



*Words Can Work:
Kids and Healthy Lifestyles*

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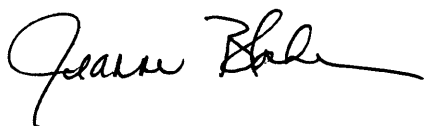
Note From the Author

Obesity among adolescents has tripled in the last 30 years. Preadolescent obesity has more than quadrupled during that same time period. Source: US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Thousands of programs and Web sites address childhood obesity. They emphasize healthy eating and regular exercise, and advise families how to eat nutritious foods on a limited budget. These are important steps in the right direction. But we can do more.

Words Can Work: Kids and Healthy Lifestyles (12-minute DVD) will help you talk with kids about the factors that contribute to the obesity epidemic. Many adults understand their responsibilities when it comes to talking with kids about topics such as tobacco and other drugs. Talking about the nutritional value of various foods, and the benefits of fitness and healthy weight, is just as important to children’s well-being. But since this can be a more delicate undertaking, parents and other caring adults often avoid these subjects altogether.

Talking openly and effectively about issues related to healthy weight supports young people form new habits that can create lasting change. We are confident that viewing and discussing *Words Can Work: Kids and Healthy Lifestyles* offers the information and strategies you can use to help raise a healthier generation of children.



wordscanwork.com

At wordscanwork.com, you can learn about other *Words Can Work* booklets and DVDs that help young people face challenges growing up. You can read *Issues and Answers* columns in which young people, parents, and experts share their experience dealing with obesity, bullying, substance abuse, depression, and more. Schools and communities, and youth-serving, parenting and healthcare organizations internationally use *Words Can Work* resources. Also read about Jeanne Blake’s dynamic multimedia presentations for parents, educators and other professionals who work with youth and families.

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Showing *Words Can Work: Kids and Healthy Lifestyles*

Words Can Work: Kids and Healthy Lifestyles is appropriate viewing for parents and other adults in kids' lives. You may want to share the video clips with young people as well. They can be used with groups of adults in schools and in the workplace and community settings. The program can also be viewed and discussed at home.

You can view the program in its entirety or in segments. We recommend watching and discussing one segment at a time. You can pause on the screen graphic between each segment and use the questions in this guide to lead a dynamic discussion.

To help you facilitate discussion, each question offers a suggested answer. Keep in mind that these answers are just a starting point. Parents and other caring adults will want to consider their own experiences as well as their unique relationships with the young people in their lives, and modify these conversations accordingly.

The content of *Words Can Work: Kids and Healthy Lifestyles* is for informational purposes only. It is not intended to replace professional advice. For specific issues, please consult a medical or health professional.

Before Viewing the Program

Prepare participants for viewing the program by discussing the following:

Ask participants:

- Obesity among adolescents has tripled in the past 30 years. What are some factors that contribute to young people being overweight or obese?
- What are some ways being overweight or obese affects young people physically and emotionally?
- How can parents and other caring adults help the kids in their lives achieve and maintain healthy lifestyles?

Physical Activity

👉 Introduction

It's recommended that children get at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day. Let's see how increasing physical activity affected Khaaliqa's overall well-being.

View Khaaliqa's story. Approximate time: 4 minutes

👉 Begin discussion by saying

Let's discuss how Khaaliqa changed when she became physically active.

👉 Ask participants

- Research shows overweight and obese children are almost twice as likely to be bullied than peers who are at a healthy weight. How did Khaaliqa's mother Michelle support her when she was bullied for her appearance?
Answer: Michelle pointed out Khaaliqa's positive attributes such as intelligence.
- How did Michelle succeed in getting Khaaliqa to be more active?
Answer: Michelle explained that if Khaaliqa were more active, she'd feel better physically and emotionally. She also pointed out that Khaaliqa is a role model for her siblings, which further inspired her to get moving.
- Khaaliqa's father Christopher keeps the focus on her accomplishments, rather than her appearance. Why is this important when addressing weight-related issues?
Answer: When you want to encourage children to exercise, comments about appearance can backfire. Remember the ultimate goal: to improve children's health and how they feel, rather than how they look.
- Khaaliqa and her father play basketball together. In addition to becoming more physically fit, what are other benefits they enjoy?
Answer: They spend time together and talk. It strengthens their relationship and increases Khaaliqa's self-confidence.
- How has Khaaliqa benefitted from physical activity?
Answer: Khaaliqa is doing better academically, is more involved with activities in and out of school, and her self-esteem has improved. Khaaliqa also feels more energetic.

👉 Remind participants

Your words and actions can support children in becoming more physically active.

Nutrition

👉 Introduction

Nearly one-third of American children ages four to 19 eat fast food every day, resulting in about six extra pounds per year for each child. Source: Children's Defense Fund In addition, sugar-sweetened beverages are the largest source of added sugars in the diet of U.S. youth. Source: CDC

Let's listen as Keron tells how learning about nutrition changed the way he eats and how that affects him.

View Keron's story.

Approximate time: 3 minutes

👉 Begin discussion by saying

Let's discuss how learning about nutrition changed Keron's life.

👉 Ask participants

Keron learned about nutrition from a mentor at a youth organization. What does this suggest about the role caring adults play in children's healthy lifestyles?

Answer: All adults have opportunities to influence children in developing healthy habits. That's why it's important to know the words and strategies you can use to have these positive conversations.

- Keron says he ate fast food because it's inexpensive and tastes good. How did John help him learn to make healthier food choices?

Answer: When John taught Keron that various foods affected how he felt, Keron was willing to eat nutritious foods he'd never tried before.

- Why did Keron give up soda and drink water instead?

Answer: Keron learned that soda is full of sugar (approximately 10 to 12 teaspoons per 12-ounce can). John explained that sugar in soda causes your energy to surge and drop. Keron realized he didn't like how eating too much sugar made him feel.

- John doesn't make food choices a "do-or-don't" issue. Why is this important when encouraging young people to eat healthfully?

Answer: Young people may resist absolutes. They may be more willing to try a gradual approach to changing their habits.

- Keron says John's tone is one reason he responds positively to John's messages. What can we learn from this observation by Keron?

Answer: When talking with young people, be aware of what you say and how you say it. John avoids being critical of Keron. Rather, his tone is supportive and encouraging.

👉 Remind participants

You can help children develop healthier lifestyles by talking with them about nutrition, learning together, and introducing new foods that are tasty and nutritious.

Healthy Weight

👉 Introduction

Chloe's doctor said her BMI (Body Mass Index) was high. BMI is one measure of whether a person's weight falls within a healthy range.

👉 Begin discussion by saying

Let's discuss how Chloe achieved a healthy weight.

View Chloe's story.

Approximate time: 4 minutes

👉 Ask participants

- What did Chloe learn when she gave up potato chips?
Answer: Chloe realized she craved potato chips less. This demonstrates that with time, habits can change.
- How does Chloe's mother Tracy explain that occasional treats are OK?
Answer: Tracy says a treat eaten every day, is no longer a treat but a lifestyle.
- Tracy avoids suggesting that certain foods will make Chloe fat. Instead, how does she guide her to make healthy choices?
Answer: She asks Chloe to consider whether the food she's considering is healthy. This allows Chloe to think about the nutritional value of food and then make the healthiest choice.
- How do Chloe's comments about choosing to eat a salad instead of a burger show she's learned to make healthier choices?
Answer: She clearly understands that she will feel better physically and mentally when she eats healthier food.
- What does Chloe understand about the importance of healthy breakfasts?
Answer: That when she eats a healthy breakfast, she thinks more clearly. Children who skip breakfast are more likely to get sleepy at school, have a harder time paying attention, and eat more empty calories later in the day. Kids who eat breakfast tend to score higher on tests and perform better in sports. Source: Kaiser Permanente
- Through conversations with her parents, Chloe learned she's responsible for her health. How may this be an ongoing benefit?
Answer: Making smart choices about her health is likely to extend to decisions that will protect Chloe's overall well-being.

👉 Remind participants

We can all support kids in developing healthier lifestyles. We can encourage positive changes in our family. We can advocate for healthier food and beverage choices in schools and in youth programs, and for safe places for kids to play. Together, we can help to reverse the epidemic of childhood obesity and raise a healthier generation of children.

Jeanne Blake

Jeanne Blake is the host and producer of *Words Can Work: Kids and Healthy Lifestyles*. She is the creator of *Words Can Work*®, and president of Blake Works Inc. and Family Health Productions, which produce multimedia about the public and mental health challenges young people face growing up. Blake is an affiliated faculty member of the Division on Addictions at Harvard Medical School and a trustee of McLean Hospital, Harvard's largest psychiatric facility. As a television medical journalist, she earned awards for her reporting about health and medicine, including the Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Journalism Award. She has appeared on *Oprah*, *The Today Show*, *The Cristina Show*, and CNN, and has been featured on National Public Radio and Bloomberg Radio.

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