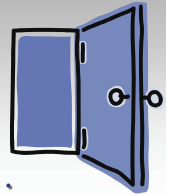


# RACS Prevention Newsletter

a publication of Rockbridge Area Community Services  
opening new doors to the schools and community...



edited and published by Wendy C. Morgan, M.A., Prevention Manager

Volume 9, Issue 9

May 2010

## Family Wellness Promotes Good Mental Health

A number of observances fall during the month of May that encompass important aspects of family wellness including mental health month, children's mental health awareness, anxiety and depression awareness, and teen self esteem month.

Family wellness is something that impacts every one of us. While the medical health of families is important, the concept of family wellness places emphasis on healthy family lifestyles and habits as well. The healthier each individual family is overall, the healthier the community is as a whole. So, the objective of family wellness is for families to spend more time together and appreciate each other. Families are encouraged to hold a family meeting and resolve differences and disputes, set family goals and share dreams.

Every day, people in our homes and our community are affected by numerous challenges, stresses and demands on their lives. And every day, people seek help in responding to them. Mental health month reminds us and challenges us to promote health and wellness in our homes, our schools, and our community.

It is easy for parents to identify a child's physical needs—nutritious and balanced meals, adequate shelter and clothing, sufficient rest and physical activity, immunizations, and a healthy living environment.

However, a child's mental and emotional needs may not be as obvious. Good mental health allows children to think clearly, develop socially, learn new skills, build self-esteem, and develop a positive mental outlook.

These are the basics for a child's good mental health:

- Give children unconditional love. Children need to know that your love doesn't depend on their accomplishments.

- Nurture children's confidence and self-esteem. Praise and encourage them. Set realistic goals for them. Be honest about your mistakes. Avoid sarcasm.

- Encourage children to play. Play time is as important to a child's development as food. Play helps children be creative, develop problem-solving skills and self-control, and learn how to get along with others.

- Enroll children in an after-school activity, especially if they are otherwise uninvolved after school. This is a great way for kids to stay productive, learn something new, gain self-esteem and have something to look forward to during the week. Or check in on children after school if they are home alone. Children need to know that even if you're not there physically, you're thinking about them, and interested in how they spent their day and how they'll spend the rest of it.

- Provide a safe and secure environment. Fear can be very real for a child. Try to find out what is frightening him or her. Be loving, patient and reassuring, not critical.

- Give appropriate guidance and discipline when necessary. Be firm, but kind and realistic with your expectations. The goal is not to control the child, but to help him or her learn self-control.

- Communicate. Make time each day after work and school to listen to your children and talk with them about what is happening in their lives. Share emotions and feelings with your children.

- Get help. If you're concerned about your child's mental health, consult with teachers, a guidance counselor or another adult who may have information about his or her behavior. If you think there is a problem, seek professional help. Early identification and treatment can help children with mental health problems reach their full potential.

Living through tough economic times can also add stress to the family. If you're a parent with money worries, life can be pretty hard. You might need time to earn extra money, work on your finances or just unwind from a draining, demanding day. But your kids still need your attention, and they may have worries of their own. How can you parent well when times are tough? Consider some steps that can support your family and preserve your own health and well-being.

- Limit kids' exposure to worries. Try not to talk too much about your own fears when the kids are listening.

- Share honestly but appropriately. Secrets can be scary. You certainly don't want to overwhelm your child with information, but it's probably best to share some of your family's financial situation. Take a reassuring approach by pointing out any areas you know are stable, such as staying in the same school despite any other changes.

- Economize in a way that's clear and fair. If you need to scale back on your children's after-school activities, letting them pick from a few options may decrease their disappointment. And don't forget to show kids that you're cutting back on some of your own "extras" as well.

- Let kids contribute. Even little kids can help around the house to ease your load. They also can donate old clothes or toys. Helping out builds self-esteem.

- Get professional help if you need it. If you're having trouble parenting—or dealing with any of your other day-to-day responsibilities—a mental health professional can help you learn new coping skills that will benefit you and your family.

Adapted in part from: [MentalHealthAmerica.net](http://MentalHealthAmerica.net) and [Mentalhealth.samhsa.gov](http://Mentalhealth.samhsa.gov)

Submitted by:  
Wendy C. Morgan, Manager of Prevention

# PEPTalk



## National Safe Kids Week

is an annual nationwide event that was first introduced by Safe Kids USA and founding sponsor Johnson & Johnson in 1988. About 1 million kids die each year from accidents and injuries, higher than any other cause. Through the combined efforts of this campaign, there has been a 45% reduction in fatalities over the past 20 years. But there is still more to do. ■ Car crashes remain the #1 killer of kids ages 3-14. Seat belts and car seats that fit are life-savers. ■ Falls are the #1 cause of accidental injuries, especially to toddlers. Keep kids away from open windows, balconies, roofs, parking lots and drive ways. Put window guards on all windows above the first floor. ■ Kids under

age 5 are twice as likely to die in a fire as the rest of us. Keep matches and lighters away from all kids under age 13. Practice escape plans with your kids, even waking them in the middle of the night so they "Know the Drill". Do not hold children while you are cooking or drinking hot liquids. ■ Traffic threats exceed a child's cognitive and developmental abilities to process and adults tend to overestimate kids' abilities (especially those who are large and verbally precocious for their age). Children under age 11 should not cross the street without adult supervision. ■ 90% of all poisonings happen at home and over one million kids are poisoned each year. Kids are curious - it's how they learn. With so many toxic substances available on the market, you have to be vigilant about keeping everything out of a kid's reach. ■ Suffocation and strangulation are real possibilities with drawstring jackets and window blind

cords. Keep strings tied up and out of harms way. ■ Drowning can occur at any age. Infants drown in bathtubs and buckets of water. Use a special baby tub to bathe the baby and NEVER leave the baby unsupervised! Kids ages 1-4 drown in residential swimming pools - keep your eyes on them and keep them out of the deep end. Don't get distracted by anything. Older kids drown in open bodies of water - make sure they have life jackets that fit. All kids over age 4 should know how to swim. ■ Snug fitting helmets are mandatory for kids when biking, skating or on a scooter. 85% of disabling injuries during these activities are head injuries.

Follow these safety tips and we will continue to see reductions in the number of preventable injuries and fatalities.

Adapted from:healthline.com

Submitted by:

Wendy C. Morgan, Manager of Prevention Services



## ask dr. mom...

Dear Dr. Mom-

My 13 year old son thinks I'm so unfair because I try to set and enforce rules like a reasonable curfew on weekends and no going out after dinner on school nights. He always argues that none of his friends' parents set rules and accuses me of being unfair and treating him like a little kid. Am I being too strict?

- Concerned Mom

Dear Concerned Mom-

Your son's response to curfews and rules is nothing new. Most generations have made the same arguments and tried to get a later curfew or get out of doing chores by saying, "No one else's parents make them live by all these rules!" or "Everyone else gets to stay out later." When I was a teenager, my own mother's response was always, "Well I'm not everyone else's parent." Unfortunately in today's fast-paced culture, parents often don't want to spend the little time they have available to spend with their kids arguing or enforcing rules. And many parents are reluctant to set rules because they don't

want to seem "mean" or "uncool". But the fact remains that you know better than your son what potential dangers and risks exist in the outside world. He is not yet an adult, and not yet ready to set his own rules. Therefore, you, not your son, must take responsibility for setting limits. And the next time your son tells you he's the only kid in school that can't stay out all night, simply respond by saying, "Well in our family, this is the rule we follow," and then stand firm. You can set an example for other parents who are likely dealing with similar concerns.

- Dr. Mom

This newsletter is supported by the Commonwealth of Virginia, Virginia Department of Social Services, Early Intervention Trust Fund



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## Did You Know...

May

...is Family Wellness Month...National Mental Health Month...Teen Self Esteem Month...and Teen Pregnancy Awareness Month...the 1<sup>st</sup> week is National Anxiety and Depression Week... and Safe Kids Week...the 1<sup>st</sup> is May Day... the 5<sup>th</sup> is Cinco de Mayo...the 6<sup>th</sup> is National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy...the 9<sup>th</sup> is Mother's Day...the 31<sup>st</sup> is Memorial Day...and the 31<sup>st</sup> is also World No-Tobacco Day!

