

Pediatricians offer 8 goals to parents to 'start the year strong'

December 27 2023, by Robin Foster



New Year's resolutions often center on weight loss and personal lifestyle changes, but setting good parenting goals is also well worth the effort,

pediatricians say.

"This is a great time to take a step back, take a breath and look at how we as a [family](#) taking care of ourselves and each other," pediatrician [Dr. Steph Lee](#) said. "What are we already doing right? Let's celebrate that first. Then, let's think about ways we can improve together and create a list of individual and shared family goals for the new year."

"Maybe this is the year you decide to join a parent's group for support or maybe it's time you said no to some things, if you've felt overextended in the past year," Lee said in an American Academy of Pediatrics [news release](#). "Your pediatrician can help you with your child's health, but we care about parents, too... because when parents are feeling their best, they create a healthy environment for children to thrive."

Lee suggested the following eight goals that could help families thrive in 2024:

- **Get recommended shots.** Vaccines are the best way to protect yourself, your children and other loved ones from the flu, RSV and COVID. Call your pediatrician to make sure your children have all recommended immunizations, and remind your children that good hand hygiene habits help prevent the spread of germs
- **Do good digital.** What are your kids watching on TV and online? Make a family media use plan and try to prevent gaming from becoming an unhealthy habit. Remember that [screen time](#) shouldn't always be done solo. Watch a show or play a [video game](#) together and discuss what's happening. Screen time can become bonding time when adults participate
- **Read together.** For [younger children](#), build it into the bedtime routine. For [older children](#) and teens, share a favorite book and

take turns reading aloud or listen to audiobooks together

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Get outside and explore. Spending time outdoors can be a great mood booster and help families get needed [physical activity](#) and vitamin D. It also gives your child's eyes a healthy break from screens and helps them sleep better at night

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Check your car seat limits. Kids grow fast, and they can outgrow car seats faster than parents realize. Keep children riding rear-facing as long as possible, up to the limits of their car seat. This commonly includes children under 2 and most children up to age 4. See if there are any new car seat laws that may be going into effect in your state in the new year

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Cook as a family. Many families enjoy baking treats together during the holidays. Keep the fun going in the [new year](#). Pick special times to cook together and get children involved, from choosing recipes to buying ingredients at the store. If your child is a fussy eater, this can get them to try new, healthy foods

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Make a family disaster kit. It's scary to think how disasters like blizzards, wildfires, hurricanes or tornados could affect your family, but [extreme weather events](#) are becoming more frequent due to climate change. Being ready is one way to be less afraid. Ask your children what they would want with them in a disaster and assemble necessities like non-perishable foods, flashlights and bottled water

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Mind your mental health. When was the last time you had a check-up? Got proper rest? Depression and anxiety can happen to both moms and dads during and after pregnancy, even up to three years after having a child. The National Maternal Mental Health Hotline is available 24/7 by calling 1-833-943-5746

More information: The American Academy of Pediatrics has some ideas on [resolutions that children and teens can make](#).

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