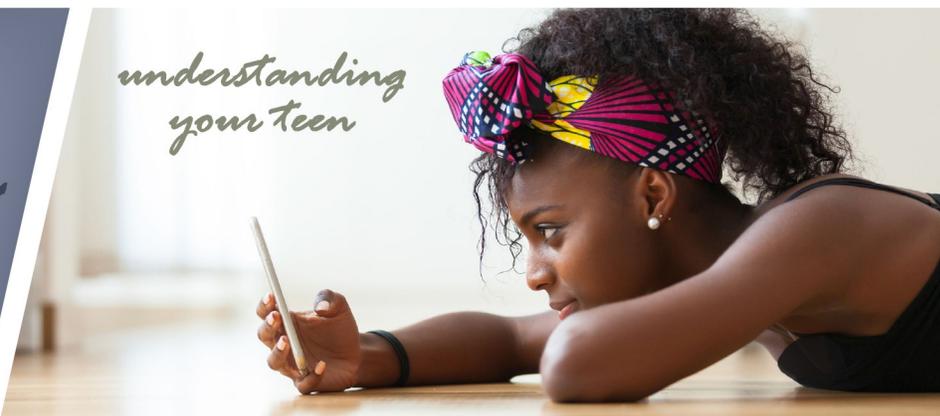


teenTalk

a newsletter for
the parents of teens

*understanding
your teen*



Fall 2016

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Laugh for your health

Ines Beltran, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, UGA Extension/Gwinnett

Hearty laughter may lower blood pressure, reduce stress, ease muscle tension, improve breathing, boost mental function, and burn calories. Imagine using laughter to help nurture both you and your teen's mind and body.

It is not as silly as it sounds. Doctor William Fry Jr. coined the terms "internal aerobics" and "stationary jogging" to describe the physical effects of a good belly laugh. His research found that laughter, like physical exercise, speeds up heart rate, expands circulation, and enhances oxygen intake. In fact, he calculated that one hundred to two hundred belly-laughs a day is the equivalent of a high-impact workout that can help you burn off as many as five hundred calories.

In addition, laughter has been known to reduce cortisol (a stress hormone in our body), ease muscle tension, and increase the body's T-Cell count (a type of white blood cell that scans for cellular abnormalities and infections).

In his book, *Laughter, A Scientific Investigation*, Robert R. Provine stated that laughter can be instrumental in brain programs. The psychological benefits of laughter include increased catecholamines (known to boost mental function), increased pain tolerance levels, and reduced levels of stress which produces an emotional high.

A good sense of humor may help your teen be more spontaneous, see things

from perspectives other than the obvious, grasp unconventional ways of thinking, enjoy and participate in the playful aspects of life, and not take themselves too seriously. Children who have developed a good sense of humor are happier and more optimistic, have higher self-esteem, and can handle differences (theirs and others).

Spend time with your teen promoting laughter, reminiscing funny events, or watching humorous movies. Teenagers can enjoy a good laugh with wordplay, puns, and riddles. They also enjoy making fun of any deviation from what they perceive as "normal" forms of behavior or dress, and gross-out jokes related to bodily functions are always a big hit. But remember, when it comes to humor, teenagers need boundaries, just like they do in other areas of life. You don't want to encourage mean-spirited or off-color jokes. As a parent, it is important to avoid demonstrating the use of humor in a negative way.

Remember that laughter is good for everyone. As a parent, you can reap the benefits of your own laughter while demonstrating your sense of humor to your teen. Laugh, laugh, and laugh as often as you can because hearty laughter has a positive relationship to a healthy lifestyle. Make jokes, tell funny stories, and laugh out loud to help your teenager develop a good sense of humor and enjoy life as well.

Technology and relationships



A few months ago while waiting in a doctor's office, I was talking with people around me. We talked about the weather, the last vacations, restaurants where we like to eat, the news on television, and many other topics. No one was using a cell phone, ipad, or computer. We were all caught up in the moment, having a good face-to-face conversation without being distracted by the latest technology.

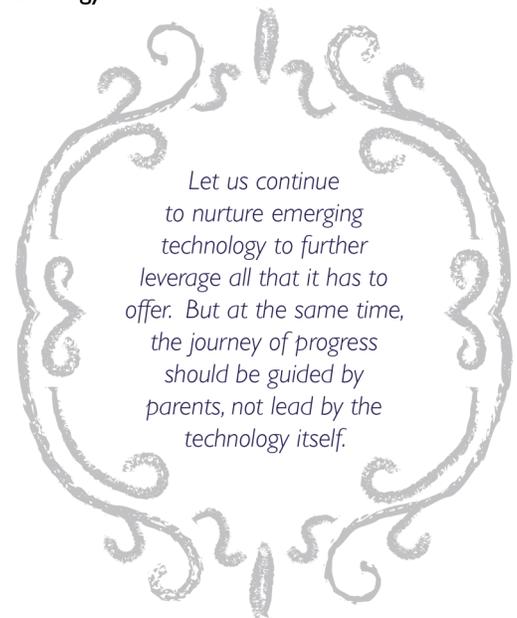
Technology can cause some people to lose connections with the people around them. They can be wrapped up in the technology talking on their mobile phones, checking email, or watching TV. It is even sadder when parents are consumed with technology and not connecting with their children.

The ramifications of technological distancing are profound. Families aren't able to build relationships as strong as they could be nor are they able to maintain them as well. As a result, children will feel less familiarity, comfort, trust, security, and love from their parents.



Parents influence their children's exposure to technology. They determine the type of technology their children are exposed to and the frequency of its use. Parents buy technological devices for them, give them permission to use them, and provide them with the time and space for use.

Parents also model the presence and use of technology in their own life. In doing so, parents are constantly sending children messages about the role that it should play in their lives. Think about how often you watch television, play video games, surf the internet, or check your email. You will probably see the kind of relationship that your children have or will develop with technology.



Let us continue to nurture emerging technology to further leverage all that it has to offer. But at the same time, the journey of progress should be guided by parents, not lead by the technology itself.

*Ines Beltran, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent,
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Powerful snacks for kids on-the-go



My son Nicholas has soccer practice three times a week in the evenings, and games on the weekends. To plan healthy, well-balanced meals and snacks on our family's tight schedule, I use MyPlate, the nutrition guide published by the United States Department of Agriculture, as a guide. Meal planning and health tips can be found online at <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/>

If we have to eat fast food, we look for options that are lower in fat and calories. We decide what will be ordered before going into the restaurant. Unfortunately low sodium foods are rare in fast food restaurants or any restaurant, but we eat lower sodium foods at home to lower our overall sodium intake.

According to the Food Advertising to Children and Teen Score (F.A.C.T.S.) at <http://www.fastfoodmarketing.org/> about seventeen percent of fast food menu items can be considered healthy choices. Approximately twelve out of more than three thousand possible meal combinations meet the nutrition criteria for preschoolers. Fifteen combinations meet the criteria for older youth.

To help on-the-go families, University of Georgia Extension provides a few tips for healthy snacks and meals.

Simple snacks:

Plain, dried or paired fruits with sorbet or cottage cheese, yogurt, whole grain cereal, 100 percent frozen fruit bars, nuts for older children, trail mix made with whole grain cereal, nuts and dried fruit, homemade fruit breads and muffins (such as banana bread or carrot muffins), low-fat cheese with whole grain bread or hummus and whole grain pita bread or crackers.

Planned snacks:

A few snacks that can be made at home and stored in a cooler or purchased away from home include peanut butter sandwiches, salads with light dressing, milk in small boxes, hard-boiled eggs, single servings of cottage cheese, cut-up vegetables with light dip made with plain yogurt, and homemade soups in thermos bottles.

Before and after practice snacks:

Cut-up fruit and/or vegetables, yogurt, milk, half a sandwich made with real turkey (not lunch meat) and low-fat cheese, or whole-grain crackers and low-fat cheese, make good snacks for active kids.

Power up the nutritional intake of your active teen and family using colorful fruits and vegetables for quick snacks on-the-go using the MyPlate method for eating healthy.

*Ines Beltran, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent,
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My food is pink

Chasity Tompkins, Intern, UGA Extension Gwinnett

According to the USDA My Plate initiative, you should focus on variety, amount, and nutrition, when planning your meals. You should also choose foods and beverages with less saturated fat, sodium, and added sugars. Fruits and vegetables should take up at least half of your plate at each meal with children getting between 1 – 2 cups of fruits a day and 1 -3 cups of vegetables a day. The key to achieving this is to have as many colors on your plate as you can.

Youth love eating foods that are colorful and more appealing. We can go get blueberries, purple eggplant, yellow corn, green lettuce, black beans, red strawberries, orange carrots, brown walnuts, and white cauliflower. There is one color, however, that is not commonly seen in the field or in our grocery stores. Pink. No, I am not referring to raw meat.

Add a little something new to your child's menu by making their food pink for day. For breakfast, start with something full of fruits, like a Strawberry Banana Smoothie (see recipe below). For lunch, heat up a bowl of Beet Spinach Soup (see recipe below) to get them refueled and focused! Finish off their day with Roasted Salmon (see recipe below) and don't forget to add steamed vegetables!

Each of these meals is tasty, nutritious, and helps your child reach their daily recommended values of fruits and vegetables. Your child will love the pink color and yummy taste and you will love seeing them enjoy their fruits.



Healthy Recipes

Strawberry Banana Smoothie – 2 servings

<http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/easy-strawberry-banana-smoothies>

Beet Spinach Soup – 4 servings

<http://allrecipes.com/recipe/228803/spinach-beet-soup/>

Roasted Salmon – 2 servings

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/recipes/roasted-salmon/rcp>

For more information and recipes, contact Ines Beltran, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, UGA Extension/Gwinnett.



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