



ABCs of Being Smart: H Is for Health and Happiness

By Dr. Joanne Foster

It may sound trite but it is nevertheless true that we need *health* and *happiness* in order to thrive. In this column, I look at what contributes to children's well-being (of body and mind), so as to enable them to flourish. As you read these H words, think about what you can do to encourage kids to be health-conscious and to feel good about themselves and their day-to-day experiences—all of which will have an impact on how they learn and grow.

Harnessing Health

- **Help**—asking for assistance is not a sign of weakness. In fact, everyone needs help at one time or another.
- **Hurrying**—we live in a complex and ever- changing world where people tend to scurry and often struggle to keep pace. Sometimes we have to learn to slow down and teach kids to do likewise, showing them how to be resilient if, in haste, we stumble along the way.
- **Holistic**—there are so many body parts and systems all working in sync. However, when one part goes out of whack, things can go awry. Help children understand the importance of keeping their bodies tuned. This includes organs, limbs, musculature, and so on—as well as the mind (awareness, spirit, emotions, and intellect).
- **Heart**—our brains make us unique, but our heart's pumping is at the core of what keeps us going. Hearty and nourishing foods provide the nutrients for a strong circulatory system, which in turn fuels power to exercise thought and take action. Children can be taught to make the right kinds of healthy food choices throughout the day so they feel energized and ready to learn.
- **Habits of mind**—effort, perseverance, and practice open up possibilities for heightened development and a healthy mindset for learning.
- **Hercules**—this mythological hero far surpassed all mere mortals in size, strength, and skill. He lost (and later regained) his sanity. Even the strongest characters are not always hale and hearty, and may have issues that tax their well-being.
- **Honesty**—it's best if children have someone they trust and with whom they can talk to

about their ups and downs, concerns, relationships, schooling, and every day lives. Bottling things up is not healthy.

- **Hollingsworth**—in the 1920s, Leta Stetter Hollingsworth made significant contributions to the field of gifted education by focusing on both the academic and social and emotional needs of gifted learners. Her work is still highly regarded today.

Harnessing Happiness

- **Humor**—is important to a child’s development, as a means to communicate with others to establish relationships, as an outlet for emotions, and as a way to cope with or take control of stressful situations. It can irritate, empower, enliven, and even change the mood of an entire room. Humor is, indeed, a funny thing.

- **Hope**—actor Christopher Reeve (aka Superman) stated these words, “Once you choose hope, anything’s possible.” His strong message provides inspiration to anyone who needs help in acquiring a positive outlook.

- **Home**—is a safe haven; a place where children can relax, feel content, and connect with family members.

- **Honor**—respect children’s choices, preferences, decisions, interests, and areas of strength—and also their areas of weakness.

- **Harvard**—just because students are smart doesn’t automatically mean that they will be happy at an Ivy League institution. The key is to find the program that suits the individual.

- **Harmony**—help children learn the value of teamwork, a collaborative spirit, and a sense of community, and to appreciate the satisfaction and fun that can be had by co-creating with others.

- **Hobbies**—enjoyable pursuits that can be a release from the rigor of academics and also provide a different kind of learning opportunity.

- **History**—Albert Einstein said, “The only source of knowledge is experience.” What we learn about the past informs the future. Historical accounts of happenings and humanity are like footprints to follow—or not—when navigating what lies ahead.

- **Hooray!**—give children positive reinforcement and acknowledge their efforts.

- **Hugs**—and smiles—convey more than words alone.



Author's Note

Joanne Foster, EdD is co-author (with Dona Matthews) of the award-winning book *Being Smart About Gifted Education* (2009, Great Potential Press), and *Beyond Intelligence: Secrets for Raising Happily Productive Kids* (in press, House of Anansi). She also is a parent, teacher, consultant, researcher, and education specialist. Dr. Foster has more than 30 years of experience working in the field of gifted education. She has written extensively about high-level development and has presented on a wide range of topics at conferences and learning venues all across North America. She teaches educational psychology and gifted education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. She can be reached at joanne.foster@utoronto.ca or visit her website at www.beyondintelligence.net