

HELPING YOUR LITTLE LEARN HEALTHY HABITS: SETTING THE FOUNDATION FOR A LIFETIME OF WELL-BEING



As a Big, one of the most valuable gifts you can give your Little is the foundation of a healthy lifestyle. By teaching them healthy habits early on, you can empower them to make choices that contribute to their **physical, mental, and emotional well-being** for years to come. Healthy habits are more than just good food choices or exercise; they also include **self-care, stress management, and positive mental health practices**.

Here's why teaching healthy habits is important, and how you can support your Little in developing them:

1 PROMOTE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity is essential for a growing child. It not only helps build strong muscles and bones but also improves heart health, boosts mood, and increases energy levels. Here's how you can support your Little's physical health:

- **Encourage Outdoor Play:** Take your Little to the park, go on nature walks, or play sports together. Whether it's a game of basketball, a bike ride, or a hike, outdoor activity is a fun way to stay active.
- **Set a Positive Example:** Be active yourself and show that exercise is a fun and regular part of your routine. Whether it's a daily walk or hitting the gym, your Little will see that taking care of your body is important.
- **Introduce New Activities:** Expose your Little to a variety of sports, dance, or other physical activities they may enjoy. This helps them find something they love while encouraging them to stay active.

2 ENCOURAGE HEALTHY EATING CHOICES

Nutrition plays a crucial role in a child's growth and development. Helping your Little develop a balanced relationship with food sets them up for a healthier future. Here's how you can guide them:

- **Teach Portion Control:** Show your Little how to balance their plate with a variety of healthy foods—fruits, vegetables, proteins, and whole grains. This helps them understand what makes a balanced meal.
- **Cook Together:** Spend time cooking simple, nutritious meals together. You can teach them how to make healthy snacks, smoothies, or dinners, which also makes it fun to learn about food.
- **Model Healthy Choices:** When you make healthy choices in front of your Little—whether that's choosing a salad over junk food or drinking water instead of soda—you set a positive example for them to follow.



3 DEVELOP A ROUTINE FOR REST AND SLEEP

Good sleep is critical to a child's growth, mood regulation, and cognitive development. Helping your Little establish a healthy sleep routine can improve their overall well-being.

- **Set a Regular Sleep Schedule:** Encourage your Little to go to bed and wake up at the same time each day, even on weekends. A consistent routine helps improve the quality of their sleep.
- **Create a Calming Environment:** Help them wind down before bed with calming activities like reading, meditation, or listening to soft music. Avoiding screens like phones or TVs before bed can improve sleep quality.
- **Encourage the Importance of Rest:** Help your Little understand that sleep is not just a necessity but also something that allows them to be their best selves each day.

4 TEACH STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Learning how to manage stress is a vital life skill, especially for youth facing academic pressures or social challenges. Helping your Little recognize stress and cope with it in healthy ways sets them up for emotional resilience.

- **Practice Mindfulness:** Introduce your Little to simple mindfulness exercises like deep breathing, journaling, or guided relaxation. These techniques help them stay calm and focused during stressful times.
- **Be a Listening Ear:** Sometimes, just talking through challenges can relieve stress. Let your Little know you are always there to listen without judgment and offer advice or encouragement when appropriate.
- **Encourage Creative Outlets:** Art, music, and other creative activities can help your Little release tension and express themselves in positive ways.

5 MODEL POSITIVE MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICES

Mental health is just as important as physical health. Teaching your Little to care for their mind will help them build emotional intelligence and coping strategies for life's challenges.

- **Normalize Talking About Feelings:** Encourage your Little to talk about their emotions and validate their feelings. Creating an open space where they can express themselves without fear of judgment is vital for their mental health.
- **Promote Self-Care:** Teach your Little about self-care habits like taking time to relax, practicing positive self-talk, or engaging in activities that make them feel good.
- **Introduce Positive Role Models:** Show them examples of people who handle challenges with a positive attitude, whether it's through books, movies, or real-life examples.

6 ENCOURAGE SOCIAL CONNECTIONS AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Strong relationships with friends, family, and mentors contribute to emotional well-being. Encouraging your Little to develop positive social connections will enhance their sense of belonging.

- **Foster Friendships:** Encourage your Little to spend time with peers who have a positive influence on them. Group activities, team sports, and school clubs can be great ways to build friendships.
- **Teach Empathy and Respect:** Lead by example and help your Little understand the importance of treating others with kindness, respect, and empathy.
- **Stay Connected:** Regularly check in with your Little to offer emotional support and show that you care about their well-being.

7 LEAD BY EXAMPLE

As a Big, you are your Little's primary role model. The habits they learn from you will shape their behavior for years to come. By adopting a healthy lifestyle yourself, you are demonstrating the importance of self-care, healthy habits, and making good choices.

- **Practice What You Preach:** Whether it's eating healthy meals, exercising regularly, or managing stress effectively, your Little is more likely to adopt these habits if they see you doing the same.
- **Be Consistent:** Just as with your commitments, consistency is key when it comes to modeling healthy habits. By maintaining a healthy lifestyle, you reinforce the importance of these habits every day.

Helping your Little learn healthy habits is one of the most valuable gifts you can give them. Whether it's teaching them to stay active, eat nutritious foods, get enough sleep, or manage stress, you are empowering them to take control of their health and happiness.



By modeling healthy habits and offering guidance, you help your Little develop the foundation for a lifetime of well-being. Stay patient, encouraging, and supportive as you watch your Little grow into a confident, healthy, and resilient individual.