

WORK & FAMILY LIFE

BALANCING JOB AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

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*Practical solutions
for family, workplace
and health issues*

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Dad and daughter, together and in sync—that's what quality time is all about.

What does 'quality time' really mean?

What comes to mind when you hear the expression "quality time?" If you're like many people, you think of doing something special with your child, your grandchild, your parents or a friend—something you've planned for ahead of time.

The idea of quality time emerged in the 1970s, when a huge number of moms started working outside their homes. It conveyed the message that kids would *not* be shortchanged if their parents were around less: that it was the quality more than the quantity of one's time that counted most.

Since then the concept has become part of everyone's vocabulary—especially moms and dads who keep trying to create regular quality times with their kids.

Getting real with our expectations

In many ways, however, the idea has backfired. It puts more pressure on busy parents because, all too often, we plan special activities that go awry: we're running late, the

baby is sleeping, teenagers want to be with their friends, and so forth.

We are unable to control the weather or people's moods, and we certainly can't force our children (spouse, partner or friends) to act at the level of intimacy that we desire at a particular moment because it's convenient for us. In other words, it's unrealistic to expect the quality time we carve out to be smooth, free of conflict and to always accomplish something educational or entertaining.

But we continue to hope, and when our efforts to create an idealized experience fall short, as they tend to, we end up feeling guilty or bad and ready to give up on the whole idea.

What our kids have to say

In the research for her book *Ask the Children*, our colleague Ellen Galinsky found the whole "quality vs. quantity of time" debate to be out of sync with reality. "They both

Continued on page 2...

Quality time...

Continued from page 1...

matter to children,” she says. “We should really be thinking of it more as ‘focused time’ and ‘hang around time’ because that’s what makes a difference to kids.”

Galinsky learned that children feel pretty much the same about their time with mom whether she works outside the home or not. That is, an at-home parent is not automatically more attentive, nor is an employed parent necessarily inattentive. “It is pretty clear that, to kids, it’s who their parent *is as a person* and what kind of relationship they have that matters most,” she says.

If we can start looking at the concept differently, quality time is much more likely to work for us. One approach is to get a better handle on what it’s *not*—and what it *could be*. For example:

► **Quality time is not problem-free.** And that’s not a bad thing. Galinsky explains: “Quality time can include dealing constructively with a stressful situation. Children can learn a lot when they help with a problem. And their parents don’t get tied up in knots because their quality time went to pieces.”

► **It doesn’t require undivided attention.** It’s not a matter of devoting yourself exclusively to your child to compensate for when you were not there. Kids don’t need or want to be in charge. They should not equate your love with doting, undivided attention.

Nor do you need to always be the leader or director of a child’s play or constantly provide entertainment. It’s important for kids to marshal their resources and learn how to enjoy themselves on their own. You don’t want your child to expect to be entertained all of the time.

“Quality time can happen when you’re *really just there* for



“That’s good—stir the ingredients slowly.”

your child, even if it’s only 15 minutes at a time and during those few minutes your child doesn’t feel like you’re about to run off,” says early childhood educator Lilian G. Katz, Ph.D.

► **It doesn’t have to involve a special activity.** When parents of infants and toddlers come home from work, they often feel as if they must have an intense play time with their child. Resist the impulse. If your child is awake, move in slowly.

Try watching, listening and tuning in first—and then follow your child’s lead in playing.

“When you and your child are together and somehow in tune, that’s quality time,” says author Louise Lague. “You are enjoying the same thing at the same time, even if it’s just being together.”

“If we think of quality time as any time when we are not distracted and are paying attention to a child, we can create it whenever we’re together—walking or driving somewhere, fixing dinner or shopping,” says Anne Geoghegan, a Boston social worker and mom.

Author Karen Levine agrees. “Quality time for my family is a time when the words ‘hurry up’ are forbidden. It’s an attitude

that says mom and dad are here. We’re not Googling, we’re not doing email and we’re not checking our Blackberries for messages.”

► **It’s harder to come by with older kids.** Preteens and teenagers can get very busy with all their activities, and they also take longer to tell you what’s on their minds. So you’ll need to spend some “hanging out” time together before you can get to “focused time” when you’re really connecting. As one dad puts it: “If you’re there

and paying attention, you can grab the opportunity to answer a question you never believed your 14-year-old would confide in you enough to ask.”

► **It’s no time to let family rules slide.** Working parents naturally want the time they spend with their children to be as carefree and happy as possible. “There’s a wish for things to be lovey-dovey and wonderful when parents are home,” says Dr. Jacqueline Olds of the Harvard Medical School. As a result, many moms and dads are tempted to become lenient, oversolicitous and let discipline slide.

But children ultimately feel happier and more secure when routines and rules are maintained. Plus, it’s easier and more fun to be together if you’re not fighting.

Reaching a happy medium may be the key to true quality time. Some days it will work out perfectly, other days it won’t. In the end, quality times are simply the moments we remember—the memories we hold on to after a great day.

► **It doesn’t have to be one on one.** A parent and child can have close, meaningful moments when other people are around—at a ball game or a school picnic. “It’s really those times when kids and adults are together in ways that make them feel connected to each another and not distracted by the to-do list of life,” says Kelly Tannen of Philadelphia, a mother of two who works at home.

► **You’re not the only “provider.”** Parents are not the only ones who can share quality time with kids. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends and caregivers can also be fun to be with and can provide special experiences for children at any age. ◆

If you don’t live with your kids all the time

Many parents don’t get to spend as much time with their children as they would like, so naturally they want the hours and days they do spend together to be happy. But the same quality-time principles we just discussed apply to divorced and noncustodial parents too. Here are some more tips:

Do the best you can with the limited time that you have. Don’t feel guilty if every moment with your kids doesn’t look or feel like a greeting-card commercial.

Create your own rituals and routines. Involve kids in your daily activities. Shop and cook together. Have clear expectations of your children’s participation in household chores.

Quality time is really about having experiences and doing things together. Don’t get sucked into always trying to please a child by buying her or him material things.

Be aware that kids’ interests are constantly changing. Keep abreast of the movies, books, games and music they like. Find out about or meet as many of their friends as possible. As children get a little older, you’ll find that having your child bring a friend along for a night or a weekend can add to your time together. ◆

Do high school seniors still need a curfew?

Q Our son is a senior in high school. He gets good grades and, for that reason, feels he should be exempt from our curfew of 10 pm on school nights and midnight on weekends. We disagree and are keeping the curfew. Are we doing the right thing?

—S.D., Indianapolis

A Yes, you are. Teenagers are not as ready as they think they are for all the freedoms of the world.

The new brain research shows us that the teenage brain is not fully mature. And one of the last circuits to get “wired” is in the prefrontal cortex: that part of the brain where we think ahead, consider consequences and manage

our emotional urges and impulses.

David Walsh, Ph.D., author of *Why Do They Act That Way?*, says a teen curfew acts as a “surrogate prefrontal cortex.” He advises parents and teachers to play that surrogate role too—until the young brain is finished being wired.

“Many parents of teens fall into the either/or trap,” he says. “They allow situations to blow up into major power struggles or let their teen do whatever he or she wants. Neither option is good for kids.”

Parenting teenagers is all about balance. You can loosen but don’t let go. For example, you can make curfews later as teens grow older, but you still need to enforce them.

You don’t want to hold teens back from the important things they can learn as they figure things out for themselves, but you need to guide them along the way.

Adolescence offers a window of opportunity for teenagers to learn to manage their new set of intense desires. “We are doing our children a favor by teaching them *No* as teens,” Dr. Walsh says.

As our children mature, they will incorporate the discipline that they have learned into their adult lifestyle. Enforcing curfew is another way of helping our kids “hardwire” the management skills they will use for the rest of their lives. ♦



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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

Changing roles a big plus for marriage

The Pew Research Center reported the findings of a U.S. Census data study that it calls “the rise of wives.” It’s an interesting report that revisits an old debate that began when American women en masse began pursuing careers outside the home: *Will a financially successful woman be a threat to her husband—or a relief?*

Here are some of the Pew findings.

- In 22% of marriages, wives are now the primary breadwinners, up from 7% in 1970. In nearly a third of marriages, the wife also has a better education.
- Role shifts within marriages, such as men doing more housework and women earning more money, have had a positive effect. The divorce rate peaked at 23 per 1,000 couples in the late 1970s and has since fallen to fewer than 17 per 1,000.
- The more economic independence and education a woman gains, the more likely she is to stay married. In states where fewer wives have paying jobs, divorce rates are higher.

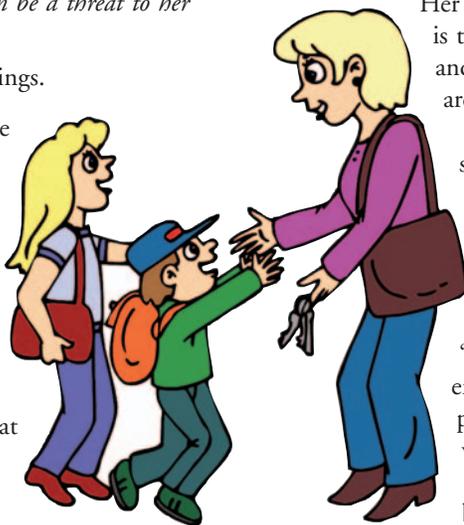
Stephanie Coontz, author of *Marriage, A History*, says women no longer need to “marry up educationally or economically, so they’re more likely to pick men who support a more egalitarian relationship.”

Sociologists and economists agree that financially independent women can be more selective—and have more negotiating power within marriage.

But the dynamic is never easy, says researcher Andrea Doucet of Carleton University in Ottawa. Her “Bread and Roses Project” is tracking couples in the U.S. and Canada in which woman are the main breadwinners.

Doucet has found that some husbands have a tough time adjusting to their wives’ greater earning power, and many wives hate to cede control over tasks done at home. “Women are their own worst enemies,” says Carleton professor Linda Duxbury, who’s part of the study. “We want men to do [the work], but we want to tell them *how* they should do it.”

In his book *The Lazy Husband: How to Get Men to Do More Parenting and Housework*, Joshua Coleman, a San Francisco psychologist, says that, clearly, men today need their wives’ income. But changing people’s attitudes takes time. As one man puts it: “I understand you want a communicative, empathic guy who does housework and parenting, but how much pride can I take in that?” ♦



Study suggests regular walking boosts memory

The part of the brain that’s important to the formation of memories is called the hippocampus, and it begins to atrophy at around the age of 55 or 60.

According to a study published in “The Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences,” researchers have found that the hippocampus can be modestly expanded—and memory improved—in healthy adults by nothing more than regular walking.

Led by psychologist Kirk Erickson, Ph.D., of the University of Pittsburgh, the study recruited 120 healthy but sedentary men and women whose average age was in the mid-60s to join one of two exercise groups. One group walked around a track three times a week, building up to 40 minutes at a stretch. The other did less aerobic exercises such as yoga and resistance training with bands.

After a year, brain scans showed that among the walkers the hippocampus had increased in volume by 2 percent on average. In the other group, it had declined by about 1.4 percent. ♦

Practical solutions for the ‘driving dilemma’

By Elizabeth Dugan, Ph.D.
Part 1 of a two-part series

A specific kind of accident has become very common: an older person, driving close to home on a weekday, is involved in a collision while making a left turn.

This happened to my own mother when I was writing my book *The Driving Dilemma*, and fortunately no one was hurt. But it was a wake-up call for my family.

After 50 years of accident-free driving, my mom provided an all-too-personal case study with which to illustrate a problem facing many older drivers and their families. And one good thing came out of it. I can attest that the steps outlined in my book really do work (*more on this next month*).

Contrary to popular myths

To begin any discussion on this subject, it's important for everyone to be aware of the facts.

■ **Age by itself does not determine driving fitness.** What matters more is the person's ability to see, think and move. Some people in their 90s and even beyond are more fit for driving than some people in their 50s or 60s.

■ **Older drivers are pretty safe generally.** They drive less, wear seat belts and rarely drive while intoxicated or get ticketed for speeding. The accident rate for even the oldest group of drivers is lower than for teenagers and young adults. But the fact remains that when older drivers do have an accident, they're more likely to be hurt or killed.

■ **Most older drivers avoid risks by self-regulating.** They tend to avoid driving in bad weather, in heavy traffic and at night. Some, however, do not use self-protective



An excellent driver at 86, she's often a chauffeur for her friends.

measures because of their own denial or impaired thinking.

■ **Older people want to keep driving.** Most older Americans live in areas where public transportation is unavailable or sorely limited. They associate the ability to drive a car with their own freedom and autonomy. For a growing number of older people in the U.S., giving up driving has become a new life milestone. And research suggests that most of us will outlive our driving ability by 7 to 10 years.

Before you say anything

If you are worried about an older relative's driving ability, here are some things to consider—before you start a conversation on this subject with your loved one.

■ **Consider what driving represents to your relative's identity.** Put yourself in his or her position. What difficulties might arise from being without a car? Will she or he be able to keep up with friends and important activities?

■ **Anticipate emotions.** Changing one's driving status can be scary and complicated for older drivers. Will your relative be sad? Angry? Resentful? Relieved? Will he or she

feel vulnerable? You may see your conversation as being just about driving, but the older driver may see it as a life-and-death issue. Many older people start to worry: *Am I losing control? Will I become a burden? Am I dying?* These thoughts may be on your relative's mind, yet remain unspoken.

■ **Plan ahead.** Timing can be a key factor. Start the conversation with your relative when and where you will not be interrupted or have to rush. Sit comfortably with everyone at the same eye level. If more than one sibling is taking part in the discussion, don't let it seem like you're ganging up on your parent. And don't rehash old arguments. This should be a conversation about your love and concern for the older driver's safety and the facts relating to his or her driving fitness.

Easing the transition

We all have essential transportation needs. Getting food, supplies and medicines and going to medical appointments are the bare minimum. As family members help an older relative who needs to restrict or give up driving, here are some suggestions:

■ **Research the alternatives** for transportation in your relative's community. He or she may not use them all, but it's good to have some choices. Only one option is unlikely to meet all of your relative's needs. Chances are you'll need to patch together several such as riding with family members and friends, using accessibility programs for seniors, or taking taxis or a bus.

■ **One talk won't do the trick either.** Moving from unlimited

driving to driving retirement can be a lengthy process that involves many conversations. It's impossible to anticipate everything that will come up in a single talk. Be aware also that the options you thought everyone agreed on during one discussion may need to be revisited.

Online resources

Here are a few links to helpful Internet resources.

www.seniordrivers.org

www.aarp.org/drive

www.itnamerica.org

www.caring.com

Information for those who are worried about a relative's dementia and driving can be found at www.thehartford.com/alzheimers.

Check out the Association for Driver Rehabilitation Specialists at www.driver-ed.org.

Enter the keywords “senior drivers” at www.Edmunds.com. ♦

—Adapted from the author's book *The Driving Dilemma*. In Part II next month, we'll talk about assessing your relative's fitness to drive. For more information, visit Dugan's website drivingdilemma.com.

Getting your child ready for preschool

Children between ages two and four mature at different rates. Some two year olds speak clearly in complete sentences and others barely say a word. One three year old may rush happily into a preschool classroom while another may cling on to you for dear life. Some four year olds can focus on one activity for a long time while others cannot.

There are no firm rules to indicate when a child is ready for preschool. Early childhood educator Bettye Caldwell explains: "The academic expectations for a child beginning school are minimal. You want your child to come to preschool feeling happy, reasonably secure and eager to explore and learn." Here are some common expectations:

USING THE BATHROOM. Most preschools require kids three and older to be toilet trained. If your child is not, talk to the teacher about it. But don't get frantic about correcting the situation just before preschool starts.

GETTING DRESSED. Preschoolers should be able to recognize their own backpack, jacket and shoes. It's good if they can put on their own clothes. But if not, they will learn quickly.

CLEANING UP. Three year olds should be able to throw away their

disposable plates and cups and wipe up their drips and spills.

COLORS, SHAPES, LETTERS. Though it's not necessary, many preschoolers can identify basic colors and tell a circle from a square. No one will expect your child to recognize an octagon or an unusual color like mauve.

Here's what you can do

BE SPECIFIC. To help young kids learn to follow instructions, do what preschool teachers do: give specific directions. For example, "Let's put those blocks back on this shelf" works better than "clean up your mess."

ELABORATE ON SHORT PHRASES. If your child points to a box of cereal you might say, "The corn flakes are on a shelf that's too high for you. I can reach it." This will extend a child's understanding of words and concepts such as "reach" and "high."

READ TO CHILDREN. This builds concentration, imagination and language abilities (see box below). Have your child look for details in pictures, repeat refrains in the story and guess what will happen next. Ask questions that will encourage curiosity, and talk about feelings: *Do you think the little boy in the story is happy or sad?*



Just starting preschool and feeling a little tentative.

THINK ABOUT FOCUS AND SELF-CONTROL. Ellen Galinsky describes this as one of the essential skills all kids need. You can start to encourage it at a very young age. It involves paying attention, remembering rules, thinking flexibly and exercising self-control. *If you want to know more about this, go to www.mindinthemaking.org.*

ENCOURAGE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY. Find times and places for rolling, bouncing and throwing balls, building with large blocks and climbing on a jungle gym. Also provide materials for small-motor activities such as cutting, pasting and stringing beads.

DON'T TEST KIDS ALL OF THE TIME. Author Carol Hillman advises parents to resist the urge to constantly ask questions that test your child's knowledge. This just puts kids on the defensive. Make simple statements instead.

For example, instead of saying to a four year old: *Do you know what word is in the middle of the red and white sign?* say, *Look at the red and white sign. It says stop.* Or instead of asking *Do you know how many uncles you have?* just say, *Uncle John and Uncle Thomas are your*

two uncles. Instead of asking *How many bunnies are in that picture?* try saying *Let's count the bunnies.*

► **MAKE COUNTING PART OF DAILY TALK.** As kids get dressed, ask them to count the pockets on their clothes. Or let your child pick out three apples or two boxes of crackers at the store. Bring out a button box and let children make piles of different colored buttons. As they get older, they can make groupings: buttons with two holes, buttons with four holes, etc.

► **SPEND TIME WITH OTHER KIDS.** Whether it's in the playground or at your house, talking, sharing and learning to play with different children will be enormously helpful in preschool.

► **LIMIT SCREEN TIME.** It can be hard to resist the plethora of TV shows, DVD offerings and the digital media out there that's aimed at young children. But all of the research points to the same conclusions: everyday activities provide the best opportunities for learning. Kids need to spend more time playing, using hands-on materials and interacting with real people who respond to them. ♦

Reading & writing go together

Children's interest in reading and writing grows naturally out of their desire to express themselves. To encourage this process, read books to your child that you both enjoy. This should be a fun time for everyone.

Visit libraries and bookstores together. Take advantage of "story hours" for kids.

Ask your child to tell you a story. Write it down as he or she says it, then read it back.

Create books by stapling blank sheets together. Let your child paste pictures or draw on the pages—or dictate stories that you can write down. Keep paper, crayons and writing implements readily available.

Encourage early efforts to write—from squiggly lines to inventively spelled words.

Show how writing is part of your daily life. Make grocery lists with your child and check off items as you shop. Write notes to other members of the family: "Joey and I are going to the park. We'll be back at 5." ♦

Is it time to dust off your interview skills?

By Barbara Moses, Ph.D.

We work for many reasons. Money, of course. But also to connect with others, engage intellectually, refine our skills and satisfy our personal values.

Each of us has a story to tell. New graduates want to discover what type of work is right for them. Young parents wonder if they can advance in their careers and still fulfill their parenting responsibilities. Employees who've been downsized want to find—and keep—work that plays to their special talents.

Work is one of the most intimate expressions of our identity. Bad work undermines our confidence and spills over into other areas of our lives. Good work fulfills and inspires us.

No easy answers out there

There's no simple solution to the challenges workers face in our competitive economic climate. But as many employers emerge from the recession, you may once again see opportunities for advancement. This makes it a good time to think about—or rethink—your interview skills.

If you haven't been interviewed for awhile, it can help to know the kinds of questions you may be asked and to practice some responses. Ideally, you'll want to show that you already have the skills needed for the new position or project—or that you're taking steps to get those skills.

Here's what you might expect to be asked, along with some suggested responses:

Behavioral questions Since past behavior is thought of as the best predictor of future behavior, these questions begin typically with the words, “Tell me about a time when you...” or “Talk about a situation when you...” Try to provide a real-life example that



You may have an interview with more than one person.

demonstrates the specific behavior in question.

Situational questions These are hypothetical: “If you were manager, what would you do to change this situation?” Talk about how you handled a specific change or what you learned from a change that you were part of.

Stress questions Some interviewers like to put people on the defensive with a question like: “What makes you think you're tough enough to do this work?” Take your time. Be cool. Reply matter-of-factly. Describe a situa-

tion that you managed very well.

Conventional questions It might be “Can you tell me something about yourself?” Talk about your skills—as if the interview was a performance appraisal.

From-left-field questions For example: “If I saw your picture in *People* magazine, what would the caption below it say?” Obviously, you can't prepare for this kind of question. Again, take your time. And remember, there's nothing wrong with showing that you have a sense of humor, if what you were asked was really funny.

Employers are looking for these attributes

Some very specific abilities are in high demand these days. Be prepared to talk, personally, about what you can contribute in terms of:

INNOVATION. Say what you've done in the past to help generate or bring about change or growth. Offer fresh ideas for the future.

TEAMWORK. Tell about when you helped a coworker or how you responded (in a mature, positive way) when you did not get the cooperation you sought.

DECISION-MAKING. Describe your thinking process prior to making a tough decision.

LEADERSHIP. Tell about a time when it was difficult to get help on a project and what you did in response to make something happen. Talk about the “big picture.”

TENACITY. Talk about a difficult situation when your persistence paid off.

ATTENTION TO DETAILS. Describe the process you use to control errors.

EMOTIONAL IQ. Tell how you dealt with a frustrating situation.

FLEXIBILITY. Talk about how you got around an obstacle that was preventing you from finishing a task or project. ♦

Be prepared for these

Here are some frequently asked questions along with some tips for how to answer them—and what not to say:

“Tell me something about yourself.”

Do not say: “I started my career in 1986...” (and give a blow-by-blow account) or “I'm not sure where to start” or “I'm married with three kids.”

Do say: “Three things about me that are important in terms of this job are...” (then briefly describe three specific job-related competencies).

“How would you describe your strengths?”

Do not say: “I'm not sure” (it's no time to be modest) or “I'm good with people” (huge cliché).

Do say: “People describe me as...” (list pertinent strengths, keeping in mind what your interviewer is looking for, and give examples of accomplishments that speak to those strengths).

“How would you describe your weaknesses?”

Do not say: “My weaknesses include...” (and proceed to be devastatingly candid).

Do say: Something like “I get nervous giving presentations, but I'm taking a night course...” (cite honestly a common problem that will not be damaging and show how you are addressing it).

“What's most important to you in a job?”

Do not say: “I like a lot of feedback...” (or anything that might be a red flag).

Do say: “I like to work in a fast-paced environment.” ♦

—Adapted from the author's book, *What Next? The Complete Guide to Taking Control of Your Working Life* (DK Publishing).

Vitamin D may work wonders (or may not)

Lots of people are talking and writing about the myriad benefits of vitamin D. It's been called a "preventive" to everything from cancer, stroke, heart attack and depression to type 2 diabetes and autoimmune diseases.

But the facts of the matter are less definitive, according to researchers at the Harvard Medical School and elsewhere. They've begun a five-year trial study in which 20,000 healthy older men and women will be taking either 2,000 IU a day of vitamin D or a placebo.

But since the findings are not expected until 2016 at the earliest, that leaves the question: What should we do in the meantime?

For starters, we can assume that vitamin D is important and that its benefits may go well beyond just the relationship with fracture risk. We should also be aware that:

- The RDA (Recommended Daily Allowance) for vitamin D has increased to 600 units for people under age 70 and to 800 for those 71 and older.
- Because it's so hard to get enough vitamin D from food, adults may want to take a daily supplement of 1,000 IU, but no higher dose without talking to your doctor.
- It's a good idea also to get some regular weight-bearing exercise and to avoid smoking, eating a lot of salty foods, drinking more than two alcoholic beverages a day or more than the caffeine equivalent of two cups of coffee a day. And if you enjoy soda, try to make it an occasional treat. ♦

—Adapted from Nutrition Action Health Letter

Dancing to a beat can lift your spirit

We're watching some great dancing on TV these days, but most of us are *not* getting into the swing of things ourselves. And we should. Studies have found that dancing is not only good exercise, it can help improve our social skills, lift our spirits and even reverse depression. Here are some of the findings.

A German study of music and partner dancing found that tango dancers had significantly lower levels of stress hormones and higher levels of testosterone after dancing with partners. They also felt more relaxed and sexier.

University of New England researchers reported that participants who spent six weeks learning fancy dance footwork recorded significantly lower levels of depression than a control group who took no class. The results were similar to a third group who took meditation lessons. Study author Rosa Piniger credits the "mindfulness" or extreme focus of dance that interrupts negative thought patterns.

A study at the University of Derby in the UK found that depressed patients who were given salsa dancing lessons improved their moods markedly by the end of nine weeks. Researchers cited the normal endorphin

boost of exercise—plus the social interaction and concentration required by dancing, as well as the heightened self-confidence that comes from learning a new skill.

Dance therapist Donna Newman-Bluestein explains: "Depressed patients tend to have a curved back, which brings the head down so it's facing the ground. Dancing lifts the body to an open, optimistic posture."

Here are some suggestions for ways to get started:

MOVE TO THE MUSIC. Dance with yourself to music you enjoy. Simply getting a beat going on in your body can lift you out of a bad mood.

TRY BALLROOM DANCING. It's often said that if you can walk, you can do the tango. It's worth trying anyway, because

it requires concentration and improvisation and forces your brain away from negative thinking.

TAKE A CLASS OR JOIN A GROUP. Moving with others can expand your sense of self and your feelings of social connectedness. If you want a class that provides a lot of structure and order, try ballet. If you prefer something more expressive, try African dance. And if you're really playful, check out zumba. ♦

—Adapted from *Psychology Today* magazine



Try asparagus, the quintessential spring vegetable

Asparagus is packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and protein—in fat-free spears that contain only about 3 calories each. Here's what 1 cup of cooked asparagus (8 medium spears) has to offer:

Folate The B vitamin that promotes cell division.

Vitamin K Essential for bone formation and blood clotting.

Potassium A good source of vitamins C and A, thiamin, riboflavin, manganese, B6, copper, niacin and phosphorus.

Rutin A lesser-known compound that strengthens capillary walls.

Inulin A group of naturally occurring sugars that increase calcium absorption and promote the growth of friendly bacteria in the large intestine.

Is there a downside?

For some people, yes. The sulphur in asparagus may yield a bit of gassy odor. But the major concern is our tendency to slather asparagus with butter, sour cream, cheese,

Hollandaise or other sauces high in fat and sodium. These take away from the healthy nutritional benefits of the plain vegetable.

How to choose, store and cook asparagus

Pick bright green spears with closed, compact, firm tips. Contrary to popular belief, large spears grow on younger, more vigorous plants.

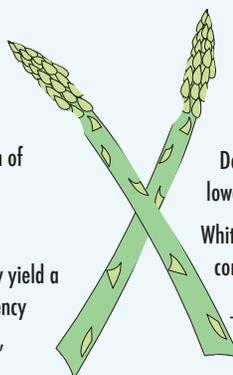
Wrap in moist paper towel, store in a dark part of the refrigerator, and use as soon as possible.

Cook quickly to "tender-crisp" to preserve nutrients. Steaming and microwaving are better than boiling.

Do not defrost before cooking. Frozen asparagus is slightly lower in some nutrients but higher in others.

White asparagus is lower in some nutrients, and purple spears contain more sugars. ♦

—Adapted from the Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter



Step-by-step guide to getting ready for a new baby

Having a baby is one of life's defining experiences. It can also feel overwhelming to expectant and new moms who already have a boatload of work and family responsibilities.

But you *can* make a smooth transition to parenthood, says Regina Leeds—and her new book *One Year to an Organized Life With Baby* delivers on its promise to tell you how.

A week-by-week guide to getting ready for a new baby may seem just perfect for the already well-organized person, but rather daunting for the rest of us. Luckily, Leeds is a professional organizer who breaks everything

down into clear, doable steps. She presents her information in a lighthearted way that makes it fun to read as well.

With handy checklists, you'll quickly pick up some organizational basics, such as what papers to keep or toss and how to purge your closets to make space. You'll also learn some things you didn't expect, like how to avoid decorating toxins when you're spiffing up the baby's room.

"No matter what your status in life, the physical and emotional challeng-

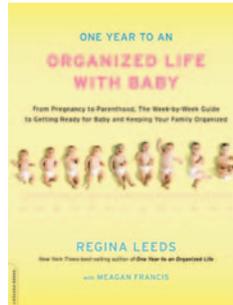
es of having or adopting a baby are pretty much the same," says Leeds. "And some parents never really crawl out from under that initial avalanche of baby stuff."

She calls her approach "Zen organizing," and her goal is to help you create a calm, peaceful and well functioning home.

Getting organized doesn't mean tidying up the house. It means finding a place for everything you own and developing some systems, habits and rituals that support the order you have created.

If this is new territory and you're thinking, "Oh no, this just is not who I am as a person," Leeds emphasizes that organizing is a skill that *anyone* can acquire. In the long run, it will make your life easier and less stressed. And you'll waste less time searching for things—precious time that you would rather spend with your new baby.

One Year to An Organized Life with Baby: From Pregnancy to Parenting, the Week-by-Week Guide to Getting Ready for Baby and Keeping Your Family Organized (Lifelong Books, paperback, \$16.95) is available in bookstores and online. ♦



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