

The American Counseling Association's "Counseling Corner" Weekly Columns

A Positive Attitude And Your Child's Health

from the American Counseling Association

Hello, cold and flu season. With damp, chilly winter weather, and school contact with all those other little germ factories, it's not that surprising if your child suddenly is coughing, sneezing or worse..

While most of us are well aware of the medical steps to help our child get better, we sometimes forget there are emotional things we can do to help our child, too. This is important because our kids often feel bad about feeling bad. Have your kids ever apologized for being ill, saying, "Mom, I'm sorry I'm sick"?

What can you do? Start with a smile. If you're looking worried and concerned when approaching your ill child, he or she is going to begin worrying about why you look so worried.

Instead of asking, "How are your feeling?" when it's already clear that he or she is not feeling well, try to offer something positive. Tell your child that he or she is looking a little better, or has gotten some of that color back or seems a little cooler. Assure him that your job is to get him well.

One of that best medicines for a sick child, regardless of age, is being generous with your hugs and cuddles. While it can be tempting to plop him or her in front of that TV and just checking in occasionally, offering physical contact that encourages positive feelings of safety brings better results.

Instead of TV time, trying sitting your young child on your lap while reading a story, or maybe spending some time together coloring. If there is to be some TV time, spend at least part of it with him or her, holding hands while watching together.

There's no question that our minds have the power to affect our health. Talk with your child about imagining feeling better and you might find it can actually help him or her feel that way.

You also want to listen to your child. Encourage him or her to talk about what's being felt. If it's something as simple as a tummy ache, you may find the cause to be the stress of the day, not an illness.

None of us ever wants our child not feeling well. When illness does strike, try combining being a health care giver with being a loving, supportive parent who encourages a positive attitude. It really can help your child feel healthier faster.

Counseling Corner" is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org.

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