

Happy New Year!

News from the Kitchen

Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a fabulous holiday with your family and friends.

This month I wanted to talk about ways to get your kids and whole family to eat healthy meals. Today's busy families don't have the time to make different entrees for each family member, so meal planning should focus on providing a range of food options that include foods both kids and adults can enjoy.

By cooking your children's meals at home, you know they are eating nutritious, wholesome meals. Preparing and eating these healthy meals together as a family sets a good example for kids to follow. Children learn how to make healthy food choices and how to prepare food themselves.

Snack Time

Snacks are important for children. Research has shown that children snack on average three times a day, making up almost one-third of their daily calories. Parents should stock the refrigerator and pantry with nutrient-rich foods from all the food groups and try not to keep foods like sweets, chips and other salty snacks in the house. Plan and prepare snacks ahead of time for younger children. For older children, designate a special snack spot in the refrigerator and in the cupboard. Keep these spots stocked with healthy snack items from all the food groups and keep fruit on the counter where kids can help themselves.

It is also a good idea to keep snack time in the kitchen rather than in front of the television or while doing other activities. By focusing on the snack itself, children avoid mindless eating and develop healthier habits.

Dinner Time

When deciding what to make for dinner, keep these kid-friendly dinner tips in mind:

- *Get your children involved:* Kids are more likely to eat what they help plan and prepare.
- *Keep it simple:* A healthy, balanced dinner doesn't have to be complicated. Kids tend to like simple, basic favorites.

- *Offer a variety and give them choices:* Include nutrient-rich foods from all five food groups on the table, but let your child choose what and how much to eat.
- *Introduce new foods slowly:* It can take up to 15 times for a child to accept a new food, so mix new items with old favorites so there's always something on the table your child will enjoy eating.
- *Focus on family during dinnertime:* Turn off the TV and phones, set the table, pour glasses of milk and get the conversation going.

I hope these tips help you and yours to not only eat healthier this year, but to enjoy doing it!



Upcoming Events

Jan. 1 - May 31: Kids & Pets Story Time at Animart East, Every Tuesday from 10:30-11:00

Jan. 18: Martin Luther King Jr. Day/ KTK **CLOSED** for In-Service



KTK News of the Day

JANUARY 2016

Notes from Our Feathered Friends

Baby Chicks: We hope everyone enjoyed a fun-filled holiday season! During December, many of the babies attained a new level and started sitting up both supported and unsupported! We loved singing many Christmas carols and the babies joined along. At the end of December we welcomed Abraham to our crew. Martin joined us the beginning of January, and Owen W. will be joining us at the end of the month. Owen A. will be making the leap over the gate to the Penguin room. So many changes going on in the baby room! Just a reminder we will be closed for our teacher in-service day on Monday, January 18.

Penguins: Happy New Year! We trust that you all had a joyous holiday season with family and friends. We said good-bye last month to Nathan who moved to the Parrots. He is doing well and is enjoying his new space. Violet will soon be moving over there as well this month. We will miss them both and are just over the gate available for hugs any time! We have been trying to get outside as weather permits, thanks for keeping warm outside clothes for your child. All of our friends are learning new things and meeting milestones every day. Whether it's taking those first steps or learning to use a cup, we are busy learning all the time!

Parrots: Happy New Year from the Parrots! Our highlights from December include making our Christmas presents for our parents as well as learning a little about Kwanzaa and Hanukkah. (Ms. Elissa and Mr. Charley learned a little about those holidays, too.) We also welcomed Nathan to our room who has graduated from the Penguins. We will be welcoming Violet to our room in January, while at the same time bidding farewell to Ruby who will be turning two and joining the Peacocks. Our January themes are families, *The Three Little Pigs*, dinosaurs and Sandra Boynton. We are also thankful for the recent snow so we can have some outdoor winter fun.

Peacocks: What a busy, busy place our classroom has been. We have been working really hard on dressing and undressing in that winter gear by ourselves. It is harder than one would think. We are still working on it! Thank you for making sure your child has everything they need to stay warm outside. We DO go outside every day unless the wind chill/temperature is below zero or if it is just nasty outside (like the other day with the ice rain). Our highlights from December were singing LOTS of Christmas music, making special Christmas gifts for our families, learning about holidays in other countries and finally playing in some snow. This month we are working on some of Ms. Sheila and Ms. Kristi's favorite activities and stories. We will be exploring activities involving winter, dinosaurs, *Goldilocks & the Three Bears* and *The Three Little Pigs*. If this group gets as excited as the last couple groups we have had, you will know those stories by heart from the kiddos saying them over and over. Our special event: a "Goldilocks Party," just for fun. Wishing everyone a very HAPPY AND HEALTHY NEW YEAR!

Preschool: We hope all of our preschool families had a very Merry Christmas! The preschoolers had a lot of fun with our visitor "Sprinkles" the Elf and finding him somewhere different in our

classroom each day. Thanks again to all of the parents who took part in parent-teacher conferences. It is always nice to touch base with all of you! We are eager to start the new year talking about "Animals All Around." We will focus on insects, pets, dinosaurs and zoo animals. With a new year and new friends, we are looking to update and add to our family picture wall in our classroom. Please feel free to bring in any pictures that you would like to be a part of this! Toward the end of the month, our friend Felix will be joining us from the Peacock room. We know our friends will do a great job welcoming him to our class!



Out of the Mouths of Babes

Last month Ms. Kristi was singing and playing the guitar with the Peacock group. They were singing “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.” Right then the preschoolers came in from outside. As they trailed in, one little boy stopped, looked at Ms. Kristi and the group, and exclaimed with excitement, “I LOVE that song!”

One of the teachers was helping the preschoolers in the bathroom. One little guy didn’t want to wash his hands, so she said, “Well you need to wash your hands to get the germs off.” Without missing a beat the young man stated, “We don’t have germs. Not in our city.”

A Note from the Director

Dear Parents,

Thank you for all the kind words, yummy treats and nice gifts that were handed out to the teachers over the holidays. Now that the festivities are over, we all can settle back into a more predictable routine—we hope! When you have children there’s no such luxury, right?

Let us know if you have any new ideas for our parent, family or grandparent nights for 2016. Or let us know what you liked from last year and we will revisit it for this year. Some of the highlights were: grandparent’s day, donuts with dad, summer picnic, movie night, and our annual Thanksgiving meal. We need your input!

Don’t forget to make a note on your calendars that we are closed for an in-service day on Monday, January 18, which is also Martin Luther King Jr. Day! As always, the parents are welcome to help us out, especially if they have a specific skill that we could utilize. Are there any plumbers in the house?

Hope you all have a Happy New Year!

Sue Schneider
Koala-T-Kare Director



January Birthdays

Jan. 11: Ruby A.
and Emily T.
Jan. 25: Felix



Stress Management For Parents

Take Time To Learn To Relax

Source: www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/family-living/stress/

Parenting can be very stressful. Whether you are a stay at home parent or a working parent, a single parent or a married parent, mother or father, parent of one child or several children; remaining cool, calm and full of energy can help get you through the day. Below are some simple stress management tips and relaxation exercises that have proven useful to adults whether or not they are a parent. Taking a moment to consider which stress management tools will work for you and then putting them into practice immediately will help to provide the stress management approach you are looking for and the stress relief you deserve.

How Do We Get So Tense?

When we are worried, anxious, hurried or harried our body begins to feel tense. Actually, this is a natural reaction. Our body is preparing us for flight or fight. Our body has been given the signal to prepare to respond to a threat. If a real physical danger were present, we would be able to protect ourselves by attack or retreat. When the emergency was over, an “all clear signal” would be given and our body would relax and return to its normal state.

In our modern existence, our mind is often bothered by many things. We call this stress. Constant mental stress keeps our body in constant tension, which itself becomes a form of stress. We can handle stress by learning to cope with thoughts and events so they no longer are stressful. We can also learn to relax. When we practice relaxation, we are giving the “all clear signal.” As we become better at giving the signal we are able to trigger the relaxation response so our body will return to its normal state.

Chronic tension affects each of us differently. Depending on the person it can cause sleep disturbance, increased or decreased appetite, headaches, stomach aches, poor concentration or irritability. Some diseases may be caused by or made worse by chronic tension. Also, our immune system can be weakened, thus making us more susceptible to colds and other infections.

Our section titled 52 Proven Ways to Reduce Stress gives some tips on coping. This section will help you learn Three Proven Ways to Relax. The are: (1) Progressive Relaxation, (2) Deep Breathing, and (3) Pleasant Images.

Use of positive mental images can be useful. Many parents have benefited from listening to a relaxation CD or MP3 such as *Being a Happy Effective Parent*.

Progressive Relaxation

We will start with your feet and lower legs. Tighten those muscles just as hard as you can. Feel the tension. Then gradually release the tension. Let your feet and lower leg muscles relax just a little bit at a time. Repeat this with your upper leg and hip muscles. Again, experience first the tension and then the gradual relaxation as you slowly release all the tension.

Next, tense the muscles in your hands and lower arms. Make a fist. Tighten them as tight as you can. Then gradually let them relax. With each muscle group, the relaxation feels good. As you relax one group at a time your whole being will begin to feel relaxed, calm and peaceful. Repeat the tension and then gradual relaxation with your upper arms and shoulders. Remember to tense and hold before relaxing.

Next, tighten your stomach muscles. Hold the tension and then

gradually release. Then, move to your chest muscles. Take a deep breath. Hold it while tensing your chest muscles. Gradually let out your breath while gradually letting go of the tension in your chest muscles.

As you have now progressively relaxed most of your major muscle groups, you may feel a tingly sensation. You will find that your breathing has become slower and deeper. You are now relaxed.

Try to practice on a daily basis. When you have followed the above for about 10 to 15 sessions, try it without tensing the muscles. See if you can just relax one muscle group at a time while breathing slowly and deeply.

Deep Breathing

When we are tense, our breathing is often shallow and rapid. If fact, most of us do not breathe properly, tense or not. Improper breathing robs us of oxygen which purifies our body as well as helps our body produce energy.

Fortunately, learning to breathe properly is not difficult. Find a comfortable place to lie down. Place your hands on your abdomen just below your ribs. Begin breathing slowly and deeply. If you are breathing properly, you will feel the expansion in the abdominal area before your rib cage expands. Spend 5 to 10 minutes several times a day practicing your deep breathing. You will notice that as you become more proficient, your breathing will improve during your normal activities.

How to Take a Mental Vacation

When we think about things that are upsetting, our body tenses up. This is because the lower centers of our brain, which regulate body functions, do not distinguish between real images and those that are imagined. If you think about being in an uncomfortable situation, your body will begin to respond as if you were in that situation. Since you have probably had lots of experience thinking about things that cause tension, you actually have all the skills necessary to do just the opposite. Imagine something that makes you feel good.

To prepare for your mental vacation, relax your muscles and take a few deep breaths. Then close your eyes and imagine you are someplace you enjoy. It could be the beach or the mountains or enjoying a favorite activity. Try to fully experience this imagined event. See the sights. Hear the sounds. Feel the air. Smell the smells. Tune in to the sense of well-being. At first, you should allow 10 to 15 minutes for this exercise. As you become more adept you will find that you can feel like you have been on a long vacation or just come back from a good time in just a few moments.

Some Other Ways to Feel Relaxed

Listening to music is very relaxing. Reading can be rewarding for many. Enjoying a hobby can make life more fun. Research has shown that exercising several times a week (even just a walk) can reduce stress and tension. Research has also found that regular church attendance and daily prayer result in lower blood pressure and better coping.

Avoid too much caffeine or alcohol. Both of these are thought to be relaxing, but they can actually make things worse. Avoid watching the news before going to bed. Try to take one day at a time. Look for the good things that happen each day and be thankful. Reach out and touch someone. Giving IS better than receiving. Be forgiving. Don’t hold grudges. No one is perfect. We all make mistakes. As you learn to forgive others, use a little on yourself. Tomorrow is another day.