



INTRODUCTION

Mother's Day is Sunday, May 10th! This month, we focus on ways to support the mom in your life. The role of mother for each person is unique and can range from a biological mother to grandparents and other primary caregivers who provide daily love & support to a child. We hope the following resources will help to support your overall wellbeing and encourage a healthy relationship with your child.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY & YOU

Attention Moms & Parents: Looking for some new ways to decrease stress while promoting the healthy development of your child? The answer may surprise you! Studies show that physical activity has a number of immediate and long-term benefits. Frequent exercise can help reduce stress and improve your mood (it also helps you feel less guilty when you reach for another piece of chocolate at the end of a long day). While physical activity has many benefits for you, it turns out that your child's exercise habits are related to yours. When you make positive choices that involve a daily routine of exercise, it is more likely that your child's activity levels will also increase. It's a win-win and with the sun finally peaking its way out of the clouds, it's time to get outside and get moving! Here are some tips to keep you active and healthy.

This series of newsletters is inspired and created just for parents. If you have suggestions, comments or ideas for future newsletters please share on our Facebook (Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative) or Twitter page (@OPECParentingEd).



Sun's out & It's Time to Play!

The CDC recommends 1 hour+ of physical activity each day for children. For adults, at least 2 hours 30 minutes per week + muscle strengthening activities:

- Go on a hike and make it a fun adventure!
- Play an outdoor game of soccer or play catch with your child.
- Make family walks a routine by coupling them with mealtimes.
- Go to the park and encourage active play.
- Check out city or county parks and recreation departments for information on team-sport sign ups (little league, softball, soccer, etc.,).
- Stuck inside for the day? FREE full-length workout videos (for adults) are available at www.fitnessblender.com.



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THE BRAIN ON LOVE

Everyone knows that a mother's love is powerful. However did you know that a mother's love can actually change a child's brain? There is a part of the brain that is associated with memory (the hippocampus) and studies are showing that children with nurturing mothers actually have 10 percent larger hippocampal volumes. According to the lead researcher, "It puts a very strong wind behind the sail of the idea that early nurturing of children positively affects their development." In this study, 95% of the participants were biological mothers. However it's important to note that the researchers say that changes to the brain are likely to be the same for any caregiver that has similar nurturing qualities. What are some defining qualities of nurturing parents? There are many, but here are a few to get you started: **trust, patience, responsibility, empathy, and self-reliance.**

TALK TO ME!

Before language fully develops, children engage in many forms of communication including touching, cooing, and crying (remember last month's newsletter featuring temper tantrums?). Nurturing parents are responsive to their children's first forms of communication by addressing the needs of their children. The more parents can encourage back-and-forth communication with their child, the more they teach children about the importance of expression and provide a foundation for early language and social skills. Here are a few ideas for supporting your child's language skills:



FUN WITH YOUR KIDS

Mother's Day Coupon Book

Ready to help your child honor the mother-figure in his life? Make a coupon book with your child. Get some construction paper and markers. Help write out ideas for coupons from your child such as 'one free hug,' or 'one outdoor adventure hike.' Ask your child to draw pictures (or doodles) before giving it to Mom!



Communication Tips + Tricks

- **Respond** to your children when they communicate with you.
- **Talk and listen** to your child by having a conversation about feelings and emotions.
- **Teach** your child new ways to communicate. Early on, children might not have the words to express themselves, but teaching new ways to express needs can be helpful (try motions, and hand signals).

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Find your local parenting resources at:
<http://orparenting.org/>

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