



Being Present

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As we move into fall, creative meals and cleaning out too-small clothes, shoes and sports equipment may be on the minds of families. Keep reading for tips on positive self-talk too. You know you can do it!

EAT

Most people enjoy the creaminess of macaroni and cheese. Have you tried making it from scratch with your child? Try a do-it-yourself approach to a meal in a bowl featuring mac and cheese. Kids can help with measuring, chopping, stirring, clean-up and other kitchen tasks.

Set Up a Mac and Cheese Bowl Buffet

Place pan of baked mac and cheese on a table or large board surrounded by small bowls with toppings and serving utensils. Each person will create their own bowl by adding a serving of mac and cheese and selecting mix-ins or toppings such as these.

- Chopped tomatoes
- Chopped red or green onion
- Chopped green, yellow or red peppers
- Steamed vegetables (peas, broccoli, carrots, edamame)
- Cooked meat (chicken, pork, beef)
- Bacon bits
- Assorted sauces (barbecue, hot sauce, etc.)

Homemade Macaroni and Cheese



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Preheat oven to 350 F.

Pasta directions: Bring water and salt to a rolling boil in a medium saucepan. Add pasta and cook six to eight minutes. Slightly undercook pasta that will be baked further. Drain pasta in strainer and set aside.

Sauce directions: While pasta is cooking, melt 2 tablespoons butter in a large saucepan over medium heat. Using a whisk, add 2 tablespoons flour and stir for three minutes. Be careful; it burns easily! Gradually whisk in milk. Add onion, nutmeg (if desired) and pepper. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring often, for 15 minutes. Mix cheese together and place in separate container. Remove sauce mixture from heat and stir in 1½ cups of the cheese. Stir in the macaroni. Pour half the mixture into a baking dish and sprinkle on half of the remaining cheese. Top with the remaining macaroni-sauce mixture and the remaining cheese.

Topping directions: Melt 1 tablespoon butter in small pan. Add bread crumbs and toss to coat. Sprinkle over the top of the cheese.

Bake in 350 F oven for about 30 minutes, until bread crumbs are slightly browned and crisp.

Recipe source: Adapted by former intern Sarah Wells from several recipes.

Makes eight servings. Each serving has 290 calories, 11 grams (g) fat, 17 g protein, 32 g carbohydrate, 0 g fiber and 495 milligrams sodium.

- 6 cups water
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- 2 cups pasta or whole-wheat elbow macaroni (8 ounces)

Sauce

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 2 cups nonfat milk
- 1/2 medium onion – chopped finely
- 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg (optional)
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1 cup shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese
- 1¼ cups grated reduced-fat sharp cheddar cheese

Topping

- 1 tablespoon butter
- ½ cup whole-wheat (or white) bread crumbs

CONNECT



Are you mindful of the messages you say to, and about yourself? Work on really listening to how you talk to yourself this month. People who are more optimistic live longer and have fewer health complaints, two good reasons to work at looking on the brighter side of life.

If you are faced with a physical challenge, do you tell yourself “I can do this,” or do you decide you can’t, even before you try? How about a long school assignment? A difficult relationship? Remind family members of a time they were faced with a similar challenge and conquered it or at least did what needed to be done. Help build a can-try spirit in your family members. Maybe you don’t make it to the top of the hill, but in the process, you find your family is positive, encouraging and cheering for you. That can be your win! Search for the silver lining and teach your kids to do the same.

- If you have ANTs (Automatic Negative Thoughts), learn to stop them and make some changes. Use techniques such as asking yourself, is this really important? Will it be important next week?
- Ask yourself, is this negative thought really true? What would you tell your best friend if they were dealing with this negative thought?
- When your child comes home and says their friend didn’t talk to them at school that day, help them consider what else might be going on by taking turns offering positive alternatives.
- Help each other correct all-or-nothing thinking. Listen for the words “always” and “never” as these are generally an exaggeration. “I never get a turn.” “I always have to do the dishes.” Talk about how definitive those words sound. Encourage other words to state the problem, and take steps to fix what is really troubling your child.

For more helpful information, fact sheets and an online screening tool, go to Mental Health America at <https://mhanational.org/>

Savor (the Savings)

Are your closets bursting? “Out with the old and in with the new or gently used” is something to think about this fall. Try on clothes and winter gear now. Have a garage sale, donate the items, provide it to a friend or pack it away for later to use for another child in the family. If you need sports equipment, shop at a store that sells used items. You can always upgrade later if the child enjoys the sport.

Cleaning out closets and drawers on foul weather days and clearing clutter from the garage, shed or other outdoor spaces on lovely fall days can help your attitude in two ways. Getting rid of extras while regaining some space feels good, as does enjoying productive time together indoors and outdoors.



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