Healthy Eating Active Living Toolkit

This toolkit was inspired by the British Columbia Mental Health Commission of Canada
NAM’s Pediatric Health Center is committed to assisting families in living healthy lifestyles. We believe that healthy eating, being physically active, getting a good night’s rest and managing stress all have critical impacts on a child’s growth and development.

Therefore, we created a toolkit by using resources from British Columbia Mental Health Commission of Canada, to help your family live a healthy lifestyle by:

- **Recognizing what you are already doing to have good health**
- **Identifying your goals by deciding what you want to work on, and taking small steps to lead to the changes you want**
- **Getting suggestions for healthy living**
**How to use this toolkit**

1. Assess your family’s current lifestyle.
2. Choose one goal and decide on a small change towards it.
4. Celebrate your family’s success.

1. **Assess your family’s current lifestyle**

Take a look at your current healthy living practices. Invite the whole family to participate.

On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you rate your family in each of these healthy living areas? Which area would get the highest rating? Which area could use the most improvement?
Think about your family’s strengths, skills and talents. Do this for each family member.

Examples of strengths:
- Family activities enjoyed together
- Each family member’s interests, hobbies and activities
- Support people around your family (e.g. friends, relatives, school)
- Physical fitness items that you already have (e.g. bicycles, weights, Wii Fit)

2. **Choose a goal and decide on a small change towards it.**

Choose one of the healthy living areas. Decide on a goal that you and your family would like to work towards. Based on where your family rated themselves on the scale (from 1 to 10), think together about a small change that could be made that would move you up on the scale, even if it's just one step, such as from a 5 to a 6.

Remember, success is achieved through making small steps and when you involve your child in the process.
3. Set S.M.A.R.T. goals to achieve the changes you want to make.

**S = Specific**
Describe what your family would like to achieve.
*Example: To increase physical activity by walking.*

**M = Measurable**
Decide on a quantity you want to reach, such as how long, or how many times.
*Example: We will walk 2 days a week.*

**A = Action Plan**
How will your family achieve this goal?
*Example: We will walk to school on Tuesdays and Thursdays.*

**R = Realistic**
Is this goal “do-able”? On a scale of 1-10 (10 being very likely), how likely is your family willing to do this?
*Example: 9 – Very likely because we enjoy walking.*

**T = Time to Review**
When will your family start? When will you review your progress? *Example: We’ll start next Monday and review in one month.*

To help with setting goals, we have included My Healthy Living chart that can be found in the Tools and Resources Guide.

4. Celebrate your Family’s Success!
Module 1: HEALTHY EATING
This module includes the following sections:

1. Key Messages
2. Tips for Families for Healthy Eating
3. Activities to Increase Healthy Eating

Good nutrition is important for healthy brain development and can help children and youth:

- Do better in school
- Feel better about themselves, their bodies, and their abilities
- Cope with stress and manage their emotions better
1. *Families that eat together, eat better*

Eating meals together as a family has many positive effects, such as higher nutrition intake and improved mental health.

Remember:
You are a role model – you influence the relationship your child will have with food!

2. *Eat Breakfast*

Children and youth who eat breakfast stay at a healthier weight. They also do better in school and have a higher intake of many nutrients, vitamins and minerals.

3. *Dieting doesn’t work: Make small, achievable changes*

Children and youth who diet gain more weight than those who don’t. Dieting has also been shown to increase the chance of developing an eating disorder.
4. Drink water, milk and only a small amount of 100% fruit juice

Remember: You can help your children make healthier choices by having fruits and veggies readily available at home.

5. Roles in feeding and eating: You shouldn’t have to eat your vegetables to get dessert

Sugar sweetened beverages such as soda and fruit drinks contribute to obesity and the development of type 2 diabetes.

Children are born with the ability to know how much to eat. They eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full.

As a parent, try not to interfere with your child’s eating. Your role is to provide food at appropriate times (i.e. 3 meals/day and 2-3 snacks/day). Your child’s role is to choose what to eat from what you provide. If they don’t eat, it’s okay. There is always another meal or snack in 2-4 hours.
6. Treat with love, not sweets

When children do something well and are rewarded with food, or hurt themselves and get a cookie to make them feel better, they link these times with food. This link can continue with them through life. So later, when they are sad or anxious or even happy, they’ll want to eat. Try to find other ways to reward children that don’t involve food.

Keep in mind that not all tips are appropriate for all families. If you have questions about a specific concern, talk to your doctor or other health care professional.

General Strategies

• Model healthy eating, demonstrate a positive attitude to trying new foods and provide choices of healthy food.
• Introduce a wide variety of foods early on.
• Build on your own child’s strengths. For example, if your child is creative, allow them to help decorate a dish you have made.

Getting them involved and interested in food

• Involve your child in the grocery shopping.
• Let your child make the menus.
• Let your child make the menu for the week or plan a meal.

Note: Some children do not respond to hunger and fullness cues. (For example, those on specific medication or those who have often ignored these cues). For these children, individual nutrition counseling by a dietitian may be required.
Let your child choose a few things to go into their lunch or meal.

**Maximizing Healthy Foods**
- Have nutritious snacks easily available – for example, have vegetables precut in the refrigerator.
- Allow your child to have one treat a day. (e.g. a small bag of potato chips).

**Alternatives to Soft Drinks**
- Mixing sparkling water with a small amount of juice.
- Mixing Club Soda and lemon juice
- Using fancy ice cubes and a straw can make drinks seem more special.

**Introducing New Foods**
- Let your child read food magazines.
- Try new food every week.
- Ask your child to try a new food more than once; if they don’t like it, they don’t have to eat it. Explain to your child that “taste buds grow up.” This may encourage them to try again another time.
- Use plates that have separate sections.
- Let your child know that it is okay not to finish everything on their plate.
- Invite a friend to visit who isn’t fussy: your child or teen may be more likely to eat foods they normally would not.

**Textures and Foods**
Some children and youth with mental health challenges may have trouble eating foods with certain textures, colors, smells or temperatures. Here are some strategies families have found helpful:

- Build on what your child knows and accepts. Make a list of foods and liquids your child currently likes. Organize these by categories such as taste, textures, color, or smell. For example, does your child eat mostly foods that are crisp or crunchy? Do they like foods that have a strong taste?
- Use your child’s likes as a way to introduce other healthy foods.
For example, if your child likes crunchy food, try finding other healthy foods that are crunchy (e.g. a salad with nuts, crunchy noodles, or raw vegetables.)

**Encouraging healthy eating outside the home**

- Suggest going somewhere your child or youth can choose what goes into their food (e.g. “Subway”)
- Don’t stress about what your child eats outside the home. Everything is okay in moderation.

**ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE HEALTHY EATING**

A good way to get children and youth to eat healthy is by getting them involved in the process. Your child can get involved in any or all aspects of the family meals such as choosing recipes, shopping, growing some of the ingredients or helping prepare the food. Here are some ideas for activities that you can do as a family:

1. **Make a Recipe Together**
   This might be done in an afternoon or it might take a couple weeks to complete - have fun!
   - Start by looking at pictures in recipe book and magazines.
   - Have your child choose a recipe that you can make together.
   - Check the kitchen together to gather ingredients.
   - Have fun playing detectives as you search the refrigerator and cabinets. Ask your child to write a grocery list for missing items.
   - Go together to the grocery store. Give your child as much independence as possible by pushing the cart, finding food on the list, picking up the new items and paying for them.
   - Let your child help prepare the recipe as much as they are comfortable.
   - Share the dish with family – celebrate!

Note: Children with sensory issues around the texture of foods, or who have strong food dislikes would benefit from seeing an occupational therapist, behavioral therapist or speech language pathologist if it is impacting their ability to eat a healthy diet.
2. Grow Your Own Food
Start a vegetable or fruit garden at home. Even apartments can have a small potted vegetable garden (e.g. tomatoes or herb garden). Let your children have a say in what is planted. Also, give them some gardening responsibilities like watering, weeding or planting seeds. Let them help you take care of the garden. Finally, let your child help decide how to use the fruits and vegetables that are grown. They might be more likely to try vegetables that they have grown themselves than vegetables bought from the store. This is also a great way to fit some physical activity into your day.

HOW CHILDREN OR YOUTH CAN HELP WITH MEALS

- Writing the grocery list
- Reading recipes
- Judging pan sizes
- Dividing up even portions for serving
- Measuring dry and liquid ingredients
- Programing the microwave
- Rinsing bottles for recycling

3. Introduce a New “Food of the Week”
Introduce a new “food of the week” so that there is a variety in your food choices. Your whole family can go to the store or farmer’s market and choose one new fruit or vegetable to try.

*Have fun Taste Testing at home!*
Module 2: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

This module includes the following sections:

1. Key Messages
2. Types of Physical Activity
3. Barriers to Being Physically Active
4. Tips for Families to Being Physically Active
5. Physical Activity Ideas for Your Family

Physical activity has many benefits for children and youth.

Physical activity can:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Emotional/Mental</strong></th>
<th><strong>Social Help</strong></th>
<th><strong>Physical</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improve self-esteem</td>
<td>Children become part of a group or team</td>
<td>Improve flexibility, muscle strength, coordination and balance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help burn off energy</td>
<td>Help children meet new people</td>
<td>Develop and improve motor skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Build confidence</td>
<td>Increase family time</td>
<td>Reduce the risk of some health problems (e.g. diabetes, heart disease)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relieve stress</td>
<td>Help children spend time with friends</td>
<td>Support normal growth and development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase enjoyment</td>
<td>Improve social skills</td>
<td>Promote a healthy weight</td>
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<td>and fun</td>
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KEY MESSAGES

1. Physical activity can have physical, social, emotional and mental health benefits. Being more physically active can increase energy, improve sleep, and lead to better health.

2. Start with your child’s ideas. Ask your child to list their favorite activities and anything that they would like to try. Suggest they consider activities that they can do on their own.

3. Find the starting point and build on it. Look at your child or family’s starting point when deciding on a change. Remember that changes should be made gradually, and goals should be S.M.A.R.T. goals.

4. Move beyond barriers to meet goals. Talk about what might be limiting your child from participating in physical activity and go from there. Fitness should be fun, not a punishment or a consequence.

5. Be a role model and play. Model the behaviors you want to see and get out and play, walk, run or dance with your child.
TYPES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
The three main types of activity to keep you fit are:

**Aerobic/Endurance/ Cardio:**
Any activity that makes the heart, lungs, and large muscle groups use oxygen. Examples include running, skating, swimming and biking. Repeatedly doing these activities makes your heart stronger.

**Flexibility:**
Activities that take muscles through their full range to keep them stretched out and keep joints moving freely.

**Strength:**
Activities that help build strong bones and muscles by making them work harder than they are used to. Examples include weight training, or using your body weight like when doing push-ups.
BARRIERS TO BEING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE
There are a number of ways that a child or youth’s physical activity can be affected by their mental health challenges. Some of the obstacles are listed below:

• Difficulties socializing with other children
• Other children refusing to include or teasing
• Lack of interest in going outside/would rather play Video games or watch TV
• Lack of energy
• Sore muscles
• Balance and coordination problems
• Weight gain (can make exercise more difficult)
## TIPS TO HELP FAMILIES BE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

*Keep in mind that not all tips are appropriate for all families. If you have questions about a specific concern, talk to your family doctor or other health care professional.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Building on your child’s interests and strengths</th>
<th>Supporting a child who has difficulty socializing or following rules</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Find a sport/activity that fits with your child’s personality or interests</strong></td>
<td>If your child is on a sports team, talk to the coach about the challenges your child experiences and give specific suggestions about how to help them (e.g. who your child should sit next to)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Have your child teach you how to play a sport/game</strong></td>
<td>Scouting groups include everyone and have physical activity opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Physical activities can be done alone or in groups</strong></td>
<td>Check to see if your community offers fitness center training programs for teenagers</td>
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*Find activities that your child can do that are non-competitive.*

**For example:**
- Individual activities like swimming, walking, running, or biking
- Free play time in an open space
- Use daily tasks like going to the grocery store as a way to be active
ENCOURAGING ACTIVITY IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO PREFER THE COMPUTER OR TV

• Gradually decrease screen time by small amounts, and set time limits.
• Have your child use an exercise ball instead of a chair when they are at the computer or watching TV. Sitting on the ball helps to strengthen core muscles and encourages good posture.
• Encourage regular movement breaks. Children can get up and stretch, run in place, walk around the house, or do another activity they enjoy for a few minutes every half hour or so.
• Wii Fit or similar games can be a starting point.

LACK OF ENERGY

Start small and try short bursts of energy instead of an all or nothing approach.
Explain that you need to use energy to get energy.

PAIN OR SORE MUSCLES

You may need to see a health care professional to see if there is a physical reason for the pain. If there is not, reassure your child they are safe to take part in physical activity.

WEIGHT GAIN MAKES PHYSICAL ACTIVITY MORE DIFFICULT

Try starting with non-weight-bearing activities (e.g. stationary or road bike, water exercises, resistance training).
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IDEAS FOR YOUR FAMILY

1. Create an Obstacle Course
Obstacle courses are a great way to exercise and to develop your child’s sense of touch, coordination, gross motor skills and balance. An obstacle course can be set up outdoors or indoors when the weather is bad.

2. Go on a Nature Walk
Make family walks around the neighborhood or nearby parks a regular event. Try playing different games and activities while you walk.

For example:

• Play “I spy.” This helps encourage children to really look around and take in their surroundings.
• Point out things. When you see something that interests you, point it out to your child.
• Take pictures and let your child take some too. Taking pictures is always a fun way to remember something.
• Tell stories while you walk. When you’re out walking, there can be less distractions and your child may listen a bit better.
• Ask your child questions about trees, plants or animals that you see.
3. Explore Your Community Resources

Find out what activities your community has to offer. This could include community recreation centers, swimming pools, parks, or nature walks that are offered through your area.

Your child may also enjoy a program or class, like dance, aerobics or martial arts. For a list of many other suggestions, review the Tools and Resources Guide.
Module 3: STRESS MANAGEMENT
STRESS MANAGEMENT
This module includes the following sections:

- Key Messages
- Helping your child recognize stress
- Tips for families for managing stress
- Activities for managing stress

Why is stress management important?

Every child and young adult experiences stressful events in their lives. While not all stress is bad, it’s important to be able to recognize and take actions when stress starts to have negative effects on your child’s thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Effective stress management can lead to better physical and mental health for the whole family.

Key Messages:

1) Explore what your stressors are and how to react to stress:

It is important for your child to be aware of what makes them feel stressed, and how to react to stress. Once you know this, your family can look for ways to manage the stressful situations. An activity sheet on recognizing stressors can be found in the Tools and Resources Guide. The activity is called “Stress In My Day.”
2) **Different stress management strategies will work for different families:**

There are many different strategies that your family can try. These include relaxation strategies such as deep breathing or yoga, cognitive strategies like changing the way you think, and behavioral strategies such as problem solving or time management. Explore different strategies to find out what works for your family.

3) **How you think changes the way stress affects you:**

The way you think about your challenges can make a big difference in how much stress you experience. When you feel stressed, try to change the way you think about the situation so that you are thinking about it in a more balanced or positive way.

4) **Stress affects the whole family:**

As with any illness, taking care of a child or youth with a mental health challenge can be hard on parents and other members of the family. It is important that families be sensitive to how stress affects them. Some strategies that parents and family members have found helpful can be found in the “Tips from Families Managing Stress” section of this module.

5) **Helping your child recognize stress**

Talk with your child about what it feels like when they are stressed, and what makes them feel stressed. Some younger children might understand words like “worried” or “upset” better than “stress.” You could ask them how stress affects their:

- **Body** (e.g. muscles that hurt, headache, upset stomach)
- **Mood** (e.g. irritable, bad mood)
- **Thoughts** (e.g. negative thoughts, difficulty paying attention)
- **Behavior** (e.g. restlessness)

In the Tools and Resources Guide, we’ve included a “Stress In My Day” activity sheet for your child. This can help them keep track of what makes them feel stressed. Once your child knows what makes them stressed and how they feel when they are stressed, your family can look for ways to manage the stress.
TIPS FROM FAMILIES MANAGING STRESS

These tips have been developed by families managing stress. Keep in mind that not all tips are appropriate for all families and if you have questions or concerns, talk to your family doctor or other health care professional.

Relaxation strategies:

• Listen to relaxing music.
• Practice relaxation exercises such as deep breathing.
• Get out into nature with your family.
• Read a book either alone or with the family.

Cognitive Strategies (Changing the way you think)

• Try changing your “red” thoughts to “green” thoughts (available in the Tools and Resources Guide).
• Try thinking about your strengths and resources.
• Think about and write all the positive things in your life, like friends, family, and talents. This can stop you from thinking about the negatives in your life.

Behavioral Strategies

• Try not to schedule too many activities, as it may cause stress for you and the family.
• Write your worries down in a journal.
• Be physically active.
• Practice problem solving (see the Tools and Resources Guide for a Problem-Solving activity sheet).

Tips for Parents & Caregivers

• Remind yourself when your stress levels go down, the kids respond positively.
• Always make time for yourself.
• Take time for a cup of tea or coffee.
• Exercise.
• Socialize with friends.
• Get back to hobbies.
• Manage your stress through relationships with friends or family, or attend support groups.
• Appreciate the time spent with your children.
• Spend quality time with your spouse.
• Loosen expectations of your child/children and be supportive of their dreams and goals. This can create a positive environment for the family.
• Try not to compare your child/children with other kids or youth, each individual grows at a different rate and comparisons are not a good standard of measurement for success.

**Activities for Managing Stress**
Managing stress can sometimes be hard and complicated. Earlier in this packet we discussed different tips for managing stress. These activities can help manage stress and can help create a positive feeling within the family.

1. Reframing Thoughts: Red & Green Thoughts

Reframing thoughts means thinking about a stressful situation in a different way to give it new meaning. For example, if we think of “problems” as “challenges,” the way we think about the situation can change to something which can be solved. You can also reframe your thoughts by finding the positives in a situation. Looking for positives doesn’t mean you ignore negatives, you simply notice positive aspects of the situation as well, and add them to your thoughts. It might be helpful to think about your thoughts as ‘Red’ thoughts and ‘Green’ thoughts.

**Red Thoughts**
Red thoughts are simply the negative thoughts that you may think of. These thoughts can be worrisome, pessimistic or unhelpful. Red thoughts are the thoughts that we think of in a negative issue or event. Examples of red thoughts include:

• “I can’t”
• “I’m no good at”
• “Nobody likes me”

Everyone has red thoughts but the idea is to have them less often. Red thoughts can also be changed into green thoughts.

**Green Thoughts:**
Green thoughts can be described as positive thoughts, these types of thoughts are positive, helpful, powerful and optimistic. The goal is to increase green thoughts and decrease red thoughts.
Examples of green thoughts include:

- “I will do my best”
- “My teacher can help me”

Green thoughts need to be realistic and achievable thoughts. Green thoughts do not mean we are lying to ourselves and they don’t always make you feel good, but they can make you feel better and help you deal with a difficult situation. Thinking in a positive way helps children and youth feel confident. These thoughts can also help to manage your child’s fears and worries.

Next time you hear your child saying a ‘red’ thought aloud, ask them to come up with a ‘green’ thought instead. We have included a Changing Unhealthy Thoughts activity sheet in the Tools and Resources Guide.

2. Deep Breathing (Relaxation Exercise)

Deep breathing is one of the easiest and quickest ways to relax, because it can be done anywhere and at any time. Try explaining deep breathing to your child as a way to relax their brain and muscles.

The best time to try this activity for the first time is when your child is feeling relatively calm. Sit down with your child and explain that you’re going to teach them a new type of breathing.

Ask them to put a hand on their stomach and feel their stomach move in and out as they breathe. Make sure that they are standing or sitting up straight. Have them take a deep, slow breath, then tell them to slowly breathe in and out through their mouth.

Once their breathing has slowed, tell them that you’re going to breathe in for a longer time – to the count of six (you can either count for them while they breathe, or you can breathe with them while counting with your fingers). Some younger children may find a count of six too difficult; you can start with a count of three and gradually stretch it out.

After you’ve practiced this a few times, introduce the last step: slowing your exhale. Children tend to want to let the air “explode” out after a big inhale. Practice exhaling to a count of six or even eight with them.
3. **Problem Solving:**

Problem solving is a good technique to help decrease or handle current stress, and can also help prevent stress from happening or becoming worse. Five steps to problem solving are:

1. Identifying the problem
2. Understanding the problem
3. Coming up with different solutions to the problem
4. Comparing the solutions
5. Finding the best solution and executing it

A Problem Solving activity sheet can be found in the Tools and Resources Guide.
MODULE 4:
Sleep
This module includes the following sections:

- Key Messages
- Common Sleep Challenges
- Medications and Sleep
- Tips for Families to Get a Good Night’s Sleep
- Activities for Better Sleep

Getting enough sleep is important for good physical and mental health.

Not getting enough sleep can lead to:
- Sleepiness during the day
- Irritability
- Difficulty paying attention or problem solving
- Hyperactivity
- Mood changes
- Difficulty learning things and remembering
- Weight gain
KEY MESSAGES

1. The amount of sleep needed is different for everyone

While most children (ages 5-12) need between 10-11 hours of sleep a night and most adolescents need approximately 9-10 hours of sleep a night, the amount of sleep needed is different for everyone. The most important question is whether your child is feeling well-rested during the day and has enough energy to go about their daily activities. Warning signs that your child is not getting enough sleep include:

- Feeling tired in the mornings or after lunch
- Falling asleep in school
- Having difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Feeling more irritable than usual
- Having less energy than normal

2. The first step to getting a good night’s sleep is having good sleep habits

The key ingredients of good sleep habits are:

- Going to bed at the same time every night and waking up at the same time every morning. Being consistent is very important
- Avoiding caffeine (e.g. soda, tea, coffee, chocolate)
- Using your bedroom only for sleep and not for studying or other activities. The sleep environment should be “boring” and not associated with stimulating activities (TV, music, computer, work). This “boring” sleep environment sends a signal to the brain to prepare the body for sleep.
- Avoiding heavy exercise in the evening
- Avoiding bright light 1-2 hours before bed. This includes the computer and other screen activities
- Making sure that the sleep location is comfortable and quiet

3. Medications and some mental health conditions can impact sleep

Talk to your health care professional if you have questions about how medications or mental health conditions may be impacting your child’s sleep. Some additional information can be found in this module.
COMMON SLEEP CHALLENGES

Sleep difficulties are common in children and youth with mental health challenges. Difficulties can include problems falling and staying asleep, waking up too early, having a decreased need for sleep, nightmares, fear of the dark, and worry.

Many difficulties can be helped by having good sleep habits. However, other problems may be related to your child’s mental health condition, the medication they are on, or a medical condition. If this is the case, additional treatment may be required. If your child or youth is having difficulty sleeping, or is complaining of sleepiness during the day, always discuss this with your health care professional.

Nightmares
Nightmares are scary dreams that wake up your child. Here are some things you could try if your child has nightmares:

- Avoid frightening images before bedtime (e.g. scary stories, movies or TV shows).
- Make sure your child is getting enough sleep. Sometimes sleep loss leads to nightmares.
- If your child gets out of bed, take them back to their bed and briefly comfort them there. Delay further discussion of the nightmare until the morning.
- Reassure your child that ‘it was only a dream.’
- Have your child draw a picture of the bad dream and then throw it away.
- Write the story with a happy ending, or keep a dream journal.
Bedtime Struggles
Bedtime struggles include not wanting to go to bed, or not being able to fall asleep without the help of another person, object or situation.

If your family is dealing with bedtime struggles, make sure your child has the same bedtime routine every night. This routine should be short. It should always move in the direction of your child’s bedroom. A picture chart, on which routine activities are listed and then checked off by your child when completed, can be helpful. If bedtime struggles continue, talk with your health care professional.

Adolescents and Sleep
It may be a relief for parents to know that teenager’s biological clocks naturally shift towards later times for both falling asleep and waking up. This means that teenagers want to stay up later and sleep in later. Teens may struggle to function on a schedule that is out of rhythm with their internal clock. As a result, they may be constantly sleepy. Teens naturally want to stay up later, and sleep in on the weekend, but this “catch-up” sleep on the weekends can make their sleep cycle even more out of sync.
Here are some specific tips for teenagers who are having difficulty sleeping:

- Weekday and weekend wake-up times should not be more than 2 hours apart: the later the weekend sleep-in, the harder it will be to fall asleep the next night.
- Discuss with your teen a good way to wake them up in the morning. This can help avoid any conflict in the mornings.
- Avoid all-nighters: remind your teen that their memory and concentration will be better when they’ve had a good night’s sleep.
- The use of stimulants (e.g. caffeine, nicotine) to fight sleepiness can make it harder to fall asleep.
- Using electronics (e.g. cell phones, video games, TV) 1-2 hours before bed time can disrupt sleep.
- Bright light in the morning can help teens become more ‘awake’, and outdoor light can help reset the body clock.
TIPS FOR FAMILIES TO GET A GOOD NIGHT’S SLEEP

Keep in mind that not all tips are appropriate for all families. If you have questions about a specific concern, talk to your family doctor or other healthcare professional.

Sleep Habits

• Keep a regular sleep schedule
• If your child is hungry, let them have a snack before bed (e.g. a bowl of cereal with milk)
• Decrease the amount of stimulating activities at night (e.g. TV or computer/internet activities, video games)

Relaxation

• Teach your child different ways to relax
• Use relaxation music (nature sounds, Zen garden, waterfalls, etc.)
• Listen to white noise, such as a fan or radio
• Try meditation/yoga
• Give your child a foot massage or rub their back

If your child worries at night

• Have a book by the bed so that your child can write/draw what they were thinking or worrying about. The next day, you and your child can talk about what was written/drawn in the book.
• Have a ‘worry’ stone in a small soft bag that your child can rub to soothe themselves.
ACTIVITIES FOR BETTER SLEEP

Relaxation

Children/youth may not realize how much tension they store in their bodies. Helping them to relax before they go to sleep can help them get a better night’s sleep. One way to relax is called visualization. This is when your child imagines themselves in a more relaxed place.

Talking Through the Worries of the Day

Discuss what happened during the day, before your child goes to sleep. Try using a bubble blower to blow worries away and then watch the bubbles pop.

Create a Bedtime Routine Chart

As a family, create a chart that has pictures of the bedtime routine (e.g. have a snack, have a bath, brush teeth, read a story) and the days of week. Try to follow this routine every night. Have your child check off the activities as you complete them.
Tools and Resources Guide
MY HEALTHY LIVING CHART

Choose a long-term goal that you would like to achieve, and then decide on a short-term S.M.A.R.T goal that will help you reach your ultimate goal. Your goal can be anything that you feel is important to your health and wellness. Remember to reward yourself when you reach your goals.

SMART GOALS ARE:
Specific
Measureable
Action Plan
Realistic (1-10 Scale)
Time (Review Goals)

Remember, setting short-term goals can help you reach your long-term goal!

My Signature: __________________________
MY HEALTHY LIVING CHART

Example

Choose a long-term goal that you would like to achieve, and then decide on a short-term S.M.A.R.T. goal that will help you reach your ultimate goal. Your goal can be anything that you feel is important to your health and wellness. Remember to reward yourself when you reach your goals.

Goal: Managing Stress  
**S:** Deep Breathing  
**M:** 5 “Belly Breaths”  
**A:** When I feel stress/worried  
**R:** 8/10  
**T:** Next Week

Goal: Eat Healthier  
**S:** Eat more fruit  
**M:** 1 piece/day  
**A:** Buy 7 pieces of fruit/week  
**R:** 7/10  
**T:** Next Week (Date)

SMART GOALS ARE:  
Specific  
Measureable  
Action Plan  
Realistic (1-10 Scale)  
Time (Review Goals)

Goal: Be Active  
**S:** Walking  
**M:** 45 Minutes on Mon, Wed & Fri  
**A:** At the park, with mom  
**R:** 8/10  
**T:** Next Week

Goal: Sleeping Well  
**S:** “Wind Down” time before bed  
**M:** 30 min before bedtime  
**A:** Do something relaxing (book, music, bath)  
**R:** 7/10  
**T:** By the end of 2 weeks (Date)

Name: Jane Smith

Remember, setting short-term goals can help you reach your long-term goal!

My Signature: Jane Smith
Physical Fitness Resources

Aldine-Greenspoint Family YMCA
(832) 484-9622
https://www.ymcahouston.org/locations/aldine-greenspoint-family-ymca

Vortex Sports Academy – Spring
(832) 482-0111
https://www.facebook.com/vortexspringtx/

24 Hour Fitness
1 (800) 432-6348
https://www.24hourfitness.com/

Dylan Park
(281) 874-2131
12351 Kuykendahl Rd, Houston, TX 77090

Tomball Community Center
(281) 255-6221
http://www.ci.tomball.tx.us/212/Community-Center
## Stress In My Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>What is stressing me?</th>
<th>How it makes me feel?</th>
<th>What I can do?</th>
<th>How can adults help?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>In the Evening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the Weekend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How to Problem Solve

1. **Figure out what is the problem (name it.)**

2. **Decide how you feel about the problem.**

   - Sad
   - Angry
   - Scared
   - Confused
   - Frustrated

3. **Decide what you want to do about the problem**
   (For example, you could ask for help, tell the person how you feel, or walk away to think about it.)
   **Think of three:**

   1. ________________________________
   2. ________________________________
   3. ________________________________

4. **Try out the plan you decided on.**

5. **Make sure that you explain how the problem affected you, how you are feeling about it, and what you want to happen to help you feel better.**

6. **If the plan you chose does not work, DO NOT give up, ASK FOR HELP!**
Changing Unhealthy Thoughts

Fill in the diagram and learn how to change your thoughts from Unhelpful Red thoughts to Helpful Green thoughts.

Difficult Situation:

Negative RED Thoughts → Negative RED Feelings → Negative RED Behaviors

Positive GREEN Thoughts → Positive GREEN Feelings → Positive GREEN Behaviors
Changing Unhealthy Thoughts

Fill in the diagram and learn how to change your thoughts from Unhelpful Red thoughts to Helpful Green thoughts:

**Example**

**Difficult Situation:** Finding someone to play with

**Negative RED Thoughts**

- No one likes me. I'm always alone.
- Everyone thinks I'm a geek.

**Negative RED Feelings**

- Sadness
- Frustration
- Loneliness
- Helplessness

**Negative RED Behaviors**

- Crying
- Giving Up
- Acting Out
- Withdrawing

**Have your child explain what red and green thoughts are to all family members.**

**Positive GREEN Thoughts**

- I can be a good friend. I played with Tom the other day.
- It’s a really nice day to play outside.

**Positive GREEN Feelings**

- Increased confidence
- Empowerment
- Happy
- Feeling OK

**Positive GREEN Behaviors**

- Smiling
- Taking Risks
- Having Fun
- Courage
- Approaching Others

**Sharing out loud some of your own thoughts help your child or youth to recognize whether thoughts are helpful or unhelpful.**

**Encourage your child to focus on the positives of any situation and realistic green thoughts.**