

WORK & FAMILY LIFE

BALANCING JOB AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

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Practical solutions
for family, workplace
and health issues

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"Just make sure you give me lots of rabbit ears when your mom snaps our picture!"

What we can do to raise caring children

As working parents, we can't be with our kids all of the time to intercept and counter some of the messages and images they get from pop culture. But we are still our children's most important teachers of ethics and morality. We pass on to them the beliefs and values that are meaningful to us.

In other words, we have the opportunity to teach "moral intelligence," which Dr. Michele Borda defines as "the capacity to understand right from wrong...to have strong ethical convictions and to act on them so that one behaves in an honorable way."

The essential role of parents

We want our children to treat people as they would like to be treated. We want to instill important values such as civility, kindness and personal responsibility as well as important skills such as conflict resolution, creativity and discipline. Surprisingly, though, some parents worry that being "too nice" will make their kids less able to compete in the real world. But research has shown that children who are compassionate and kind are also well-liked and successful at school and in every aspect of their lives.

As Dr. Ron Taffel explains: "Your child grows from rubbing up against the envelope of *your* beliefs, *your* values, *your* emotions and *your* concerns. If you don't give kids something firm to hold on to, they will have to look for it somewhere else."

Children respect people who stand up for moral values, who insist on kindness and condemn cruelty. In their book *Bringing Up Moral Children*, Michael Schulman and Eve Meckler point out that generous, kind and loving children are also kids who feel loved by their parents. But loving your child is not enough. We need to balance warmth and humor with structure and limits.

Teaching kids to think about others

Overly permissive parents tend to have self-centered kids. After all, when children always get their own way, it becomes an expectation. They feel entitled. But they need to learn that other people have rights and feelings that sometimes take precedence over their own. Identifying with and feeling other people's concerns is the key to moral development, say Schulman and Meckler. It's called empathy,

Continued on page 2...

Caring children...

Continued from page 1...

and it's a crucial ingredient of compassion and consideration that develops as kids mature.

In fact, children show a remarkable capacity to empathize at a young age. We have all seen a 2 or 3 year old, even a toddler, gently pat another child who was hurt and is crying. Then, as kids get older, they start to see things from another person's perspective and use language to offer comfort. By age 10 or 12, children can extend their empathy to people they've never met, such as a homeless person or a hungry child in another country.

How parents can pass on their values

We don't mean to suggest that raising caring kids in a me-first world is easy. Sometimes it feels like we're pushing against the tide. Even so, there's a lot we can do to transmit the values we believe in. Here are some ideas:

■ **Start early to build empathy and consideration.** For example, you might put a toy in a toddler's hand and one in yours and say, "Hand me that, and I'll hand you this. Now I'll give this back to you, and you give that back to me." This begins to teach the basics of reciprocity, exchange and trust. When it's appropriate, point out the consequences of *not* sharing.

Give young children opportunities to role-play the nurturing behaviors we want them to develop. Provide time and dramatic props such as dress-up clothes, hats and jewelry, doctor kits and blocks to build with.

■ **Help children develop an emotional vocabulary.** Last month, we discussed this in relation to boys, but it applies to all children. When kids can understand their own feelings, they're more capable of understanding other people's con-



Volunteer tweens spiff up their neighborhood.

cerns and needs. Give your child's emotions a name. For example: "You seem worried about something. What's the matter?"

Many books, such as *Dogger* by Shirley Hughes and *Horton Hears a Who* by Dr. Seuss, contain messages of empathy, generosity and reaching out to help others. Read these and other books to your children.

■ **Values are caught as well as taught.** Kids learn more from our example than from our words. When you help someone cross the street, take food to a sick neighbor or do volunteer work for a cause you care about, you are passing on your values.

■ **Reinforce the values you want your child to have.** Small acts of kindness can make a difference. Look for opportunities to praise truthfulness, empathy and talking things over instead of fighting. Comment on your child's efforts and diligence. For example: "I like the way you kept working and finished your project." Or "You sure are dependable showing up right on time."

■ **Sensitize kids to the feelings of others.** Point out nonverbal cues: "Did you notice the look on Matt's face? Maybe you should ask if everything is OK." And when you draw attention to someone who is feeling bad or sad, ask your child to guess what the person might need to help him or her feel better.

■ **Show children how their actions can affect others.** You might say, for example: "Bouncing the ball on this floor will bother our neighbor downstairs." Or

"Can you think of a way to say that without hurting Stephanie's feelings?" Remind an older child: "Put yourself in his place. Do you remember how you felt when Duncan treated you that way?"

■ **Use kids' favorite TV shows as a way to start discussions.** Talk about how one character's action affects another. Watch out for examples of bullying. Ask questions like: "Could they have resolved their differences in a way that would be less hurtful?"

■ **Encourage children to come up with their own ways to make other kids feel welcome, accepted and helped.** For example, if a new kid has come into your child's class, you might ask: "How can you and your friends make Jose feel that you are glad he's part of your group now?"

As Dr. James Comer of the Yale Child Study Center suggests, "Children who are encouraged to deal with challenges are the most likely to develop the kind of value system you want them to live by." ♦

Doing the right thing feels good

Charity is more than giving away money or dropping off a bag of used clothing at Goodwill, says Deborah Spaide in her book "Teaching Your Kids to Care." Charity is an ancient word that means to "help others for the sake of love."

Without realizing it, parents sometimes convey to their children the message that helping others can be unsafe, unnecessary or even unwise.

But the frustration of not being able to respond—of watching and accepting human suffering simply as a given—can harden kids' hearts.

Encourage children to reach out and be helpful through family projects, youth groups, civic and church organizations and schools. There's also an organization called "Kids Care Clubs" that helps arrange volunteer projects (see kidscareclubs.org).

Spaide's book also provides the nuts and bolts of at least 100 projects for children of different ages such as:

- Making snacks for kids in homeless shelters
- Recycling bicycles, tricycles and scooters for needy children
- Running errands or doing home repairs for older people
- Making texture maps for blind children

Doing things for others helps children focus on the larger community instead of themselves, says Spaide. It helps kids build character, develop ideals and teaches them to apply what they believe in. ♦

Guidelines for texting at the workplace

QI work with younger people who prefer texting as a form of communicating on the job. It's a fast way to reach many people, but seems inappropriate for some messages. Do you know of any commonly accepted guidelines for business texting?

—R.S., Denver

AWe checked in with our friend Barbara Pachter, author of the new book *Greet! Eat! Tweet! 52 Business Etiquette Postings to Avoid Pitfalls & Boost Your Career* (www.pachter.com). She suggests the following:

Do not text an apology. You need to apologize in person. And

if that's not possible, the telephone is your next best alternative.

Give negative feedback in person. The reasoning is the same. But you can send good news via text.

Be cautious about texting last-minute changes in meeting times or venues. Or have a backup plan in case attendees don't check their messages in time.

Choose your words carefully. Be aware that your tone may sound harsher than you intend.

Be careful with abbreviations. Short cuts are common in the business world, but make sure it's appropriate at your workplace to use, say, the informal "u" for you. And

not everyone knows that "np" means no problem, for example.

Don't use text shortcuts when e-mailing from your phone. It's received as an e-mail—not a text message. Avoid IM abbreviations.

Don't text under the table during a presentation. It's rude, noticeable and distracting to the speaker.

Don't quit your job in a text. This amounts to burning your bridges. Speak to your boss in person. You may need a reference in the future.

Don't drink and text. You can easily say something that you will regret later. ♦



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This is your column. We invite you to send questions about work and family life or tell us how you solved a problem that you think a lot of people face. Write: Dr. Susan Ginsberg, *Work & Family Life*, 305 Madison Avenue, Suite 1143, New York, NY 10165. E-mail: workfam@aol.com.

RESEARCH REVIEW

'Self-expansion' is key to a happy marriage

Over the course of history, marriage has mainly been an economic and social institution. The emotional and intellectual needs of spouses were considered less important than the survival of the marriage itself. So a long marriage wasn't necessarily a happy one.

But these days couples want more than just to stay together, says Arthur Aron, Ph.D., director of the Interpersonal Relationships Lab at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. They're looking for a partnership—and they want partners who will make their lives more interesting, more meaningful and more satisfying.

Dr. Aron and Gary W. Lesandowski Jr., Ph.D., of Monmouth University in New Jersey, have published their marriage research in the *Journal of Social Psychology*. They have reported that spouses use their marriage relationship to gain knowledge and experiences. And the more "self-expansion" they get from their partners, the more satisfied they are in their relationships.

Researcher Caryl Rusbult of Vrije University in Amsterdam calls this the "Michelangelo effect." As she explains it, marriage partners "sculpt" each other in ways that help each other grow and reach his or her desired goals.

When two people fall in love, it's exhilarating, of course, says Dr. Aron. But over time, having a marriage partner who is funny or creative adds something new to the person who does not have those traits. Or, for another example, being married to

someone who is an active volunteer in the community creates social opportunities for her or his spouse. In effect, the partners in a marriage relationship are able to broaden the way they see themselves.

In the Aron-Lesandowski studies, participants who responded the quickest to traits that were true of both them and their spouse were highly predictive for the couple's long-term happiness.

Dr. Aron explains: "You go from being a stranger to including this person in your [sense of] self, so



you suddenly have all these social roles and identities you didn't have before."

Dr. Lewandoski adds that people have a fundamental motivation to improve themselves and to grow as individuals.

"If your partner is helping you become a better person, you become happier and more satisfied in the relationship," he says. ♦

'Be merry, think like a kid and boost creativity'

Creativity is an important element in the development and advancement of new ideas. We tend to think of certain people such as artists and scientists as more "creative" than the rest of us.

But there's a lot about the creative mind that is unknown, say the researchers Michael Robinson of North Dakota State University and Darya Zabelina of Northwestern University. Based on their studies, they have come up with a few suggestions for ways we can all boost our creativity:

- Give yourself permission to explore and free time to play. Tap into your inner child.
- Appreciate fun when it happens. Enjoy the moment.
- Lighten up. Don't take yourself so seriously. Try to do something spontaneous—every day, if possible.
- Treat errands as opportunities for exploration, not boring duties.
- Let free time be truly free. Don't fill every moment with projects and chores. ♦

Siblings working together for their aging parents

By Francine Russo, Ph.D.

Look around and you'll see that eldercare is rarely shared equally among siblings. Even in the warmest, most cooperative families, one sibling typically does more of the caregiving.

While this may seem unfair, as a practical matter, having one adult child to rely on may feel better and safer to an aging parent.

Making the 'right' choice

The fact is, we all have complicated lives and unique family dynamics. So it's important, when decisions are made about who will take on caregiving responsibilities, to look at issues of closeness, competence, temperament and old family roles—in addition to location, career and other obligations. But the reality for most families is that caregiver choices are limited.

According to the National Alliance for Caregiving, the "typical" caregiver is a working 46-year-old woman who helps her parents about 20 hours a week due to "old age," diabetes, cancer or heart disease. A quarter of primary caregivers live on average about seven hours away from their parents.

Of course, the texture of caregiving is different for everyone. Some live with their parent and do hands-on personal care such as bathing and dressing. Some live nearby and act progressively as chauffeur, shopper, medical adviser and first responder.

Others supervise a parent's care from a distance, spending countless hours on the phone or online and doing paperwork related to home aides, doctors, nursing home administrators and insurers.

If you are the primary caregiver...

○ **Don't assume that it has to be all you, all the time.** Accepting the main caregiver role doesn't mean taking responsibility for ev-

erything that's happening. Include your siblings as much as possible. Before any major decision, talk to everyone involved, including your parents. Go over your options as a family.

○ **Ask yourself what you really want.** Help? Appreciation? To be in charge? Lots of caregivers feel lonely and unappreciated. If you want your siblings to check in once a week to let you vent, say so. If you're feeling lonely, ask them to call more often. If you'd like them to say they understand what you're going through, tell them it would help to hear those words.



"I'm so happy you could be here for the family meeting!"

○ **If you think you shouldn't have to ask, think again.** Sometimes we assume that people can read our minds and should know what we want. Or we may think to ourselves, "Oh, if my brother were a better son, a better brother, he would feel what I feel and do things differently." This kind of thinking often results in disappointment and anger.

○ **Don't confuse good care with happiness.** If poor health and losses have made an older person sad, you can be there for him or her. But if your mom or dad never had a cheery personality, it's not

going to happen now. Remind yourself that, contrary to popular belief, we do not change roles with our parents—we don't take care of them as if they were children. Aging and death are things we can't "fix," no matter how well we care for our loved ones.

○ **If you resist telling others that you need help, ask yourself: What's going on? Do I want my siblings to feel guilty? Am I more interested in showing them how exhausted I am than in finding resources for help?** Try to focus more on the satisfactions you feel for being there for your parent.

she is doing. If the caregiver just needs to talk, be a good listener.

○ **Don't think of yourself as off the hook.** Your sibling may live closer to your parent and may feel closer too. But that doesn't mean that she or he should do everything. Ask what you can do—and even though your sibling may say "nothing," keep checking back. Remember: caregiving can start small but, later on, can become overwhelming.

○ **Lend a hand by phone or the Internet.** With all the instant media out there, there's no reason not to be helpful. You can arrange

food deliveries or provide a car service to take your parent to a doctor's appointment. If you can afford it, you might also pay for an aide to come in part-time or for special occasions. And if you've arranged for a service from a distance, call to find out how it worked out.

○ **If you sense caregiver burnout, be sympathetic.** You may feel that a sibling is doing more than she or he needs to, but don't try to argue the person out of it or dismiss her or his efforts. Being thrust into prolonged, intense contact with a dependent, perhaps difficult, parent generates many emotional pulls.

○ **Offer your perspective carefully.** If you live far away and visit occasionally, you may be the one who notices declines or improvements in a parent's condition. Your observations can be valuable but should be carefully worded so they don't imply criticism of the on-site caregiving. ♦

—Francine Russo is a New York writer who also gives eldercare workshops. This was adapted from her book "They're Your Parents, Too!" Visit www.yourparentstoo.com and see We Recommend on page 8.

Helping kids appreciate the good things they have

What do you say to children who cry when you tell them they can't have a toy they want or a pricey pair of sneakers or even a certain breakfast cereal?

"I feel like saying, 'You are a selfish, spoiled kid,'" says Lynne. "And there's part of me that feels like blaming the media and our status-seeking culture—even their indulgent grandparents. But I know that I'm responsible too. I give my kids everything they *need* and probably too much of what they simply *want*."

Grateful behavior needs to be taught

Children (or adults, for that matter) who are given a great deal do not automatically become "thankful." But, as parents, we can do a lot to help our kids recognize and appreciate all that they have. Here are some suggestions:

► **MODEL YOUR OWN FEELINGS OF APPRECIATION.** Say thank you at every opportunity: "Thank you for that hug. It felt good." "Thank you for cleaning up that mess without being asked." Kids who hear grownups say thank you are more likely to say it themselves.

► **COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS.** Some parents play the "I'm lucky" game at bedtime. They tell kids how lucky they are (and why), then ask their child to name a few of his or her own "I'm lucky's."

When you play this game, you may start hearing a list of all the toys your child feels "lucky" to have. This is only natural: we've taught kids to say "thank you" for gifts. But if you ask "Who are you thankful for?" children will usually mention people and pets.

We can also teach our kids that life can be both light and dark. We might ask: "What makes you sad?" This will help children to see that we can have reasons to be grateful even when bad things happen.



This kind of thank-you is Grandma's favorite.

► **TEACH KIDS TO SEND THANK-YOU NOTES.** They serve two purposes. They acknowledge that a gift was received, and they bolster empathy. Say, for example: "I'm sure Grandma will appreciate your note as much as you appreciate her gift." Have your child make a drawing on the note or card and write down what he or she has to say. As children get older, expect them to put more thought into each note.

► **HELP YOUR CHILD BECOME A BETTER LISTENER.** Young kids feel like they are the center of the universe and your job is to meet their needs. For a time, of course, that's true. But an awareness of the wants and needs of other people does not come naturally. It has to be taught.

One way to do this is to ask each other over dinner: "How was your day?" To get the conversation going with a child, you might say: "What's the best thing that happened to you today?"

Giving children your time and attention shows that you value and respect them. Eye contact is

important too. Teach your child to put down the Wii control and focus on you when you're talking—and be sure to look up from your smart phone when your child has something to say to you.

► **SHOW GRATITUDE BEFORE MEALS.** Many families say a prayer or read a short inspirational passage. The simple act of holding hands in silence can help children realize that they are fortunate to have food on the table. And we should always say thank you to the people who prepared the food.

► **GET INVOLVED.** Take advantage of opportunities in your community to help others who are less fortunate, and involve your children in these activities. These experiences can help kids learn to appreciate the abundance in their own lives. See "Doing the right thing feels good" on page 2.

► **CONNECT KIDS TO THE LARGER WORLD.** When children tell you they are feeling sad or lonely, have them send a letter, email or instant message to someone they love. Connecting to a faraway grand-

parent or a favorite aunt can help a child's problems seem more manageable.

Reaching out to someone they care about helps kids feel gratitude for the love around them—even when they're feeling blue.

► **EXPRESS YOUR PERSONAL SENSE OF GRATITUDE.** Every day, in some small way, let children know that you are grateful for the gift of being their parent. Say something that is special about your child—a quality that you appreciate, even if it frustrates you at times.

► **TEACH CHILDREN TO BE RESPECTFUL.** If your child steps on the flowers in a neighbor's yard, don't just scold him or her. Explain that your neighbor spends a lot of time tending her garden so everyone can enjoy the flowers.

Before you give a child a prized object, have some rules for how it should be used. For example, you might say: "You have to be gentle with Mommy's old carousel. Always stay seated while you use it. Here's how to wind it carefully so it will turn and play music."

Encourage children to express appreciation to the many helpful people in their lives such as teachers, coaches, tutors, school bus drivers, aunts and uncles, neighbors and caregivers.

► **LITTLE THINGS IN LIFE REALLY DO MEAN A LOT.** We can get so busy ourselves that we may not notice a beautiful sunset. Or we may forget to comment on the savory smell of food cooking on the stove, or the warmth of our house on a cold night.

We need to let our children know that we feel joy and gratitude to be alive in a wondrous world—even if parts of it don't appear to be so wondrous sometimes. ♦

How do you learn the stuff nobody ever tells you?

Marie was having difficulty getting people to do things around the office that were nobody's job in particular: "I'd say something like, 'This table is a big mess' a few times. Then on Friday, when everybody was getting ready for the weekend, I'd notice it was still messy and I'd clean it up myself—feeling annoyed at my staff, of course."

Some people are highly responsive to suggestions, but most of us are not. That's why it's important to state our messages clearly and directly, and make sure that others have the same understanding that we do.

A better approach for Marie would be to raise the issue of how to handle shared spaces at a meeting of the entire staff, work out a clean-up routine and post it so everyone knows who's responsible.

Observational learning is an overrated skill

Many supervisors believe that motivated employees should be able to figure out on their own what's expected of them. But it doesn't work that way. Studies have found that only about one person in five is a good observational learner. That leaves the great majority of us who need some teaching and direction.

Also, many managers perform well on the job themselves but are less adept at analyzing and explaining to their employees or coworkers what they've done and why. They may not appreciate the practical reality that people have different learning styles.

To complicate matters, the typical workplace is diverse. Employees from different generations, cultures and backgrounds



"Why didn't they tell us the reports are due the last week of every month?"

may have difficulty figuring out the nuances of a supervisor's behavior or what he or she expects of them.

Matters of style count too

Getting ahead at work often requires more than learning new skills and picking up information. It requires the ability to figure out underlying issues, come up with possible solutions and then take action.

"What people need to learn specifically are matters of style—the manner in which things are done—and sensitivity to the political realities of their company," according to Albert J. Bernstein and Sydney Craft Rozen, authors of the book *Sacred Bull: The Inner Obstacles that Hold You Back at Work and How to Overcome Them*. "Your future depends on how well you were able to learn the things nobody ever tells you."

New strategies to try

The fact is, all of us need some help at one time or another to figure things out at the workplace. This is a communications challenge, whether people report to us or we're leading a work team, chairing a committee or mentor-

ing a coworker. If our messages are vague or seem to be getting lost in the shuffle, Bernstein and Rozen suggest these strategies:

- **Be clear in your own mind** what you think the person ought to know and what you want her or him to learn. Let the person know in advance what is expected.

- **Be specific.** Do not assume that everyone will know precisely how a particular task should be done. Even for what seems like a routine job, it's a good idea to illustrate your expectation of how it should be handled.

For example, Dan told a new employee to affix stamps and addresses to a batch of large envelopes, and the employee did what she was told. To Dan's surprise, she treated the envelopes vertically rather than horizontally, which was the custom in the country she came from.

- **Confirm that you were heard.** When you are talking, make sure others are listening and that you're all on the same wavelength. For example, a college admissions officer called out, "Tell everyone to 'get off' [their computer terminals]." But he did not tell anyone in par-

ticular to inform the staff person in an adjoining office, who stayed "on" and lost files when the system shut down.

- **Communicate your priorities** even if you think a person should know them already. Break down complex assignments into manageable chunks. Encourage people to ask questions. If you are instructing a new person on the job, check back from time to time to make sure your directions were understood. For example, Nancy discovered too late that she had not instructed a new office assistant to file medical records in the back rather than front of each folder.

- **Emphasize behaviors.** Accept that we all bring our different attitudes to the workplace. Don't try to change the way people are. Just show them what you want them to do, and explain why the task should be done this way. Shine a light on "unspoken rules" in your workplace. Gary told his staff: "Some of us are very active in politics, but we don't talk a lot about it at the office."

- **Learn more about the people with whom you work.** Ask about and listen to their concerns. Get to know a little about their backgrounds and outside interests. The better you know an individual, the better you will know what she or he needs to know.

- **Reward positive behavior.** When there's a payoff for pleasing one's manager or supervisor, chances are it will happen more often. It means a lot to just tell someone, "Job well done. Thank you."

- **Good communications go both ways.** Just as your coworkers or employees can't read your mind, the same is true for the people to whom you report. Communicate clearly—both as a speaker and writer. ♦

Beans may be the ultimate health food

Most of us assume that berries are the leading nutritional powerhouse because they are rich in disease-fighting antioxidants. But take a closer look at the USDA's top 10 antioxidant foods, and you may be surprised.

1. Red beans*
2. Wild blueberries
3. Red kidney beans*
4. Pinto beans*
5. Cultivated blueberries
6. Cranberries
7. Artichokes
8. Blackberries
9. Prunes
10. Raspberries

Three out of the top four on the list are beans. Plus, they are the ultimate "combination food," providing maximum nutrition per cup served. Here are some tips:

As we age, our metabolism slows and we tend to eat less. So it's important to eat foods high in vitamins, minerals and food-based chemicals—namely beans. Aim for three cups of cooked beans a week.

Use garbanzo or kidney beans in lettuce salads, navy or black beans in soups, roasted soybeans (soy nuts) as snacks.

Worried about gas? Add beans to your diet gradually. Start with a quarter cup on a salad. Increase your intake over a period of weeks.

Get dried beans when they are fresh. Soak overnight and rinse before cooking.

To reduce the salt content of canned beans, wash them before cooking. ♦

Some 'facts' about food may be wrong

Commonly held knowledge about nutrition may not hold up under scrutiny. But the truths may be even better than you imagined. For example, certain cuts of beef have less fat and fewer calories than chicken wings—even the ones without the skin.

Here are some other flawed notions widely thought of as factual.

The low-fat version is always better nutritionally.

Not so, especially when you're talking about cookies, crackers and cakes. Typically, the calorie difference between low-fat and regular is slim to none. For example, a reduced-fat blueberry muffin from Dunkin' Donuts has 450 calories (40 fewer than the full-fat version) and 8 grams of saturated fat (2 more than the regular).



A vegetarian dish is always the healthier option. In fact, a vegetable casserole made with a lot of cheese and cream could very well end up having more calories and fat (including saturated fat) than an entree of steak, chicken or fish. Vegetarian means that food does not contain animal flesh, not that it's necessarily healthful.

If it contains yogurt, it has to be good. Plain low-fat yogurt is, of course, a healthy choice. But you can forget about yogurt-coated raisins, pretzels and the like. Your nutritional advantage is lost. Used this way, it's

actually a confectioners' coating that is more candy than dairy food. Consider: one ounce of plain raisins contains 85 calories, with yogurt 120.

Energy and weight-loss bars are better for you than candy bars.

The disappointing truth is that most energy bars have between 200 and 300 calories, as much

as or more than many regular candy bars. And while energy bars pose as "health" foods, they pack a whole lot of sugar. Your best bet: indulge rarely or give up both.

Baked potato and veggie chips are healthier than regular potato chips.

Actually, the calorie differences are slight. One ounce of regular potato chips contains about 150 calories. An ounce of Veggie Booty with Spinach and Kale from Robert's American Gourmet contains about 130, Good Health Veggie Stix 140, and an ounce of Terra Stix 150. Granted, baked and veggie chips do contain a bit less fat and more vitamins—but, nutritionally speaking, a chip is a chip. ♦

—Adapted from the Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter

Get some advice before you start lifting weights

Weight-training is growing in popularity among people of all ages. It refers to exercises done with free weights or on gym equipment called resistance machines. It is a relatively safe, core-strengthening form of exercise, but injuries can and do happen. And, according to a national study published online by "The American Journal of Sports Medicine," these mishaps spare no body part, gender or age group.

The most common injuries are sprains and strains, but can also involve fractures and dislocations. The leading cause, by far: people dropping free weights on themselves.

Here's some advice from New York Times Personal Health columnist Jane Brody, who lifts weights at home with the guidance of a personal trainer.

Before you start lifting weights, consult with a doctor or athletic trainer to create a safe program based on your age and abilities. Talk about your goals and the physical activities you currently do.

Get instruction on how to use weight-lifting equipment and learn the proper technique under professional supervision. Respect the equipment and know how to use it in relation to your size and abilities. In other words, don't go into a gym, look around to see what other people are doing, and then start doing it yourself.

If you are injured, give your body the time and treatment it needs to heal before you start training again. This may not require stopping your exercise program altogether. For example, if you strained a shoulder muscle, you may be able to continue working on your legs.

How do you know if a trainer is qualified? It doesn't hurt to ask if he or she is certified by the National Athletic Trainers' Association or the American College of Sports Medicine. ♦



Sharing the care: a guide for adult siblings

At some point, as our parents grow old and start to slow down, we may need to step up and help care for them, a little or a lot. And to make the right things happen, siblings need to work together. But most of us enter this period of our lives unprepared for the difficult decisions and delicate negotiations ahead.

“Understanding the psychological demands of this time of life are far from easy,” writes Francine Russo, Ph.D., author of *They're Your Parents, Too!*, a wise and wonderful new book that can help siblings who are struggling with the challenges posed by their parents growing older.

After all, even in the healthiest families, our parents' aging and mortality evoke powerful feelings, the author says. And even in the best of times, family dynamics can be hard to change.

Russo, a veteran journalist, was stirred to write this book after the death of her own parents proved to be an “uneasy journey” for her and her sister. Russo interviewed other families in similar situations from coast to coast and consulted with many experts as well.

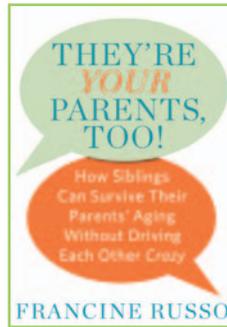
She begins with a

discussion of “the last transition of our first family.” She takes the reader through the decisions that need to be made in the final days of a parent's life.

Russo provides insights that are enormously helpful for siblings who need to manage their adult relationships positively and avoid the traps of old family roles and rivalries. Ideally, they can even strengthen their relationships during this trying time. The author offers advice that is both compassionate and uplifting such as:

- ❑ How to ensure the best care for your parents while lessening conflict, guilt and anger.
- ❑ How to deal with unequal contributions and power struggles.
- ❑ How caring for your parents can be an enriching experience rather than a thankless chore.
- ❑ How to handle inheritance issues to minimize hurt feelings and resentment.

They're Your Parents, Too! How Siblings Can Survive Their Parents' Aging Without Driving Each Other Crazy (Bantam, hardcover, \$26) is available in bookstores and online. ♦



Work & Family Life provides information and practical solutions to a wide range of family, job, and health issues. Our purpose is to help our readers reduce their stress and find pleasure and satisfaction in their many roles at work, at home, and in their communities.

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