



NataliaRose's
*Life Force*Families

Interact, share tips and recipes, exclusive content from Natalia

Elementary School (4-10 years)

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Curriculum topics for Elementary School include:

- The “Dance” - Learning when to be flexible and when to be firm
- The Ideal Elementary School Daily Diet
- Bagged Lunches
- Public and Private School Cafeteria Foods
- Converting the Picky Eater
- Home Life
- Dealing with a Hectic Schedule
- Social Activities
- TV, Media, and Video Games

Introduction

We like to think of the elementary school years as the “inspirational years” for educating children about proper nutrition. Up until now, you have probably been educating your child about food through simple words and actions, but, naturally, two-way conversations have been a bit limited! At this next milestone of life and development, children can start to express their perspectives and receive more complex information. This will make your conversations much more interesting and enriching for both of you!

At this time, we want to convey to our children that taking care of our bodies through proper nutrition is a joyful part of life—one that empowers them, that helps them to grow strong and remain creative and full of energy. Eating foods that work in harmony with our bodies and our environment should be a pleasurable experience! Children enjoy learning about the body and how it functions, so go ahead and feed this natural curiosity. If you are unclear about certain principles, you can learn them together! No one should feel like a dark cloud is hovering over the house just because your family is not eating what everybody else is eating. On the contrary, your family should find great joy and security in knowing that you’re eating the most naturally delicious and nourishing foods on the planet. Dark clouds result from addiction to substances that compromise our health, cause disease, and rob us of our natural joy and creativity.

While we want to keep a cheerful attitude about healthy eating, we also know that it is critically important work. We want to be light about the topic, but not take the topic lightly! Through proper nutrition, we are shaping the future of our children’s bones, muscle tissues, organ health, and ability to fight disease. We know what it’s going to take to avoid the common childhood imbalances (e.g., ADHD, obesity, diabetes, pre-cancerous conditions, digestive and respiratory problems, and myriad other physical, mental, and emotional issues). We know that it’s absolutely essential to provide our children with the most health-generating foods and environmental conditions possible.

However, we want to acknowledge that we walk a fine line between knowing what is right for our bodies and minds and living in a world that does not always embrace health-generating activities. We must become skilled at balancing these two paradigms and understanding when it is more health-generating to bend the rules a bit instead of causing stress with too much rigidity. To determine whether flexibility is appropriate in any given situation, weigh the relevant factors, such as your child’s age and current physical condition. Listen to your own intuition. What would the true (not imagined) outcome of this decision be both physically and emotionally for your child?

How often is this happening? How offensive is the substance in question? Do you understand what it takes to counterbalance the physical ramifications of consuming this substance, and could this be used as a teaching opportunity for your child? If you do your best to understand the basic components of good health, you can determine whether you're being too flexible by succumbing to peer pressure or striking the right balance for you and your child. strong system with excellent flora and peristalsis!

When the path is unclear and you feel intimidated, stuck, or confused, we urge you to look within yourself and reflect. Be extremely honest with yourself about the intentions behind your decisions. Imagine your child's bloodstream, tissues, and organs—and remember that just because they're beneath the skin does not mean they are not real! Many people today forget what lies within, leaving their bodies behind for external pursuits that do not serve their highest good, and this almost always catches up with them in painful ways. Try not to let this happen to you or your child.

We understand this path is not always the easiest! At times, it will feel like the cards are stacked against you and that you are living in a world of insanity. This is where we have the opportunity to put our gifts to the test—our intuition, our intelligence, and our compassion for others. We must all become like professional dancers, capable of bending, jumping, and flowing through our lives with an unbelievably strong center, a deep passion, and a smile on our face. This takes practice, patience, reflection, and a true commitment to life.

The Ideal Diet

The ideal diet for elementary school aged children is no different from the ideal diet for all humans! The diet should be focused on foods that are:

1. Vital conductors of life force energy (i.e., high-vibration, negatively charged, alkaline). The only truly vital foods by this definition are raw plant foods (and their juices) grown in the soil and under the sun, and mother's milk for babies. These foods deliver vitality to the body's cells and bloodstream. We also get vitality from clean air, sunshine, and clean water. Vital foods conduct life force energy through the body and brain, helping children to absorb and receive information and remain creative throughout the school day. (Other foods, such as sprouted grains, fish, eggs, and goat cheese, have a place in this diet. They are not vital, but they won't harm the body as much as other insulting substances. Refer to the Food Chart and the Transition Foods Chart for more information.
2. Easily digested, so waste and waste by-products are not accumulated in the body.
3. Eliminated easily, so blockages do not occur in the body and create a fertile breeding ground for viruses and diseases.

The Ideal Daily Diet of an Elementary School Child

Breakfast

- Whole or sliced fresh fruit, preferably organic, as we do not want to expose children to chemicals and pesticides. However, if you are new to this, just getting the vital fresh fruit into your child's system is the first step; organics can come later!
- Smoothie—any blended concoction of fruits, juices, water, and ice that your child likes! See our smoothie recipe in our Recipes section to get you started. Throw spinach, sprouts, romaine, or any other greens into the smoothie. Your child shouldn't be able to taste or see the greens, but simply adding these items will give the smoothie so much more vitality!
- If your child desires more than fruit and smoothies in the morning, or if your child is used to eggs, bagels, toast, and pancakes, the key is simply to upgrade the quality of those same items. Anything you were serving your child before can be tailored with better ingredients. Here are some examples of common breakfast items and easy upgrades:
 - ▶ Omelet: Use free-range, organic eggs. Avoid mainstream cow dairy, but goat or sheep cheese is perfectly fine to use.
 - ▶ Cereal with milk: Brands such as Barbara's, Cascadian Farms, Kashi, EnviroKidz, and Mother's offer high-quality cereals that have few ingredients and are not highly processed. Serve this with almond milk (you can either make your own nut milk or use a store-bought brand like Pacific almond milk.) Use honey, agave, or stevia for added sweetness, if desired.
 - ▶ Pancakes: Use spelt flour, organic butter, free-range eggs, nut milk, and high-quality maple syrup.
 - ▶ French Toast: Use sprouted-grain bread battered with a free-range, organic egg and organic butter for the skillet.
 - ▶ Bagel: Serve a sprouted-grain bagel with organic butter and raw honey or a high-quality jam like St. Dalfour.

Lunch

If your child is attending public school, we highly recommend sending your child to school with a bagged lunch. The cafeteria food served in the vast majority of public schools is "dead" and full of toxic chemicals. Because the food is made for mass consumption at cheap prices, it is normally inorganic, filled with additives, overly processed, made from white/refined flour and sugar, and contains mainstream meat from the cheapest cuts and dairy products, which are pumped with hormones and antibiotics. These foods are extremely devitalizing and result in a hypersensitive nervous system followed by a shutting down of the system (commonly known as a "food coma"). They are extremely difficult to digest, and thus lead to constipation and an inability to fight viruses and bacteria. If your child is eating these foods on a daily basis, you can expect him/her to catch any sickness that's getting passed around in the classroom. There may be rare exceptions to the school cafeteria norm, due to localized initiatives of parents or local farms, but for the most part, cafeteria foods in public schools should be avoided at all costs. Even just a few public school lunches per week will wreck havoc on your child's ability to fight infection, stay focused, and thrive.

Unless you are sending your child to an extremely unique school, the situation is not normally much better in private schools. However, private schools may have slightly better food options, as their food is often cooked on the premises and most will at least have a salad bar and include some cooked vegetables with the meal. If it is necessary that your child eat the food served at school, allow this only for one meal per day, not two, and encourage your child to find the colorful, vital food options. Teach your child to stay away from meats because they will most likely be mainstream meat products (highly toxic). To compensate for the mainly acidic lunch they will most likely be exposed to daily, make sure you feed them a substantial breakfast comprised of vital, alkaline ingredients before they go to school and a vegetable-centric, highly alkaline meal for dinner. Snacks should be mainly raw fruits and vegetables.

In either the public or private school scenario, we highly encourage you to send your child with a bagged lunch. This does not need to be an arduous task and can take as little as 4–5 minutes in the morning to put together. ***See below for lunch bag ideas and tips for sticky social situations:***

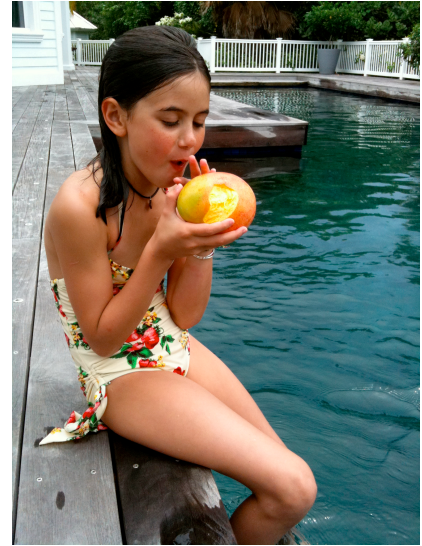
- See our convenient Lunch Bag Ideas, which we have used successfully with our children and clients.
- Parents often feel they should include something more brightly packaged or processed in their kids' lunch bags because that's what other parents are giving their children. Do not fall for this kind of peer pressure! As long as there is an abundance of items that you know your child enjoys, he/she will happily eat the lunch you provide. Our concerns as parents are often our own projections of what is happening at school, not the reality.
- Lunchtime has gotten shorter and shorter, so kids don't have time to trade foods and sit around and worry about what they are eating. Most schools get the kids fed quickly in the cafeteria and move on to the next activity with great efficiency. There's no need to be a bleeding heart—we just need to think of lunchtime as an opportunity to get the necessary nutrients in our children's growing bodies!
- Remember, there are many kids with special dietary needs these days, either due to allergies, early onset sickness, or religious/cultural beliefs. There's no reason to fear that your kid will be shunned or seen as weird because he/she doesn't eat salami and cheese and chicken nuggets for lunch! On the other hand, if your kid has to deal with autism, obesity, or diabetes from an early age, you can bet he or she will have much more difficult social issues to contend with. If you can keep the big picture in mind, adhering to your beliefs will be much easier.



After-School Snack

It is a great idea to make after-school snacks freely available for the taking. Putting big bowls of fruits and vegetables out takes a burden off you and creates an environment of freedom for the children. Here are a few fun snack ideas:

- Place plates and bowls in accessible areas with sliced or whole apples, bananas, dates, figs, grapes—select whatever is in season and whatever raw fruits your kids will enjoy.
- Serve raw vegetables such as olives, carrots, and bell peppers with hummus, salsa, and guacamole.
- Keep fun treats in the freezer, such as blended frozen bananas or strawberries, Rice Dream ice cream sandwiches, or blended smoothies made into popsicles.



Dinner

There is no reason to place undue importance on dinner. It is only social conditioning that has led us to believe that dinner needs to be an elaborate, perfectly balanced meal! This causes unnecessary stress for the parent who's responsible for serving dinner. You should emphasize overall balance and variety throughout your child's daily and weekly diet, not variety within each individual meal.

Try to make dinner a vegetable-centric meal as often as possible. This does not mean you need to serve only raw salad for dinner; but instead of serving a plate full of pasta with a little broccoli, try serving broccoli with whole-grain pasta instead. In addition, always put a platter of raw vegetables out before dinner—such as olives, carrots, celery, raw corn on the cob, slices of avocado, raw sweet potato slices (sounds odd but tastes amazing), bell peppers, or any other vegetables your children will grab. Serve the raw veggies with dipping sauce if they need extra enticement. Visit our Recipes section of the website for inspiration or try some of the following dinner ideas:

- Free-range, organic egg omelet with goat cheese and vegetables
- Steamed broccoli and carrots topped with a generous helping of marinara and shredded goat cheese.
- Spelt, Kamut, or buckwheat pasta with marinara and steamed vegetables
- Acorn or spaghetti squash with marinara and goat cheese or served simply with butter and sea salt
- Hearty blended soups, such as butternut squash, broccoli, or tomato soups
- Lentil soup
- “Tacos”—steamed corn, black beans, guacamole, salsa, lettuce, and shredded cheddar-style raw goat cheese tucked into large romaine lettuce leaves or sprouted-grain tortillas
- Quesadillas—fresh salsa, guacamole, and shredded cheddar-style raw goat cheese on sprouted-grain tortillas, using organic butter to brown tortillas
- Baked sweet potato with organic ketchup and side of steamed vegetables, topped with marinara sauce

Dessert

Some kids really love dessert, whereas others can take or leave it. Here are some dessert options that are delicious and not overly toxic:

- Kashi chocolate-chip and oatmeal-raisin cookies
- Late July Oreo-style cookies
- Laloo's Goat's Milk Ice Cream
- Rice Dream ice cream sandwiches
- Blended smoothies made into popsicles
- Sweet Nothings Fudge Bars (frozen popsicles)
- Frozen banana or strawberry ice cream
- Homemade nut-based ice cream
- Homemade baked goods*

****There is no reason to stop baking for your family in this lifestyle! Kids love to help in the kitchen, and baking together can be sacred time in the home. Simply adjust your recipes to include spelt flour instead of white flour; high-quality chocolate chips such as SunSpire or Ghirardelli; free-range, organic eggs; and maple syrup or turbinado sugar (natural brown sugar) instead of refined white sugar.***



Converting the Picky Eater

We realize some of you may be new to this lifestyle and you may already have a child who refuses to eat fruits, vegetables, and anything that resembles a fruit or vegetable! Mainstream foods, like many drugs, are highly addictive and numbing to the sense of taste, so it is no wonder that after exposure to these foods our children will gravitate toward them exclusively. Moreover, children will crave more of the same chemical-laden foods to experience the same “high” as they get older. Therefore, now is the time to really “nip it in the bud” and be firm about the changes you want to make.

At this point, your child has probably had his or her fair share of colds, flus, ear infections, eczema or other skin issues, and possibly more serious digestive, respiratory, and autoimmune disorders. These ailments can be due to compromised lineage, but they are mainly the body’s way of signaling that something unnatural is going into the body, resulting in blockages within the system. Suppressing these conditions with drugs without addressing the causes of the sickness in the first place will only result in recurrence and chronic illnesses in the future. This is a great time to start gently transitioning your child toward a more health-generating diet.

If you put natural foods in front of your child and he or she refuses to eat them, you will probably have some painful days or weeks. The transition may be challenging at first; when embarking on any significant life change, it takes persistence and a deep desire to do what you know is right. Do your best to keep your goals in mind and remind yourself that your child will not starve! In fact, over time, your child will develop a taste for life-generating foods. However, the process doesn’t have to be completely miserable for you or your child! To assist you in this process, here are some additional tips and tricks to help keep you balanced and confident.

Tips and Tricks

- Unless your child has serious digestive issues, you do not need to worry about quick-exit food combinations at this time. Children have strong bowels and worrying about this can drive you crazy! And in the end, you probably won’t be successful enforcing quick-exit combinations anyway, so this is simply one battle not worth fighting. However, keeping the “light to heavy” principle in mind throughout your child’s day can be helpful for digestion. If, for example, your child is very gassy after serving him or her fruit after a dinner of spelt pasta, you’ll know why. But again, do not stress about this!
- Home should be an empowering place for children, food-wise. Children should have access to a range of foods that you approve of and be allowed to make independent choices within this safe environment. Just make it clear that they are free to take these foods anytime they want to.
- When you are out and about with your child, take fresh fruit or other healthy snacks with you so you don’t get stuck in situations that tempt or force you to compromise.
- Do not force food on your children. They know when they are hungry and will stop eating when they are full.

- If your child does not want to eat the meal you have prepared and you are concerned that he or she will be hungry later, try saying something like, “If you’re hungry later, Mommy’s not going to cook again, so this is your last chance for a warm dish. But you can have it cold later, or have a banana or another piece of fruit.” This way, you’re giving the child freedom to eat when he or she is actually hungry rather than threatening your child with future deprivation—while also teaching your child that you are not a short-order cook!
- If you bring your child with you to the grocery store, empower him or her to help with the shopping. One fun idea is to have your child pick 3 fruits and 3 vegetables that you have never tried before, which you can try at home as a family.
- If you have the courage, this is a good time to pull all Non-Ideal and especially Toxic foods out of your kitchen, per our Food Chart. Let there be a complete purging of the kitchen so these foods are not there to tempt your family or create opportunities for arguments with your child. Remember, these foods are highly addictive and can be very difficult to resist. If your child insists on certain mainstream foods, there are many delicious substitutes to help make this dietary lifestyle flexible and approachable for you and your child. Given the availability of so many great Transition Foods, you won’t need the highly toxic foods anymore.
- Focus on the fruits and vegetables they do like without worrying about variety. If they will eat an apple every day, give them an apple every day!
- Stress the quality over the quantity of the foods your children are getting. If they are eating large amounts of processed, dead foods today, they are actually starving nutritionally! Therefore, if they start to eat just a little bit of natural, whole, live foods, or consume some green juice in the morning, they will be getting more nutritional value. Remember, what is important is progress, not perfection!
- Use some tricks of the trade to make fruits and vegetables more attractive. For example, try raw honey, tahini, or almond butter on fruits such as bananas and apples; high-quality marinara sauce on acorn squash or avocado; or hummus with baked sweet potato. This is a great way to start getting the fruits and vegetables into your child’s diet. As your child’s palate changes, you may eventually be able to eliminate some of these extras.
- Planting gardens, growing herbs, and having your child help you cook or prepare foods can help them enjoy the foods more. When children (and adults, too) understand the source of their food, they are more likely to appreciate it. We want our children to understand the “why” behind our decision to change their diet.
- Remember, if your child is eating extremely well most of the time and only moderately well, or not so well, the rest of the time, you’re still on the right path!

Home Life

Although children are spending more time outside the home these days, the home continues to be the centerpiece of their life experience. There are many aspects of home life that are unique to modern society and that can contribute to a wiring of stress and anxiety. When children are in elementary school, parents are typically between the ages of 35 and 50, and many of us are in our biggest earning years and as active in our careers as we will ever be. Life can become very difficult trying to balance demanding work schedules with raising and providing for a family, especially when the world of wireless communication keeps us switched on 24-7. Everybody is so accessible that the experience of work has morphed into something that it wasn't when we were kids.

As a result of these demands and the blurring lines between home and work/school, many kids are experiencing home life as an outgrowth of student life, where they are always rushing and there is never enough time. Mornings are whirlwinds of everyone trying to get themselves (and each other) ready for school and work and a stressful commute. Before our children even get to school, their day is already wired for stress. Then the school day itself (much like the average adult's work day) is stressful. The teaching styles, the number of teachers, and the amount of funding a school receives are all based on how well children do on standardized tests. The result is an academic day that is so highly disciplined that children do not learn to be great learners and thinkers; their learning experience is limited, lacking the freedom and joyfulness that many of us experienced as kids. Many parents are choosing to diffuse or neutralize this phenomenon by making radically different schooling choices, but for the majority of households, school is stressful during these elementary school years.

In addition to being a time of school and work challenges, this can also be an interesting time for marriages. Many marriages are in the 7- to 10-year period, when growing pains can be common and children will feel deeply any instability and uncertainty that their parents are going through.

The obvious questions are: How can we as parents implement changes to create a more sane, calm haven for ourselves and for our children? What steps can we take to create a sense of peace in our lives so we avoid wiring our children for stress at such an early age? Our children are little sponges, absorbing everything, so we really have to honor their perspective of the world. How can we create a home environment where their true natures can blossom? How can we give them the safety and freedom to grow into their authentic selves, rather than losing them to survival mode in the face of peer pressures and social expectations? It is a heartbreaking moment for parents when their children lose their innocence and start to put on armor to protect themselves.

At least for the sake of our children, if not for ourselves, we must make a dedicated effort not to succumb to the madness around us. In a world of never-ending rush and stress, it is very difficult, but not impossible, to slow down and break free from the clutches of the rat race. If we make sincere and concerted efforts in this direction, our children will respond positively. However, children can sniff a fake from a mile away, so we must be authentic of heart and action.

This does not mean that we need to be perfect, but that our children will know if we are truly dedicated to our vision of life, or if we are just going halfheartedly through the motions.

Our homes can be sacred spaces in an otherwise crazy world. If children can come home to a place where energy flows openly, if there is cleanliness and order and harmony, they respond well. Children want to know what to expect and what their boundaries are. The less chaotic their home life is, the better they can understand and make sense of situations outside of the home. If our children are overloaded with stress and chaos, they will shut down intellectually and will put on armor instead of opening their heart. We want to create an environment where our children can feel safe to be themselves, where their true spirits can blossom.

Although most of the answers for accomplishing this in your own home can only be found within yourself, we offer some strategies to assist you. Implement as many of them as you are able and notice the positive shifts in energy with each adjustment you make.

1. Take a moment to reflect on your life and begin to eliminate unnecessary distractions.

In the modern age, many of us are wired for stimulation, which means we gravitate toward distraction. As long as we are distracted, we don't have to look at any real issues in our lives. Common distractions include excessive phoning, e-mailing, Internet surfing, television watching, socializing, overeating, and drinking. Such activities create a constant buzz of drama in our lives, maintaining the illusion that we must constantly rush around, while allowing us to avoid any true evaluation of our lives. Distractions also put us on autopilot, allowing us to become lazy with our lives.

In order to begin breaking yourself from these addictive distractions, ask yourself: Am I really putting my energy into those things that give me life force and vitality? What is it I don't want to look at and see? Am I really present for my child when I am with him/her, or am I constantly distracted? Are these distractions really necessary or am I using them to create a false sense of importance or as an excuse to avoid important issues? These are serious questions to consider, but we must be honest with ourselves if we want to raise happy children.

It's always difficult to do at first, but honestly dealing with those things you'd rather keep under wraps is, in the long run, so much easier than letting them continue to fester like a low-grade fever that you walk around with every day. They will not go away on their own just because you're distracted! Plus, children are extremely perceptive and sensitive, and they will pick up on your unhappiness. They will also develop resentments if you always seem too busy or distracted for them.

Just as we advise when you transition from a mainstream diet to one more centered around vital fruits and vegetables, you may need to take things slowly and gently as you eliminate the unnecessary distractions in your life. It's also important to replace the old distractions with other activities that are enjoyable and life-generating. Make a list of your distractions and then start eliminating them slowly, one by one. For example:

- Reduce your television watching to just one hour, two days per week, and not on weekends. Replace this time with games you can play with your kids, a yoga class, a run, or a session on your rebounder.

- Put your BlackBerry away during dinner or after a pre-determined time at night. Use that time to truly catch up with your children about their days.
- Eliminate social activities with people or groups who are not very important to you, and plan family nights or fun daytime excursions with your loved ones instead.

Consider this an extension of any detoxification you are doing for your body. These efforts will help you detoxify your life and will free up precious time and space to give your child the attention he/she needs to flourish and grow. Reflect on the inner pain that is keeping you in states of distraction and addiction, and release it as best as you can. As a result, you will start accomplishing so much more of what's necessary, and you'll find engaging with people to be less stressful and taxing.

2. De-clutter your house.

This is something really tactile and satisfying that you can do to create a better flow of energy in your house. If you haven't been diligent about getting rid of things through the years, you may have an overwhelming accumulation of clothes, books, toys, and other items you no longer need. Take time once a month or every other month to get rid of things that aren't relevant to your life right now.

Involve your children in this. Ask your kids to go into their rooms and pull out 10 things they aren't wearing anymore and that they don't need, or to pick out 20 toys that they aren't playing with anymore. Inspire them to give away more by explaining that these old clothes and toys will be going to children who need them. This teaches the joy of giving as well as the importance of not being overly attached to material possessions. Normally children are better at this than we are because they have less attachment to material things than we do! If they pick out items that you are very sad to see go, tuck them away in a memento and put that box out of sight in storage or in your garage.

Take joy in releasing things! A house filled with stuff we don't really need just contributes to the chaos and clutter we feel in our lives. If you have an excess of cushions, little knickknacks, or magazines and books, and you're not ready to part with them permanently, throw them in a box or a bag and put them out of sight for a week or two and just see how it feels. Enjoy the extras space, and notice how clear your mind gets. You will probably notice your business decisions getting better, your interactions with your spouse/partner becoming calmer, and a general release of tension in your home. Just as it is with our bodies and minds, the more we get rid of the clutter in our physical environment, the better our life force can flow.

3. Keep your personal rituals sacred.

There are rituals that we can do in our daily lives to keep us grounded and centered. Some examples include always having our juice in the morning, getting outside in nature on a daily basis, or finding a sacred moment between the end of the workday and the dinner/evening hours to take a bath or do a brief meditation. It is so important to make a commitment to yourself and create boundaries that you and others respect. You will notice that if you let these little things slip, you will start to feel out of control in your life. Take time to connect with your higher self every day. This will help you to make decisions with a clear mind and to keep calm in the midst of chaotic situations.

When children are young, they don't need stimulation the way adults do, yet we tend to wire them for it prematurely. Most young children could be content to sit calmly like yogis and look at the clouds float across the sky for stretches of time. Keep them in touch with their childlike wonder and innate love of nature.

4. Be extremely selective about the activities you participate in.

Are you taking time to meet people for coffee who leech your energy or spending time with groups of people you don't truly enjoy? Are you having lunch dates or dinners where you're gossiping, spending too much money, and worrying about the way you look? Are you spending money and time on toxic beauty routines such as mani-pedis, spray tanning, and any number of other cosmetic procedures rather than cultivating beauty from within? Are these activities merely stimulating and distracting or are they making you feel more peaceful and fulfilled? It's time to be vigilant about your life. Take a half hour to sit quietly and follow your every thought and see where your mind goes. This is a great way to see where you're investing your energies.

Instead of spending time on activities and people that are not helping you reach your highest potential, go for a long walk in the park, jump on the rebounder, do an Almine meditation, write down your thoughts in a journal, or take a bath. If you can replace just some of the energy-draining activities with life-generating ones, you will be less likely to burst out in frustration around your family. You will start to reassess the ways you allocate your time and resources. Such honest self-assessment can be scary at first and can lead you in unfamiliar directions, but if you let it happen organically, if you understand why you're doing it and recognize that it's best for your children for you to be present, then it can be extremely liberating and rewarding.

The same is true for your child. Children do not need every moment of every day to be scheduled and crammed with activities. They enjoy unplanned moments of solitude, quiet, and freedom as much as we do! Such moments are necessary for their development.

5. Rid the house of toxic substances.

Make sure detergents, shampoos, toothpaste, and soaps are organic and free from harmful chemicals.

6. Have children help with your daily efforts to keep the house in order.

Some examples of "jobs" that children can be held responsible for are making their beds in the morning, not leaving the house until their desks or study spaces are in order, and helping with the dishes. Just like adults, children do a much better job with their schoolwork and feel a sense of calm and peace when their living space is clear and clean.

7. Keep your family rituals sacred.

Just as you want to honor your personal rituals and encourage your children to have their own rituals, it is equally important to hold family rituals sacred. Maybe this is walking or driving your children to school and listening to or singing your favorite songs on the way, or picking your child up from school and having one-on-one time, or making green juice together in the morning. Whatever the rituals are, do your best to honor these and keep them consistent. Children find peace and comfort in this kind of predictability, which lends a pleasant rhythm to family life.

Social Activities

When attending parties, it is OK to let your children have what they want (within reasonable boundaries), but it's always a good idea to make sure they are really well fed BEFOREHAND. This way, they will not eat a ton of the non-ideal or toxic foods that will be served there, but more likely just to taste it. For example, make them a big free-range, grass-fed omelet or quinoa pasta or sweet potato pudding with some carrot slices and apple to enjoy before a party.

If your child has frequent playdates, make sure the other caregiver knows what foods you feed your child and send your little off with the foods you know he/she really loves.

TV, Media, and Video Games

The brainwashing effect of modern media is fast, deep, and lasting. It begins the moment you switch the TV or Internet on. As soon as your children are exposed to targeted marketing, they start to be robbed of their power. Exposing your children to the constant stream of commercials and the insidious messages of mainstream programming cements their social conditioning. In addition, TV shows and the Internet are extremely addictive, and too much exposure to television and computer content can erode your children's attention spans.

There is plenty of great entertainment for kids without ever switching on the TV. Consider buying, renting, and checking quality shows out from your local library, or even from online video stores. Consider banning TV at home (as many of us do), but reserve the right to pop in high-quality videos like the Baby Einstein series and all your old childhood favorites—like Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Oliver, Pollyana, Mary Poppins, Annie, the Shirley Temple movies, The Little Rascals, Strawberry Shortcake, Flipper, or Lassie. Our kids do not always have to watch what is on TV today (mostly junk) and this can be a fun trip down memory lane for you. The old musicals are especially fun!

The world naturally offers enough stimulation for children without the need to push all those synthetic products on them. If you protect your children from the barrage of marketing and social programming, they will gravitate toward the natural and simple. Plunking your kids in front the TV, computer, or video games might seem to buy you time for yourself, but in the end it's a trap for both of you and them. Children who are not overexposed to technological stimulation tend to enjoy the full range of nature's wonders (such as bugs, leaves, flowers, and wildlife) and all manner of arts and crafts projects far more than TV and video games. Best of all, they become completely engrossed in their discoveries, and you too can enjoy these quiet moments to yourself. This is how children learn about themselves and their environment.

One rule you may want to enforce is a complete ban on video games in the home. At the very least, violent games should be completely off limits. The hyper-stimulating flashing screens may erode your child's eyesight, brain development, and attention span, and the violent images will embed themselves in your child's consciousness and nervous system. During this impressionable time in your child's life, we highly recommend a no-video-game rule.

The Addictive Nature of Television

If you are interested in reading further on this subject, Thom Hartmann speaks eloquently about it in *The Last Hours of Ancient Sunlight*:

"One measure of a drug's addictive potential is what percentage of people can take it up or put it down at will and with ease. This behavior is called chipping a drug—occasionally using it, but also walking away from it without pain or withdrawal for months or years at a time. Research reported in *Science News* found that while large percentages of people could chip marijuana, and medium percentages of people could chip alcohol, cocaine, and even heroin, very, very few people (less than 5%) could chip tobacco. But imagine a "drug" that fewer than even 5% of Americans could walk away from for a month at a time without discomfort. Such a drug, by the definitions of addiction, would be the most powerfully addictive drug ever developed.

In addition to discouraging chipping behavior, this drug would also have to stabilize people's moods. It would put them into such a mental state that they could leave behind the boredom or pain or ennui of daily life. It would alter their brainwaves, alter their neurochemistry, and constantly reassure them that their addiction to it was not, in fact, an addiction but merely a preference. Like the alcoholic who claims to only be a social drinker, the user of this drug would publicly proclaim the ability to do without it...but in reality would not even consider having it be completely absent from his home or life for days, weeks, or years.

Such a "drug" exists.

Far more seductive than opium, infinitely more effective at shaping behavior and expectations than alcohol, and used for more minutes every day than tobacco, our culture's most pervasive and most insidious "drugging agent" is television. Many drugs, after all, are essentially a distilled concentrate of a natural substance. Penicillin is extracted from mold; opium, from poppies. Similarly, television is a distilled extract—super-concentrated, like the most powerful drugs we have—of "real" life.

People set aside large portions of their lives to watch a flickering box—hours every day. They rely on that box for the majority of their information about how the world is, how their politicians are behaving, and what reality is, even though the contents of the box are controlled by a handful of corporations, many of which are also in the weapons and tobacco and alcohol business. Our citizens wake up to this drug, consume it whenever possible during the day, and go to sleep with it. Many even take it with their meals.

Most people's major life regrets are not about the things they've done, but about the things they've not done, the goals they never reached, the type of lover or friend or parent they wished they'd been but know they failed to be. Yet our culture encourages us to sit in front of a flickering box for dozens (at least) of hours a week, hundreds to thousands of hours a year, and thereby watch, as if from a distance, the time of our lives flow through our hands like dry sand."

Closing Thoughts

Cause and effect is one of the key natural laws of the universe. We can either put in motion the causes that result in our children's vitality and blossoming, or we can be a part of the causes that result in imbalances and suffering. These are the years when we are shaping our children's bodies and perspectives. If you take an empowered approach and they see joy in it, they will receive it well because they want their parents to be happy, and every child responds to the flow of positive energy. However, if you seem nervous, overwhelmed, or overly rigid about this approach to life, they will have no reason to believe in its life-generating effects; they will see it as a burden rather than a joyful expression of life and love.

Enjoy the process and remind yourself that the goal is progress, not perfection. Use your own intuition and expert knowledge of your family, and take full advantage of the community resources we've provided here for all parents. Remember, we are all connected and in this together!



Thank you. We look forward to serving you.

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