

FIVE BACK-TO-SCHOOL TIPS

As kids get ready to head back to school, it's important for them to be at their best physically and emotionally each day. But the challenges kids face today, add much complex to their parents. That is why I wrote the book *"Brave Parent Raising Healthy, Happy Kids (Against All Odds) in Today's World."* I hope to help wannabe Brave Parents sort out critical issues with evidence-based solutions and build actionable plans.

Here are five tips for parents to focus on as we head back to school:

- **The one-finger rule with packaged goods:** Kids love packaged snacks, and parents like the convenience and ease they serve as lunchbox fillers. If your child can't cover the ingredient list with one finger (usually meaning there are more than five ingredients), ditch it. If anything in the ingredients sounds less like real food and more like a chemical additive, take a minute to Google it. You might be grossed out about additives that make this "food" not really food at all.
- **Eliminate all sugary beverages:** Purge them all. This includes fruit juice, sports drinks, sweetened water, sweet tea, soda and energy drinks. Sugar consumption is the root of all evil when it comes to obesity and metabolic disease stimulus. It's not that sugar is inherently bad, because every human cell requires some for energy. But unless your kids are wrestling a gorilla or running a marathon, a little goes a long way.
- **Better sleep hygiene:** Design some pre-bedroom-time routines that help your children wind down. Establish a screen-time curfew. Keep your child's room as dark as possible. Avoid scary or violent content before bed. Nix the caffeine. Drop the temperature, keeping their room cooler at night. Vigorous play and physical activity during the day is conducive to better sleep at night. Make sleep time a quiet time because even low levels of noise can rob your child of deep, restorative sleep.



- **Never neglect emotional, social and cognitive health:** It's equally as important as physical health. Teach your kids how to reduce stress and worry. Help them recognize the signs of depression. Help your child develop character, grit and integrity. Show them how to overcome obstacles. Talk to them about the dangers of drugs and addiction. Teach them the importance of self-care. Most important, your first job as a parent is to love them deeply and unconditionally, something that too many kids are sadly lacking today.
- **Foster a daily dose of get-up-and-go:** Kids who exercise develop all elements of metabolic health – better heart and lung fitness, stronger bones, more restful sleep, emotional stability and improved cognitive function. Just as you wouldn't think of letting your kiddo go without food, water or sleep in any given day, please start to think about daily exercise as essential for your child's overall well-being.

Give yourself grace as you adjust to your new schedule – it will get better with time. There's so much uncertainty in the world right now, but following these back-to-school wellness tips will help. Cheers to a new school year. You've got this!

BeABraveParent.com



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