

Parenting: Children's Minds

The Allies in Action Project educates newcomers to Canada about domestic abuse/family violence and how to maintain healthy family relationships.

What do children need to have a healthy mind?

In order to have a healthy mind, children need three things: a healthy body, a healthy brain, and a healthy spirit.

1. Healthy Body

- Good Food. Children need to healthy food to eat, and a good variety of foods as well – e.g., different kinds of fruits and vegetables, meats and fish, grains and cereals, etc.
- Good Sleep. Regular, good quality sleep is critical for children. Sleep affects children's mood regulation, brain development, behavior, and physical health and growth.
- Clean Teeth. It is important that children learn to brush their teeth early, so they can develop good habits. Regular teeth brushing is necessary for children to have healthy teeth and healthy mouths.
- Fresh Air. Having healthy bodies requires children to spend time outside every day running and playing and getting good exercise.

2. Healthy Brain

- Doing for Themselves. One way in which children develop healthy brains is by learning to do things for themselves, such as feeding themselves, dressing themselves, and learning to take care of their own things. These tasks help with skills like memory, coordination, and patience.
- Helping at Home. Children also develop healthy brains when they help at home with family tasks like cooking, cleaning, putting things away, or tidying up.
- Playing Games. Playing different kinds of games – like sports, board games, toys – help children to learn and follow rules, as well as different kinds of problem-solving strategies.
- Having Friends. Having friends is important for children to learn important skills like empathy, sharing, perspective-taking, and cooperation.

3. Healthy Spirit

Having a healthy spirit means feeling a general sense of balance, peace, and well-being. Having a healthy spirit is important for all people, not only for children.

- Family. Spending time with family helps children develop a feeling of safety and belonging. They also learn that they are valued by and important to the people who love them.
- Exercise. Getting exercise and spending time outside is good not only for the body, but it is also good for the spirit – it is calming and reduces stress.
- Prayer & Meditation. Both are very important for creating feelings of peace and balance. If you follow a religion, you might find it helpful to pray regularly. If you do not practice a religion, you can still find ways to quiet your mind – meditation and yoga, for example, are good ways to find peace and balance.

Resources from Health Canada (<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/>):

- [Are Canadian Children Getting Enough Sleep?](#)
- [Canada Food Guide](#)
- [Physical Activity Tips for Children \(5-11 years\)](#)
- [Physical Activity Tips for Youth \(12-17 years\)](#)
- [Relationships Matter to Kids' Health](#)
- [Tips for Healthy Teeth: Children Ages 0-3 Years](#)
- [Tips for Healthy Teeth: Children Ages 3-6 Years](#)