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Your EAP news

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Questions parents ask about schools: working with schools and teachers

Asking the right questions can be the first step to making sure your kid has every chance to succeed in learning — and in life. Helping children get the most out of their time inside and outside the classroom is a team effort. That's why it's important that you get to know the school environment, teachers, staff and other students that will become part of your kid's school experience. Here are some tips to help you get started.

What can I do to be more involved in my child's school?

- Make sure you're there for back-to-school night, games and other student events. It's a great opportunity to meet and get to know your kid's teachers and school staff. Talk to them about their plans to help students achieve their goals.
- Find out how to join parent organizations so you can make your voice heard in case there are any issues at school. You can also help put together parent-teacher meetings, set talking points and get to know other parents.
- Become a tutor! Sharing your knowledge with students and teachers can be a great experience for all of you.
- If you have time, volunteer at the school or help monitor students during field trips and student events.

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- Be part of any advisory group that may set policies and programs that could impact your kid's school.
- Find your parent resource center. If there isn't one, start it. It can be a safe space for parents to share information about the school and their community.
- Help from home. You can call other parents to meet them and talk about things that affect your kids. You can also help edit the school newsletter or use any bilingual skills you have to help other parents become more involved in school activities.

It's all about helping kids do better in school and guiding them on their road to success!

What can I do to make sure school is safe and drug-free?

- Go over school rules with your kid. Talk about what will happen if the rules are broken, and be clear about what you and the school expect from your kid.
- Talk to the school staff about how they handle safety and drug problems. Make sure you know which anti-drug/violence programs your kid will attend.
- Get to know your kid's friends and talk to their parents. Make sure they share your concerns.

U.S. Department of Education, *Questions parents ask about schools* (accessed May 2017); ed.gov.

Becoming a caregiver

Caring for someone else can be one of the most rewarding and challenging experiences in life. And you may already be a caregiver without realizing it. A caregiver takes care of family or friends who have a disability or illness, or who may be older and not able to do things without help. You may just have to shop for them every now and then or you may need to care for them around the clock.

Here are a few things to keep in mind to help you take care of yourself while you take care of others:

- **Manage your stress.** It affects people in different ways. Learn how to recognize the symptoms of stress. You may feel tired, but not be able to sleep. It may be hard to concentrate during the day or you may get sudden headaches. There are some simple things you can do to help you relax throughout the day. If you feel anxious, take a few deep breaths, stretch your arms and take a few minutes to rest.
- **Talk to other people.** Isolation can be a defense mechanism for many. But talking about how you're feeling can help you deal with any anger, resentment or frustration.
- **Understand your feelings.** Feeling guilt and resentment is natural. You may feel guilty because you think you should be doing more to help a loved one. Or you may experience resentment because of how your life may have changed. Know how to recognize your feelings and how to deal with them so you can continue taking care of someone who needs you to be healthy. Ask for help if you need to take some time to recover your energy.

- **Get ready emotionally and physically.** Grief and loss affect everyone differently. Start building a support system around you so you can protect your health and get the support you need to deal with difficult situations. Taking care of your mind and body can help you stay strong when those around you need you the most. Remember to eat well-balanced meals, exercise regularly and try to make time to relax or follow your own interests. Don't lose touch with your friends. Try to strengthen the relationships and friendships that are important to you.
- **Find help during difficult times.** Finding a support group can help you share your feelings with others who are in a similar situation. If going to a group is not something you're comfortable with, think about finding a counselor who can help you deal with your feelings as a caregiver.
- **Try to stay positive.** Taking care of someone can make you feel good — and sometimes, not so good. But it's always important to focus on the positive things from any experience. There may be some things you can no longer do with your loved one, but try to find new activities that can help you get to know each other better. Also, don't feel bad if you need to take a break from each other.

Workplace Options. *Becoming a caregiver.* (Revised April 2017).



Defend yourself against germs

There are many simple things you can do during your day to protect yourself from nasty germs. Here are a few tips to make sure you're doing all you can to stay healthy:

- Even if you love someone with all your heart, try to stay away when they have a cold or flu.
- If you're feeling a little down, get lots of sleep to power up.
- Visit your doctor and dentist for regular checkups even if you feel all right.
- Had a good meal? Ready for bed? It's time to brush your teeth!
- Do you like to keep up to date with the latest trends? Make sure to do the same with all the shots that keep you safe.
- They say an apple a day keeps the doctor away. Well, so does eating a balanced diet with plenty of grains, vegetables and fruits. Also, try to limit fat, cholesterol, sugar and salt.
- And don't forget that working out once a day is good for the mind and waist!

Keep a tidy kitchen

Germs love wet kitchen things with leftover food on them, like dish rags, sponges and brushes. Here are some things you can do to keep them clean, safe and smelling fresh.

- Wash them with hot water and put them in a place with plenty of air so they can dry.
- Put them in a microwave for 30 seconds or in a dishwasher.
- Wash or soak them in bleach once a week.
- Get rid of old items and get new ones once they start to have a bad smell.

Make and use your own disinfectant — it's as easy as 1, 2, 3!

1. Add a half-cup (about 120 ml) of household bleach to one gallon (about four liters) of water.
2. Spray the solution around the place you want to clean and let it stand for a few minutes before wiping it dry with a clean cloth.
3. Use it in the kitchen and bathroom to kill germs. Just spray toilets, faucets, handles, showers, tubs, sinks, counters and cutting boards.

IMPORTANT: Never mix chlorine bleach with household cleaners that have ammonia in them. The fumes that come from doing that are extremely dangerous.

Use your dryer to save more than just time

Dangerous bacteria can be found in many washing machines. They can survive cold-water washes and short dryer cycles. To make sure this doesn't happen to you:

- Try longer dryer cycles.
- If you can, add bleach when washing clothes.
- Run an empty washer through a cycle with only bleach in it.

Make sure food is safe

Preparing meat on a cutting board and then not cleaning it well before chopping vegetables on it is one of the most common ways to contaminate food and spread bacteria. So be sure to always clean your cutting boards well. Also, wash your hands with soap and water after handling raw meat. To lower the risk of food poisoning:

- Don't buy outdated food, packaged food with a broken seal or bulging cans.
- Don't eat food that has a foul or weird smell or taste.
- Put meat in the refrigerator and use it within a day or two after you buy it.
- Keep frozen foods in the freezer until you're ready to cook them. If you defrost meat, don't put it back in the freezer if you don't eat it. Also, don't leave cooked food out to cool. Put it in the fridge.
- Don't eat undercooked ground beef, raw oysters, unpasteurized milk (pasteurization is a process that slows the growth of bacteria in foods) or raw/undercooked eggs.

It's never too early to start learning about staying healthy. Let your children know how important it is to fight germs!

Workplace Options. Soha, C. *Defend yourself against germs*. (Accessed May 2017).



Learn to disconnect

Technology can be a great tool to keep in touch with those far from us. But it can also make us disconnect from those who are close to us. It can be easy to glue ourselves to our cellphone screen or use technology to multi-task. Make sure to use technology wisely so it doesn't end up controlling you. Think about taking a break from it. Here are some tips to help you get started:

- **Make a 20-20-20 rule.** After 20 minutes of computer use, look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds.
- **Say no to multi-tasking!** Try doing one thing at a time. Read a magazine, talk on the phone or walk to a co-worker's cube to ask a question instead of instant messaging or emailing.
- **Make your vacation technology-free.** It can help you relax and start seeing things from a different perspective.
- **Discover nature.** Go where cellphones don't work and the internet is not available, like at the ocean or a cave in the mountains.

- **Take one step at a time.** Start slowly. Try 10 minutes the first day, and then add 10 more each day until you get to 60 minutes with no interruptions. You can also try to turn off technology an hour before going to sleep or right before working out. Try driving to work without listening to the radio and silencing your cellphone.
- **Make it a family habit.** Limit children's time using technology. Make it a TV Turnoff Week and give out small prizes for those who participate.
- **Go for a walk or run without headphones.** Take in what's around you or find a workout buddy.
- **Make time for social networking.** Try turning off your phone notifications and have real face-to-face time.

Remember that a healthy balance can be the key to having a peaceful day. While it is still very important to be plugged in, it is just as important to know that there is a world beyond the screens in front of you.

Workplace Options. May, C. Learn to disconnect. (Accessed May 2017).



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