

Children see, children do

Being a positive role model for your child can help instil the right attitude and habits from an early age for your child to nurture a healthy lifestyle



You teach your child to speak by having him* imitate the sounds and words that you form with your mouth. You teach him to walk by showing him how to place one foot in front of the other. In the same way, you teach him how to grow as an individual as he imitates how you behave, act and perform.

As a parent, you are your child's role model. He will look up to you in everything you do.

But just as children learn the good things from you, they will also pick up your bad habits. The next time you reach out for that pack of cigarettes or that can of beer, ask yourself if you are setting a good example for your child.

Read on for tips on how to be a positive role model for your child.

• Do what you want your child to do

Whether you realise it or not, your child is constantly observing and watching you for behavioural cues. Model the healthy habits you would want him to pick up: it could be eating fruits and vegetables, washing hands, limiting time on the television (TV) and computer, or maintaining a positive attitude.



* For the sake of simplicity, he/his/him are used to represent both genders.



• You eat, I eat

Since your child was a toddler, he has been trying to eat the food on your plate. Being mindful about what you eat is important, so that your child can model after you to eat a well-balanced diet. After all, you want your child to have all the essential nutrients to grow up healthy and happy.



• Let's get active together

The weekend is coming and you wonder what you can do as a family. Your child might just want to watch TV or play computer games. Why not plan activities to do as a family? Your child can discover with you the joys of going to the park, the playground and even the supermarket to pick out healthier choice food items. Outings with family can be fun and healthy.



• Handle stress

When things get too much for you, and when you feel tired, upset, or angry, find a healthy, non-violent way to express your feelings and sort them out (through exercise, meditation, writing, baking and so on). Explain to your child that you need some time out to manage your stress. Show your child that all of us can manage negative feelings in a positive manner.



• Keep your child away from harmful substances

Survey findings suggest that children are using tobacco products and alcohol at an early age. Cultivating a good relationship with your child can help prevent him from falling into the traps of tobacco products and alcohol. See a TV character lighting up on screen or an alcohol advertisement? Seize on these opportunities to discuss the harms of tobacco products and alcohol with your child. If you are a smoker, engage your child in your attempts to quit smoking. And if you have a drinking problem, get professional help and do not let your child bear the consequences of your addiction.

“Outings with family can be fun and healthy.”

Parent-Child Activities

Play a role

Foster the parent-child bond as you engage in these activities with your little one

Walking In Your Feet

You can try this activity at the beach or at the park. Trace your feet on pieces of paper and cut them out. On each cut-out footprint, write down a message that you want to pass on to your child. These messages can be:

- Yummy! I will try all kinds of food!
- Get moving, keep active!
- I am special in my own ways
- Brush twice a day for a sparkling smile
- Keep myopia at bay. Go outdoors and play
- Live it up without lighting up!
- Live it up without drinking up!

Make a path of feet by pasting them onto the floor. Let your child walk in your footsteps as you talk to him about healthy habits and how he can apply them in his life.



Who Am I?

Does your child have a favourite athlete or TV personality? Discuss this person's positive values with your child and encourage your child to pretend to be in this person's shoes.

Make a Heart Wreath

Cut out the middle section of a paper plate so that you are left with a ring. Cut out hearts from coloured paper. The hearts should be big enough to fit the width of the paper plate ring. Talk to your child about good values and characteristics that you want him to learn, and write each on a heart. Glue the hearts on the ring to form a colourful wreath of hearts. This can be hung on the wall or the door of your child's room.



Make a Role Model Puppet

Gather scraps of material — cloth, paper, sequins, shells, string, cotton balls, pipe cleaners, wool and so on — and craft a puppet with your child. You will probably have to cut out the outline of a person from cardboard for your child to decorate. Make the arms movable and attach wooden satay sticks (or chopsticks) to the back so that you can manipulate them. Use this role model puppet that your child has made to “act” out or role-play situations with your child.

