Parent Power Preschool

Transforming the health & wellbeing of our children

PLANET Youth®

PARTNER Cavan & Monaghan

Guidelines for Parents of Preschool Children

About Planet Youth

Planet Youth is an evidence-based primary prevention project that provides us with the opportunity to improve the long-term health and wellbeing of our children and young people.

Every two years, we survey all of the 15 and 16 year olds in our schools in Cavan and Monaghan and this gives us the information we need to make positive changes for the younger children coming behind them.

You may wonder what this has to do with preschool; however creating solid foundations at a young age such as having good routines and spending quality time together will quickly pay off but also over time will make for happier, healthier children, teenagers, and young adults.

This booklet has been developed to bring some of that information to parents who have children in preschool and to introduce the idea of parents working together more, to improve outcomes for all of our children.

71% of our teens said it's easy to get caring and warmth from parents

51% of our teens are not getting enough sleep

75% of our teens spend two hours or more on social media every day

93% of our teens reported good physical health compared to **79%** for their mental health

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Family Time

Our time is one of the greatest gifts we can give our children and setting time aside each day creates the opportunity and space to chat with them and listen to what they have to say.

Here are just a few good reasons why that is so important.

- It strengthens family connections/relationships
- It improves communication
- It builds children's self-esteem
- It develops positive behaviours
- It can help your child to do better in Preschool
- It is really good for parents too!

Connecting and Interacting

Throughout their lives, it is important that we connect with our children. Building time into each day to really listen to and notice them lets us show them that their experiences and feelings are acknowledged and understood, and builds strong relationships. Take time to cuddle and enjoy the little things together.

Stepping into their shoes and trying to see the world as they see it is a great way to do this.

Some things to do together

Doing things together doesn't have to mean spending money, some of the simplest things are the best.

Regular family meals.

Play dates with their friends helps you and your child get to know other local families.

Play together, try traditional board games.

Spend 10-15 mins daily doing things together.

When times are busy, use a car ride to talk.

Play alongside your child. Follow their interests, go outside, try messy play activities.

How are we doing?

What are we doing well? .....

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What would we like to do better? .....

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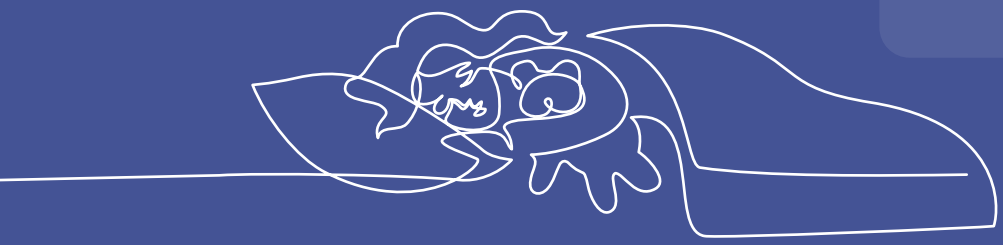
Make a list of things you enjoy doing together

For more information on **Family time**, explore: planetyouthpartner.ie/cavan-monaghan/parents

Sleep and Bedtimes

Children that have regular and good quality sleep have improved attention, behaviour, learning, memory, and overall mental and physical health.

From 2-5 years old, children typically need 11-12 hours sleep. Every child is different, some will need a nap and others may not. Try not to let your child sleep beyond late-afternoon or they may not be ready for their night-time sleep.



How much sleep does my child need?

SLEEP

2 - 5 Years

11-12 HOURS

per 24 hour period

NAPS

2 - 3 Years

will nap for about 30 minutes

3 - 5 Years

may prefer a period of quiet reading or play

Bedtime routine: what works well?

A consistent bedtime routine with a regular bedtime is very important at this age. Following this routine each night means your child will know what to expect. Begin preparation for bedtime in your child's bedroom.

For example, a child who normally goes to bed at 7.30 might have a bedtime routine that looks like this:

6.45 pm:
put on pyjamas, brush teeth, go to the toilet.

7.15 pm:
quiet time in the bedroom with a book and a bedtime story or quiet chat.

7.30 pm:
goodnight and lights out.

Adjust to your child's needs. Some children can take a longer or shorter time to prepare for bed and to get over to sleep.

Relaxing before bed

Reduce screen time and sugary foods and drinks in the hours leading up to bedtime. You can help your child settle and relax for sleep by keeping activities quiet in the hour before bed. For example, you could play gentle music or read a story together. If it is part of your child's bedtime routine, a bath can also help with relaxation.

How are we doing?

What works well at bedtime? .....

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What could be better? .....

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Chat together about what could make bedtime routines better

For more information on **sleep**, explore:
www2.hse.ie/babies-children/sleep

Screen Time

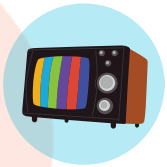
Evidence suggests that if a child spends a lot of time on screens during childhood it can affect many important aspects of their life. Things like sleep, obesity, behaviour, and learning can all be impacted.

However, screens are now part of family life. They are used for staying connected and for entertainment. What is important though is that screens don't overtake family life or prevent us from being physically active during the day. Do not forget to share books and stories with your child. Among other things, books support the development of fine motor skills and contribute greatly to good language and communication skills.

Top Screen Time Tips For Parents

Between the ages of 2 and 5 years a child should have no more than 1 hour of screen time each day.
*This includes all screens: smartphones, gaming devices, tablets, computers and televisions.

1. Rules
Agree on a clear set of rules in your home about screen use and screen time.



2. Screen Free Zone
Having no screens in bedrooms is best.

3. Handing up screens
It's good to have the routine established of handing over screens every evening at a set time. Giving a 5 minute warning will make the hand over easier for your child.

4. Join In
Watch screen content with your child or play their favourite game together. They can learn how to behave online while interacting with you.

5. Parental Awareness/Controls
Ensure you have suitable parental controls in place.

6. Digital Detox
One evening a week try a family digital detox and plan an activity together. Local libraries have a wealth of book and toys to lend!

7. Lead By Example
Your own actions are the most powerful way you can influence your child's behaviour. Be mindful of your own screen use. Be consistent with your behaviour.

How are we doing?

What are we doing well? .....

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What would we like to do better? .....

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Have a chat together about this

For more information on Screen time, explore:
planetyouthpartner.ie/cavan-monaghan/parents
webwise.ie/parents/the-experts/tips-gradually-introducing-technology-child

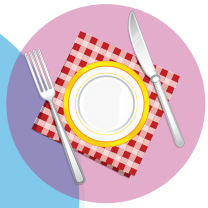
Play, Play and More Play

Play is one of the most important ways that children learn and develop.

Play is an enjoyable way for children to be well, active and happy. Play helps children to be creative and learn at their own pace.

It can be little and often (10-15 minutes daily). Little things add up and have a big overall effect.

What Does Play Look Like?



Make play part of you and your child's everyday routine e.g. set the table, sort laundry.

Get creative together. Children love to play creatively with their parents.

Play can happen anywhere. You do not need a lot of equipment, e.g. finger games, build with junk materials or hide and seek.

Allow time for play. Children can burn more calories and have more fun when left to their own devices.

Trying something new

Shop-bought items/toys are not always best. Encourage children to use natural, everyday items found inside and outside the home.

Try out new hobbies or household activities together.

How are we doing?

What are we doing well?

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What would we like to do better?

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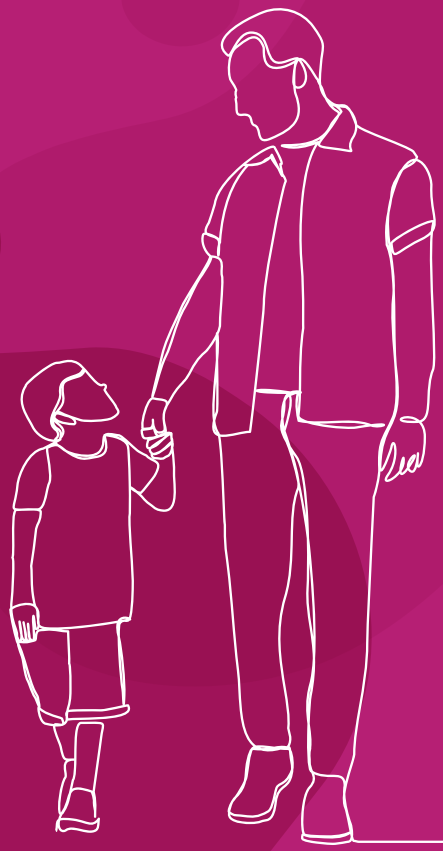
Have a chat together about this

For more information on **Play** explore:
facebook.com/people/NCN-Play-Hub/100088404354693

Making Changes at Home



If there are new things you'd like to introduce, or changes you'd like to make, here are some steps and tips to think about.

6 TOP TIPS

1. Keep it simple
Instead of trying to change lots of things at once, pick one thing you want to work on first.

2. Involve everybody
Sit together and come up with a plan on any change you would like to make as a family.

3. Set goals and write them down
Start small; you can build on these first steps over time.

4. Expect some resistance
Your child may not like new rules or things being different and so they may test boundaries. Understand that this is normal.

5. Give yourself a chance
Changes take time so be patient and don't get discouraged. Keep going.

6. Look for support
Making changes can be difficult, so look for help. A sibling, a friend, other parents or your child's preschool educator can give you suggestions and help provide support. Attending a parenting course is also a great resource.

> **"Sometimes the smallest step in the right direction ends up being the biggest step of your life."**

For more information on Making Changes at Home explore:
planetyouthpartner.ie/cavan-monaghan/parents

Parents Working Together

The support of other parents is really valuable.

Try to get to know the other parents in your child's preschool. Knowing the other parents, networking and attending preschool/community events are all important and a well-known protective factor for our children.

Good parent networks are also an effective way to support children's learning, development and wellbeing.

Parents Committee/Support Group

Parents can achieve a lot to support their child and their child's preschool service by getting involved and coming together to work out shared expectations and boundaries.

Some issues that parents can work together and agree on are:

Birthday parties, presents and cake

Screen time

Play and play dates

Communications

Inclusion in preschool

And so on, it's up to you to decide...

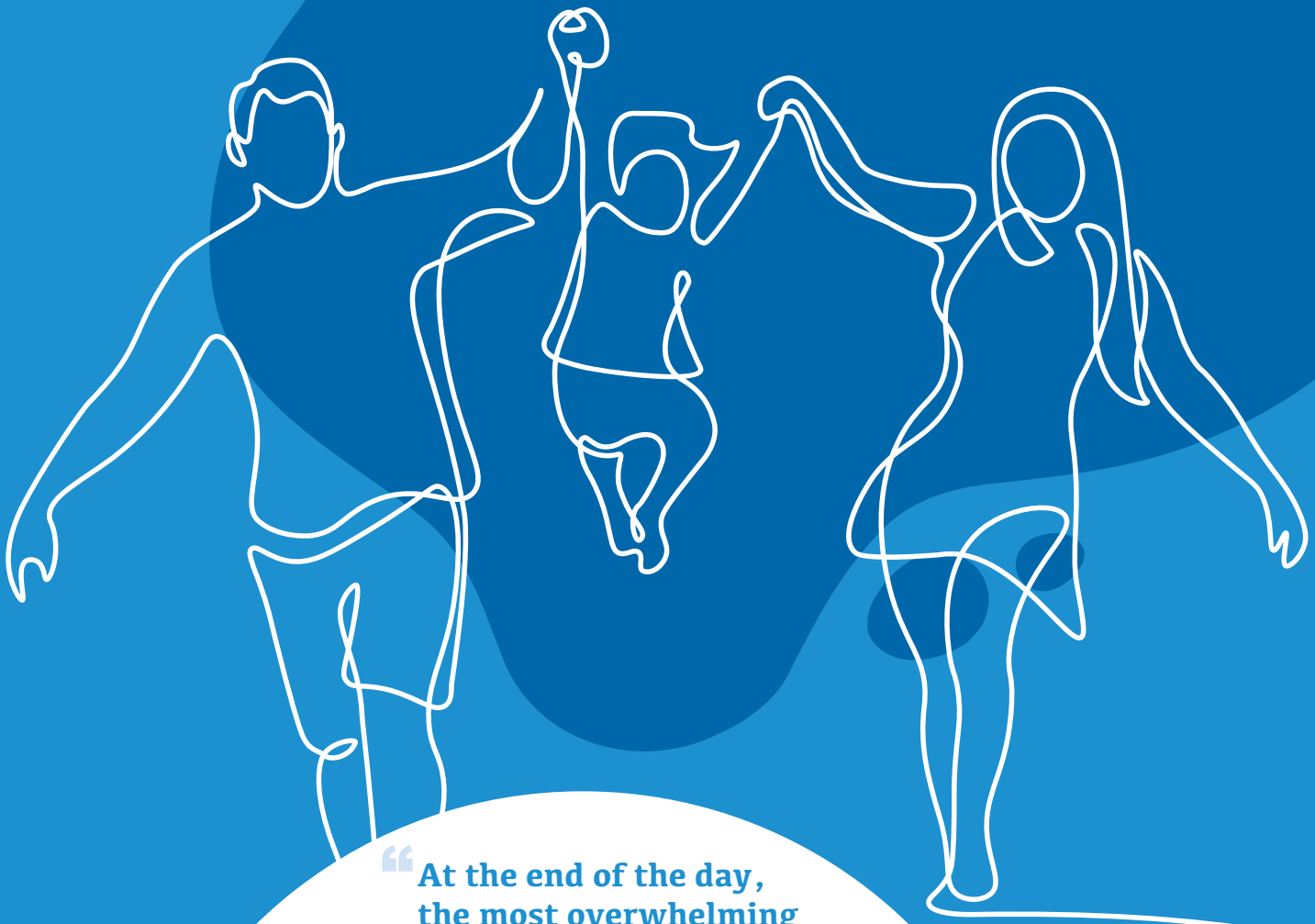
NEXT STEPS

There is an opportunity for class groups of parents to develop this idea a bit further.

By working together, parents can come to a consensus and develop agreements on issues that affect their children.

If, as a parent, or as a preschool educator, you feel this is something that your preschool would like to work on together, then visit the Parent Power section of the Planet Youth website for more information.

planetyouthpartner.ie/cavan-monaghan/parents
facebook.com/parentingmonaghan
facebook.com/parentingcavan



> “At the end of the day, the most overwhelming key to a child’s success is the positive involvement of parents.”

planetyouthpartner.ie/cavan-monaghan/parents

We are grateful to Planet Youth Ireland Galway-Roscommon-Mayo for sharing their original design of Parent Power with the Cavan Monaghan Planet Youth Implementation Group