



7 part plan to beat childhood obesity forever



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Everyone is talking about fighting the war against childhood flab. It is odd that in a relatively wealthy country such as Australia improving children's health, weight and fitness should be a problem but it appears to be a sticking point with many.

Childhood obesity in a developed country like Australia is essentially a lifestyle issue. Children are overweight because they eat inappropriate amounts and types of food and they don't exercise enough. To put it simply many children are stacking on the weight because calorie intake is higher than calories burned.

Here is a simple, fool-proof lifestyle plan that parents can adopt to ensure their children grow up healthy and fit rather than be unhealthy and fat.

1. Limit the amount of children's television, computer and electronic games usage to a maximum of two hours a day. Very little physical exertion is needed to watch TV or use other electronic equipment so for the sake of fitness their use of these needs to be limited. Send children outside, suggest they walk or ride to a

friend's house or even suggest they have a friend or four over to play.

2. Children walk or ride a bike to school each day. Recent Roy Morgan research revealed that 60 per cent of Australian 6 – 13 year olds would like to walk to school but only 30 per cent actually do. Most children would get their required minimum two hours of exercise a week by walking or riding their bikes to school. Bike riding is not safe for every child but more bike tracks in the vicinity of schools would be a great start.

3. Keep unhealthy food out of the trolley and include more fruit. This may be stating the bleeding obvious but as keepers of the family purse parents have the main stake in what food goes in and what stays out of the shopping trolley. Only 43 per cent of Australian children eat fruit after school so more fruit could be a good place to start.

4. Serve healthy meals at the table on a regular basis. The humble ritual that sees adults and children who are related to each other breaking bread together on a daily or at least regular

basis has a lot going for it. Far from being a refuelling stop mealtime is an opportunity for everyone to catch up and to share good healthy, well-prepared food.

5. Parents play with their children or join them in a physical activity. The family that plays together stays thin together could well be the motto of our times. It should be easy for adults to sell their children on the virtues of playing physical games outside as play comes before work in most children's dictionaries.

6. Encourage children to be involved in at least one organised physical activity each week. Some parents may need to be insistent but 88 per cent of Australian children say they enjoy sport so getting children motivated for physical activity shouldn't be hard. There is no shortage of options for children these days as there are activities and sports that cater for a diverse range of interests, abilities and body types.

7. Parents model a healthy lifestyle. Do as I do not as I say is the idea here. It is little use parents telling their kids to go out and play as they tuck into their second wine or they slump into the couch. Modelling is the most important tool in the armoury if we want children to develop sustained healthy eating and exercise habits.

This plan has a great deal going for it. It is cost-free, easy to use and places the responsibility where it should lay – with parents. It also has the added bonus of promoting healthy relationships as if they follow this plan parents and kids should spend more time together which can't be a bad thing.

Take time to make time for YOU!



Article by
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Feeling snowed under, stressed or tired? Well, you're not alone! Juggling the demands of parenting whilst trying to achieve some balance can take its toll.

That is, unless you decide to stop and take time to make more time for YOU. By "more" time, I'm referring to more "productive" time where you're actually more effective. When we're rushed and mentally tired we can tend to make errors, hasty decisions, get cranky – or all of these!

By taking some time out for yourself, you end up feeling fresher, more relaxed and in charge of what's at hand, at work or home.

Any activity that allows you to stop and recharge

will do to help you get there, not just physically but mentally. We are bombarded with mental stimulation from many sources such as billboards, television and radio. So we need to regularly *switch off* from it all in order to stay *switched on!*

The best way to switch off is by doing the simple things. Do something you love to do that relaxes your mind (and body!). Here are three of my favourites:

- In afternoon, get to school pick-up early and sit in car with eyes closed.
- Turn off radio whilst driving. Keep a notebook & pen handy to jot down ideas that come up!
- Whenever you get the house to yourself (ahhh: bliss), sit in silence for at least 15 minutes.

Anytime you can during your day, squeeze in some for YOU - regardless of how little it might be. Even 10 minutes of silence can seem like a long time. Ever tried it? Go ahead, you'll be surprised at what a difference it can make to your state of mind. More clarity, focus and relaxation can be yours.

During a presentation to a group of parents, I was asked "How can I actually get some time for me?" This can be tricky. However, it does start with deciding that you are worth it – and need it – to be more focussed and effective in all areas of your life, not just your parenting.

So, with this challenge in mind, I'd like to trade some ideas with you. If you send me your Top 3 ways you get some time for yourself – I'll send you my "Top 100 ways". Email me at info@timeforyou.com.au, write "My top 3 ways" in subject line, include your tips and I'll return the favour.

Marie Farrugia speaks about balancing life and work, not from theory, but from personal experience. She can be contacted at www.timeforyou.com.au or info@timeforyou.com.au