

## Parenting as Activism

• BY SUMYA ANANI •

**H**ealth education for children should be a priority for all of us. In order to obtain true health, I believe there are seven holistic practices for mind, body, and spirit. For each healthy habit, incorporate fun and playful activities to engage a child's natural curiosity and address their energetic bodies.

### Healthy Habit #1—Nutrition

Sugar is a big problem in this country, and it starts early. Walking down any cereal aisle is proof 'in the pudding.' White refined sugar has debilitating effects on a child's young, still growing body. Healthy sugars, like fruit, taste great and are a delicious snack. Get kids started on these natural sugars while they are young.

I made a sugar display that shows how much sugar is in our everyday foods. It has impacted kids and adults in positive ways. According to the American Heart Association, one single serving cola and orange juice have more sugar than a child should have in one day. We all need to think about what we put in our mouth. We can cultivate positive nutritional habits from the start. Be vigilant.

### Healthy Habit #2—Exercise

Movement is life. The benefits for daily exercise are extensive. Being active helps alleviate so many other issues, including obesity, ADHD, and according to Harvard, exercise is an all-natural treatment to fight depression. We introduce kids to many forms of movement during our camps, including daily aerial silks classes. We add boxing on heavy bags, yoga, weight training, nature walks, and hula hooping too.

At home, make a family commitment to exercise. Plan dates with your kids to explore your city and all the fun ways to move your body. Go roller skating, rock climbing, or kayaking. Make exercise a habit. Be consistent.

### Healthy Habit #3—Learning & Self-Confidence

"I'm bored," said no child ever at my youth camps. Curiosity is the greatest quality we can nourish in children. Learning new things is so much fun. Our goal is to inspire your children toward a lifelong love of learning which builds a sense of pride and accomplishment.



Feeling good about oneself is important for a healthy self-esteem.

Making individual art projects around the "seven habits of health" reinforces any lesson. Making group art projects are also important. It is great for kids to know the value of creating something themselves and the value of collaborating with others. This teaches children important skills of listening, compromising, praising others and being a team player. We can learn from everyone. Be curious.

### Healthy Habit #4—Environment - Be a tree hugger.

Every day really should be earth day. Let's work together to teach kids to honor the earth, animal and plant life, the air, and waters of the planet. Just as our bodies are miracles, kids should understand the miracle of all life on planet earth. Whether you believe in global warming or not, it makes good sense to teach our children not to be wasteful. We all can take pride in contributing towards a healthy ecosystem. Look at all the litter lining our highways. I am astonished at the plastic trash that lines the creek along I-35 near the Lamar exit.

Most of what people throw away is recyclable. "Away" is actually somewhere, and when you throw something away, it could end up in a landfill, in our creeks or in the ocean. The Great Pacific Garbage Patch is a wad of plastic the size of Texas.

Let that sink in. Eldridge Cleaver said, "You either have to be part of the solution, or you're going to be part of the problem." Be the change.

### Healthy Habit #5—Family & Community

The value of having friends and family that support us is priceless. Learning how to make friends and keep friends is something that should be taught in schools. Kids can learn to use their power of their words to uplift and inspire others. Words matter. Listening also is a life skill to develop that will impact every part of their life for the rest of their life. It will aid kids when there is conflict, and there will be conflict.

Learning how to speak and listen paves the way for conflict resolution. This is important for dealing with conflict in relationships and between nations. Everyone needs and wants to be heard. Being able to communicate effectively will serve as inspiration to be a better person, partner, and parent. Maya Angelou said, "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget how you did it, but people will never forget how you made them feel." Be kind.

### Healthy Habit #6—Global Diversity & Appreciation

*It's a small world after all.* That song is so true today considering we live in a very diverse world. We are global citizens

now. So many young people are well traveled, and many homes are bilingual. It is so much fun to learn about the many cultures and their important contributions in so many areas - diverse languages, food, cultures, fashion, family traditions, and art to name a few. Global diversity adds so much joy and creativity to our lives. Learning to appreciate other cultures also opens many doors of opportunity.

We can all work in our own communities to actively work together to improve the world. Teaching kids to accept people from varied cultures and backgrounds makes positive impacts. Celebrating and appreciating diversity is important, necessary, and awesome. We can raise empathic young people who welcome differences and are sensitive to others. Be aware.

### Healthy Habit #7—Spirituality

We need to create and nurture an environment where kids feel good. Treating others with love and respect is essential, but also we need to be mindful of our own internal dialogues. Sometimes we are not nice to ourselves with our thoughts, and in fact, we can actually be very negative. Thoughts are things. Teaching children meditation techniques and affirmations can ease stress and anxiety. This fortifies a positive inner belief about who they are. Thoughts do affect our health. Let's not judge or limit ourselves with our thoughts. Be positive.

Educating children on health and wellness practices is an essential activism in action. I believe that practicing these seven fundamental habits of health will create a happy, healthy child, adult, community, nation, and ultimately, a healthy world. YES WE CAN.

**Sumya Anani** owns Learning2Fly - aerial fitness, party, K-12 field trip center in white geodesic dome off I-35 & Lamar. Regular classes, birthday and bachelorette parties, summer youth camps, K-12 field trips. She is 4x world champion boxer and Women's Boxing Hall of Famer [www.AMLeaning2Fly.com](http://www.AMLeaning2Fly.com) [www.Sumya.com](http://www.Sumya.com)

