

“Get Your Game On!”

Family Fun Fitness

Does your child seem more interested in engaging with their technological gadgets than playing a ball game or racing around in the park? Too much screen time and not enough outdoor time is taking a toll on today's children. In fact, many parents report that it's easier to get their child to eat healthy than it is to get them to exercise.

So, where do you start? How do we get our kids to put that cell phone down, turn off that video game, unplug from their headphones, and get moving?

Practical Steps to Motivate your Child to Get up and Get Moving

1. It's a Family Affair

Be consistent, schedule it, and make it a family affair. Children like routines. It is something they can count on. So, when it comes to exercise, make them expect it as a daily part of their routine. Also, notice that this step states “Family Affair.” That's right! You need to keep this activity appointment as a family. It will never work if you send your child to exercise while you sit on the couch. Remember, modeling is important so, if you want to get your child moving then you must move first!



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2. Provides Opportunities for Connection and Talk

Children prefer activities over exercise. For example, they're more likely to take a bike ride than jog around a track. Riding a bike does not seem to belong in the same category as exercise to an eight or nine-year-old. It is fun and the mere mention of the word “exercise” may denote negative feelings. What activity does your child find to be fun? What do they enjoy? The bottom line is to make it fun for them. How about a family game of kickball, baseball, shooting hoops, jumping rope, or a game of hide and seek? Your child is not going to be motivated by something they do not enjoy. So, make exercise fun!

3. Invite a Friend

Children have an additional motivation to exercise if their friends are joining them. Yes, your child is motivated by their peers as well as by you. Plan outings that include another family with a child similar in age to yours. In this way, you can encourage positive friendships with peers and exercise at the same time. When your child is having fun with a peer it will not even seem like exercise to them.

4. Track Progress

We are all motivated by goals, targets, competition, and progress-tracking. Make it a family game with all members participating. Track exercise and reward the winner. There are numerous gadgets on the market and apps that will help you do that.



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5. Limit Screen Time

If screen time is an option, they will probably choose that. So, you must set strict boundaries and be consistent with enforcing them. Remember, keep the time consistent each day. One option may be that your child earns screen time each day based on their exercise time.

6. Be Spontaneous

It is amazing how many opportunities in our daily life create opportunities for exercise. Yet, all too often, we opt for the easy way out. For example, when you go shopping, do you take that parking spot closest to the door. Instead, park at the farther end of the lot and walk. Skip the elevator and take the stairs. Walk the dog together. If you look for them, there are small everyday tweaks that will get you and your child moving. They will be exercising without even knowing it!

7. Healthy Children Become Healthy Adults

The habits you instill in your child now will be carried over into adulthood. This habit of regular exercise not only affects them today but will positively impact their future. This lifestyle habit will also be carried into the homes they will establish as adults. So, in reality, you impact generations to follow.



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Benefits of Exercise Include:

- Helps children achieve and maintain a healthy body weight
- Maintains strong, healthy muscles, bones, and joints
- Aids in the development of important interpersonal skills
- Improves the quantity and quality of sleep
- Promotes improved school attendance and enhances academic performance
- Helps develop healthier self-esteem and self-image
- Prevents or delays the development of many chronic diseases (e.g., heart disease, diabetes, obesity, hypertension)
- Reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression and promotes a better overall mood
- Improves motor coordination and enhances the development of various motor performance skills

Exercise will affect your child's tomorrow. The habits they learn now will be carried into adulthood. Perhaps one of the best gifts we can give our children is to instill in them the importance of taking care of their bodies.

The truth is that you will experience the same benefits from exercise as your children do. In other words, if you exercise with your child it is a win-win for both of you. So, get up and get moving!



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Play Outside!

Guess what Mom and Dad! Kids love it when you play with them or just go for a walk together! I know I know ... you already knew that! Let's go outside and do something fun! Like exercise! You may be chuckling but don't stop reading yet! Creating a fun obstacle course, with your kids, not only is the best exercise for a healthy body, but it is also a great family 'memory maker' experience for your family....and that's good for the soul!

Try this idea ... or create your own 'side walk chalk' obstacle course.

ACTIVE ACTIVITIES: @WHATMOMSLOVE



@whatmomslove

1 Long Jump: Draw a series of horizontal lines and challenge your kids to jump as far as they can, marking where they land. Then see if they can beat their farthest jump. Add variations like a running start, jumping backwards or on one foot to keep the fun going.

2 Follow Me: Use active instructions for your kids to follow while navigating a custom course – we love [this example](#) from Matty Angel.

3 Walk the Line: Test your child's balance, coordination and concentration just by drawing a line! (Pic via [The Pinterested Parent](#))

4 Line Stretch: Try drawing 2 lines and have them keep their feet on both...make the lines zig and zag so they have to stretch! Again our [Walkie Chalkie](#) came in mighty handy for this one.

Obstacle Course Tip: Draw squiggly lines to follow, straight lines to jump over, spirals to spin on! The possibilities are as endless as your imagination. We love [these course ideas](#) from Playtivities (and check out [their video](#) for further inspiration!)

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