

## The 4 R's – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Repair

As children reach kindergarten and early grade-school age they become more aware of the wider world beyond home, school and their neighborhood. If you haven't already done so, this can be an excellent time to teach your child about the environment, and how you can work together to go green as a family. There are many ways that your growing child can contribute to the greening of their world and beyond.

Make a family commitment. Convene a family gathering and talk about the need and value of **recycling**. A strong commitment to the environment is an important value in any family, and **recycling** is a good way a family can make a real difference in your community.

Explain to them that we can all do something to **go green**. Talk with your child about things, like wind farms and recycling, that are making a positive impact.

Teach them to turn off the lights and electronic devices when not using them. This simple action also has the bonus of reducing your electric bill.

Remind them to turn off the water when brushing their teeth. A grade-schooler is old enough to understand that water comes from lakes and reservoirs. Explain that wasting it can affect everyone who relies on that water. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) a faucet that runs for five minutes is equivalent to letting a 60-watt bulb run for 14 hours.

Show your child how to have non-electronic fun. Play family board games, read favorite books, or go outside to throw a Frisbee around, ride bikes in the park or explore a hiking trail. Being in nature can help provide children with a clear picture of what we are trying to preserve and remind them why it's important to **go green** every day – if every person made just a few changes it could make a major difference in the world.

**Go green** by switching to reusable containers for lunches and snacks and filling up BPA-free (Bisphenol A) or metal water bottles instead of buying bottled water. When you go grocery shopping bring **reusable** bags.

Before shopping for back to school clothing and school supplies have your child help you sort out used clothing that they have outgrown, also, check books, toys and other items around the house to donate to local homeless shelters. Save packing boxes and supplies from things you buy online and **reuse** them if you are mailing gifts or packages to friends or family members.

Before you **recycle** or dispose of anything, consider whether it has life left in it. An old shirt can become a pajama top. An opened envelope can become a shopping list. Magazines can be shared by dropping them off in your doctor's waiting room. DVDs can be traded. A computer can be upgraded. A car can be resold. Donate your old cell phones. Return cans and bottles to the store to be **recycled**. **Reusing** keeps new

resources from being used for a while longer, and old resources from entering the waste stream.

When **recycled**, paper, plastic, glass, magazines, electronics, and more can be processed into new products while using fewer natural resources and less energy?

Make a commitment to buy **recycled** paper for the computer printer, mulch from **recycled** products for the garden and other such products will help the secondary markets flourish and make **recycling** available at more places.

Never forget that our own attitudes and actions influence our children more deeply than our words. Children learn by what they observe and how they live.

Don't forget: "Together we can make a difference!" - [lesleyhaynes14@yahoo.com](mailto:lesleyhaynes14@yahoo.com)