

HEALTHY LIVING

Nutrition hacks to help keep kids calm

By Sandi Schwartz

We are what we eat. But did you know that what we consume can also either trigger or ease anxiety?

With so many stressors that our children face on a daily basis — from homework to busy schedules to social pressures and bullyings — it's helpful to understand how something as simple as food and drinks can impact their stress level.

Here are three key components of your children's diet to pay attention to if you want to help them live in a more balanced, calm way.

Drink enough water

As one of our most essential natural resources, water provides numerous benefits including improving our health and happiness.

By simply drinking enough water throughout the day, children can minimize feelings of stress and anxiety because water plays such a critical role in how our body functions. All of our organs, including our brain, need water to work properly.

According to Calm Clinic, water appears to have natural calming properties. Drinking water can be soothing, and our body can benefit from the added hydration when we are stressed.

On the other hand, if we are dehydrated, our body is strained and we can become tense and edgy.

Dehydration can even cause symptoms that feel like anxiety, such as dizziness, muscle fatigue, headache, increased heart rate, and nausea. It has also been linked to higher cortisol levels, which trigger stress.

It is so important that we encourage our children to drink enough water to help them stay in balance.

The amount of water a child needs depends on several factors like their activity level and the local weather, but generally children should drink at least six to eight cups of water per day.

Your children will probably need more water if they are participating in sports; it is suggested that they drink a half cup to two cups of water every 15 to 20 minutes while exercising. For specific recommendations, see the Dietary Reference Intakes (bit.ly/3qGUZQs) developed by the Institute of Medicine.

It is not always easy to convince your children to drink plain old water. Try boosting their water intake with these tricks:

- **Keep it handy** — Bring reusable water bottles wherever you go. Pack water in their lunch box and an additional water bottle to have at their school desk to sip throughout the day.

- **Factor in fun** — Buy cups and reusable water bottles with your child's favorite characters on them or in their favorite color to give them a more enjoyable water-drinking experience.

- **Add flavor** — Add berries, watermelon, pineapple, cucumbers, lemons or limes to water. Try using frozen fruit in place of ice cubes or freezing ice cube trays with berries in them to add to their cups.

- **Be a good role model** — Carry your own water bottle with you on the go and drink lots of water at home. The more your children see you drinking water, the more likely they are to ask for it.

Cut out caffeine

Shockingly, about 75 percent of children are consuming caffeine daily, according to the journal *Pediatrics*.

This is quite troubling since caffeine is a stimulant, addictive and has no nutritional value. As the most popular and easily accessible drug in the world, caffeine affects our central nervous system and makes us feel nervous and jittery.

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GOALS!

How to help your child believe and achieve

By Cheryl Maguire

"I want to be on the honor roll," said the student.

"That sounds like a great goal. Let's talk about how to achieve it," I said.

When I was a guidance counselor, I helped students create and achieve their goals. Setting goals are important because it will help children to be successful in school, work or any area of their life.

The founder of JCPenney said, "Give me a stock clerk with a goal, and I'll give you a man who will make history. Give me a man with no goals, and I'll give you a stock clerk."

Here are some tips to help your child to formulate and reach their life aspirations. These examples are related to school, but your child could create goals for sports, social skills, jobs or any other area of their life.

First, motivation

Before creating goals, ask your child what their motivation or reasons for wanting to reach those goals.

This will help them to stay focused and overcome obstacles. For example, if their goal is, "To be on the honor roll" and their motivation is, "To help me get into a good college" you can use this concept to remind your child why achieving these goals is important.

Using pictures or images as a sign of your motivation can help them to stay focused. In this example hanging a picture of a college campus on the wall would help your child to visual it.

How to create goals

Edwin Locke researched goal setting for over 40 years. He found that people who form specific goals had greater achievements than

people with non-specific goals.

When creating goals it is important to have the goal be specific, measurable and realistic. Using these three criteria will increase the likelihood of success. Here are some examples:

Vague vs. measurable

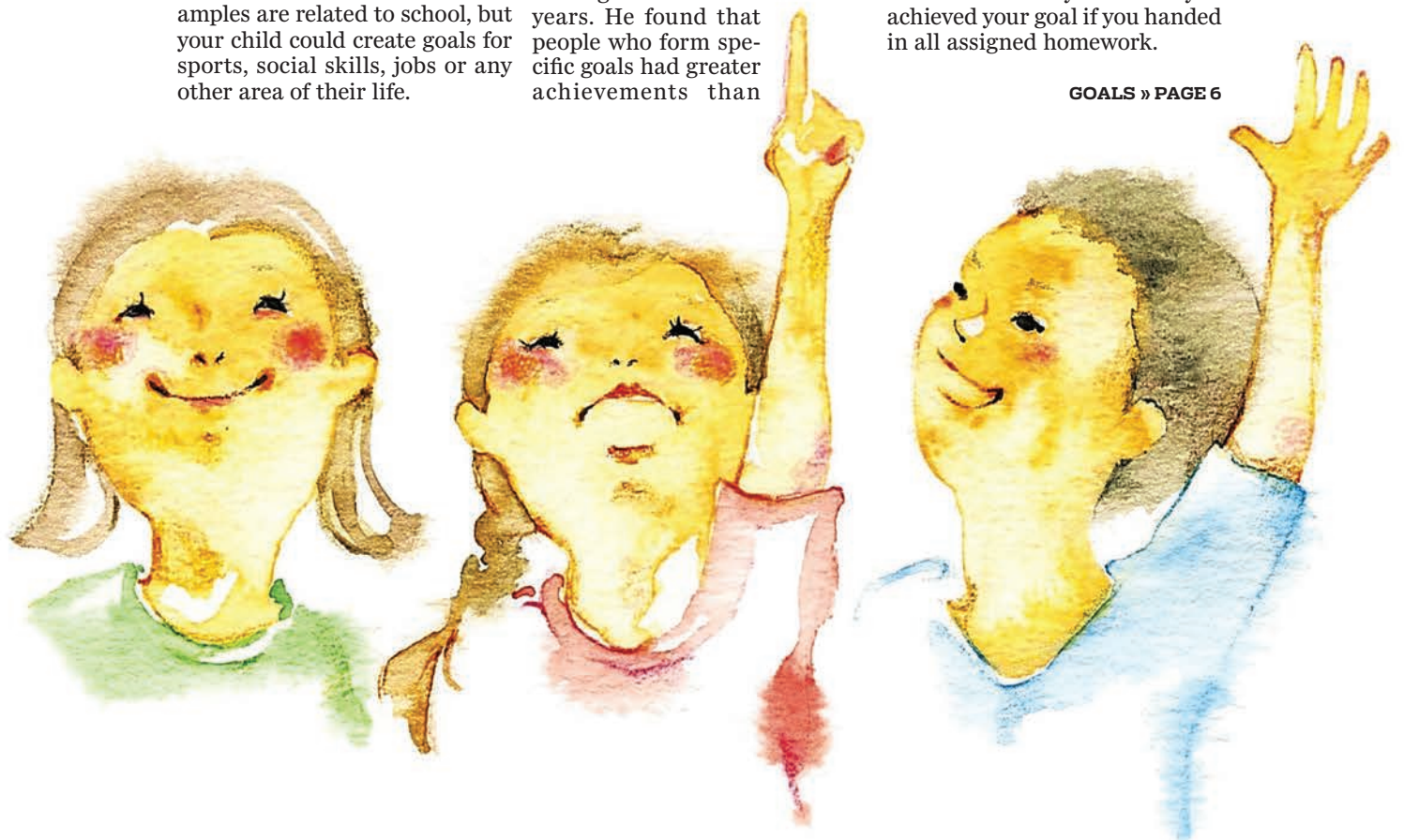
Example of vague goal: I want to get good grades.

Example of measurable goal: I will hand in my homework on time every day for one week.

With the first example, it will be difficult to know if achieving your goals since you didn't define what "good" means. Does good mean receiving a C or an A grade? Is it for all subjects? Do you want to get these grades for one or two terms or a final grade?

In the second example, a time frame of one week is defined so at the end of a week you know if you achieved your goal if you handed in all assigned homework.

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ADVOCATING FOR YOUR CHILD

Medical diagnosis doesn't guarantee access to special educational services

Editor's Note: *With the impact of coronavirus on school operations, it's more important than ever for parents to advocate for the education of their children.*

Families who have children on the spectrum face even more challenges ensuring their children receive the services and educational support they are due. With that in mind, we offer this piece from attorney Adam M. Wasserman, of the Education Justice Law Group. The text is excerpted from Wasserman's writing found at www.educationjusticelaw.com.

By Adam M. Wasserman

Parents are often surprised to learn that a medical diagnosis of autism or other disorder does not automatically entitle a student to special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

Eligibility for special education services is based, rather, on an educational determination of a disability, which includes meet-

ing not just the criteria for a specific disability (such as autism), but also finding that a student is in need of special services.

Understanding the differences between a medical diagnosis and an educational determination of eligibility for special education services can help you become a better advocate for your child.

Medical diagnosis

A medical diagnosis is made by a doctor or other specially trained clinician by using symptom criteria set in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, a book published by the American Psychological Association. Many individuals with a medical diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder were diagnosed using the fourth edition of the DSM.

DSM-IV, as the fourth edition of the manual is called, established specific criteria for diagnosing individuals with three different autism spectrum disorders: autistic disorder, Asperger's disorder, and pervasive developmental

disorder not otherwise specified (PDD-NOS).

In May 2013, the American Psychological Association published DSM-5, which eliminated these three subcategories and grouped all three conditions under the name of autism spectrum disorder.

Diagnostic criteria were also modified, and, going forward, doctors and clinicians will use DSM-5 criteria when determining a diagnosis.

Under both DSM-IV and DSM-5, an individual must meet a specific number of symptoms, including repetitive behaviors and difficulties with social interactions, to be diagnosed.

DSM-IV requires qualitative impairments, while DSM-5 requires that symptoms limit and impair everyday functioning, but this is to be interpreted broadly.

Individualized Education Program eligibility

In contrast, eligibility for an individualized education program,

or IEP, is decided by a team comprised of various school professionals and a student's parents who consider a disability's impact on a child's education.

The team must find that the student qualifies for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

To be eligible, the IDEA requires that a student have at least one of 14 specified disabilities and be in need of special services.

Autism is one of the 14 categories, but the definition of autism varies from state to state.

Though special education eligibility is bound by IDEA, there are no definite rules for determining who is eligible for special education. This is a *very* important concept to understand — it means that under the law, the IEP team has the flexibility to determine if a child qualifies for services.

Criteria states that to qualify for special education services, a child must have one of the 14 disabilities as defined by IDEA and the impact of the disability must

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