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 **The Indian EXPRESS**

7 lifestyle habits to teach your kids

It is important that you set an example for your young ones by following a disciplined routine and maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

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By Pooja Bhargava

In the era of Instagram and Snapchat, there's a lot of information available online that may not always be the solution to all your kids' problems. Fad diets like keto, paleo, and military diets are taking social media by storm and they seem to be very appealing to young individuals who put a premium on physical appearance. These diets are often short-term solutions and they end up having long-term adverse effects. Hence, now more than ever, we need to help our children understand what it means to lead a healthy lifestyle.

As a parent, you pass more than just your genes to your children. Kids tend to pick up your habits from an early age, both good and bad. Hence, it is important that you set an example for your young ones by following a disciplined routine and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. When healthy habits are instilled early on in one's life, it becomes part of a lifestyle routine and goes a long way in ensuring a happier, healthier, and disease-free life. Here are a few habits that I have inculcated in my kids.

Don't skip breakfast

"Breakfast is the most important meal of the day," is an adage I have personally lived by. It not only helps kids to kickstart their day with good energy levels but also teaches them to stick to regular meal times and teaches them the importance of having a routine. It is important to teach kids the value of being armed with good discipline as it always lends a better perspective towards life. Following the body's biological clock also helps to keep chronic diseases at bay and ensures that your kids avoid late nights and drowsy mornings. Having a balanced and nutritious breakfast goes a long way in promoting an overall healthy lifestyle.

Read | [Teach your kids healthy nutrition practices at an early age](#)

Get off the sofa and out the door

With the pandemic-induced lockdown now having tied kids to their screens, it is extremely important for them to get enough exercise. Kids today aren't playing outside as they used to; FIFA, Angry Birds, and Call of Duty have become the norm as opposed to Hide and Seek, Kick the Can, and Catch and Cook. It is important to get your kids out the door and ensure that they are exercising in some way or another for at least an hour everyday. Being physically active from an early age ensures that your kids have improved academic scores and are actively engaged in sports. The endorphins released when you exercise help fight academic stress and emotional distress. Playing a sport also teaches kids how to deal with life's highs and lows from a young age and it also helps to enhance their social skills.

Today a reader, tomorrow a leader

Make your kid read 10 minutes every day before going to bed. Let them choose what they like to read. Strong reading skills are essential to building a well-versed vocabulary. Make reading a fun activity so that they view it as a treat and not a boring chore. Ingraining the habit of reading reaps high returns in the long run as books will always help kids learn and add to their body of knowledge.

Family time is important

Creating a bond with your child and making them comfortable with confiding in you is one of the most rewarding experiences. Assigning dinner as a family meal is an easy way to go about this. This makes it easier to ensure that everyone is eating nourishing meals together. You can use dinner as an opportunity to have a conversation with your kids about their day; discuss films, literature, politics or whatever it is that excites you and them. Make it a point to take an interest in their interests even when they are something you never imagined being interested in! And lastly, be open-minded and understanding of the changing times, this ensures that they are comfortable reaching out to you when they are in need of help.

Sleep well

There's nothing better for your kids' routine than eight hours of uninterrupted sleep. Poor sleeping patterns can cause a decrease in the release of growth hormones, hence, affecting the development of bones and other cells and tissue. It also negatively affects immunity levels, leads to forgetfulness, and lack of concentration. Sleeping early and developing a daily routine that isn't interrupted on weekends will only do your child good in the long run.

Hygiene is two-thirds of health

Kids must be taught the importance of basic hygiene from a young age. Practices such as brushing twice a day, flossing your teeth, washing your hands before and after each meal are simple and effective routines to keep illnesses at bay. It is essential that we teach our young kids the importance of being clean and well-groomed. Inculcating these habits from childhood will help kids have healthy teeth, good skin, and good gut health!

There are no bad emotions

Raising emotionally healthy kids ensures that they do not look to food for comfort and prevents them from resorting to alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism in their later years. Teach them to embrace all kinds of emotions because they have a right to their feelings. Allow them to release emotions such as anger and sadness in a healthy way from a young age. Teach kids the value of habits such as journaling and meditation; this could help them develop a good sense of judgment. Talking to them about anger management techniques can help them understand when to walk away from fraught situations. Allow them to cry and talk about their feelings as it helps teenagers deal with their sadness. Showing emotion must always be encouraged and not suppressed.

Raising a child comes with its ups and downs. Hopefully, my advice helps make your journey easier.

(The writer is a health coach, holistic nutritionist and fitness expert.)