



Part II -On the Move – Physically Active Strategies for Parents and Children

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In the face of increasing obesity rates, and declining physical activity schools and homes, how can we encourage this generation's children to move more?

The following are some possible strategies that I have typed into an index card format. Pre-K educators and caregivers have suggested that "pocket notes" such as these can be kept in their vest pockets when they need a quick, ready to use idea. The pages can be laminated, cut apart, and then filed into a file box, attached to a key ring, or any other way that keeps them where you can use them.

Balls and Balloons

Balloons and beach balls are cheap and easily obtained. I encourage children to bounce them up in the air and then use a different part of the body to hit the balloon/ball back up in the air. It takes some coordination and thought to try to hit the ball with an elbow/knee/shoulder/ankle instead of just using the hands!

Balloons or beach balls in a children's parachute are fun to bounce up and out – this takes teamwork and is a great activity for the whole family!

Put a ball on a dish towel or other piece of cloth of similar size, and two people (one on each side) try to bounce the ball and catch it in the cloth.

Some discount stores carry balloons that "light up" when you inflate them for fun, night-time backyard fun!



Very young children have to be supervised if they are playing with balloons – one "bite" into a balloon could aspirate a balloon down the airway!

Towels, Scarves, and Other Scraps of Material

Towels or pieces of material that are long enough to pin on the shoulders or loosely tie in front make wonderful **superhero capes**. It's hard not to run faster, leap higher, and spin around quickly when wearing a super cape! With some supervision, children can personalize their capes by print their names or decorate using fabric pens.

There's something magical about scarves. Sway, shake, or jiggle – everything is more fun when you're making the scarf "dance in the air". Scarves can be juggled, mashed up into snowballs, used as flags, or whatever creative ideas children devise.



Ask your local drapery store for left-over window sheer scraps

Bubbles

When buying bubble wands, choose the really BIG ones (available at most Dollar Stores) that make huge bubbles and encourage children to use big, sweeping movements to create the bubbles. I have used these with many, many children and it's always a big hit!

Bubbles blown out of doors in the cold of winter form and then shatter!

Find a recipe for homemade bubble solution and make it cheaply. It's also a good "science" experiment for children. Is homemade solution just as good as the store-bought kind?

"There are 1400 minutes in a day. Use some of them for poetry... and some of them for play."

Jump ropes for more than jumping!

Stretch a jump rope out as far as its length on the lawn or indoors; have the child stand with both feet on one side and then step the outside foot over the rope crossing over so that the legs temporarily make an “X”; then step the inside foot over. Continue “wacky walking” (that’s what I call it) down the length of rope. This is a great crossing-the-midline activity which (I tell the children I teach) makes “the brain smarter.”

- This activity can be done forwards and backwards
 - You can do the “wacky jump” too – just jump side-side on two feet
- What letters, shapes, numbers, can you make with a jump rope. Each child or adult makes one and then everyone else guesses what shape, number, or letter it is.

Thoughts which do not get into the muscles, never truly possess the mind.

Activity Walks

Pedometers are instructional in many ways; you can, of course, keep track of the number of steps you take in a day – or, you can go for a walk with your child and estimate how many steps it is to the mailbox. Then, walk there and check if you were correct. How many steps is it around the block? The goal is to make it fun – and increase the number of steps each day!

When you go for a walk with children, have them to show you their best skip, gallop, jump, hop. valuable in dance and sports. Encourage them to jump over the cracks in the sidewalk, balance-walk on short curbing, or (at the mall) leap from one darker tile to the other. Those locomotor skills are also the building blocks of dance and sports.



Model what you believe. If we “walk the walk” rather than “talk the talk” children are more apt to follow our examples.