

HOW TO HELP KIDS MANAGE THEIR MOODS

Things To Do:

- Model helpful eating habits. Avoid junk foods and plan regular meals that include all the basic food groups.
- Establish routines for bedtime and sleeping time that allow all members of the family to get the sleep they need. Quiet times, after certain hours, are essential for kids of all ages. For example, on school nights kids in grade school might well be expected in bed by 8:30 or 9:00 p.m.; junior high, 9:30 or 10:00 p.m.; and high school, 10:00 or 10:30 p.m., depending on the morning wake up time.
- Do activities with kids that teach them good exercise habits and at the same time show them that exercise is **fun**. The list is endless: tennis, basketball, skating, walking, jogging, swimming, to mention only a few.
- Help the family to discuss openly the mood levels of individual family members and of the family as a whole. When a family member sinks into boredom or edges towards irritability, for instance, being able to talk about it helps the person to see where he or she is heading and to ward off troubles.
- Become aware of your own moods and be willing to discuss with the kids how those moods affect the kids and others around you. Modelling this willingness will teach kids a lot about maintaining their own moods in the comfortable middle range. Also, it's important to be responsive to kids as they give us feedback about our moods. ("Dad, all week you've been irritable at the dinner table. Is something wrong?" "Oh, really? I honestly didn't know that. I'm glad you mentioned it.")

Things to Avoid:

- Instead of having junk food in the house, have on hand a supply of carrot and celery sticks plus other cut up vegetables, along with natural dips, fruit and popcorn.
- Help kids avoid confining themselves to passive activities such as watching TV or sitting on the sidelines at all sporting events. Encourage their active participation in sports, hobbies and outside activities. Get involved with them, support their teams, go to their games.
- Direct your kids to have jobs that don't interfere with proper daily habits associated with basic needs such as proper nutrition, sleep, exercise and relaxation.

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