

Prevention^{IN}Action

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A New Year's Resolution: Making A Meaningful Difference

We see it within our children, their friends and our community...growing up today can be a pretty stressful time. With overextended calendars and the building of resumes to gain the elusive top college acceptances, we need to look more deeply at how we can support, nurture and provide the tools needed for success in our schools and community.

Here are some top ways to creating a safe, productive, engaged learning environment where healthy decision-making and personal achievement is fostered.

1. Have open dialogue with teens about their goals, challenges and aspirations, and help them put together a plan for support and building confidence along the way. Let there be room for growth and discovery, and an understanding that perfection is never expected.

2. Encourage connections outside of the classroom with experiences such as sports and community involvement where students can connect with their peers and people of different backgrounds for support, understanding and the benefits associated with being part of something larger than themselves.

3. Encourage students to be self advocates. Learning to overcome struggles and a poor grade can be an important milestone in building success.

4. Show trust in a student's decision-making and allow them to make mistakes. Important growth and learning is often the result.



5. Stress, depression, anxiety and suicide are on the rise. Be sure to listen to and watch teens, and help them find the professional support, when needed. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, one in five children and adolescents experience a mental health problem during their school years. Unfortunately, estimates of up to 60% of students do not receive the treatment they need due to stigma and lack of access to services.

6. Be a role model that leads a happy, fulfilled, healthy lifestyle. Model healthy eating, exercise, positive relationships, adequate sleep and good decision-making.

7. Find ways to support activities, engagement with teachers and school, and show pride not just in their successes, but also in their best efforts.

8. Provide job opportunities for students, where appropriate, to allow them to gain responsibility, financial management skills and pride of being an employee.

9. Be part of the village and look out for the youth in our community. If you see something dangerous or harmful, find a way to help

get the expertise they need to avoid the path of addiction, poor decision-making or the inability to reach their potential.

Growing up is not easy in 2017 so let's all make a commitment in the New Year to try to make a difference for as many children as we can. They are our future and each of us can make a difference in the lives of another. And, you may just be surprised how much you get in return for what you give.



Next Issue: How Pediatricians Can Play a Part in Prevention

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