

# Family

## Tips to throw a memorable graduation party

Each year, newly minted graduates proudly don their caps and gowns and walk across countless stages to receive their diplomas or degrees. Graduation is a proud moment for students, and that pride is shared by family and close friends who have supported students throughout their academic careers.

Graduation is a milestone worth celebrating. Planning a graduation party takes some effort to ensure an event worthy of this significant moment in a student's life.

### Begin with a theme

Host can select a theme that aligns with the graduate's interests. Consider themes that align with what a new high school graduate plans to study in college, or make the theme all about the career path a recent college grad plans to pursue. Additional potential themes include the grad's favorite movies, his or

her musical interests, cherished hobbies, or travel.

### Set a budget

Establish a clear budget to manage expenses and prioritize key aspects of the graduation celebration. Hosting a party away from home may seem like it would be the more expensive option, but when party hosts factor in rentals of tents, tables, chairs, catering, and other needs, booking a venue may be more affordable. Only by pricing out all expenses and comparing options can graduation party hosts identify their options and determine how much a party will cost and how to budget for the celebration.

### Make the venue interesting

If possible, tailor the venue to the theme. For example, if the graduate is a fan of the ocean and beach, then a beach bonfire party can be a memorable

celebration. Graduates who are fans of attending concerts might appreciate a party that recreates the feeling of a performance. Hire a professional musician, set up stadium seating and create a stage where the performer can have all eyes on him or her. Afterwards, hire a DJ to play music or stream a playlist created by the guest of honor.

### Create a grand entrance

Figure out a way that the graduate can make his or her big entrance to the party to add some drama to the event. Perhaps the lights can be dimmed before placing a spotlight on the graduate? For a sports-themed graduation party, the graduate can run through a breakaway banner like a football team does when taking the field before the opening kickoff. Embrace your creative side to ensure the celebration is one to remember.

### Include fun activities

Dancing, photo booth sessions, scavenger hunts, or even some special demonstration that pertains to the theme can be entertaining activities to keep guests busy.

### Keep the food simple

Keep the graduate's culinary preferences in mind and offer fare that is familiar and tasty. There's no need to offer exotic foods; guests will remember tasty items, particularly if they're well fed. A signature cocktail (or mocktail) also can be a special touch for the party.

If the idea of planning a graduation party on one's own seems daunting, particularly during a time of year when there is a lot of competition for dates and venues, a professional party planner can be an invaluable resource. Then everyone can celebrate the graduate in a way that is fitting and memorable.



## Learning about space

Clayton Anderson, Nebraska's only astronaut, made stops throughout the area and was in Wayne to visit with Wayne Elementary third and fourth grade students. Anderson had an interactive presentation with the students, helping them determine distances from the Earth to the moon and from the Earth to Mars.

# Questions to ask before enrolling in a summer camp

Millions of children spend a significant portion of their summers at camp. The American Camp Association reports that 26 million children enroll in summer camp each year, and many of those youngsters make memories that last a lifetime while building lifelong friendships along the way.

Camps have arguably become even more important in recent decades as more and more households have featured two working parents. Single-parent households also rely on summer camp to keep kids occupied and entertained while school is not in session and Mom or Dad is working. Such situations illustrate how important summer camp can be and underscore the significance of asking the right questions before enrolling a child in camp. In addition to inquiring about hours of operation, insurance and pricing, parents can ask the following questions before enrolling a child in summer camp.

## What is the history of the camp?

A camp that has been in business for decades is not necessarily superior to one that opened more recently, but it's still worth asking how long a camp has been around. It might be easier to determine if a given camp is what you're looking for if it's been around awhile. Such camps may have a significant number of



Google reviews and may even provide testimonials from past campers and parents. A camp that's been around awhile also can share information regarding its return rate, which indicates the number of youngsters who have come back each summer. A strong return rate can indicate campers enjoy their experiences each summer.

## Who is eligible to attend camp?

Some camps restrict enrollment to youngsters within a predetermined age bracket, while others may be exclusive

to legal residents of the town where the camp is being held. Eligibility is not only a significant variable in regard to determining who can and cannot attend a given camp; it's also notable because parents may want their children to attend a camp that will feature some familiar faces. Attending camp alongside classmates or neighbors or teammates can calm kids' nerves and make them more excited about going to camp each day in the summer. But camps open to children from other towns also can be beneficial by allowing children to expand their social networks beyond their own towns.

## What is the experience of camp staff?

Camp directors and staff members spend a lot of time with campers each summer, so it's important that parents ask who these people are, how they're trained and how much experience they have. No business can avoid employee turnover completely, so parents who hold out for a camp that's had the same employees for decades will likely find themselves with an unhappy non-camper come the start of summer. But questions about turnover rate, training and the counselor selection process are viable questions to ask prior to enrolling a child in a particular camp.

## What is the camp itinerary?

Kids might grow bored if camp features the same itinerary each day, and parents might feel such camps are not worth the investment. Ask about the typical camp itinerary, including field trips, daily activities, special events, and entertainment. The more entertaining and fun a camp is, the more likely youngsters are to love spending time there.

## Is physical activity part of the camp?

Many students attend academic camps or camps where they learn to play music or further their existing skills. But parents know that physical activity is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle and a great way to make the best of the summer sun. When considering a specialty offering like band camp or STEM camp, ask about what role, if any, physical activity plays in a typical day.

## Three fun ways to involve kids in April Fools' Day

Fun is a common component of many holidays, but perhaps no holiday is more exclusively devoted to merriment than April Fools' Day. Fun might be the lone demand of April Fools' Day, when people of all ages can engage in some light-hearted pranks and share a few laughs with loved ones.

Families can join in the fun this April Fools' Day by embracing the many ways to involve children in the merry pranking that makes the first day of April so enjoyable. The following are three ways to get kids in on the action this April Fools' Day.

### Prank a parent

Pranks are tailor-made for the young and the young at heart, and kids might be particularly engaged if they're enlisted to pull a fast one on Mom and Dad. Parents can work behind each others' backs to prank their spouse, enlisting the services of the kids to pull off a prank the whole family can get a kick out of. Whether it's removing shoelaces from Dad's sneakers and putting them back in backwards or hiding plastic insects on or around Mom's car keys, pranking a

parent can be just what kids to embrace the spirit of April Fools' Day.

### Make the Day Auto-Correct Day

Another fun way to get kids in on the prank-filled fun is to enlist their help in setting a ridiculous auto-correct on a parent's or older sibling's phone. Ask kids to offer an alternative to a phrase a parent or sibling often shares via text message, and then go into the phone and set it up so that oft-used phrase automatically auto-corrects to the phrase kids offered up. For example, if an older sibling loves to text "lol," make that phrase automatically auto-correct to, "I will do my brother's (or sister's) chores."

### Prank the youngsters, too

Of course, kids can not only be prank perpetrators, but also recipients of April Fools' Day tomfoolery. Parents can incorporate children's love of dessert into their April Fools' Day pranking, swapping out the filling in a cookie or the icing on a piece of cake with mashed potatoes. Watch as youngsters take a bite of cake only to realize that sugary icing they love so much is actually garlic mashed potatoes.

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**Friday, Mar. 14: NO SCHOOL - Spring Break**  
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**Wednesday, Apr. 2, 9, 16, 23, & 30: 2:00 Dismissal**  
**Friday, Apr. 18: NO SCHOOL - Easter Break**  
**Monday, Apr. 21: NO SCHOOL - Easter Break**  
**Saturday, May 17: Graduation**





# What parents should know about mental health issues and children

Mental health issues were once stigmatized to such an extent that many people dealing with problems like anxiety and depression felt uncomfortable speaking about them or even seeking help. Though some may still find it difficult to acknowledge their mental health issues, society has made great strides in regard to destigmatizing mental health conditions and recognizing how common such problems are.



and those that suggest a potential mental health problem. Parents know that children's behaviors and emotions can be challenging to deal with, but that's often a normal part of a child's development that youngsters outgrow with age. The NIMH notes that time is a potential indicator of a mental health problem, and encourages parents to seek help if a child's challenging behavior or emotions persist for weeks or longer. Kids will not outgrow negative behaviors overnight, but persistent problems that extend for weeks or months could be indicative of something beyond normal developmental hurdles.

Behaviors and emotions that cause distress for a child or the child's family are another potential indicator of a mental health issue. In addition, behaviors or emotions that interfere with a child's ability to function, be it at school or at home or among friends, may indicate the presence of a mental health issue.

## What if signs suggestive of mental health issues are present?

The NIMH advises parents to be proactive if they notice signs of mental health issues in their children. Parents can begin by contacting their child's teacher and asking how the child behaves in school, both in the classroom and on the playground. A child's pediatrician also can be a valuable resource. Share the particular behavior(s) or emotion(s) that are causing concern with the child's pediatrician. The pediatrician may note if the behavior is part of normal development or may recommend a mental health professional to further address the issue.

## Is an evaluation really necessary?

The aforementioned stigma associated with mental health issues may make even the most well-intentioned parents hesitant to seek an evaluation. But evaluations can set children on a path to improved mental health, and it's worth reminding parents that issues like anxiety and depression are quite common and nothing to be ashamed of. In fact, a large-scale 2023 study published in the journal *The Lancet Psychiatry* found that one out of every two people in the world

will develop a mental health disorder in their lifetime. Evaluation is one of the initial steps toward overcoming mental health issues, and children may exhibit different signs that an evaluation is necessary based on their age. For example, the NIMH notes that young children who often seem fearful or worried and those who have frequent tantrums or are irritable much of the time may benefit from a mental health evaluation. Older children who engage in self-harm

behaviors or those who diet or exercise excessively can benefit from an evaluation. Additional age-based indicators that an evaluation may be necessary can be found at [nimh.nih.gov](https://nimh.nih.gov).

Many mental health issues begin in childhood. Parents can keep an eye out for indicators of mental health issues and work with their children's health care providers to determine the best course of action.

# How to celebrate Earth Day as a family

Protecting the planet is a year-round responsibility, and that obligation is emphasized each April 22 when the world celebrates Earth Day. In 1969, an oil spill in California killed thousands of sea animals and contributed to significant ocean pollution. This environmental disaster inspired Gaylord Nelson and Denis Hayes to establish Earth Day in 1970 as a global event to raise awareness about environmental issues.

Every year around a billion people are motivated to protect the planet for Earth Day. Families can work together to do their part in protecting the environment. Here are some ways families can commemorate Earth Day together.

## Clean up the neighborhood

Families can work together to make their neighborhoods cleaner. Litter in streets or parks can end up in waterways after being carried into storm drains by rain or wind, according to the Marine Debris Program. A 2016 report from the United Nations found that nearly 50 percent of cetacean and seabird species have ingested litter. Picking up litter from local neighborhoods is a relatively easy way for families to do their part on Earth Day.

## Walk and bike more

Families can learn about their carbon footprints and how their lifestyle choices affect the environment. One way to cut down on carbon emissions is to walk or bike to school and to skip the car whenever possible.

## Visit a local park or wildlife habitat

Families can experience the beauty of nature and be reminded about humankind's responsibility to protect habitats and wildlife at a park, sanctuary or wildlife area. When visiting, it's important to stick to trails and remain mindful of leaving no trace behind.

## Create reusable bags

Individuals can turn old T-shirts and other clothing into reusable cloth shopping bags. There are no-sew project instructions online that offer tips about how to repurpose old clothing that is no longer worn into something Earth-friendly.

## Plant more greenery

It doesn't have to be a tree, but families can visit a garden center to purchase seeds, seedlings or full-grown shrubbery to enhance their landscapes with more Earth-friendly plants. CO2METER, a carbon dioxide monitoring website, says plants and trees, combined with oceans, remove about 45 percent of the carbon dioxide emitted by human activities each year. A typical hardwood tree can absorb as much as 48 pounds of CO2 per year.

## Embrace locally grown foods

Families can plan meals together that feature in-season foods purchased at a local organic farmer's market.

Earth Day is a time when families can work together to help protect and preserve the planet.

Parents may be surprised to learn that many mental health issues begin in childhood. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, anxiety disorders, depression and other mood disorders can start to develop long before children leave for college. Recognition of that reality may compel parents to learn more about children and mental health, including signs of potential issues and how to determine if certain behaviors are indicative of a burgeoning issue or a part of normal development.

## Identifying mental health issues in children

The NIMH notes the difficulty in distinguishing between behaviors that are a normal part of a child's development

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# Notable events that make spring even more fun

Spring is widely considered a season of rejuvenation. The warmer post-winter air that is a hallmark of spring certainly adds an extra hop to the steps of millions of people each year, but a number of notable events also lend a festive feel to this beloved time of year.

## St. Patrick's Day

Though the holiday itself occurs on one of the final days of winter, St. Patrick's Day celebrations tend to take place throughout the month of March.

Many communities host St. Patrick's Day parades after the spring equinox, and celebrations of the patron saint of the Emerald Isle have a reputation for being especially convivial. A St. Patrick's Day celebration at a local Irish pub featuring live music and food that would be at home on any dinner table in Ireland can mark the perfect way to close out winter and usher in spring.

## March Madness

Basketball fans get their fix and then

some each March, when the 68-team, single-elimination NCAA Tournament tips off. Affectionately known as March Madness, the college basketball tournament that unfolds over three weeks from mid-March to early April features its fair share of buzzer beaters, upsets and, of course, busted brackets. Regional contests ensure that just about everyone across the United States is within driving distance of the exciting, if maddening, action.

## Major League Baseball Opening Day

Another hallmark of early spring, Opening Day of the baseball season embodies the seasonal spirit of rejuvenation. Baseball fans across the globe know that every team has a chance come Opening Day, when millions of fans return to stadiums to see their favorite teams kick off the six-month campaign.

## Spring flower festivals

Spring flower festivals dot the landscape every year. Many occur between mid-March and mid-April and serve as beautiful, awe-inspiring reminders of the blooms that make spring such a colorful and enjoyable time of year.

## Kentucky Derby

The annual "Run for the Roses" is

held on the first Saturday in May and attracts more than 100,000 visitors to the race track at Churchill Downs. Often referred to as "The Fastest Two Minutes in Sports," the Kentucky Derby serves as the first leg of the Triple Crown and inspires men to don their best seersucker suits and women to showcase their most elaborate, and typically largest, hats as they sip a mint julep and watch the thrilling race unfold.

## Memorial Day weekend

Memorial Day is an American holiday that honors and mourns United States military personnel who died while serving in the nation's Armed Forces. Though there's a solemnity to Memorial Day events that is not present with other notable celebrations each spring, the weekend itself also has become a time to gather with friends and family for backyard barbecues. Beachside communities also have come to see Memorial Day weekend as the unofficial beginning of summer.

There are no shortage of events each spring that serve as reminders of why this time of year is so special and enjoyable.

## Spring Soccer Registration

Open Online & In Person  
Registration Cut off - March 16  
Practice/Game Schedule is:  
Apr. 1, 3, 8, 15 & 17



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## Make baking fun for the entire family

Family fun can entail many things, but producing delicious food in the kitchen is a popular way for adults and children to get together and let loose. Teaching kids how to follow a recipe and produce a finished meal imparts important lessons in everything from measuring to math to science. Cooking also shows kids that follow-through can lead to delicious results.

Any recipe will do when cooking with kids. However, baking desserts may be particularly enticing to youngsters who won't want to wait to dig into a sweet treat. Plenty of things can enhance the enjoyment factor of baking for children. Families can explore these ideas to make baking more fun.

## Accept the mess

Expecting baking to be a tidy process is setting yourself up for failure. Kids, particularly younger children, may not have the dexterity needed to keep everything neat and clean. Prepare for spills, flour trails on counters, poorly cracked eggs, and sticky situations. Keep a damp cloth nearby and go with the flow. Dress baking participants in clothes that can get soiled, or invest in matching aprons.

## Assign age-appropriate tasks

Young kids will want to get in on the action, so figure out which tasks they can safely handle. These include measuring ingredients, mixing with a spoon, scooping batter into pans or tins, and adding chips or sprinkles to items. Adults should man electrical equipment and knives and handle tasks that

involve a stove.

## Let kids choose flavors and colors

Cater the recipe to the kids' likes and tastes. They will be more likely to participate fully if the end result features flavors they enjoy.

## Explore the sensory experience

Enable kids to feel the different textures of the ingredients, from the coarse sugar to the silky flour. Talk about how ingredients change in texture when they are blended together and baked. Let kids watch baking soda bubble when an acid is added to it.

## Try smaller tools

Invest in a set of kid-sized baking tools, such as spoons and spatulas, to make them easier to maneuver with small hands.

## Encourage creativity

Let children come up with funny names for their creations, and don't cringe if they combine food colors or shapes that might not turn out so pretty. Be encouraging of the process and the results so kids want to continue baking in the future.

## Listen to upbeat music

Music can help set the tone of the baking experience. Have children pick some of their favorite songs and let that playlist run in the background. Bounce and dance along while ingredients are being combined.

Baking is an activity that family members of all ages can take part in. The process is more fun for children with some planning.



# How can a living trust can help me control my estate

**Contributed by George F. Phelps CFP**

Living trusts enable you to control the distribution of your estate, and certain trusts may enable you to reduce or avoid many of the taxes and fees that will be imposed upon your death.

A trust is a legal arrangement under which one person, the trustee, controls property given by another person, the trustor, for the benefit of a third person, the beneficiary. When you establish a revocable living trust, you are allowed to be the trustor, the trustee, and the beneficiary of that trust.

When you set up a living trust, you transfer ownership of all the assets you'd like to place in the trust from yourself to the trust. Legally, you no longer own any of the assets in your trust. Your trust now owns these assets. But, as the trustee, you maintain complete control. You can buy or sell as you see fit. You can even give assets away.

Upon your death, assuming that you have transferred all your assets to the revocable trust, there isn't anything to probate because the assets are held in the trust. Therefore, properly established living trusts completely avoid probate. If you use a living trust, your estate will be available to your heirs upon your death, without any of the delays or expensive court proceedings that accompany the probate process.

There are some trust strategies that serve very specific estate needs. One of the most widely used is a living trust with an A-B trust provision. The purpose of an A-B trust arrangement (also called a "marital and bypass trust combination") is to enable both spouses to use the applicable estate tax exemption upon their deaths, which shelters more assets from federal estate taxes.

Before enactment of the 2010 Tax Relief Act and the higher federal estate tax exclusion, some estate planning was involved to ensure that both spouses could take full advantage of their combined estate tax exclusions. The latest major piece of tax legislation is the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which was signed into law on December 22, 2017. This Act doubled the federal estate tax exclusion (indexed annually for inflation); in 2025 the federal estate tax exclusion is \$13.99 million (up from \$13.61 million in 2024). In 2026, the exclusion is scheduled to revert to its pre-2018 level. Typically, it involved creation of an A-B trust arrangement. Now that portability is permanent, it's possible for the executor of a deceased spouse's estate to transfer any unused exclusion to the surviving spouse without creating a trust.

Even so, many states and the District of Columbia still have their own estate and/or inheritance taxes (Maryland has both), many have exclusions of less than the federal exclusion amount, and most do not have portability provisions. By

funding a bypass trust up to the state exclusion amount, you could shelter the first spouse's exclusion amount from the state estate tax.

Thus, A-B trusts may still be useful, not only to preserve the couple's state estate tax exclusions but also to shelter appreciation of assets placed in the trust, protect the assets from creditors, and benefit children from a previous marriage. In most cases, however, when couples have combined estate assets of \$27.98 million or less in 2025 (up from \$27.22 million in 2024), they might be better off just leaving everything outright to each other.

A living trust with an A-B trust provision can help ensure that a couple takes full advantage of the estate tax exclusion for both spouses. When the first spouse dies, two separate trusts are created. An amount of estate assets up to the applicable exclusion amount is placed in the B trust (or bypass trust). The balance is placed in the surviving spouse's A trust (or marital trust), which qualifies for the estate tax marital deduction. This then creates two taxable entities, each of which is entitled to use the exclusion.

The B trust is included in the taxable estate when the first spouse dies. But because it doesn't exceed the estate tax exclusion amount, no estate taxes will actually be paid. The surviving spouse retains complete control of the assets in the A trust. He or she can also receive income from the B trust and can even withdraw principal when needed for

health, education, support, or maintenance.

Upon the death of the second spouse, only the A trust is subject to estate taxes because the B trust bypasses the second spouse's estate. If the assets in the A trust don't exceed the applicable exclusion amount, no estate taxes are owed. At this point, both trusts terminate and the assets are distributed to the beneficiaries, completely avoiding probate.

While trusts offer numerous advantages, they incur up-front costs and ongoing administrative fees. The use of trusts involves a complex web of tax rules and regulations. You should consider the counsel of an experienced estate planning professional and your legal and tax

professionals before implementing such strategies.

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# Crafts are a lucky bet for St. Patrick's Day celebrations

While it certainly can be fun to visit a pub and raise a pint in honor of St. Patrick's Day on March 17, such efforts are not necessarily a family-friendly way to commemorate the patron saint of the Emerald Isle. Thankfully, there are plenty of activities for children and adults that focus less on imbibing and more on hands-on fun so everyone can be involved equally. Crafting often fits that bill.



The following are some unique craft ideas to celebrate the spirit of St. Patrick's Day. Many of these projects include items you may already have around the house.

## Shamrock key chain

Find your favorite salt dough recipe and use a shamrock cookie cutter to cut out the shape of a lucky clover. Poke a hole at the top where you can connect a key ring. When the shamrock is dried and hardened, paint it in a vivid shade of green. Attach keys, a school ID or anything else to the key ring, or simply hang it from a backpack.

## Leprechaun hats

With a little green paint, green card stock and construction paper in black and gold, anyone can create miniature leprechaun hats. Paint the toilet paper tube green, then wrap the bottom in a strip of black and place a gold "buckle" made out of a rectangle of gold or yellow paper. Glue the tube to a round of green

card stock, and voila, you have a perfect leprechaun hat for decorating a room or table.

## Easy rainbow craft

Grab some fruity O-shaped cereal and let kids sort the colors into red, orange, yellow, green, and purple. Glue rows of these colored cereal rings onto a piece of white cardstock to make the rainbow. At the base of the rainbow, glue some cotton balls to serve as the clouds.

## Beaded bracelets

Visit a craft store and stock up on small

green, white and gold beads, as well as some bracelet wire or poly string. Spend a few hours making bracelets that everyone can wear with their green attire for St. Patrick's Day. The bracelets also can be given as gifts.

## Shamrock slime

Those who can find green glitter glue and shamrock confetti can turn their favorite slime recipe into one worthy of St. Patrick's Day.

## Rainbow cereal bars

Incorporate some of the marshmallows

from a favorite "lucky" cereal brand into the mix of rice cereal treats to give them a rainbow-inspired upgrade.

## Pots of gold

If you have leftover plastic witches' cauldrons from Halloween, paint them gold and use them to store foil-wrapped chocolate coins. Otherwise, tie green helium-filled balloons to the cauldron to make a perfect centerpiece.

St. Patrick's Day crafts get the entire family in on the fun of celebrating the Emerald Isle.

# How social media affects kids' mental health

Social media has become such a key component of most people's lives that it is easy to think that it as always been there. SixDegrees, created in 1997, was the first social media site similar to the format known today. When SixDegrees shut down in 2001, Friendster, LinkedIn, MySpace, and Facebook soon took root. The University of Maine reports there are now 4.8 billion social media users worldwide, representing 92.7 percent of all internet users. And according to the American Family Survey 2023, 96 percent of parents say their kids have access to at least one social media platform. Many use multiple online platforms daily.

Although social media may have originated as a means to bring people together, there are many who argue that it actually does the opposite. Instances of cyberbullying, which is a form of online harassment, have grown as social media has become more pervasive. Some experts believe that mental health concerns are an unexpected side effect of increased social media use, says Johns Hopkins Medicine. In fact, in the spring of 2023, United States Surgeon General Vivek Murthy, MD, MBA, released an advisory that suggested social media is harmful to young people. In 2024, Dr. Murthy called for a surgeon general's warning label on social media not unlike the warnings on cigarette packages.

How might social media affect children's mental health? Here are some of the main concerns.

## Changes in a developing brain

According to the Surgeon General's report, children's brains go through a highly sensitive period of development between the ages of 10 and 19,



when feelings of self-worth are forming. Frequent social media use may affect these feelings as children compare themselves to others they see online. In addition, functions like emotional learning, impulse control and emotional regulation may be affected.

## Development of depression

Johns Hopkins Medicine says research has demonstrated there are high rates of depression attributed to very low social media use and very high social media use. Finding a healthy balance might not be as easy as it seems.

## Addiction

There is some evidence that children become addicted to checking social media, which can lead to addiction-like behaviors in other areas. According to The Addiction Center, a Web-based substance abuse resource, addiction to social media is driven by an uncontrollable urge to log on that impairs other important areas of life. Fear of missing out (FOMO) is another threat to kids' mental health.

## Low self-esteem issues

Children and teenagers who compare themselves to others' carefully curated online profiles (which usually are not telling the whole story) can develop feelings of inadequacy and body image issues.

## Exposure to inappropriate content

Social media may introduce children to content and images that are not appropriate for their age levels and capacity to understand and interpret. According to Dr. Murthy's report, deaths have been linked to suicide- and self-harm-related content, such as risk-taking challenges or asphyxiation content. Viewing this content normalizes these behaviors for some youngsters.

Although plenty of good can come from social media, parents are urged to exercise caution when giving children access to these platforms, which can affect kids' mental health in negative ways.

# Add to the Calender!

March 22 - Prom

March 24 - Value Up Assembly

March 25 - ACT Testing (Juniors Only)

March 28 - WSC Regional Science Fair

March 29 - Greater Nebraska Science Fair

March 31 - L & C Art Show

April 2-4 - FFA State Convention

April 8 - NECC 8th Grade Career Day

April 10 - Spring Concert

April 17 - Early out at 1:50pm

April 18 & 21 - NO SCHOOL

April 24-25 - NJAS Science Fair

April 28 - TCNE Athletic Awards Night @ Allen

April 30 - Kindergarten & Preschool Roundup

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# What is a quiet room? (And why you should create one at home)

Home for most people is a sanctuary that offers comfort, familiarity and a place to gather with family and friends. Although home can be a welcoming place, with so many people in the average household humming along from day to day, it may not always be the most serene setting.

From teenagers playing video games

to video meetings in a home office to dogs barking at the postal worker doing daily rounds, there are plenty of potentially distracting sounds in and around a home. Lawn care workers with their mowers and blowers also may contribute to ambient noise. A dedicated quiet room can be beneficial for anyone, and most especially for people who experi-

ence sensory issues.

## What is a quiet room?

A quiet room is a space where a per-



son can enjoy peace and quiet in a distraction-free environment. According to designer Rachel Cannon, “a quiet room is a sanctuary from the stimulation and overwhelm that we encounter every day.” A quiet room may go by various names, including a mindfulness room or cozy cove, but the common goal is to remove as many sensory distractions as possible so that an individual can disconnect from the outside world and reap some calming benefits. According to School Specialty, LLC, an education resource provider, schools are now providing quiet rooms for over-stimulated students, and homeowners can take similar cues to create these relaxing retreats at home.

## How to create a quiet room

The first step in establishing a quiet room is to identify a location that is far away from the main action of the household. A bedroom, basement, nook in the garage, or even an attic can be a good spot for a quiet room.

Soundproofing the space can make it even more inviting. Sounds will bounce off of walls and floors, but acoustic panels can help muffle noises. If acoustic panels are not in the design plan, thicker draperies, wallpaper, carpeting, and wall art can help counteract echoes and noise infiltration. Soft furniture also can absorb sound.

Small rooms work better as quiet spaces, as such areas can feel more cozy. Less is needed to decorate the space if it is on the smaller side. Bring in warm, soft lighting and soft decor. A sound machine playing favorite ocean or natural sounds also can mask outside noises even more.

Establish rules that govern how the quiet space is to be used. When someone is inside the area, they should not be disturbed. If possible, use the quiet room during naturally quiet times of the day. Keep the room stocked with books, journals, crafting items, or whatever it is you need to unwind and relax.

Quiet rooms can be special retreats homeowners use to escape the hustle and bustle of a household.

# Tips to quiet colic

Crying is a normal outlet for babies to express what they cannot verbalize. Infants cry when they are hungry, uncomfortable, tired, and/or have soiled diapers. But for some babies, crying may be something that seemingly does not end no matter what frazzled parents do. In such instances, an infant may be experiencing colic.

Colic can fluster new parents. A baby that cries for hours on end can exact an emotional and physical toll and interrupt parents’ schedules and sleep. Connecticut Children’s Pediatric Health System says newborns are diagnosed with colic if they cry for more than three hours a day; the crying lasts for more than three days a week; and this pattern has been going on for more than three weeks. Babies experiencing colic often clench fists or curl their legs while crying. Babies’ bellies often are tight and their faces can redden as well.

Managing colic can add to the stress new parents already feel. Although colic is a phase that infants typically outgrow, parents may wonder if there’s anything they can do to quiet the crying. Although colic can’t be avoided, there may be some ways to avoid colic triggers.

## Food diary

Breastfeeding mothers should realize that everything they eat and drink gets passed on to the baby and can affect them through breastmilk. Caffeine and chocolate can act as stimulants, and dairy products and nuts may be causing allergies. Certain medicines also can cause reactions in children. Keeping track of what you consume and the

response it causes in your newborn may offer a clue about what to avoid to make the baby less fussy.

## Formula changes

If you are formula feeding, experimenting with another brand might help. Babies can be sensitive to certain proteins in formulas. Also, slow down feedings by using a nipple with a smaller hole. Feeding the baby smaller meals more often also might help with colic.

## Car ride

Sometimes the soothing hum of the engine and the tires on the road can help settle a newborn. This tactic also has a secondary benefit of getting you and the baby out of the house for a change of scenery.

## Change of position

Sometimes holding a baby differently can alleviate a colic episode. Lay baby across your arm or lap while you massage your child’s back. If you suspect colic is from gas, hold your baby upright or rock the child using an infant swing.

## Take a break

FamilyDoctor.org says although colic can seem scary, it doesn’t cause any short- or long-term problems for your baby. Placing your newborn in a crib or another safe space and letting the crying fit go on for a bit while you take a break is fine. Parents also can seek help from a friend or loved one and go out for some time to escape the crying.

Colic can affect any baby and often seems like it will never end. Fortunately, it’s usually a temporary condition that resolves by age four months, and parents can try various strategies to cope until colic is a distant memory.

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