



Making the “Move” to Better Parenting

These days, there is heavy focus on self-care for parents feeling overwhelmed with the pressures of raising healthy children.



The experts are sharing tips on mindfulness, journaling, growing social connections, and making changes to get more restful sleep.

While all of these are good ideas for dealing with the weight of parenting responsibility and increasing a sense of well-being, simple movement is perhaps the most immediate way to attack stress and bring more joy into your life and your role as a parent.

Immediate impacts of exercise:

- Better ability to focus
- Improved mood
- Increased energy
- Enhanced sleep

Many people envision exercise as disagreeable, whether they view expending energy as uncomfortable or they recall a painful experience from making the effort to move.

Some beliefs about exercise are easily dispelled once realistic goals

are set, and the type of movement taken on fits easily into the busy life of a parent.

It is not always easy to capture time to exercise regularly. Incorporating children into physical routines can be helpful and especially rewarding for everyone (see the next page for some ideas).



Importantly, the long-term benefits of regular exercise are extensive. [The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) make the claim that “active people generally live longer and are at less risk for serious health problems such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, and some cancers. For people with chronic diseases, physical activity can help manage these conditions and complications.”

These outcomes are possible for families who desire all the best for their children and are willing to take healthy steps to secure their futures. **Parents who are active are more likely to raise children who enjoy physical activity and make it a part of everyday living.**

Long-term impacts of exercise:

- Weight management
- Disease prevention
- Children adopt healthy habits

An active body also keeps the brain active, and learning can be easier for family members who exercise.

Staying motivated to move can be challenging. The lack of sleep that often accompanies new parents and adverse weather conditions are just a couple of barriers to consistency. Therefore it is important to embrace a number of options for raising your heart rate and working muscles. In fact, many parents find that rotating various exercise routines creates a welcome escape from the strict daily structure required for raising young children

Dad's Corner:

**Give them
something
amazing to
imitate!**



Check out ideas to get moving on the next page.

SAFETY FIRST:

When adding any *new* physical activity to a daily routine, check first with your doctor to ensure safety, especially if you recently had a baby.



Always be sure your infant or child is well supported and developmentally ready for a movement you are adding to your routine. Check with your pediatrician and home visitor if unsure.

Outside Fun



Take a Stroll: Walking is great fitness inside or out. Marching and side-stepping while firmly supporting an infant with both hands is an ideal inside workout, while placing baby in a stroller outside allows Mom to walk or jog at her own pace. Both moves can rock an infant to sleep, if needed. If your baby is wide awake or unhappy in the stroller, consider finding a walking partner, so your child has more to experience on the adventure. Try attaching a stroller activity toy or setting your phone to play lullabies or children's songs. When your child is old enough to walk with you, gradually add some backward movements, skipping, hopping, and running to your stroll.

Take a Hike: Hiking with a child backpack is a great bone and muscle-strengthening exercise. Young children enjoy being at the same eye level as their parent, so that they can talk together and share the view. Be sure the child pack is age-appropriate for your youngster and safety buckles secured. Carry water, and be sure to protect both of you from weather extremes.



Ride a Bike: If your toddler or preschooler is not old enough to move a foot-propelled ride-on toy while you walk, or to steer and manipulate a balance bike, they may be old enough to ride secured in a bike seat or trailer.

Make it a Family Affair: Young infants are happy keeping an eye on Mom or Dad doing push ups or holding a plank while lying on the floor beneath them. A second parent can add baby's weight, making the move more challenging.

Holding baby while doing squats can work out the core, leg and arm muscles.

Older tots can move like animals with Mom or Dad's lead. Dancing is terrific exercise and loads of fun for the whole family. Movements that include crossing arms or legs over the body while listening to music is a brain building exercise too!



If finances keep you sedentary, share your exercise goals with your Building Healthy Families home visitor.

Participants are connected to the tools they need to support health and wellness goals.

The Department of Health is a great resource for helmet fittings and for learning about bicycle safety.

The YMCA and Clark's Sports Center have scholarships available for families with limited financial means.

