PCANV wishes all a Happy New Year

Family New Year's Resolutions

The New Year is a good time to take a look upon our lives and make some positive adjustments. Whether it’s diet, exercise routine or tendency to procrastinate, there’s always room for improvement. Our kids can also learn about self-discipline and the value of making goals by making New Year’s Resolutions. Here are some tips to help your kids benefit from making resolutions.

Sit down to dinner

Eating family dinners together has been linked to lower incidence of teen smoking, drinking and drug use. Additionally, research shows that kids who eat with their family also get better grades. And if you need more reasons to sit down to dinner, meals at home cost less than eating out, plus you’ll be able to ensure your kids are consuming their veggies, trying new foods and eating more healthfully. This year, make a resolution to sit down and eat dinner together as a family at least four nights a week.

Stop overscheduling

Are your kids scheduled from breakfast to bedtime? Scheduling your kids for every extracurricular activity and event possible doesn’t make you a good parent. You have to find the balance of letting your children participate in activities they enjoy, while also allowing time for free play,
friends, family and sleep. Parents who overschedule their kids often overschedule themselves too. Make a promise to yourself and your family to ease back on all the structure and planning to allow everyone to have a little more free time.

Unplug once a week

Technology is great and we certainly can’t live without it. However, if your family is always on the computer, watching TV or playing video games, it’s time to take a break and reconnect with each other. Dedicate one day a week as an “unplugged” day. On this day, turn off computers, televisions, smartphones and all other electronics. Use this day to get back to basics.

- Go hiking, biking or swimming.
- Create a special arts and crafts project.
- Cook a meal together as a family.
- Set aside a couple of hours for reading time.
- Do some spring cleaning.
- Draw, paint or take pictures.
- Play board games or cards.
- Spend time talking, relaxing and laughing.

Plan family fitness days

Keep your family fit and healthy by holding family fitness days. Take a walk (or run) together every evening, plus use the weekends to try out new fun ways to exercise.

- Take a hike or bike ride around your neighborhood or a local park.
- Create an obstacle course in your backyard.
- Play laser tag or paintball.
- Go rollerblading or ice skating.
- Sign up for martial arts classes.

Start a family hobby

Collaborate with your family members to start a hobby together. Discuss options that interest everyone and take a vote on which hobby you would all like to try. When tossing out ideas for a hobby, considering the following:

- Age-appropriate activity - Can everyone in the family participate at an appropriate (and enjoyable) level?
- Affordability - Can your budget accommodate the cost of your new family hobby?
- Longevity - is the hobby something that you and your family can grow with for years to come?

The family that journals together, stays together

Starting a family journal is a great way to spend more time with your kids as well as gain insight into their innermost feelings. Journaling with your kids can be as simple as sharing a spiral notebook in which you can all jot down a few sentences (or more) about a shared experience. For example, if you’ve recently gone out to a new restaurant, ask everyone in your family to jot down their personal “review” of the restaurant, as well as their favorite moments of the dining experience.

Make a chat pact
If you’re not used to chatting with your kids, creating a resolution to talk more (outside of the necessities of the day-to-day) may seem a little silly at first. However, the more you start enjoying casual conversation with your family as a whole, the easier it will become. Plus, it will bring you closer to your children so it will be easier to have those tough conversations that are oh-so-necessary throughout the awkward teen years. If your kids seem reluctant to open up at first, simply make the first move by telling them about your day or a special memory that you have of when you were their ages.

Laugh more, argue less

Probably the most important thing you can do for your family is to enjoy life and avoid arguments. Don’t sweat the small stuff. Create a laid back atmosphere in your household with lots of laughs and love. Control your temper and be kind to others, and your children will follow suit. Reducing confrontations and stress leads to a healthy and happy environment for everyone.

Adapted from www.sheknows.com’s article Simple Resolutions for Families.

Cooking with Kids

There are lots of reasons why parents should cook with kids. First of all, it’s fun! If you can get over the fact that half the flour in the cookie recipe will end up on the floor, cooking with kids is often as enjoyable for parents as it is for kids. It’s also educational. Getting children involved in preparing food teaches them math skills, reading skills, safety, and creativity, in addition to helping them learn responsibility and awareness about the natural world. Plus, if you want your kids to know how to prepare dinner for the whole family when they’re teenagers, cooking with them while they’re little will have such later paybacks.

To start cooking with a child of any age, a trip to the bookstore or library is a good idea. There you can buy or borrow one of the many wonderful recipe books. You can get your younger child involved with what you’re cooking at dinnertime by giving him simple tasks they can accomplish, like the following:

- Cutting butter with a dull knife
- Pouring flour and other ingredients from the measuring cup into the bowl
- Stirring (and licking the batter, unless it contains raw eggs in which case do not let your child eat it)
- Cracking eggs (some parents don’t like to let kids do this but the inevitable shell is easy to fish out and egg cracking is a great job for a child of any age)

Older children can help choose recipes and follow them (with some supervision), and set the table. Encourage your child to add something special like a vase of cut flowers or fancily folded cloth napkins. All kids should participate in cleanup. A child-sized broom, spray bottle with vinegar and water or another nontoxic cleaning product, and some lively kids’ music makes cleanup more fun.
You can also do special cooking projects with your child. Baking whole wheat bread (and letting them shape the dough), making whole grain biscuits, and homemade pizzas are three surefire family activities that will keep children occupied for a long time. Here's our favorite kid-friendly recipe, which can be served with any meal.

Safety Notes for Cooking with Kids

- Rinse eggs before cracking them and don't let children eat batter with raw eggs to avoid salmonella poisoning.
- Children under 12 using the stove or oven should be supervised at all times.
- Point pot handles to the back of the stove so eager children don't knock over hot food.

Adapted from family.com's article Cooking With Kids: Getting Them Involved.

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**University of Las Vegas, Nevada**  
4505 S. Maryland Parkway, Box 453030  
Las Vegas, NV 89154-3030  
**Phone:** 702.895.5053  
**Fax:** 702.895.2657  
preventchildabusenevada.org

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