



# ACPeds Parent Talk

***Keeping parents up to date on the latest news in child and teen health***

## Healthy Hearts

In American society, the month of February shines a spotlight on the heart--emotionally and physically. As **American Heart Month**, February recognizes healthy (and unhealthy) hearts. **Valentine's Day** recognizes happy, loving hearts, and as **Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month**, February recognizes broken hearts.

**In honor of the different types of "hearts" recognized this month, and especially today, this Parent Talk focuses on the heart.**

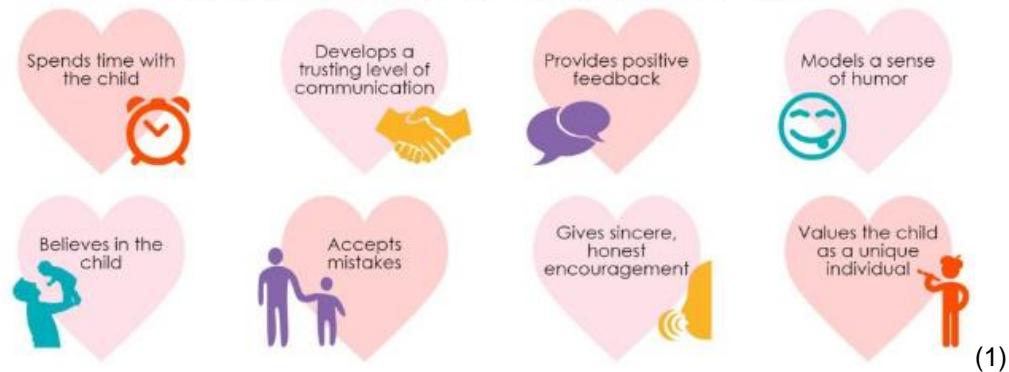
## Fostering Loving Hearts

As today is Valentine's Day, you probably spent last night buying heart-shaped candies and helping your child make heart-shaped Valentines to exchange with classmates.

**While Valentine's Day for adults usually focuses on romantic relationships, choose to use this Valentine's Day to show love and appreciation for your spouse AND your children.**

### 8 Ways to Show Your Child they are Loved

Children know they are loved and accepted when the parent:

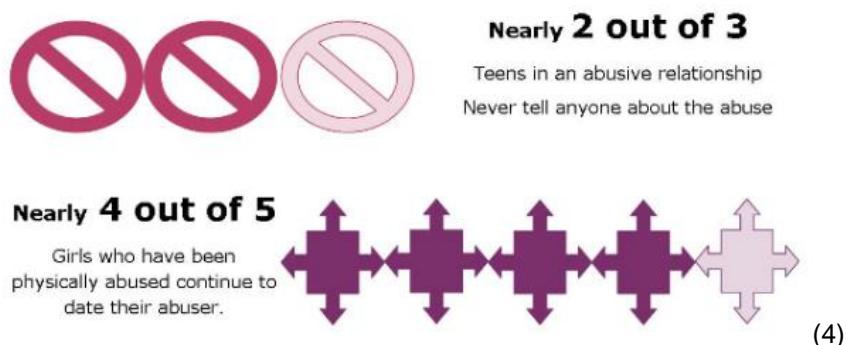


- **Give each of your children and your spouse a small token of appreciation.** Make a special dinner. Write a loving note. Tag them in an appreciative social media post. Be creative and try not to spend too much money. **It's not about how much you can give, it's about how much love and appreciation you can show.**
- **Spend time on your marriage.** If you have time, go on a date with your spouse stay home and spend an hour of quality time together after the kids go to bed. You can play a game, listen to music, or just reminisce about your honeymoon days. **Having parents with a healthy marriage is one of the greatest determining factors in a child's academic performance, mental and physical well-being.**

## Preventing Broken Hearts

**Every year, approximately 1.5 million high school students nationwide experience physical abuse from a dating partner.**

As 1 in 3 teens (2) have experienced some sort of abuse from a dating partner, it's scary to think that 3 in 4 parents (3) have never talked to their children about domestic violence.



This month, please take the time to have conversations with your teens about **healthy dating practices**. However, while talking about healthy relationships is a great place to start, it's not enough. **If you want your teens to learn what love looks like, you have to show them!**

## Maintaining Healthy Hearts

According to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States (5). Fortunately, it is largely preventable and there are many things people can do to reduce their risk, such as eating healthy foods and being more active.



To help keep the hearts in your family physically healthy,

- **Make time to engage in regular physical activity on your own and as a family.** If your spouse and your children see you taking time to exercise, they'll be motivated to do the same. Even if they aren't immediately motivated to get moving on their own, invite them to tag along. Take a walk as a family, go on a hiking trip or go for a swim. You'll develop a stronger bond and keep your hearts healthy at the same time.



**Do something fun...**  
...like running, bike riding, dancing or playing a sport such as soccer, basketball or volleyball.

**Physical activity before starting homework...**  
...can help your child unwind from the day. It also improves concentration.

- **Eat nutritious meals and eat fruits and veggies regularly.** Sometimes people think eating healthy means no comfort food and no desserts. But that's really not true. **It's not about the dish, it's about how you make the dish.** Use less salt, use coconut oil instead of butter, bake instead of fry and whenever you can, add fruits and veggies to your snacks and meals. You'd be surprised how sweet fruits are and you don't have to worry about artificial sweeteners.



**BEATING OBESITY—AND HEART DISEASE—ON THE PLATE**

- Balance whole grains and lean proteins
- Choose low-fat/fat-free dairy
- Limit sugars, salt, and saturated fats
- Offer ample fruits and veggies

(7)

- **Please, please PLEASE no smoking.** Smoking is bad all around, especially for your heart and the hearts of those around you. **Second-hand and even third-hand smoke can cause severe health problems in adults and kids** so please keep your children (and yourself) from cigarette smoke and residue at all costs.



**Smoking is a major contributor to heart disease...**  
...and 90% of adult smokers started when they were kids.

**If current smoking patterns in the U.S. persist...**  
...5 million of today's children will die prematurely of tobacco-related diseases.

- **Find ways to laugh and to be grateful.** Laughter releases stress-relieving hormones into the body and reduces tension, which decreases the impact stress can have on your heart. It also helps with breathing, blood pressure, and heart rate. [Gratitude can improve cardiovascular health and reduce blood pressure](#) (9).

For more information, please view these ACPeds blog posts:

- [Laughter: Nature's Medicine for Family Relationships](#) (10)
- [Why Marriage Matters](#) (11)
- [Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month - Protecting our Teens](#) (12)
- [What to do if You or Your Child is in an Abusive Relationship](#) (13)



## Do you hug your children enough?

#WeeklyBlogPost

**Research shows that every family can benefit, mentally and physically, from providing plenty of parental love and affection. So to help protect your kids from stress, improve their health, and better connect with them, try giving at least a hug a day.**



*For more info on the benefits of giving your children regular hugs,*

**[CLICK HERE](#) (14) and please, leave a comment!**

***We love to hear from our readers and hope to receive your feedback!***

Check [ACPeds.org/Blog](#) (15) each Monday & Friday for a new post. Visit [www.acped.org/subscribe](#) (16) to subscribe to the blog and click [here](#) (17) to subscribe to the Parent Talk newsletter.



Don't hesitate to contact us with your questions and comments. We look forward to hearing from you.

1. <http://www.familyhouston.org/resources/8-ways-to-show-your-child-they-are-loved/>
2. <http://www.loveisrespect.org/resources/dating-violence-statistics/>
3. <https://nrcdv.org/dvam/tdvam>
4. <http://www.lewisklaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Teen-Dating-Violence-Infographic.jpg>
5. <https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>
6. <http://blog.sunrisechildrenshospital.com/images/medium/815876.png>
7. <http://blog.sunrisechildrenshospital.com/images/medium/815876.png>
8. [https://blog.chw.org/wp-content/uploads/Heart\\_Infographic\\_blog\\_5.jpg](https://blog.chw.org/wp-content/uploads/Heart_Infographic_blog_5.jpg)
9. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/11/23/456656055/gratitude-is-good-for-the-soul-and-it-helps-the-heart-too>
10. <https://www.acpeds.org/laughter-natures-medicine-for-family-relationships>
11. <https://www.acpeds.org/why-marriage-matters>
12. <https://www.acpeds.org/teen-dating-violence-awareness-month-protecting-our-teens>
13. <https://www.acpeds.org/understanding-domestic-violence-part-2-what-if-you-or-your-child-is-in-an-abusive-relationship-dvam-domestic-violence-awareness-month>
14. <https://www.acpeds.org/do-you-hug-your-child-enough>
15. <http://acpeds.org/blog>
16. <http://www.acpeds.org/subscribe>
17. [https://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/manage/optin?v=001\\_vy7mr9zh8wyioud36znioqc0fzotql&id=preview](https://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/manage/optin?v=001_vy7mr9zh8wyioud36znioqc0fzotql&id=preview)