

Take care you have good habits and they'll take care of you.

THE DAILY TIMETABLE

Lack of sleep leads to depression and other mental problems.

Too short a night's rest and stress levels rise, irritability increases, and we run out of energy. Tiredness hinders concentration and learning. Use your common sense and draw up a timetable as a basis for a daily rhythm: what time you wake up, when you eat, and when you go to bed.

We can insist on keeping to a daily routine, and keep to it ourselves.

Remember that sleep is like putting money in the bank.

GRASP THE MOMENT

Hassle and stress consume an enormous amount of energy.

Listen to what the other person is trying to say. Grasp the moment when they complain of being tired and exhausted. Support them in their daily problems. Gestures, no matter how small, will help.

We can help others by doing the shopping, for example, or carrying the shopping bags, beating the carpets, doing the washing, cooking, or spending the evening with the neighbour's children.

We can take other people's children to their out-of-school activities, or a tired colleague's kids to the movies, or help a friend's child with their homework.

DO I ABSOLUTELY HAVE TO?

Think for a moment, do you really have to start a business meeting in the evening?

Are you really a hero turning in 12-hour working days week after week and then bringing work home with you? If the family isn't happy, the working adult won't be happy either – and it won't be long before the family could have severe problems.

We can reconsider how we can plan our work to ensure a better day for everyone.

We can also offer to help a colleague who's collapsing under the burden of work.

DO SOMETHING – NOW!

The growing child's brain develops fast: thoughts and feelings ebb and flow.

People always need someone to talk to, the more the better. It's good for young people to air their thoughts with more than one person. Give them your time. Be genuinely interested and don't always try to teach them. Give them time to reply and make sure, as you listen, you really understand how they are getting on. Not even the best advice is any good if the child or adolescent feels adults don't actually want to be with them.

We can donate our time as a support person to families in the vicinity, as well as organizations dedicated to child and adolescent wellbeing.

We can take our neighbour's children to the local football match or the theatre.

ADULT, DON'T CUT CORNERS

Children and teenagers get exhausted if they feel they have to do it all on their own.

Curiosity, questions and learning are hard work. Explain to them, and answer all their questions, even the difficult ones. You can offer young people opportunities to learn what interests them. They only attend secondary school once. Don't let them play truant.

You can support the teacher and maintain positive relations with the school.

You can take action if you hear of bullying.

We can help children with their homework and find information with them together.

BIRTH, LOVE, DEATH

Rootlessness leads to irresponsibility.

Marvel at life's big questions together: birth, love and death. Young people need to know where they come from: what grandpa and grandma did when they were young, what life was like 20 or 50 years ago.

We can tell them stories about the past and our family history: the mistakes we made, how we coped and how we came through.

We can look at old photos with children and young people, and remember the past with them.

You can act as a foster grandma or grandpa for a child.

JOY FOR FREE

Security is a fundamental building material for wellbeing.

Don't always do what's "more important", rather nurture relationships with those who live close to you. Build a stable and secure atmosphere in your vicinity. Be an example yourself of how life and people are gifts to each other. Happiness is here and now.

You can openly show that the child, adolescent (and why not the adult as well) close to you is special because they are who they are, good enough and appreciated.

We can organize a local garden party for the whole family, and voluntary community work or even fun-Olympics for everyone.

A FRIEND IN NEED

Playmates with the wrong kind of interests can lead children straight into trouble.

Friends bring security to life and teach us to be tolerant. A gang of good kids is a strength. Friends help, they encourage each other to take part in recreational activities and to learn something new. It's good to have a real friend.

We can offer advice on how a real friend does or doesn't behave.

We can invite friends home a bit more often.

You can let your child invite his friends to your home.

WEIGH UP WHAT YOU SAY

Calling people names and using bad language only serve to weaken our own standing as adults.

Racist talk or poking fun at someone because of their looks, a handicap, their clothes, speech, the colour of their skin, or their sexual orientation are definitely out. Watch what you say when young people are around and teach them to prefer what unites rather than what separates.

We can promote equality everywhere: in the workplace, at home, and at sports events.

We can watch our own speech and ask ourselves if we follow the same rules that we give to the younger generation.

We can first cut down our own swearing by half, and then by half again, and see the change.

AT LEAST DO THIS

Children and adolescents become dependent on alcohol much faster than adults because a young person's brain is still developing.

Don't actively "introduce" alcohol or even its smell to children as that only encourages them to start drinking sooner. Your own drinking habits will carry over to children. If you, or anyone close to you, has a drinking problem, don't cover it up or wait for it to disappear by itself. Get help.

You have a decisive influence on how the young people around you regard alcohol and drugs.

We can delay the onset of problems with alcohol – simply by obeying the law. No alcoholic drinks to underaged persons.

If necessary, we can encourage people with problems to seek help: AA, an appointment with a doctor, or a chat with a social worker, for example.

Now and again you can always remind the young that a police record for drug abuse could ruin their study or work prospects later.

You can ensure that children and adolescents don't get all they know about cannabis and other controlled substances just from their friends or chat sites.

STUPID BEHAVIOUR

When children or adolescents cause trouble, it's often to attract attention.

Every young person causes trouble at some time. It's part of growing up but there has to be a limit. What would you want another adult to do if your child were to take a foolish risk or get into trouble? Involve yourself in the situation and offer help.

We can suggest something more worthwhile to do. Simply saying no is not enough.

We can give an example: how I acted stupid as a youngster (or adult) and what I've learnt from it.

MAKE COPYING A HEALTHY ACTIVITY

We have it in our power to make the people around us feel either good or bad.

Youngsters learn by copying, and each one of us is a role model. Get to know other parents. Agree on a basic set of rules among yourselves.

Follow where the youngsters hang out and with whom, and if they are often changing friends.

We can prevent families from getting isolated by setting up a ring with our neighbours to give each other help in ordinary daily things like looking after the kids for a while, or taking them to hobbies.

TIME FOR TEA

There's no such thing as prime time, there's only time.

The amount of time you spend together is all-important. Children want to enjoy life with others, and to experience everything that means. Offer your time to other people's children and support them whenever you can. Don't forget your own child, though.

Spend time outdoors and do what interests all of you.

Why not enjoy a cup of tea and some cakes together? Being and doing everyday things together can be enormous fun.

We can also teach our children and their friends how to make macaroni cheese.

Or now and again we can spend time together doing absolutely nothing.

DREAMS GIVE WINGS

Youngsters have their own characters and inclinations.

Strict plans for youngsters made by adults can ruin their chances. A child's own dreams will give him or her wings. Young people who know they are accepted on their own merits will deal with failure better.

You can support them as they become independent, but don't forsake them.

You can avoid casting your children in your own mould.

We can always ask ourselves which is more important: to be right or to be happy.

THANKS

Good behaviour prevents conflict and gives confidence.

Good behaviour helps us get on with other people. It's essential when we want to make a new friend and give a good impression of ourselves. A culture of respect increases security and enjoyment both in and out of school. Look people in the eye when you speak to them. Smiling is contagious.

We can improve the way others behave by behaving just that little bit better ourselves.

We can learn, and teach others, how to say "thank you" in the main languages spoken in Finland: in Finnish (kiitos), in Swedish (tack), in Russian (спасибо [spasibo]), in Estonian (aitäh), in Somali (mahadsanid), in English (thank you), and in Sami (giitu).

A SENSE OF PROPORTION

Getting something for nothing makes us lazy.

The result is dissatisfaction and a feeling of emptiness. Don't give youngsters too much money, goods or treats as that will teach them that they'll always get everything automatically. The child who learns this attitude may not learn to work for a living later.

We can explain where money really comes from and where it goes.

Give rewards by all means, but not for basic domestic chores, for example. Rewards are for an extra effort.

CLEANING UP

We don't get through life just by having fun.

The school, home and other places must be kept clean. Order organizes the mind as well. Learn to do boring jobs and to do them together. Voluntary work is good practice for doing things together. Strike a reasonable balance.

You can start by picking up rubbish from the ground.

We can help with washing the windows.

You can hold a garage sale in your village or neighbourhood.

BECOMING FAMILIAR WITH WORK

Work is often done out of sight of youngsters and may feel remote, even meaningless to them.

It's worth introducing work to youngsters when they are young. They are interested in where work is done and what it actually is.

We can organize open doors days and parties at our workplace for employees' families.

We can ask the local school if we could pay a visit to describe what we do for a living.

We can also invite the local school or kindergarten to visit our workplace.

TAKE CARE

Early action is most effective.

Seeking help isn't the youngster's responsibility: it's the task of adults and professionals. A youngster can be so tired or exhausted that it's a huge effort even to seek help. As an adult, take complete care of his or her interests. Don't leave youngsters alone.

We can take the active decision not to abandon them.

We can help the frightened and exhausted young person to seek help.

HANDS DON'T WEAR OUT THROUGH SHOWING AFFECTION

Children become selfish and unhappy if they are expected to be perfect and are left to fend for themselves in difficult situations.

Children can and should be encouraged. Sympathize with them and focus on getting through the problem together. Physical contact strengthens self-esteem. It communicates acceptance and comfort, and it can encourage better than words. Make a habit of hugging, kissing, stroking or even play-wrestling. Take a child into your arms. At some point a youngster might want to avoid physical contact. In that case a kind look can mean the world to them.

You can show physical affection to children every day. Your hand won't wear out.

You can teach a child to give affection. Let kids stroke your cat or dog (assuming they are ok with children).

THE RIGHT THING AT THE RIGHT TIME

Adolescents are easily damaged sexually.

Parents are responsible for explaining what feelings, dating and sex are all about. Children and youngsters should know the right things at the right time. Young people learn things in practice, so it's important that they have the right information to hand. The distortions of web pornography and reality TV can get youngsters seriously mixed up. Keep to the age limits set for the TV programmes.

We can teach youngsters about sex in a responsible way. Let them ask, and answer their questions in a manner appropriate to their age.

You can do children a great service by not spreading prejudices or wrong information about sexual minorities.

An unbreakable rule: if it should come to your attention that a youngster is being abused or offered money for sex, deal with it immediately. Notify the child welfare services or the police.

MOVINGLY SIMPLE

Lack of exercise may be due to frustration, loneliness or the need for consolation.

Exercise improves wellbeing: it refreshes the mind, dispels the blues, and reduces the risk of illness. Have fun when taking exercise and keep it moving. Get up a sweat when playing in the yard. Cheer when you feel like it.

We can be examples of active people: we can include our neighbours' children when playing outside with our own, going for a bike ride, a run or swimming.

We can also consider this: sports training nowadays involves too much training and not enough play. At training sessions most of the kids just stand around waiting.

ASKING AND REQUESTING

Sometimes we just come up against a wall.

None of us is as strong as perhaps we think we are. Moments arise in life when we feel weak, a failure, lacking in strength. That's nothing to feel ashamed about.

We can bring matters up, initially approaching the subject with discretion.

We can learn, and teach others, to accept help and to express gratitude.

You can ask for help and you can give help.

We could ask friends in for coffee a little more often.

NOUGHTS AND CROSSES

Some computer games are so consuming they can bring the player to extremes of exhaustion.

Exhaustion causes irritability. Youngsters with game stations and televisions in their rooms can lose all sense of time.

Games and the internet have plenty of good sides. But it takes an adult to decide what is, and is not, suitable for a child.

You can set limits to the time spent with computers.

We can suggest sensible internet and console games.

TIME OUT

Overly tough demands and continuous defeat don't teach youngsters to tolerate disappointment. Frustration makes them restless and aggressive.

Recreational activities don't have to be competitive. Young people enjoy a little friendly rivalry. Having too many activities is stressful. It's ok to be bored sometimes.

We can forget our own competitive spirit when we encourage others.

We can encourage the whole team.

TIME TO CALM DOWN

Overload and the pressure to perform create an invisible threat.

Children or adolescents can end up doing a long day without anyone noticing. Well behaved and conscientious students and workhorses can show symptoms of fear, stomach pains and sleeplessness. They may suddenly grind to a halt through depression and anxiety. The stress hormone level becomes unbalanced: the night's sleep is no longer enough. A stressed child will become a stressed adult. Routines and the opportunity to calm down create security.

You can read a bedtime story or prayer to a child and make sure an adolescent's evening is calm.

We can tell them that it's alright to be unsure and to make mistakes in life, and that they can always turn to an adult for help and not worry.

READING CAN BE MAGIC

The ability to understand life and express oneself is often about words.

We should make a habit of reading to children even when they are very young. Go to the library together and read whatever takes your fancy. You don't have to read the whole book. Talking books are wonderful.

We can hand on books we don't need.

You can enjoy studying books on birds and flowers or an atlas and marvel at what you find together.

DON'T HIT. PERIOD.

Using fear to bring up a child will create anxiety in the child or youngster.

The threat of violence tells a child they are in danger. Punishing by pulling hair, smacking or pinching gives children the message that their bodies are bad. It also teaches in a cruel way that big people can hurt small people. Violence is illegal.

We can break the vicious circle of fear.

You can do something about family violence: encourage the victim to seek a place of safety.

STRENGTH!

Children should not have to "care for" an adult.

As adults, we must look after ourselves. It's important that you keep yourself well and fit. A well rested adult is a better adult. Children understand what it means to be an adult through your example. They will begin to treat themselves as you treat yourself.

You can reserve time for yourself. Rest and do whatever gives you strength. Doing nothing is fine, too.

We can offer to look after a friend's or neighbour's children, to allow them to rest for a moment.

We can accept that the home doesn't have to be squeaky-clean all the time.

THE RESPONSIBLE WORKPLACE

The workplace can be of key importance in the future.

Employers – take on young people if you possibly can. Try and promote the employment of youngsters by all legal means. Becoming familiar with working life doesn't begin if it doesn't begin somewhere.

We can help youngsters in our neighbourhood to find a summer job or similar work.

We can take on young people for jobs like cleaning the backyard and pay them for it. Give them a work certificate for this work, too.

A SMALL INVESTMENT

Many voluntary organizations that do important work suffer from lack of cash.

Get to know these organizations via the internet. If you can't or don't wish to get involved in voluntary work yourself, you can at least help financially.

If you can give money to organizations working with children and adolescents, go ahead! All donations help, even small ones.

We can pull together a pool of friends or colleagues at work and collect money together for a donation.

THE POWER OF VOLUNTARY SERVICE

Many sports clubs and recreational groups need voluntary help.

These associations can often serve as a lifeline for youngsters and be the only places where they feel safe with adults.

We can offer to be a support person, taxi driver, helper, coach or instructor.

We can also get involved in an activity we enjoyed as a child and which is still of interest to us.

TRY, ERR, AND TRY AGAIN

Young people can decide for themselves on reaching the age of maturity. But managing such responsibility takes practice.

The brain is only able to fully understand causal relationships when roughly 25 years old. Risk-taking, managing the emotions, social skills – all need daily practise, through trial and error.

Everyone makes mistakes even if they are trying their best. We must each learn to take responsibility for our actions, to bear the consequences and to say sorry.

Confidence is the ability to get on with life despite our faults and errors. Try, try, try again. Hopes and dreams will continue to exist despite our mishaps. Our mistakes teach us that it's not worth behaving badly. That road doesn't help us fulfill our dreams.

You can explain the difference between right and wrong in the manner appropriate to each age. Help them understand what went wrong. It's also a lesson worth repeating.

Instead of meting out a tough punishment we can rather offer an instructive experience. In so doing, we are giving the young person a new opportunity. We are making them feel worthy of our trust.

We can decide that we'll no longer save a single good word or deed for tomorrow.

NOT EVERYTHING YOU SEE IS TRUE

Everything for sale is packaged to look its best.

Advertisements and commercials are manipulated. For young people whose bodies and self-esteem are just at their most formative, confusion is the likely result. We need to protect children and adolescents from the misleading stories and pictures they will be exposed to on television, in the print media and on the internet. Follow the age limits set for the media.

We can explain that a very ordinary life is good enough. Understanding this helps us be healthily critical of the media. It is our individual uniqueness that makes each of us interesting and attractive.

We can explain again and again that manipulated media photos are not the truth.

We can say to our children and young adults: you're just fine and the "best you" in the world!

We can put children and young people in touch with those media that respect freedom and responsibility of speech.

A CONTACT FOR HOME

If a young person doesn't dare come home, he or she's in danger of something bad happening to them.

Not coming home on time could be a sign that the young person has been abandoned. You must guarantee to them that they can always come home, whatever the situation. Insist that they answer when you call.

We can rely on each other but not blindly.

We can accompany the young person home or make sure they have access to help.

THE WHOLE PACKAGE

Children don't come into this world with a guarantee attached. Their choices can at times be annoying and astonishing.

There will always be surprises, joy and sorrow. That is not the moment to quarrel but to sit down and talk together: to take time out, to make an effort, to do what's needed. It's the moment not to throw in the towel but to lead the young person by the hand to full adulthood. Let's take responsibility and see the job through to completion.

We can decide to stay on their side, come what may.

You can decide to get help, if the situation so demands: from relatives, friends, the school, healthcare professionals, the child protection authorities, the local church or relevant associations.

We can decide that we won't be like those that, when asked for help, are the first to say "speak to someone else". Offer your help if you are at all able and willing.