

A Positive Attitude Can Help A Sick Child

from the American Counseling Association

Winter greatly increases the odds for a young child to become ill. Whether a case of strep, a touch of flu, or simply the common cold, damp, chilly winter weather combined with lots of school contact with other children is the recipe for a sick child.

While most of us know the medical steps to take for a cold or the flu, too often we ignore the emotional things we can do to help our child get better. If you've ever heard your young child apologize for being ill, then you'll begin to understand that kids often feel bad about feeling bad.

So, how to change that? Start by smiling. If you look too concerned and worried when you approach your ill child, he or she will also worry about why you look so worried.

Similarly, instead of asking, "How are you feeling?" when you can see that the answer will be negative, offer some positive comments. Tell your child that he or she is looking a bit better, or maybe has some more color back, or seems a little cooler.

And don't overlook the healing powers of hugs and cuddles. Plopping a sick child in front of the TV and checking in now and then is tempting, but offering physical contact that encourages positive feelings of comfort brings better results. Try putting him or her on your lap and reading a story. Do some drawing or coloring together. If there is some TV time, spend at least part of it with your child, holding hands or giving hugs while watching together.

Also try to encourage healthy thinking. Our minds have the power to affect our bodies. Talk with your son or daughter about imagining feeling better and it can help them actually feel that way.

You also need to listen to your child. Even if it's just a tummy ache, encourage him or her to talk about it and you may discover some stress of the day being described that is the actual cause of the physical pain.

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 person 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

###

words: 380