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BACK TO SCHOOL, SLIM TO SCHOOL

As parents, we are responsible for the environment in which we raise our children—emotionally, physically, psychologically, socially and spiritually. That responsibility is so huge; the enormity of the endeavor we embark upon once a child is born is hard to grasp. All the years our children are home before spreading their wings and beginning the next chapters of their lives, our children are listening to us, watching us, and soaking it all in. We simply must strive to do everything possible to get it right. Nothing is as important for a child’s emotional and physical well-being as is good health ... and the eating habits that contribute to it.

One in three children is now overweight or obese—a frightening statistic. The number of overweight and obese children who take medications for chronic diseases has jumped dramatically. Data shows increases in pediatric prescriptions for high cholesterol, high blood pressure and hypertension, and more kids are now being treated with drugs for diabetes, sugar maintenance and insulin resistance. It’s a fact, too, that most of the increases in drugs for diabetes is seen in overweight and obese girls, no doubt a factor in more girls having erratic menstrual cycles, leading to hormonal disturbances, more diagnoses of PCOS, which itself leads to a whole slew of medical issues, including infertility problems. On top of all this are the emotional ramifications of obesity, confirmed by the increase in prescription drugs for depression amongst overweight and obese girls. The American Liver Foundation says that about 5% of obese children have nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, caused by too much body fat, especially belly fat.



With few exceptions, overweight kids have overweight parents—and overweight parents are frequently in denial about their child’s weight. Either they refuse to acknowledge it, or rationalize the extent of it, or think their child will slim down as they grow up. If you are an overweight parent, do NOT think that your weight is OK with your child. Slim kids don’t like having overweight parents. They are embarrassed by it. They also feel insecure because overweight parents have greater health risks, and are less active in their kids’ lives. Overweight kids don’t like it either; with no role model, they feel inhibited to speak to an overweight parent about how they feel about being overweight. They can’t ask for proper lifestyle guidance because they don’t believe their parents can help them.

If you are an overweight parent, be honest: Do you like what you see in the mirror? Will your child be happy growing up overweight like you? Will your child be healthy? Will your child blame you for the food and weight issues that will undoubtedly be a lifelong battle for them? You are responsible for grocery shopping, for cooking and preparing meals, for the eating habits that will be cultivated in your children. If you are an overweight parent, it’s time to begin the journey to a healthier, slimmer life, and to do so in a manner that resembles the way you, and your child, can eat for the rest of your lives.

This year, don’t let back-to-school preparation be only about buying your children new clothes and school supplies. Make it a priority to get them ready for a slim and healthy school year—this year and beyond.