Let’s Spread Joy This Year!

The last several years I have struggled with Christmas. When you lose family members, it’s really hard to get into the Christmas spirit. This year I plan to celebrate with my family and spread the joy of Christmas to everyone. I’m starting with my newsletter.

Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus. Matthew 1:23 announces the birth of Jesus saying, “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a Son, and they will call him Immanuel’ (which means ‘God with us’).” The birth gives us hope and joy. Hope is defined as "confident expectation." So when someone states, “I hope you have a great day!” They are confident you will. Joy is defined as “the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune.” I feel joy goes much deeper than being happy. Having joy includes feeling good cheer and a vibrant happiness. But joy, in its fuller, spiritual meaning of expressing God's goodness, involves more. It is a deep-rooted, inspired happiness. The Holy Bible says, "The joy of the Lord is your strength" (Neh. 8:10). So let’s find our joy. When we experience sadness or grief it blocks our joy. By continuing to live and find joy is the greatest way to honor your loved ones who have passed away.

Christmas is one of the best holidays that represent love, caring, sharing, and being together. Everything leading up to Christmas, from decorating the Christmas tree to baking sugar cookies, is done with the help of family and good friends. Remember to thank and show kindness to those you love.

Christmas giving also provides the chance to help those who need more support. Remember, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ Acts 20:35.

Tammy Fleshman, Parent Partner
HOW TO RAISE A GOOD CHILD
By Katherine Lee

Many parents focus attention on their children’s grades and extracurricular activities, by making sure kids study, do their homework, and get to soccer practice or dance lessons on time. But all too often, we forget to put time and effort into nurturing another component of child success and development—one that is just as important, and perhaps even more essential—being a good person.

It can be easy to forget the importance of countering the pervasive messages of instant gratification, consumerism, and selfishness prevalent in our society

As C.S. Lewis famously said, “Integrity is doing the right thing, even when no one is watching.” How can we raise a good child, one who will do the right thing, even when no one may see them do it, and when there may be no reward? While there is no guaranteed formula (if only!), here are some ways parents can build good character and help their child grow into a good person.

1. **Nurture Empathy in Your Child**—Emotional intelligence and empathy, or the ability to put oneself in someone else’s shoes and consider their feelings and thoughts, is one of the most fundamental traits in good people.

2. **Encourage Them to Lift Up Others**—While stories about kids engaging in bullying and other bad behavior often make headlines, the truth is that many kids quietly perform good deeds in the ordinary course of their lives, whether it’s making a friend feel better when he’s down or pitching in at a community center.

3. **Teach Them to Volunteer**—Whether your child helps an elderly neighbor by shoveling the sidewalk or helps you pack some canned goods into boxes for donation to family shelters, the act of volunteering can shape your child’s character.

4. **Teach Them Good Manners**—Does your child routinely practice the fundamentals of good manners such as saying “Thank you” and “Please”? Does she speak in a polite manner to people and address elders as “Mr.” and Ms.”? Does she know how to greet people properly, and is she familiar with the basics of good table manners? Is she a gracious loser when she plays a game with friends?

5. **Treat Them With Kindness and Respect**—The most effective way to get kids to speak to you and to others in a respectful way and to interact with others in a nice manner is by doing exactly that yourself when you interact with your child. Think about how you speak to your child.

6. **Discipline Your Child Consistently**—Parents who hold back on giving children boundaries or firmly (but lovingly) correcting bad behavior may actually be harming their child with good intentions. Children who are not disciplined are unpleasant, selfish, and surprisingly unhappy.

7. **Teach Them to Be Thankful**—Teaching your child how to be grateful and how to express that gratitude is a key component of raising a good child. Whether it’s for a meal you’ve prepared for dinner or for a birthday gift from Grandma and Grandpa, teach your child to say thank you.

8. **Give Them Responsibilities**—When children have an expected list of age-appropriate chores to do at home, such as helping set the table or sweeping the floor, they gain a sense of responsibility and accomplishment.

9. **Model Good Behavior**—Consider how you interact with others, even when your child isn’t watching. Do you say “Thank you” to the checkout clerk at the market? Do you steer clear of gossip about neighbors or co-workers? Do you use a friendly tone when addressing waiters? It goes without saying that you directly influence how your children will be. If you want to raise a good child, conduct yourself in the way you want your child to act.
HERSHEY’S S’mores Pops with Candy Cane

Ingredients:
20 small Candy Canes, divided
12 Marshmallows
2 Hershey Milk Chocolate Bars
1 tsp. of shortening (do not USE butter, margarine, spread or oil)
2 Tbsp. Graham Cracker Crumbs

(1) Line tray or cookie sheet with wax paper. Remove wrappers from candy canes. Push straight end of candy cane about half way into each marshmallow. Crush remaining candy canes into small pieces. Remove wrappers from chocolate bars; break into pieces.
(2) Place chocolate and shortening in small microwave-safe bowl. Microwave at medium (50%) 1 minute; stir. If necessary, microwave at medium an additional 10 seconds; stir until chocolate is melted and smooth.
(3) One at a time, dip about 1/2 of each marshmallow into melted chocolate; shake off excess chocolate. Immediately sprinkle chocolate portion with graham cracker crumbs and dip into crushed candy canes. Return to tray. Allow to firm or refrigerate about 5 minutes until firm. Store in cool, dry place.

Candy Cane Mint Dipped Pretzels

Ingredients:
1 Tbsp. butter or margarine, 14 HERSHEY’S KISSES Brand Candy Cane Mint Candies
1 cup miniature marshmallows 25 miniature pretzels

(1) Line cookie sheet or tray with parchment paper.
(2) Melt butter in saucepan over low heat. Add candy cane candies. Heat and stir until candies are melted. Add marshmallows, heating and stirring until melted and mixture is smooth. (Mixture will be like soft and pliable dough). Transfer mixture to small bowl.
(3) Dip each pretzel piece into mixture, molding mixture around about 1/2 of the pretzel. Place on prepared cookie sheet. Allow coating to firm.
10 Reasons a Daily Routine is Important for Your Child and How to Set One

All families need some type of routine to get things done and create a sense of security for their children. Children often fear the unknown – whether it’s the broccoli on their plate or a big life change like moving to a different house or gaining a new sibling. While change is a learning opportunity, it can also be stressful for children. Routines bring comfort and consistency to a child’s life. Daily routines might include:

⇒ The time to get ready in the morning
⇒ Bath times, mealtimes, naptimes, and bedtimes
⇒ Housework, cooking and cleaning schedules
⇒ Play time, family time and outdoor play

Routines also help your child know what is important to your family. While daily routines look different across neighborhoods, the most important aspect is creating a routine that works for your family.

Here are 10 reasons a daily routine is important for your child:

1. Helps your child get on a schedule - Consistent routines will help your child and their “body clocks” with many day-to-day basics such as:
⇒ Ability to take naps and sleep well at night
⇒ Ability to eat healthy, full meals
⇒ Regular bowel movements
⇒ Healthy play and outdoor time
⇒ Calm, relaxed behavior at “down times” during the day

For example, because your child and their body know it’s time to sleep, they are more easily able to wind down and rest.

2. Bonds the family together - When a child knows what to expect and notices regular family activities, they begin to understand what’s important. This strengthens shared values, beliefs, and interests. The child, for example, might notice that eating breakfast together on Saturday mornings is important. They can see that family time together is special. Even if your child is young, they will pick up on these traditions. The family bonds together by doing regular, important things together.

3. Establishes expectations - Rather than having a power struggle about picking up toys at the end of the day or taking a bath, a child becomes accustomed to knowing when “pick up time” and “bath time” are. Children begin to expect and complete activities without issue. As the parent, you become a partner in that routine, rather than the person who is telling the child to “do this” and “not do this.”

4. Creates a calmer household - Because the child, and other family members, know what to expect, stress and anxiety are reduced. The child will know what comes next. They will feel valued because they are included in the plans and don’t feel as if they’re being forced to do something.

5. Gives your child confidence and independence - With a routine, a child will learn over time when it’s time to brush their teeth or put on their pajamas. They will take pride in knowing what they are supposed to do – and doing it by themselves. Rather than always being told what needs to happen, children will feel confident to go ahead and be in charge of themselves. When children feel empowered and independent, they are less likely to rebel or retaliate.

6. Establishes healthy, constructive habits - From brushing teeth regularly to completing homework every afternoon, routines help establish constructive habits. Children who practice these skills will be able to better manage their time. As they age, they’ll have more self-discipline in terms of healthy grooming and eating habits, along with studying and cleaning their rooms.

7. Helps you (the parent) remember important things - Whether it’s ensuring your child takes their medicine every day or remembering to pay the bills every month, a routine helps you stay on track. Family life is busy and routines help you to keep track of the important details – allowing for a more stress-free household and quality time together as a family.
8. Offers your child an opportunity to get excited about what’s ahead - If your child knows what’s on the schedule, they anticipate and look forward to future events – such as going to the park on Friday afternoons or visit grandparents on Sunday. When these activities are established, your child feels like a loved part of the family and the world.

9. Provides opportunity for special “daily rituals” - When you build something into your day, like snuggling and reading to your child before bed, you instill special moments or “daily rituals.” These dedicated times create increased bonding and connection with your child every day. Rather than just moving from one activity to the next, you have quality, relaxing time built into each day.

10. Offers stability during times of change or stress - Changes and stresses impact a child’s life and sense of security. When the family has an established a routine, consistency is present in the child’s life, no matter what is going on. A child finds calmness, stability, and love through elements of routine, such as family dinners or regular Thursday trips to the library.

The Importance of Flexibility
While establishing and maintaining routine has a wealth of benefits, it’s vital to also remain flexible. Spontaneity and creativity are important factors in a child’s life. For example, the breakfast dishes can wait if there is an exciting animal in the backyard or a special Saturday carnival happening in the city. Remember to stay sensitive and adaptable to the needs of each child (and adult). When a schedule becomes too regimented or strict, the benefits will be reduced, and children may feel controlled by it rather than freed by it (which is the ultimate goal).

How to Set a Daily Routine for Your Child
Routines can begin from the first day of life. If you haven’t started a routine from the early days, don’t worry. They can be established and start at any point. The earlier you establish a routine, the better.

Step 1: Establish the important times such as mealtimes, snack times, naptimes, and bedtime. Because these affect how well your child is able to sleep and eat, these items should come first. If you currently have no schedule, gradually move to a consistent routine. For example, you may wish to set up a regular naptime and bedtime first. Then, you can add in regular mealtimes and bath times.

Step 2: Practice patience. Setting a schedule may be hard for your child at first, but they will become accustomed to it. Try not to become impatient or frustrated if the routine takes time to become “regular” for your child.

Step 3: Add “helpful” elements to each part of the routine. For instance, you may wish to add in a regular 10 minute reading and snuggling time with your child before bed. This helps them wind down and feel ready to sleep.

Step 4: Work toward consistency and make room for flexibility. In order for a routine to stick, you’ll need to make sure you keep it as regular as possible. However, stay open to flexibility, especially for holidays and special events, so your child’s mood doesn’t become solely dependent on eating at a specific time, for example.

Step 5: Establish special times with your child. Whether it’s a regular trip to grandma’s house or walking the dog together, create expectations and routine of family time.

Step 6: Adjust as needed. As the months go on, you’ll start to see what’s working and not working for the family. A routine is meant to help the family, not hinder it. Be sure your routine is healthy and positive for your child and other family members.

If you feel you need some ideas in creating a routine that works for you and your child, talk with your WV Birth to Three team members for support!

WEBINAR

Please join West Virginia Birth to Three for a webinar, "Seizure Disorders and Autism Spectrum Disorder," on January 9, 2023, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. In the session, Dr. Lindsey, a child neurologist at Ruby Memorial in Morgantown, WV will provide an overview of seizures and epilepsy for children diagnosed on the autism spectrum. This conversation will include:

- Incidence
- Description of seizure types
- Brief overview of particular seizure disorders
- Evaluation
- Treatment and management
- Question and answer

Follow this link or scan the QR code to register for this free webinar: https://attendee.gototraining.com/r/3563667145745504001

Hey Parents! Read this classic book to your children!

The idea of Christmas did not begin with Clement Clarke Moore, the author of "Twas the Night Before Christmas," but in "a wink of an eye" his poem took young America by storm. His spirited tale of a late night visit by jolly St. Nick and his eight tiny reindeer captured the hope, happiness, and love expressed during the holiday season.

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