

New School Year Resolutions

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Why wait until January to make your annual resolutions?—The start of the school year can be the perfect time to set you family up for a healthier year. Practical planning and practice can improve your child's and your health in as little as two to three weeks! Simply through diet and exercise you can reap the rewards before the first teacher conference.

LET'S START SCHOOL WITH A HEALTHIER PLAN THIS YEAR.

***Be mindful as you make schedules for you and your family.** Start by scheduling a daily "off duty" for everyone in your household so they can de-stress; then schedule in some family activity time at least a few times during the week. (Ideally bring back the family dinner where you can all contribute to food and conversation.) Nothing else comes before this schedule.

***Delegate chores.** Living in a family comes with responsibility. There is a job that can be assigned to everyone in the family so that each makes a contribution. Be thoughtful as you make the task assignments to make sure that the job requirement is appropriate for the child's abilities. If the job when completed is not to the level of your expectation then it is your job to coach the child. It is not your job to do it! In fact, do NOT fix it. You must allow your child time to improve without interference.

***Mandatory physical activity is required following a long school day.** Children were not meant to sit for extended periods of time. This is the time to schedule sports practice, dance classes, run club or whatever interests your child so your child has activity AND social time. Again, be careful not to over-schedule them. Let them choose an activity and then commit to that ONE activity for the semester. They can try something new the next semester. They can do it all but not all at once. And whatever you do, do not let them quit! They made a commitment and it is the parent's job to hold them to it.

***Balance screen time with activity.** Your child MUST be active BEFORE they can have screen time---television, computer, games, cell phones. Ideally it is a perfect balance as in one hour of activity for one hour of screen time earned.



***Backpacks are not meant to be progressive weight lifting.** Make sure your child can carry the backpack with little effort. If it is too heavy then notify the school. Your child's normal growth should not be compromised and lugging around books and papers should not cause a lifelong injury.

***Speaking of homework—a child should not have too much of it!** If it takes your child all evening to prepare for the next day and they do not have any free time, then discuss this with the child's teacher. Homework must be reasonable and you must be your child's advocate. Life is too short to spend so much time on homework. Be a coach for your child's challenges but help them find their strengths. Then be a cheerleader!

***Start the day with a good breakfast AT HOME--even if the child says they are not hungry.** A good breakfast habit is steel cut oatmeal with blueberries and soy/almond milk. It can be made by the child in 3 minutes! This will fuel the child's body and brain until lunch.

***Stock the car with snacks.** Keep a small cooler for veggie sticks and hummus, apple slices with peanut butter or just keep pre-portioned bags of

unsalted nuts and seeds. These are great grab-n-go snacks when you need something quick. These may not be your typical snacks and they may take some time before you develop a taste for them. Your child will learn to prefer them if this is the only snack option offered at home. Become informed on nutrition so that you and your family can avoid the illnesses related to processed foods and our American diet.

***Pack your child's lunch.** Regulations for school meal programs are not always in the child's best interest. Be an informed consumer and provide your child good nutrition for their growing bodies so they can remain healthy. Begin your own food revolution by changing and committing to one food change per week in your own home. Outside of your home your child will not choose perfectly, so limit your child's access to junk food by NOT having a school account.

***Commit to eating only meals prepared at home.** When someone else prepares your food you give up control over the healthfulness of food. If you want to eat out on occasion then commit to not more often than once every two weeks.

***And for every child adequate sleep is mandatory!** First rule in the house must be that cell phones are not in the bedroom. Bedrooms are for sleeping. Keep a charging station in a family area so you can monitor this. (Also monitor the activity on your child's phone and laptop as well because you do not want strangers in your house without your knowledge. Remember to talk to your child about group living where there is no real privacy!)

May this school year bring your family health and happiness along with new growth of knowledge in all aspects of life.

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