



# CELEBRATING YOUTH DAY

**Youth Day commemorates the Soweto youth uprising of 16 June 1976, an event that profoundly changed the socio-political landscape in South Africa.**

**In 1975, protests started in African schools after a directive from the then Bantu Education Department that Afrikaans had to be used on an equal basis with English as a language of instruction in secondary schools. The following year, on 16 June 1976, the student uprising began in Soweto and spread countrywide.**

**It's estimated that 20,000 students took part in the protests. The original government figure claimed only 23 students were killed, but other sources suggest the numbers who died were in the hundreds and the number of wounded was estimated to be over a thousand people.**

**To honour those who lost their lives, 16 June is now a public holiday in South Africa, named Youth Day.**

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## Celebrating the value of young people in South Africa

The youth of a country or nation is important for several reasons. Not only do they represent the future of our country and set the path for the coming generations, but they will also be the leaders of the future. This is why it is so important to develop and invest in and empower our young people.

### How we can support our youth

One of the cornerstones is education. Access to quality education and a thorough understanding of the world we live in is so important. By providing young people with equal access to valuable resources and knowledge, we can enable them to have a fair and balanced perspective both now and in the future. Educating our youth also allows us to boost the economy for growth and sustainability.

We can support the youth by implementing a couple of useful practices in your own household, company or community:



## 01 Encourage them to develop their minds

We learn from being curious about the world around us. This is probably why a study by online retailer Littlewoods.com found that the average British mom is required to answer about 300 questions a day. According to the results, this amounts to more questions per hour than what the Prime Minister needs to answer. Reading to your young children is one of the most valuable ways to expand their minds and satisfy their curiosity. It also boosts their thinking skills, concentration and memory, and develops their language and vocabulary skills. As a family, opt for board or card games, puzzles, or interesting documentaries instead of binge-watching television and enjoy the results of their brain development.

It's also important that they understand how they can make a difference to their world. Encourage them to donate their old toys and clothes. Discuss as a family how and where you want to donate your time. Teaching children how to volunteer their time or ideas to help a community in need is an important skill they will use as an adult.

## 02 Empathy, free of prejudice

As children of the Rainbow Nation, we need to acknowledge and be open about our history and the journey we have had as a country. This is particularly true when we teach our children on how to treat other people and respect diversity. In many areas of our society, issues like racism, prejudice and inequality still pose a challenge to us living in a free, open society. Children need to understand they have a responsibility to shape the future, and break down all forms of prejudice.

To facilitate ease of understanding on matters like diversity, heritage, belonging and acceptance, the following books can help parents and educators teaching young children:

- *All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold
- *This Is How We Do It* by Matt Lamothe
- *Handa's Surprise* by Eileen Browne
- *Where Are You From* by Yamile Saied Mendez
- *Sulwe* by Lupita Nyong'o



## 03 Teach healthy habits

Remember that your children take their cues from you. Your actions today will have an influence on what behaviour gets passed on to them. According to a paper published in the journal *Science* from the researchers from the University of Adelaide, human eggs and sperm don't just carry genes. They are also coded with genetic memories that can affect the health of an embryo.

"Transgenerational epigenetic effects interact with conditions at conception to program the developmental trajectory of the embryo and foetus," the paper read, "ultimately affecting the lifetime health of the child."

This means that certain habits can be carried through from parents to their children through DNA.

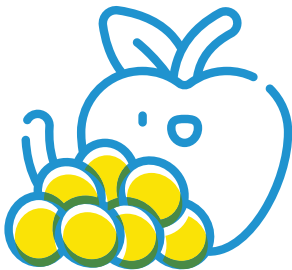
If there are changes you need to make as a family to enjoy a healthier lifestyle, take it one step at a time. The following simple habits are easy and practical:



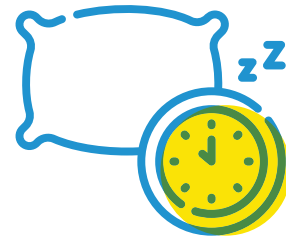
Exercise regularly as a family. Encourage all the members to join, as this can make it more fun. Find out what your family enjoys, and discover new ways to develop fitness.



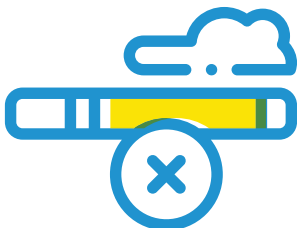
Teach your children simple nutritional health benefits from an early age. Explain why they should eat certain food in simple terms, such as protein building muscles and healthy carbohydrates providing energy.



Buy healthy treats for the house instead of sugary ones. Opt for things like dates, dried fruit, sweet fruits such as mangoes, lychees, strawberries and grapes to satisfy a sweet tooth.



Encourage a regular bedtime routine from a young age.



If you're a smoker, you need to stop.



Involve them in cooking, and try to opt for healthy meals. This empowers children and gives them confidence, and will prevent them from opting for fast food when they need to leave the house later on.



## 04 Encourage them to develop good mental health

Today's children tend to grow up in a much more stressful environment, with parents who experience much more stress than their grandparents did. As a result of social media and more access to media in general, they will be exposed to global issues like international conflict, global warming, environmental destruction, social bullying and death at a young age. If not addressed, this can easily result in feelings of confusion, anxiety, and hopelessness. According to a report by Psychology Today, 'eco-anxiety' is also becoming an issue among young people and children, because they witness environmental destruction on a massive scale but feel powerless to do something about it.

You can help by providing them access to positive information and encouraging them to learn how to deal with their emotions in a healthy manner.

We live in a time of great disruption, but it can also be a time for tremendous change and growth. There is a lot of positive change happening, but it tends not to receive the amount of coverage negative news does. Search for organisations or individuals who are making a positive difference in the world and expose your children to their efforts. Try to limit the amount of screen time they have, and the amount of media they consume. Family discussions about their concerns and dreams for the future can be very helpful, and allow children to experience safety in the first community they will ever know.

Remember, pushing young people from the back isn't effective. You need to walk beside them and support them in their development. By allowing healthy growth, we can invest in today's generation so that it can be better than the one before.

To quote Mary McLeod Bethune, "We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends."

***If you or your loved one needs support during this time, reach out to your ICAS EHWP via your toll-free number to seek counselling support. Alternatively, download the ICAS On-the-Go App and login with your Company App Code.***

Toll-free:

*(from land and mobile phones)*

Or request a call back: **\*134\*905#**

Applicable to you and those who live under your roof



### References:

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