are cheaper than they have ever been. There are **21-30 million** slaves in the world today. People forced to work without pay, under threat of violence, unable to walk away. This means that **THERE ARE MORE PEOPLE IN SLAVERY TODAY THAN AT ANY OTHER TIME IN HUMAN HISTORY.**

An average slave in the American South in 1850 cost the equivalent of \$40,000 in today's money; today a slave costs an average of \$90.

Since they are so cheap, slaves of today are not considered a major investment worth maintaining. If slaves get sick, are injured, outlive their usefulness, or become troublesome to the slaveholder, they are dumped or killed. Today the trafficker cares more about these high profits than whether the holder and slave are of different ethnic backgrounds. Profit trumps skin color.

Sex trafficking can be extremely lucrative, especially in areas where opportunities for education and legitimate employment may be limited. Crime groups involved in the sex trafficking of women and girls are often involved in the trafficking of drugs and firearms, and frequently use violence as a means of carrying out their activities.

Women and girls are ensnared in sex trafficking in a variety of ways. Some are lured with offers of legitimate and legal work as shop assistants or waitresses. Others are promised marriage, educational opportunities and a better life. Still others are sold into trafficking by boyfriends, friends, neighbors or even parents.

Human trafficking victims experience various stages of degradation and physical and psychological torture. Victims are often deprived of food and sleep, are unable to move about freely, and are physically tortured. In order to keep women captive, victims are told their families and their children will be harmed or murdered if they (the women) try to escape or tell anyone about their situation.

<http://www.soroptimist.org/trafficking/faq.html>

<http://neverforsale.com/definition-of-human-trafficking.html>

**If you believe you are the victim of a trafficking situation or may have information about a potential trafficking situation, call the National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC) at 1-888-373-7888. NHTRC is a national toll-free hotline, with specialists available to answer calls related to potential trafficking victims, suspicious behaviors, and/or locations where trafficking is suspected to occur from anywhere in the country, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, every day of the year.**



# BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS IN ADOLESCENTS

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Article taken in part: By **Sharon Levy, MD, MPH, Harvard Medical School; Children's Hospital, Boston**

Adolescence is a time for developing independence. Typically, adolescents exercise their independence by questioning, and sometimes breaking, rules. Parents and doctors must distinguish occasional errors of judgment from a degree of misbehavior that requires professional intervention. The severity and frequency of infractions are guides. For example, regular drinking, frequent episodes of fighting, truancy, and theft are much more significant than isolated episodes of the same activities. Other warning signs include deterioration of performance at school and running away from home. Of particular concern are adolescents who cause serious injury or use a weapon in a fight.



Because adolescents are much more independent and mobile than they were as children, they are often out of the direct physical control of adults. In these circumstances, adolescents' behavior is determined by their own moral and behavioral code. Parents guide rather than directly control the adolescents' actions. Adolescents who feel warmth and support from their parents are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. Also, adolescents whose parents convey clear expectations regarding their children's behavior and show consistent limit setting and monitoring, are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. Authoritative parenting is a parenting style in which children participate in establishing family expectations and rules. This parenting style, as opposed to authoritarian-style parenting (in which parents make decisions with minimal input from their children) or permissive parenting (in which parents set few limits) is most likely to promote mature behaviors.

**Authoritative parenting** typically uses a system of graduated privileges, in which adolescents initially are given small bits of responsibility and freedom (such as caring for a pet, doing household chores, purchasing clothing, decorating their room, or managing an allowance). If adolescents handle this responsibility well over a period of time, more responsibilities and more privileges (such as going out with friends without parents, and driving) are granted. By contrast, poor judgment or lack of responsibility leads to loss of privileges. Each new privilege requires close monitoring by parents to make sure adolescents comply with the agreed-upon rules.

Some parents and their adolescents clash over almost everything. In these situations, the core issue is really control. Adolescents want to feel in control of their life, and parents want adolescents to know the parents still make the rules. In these situations, everyone may benefit from the parents picking their battles and focusing their efforts on the adolescent's actions (such as attending school and complying with household responsibilities) rather than on expressions (such as dress, hairstyle, and preferred entertainment).

## Violence and Gang Membership

Children occasionally engage in physical confrontation. During adolescence, the frequency and severity of violent interactions may increase. Although episodes of violence at school are highly publicized, adolescents are much more likely to be involved in violent episodes (or more often the threat of violence) at home and outside of school. Many factors contribute to an increased risk of violence for adolescents, including:

- ➡ Gang Members
- ➡ Access to firearms
- ➡ Substance use
- ➡ Poverty

**Gang membership** has been linked with violent behavior. Youth gangs are self-formed associations made up of 3 or more members, typically ranging in age from 13 to 24. Gangs usually adopt a name and identifying symbols, such as a particular style of clothing, the use of certain hand signs, or graffiti. Some gangs require prospective members to perform random acts of violence before membership is granted.

Increasing youth gang violence has been blamed at least in part on gang involvement in drug distribution and drug use, particularly heroin. Firearms and other weapons are frequent features of gang violence. By 2015, almost 25% of high school males in the United States reported carrying a weapon at least once during the month before they took part in a study about youth risks. A much smaller percentage (4%) reported having carried a gun to school during that same period.

**Violence prevention** begins in early childhood with violence-free discipline. Limiting exposure to violence through media and video games may also help, because exposure to these violent images has been shown to desensitize children to violence, and cause children to accept violence as part of their life. School-age children should have access to a safe school environment. Older children and adolescents should not have access to weapons and should be taught to avoid high-risk situations (such as places or settings where others have weapons or are using alcohol or drugs) and to use strategies to defuse tense situations.

All victims of gang violence should be encouraged to talk to parents, teachers, and even their doctor about problems they are experiencing.

<http://www.merckmanuals.com/home/children-s-health-issues/problems-in-adolescents/behavioral-problems-in-adolescents>

**What** do you do when you're worried that a child might be feeling suicidal? First and foremost, it's important that you talk to him about your concerns in a calm, non-accusatory manner. Sometimes when parents are very worried, they end up saying, "Don't think this way," or "You shouldn't feel that way," and they come across not as loving and caring, as intended, but as critical. Children respond negatively to that. So you really need to be as calm and non-accusatory as you can when talking to them.

**Show the love.** It may seem obvious to you that you love your children, and that they know you love them. But when they're having a hard time, kids need to hear over and over again from you how much you love them, and how much you care about them. It's not good enough to just say, "You know I love you." You need to convey that in small and big ways. These days, we all have so many things we're juggling that kids can end up unsure of where they fit in, and whether you really have time for them. Let them know how important they are to you.

**Express empathy.** It's also important to validate a child's feelings. You want to make statements that express empathy for her distress: "It sounds like that was really difficult." "I know how painful that can be." "I know what that's like. I've felt that way." Telling them not to feel that way, to "pull it together," isn't as helpful as saying, "What is it that you're concerned about, and how can I help you?" If you're really concerned about your child, it's important that you encourage him to get professional help, and that you convey that getting help isn't weak, but something you would respect him for doing, and that you would work together to accomplish.

**Prioritize the positive.** Another important way to prevent suicidal behavior is to prioritize interacting with your child in positive ways. Sometimes we get into a sort of vicious cycle with a child. The child does something concerning; the parent gets critical; the kid does something more concerning; the parents get more upset. All interactions turn contentious. Interacting in positive ways means doing fun things together, hanging out and chatting about things that aren't controversial, that aren't difficult.

**Minimize conflict.** So choose your battles wisely with your kid. It's part of normal development for adolescents to rebel. You need to pick what you're going to set limits about and the rest of the time you want to focus on the positive connections. It also helps to try to increase your child's involvement in positive experiences. Kids who are involved in a lot of engaging or fun activities tend to fare better. Your goal as a parent is to reassure struggling kids that they won't feel like this forever, and you can help do this by promoting positive experiences. When kids feel suicidal it's often because they feel hopeless and can't imagine things being better.

**Stay in touch.** It's also really important to monitor your child's whereabouts when they aren't with you, whether online or out of the house. You can't stop your kids from texting and Facebooking and using Twitter. That's normal social interaction at this point. So you need to get on Facebook yourself, learn how to tweet, learn how to text. And use those channels to stay on top of what your kids are doing.

**Know your child's friends.** In the "real" world, it's also critical to know your child's friends—to have a good sense of who they are and to have a connection with them. Sometimes it's harder the older your kids get, but it's really important you do that. You should know the parents of their friends and be in touch with them, too. And you want to communicate regularly with your child's school to ensure her safety and care in the school setting. Don't hesitate to use the school and the people in the school as partners in your child's care when you have concerns.

**Talk openly.** But again, the crucial first step: If you think your child might be suicidal, talk with him about it, ask him about suicidal thoughts. Sometimes people are afraid that if they talk about it it will make suicidal thoughts more real, and suicide more likely to happen. But the truth is that if a child feels that he has someone safe in the family that he can talk to, he feels better. He feels more understood. He feels like there's more empathy for him. And that gives you an opening to explain the value of psychotherapy, and possibly medication for the feelings that are causing him so much pain.

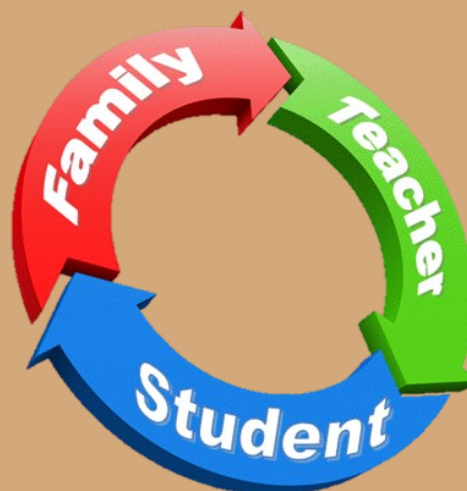


<https://childmind.org/article/youre-worried-suicide/>

***The school-parent compact is a written agreement between teachers and parents and provides an opportunity to create new partnerships in your school community.*** The compact serves as a clear reminder of all stakeholders' responsibility to take action at school and at home so that all children can attain the state's academic achievement standards.

The underlying assumption is that a student's academic success will improve when the home and school work together. Overall, if the compact is implemented with fidelity, it will assure that there will be support for the academic success of the student by enhancing effective communications between school and home.

The compact is a "tool" that can be used to clarify expectations, solve problems, keep the focus on teaching and learning, and help clarify choices about how teachers, parents, and students spend their time. The compact's important function is to continually broaden the circle of people who become invested in education.



## **Public Law 114-95, Section 1116 (d) *Shared Responsibilities for High Student Academic Achievement***

"Each school receiving Title I, Part A funds shall jointly develop with parents a school-parent compact that outlines how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State's high standards."

### **The school-parent compact should address, at a minimum:**

- The school's responsibility to provide high-quality curriculum and instruction
- Meeting the state's student academic achievement standards
- Ways in which parents will be responsible to support their child's learning
- The importance of frequent two-way communication
- The value of annual parent-teacher conferences, required in elementary schools
- Frequent reports of student progress
- Reasonable access to school staff
- The opportunity for parents to observe and volunteer in their child's class

If you are interested in serving on a team to develop, update, and evaluate the school-parent compact, contact your school's administrator. The compact can become powerful documents when many stakeholders agree on educational goals and fulfill their personal commitment to learning.



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## Things You Wish People Would Say to Your Daughter Instead of 'Aren't You Pretty?'

Family, friends and even strangers mean well when they remark on your daughter's looks, but wouldn't it be better if she heard something more meaningful?



Below are some ideas from parents on what they wish other people would say to their daughters.

- ◆ What makes you happy?
- ◆ You look pretty clever...I bet you're pretty smart, aren't you?
- ◆ Compliment her on her smile and how happy she seems.
- ◆ Compliment her on the shoes she chose to wear today.
- ◆ What do you love about being you?
- ◆ Mention how confident she seems and how well she knows herself.
- ◆ You have a delightful sense of humor.
- ◆ You have a great laugh.

Comments on your daughter's looks may not seem like a negative, but if adults are constantly telling her how pretty she is, as if it were the highest compliment, what kind of affect could that have on her in the long run?

<http://tinyurl.com/y9vomw45>

## Things You Wish People Would Say to Your Son Instead of 'Aren't You Big?'

They may mean well when they remark on your son's size, but wouldn't it be better if he heard something more meaningful?



Below are some ideas from parents on what they wish other people would say to their sons.

- ◆ Compliment him on his firm handshake, eye contact, and general politeness.
- ◆ You're such a bright young man. You will make a difference in this world.
- ◆ You are a kind and compassionate person with a big heart!
- ◆ You're such a caring human being.
- ◆ You're such a hard worker. You should be proud of yourself.

While you know people just want to give your son a well-meaning compliment, you may wonder how so many people pointing out his stereotypical "manliness" will affect him in the long run.

<http://tinyurl.com/y9vomw45>

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### EDITOR

**Terri Stafford, Coordinator**

**Title I Statewide School Support and Family & Community Engagement Initiative**



<http://www.esc16.net/dept/isserv/title1swi/index.html>

### ADMINISTRATION

**Ray Cogburn, Executive Director**  
Region 16 Education Service Center

**Texas Education Agency**

### Region 16 ESC

5800 Bell Street  
Amarillo, TX 79109-6230  
Phone: (806) 677-5000  
Fax: (806) 677-5189  
[www.esc16.net](http://www.esc16.net)