

Parenting Strategies

school toolkit

Jump IN's work is grounded in this fact: changing the environment is the best way to change behaviors. Thanks to the Indianapolis Colts, Jump IN has created Jump Right UP, a partnership to improve the health of kids in four Indianapolis school districts. This program includes 35 participating schools and will implement and improve school wellness best practices, impacting 23,000 students and helping schools meet their wellness goals.

This toolkit was developed as part of the Jump Right UP program to help schools provide resources to educate families on positive and healthy parenting strategies. This Parent Strategies school toolkit allows schools to easily disseminate evidence based parenting strategies from the Centers for Disease Control to families which in turn will aid in a healthier school environment and a healthier community.

Using this toolkit will allow schools who participate in the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's School Health Program to state that they are providing this best practice education to parents and families, in line with the Whole School, Whole Child, Whole Community model.

It is important to bear in mind the wide range of ways to engage parents— from one-to-one interactions, to support groups, to topical workshops, to community-wide celebrations, work sessions and participatory planning efforts. Parent involvement takes time and sustained effort. However, never underestimate the power of informal approaches to engage parents in community-wide youth development and building the supports, services and opportunities that will help to develop their children's health.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit contains a series of parenting strategies. The series is designed to be used in total and to be given out to parents and families over the course of a semester. If used properly, the schools who participates in the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's School Health Program will be able to say "yes" on School Health Index question PO-7.

Different ways to connect these strategies to families and parent include:

- Print each page off, cut in half, and hand out to students to take home.
- Hand out to families at family and community nights or parent teacher conferences.
- Discuss and disseminate during your school's Parent Teacher Association meetings.
- Add strategies to the monthly newsletter.
- Share the series on social media.

Praise positive behavior

From time to time, your child is going to do things you don't like. He'll do things that are dangerous. He'll do things you don't want him to do again. He'll also do a lot of things you like. The consequence or what happens right after your child's behavior makes the behavior more or less likely to happen again. **Consequences can be both positive and negative.**

Why praise positive behavior?

- To encourage desirable behaviors and to diminish undesirable behaviors.
- To build children's self-esteem.
- To encourage a close and meaningful relationship.
- To make children aware of their behaviors in a positive manner.

Examples of specific praise

"Great job playing quietly while I was on the phone!"

"You were a great helper when you put all your toys in the closet today."

"Thank you for using your inside voice."

"I like how you are waiting patiently for me to complete my task!"

"Great job sharing your toy with your brother!"

"Thank you for walking calmly next to me in the store."



Set expectations

Know your child

- Set expectations for your child, not your neighbors children.
- Take the time to reflect on how your child learns and plays, as well as how they adapt to change.
- What is it that creates joy in your child and motives him to achieve?

Know yourself

- Examine whether the expectations you have for your children are more about you or them.
- Just because we excel at something does not mean it is best for our children.

Know what is age appropriate

- Learning how children mature and what they go through will help you gauge whether an expectation is realistic.

Reasonable.

In simple terms, does this make sense for my child?

Realistic.

Knowing my child as I do, will my child have a good chance at success? (This does not imply that it has to be easy and without struggle, but the level of frustration needs to be kept as low as possible.)

Responsible.

Are the risks (physical, mental, emotional) worth it for my child?



Create family rules

Family rules help create structure. A family rule is a specific, clear statement about behaviors you expect from your child. Family rules can be specific to a situation or address behaviors that are never okay. Whatever the reason for the rule, your child's behavior and your relationship can be stronger with rules in place.

The number of rules you set depends on your child's ability to understand and remember. It is also hard for parents to constantly enforce lots of new rules. Focus on only two or three of the most important rules at any one time. As your child learns a rule and follows it consistently, you can add new rules.

1. Identify the rule

- Be specific.
- Focus on behaviors.
- Avoid vague words.
- Be realistic.
- Start with one or two.

2. Explain the rule

- Make sure your child knows what you want him to do.
- Talk your child through the rule.
- Visually display the rule in the home.

3. Follow the rule

- All family members should be trying to follow the rule.
- Provide reminders and support when needed.
- Stick with the rule as much as possible.

4. Use consequences

- Shower your children with praise when they follow the rule.
- When rules are broken remove the child from the situation or use time-out.



Create consistency

Routines and rules help structure the home and make life more predictable. Structure helps parents and their children. Children feel safe and secure because they know what to expect. Parents feel confident because they know how to respond, and they respond the same way each time.

Constancy

Doing the same thing every time.

Predictability

Expecting or knowing what is going to happen.

Follow-through

Enforcing the consequence ("say what you mean and mean what you say").

How can all family members get on the same page about rules?

- Parents can talk about what rules would help their family and which ones to set.
- Parents can post the rules in the house so everyone can know them.
- Parents can have conversations with other adults who care or their children about the rules.
- Parents can ask all caregivers to be consistent in monitoring and enforcing the rules.
- Parents can remind children about the rules and repeat them often.



Listen to your children

As children go through their day, they experience many moments of exhilaration and frustration. Often the quality of your day can feel tied to your children's roller-coaster of emotions. **One way that you can keep yourself on an even ride is to learn how to steady your child's ups-and-downs.**

Listening to your children is a chief skill you can use. You can hear their disappointment when they do not make the team; you can accept their frustration when their plans do not work out; and you can acknowledge their dissatisfaction when they complain that their friends have more freedoms than they do.

- **By listening to your children**, you are communicating that they are worthy of your attention.
- **By hearing your children's distress**, you are demonstrating that their view of the world has merit.
- **By allowing your children time to decide their course of action**, you are showing your trust in their ability to solve problems.

Active listening styles

- **Non-verbal active listening:** show attentiveness by nodding and making facial expressions.
- **Feeling response:** respond to the emotions you think your child might be experiencing.
- **Content response:** reflect back to your child the content of what you heard.
- **Clarifying response:** respond with a deeper view of the situation your children are facing, offers other possible reactions and identify potential needs.



Model healthy behaviors

Parenting is not an easy task. Many outside influences distract our children and add challenges to parenting efforts. **By modeling healthy behaviors parents can help their children make healthy choices.** Children need adults who are there for them- people who connect with them, communicate with them, spend time with them, and show a genuine interest in them. A key parental role is helping children understand that their health and wellbeing- now and in the future- are not simply a matter of chance, but a matter of choice.

Parents are their children's first and most enduring teachers. As an important adult in children's life, there are things you can do to help them learn healthy habits and behaviors. Even small changes will make a big difference in the children around you!

Be a healthy role model

- Use respectful language with your child and others.
- Eat healthy foods.
- Use your free time to get physically active.
- Drink water.
- Express your feelings in a calm and direct way.
- Manage stress with physical activity.
- Follow your own rules.
- Model skills like making your bed or active listening.



Stay actively involved

It's no secret that children who have involved parents are more happy, healthy, well-adjusted, and excel at their educational and extracurricular pursuits. Having an actively involved parent can increase their cognitive development, keeps them motivated, strengthen the parent-child relationship, and has a direct positive influence on their overall academic achievement.

In turn, it can also help parents achieve a positive outlook on their parenting, increase their own self confidence and self esteem, and will most likely feel more satisfied with their child's educational experience at school.

**Make a pledge to stay active
in your child's life!**

Fun parent and child activities

- Read a book together.
- Color and create.
- Go on a run or walk together.
- Explore the local park or nature trails.
- Visit a museum or art gallery.
- Plant flowers.
- Let the child assist in meal preparation.
- Play a board game.
- Build with blocks or Tupperware.
- Stretch or do yoga together.
- Challenge each other in a foot race.
- Go see a movie of the child's choosing.



Create a supportive environment

To help your children excel in life, parents should create a positive, supportive learning environment in their home. Begin instilling a love of learning in your children at a young age. Encourage active play and follow these tips to build a supportive learning environment at home.

Instill a love of learning

Children who are exposed to a broad base of knowledge at home will find it easier to learn in school. When children are young, read to them every night. When they are old enough to read themselves, ask them to read out loud to you.

Take advantage of learning opportunities

Children can learn from everyday activities such as going to the grocery store or doing a home project. Talk with your child even during mundane activities and try to find lessons and opportunities for learning on a daily basis. Children are eager to learn from a young age. By spending time together and communicating, you'll continue to prompt their learning experiences.

Encourage play

Play contributes to cognitive, emotional, language, social and physical development. To reinforce positive play, parents need to enrich the environment with toys, games and objects that provide learning opportunities.

Supply brain food

To aid in creating a positive learning environment at home, make sure that your children are served healthy meals and snacks.



Encourage open communication

Encouraging open communication is an important parenting skill. Parenting can be more enjoyable when a positive parent-child relationship is established. Whether you are parenting a toddler or a teenager, good communication is the key to building self-esteem as well as mutual respect.

Basic Principals of Good Parent/Child Communication

- Let the child know you are interested and involved and that you will help when needed.
- Turn off the television or put the phone down when your child wants to converse.
- Avoid taking phone calls or texts when your child has something important to tell you.
- Unless others are specifically meant to be included, hold conversations in privacy.
- Embarrassing the child in front of others will only lead to resentment and hostility.
- Get down to your child's level then talk.
- Listen carefully and politely.
- Don't use put down words or statements such as dumb, lazy, or stupid.
- Assist the child in planning out steps for a solution if needed.
- Show the child that you care for them, no matter the situation.
- Accept the child's way of discussing topics and praise their efforts to communicate openly with you.



Model nonviolent reactions

At times, parenting can feel like you're in an airplane in turbulence in a thunderstorm and the oxygen masks have dropped. As with on a plane, when parenting it's important to remain calm and put your oxygen mask on first before you help your children. Once that's accomplished you can give specific instructions of what to do, with lots of positive feedback for good behavior.

In order for your child to learn how to handle her emotions, you need to be sure you're doing everything you can to get a handle on yours. Yes, you can teach your child specific social skills, but your values and behavior can convey a very strong message. So what you do around the house is important.

Foster Empathy

The first step toward handling powerful emotions is to identify and share them. Being aware of your own feelings is necessary for learning empathy- the ability to understand another person's point of view. Empathy helps people connect, and it helps youngsters take responsibility for the effects of their behavior, as well as learn to respect other people's needs, rights, boundaries, and feelings.

Teach self-control

Children need to learn to curb impulsive behavior when they don't get what they want, and that blurting out the first thing that comes to mind can be hurtful. Your own self-control is your child's most influential example, but you can teach them techniques for calming down, such as walking away, counting to ten, taking deep breaths, or talking with someone they trust.



Discuss health risks and behavior

Not all risk-taking is bad. In fact, taking risks is part of learning and growing up. As children grow they have a natural tendency to seek out risks and with the help of parents, negative risks can be avoided. **Talking to your child about risky health behaviors and how to handle topics sensibly is essential for preparing your child to make responsible decisions.** Irresponsible decisions can lead to serious consequences and your child needs to hear about this directly from a caring parent.

Encourage healthy risk-taking

- Educate your children about abuse.
- Prepare them for worst-case scenarios.
- Let them know you are always there for them, no matter the situation.
- Ask questions with an open mind and listen to your child's thoughts and feelings carefully.
- Avoid using scare tactics.
- Help build your child's self-respect.
- Suggest ways to handle peer pressure.
- Encourage healthy outlets for risk-taking, such as joining sports team or club.



Encourage sleep

Good sleep quality is essential. Signs of poor sleep quality include not feeling rested even after getting enough sleep, repeatedly waking up during the night, and experiencing symptoms of sleep disorders (such as snoring or gasping for air). Improving sleep quality may be helped by better sleep habits.

Tips for Better Sleep

- Be consistent. Go to bed at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning.
- Make sure your bedroom is quiet, dark, relaxing, and at a comfortable temperature.
- Remove electronic devices, such as TVs, computers, and smart phones, from the bedroom.

Recommended Hours of Sleep Per Day

Newborn	0-3 months	14-17 hours per 24 hours
Infant	4-12 months	12-16 hours per 24 hours
Toddler	1-2 years	11-14 hours per 24 hours
Preschool	3-5 years	10-13 hours per 24 hours
School Age	6-12 years	9-12 hours per 24 hours
Teen	13-18 years	8-10 hours per 24 hours
Adult	18+ years	7-9 hours per 24 hours



Monitor children's activities

Childhood is a time of rapid growth, exploration, and risk taking. Taking risks provides young people the opportunity to test their skills and abilities and discover who they are. But, some risks can have harmful and long-lasting effects on a child's health and well-being.

Parents are a powerful influence in the lives of their children. When parents make a habit of knowing about their child- what they are doing, who they are with, and where they are and setting clear expectations for behavior with regular check-ins to be sure these expectations are being met—they can reduce their child's risks for injury, pregnancy, and drug, alcohol, and cigarette use.

Parental monitoring works best when parents have good, open, and caring relationships with their child. Children are more willing to talk to their parents if they think their parents can be trusted, have useful advice to offer, and are open and available to listen and talk. Children who are satisfied with their relationships with their parents tend to be more willing to follow the rules.

Parenting Tips

- Establish relationships with your child's friends.
- Get to know other parents.
- Ask lots of questions.
- Make sure your child has access to enjoyable, safe, structured activities.
- Make sure your child knows how to reach you when needed.



Share family values

Family values help shape a family's beliefs, attitudes, and ideals. Within each family, encouraging quality values helps influence behavior, social interactions, relationships, and family traditions and habits.

Family values include the qualities that are most important to you as a family, such as integrity or hard work or kindness; they also define what you believe is right and wrong. Your family's moral definitions might shape, for example, what you consider acceptable for public conduct, work ethic, and social views.

When family values are well defined and reinforced at home, they become a part of who you are and how you act. **Values, when intentionally taught and followed, can help a family work together toward common goals.**

Examples of Family Values

- Kindness to others
- Respect and courtesy
- Standing up for others
- Courage
- Education and knowledge
- Commitment to excellence
- Creativity and expression
- Honesty
- Trustworthiness
- Compassion
- Patience
- Quality time together
- Equality
- Taking responsibility
- Being generous
- Treating others the way you would like to be treated
- Being open-minded



Encourage healthy rewards

Food should be used as nourishment, not as a reward or punishment. In the long run, food rewards or bribes usually create more problems than they solve. Using food as a reward or punishment can undermine the healthy eating habits you're trying to teach your child. Giving sweets, chips, or soda as a reward, often leads to children overeating foods that are high in sugar, fat, and empty calories. **Worse**, it interferes with children's natural ability to regulate their eating, and it encourages them to eat when they're not hungry to reward themselves.

Food as a reward:

- Contributes to poor health
- Encourages over-consumption of unhealthy foods
- Contributes to poor eating habits
- Increases preferences for sweets

Celebrating at home without using food treats

- Give certificates or ribbons for healthy behaviors.
- Allow your children to have a few friends over after school to play.
- Have a family game night.
- Keep a box of special toys or art supplies that can only be used on special occasions.
- Go to a sports game.
- Camp out in the backyard or living room.
- Go outside and have an adventure with your children.



A meal is a family affair

In such a busy world, mealtimes often revolve around our lifestyles. As a result of this, we miss meals or eat foods that are not the best for our bodies. **Did you know experts have found that kids who eat regularly with their families are more likely to eat fruits, vegetables, and whole grains?** So, no matter how busy life may seem, it's important to make family meals a priority.

To get started, try some of these ideas:

- Choose a time when everyone can enjoy at least one meal together- it may be breakfast, lunch, or dinner.
- As the parent, you should decide what time meals are served and what the food choices are. Your children can then decide what and how much they will eat.
- Include your children in preparing the meal.
- Gather around the table for a meal and turn the TV and mobile devices off.
- Make the meal pleasant by keeping the conversation positive.

Every Day Healthy Habits

5 or more fruits and veggies

2 hours or less of screen time

1 hour or more of physical activity

0 sugary drinks

