

PROMOTING HEALTH

Dear Families and Caregivers,

The meaning of *health* is not so straightforward. According to the World Health Organization, health is the balance of mental, physical, and social health, also known as “the health triangle.” Having a good balance in all three areas is essential to living a healthy life. But some of the components of health are not always easily visible. What can you and your child(ren) do to improve your health and that of those around you? Use the activities below to get started.

Sparking Conversations

Ask your child to make a list of things they do to be more healthy. This could be eating a vegetable with each meal, playing a sport, or getting a good night’s sleep. Introduce them to the idea that there are three components of health: physical, mental, and social. Go through their list and categorize each activity as physical, mental, or social. Did they list things in each category? If not, challenge them to add to the list. If there are areas with less focus, discuss why that is, and how they can improve in that area. Create a goal in each category. For example, your child might plan to play a game with a friend once a week instead of watching TV (social), take time to eat breakfast each morning (physical), and learn a new breathing exercise to use when feeling overwhelmed (mental). Have kids work on one goal at a time, and support them as needed. Have reflective conversations about how they’re doing with each goal and whether they notice any difference in how they feel.

Get Active

Think of someone you and your child know who might have a health struggle. How did your child identify this person? Note that physical health is often the easiest to identify, but remind kids that this is not the only aspect of health. Have kids think of people who might not have good social or mental health. If they’re not sure, encourage them to pay closer attention to the people around them, or to ask questions about how peers and community members are doing. Ask your child to brainstorm ideas on how they can help someone improve his/her health (e.g., accompany that person on a walk, make them a comforting meal, or write them a kind letter). Have your child consider how helping someone else will affect their own health. Put at least one of their ideas into action. Or use the resources from one of the groups.

Groups That Help Kids Make a Difference

Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly, lbfenetwork.org

- Little Brothers - Friends of the Elderly helps relieve social isolation and loneliness among people over the age of 60 in the United States through intergenerational friendship. LBFE is a nonprofit with offices in California, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Ohio, Minnesota, Nebraska, Pennsylvania.

Ronald McDonald House Charities, rmhc.org

- Ronald McDonald House Programs believe that when a child is sick, the entire family needs comfort and support. RMHC provide a place to stay, meals, and recreational activities for families of children who are being treated at medical facilities.

VolunteerMatch, volunteermatch.org

- This volunteer search engine allows you to find volunteer opportunities based on your ZIP code. You can sort by interest and filter opportunities by those that would be great for kids.