



A Heavy Fate by Lindsay Kehl

It's no secret that our beloved United States of America is feeling the impact of the excess weight that its residents are carrying around these days. The fact is, the number of overweight and obese people in the US has increased significantly over the past 30 years and continues to rise. Predictably, American children are affected just as much, if not more, than adults. Go figure; monkey see monkey do. A study from the Obesity Society estimated that in the US one in every five children are overweight. An overweight child is faced not only with increased health risks, but also problems academically and socially. All adults, including parents and non-parents, need to take responsibility to ensure a better life for the youngest generation of Americans who will one day be running the nation.

The list of increased health risks is endless for children. Whether it is short or long term, an overweight child is more prone to sickness or disease. The most commonly known physical health risks are type 2 diabetes, stroke, heart disease, colon cancer and early puberty, none of which a child should ever have to experience! If that doesn't scare you enough, there are also mental health risks that are increased by an unhealthy amount of fat on a child. Many overweight children suffer from anxiety and depression, which can spill over and affect other facets of their life, socially and academically. A child of any size faced with anxiety and/or depression is likely to have trouble obtaining and maintaining

social relationships. Those psychological problems make it hard enough for a child to come out of his or her shell and make new friends; however it gets more difficult when you add poor body image to the mix. These are potential everyday problems that overweight children face. It just doesn't seem fair! To make matters worse, overweight kids on average score low on math and reading assessments. Imagine having all of these things working against you before you even enter the so called 'real world'.

To think, all of this could be avoided. There are actions you can take to help kids battle excess weight and give them a fighting chance at growing up carefree.

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

If a child sees a parent or role model active, healthy and fit, it may lead to positive changes in their choices

TURN OFF THE TUBE

Sedentary activity like watching TV can easily lead to overeating and lack of mental stimulation. Try limiting the time in front of the television, and send the kids outside to play and explore. The freedom of playing outside also builds confidence which is usually lacking in someone with poor body image.

SUBSTITUTE FRUIT SNACKS FOR FRUIT

Only about 20% of kids eat their recommended fruits and veggies. Try to add a couple serving to every meal as a substitute for high sugar and high fat foods.

EARLY BEDTIME

Children that don't get a sufficient amount of sleep have a greater chance of becoming overweight. Tuck them in early so they can be well rested and clear minded to take on a new day. Lack of sleep can lead to laziness in learning and increases the munchies.

Overall, it is so important to give our kids the best chance at enjoying life and living it to the fullest. We all must act to change the condition that our kids are in now so that they too can have a brighter tomorrow. It is the responsibility of the adults of the US to take charge and make a drastic change towards the direction we are leading our children! Help them avoid the heavy fate. We have all the power! Don't just commit to yourself - commit to our kids!

COMMIT TO YOURSELF!

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