

Parents can improve school safety

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Academics normally are at the forefront of parents' concerns when they think about children and schools. But safety needs to be, too.

Far from being helpless, parents can be important players in making schools safer, security experts say. School shootings in Colorado, Wisconsin and Pennsylvania may cause some parents to

ask questions of their own schools, and that can be a good thing.

"Parents are the, the, the No. 1 source that can make sure safety is kept on the front burner," said Kenneth Trump, president of the National School Safety and Security Services consulting firm in Cleveland.

That's especially true as schools worry about raising

academic standards and rising budget costs, he said. But parents can help in several ways:

- Ask good questions to understand school procedures about violence drills, just like you would fire drills and storm drills.

Ask respectfully, but don't worry about sounding paranoid or overprotective.

"It's fair for students and

parents to expect their schools to be safe—and they mostly are," said Anna Weselak, National PTA president. "If school is a safe place for children, then they can learn. And teachers can't teach either if schools aren't safe."

Trump urged parents to ask pointed questions of school administrators, though he cautioned against taking a finger-pointing approach.

First, ask if the school district has a crisis team, he said. The answer should be yes.

Then ask how often it meets, and how often police review the emergency plan to make

sure it works.

Trump, who has worked with schools in 45 states, reported that it's not uncommon to have outdated plans, with either retirees or even deceased people listed as top-tier contacts.

- See if your school invites parents to get involved in devising anti-violence policies.

Bruce Snelling, operations commander of Denver Public Schools' safety and security department, said parents there are probably more aware of security issues since it's less than an hour's drive from both Littleton—site of

the 1999 high school shooting rampage that left 12 students and a teacher dead—and Bailey, where six girls were taken hostage and one fatally shot last week.

Even there, though, parents can become preoccupied with test scores, resulting in apathy about safety, he said.

To combat that, the school system now includes parents in its emergency response plan, requiring at least one parent to be on the crisis team for each building along with administrators and law enforcement.

Simple repairs that improve health

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your best. Write a list of your next day's tasks, then stop dwelling on them until it's time to start your projects. Give yourself time to focus on what you want and what makes you feel good.

Sleep well. You need at least

four to six hours of deep sleep each night. To get that, don't take naps during the day. Don't work in your bed. Be careful what you read before bed and choose your sources of news wisely. If your partner is snoring, camp out on the couch for the night.

Work on these steps as the foundation for your body. Let your good health help you achieve your goals and dreams.

Dr. Peter Cox is director of Dynamic Health Center in Charlotte.



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If You Don't Like It!

One of the easiest things for us to do when life does not go the way that we want it to go is to complain. We may find ourselves faced with situations that we feel are obstacles to the kind of life that we have dreamed of having. We may tell others how bad life is for us. We may look at a situation and complain about how unfair life is to us. We wonder why others seem to be doing so well when we are doing so badly.

For some of us, we sometimes believe that people are intentionally trying to do whatever they can to make us miserable. We are convinced that people are actively working against us.

One of the things that we have a tendency to do is to complain about how miserable we are with a situation whenever we are with our friends. Sometimes we take turns with each other, sharing with one another how bad life is.

However, the question we must ask ourselves in the midst of all our complaining is this: "Do we really want our circumstances to change?" Some people complain about a situation for years. If we really think about it, we must ask ourselves that if a particular situation is as unbearable as we say it is, why do we choose to stay in it.

The truth is that often we do what is called venting. We face a situation that we do not like and we just want someone to listen to us. We really have

no intention of changing it. On the other hand, when we really become fed up with a situation and find it unbearable, we will begin to take steps to change our lives.

That is the key. If we find something in our lives that we do not like, it is up to us to change it. No matter how much we may complain about our situation, no one has the power to change it except us. We must always take the first step.

Whatever you may find in the world that you find unacceptable, it is up to you to do whatever you can to change it. It may have to do with your career. There may be things about your family that you do not like. There may be something in a personal relationship that you wish were different. Whatever it is, if you do not like it, it is up to you to take the steps to change the situation.

Even if you feel that you are unsuccessful in your attempts to change something, at least you can have the satisfaction of knowing that you tried to make a change in your life. The change may not be as complete as you would like it to be, but you are further along than if you had not taken some action to change. The goal is to keep moving. This will bring you closer and closer to the kind of life you really want to live.

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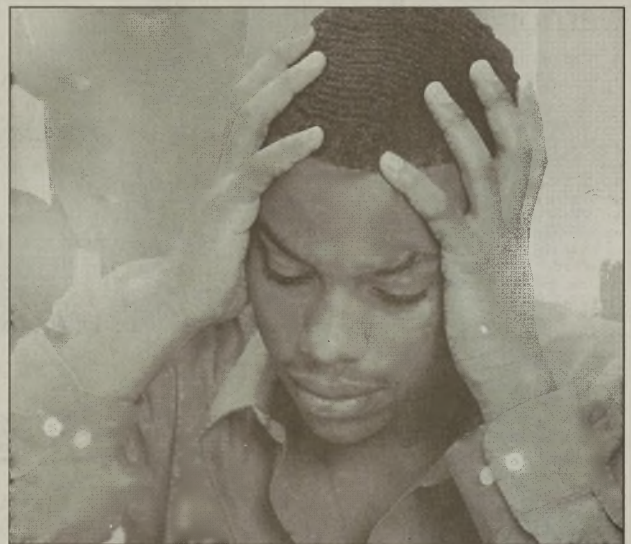
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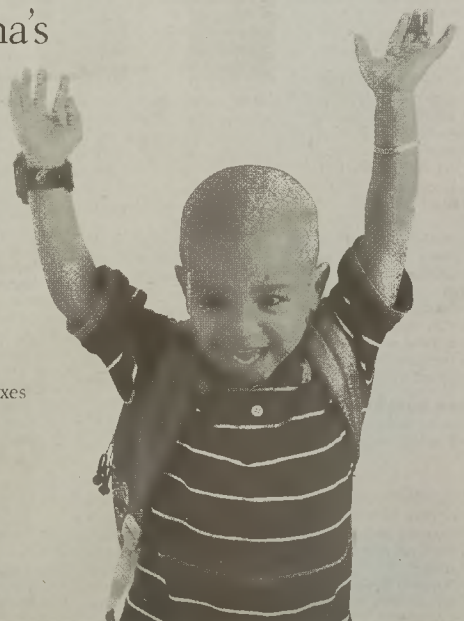
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