Families Matter



Ban Boring Lunches!

It's easy to get into a lunchtime ritual that is packed with equal parts boring and panic when you're not sure what to take. But it pays to pack a lunch because eating out usually costs you more — in calories and money. A typical fast food meal of large fries, a cheeseburger and soda can have about 2,100 calories and 100 grams of fat.

Tips for Packing Lunches

Use reusable containers. It saves money and it's better for the environment.

Keep it cold. Frozen water bottles or juice boxes can make great ice packs. You can prepare your food the night before and keep your whole lunch bag in the fridge overnight. Use the 2 hour rule. Foods should not be at room temperature for more than two hours.

Ban the boring bread. Use whole-grain pita pockets, tortilla wraps, hot dog buns, flatbread or mini bagels. Or try flaxseed chips, crispbread, pumpernickel, muesli or dark rye. Bread can be high in sodium, so take a look at the labels.

Prep work pays off. Pick times during the week when you have some extra time and wash and cut fruits and vegetables in advance so they're ready for packing. Most cut fruits and vegetables will keep for two to three days.

All about the base. Toast some bread and try an interesting base layer of ricotta, avocado with lemon, hummus or Greek yogurt with a honey drizzle. Top at lunchtime with your choice of any of these: sliced fruit or vegetable.

Surprising sides. Slice up jicama or green and red pepper strips. Or pack sugar snap peas, a side of almonds, or whole grain crackers and sliced cheese. Dish out hummus with pita chips and carrots, bag some popcorn, or layer some Greek yogurt with berries and honey.

Blaze a trail mix. Store-bought granola or trail mix can be high in fat, salt and calories. But trail mix can make a great substitute for salty snacks like pretzels and potato chips. Choose almonds, peanuts, pistachios, dried apples, cranberries, pineapple, blueberries, raisins, shaved coconut, pumpkin and sunflower seeds.

Source: BlueCross Blue Shield Life times.



Oklahoma State University

Volume 17, Issue 11

September 2021

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POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY EXTENSION

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Raising Responsible Kids Start Early

Shift responsibility. Having the role of 'Chief Nag' isn't fun for parents—or spouses—and it guarantees an unpleasant morning for everyone. Using alarm clocks and timers to signal when it's time to get, or put on shoes and coats and walk out the door puts the pressure off mom and onto the kids.

Create consequences. Don't bail out your kids! Kids learn from making mistakes, which usually means forgetting something. But what do parents do when that happens? They sweep in like frenetic geese and ferry the forgotten snack or gym shorts to school. Instead, lose the urge to rescue. Every time you do that your child learns only that messing up costs him zero in terms of time and inconvenience.

Let the consequence be the punishment. Resist the impulse to hammer a point home with a lecture. Forget the tirade and commiserate. Gee, I'm so sorry that happened. Oh, well, you'll know better next time. If he or she misses a field trip or gets an F in gym, all the better. It will be a painful lesson—hence, one remembered forever.

Get your kids invested. If your kids are older ask them what will make things go more smoothly. They may have some good ideas—and they'll be invested in having their solutions work.

Recognize the importance of organization. One of the greatest gifts a parent can give children is organizational skills! These are the skills they will use the rest of their lives, the skills that may make the difference between achieving their goals in life or not.

Tips for Getting Out the Door

Do anything that can be done ahead of time the night before. Pack lunches and put them in the refrigerator. Pack backpacks and work bags and lay anything that doesn't go in the bag right next to it or on top of it, so it won't be forgotten. Write yourself big notes for anything you still need to find or remember to do in the morning.

Look over your calendar the night before. This will help you mentally sort through how you need to dress and what you need to prepare the night before. I forget "sharing time" a lot less when we pack it the night before.

Get yourself ready first. Get up early enough so that you can shower and dress before the kids wake-up. Avoid turning on the TV or checking electronics in the morning – they are only distractions that can wait!

Teaching Caring by Sharing the Cleaning

One thing the pandemic taught many households over the past year or so is that roles are fluid. This included getting the kids involved in helping around the home, if they didn't already. There are a lot of ways kids can help with tasks around the home and it's been shown to teach responsibility and build self-esteem. The most important element is assigning chores that are age appropriate. They must be able to complete it safely. Here are some ideas:

Start small: Even a few tasks can help instill a sense of shared responsibility. Set kids up for success by identifying initial places to help, like sorting socks, and working up from there.

Embrace imperfection: Especially when they get started, kids will not be good at certain tasks. Figure out what you can live with and assign things you won't get the urge to redo after they're done.

Keep it light: Pitching in on chores is a fact of life when living in a family; however, it can quickly be a point of contention. Try to find ways to make it a neutral or even fun experience. It may help to offer a choice or build in an incentive.

Be safe: Look for tasks where kids can be successful and keep young kids away from cleaning products. There are other places they can help, like picking up toys or putting clean clothes away.

Simple Ways Parents Support Education

1. Regularly talk with your child and listen to their thoughts and feelings.
2. Set high but realistic expectations and goals.
3. Build your child's self-esteem and confidence.
4. Keep your child healthy—ensure they get enough rest and nutritious foods.
5. Parents are the first teachers—support learning at home.
6. Communicate and stay connected with your child's school.
7. Encourage exploration and discovery at home and in the community.
8. Help your child develop a circle of friends and good, healthy relationships.
9. Keep your child safe at home, school and the neighborhood.



Afterschool Tips for Kids

It's not easy to see kids get upset or angry. Here are ways to help kids cope with overwhelming feelings at the end of the day.

Give an afterschool snack. Some kids get "hangry," or cranky when they're hungry. It can help to have a snack and a drink ready for afterschool, or to eat on the way home.

Sit in silence. Leave the questions about school for later. Most kids need some time to chill out before talking about their day.

Rethink the homework routine. Going straight from school into homework is hard. Playing or just doing nothing first lets them regroup.

Dealing with Afterschool Melt Downs

It's not uncommon: A child goes to school in a good mood, seems perfectly fine all day, and then comes home and falls apart. Yelling, whining, crying — it's like a totally different child.

Why do kids who had an OK day at school unravel when they get home? Often, the reason is simple. Kids are wiped out, and home can be a safe place to lose it. Learn more about why kids fall apart after school.

What can cause afterschool outbursts

Being in school all day — whether in-person or virtual — is tiring for many kids. For some, it's completely exhausting. Kids spend the whole day trying to sit still, focus, answer questions, and do classwork. Plus there are rules and routines to keep in mind. And they have to try to get along with the other kids.

Kids don't always have the self-control and coping skills to manage this stress. Some pick up these skills just by watching other people model them. But many kids — especially those who learn and think differently — need to be taught. They may be more sensitive than others to school demands. Or they may be struggling with math, reading, or writing. By the end of the day, they don't have any energy left to keep a lid on their feelings. And they may not even know they're overwhelmed.

This situation isn't all bad. It's good when kids feel safe to express themselves at home. They trust that the people there will love them and help them learn to calm down no matter how they act.

Key Takeaways

- Kids may not yet know how to express their feelings when they feel them.
- Simple self-soothing techniques can help kids calm themselves down.
- Parents and teachers can teach kids self-control and coping skills.

The Families Matter E-newsletter is one way the Pottawatomie County Cooperative Extension Service, Family & Consumer Science programs provides educational resources in our community.

Families Matter E-news
Is published by the following:
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POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY EXTENSION

September Activities

Dancing Pepper - Hand Washing Lesson!

First, add water to a small foam or paper plate. You will need just enough water to cover the bottom of the plate. Now, sprinkle black pepper across the top of the water. Think of your black pepper as make-believe germs or dirt. Next, stick your bare finger in the center of your pepper. What happens? You will probably notice that your finger is covered with pepper. Now, cover your clean finger in the dish soap and then stick that same finger in the center of the pepper plate. What happens? The pepper should dance away from your finger.
Source: 4-H STEM Lab

September 7-10 – Read an ACCURATE Ag Book Week
Want your kids to understand where their food comes from and what it takes to get it to the grocery store?
Here is a list of recommended books talking about accurate information from the Agriculture Industry.
American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture website.
https://www.agfoundation.org/recommended-pubs

Quick Fix Recipes— New Lunch Box Ideas

Quesadillas—Kids love the quesadilla and sometimes parents get stuck believing this food has to be Mexican flavors. Try using a whole wheat tortilla and adding your child's favorite lunchmeat, cheese or vegetables. Spinach leaves and shredded carrots make a great addition to this item. Even better roll up the tortilla and make pinwheels!!

Cold Noodle Salads—Most kids love pasta noodles, but parents only think of them hot with tomato sauce!! Try a simple cold noodle salad with added veggies and diced meats.

Check out this site for some great recipes and lunch ideas!
http://www.parents.com/kids/nutrition/lunch/healthy-school-lunches-snacks/?slideId=32900

Easy Apple Cheddar Melts

1/2 cup sugar

1/2 Teaspoon cinnamon

2 Apples cut into slices (40 slices)

20 slices cheddar cheese

40 whole wheat crackers

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Mix sugar and cinnamon in medium bowl.

Add apples; toss to coat. Cut cheese slices in 1/2 diagonally. Place crackers on baking sheet; top each cracker with 1 cheese piece & 2 apple slices.

Bake 4-5 minutes or until cheese is melted

Source: Kraft Food & Family