

# Happy Kids Are Healthy Kids

## MENTAL HEALTH SERIES



### Human Connection Is Happiness

Contrary to popular belief, it's not career success, financial wealth, regular exercise, or a balanced diet that holds the key to a fulfilling life. Through 85 years of research and study, one unwavering truth has emerged: Positive relationships are the cornerstone of our happiness, well-being, and longevity. No ifs, ands, or buts about it!

To maintain healthy, harmonious relationships, it's crucial to cultivate what Harvard researchers like to call "social fitness."

Think about this: just as physical fitness is vital for our bodies, social fitness is crucial for our emotional and mental well-being. Healthy relationships not only bring happiness and fulfillment but also have a profound impact on our overall health.

### Tips for Cultivating Social Fitness as Parents

Just as with physical fitness, consistency is key when it comes to social fitness. Regularly investing time and effort into your relationships can lead to a happier, healthier, and more fulfilling life for both you and your children. Here are five key points for parents trying to cultivate Social Fitness:

**1. Quality Time:** Spend meaningful time with loved ones. Family meals and date nights are great ways to connect.

**2. Communication:** Foster open, honest conversations within your family. Listening is as important as speaking.

**3. Maintain Friendships:** Stay connected with friends who provide emotional support and understand your role as a parent.

**4. Seek Support:** Don't hesitate to seek professional help for relationship challenges.

**5. Teach Social Skills:** Educate your children about the value of relationships and empathy. Encourage them to build healthy friendships.

Research tells us that our connections require ongoing nurturing, much like a fitness routine.

### Have you ever said to yourself?

The Harvard Happiness Study, also known as the Harvard Study of Adult Development, is one of the longest-running studies on well-being. This study has given us lots of knowledge as it relates to family relationships and our happiness and that of our children. Parents can reflect on their family's well-being and happiness by asking themselves the following questions, considering the insights from the Harvard Happiness Study:

#### How Strong Are Our Family Bonds?

- Do we nurture close and supportive relationships within our family?
- Are we fostering positive connections?

#### Are We Prioritizing Quality Time?

- Do we dedicate time for meaningful family activities and conversations?
- Are we balancing work and personal life to ensure we have time for family?

#### How Do We Manage Stress as a Family?

- Do we have effective strategies for coping with stress and challenges together?
- Are we teaching our children healthy stress management techniques?

#### Are We Encouraging Personal Growth and Learning?

- Do we create an environment that promotes curiosity, learning, and personal growth?
- Are we setting goals and challenges that help each of us grow?

# Featured articles

## Are We Engaging in Acts of Generosity and Kindness?

- Do we encourage acts of kindness and giving within our family and towards others?
- Are we teaching our children the importance of helping and giving back?

## Do We Embrace Change and Adaptability?

- Are we open to adapting to changing circumstances and challenges as a family?
- Do we maintain a positive outlook, even during difficult times?

## Are We Cultivating Strong Friendships?

- Are we helping our children develop and maintain positive friendships?
- Are we teaching them the importance of close and supportive relationships?

## Are We Teaching Our Children About Happiness and Fulfillment?

- Are we discussing the principles of happiness, well-being, and life satisfaction with our children?
- Do we encourage them to reflect on what makes them happy and fulfilled?

## How Are We Preparing for Aging and Family Happiness?

- Are we laying the groundwork for a happy and fulfilling family life as we age?
- Are we fostering intergenerational relationships and passing on wisdom to our children?

These questions can serve as a starting point for parents to assess and enhance the overall happiness and well-being of their families, drawing from the insights of the Harvard Happiness Study.

## Empowering Kids to Overcome Negative Self-Talk

Once children can tell the difference between thoughts and feelings we can actually teach them to spot their own negative thinking. It is important children have strategies to change those negative thoughts.

When you hear your child using negative self-talk for example, saying things like "I'm not cool enough to be in their group." or "I am not smart enough to take honors chemistry" you as the parent must challenge the negative thinking.

Help your child to replace negative thinking with a more realistic, and positive, thought. It is important to help your child make a plan for the next time their negative thinking creeps up. Talk about: Where or when does it usually happens? Talk about: What strategy could they use to manage it?

If a child can tame their negative thought, this will have a big impact on negative feelings and behaviors and lead them to be more self confident, ultimately leading to their ability to deal with ups and downs of life. Stopping negative self thoughts can lead to kids being able to control their happiness.

The clearest message that we get from decades long Harvard Happiness study is this: Good relationships keep us happier and healthier.



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Everyday Happiness

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**ParentGuidance.org** offers several free courses to help improve your own self-compassion, mindfulness, and coping skills to handle anxiety and daily stressors.

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