

Help teenagers resolve to care for their bodies

Many people's New Year's resolutions are related to their bodies and how they treat them. Although resolutions are often unrealistic and short-lived, it's helpful to regularly remind ourselves that God wants us to take care of the bodies he created. When the Bible refers to our bodies as temples (1 Corinthians 6:19), we usually associate that with the need to abstain from immoral sexual activity. But God also wants us to nurture our "temples" by giving them proper rest and nutrition.



Teenagers are notorious for late-night study sessions and parties, as well as for wavering between the extremes of junk-food indulgence and harsh diets. And that behavior takes a toll. Most experts say teenagers need about nine hours of sleep a night, but many get only about seven. Lack of sleep, according to researchers, contributes to physical and psychological problems among young people, from forgetfulness and a lack of coordination to depression and increased drug use.

Kids' busy schedules also lead to poor eating habits and a lack of exercise. An estimated 30% of young Americans are obese. On the flip side, many kids—especially girls—feel a constant need to limit calories, leading to serious eating disorders.

God wants us to treat our bodies well, not out of vanity but so we can use them and our gifts to serve him. Read on to discover ways to help your teenagers be good stewards of their bodies.

Have your teenagers become walking zombies? Follow these tips to help them sleep better and feel more rested:

1. Establish and stick to a routine bedtime for kids, even if they insist they're too old for limits.
2. On weekends, don't vary the sleep-wake routine by more than two hours.
3. Challenge kids to reduce how often they use cell phones and electronic media at night.
4. Talk more often about the value of sleep and remind kids of the consequences of sleep deprivation (the same way you remind them of the consequences of drug abuse or smoking).
5. Adjust your family's schedule so kids can get to bed closer to a normal bedtime. For example, try to eat dinner earlier.
6. At home, use lower, softer lighting in the evenings and maximize the amount of light in the morning hours.
7. Curb caffeinated drinks—they screw up sleep even if kids consume them early in the day.
8. Encourage more exercise, especially if teenagers aren't participating in sports.

Pulse

Many of today's teenagers suffer from a lack of nutrients and quality shut-eye:

- More than half of male teenagers and more than two-thirds of female teenagers say they regularly skip breakfast.
(American Dietetic Association)
- Forty percent of the calories that American children and teenagers consume are "empty," and experts say parents often set poor food-choice examples.
(NHANES)
- Of teenagers who say they're unhappy and tense, 73% say they don't get enough sleep at night.
(National Sleep Foundation)
- At least once a week, 28% of teenagers fall asleep during class, and 22% fall asleep doing homework.
(National Sleep Foundation)



Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

Help teenagers evaluate their habits by discussing these questions:

1. How well do you think you treat your body? What, if anything, does how you treat your body say about your feelings toward God?
2. How often do you feel tired, and how does that affect your performance in different areas?
3. What would you have to change to get more sleep?
4. How healthy is your typical diet? What obstacles stand in the way of you getting proper nutrition, and how can you overcome them?



Focus on Prayer

PRAY THAT:

1. Your teenagers will care for their bodies as precious gifts from God.
2. Your teenagers will make proper rest and nutrition priorities in their daily lives, despite busy schedules.
3. You can set good examples for your teenagers in these areas.
4. Your family views healthy sleeping and eating habits as an act of worship to God, our Creator.

Verse of the Month

“Don’t you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? ... So you must honor God with your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

It’s easy to think, “This is my own body; I can treat it how I want to.” But God asks us to be good stewards of our amazingly complex and wonderful bodies, which he made. Respecting our bodies and our physical needs is a way of respecting and honoring God.

Going Deeper

At SimplyYouthMinistry.com, youth ministry expert Jim Burns writes about the importance of solitude and rest—lessons that apply to Christians of all ages.

While preparing some New Year goals, I realized there are some areas of my life I wish someone would’ve talked to me about when I was just getting started: solitude and rest. The more I investigate “successful” leaders who are making a long-term difference, the more I realize much of their effectiveness comes from healthy personal decisions, not raw talent. As busy as these people are, they still manage to find times of physical and spiritual renewal. Here are two areas I’m working on:

Solitude—The Old Testament Sabbath is a form of rest, reflection, and change of pace. Even God rested one day out of seven! A “solo” is a time away for extra time with God. When I go on a solo, I try to be away for about five hours. I bring my Bible, journal, and pen. I read, pray, journal, sing, worship, and walk. I’ve even been known to take a short nap! I want my solo to take place in nature, so I go to the beach, a park, a lake, or somewhere else I can be away from people and in God’s creation. It’s a time of reflection and worship. The purpose is to refresh me so that when I’m with people, they’ll have all my attention.

Rest—If you aren’t taking at least a 24-hour period of rest each week, most likely your primary relationships are out of order and you aren’t functioning with as much Christ-honoring passion as you’d wish. If God can rest one day, then why can’t you? Rest heals; rest soothes; rest gives us perspective. Without a definite time of rest each week, our lives become more and more confusing and disordered. If you can’t finish all you need to get done in five or six days, then you’re doing too much and most likely aren’t listening to God’s Spirit in your life. Join me this year in creating more margin in your life and being more purposeful about resting.



MUSIC SPOTLIGHT



Mainstream Artist

Background: This singer, rapper, and producer is one of the world's most influential musicians. He's won 12 Grammys, and his new album is garnering wide acclaim. West is known for interrupting Taylor Swift at the Video Music Awards and for saying, after Hurricane Katrina, that President Bush didn't "care about black people."

Albums: *My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy* (2010), *Graduation* (2007), *Late Registration* (2005), *The College Dropout* (2004)

What Parents Should Know: West is a mixture of talent and immaturity. Unlike some stars, though, he's admitted his mistakes—as he did with both Swift and Bush. But West's albums are full of foul language and sexuality.

What Kanye Says: "In my moment of frustration, I didn't have the grounds to call him a racist," West says about Bush. "We as human beings don't always choose the right words."

Discussion Questions: Why is it so hard to apologize—even when we *know* we're wrong? How have people reacted to apologies you've made? Read aloud Numbers 5:5-7. Why does God think apologizing is so important? What might happen if we don't apologize? When Christians have an apologetic spirit, how does that reflect on God?

Christian Artist

Background: Chris Tomlin, winner of 16 Dove Awards, is a popular, prolific modern-worship leader. His songs include "How Great Is Our God" and "Indescribable." Tomlin caught the ear of Passion Conferences founder Louie Giglio, and Tomlin has joined Giglio at the church he started in Atlanta.

Albums: *And If Our God Is For Us...* (2010), *Hello Love* (2008), *Arriving* (2004)

What Parents Should Know: Tomlin's work with Passion and Giglio shows his heart for young people. His musical formula is mostly anthem-like praise ballads that start slowly and build to an emotional crescendo. But he's good at what he does.

What Tomlin Says: The song "I Will Rise" came from a conversation about the need for "more songs like the hymn 'It is Well' that can be sung as worship and hope at a funeral; to be able to find words to say and sing in that moment of sorrow when you lose someone you love."

Discussion Questions: How has death touched you? Are you afraid to die? Why or why not? Read aloud 1 Corinthians 15:51-57. How does Jesus give victory over death—and to whom? How is death like a transformation? In what ways does this Scripture passage change your perspective about your own death and other people's deaths?

FILMWATCH

Movie: *The Green Hornet* (releases Jan. 14)

Genre: Action/Adventure

Rating: PG-13

Synopsis: Seth Rogen plays a man who lives for parties, until his father mysteriously dies. For the first time, he sees the opportunity to do something meaningful: fight crime. But that means he's now a vigilante.

Discussion Questions: When people dislike how authorities are handling a situation, should they take justice into their own hands? Why or why not? Read aloud Isaiah 56:1. If justice is so important to God, why doesn't he intervene and stop injustice? How can we support and preserve justice and still remain under earthly authority? How can you, as an individual, champion justice?

