

WORK & FAMILY LIFE

BALANCING JOB AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

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*Practical solutions
for family, workplace
and health issues*

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"Catch me if you can" is two-year-old Dylan's favorite game with Mom and Dad.

'Partnership parenting' is good for children and for grownups too

By Kyle Pruett, M.D., and Marsha Kline Pruett, Ph.D.

What is "partnership parenting?" It is based on the idea that when any two adults share the parenting of a child, the nature and quality of the relationship between those adults will have a strong impact on the child's development, for good or ill.

This seems like plain common sense, of course. But, until recently, most advice to parents focused on what one parent could do to influence a child's behavior and attitudes. It rarely considered the importance of the parental alliance. And we're not just looking at husbands and wives. Parenting partnerships can be between a grandparent and his or her adult child, same sex couples, and other combinations of connected, committed adults.

In fact, children benefit from having two nurturing, competent, engaged parents, regardless of whether those individuals live together. The real story is *how* the parents work out their different competencies for the joint benefit of the child and of their relationship—because working that out is what makes the difference between happy and

unhappy families. Here's what a successful parenting partnership requires:

- ▷ *Making decisions together.*
- ▷ *Sharing child-care responsibilities.*
- ▷ *Striving to agree on what your children need and want and how you'll go about giving it to them.*
- ▷ *Valuing the other parent's differences and accepting those differences as part of what makes family life interesting.*
- ▷ *Recognizing and appreciating gender differences that lead you both to think, feel and behave in distinct ways with respect to childrearing and how you express love, anger, fear and sadness.*
- ▷ *Putting children's well-being first when disagreements arise.*
- ▷ *Finding a way to talk about conflicts so you both feel heard and understood.*
- ▷ *Sticking together even when the going gets rough, making*

Continued on page 2...

How strong is your parenting partnership?

Have you (or your partner) fallen into any of these traps:

Believing that your partner is second in command and less important than you in nurturing the children or the relationship.

Treating your mate like an employee who is less invested in the family. Micromanaging your spouse's relationship with your children.

Showing frustration or disdain when interacting with your partner about an unresolved issue.

Letting your tone of voice, facial expression and body language convey a negative, disrespectful attitude.

Expressing unhappiness with your partner in front of your kids, extended family or friends.

Using work or other adult responsibilities as an excuse for not pulling your weight at home, especially for tasks like doing dishes, folding laundry.

Withholding information to see if your spouse will figure it out on his or her own, such as neglecting to remind him or her that your child needs to take his swimsuit to preschool that day, for example.

Putting up a wall or withdrawing from a conversation when the two of you face a difficult decision. ♦



Men and women tend to parent differently—and their children benefit greatly from both approaches.

Partnership parenting...

Continued from page 1...

your relationship's health a priority.

▷ *Committing to finding ways to grow individually and together in response to your ever-changing family's developmental stage.*

Building the partnership

Although couples face many challenges as parents and partners, there are ways to stack the deck in your favor. Here are some of them:

Focus on your relationship. Couples need time *as couples* to recharge their common, collective battery and talk about their partnership outside the world their child inhabits.

Choose activities you both enjoy. Spend time individually and together with family and friends—without kids, if you can. Banish talk about logistics for as long as you can.

Check in with each other about any feelings that may be simmering but not expressed, but don't do it on a "night out." Find some time at the end of a day or whatever works for you.

Women often bring up the need to talk in order to make changes in the relationship or the marriage. Men's ability to change in response to these requests is one of the strongest indicators of whether a couple will be happy and stay together. So for men, it isn't whether they get it right the first time that matters, it's whether they're

willing to be responsive to a need for change.

Practice resilience. Resilience makes us less vulnerable when we hit life's unexpected speed bumps, such as illness, unemployment or the loss of a loved one—and we will surely encounter one or more of these "bumps." The ability to recover without getting bitter or traumatized is a function of our resilience.

How does this relate to parenting? Studies have found that men and women differ in their ability to maintain resolve and focus under stress. For example, James McHale of the University of South Florida found that resilient dads tend to stay collaboratively involved during the difficult first three months of a newborn's life and, as a result, the couples are more likely to maintain a positive co-parenting relationship at the end of the baby's first year.

When a mother is resilient, she tries to make things better for everyone in the family as they absorb stress, but the parenting partnership is not affected or enhanced. McHale's research suggests that resilient fathering is especially important for protecting the whole family, because it also strengthens the parents' relationship itself.

Recognize your potential. A sturdy parenting partnership leads to a strong family. Couples with the strongest partnerships support each other and make and stick to agreements about how to raise their children.

Couples who work well together also report less distress in their parent-child relationships. Both partners, but mothers in particular, report greater personal well-being. The old adage applies: what's good for one is good for all.

Fathers are a crucial part of this equation. Being an active dad and a more responsive husband leads to a healthier family. When men assume an active role in fathering, it positively affects them personally and tends to strengthen the marriage or relationship.

Men who become fathers, it turns out, live longer, suffer fewer accidents and their suicide rate drops dramatically. Dads are less aggressive and less prone to act impulsively. When a child's need to be nurtured stirs the nurturing potential in men, it often happens that men's personalities begin to soften and open.

Avoid bean-counting. Consider all of the things you and your partner do for the good of your family—and stop keeping track of what the other person is *not doing*. Don't insist on a 50-50 split in tasks. For example, if Mom packed the lunch boxes this week, it has to be Dad's turn next week.

While there's some logic to this, it ignores the reality of people's lives. The point is not that each parent needs to take a turn at making sandwiches but, overall, that they're both committed to doing the best they can to support each other as parents.

What about fairness? How can an uneven split be fair? If you are lucky enough to live many years together, a time will come when your roles will be reversed and your partner will need to pick up the slack.

The important issue is not the uneven distribution of burdens during the formative years. Rather, it's whether partners are responsive when they're asked to make changes and whether they are the kind of people who can and will assume a share of the work when it's necessary—now and in the future. ♦

—Adapted from the authors' new book *"Partnership Parenting"* (Da Capo Press). See *We Recommend* on page 8.

'Another new, young boss in my life'

QI know I'm lucky to be working, but in the last few years I've had four bosses—and they seem to be getting younger and younger. I have a lot of experience at my company, so I should be more confident. But I'm finding it hard to get started on the right note with a new boss. Any ideas?

—R.S., Mt. Juliet, TN

AYou're not alone in this situation. Here are a few suggestions that could work better with some people than with others. So you'll want to do a little tweaking on your own.

Don't believe everything you hear on the grapevine. And be

aware that if you repeat any gossip that may be flying around, chances are good it will find its way back to the new boss.

Be cooperative. Ask if there's anything you can do to make a new boss's first weeks go smoothly. You may have to repeat your offer because some new supervisors, especially younger ones, can be reluctant to ask for or accept help.

Be proactive. Request a meeting to clarify your responsibilities. Make sure your job description fits your new boss's expectations of what you should or shouldn't be doing. But don't expect new people to honor all of the commit-

ments their predecessors may have made. At best, it will take some time to reevaluate these decisions.

Avoid talking about the "good old days." Keep to yourself any comparisons of supervisors past and present. And if a new manager turns out to be much younger than you are, don't make jokes or comment about it.

Be a good communicator. Find out how your new boss wants to give and receive information: by phone, e-mail, memos, texting, in-person recaps? It's up to you to make adjustments in your style. Your experience should stand you in good stead. ♦



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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, NY, NY 10165. E-mail: workfam@aol.com.

RESEARCH REVIEW

Studies find healthy rewards for giving

We've all been taught that it's better to give than to receive—and many of us have had the experience of actually feeling better after being helpful to someone. This effect has been called the "helper's high."

Now, it seems, we have scientific evidence to support these ideas. *New York Times* health columnist Tara Parker-Pope cites some of the research findings.

A BOSTON COLLEGE STUDY found that patients with chronic pain fared better when they counseled other patients who were also in pain. They felt less depression, less disability and their intense pain was reduced.

THE BUCK INSTITUTE FOR AGE

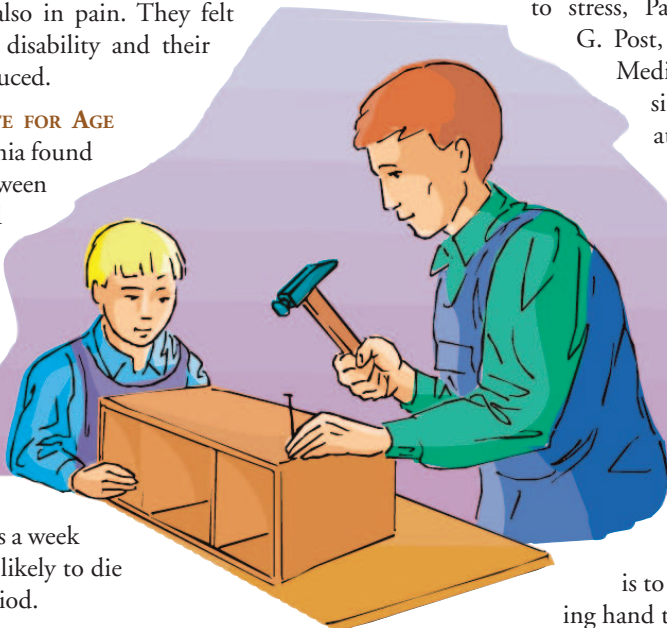
RESEARCH in California found a connection between volunteerism and longevity among older people. After controlling for variables, researchers found that the elderly participants who also did volunteer work for more than four hours a week were 44 percent less likely to die during the study period.

SIMILARLY, A MIAMI STUDY of patients with HIV found that those who demonstrated strong altruistic characteristics had lower levels of stress hormones. By contrast, a study of 150 heart patients found that those who talked about themselves at length and used more first-person pronouns did worse on treadmill tests than those who referred to themselves less.

It's not clear how a giving spirit can lead to mental and physical changes in health, although studies have suggested that altruism may function as an antidote to stress, Parker-Pope writes.

Stephen G. Post, director of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care and Bioethics at Stony Brook University in New York and co-author of the book *Why Good Things Happen to Good People*, offers this suggestion.

"To rid yourself of negative emotional states, you need to push them aside with positive emotional states," he says. "And the simplest way to do that is to just go out and lend a helping hand to somebody." ♦



Dutch research on male-female sleep patterns

Who sleeps better: men or women? It depends on whom you ask.

Researchers in Rotterdam used monitors and sleep diaries to assess the sleep of 1,000 older women and men. Their findings: men over-reported their sleep to make it sound better. The women reported more accurately but complained more about insomnia. In fact, the Dutch study found, the men did not sleep quite as long or as well as the women.

Flu virus can live up to 48 hours

Studies have found that viruses live longer on smooth surfaces like metal, plastic and wood than on porous surfaces like clothing and tissue. Flu viruses tend to survive longer than cold viruses but both can live on the skin for a few minutes.

—Adapted from the NY Times

How to help older people avoid Web scams

Now that so many of us are using the Internet, we're discovering that the Web's been overrun by companies that will take your money and run if you give them a chance.

Many scams are for health-related products that appeal to older people especially. So, until the law catches up with the cyber-swindlers, we can do a lot to protect ourselves and our older relatives from becoming victims. Here are some rules for the "virtual road" from the Center for Science in the Public Interest.

Be wary of "free" trials. Some are just a free key to your credit card or bank account. After you pay shipping and handling charges, you may well find yourself in an "automatic shipment program." Even if you manage to catch and cancel the typically overpriced product, you'll find it all but impossible to get a refund.

Some buyers received products *after* the free trial period was over, but their credit cards were already charged. "This happened to me," one woman complained. "When I asked for a \$78.81 credit, I was told I could only get \$40."

People have also reported having trouble stopping credit card charges after they cancelled a free trial. Many have found themselves



"I thought you cancelled that shipment last month!"

automatically disconnected from a company's 800 number when they called to complain.

Watch out for bogus blogs. For example, weight-loss blogs by "real people" named Alicia, Emma, Tara, Becky or Olivia may be rich in personal details, but they are also fake, right down to the stock photos. The aim of these compelling stories is to connect you to a dubious, overpriced weight-loss product to buy online.

Ignore endorsements. Have you seen the ads for "Oprah's Amaz-

ing Diet?" With one click, you'll read about a woman who "lost 57 pounds in two months" using "Oprah-endorsed" products. Oprah Winfrey is not associated with these products—and the Better Business Bureau has given many companies an "F" for misusing endorsements by celebrities and doctors. Online endorsements are often not what they seem to be, as the fine print may reveal.

Don't fall for "product reviews." Using names like "Consumer Best Deals" or "American Anti-Aging

Spotlight" or "The Açai Berry Report," these websites are trying to sell you a product. The "reviews" were written by the same people who are marketing the product. Unless you read the tiny type at the bottom of the page, you may be fooled. And some websites purporting to warn you about scams are themselves a scam. It's important to find your own reliable, independent sources.

How to protect yourself and your older relatives

The Web may indeed be a huge new bazaar for crooks, but it can work for us too—we can sniff around before we buy. A good place to start is with the Better Business Bureau at us.bbb.org. Click on "Check Out a Business or Charity." Enter the information you have: product, company name, city, phone number, Web address (URL) or e-mail address.

The Bureau will give you grade ratings, the number of complaints processed against the company last year and how many complaints are pending. Websites where consumers post their own tales of woe can also be an eye-opener.

Try the following:

complaintsboard.com Browse, search and post your own. Site includes *Tips & Tricks, Latest Complaints and list of worst offenders.*

complaints.com Search for company complaints made by others and post your own.

ripoffreport.com File your own report. See latest reports. Site also offers consumer tips.

wafflesatnoon.com Wide-ranging blog covers a gamut of topics with focus on exposing Internet scams.

quackwatch.com Site emphasizes health-related frauds. (See the box.)

You can also Google the company or product name and look for links to complaints. ♦

Quackwatch.com weighs in on açai berry products

The açai berry from South America is a perfect example of a product heavily marketed on the Internet. Companies sell açai products as a dietary supplement in the form of tablets, juice, smoothies, instant drink powders and whole fruit.

Marketers claim the berry can cure chronic illnesses, promote weight loss, boost energy, lower cholesterol, and improve skin, sleep, and heart health. But, as of 2009, there were no studies backing up these claims—and consumer complaints numbered in the thousands.

The website quackwatch.com, operated by medical communications expert Stephen Barrett, M.D., has debunked claims by açai product promoters and exposed many other health-related frauds. "The best way to avoid being quacked," he says, "is to reject quackery's promoters."

Dr. Barrett offers some general characteristics of online health products to be wary of. These include herbs or dietary supplements. Some of these products are useful, he says, but it's impossible to sell them online profitably without some sort of deception.

The deceptions may include withholding relevant facts about the product, selling a product that lacks a rational use, and/or failing to provide advice indicating who should NOT use the product.

Dr. Barrett cautions consumers to watch out for sites that sell homeopathic products, "alternative," "complementary" or "integrative" methods, and "nontoxic," "natural," "holistic" or "miraculous" treatments. These products, methods and services have not proven effective in scientifically-controlled studies, he says. ♦

Try asking open-ended questions

Once your teenager begins to trust you enough to express what's on his or her mind, you have arrived at the next step: expanding the conversation.

This is best done with open-ended questions that give kids room to respond however they wish—and they don't feel pressured to come up with the "right" answer. This approach invites kids into a conversation in which it's OK to say how they really feel.

Here are some questions that lead to open-ended discussions:

"What do you mean? Please explain."

"What was it like for you when that happened?"

"How has this incident made you feel different?"

"How do your friends feel about this?"

"Have you tried anything that made the situation better? (Or worse?)"

"What do you think you should do next?"

"Is there anything I can do to help?"

"Would you please tell me more about it?"

Be patient. Answers may not come immediately. And you can't force kids to talk if they really don't want to—or may not trust you to be understanding or handle what they have to say with a cool head. But we can ask thoughtful, inviting questions and be good listeners.

Once your kid starts to talk, just listen. If you speak at all, encourage your child to keep on talking.

Kids tend to be more interested in what you have to say if they feel that you are interested in what they have to say. ♦

Tackling tough subjects with teens

By Ken Druck, Ph.D., and Matthew Kaplowitz

Think back to your own youth. Was the door open for you to go to your parents with your problems? Then ask yourself, "When was the last time my child came to me asking for help?"

Respectfully listening and talking to our kids is a powerful form of violence prevention. When we talk to our kids about what's weighing on their minds, they not only unburden themselves, but they learn new coping skills and self-control.

Young people who have an open-door relationship with their parents are fortunate. In addition to receiving lots of TLC, they're more likely to ask for help when they're in trouble.

Moving beyond 'Yeah, whatever...'

Getting through to our kids can be difficult. They can be sensitive, defensive, resistant and downright stubborn. Building bridges often involves trying something new.

Don't pussyfoot around tough issues. Be direct. Set firm limits and—this is the key—focus on being a better listener. Spend more time talking face-to-face with your child.

The trick to getting past a teenager's communication roadblocks and other diversionary tactics is to keep your focus. Be patient and be smart. Don't let your child change the subject, talk you out of having this conversation, prey on your guilt, or sucker you into an argument. Take no detours. Accept no excuses.

We're not suggesting that you can make teenagers talk to you whenever you want them to. But you can ask nonjudgmental, open-ended questions and really listen when they do have something to say. That alone will make a big difference.



What to say when you hit a communication roadblock

When you are ready to tackle a thorny subject such as your children's safety or their choice of friends or what's going on in and after school, you may well hit some communication roadblocks. Here are a few possible responses for when that happens.

When your child says... You might say...

"What did I do now?"

"You haven't done anything wrong. You aren't in trouble. I just want to ask some questions about school."

"You treat me like a child!" Or "I've gotten this far. Why should we start talking now?"

"That's why I want to talk to you. You're old enough and mature enough to have this discussion."

"This is so lame" or "ridiculous" or "crazy." I can't believe we have to talk about this."

"This is not lame/ridiculous/crazy. This is about your safety."

"Don't you trust me?"

"Trust is not all or nothing. We trust more or less, based on how the other person acts."

"None of my friends have to sit and talk about all this stuff."

"Your friends' parents might not discuss this, but we need to."

"We don't need to talk about anything!" Or "Get over it." Or "You're just being paranoid."

"I'm sorry if you don't like it, but we need to discuss some things. If now isn't convenient, fine, but we are going to talk about this."

"Just leave me alone!" Or "I'm too busy to talk."

"This is important. When is a good time to talk?"

—Adapted from the authors' book "How to Talk to Your Kids About School Violence."

Say it in plain English and other writing tips

By Joan Detz

Whether you're talking to one person or hundreds, it's important to target your message to the needs of your listeners.

Before you decide what to say at a department meeting, seminar or presentation at a conference, try to determine the answers to at least some of these questions:

- *What do they want to hear from me? What do they need to hear from me?*
- *What do they already know on this subject? Where did they get their information? If they have misconceptions, what are they?*
- *What problems do they face? How did the problems develop? What solutions have they tried?*
- *What message would be most comforting? Most troubling?*
- *What information would save them money? Time?*
- *What changes could I suggest? What advice would be welcomed? Resented? What recommendations could be put into practice most easily?*
- *What perspective can I bring to their situation? What could I say that no one else could say as effectively?*

Focus on your writing

No matter how you plan to deliver your message—informally or with PowerPoint—be sure to write it out ahead of time. The following tips should help you refine what you have written and make it clear, lively and interesting to your audience.

Read it aloud. You can't tell for sure how something will sound until you hear the words. Read your manuscript to yourself out loud as you work on it.

Print hard copy along the way. Resist the urge to do all of your editing or proofreading on the

computer screen. Print out your manuscript and edit it on paper.

Use short sentences and paragraphs. Short, punchy sentences are easier to deliver and understand. Speakers tend to pause at paragraph breaks, so using more frequent indentations will help ensure more frequent pauses.

Value verbs. Inject energy and add spark by using active verbs. For example, instead of saying "our sales goals were achieved," say "we hit out goals."

Replace hidden verbs with bold, precise ones. The stronger the verb, the stronger the speaker. Instead of "we have come to the realization that..." say "we know now..."

Rewrite in the plural. Avoid those he/she, subject/verb agreement challenges in the English language. Instead of "each applicant must submit his or her form by April 1," try "applicants must submit their forms by April 1." And by all means,

don't say "he or she must submit their forms."

Use modern-day terms. Avoid biased or sexist references. This may require finding a new word. For example, instead of "gentleman's agreement," make it an "unwritten agreement." Instead of "man-made," say "synthetic." Instead of "spokesman," try "representative."

Be precise. Avoid confusion. For example, instead of saying "senior citizens will get a discount," try

"anyone over age 55 will get a ten percent discount."

Think positively. Rewrite the negative. Here's an easy tip: search for the words *no*, *not* and *none*. When you find them, rewrite the sentence. For example, instead of "the board was not united," say "the board was divided."

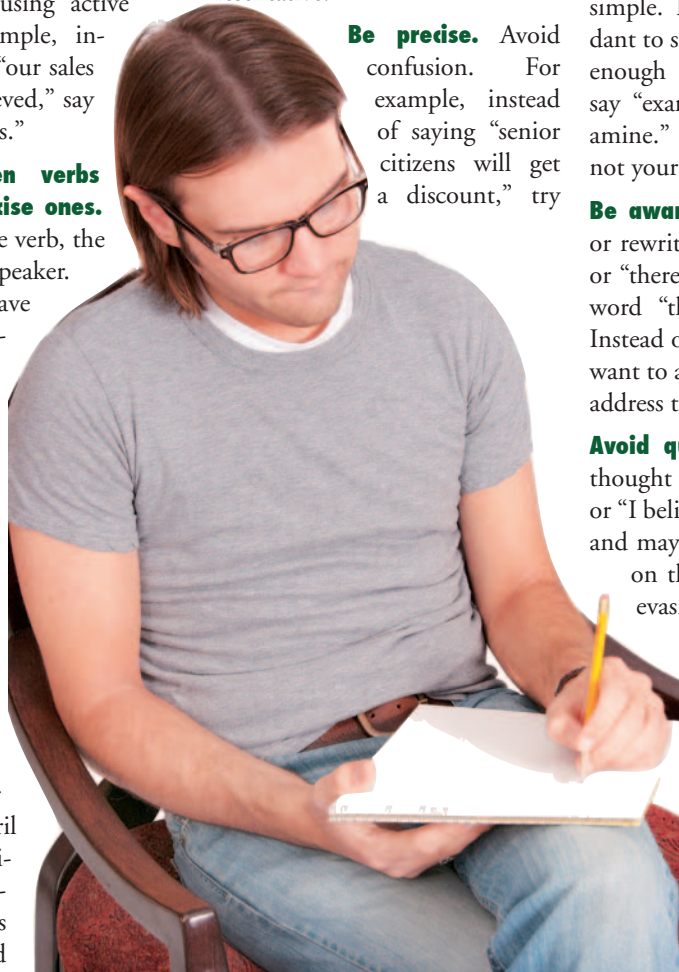
Don't repeat yourself. Keep it simple. For example, it's redundant to say "totally complete." It's enough to say "complete." And say "examine" not "carefully examine." Talk about your "plans" not your "future plans."

Be aware of weakeners. Omit or rewrite the phrases "there are" or "there is." Cut your use of the word "that" whenever possible. Instead of "there is an issue that I want to address today," say "I will address this issue."

Avoid qualifiers. Introducing a thought with the words "I think" or "I believe" sounds wishy-washy and may even suggest that you're on the spot and trying to be evasive.

Tighten your quotes.

If you are quoting someone, it's okay to drop any extra words that may interfere with the essential meaning of the quote. This makes it easier for the audience to remember what you're saying. ♦



Writing can help refine and clarify your thoughts.

AVOID LEGALESE

Go on a search-and-destroy mission for legalese and gobbledygook. Replace it with plain English.

| LEGALESE | PLAIN ENGLISH |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| In view of the fact that | Because |
| At the present time | Now |
| A large number of | Many |
| In a case in which | When or where |
| Owing to the fact that | Because or since |

| LEGALESE | PLAIN ENGLISH |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Maximize | Build |
| Ascertain | Find out |
| Conceptualize | Imagine or think about |
| Additional | More |
| Additionally | Also |
| Adjacent to | Next to or near |
| Utilize | Use |
| The aforementioned | Avoid the word altogether |

—Adapted and reprinted with permission from the author's book *"It's Not What You Say, It's How You Say It."* Visit joandetz.com.

Next month, we'll talk about how to give the speech you've just written.

Exercising early or late in the day?

Is it better to work out late in the day or early in the morning?

A small group of researchers who have studied the question of exercise performance and time of day say that performances are better late in the day and early evening.

In fact, Dr. Thomas Reilly and his colleague Jim Waterhouse at the Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Sciences at Liverpool John Moores' University in England said that not only outstanding performances—but also world records—are typically set in the late afternoon or early evening.

Your heart and lungs are more efficient and muscles are more flexible and stronger at the end of the day, according to Dr. Michael Smolensky of the University of Texas Health Science Center. However, he adds, this mostly applies to people who work out vigorously three or more times a week.

Among others, there is a variety of opinion, and some exercise physiologists and trainers continue to prefer morning workouts.

For anyone who is seeking a "personal best" time, Dr. Smolensky suggests that he or she try to find events that start late in the day.

"My approach is to train when your biological efficiency is greatest which means late afternoon or early evening for most people," he says. ♦

Lots of reasons to go for walnuts

Is it simply marketing hype when walnut growers describe their product as "essential food for health?" Apparently not. Recent studies have found that adding some omega-3 rich walnuts to your diet can be good for your heart.

A research team at Loma Linda University led by Sujatha Rajaram, Ph.D., tried out three different diets on a group of adults with normal to mildly high cholesterol, and the most successful was one that included a moderate amount of walnuts. It reduced "bad" cholesterol levels and improved the ratio of total cholesterol to "good" cholesterol, a key predictor of heart disease risk.

Studies at Tufts University and the Marshall University School of Medicine have found even more benefits of walnuts in preliminary studies with animals. But it's too early to say what these could mean for human beings.

Given that nuts are a rich, dense food, the question is *What's a moderate amount of walnuts?*

Here's the carefully worded health claim okayed by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration: "Supportive but not conclusive



research showed that eating 1.5 ounces of walnuts per day, as part of a low saturated fat and low cholesterol diet, and not resulting in increased caloric intake may reduce the risk of coronary heart disease." But 1.5 ounces of walnuts (about 20 halves) contain 278 calories. So we shouldn't overlook the words "not resulting in increased caloric intake."

Here are some tips for buying and storing walnuts.

When you buy whole walnuts, choose ones that feel heavy for their size.

Their shells should not be stained, pierced or cracked.

Walnuts are highly perishable due to their high fat content. Store shelled walnuts in an airtight container in the refrigerator, where they will keep for six months or, in the freezer, where they will last for one year.

Store unshelled walnuts in the refrigerator or in a cool, dry, dark place, where they'll stay fresh for up to six months.

Roast walnuts at home in a 160-170-degree oven for 15-20 minutes, to preserve their healthy oils. ♦

British study finds older people need more vitamin D

Vitamin D is especially important to older people because it lessens their risk of falling. But how much is enough? The RDA for vitamin D may soon be revised upward.

To substantially cut their risk, older people need to take *no less than* 700 to 1,000 IUs (international units) of vitamin D daily, according to a report in the *British Medical Journal* based on eight studies of vitamin D and fall prevention in subjects 65 and older.

The U.S.'s Institute of Medicine (the health arm of the National Academy of Sciences) has not yet revised its recommendations, however. Adults between 51 and 70 are still advised to take 400 IUs per day and people over age 70 are advised to take 600.

Having too little vitamin D contributes to muscle weakness. A third of adults 65 and over fall annually and about six percent of falls result in a fracture. ♦

—Adapted from the Food & Fitness Advisor

Yoga helps keep the spine straight

As we get older, our upper spine tends to curve. This condition, known in the medical world as hyperkyphosis, is also referred to as "dowager's hump."

A new study in the "Journal of the American Geriatrics Society" has reported that older adults who did yoga for six months had a reduction of about five percent in the curve of their upper spine—and those who did no yoga had an increase in their spinal curve. The study participants were women and men with an average age of 75.

The yoga group took three yoga class a week for six months while the control group attended six monthly informational luncheons. The yoga practitioners also reported better sleep, improvements in upper back pain, and they were able to stand up more quickly from a sitting position. ♦



—Adapted from the Food & Fitness Advisor

Creating a positive co-parenting environment

Parenthood is the dawn of a new epoch in people's lives—and *how new* is often what stuns parents the most. Expectant couples tend to think it won't be difficult to communicate about their baby's needs and other child-related decisions.

But from juggling child care to dividing up housework, many of these decisions can be stressful to even the strongest relationships.

In *Partnership Parenting*, Dr. Kyle Pruett, a child psychiatrist at the Yale Child Study Center, and Dr. Marsha Kline Pruett, a psychologist and professor at Smith College, describe how men

and women naturally parent differently and what can be gained from each approach.

They see the alliance between parenting partners as hugely influential on a child's development. In fact, they say, it sets the stage for the quality of life for everyone in the family.

The key components of a co-parenting relationship are: being the "kid's team," dividing up child care, caring together rather than feeling alone, keeping intimacy alive, balancing work and family, and managing conflict about your child.

The authors describe the most common challenges couples (married or not) face when they become parents and offer advice on dealing with everyday situations, from bedtime and feeding to discipline and schooling.

They describe a positive, nurturing, co-parenting environment and explain why couples shouldn't worry about splitting tasks 50/50 (see *Front page article*). They offer rules for nego-

tiation and "fighting fair"—and suggest ways to show appreciation for your partner's contributions.

The book includes anecdotes, quizzes, questions and solutions to jump-start a conversation with your partner. With wisdom and humor, *Partnership Parenting* will help both of you take advantage of your individual strengths to stay connected and confidently raise children together.

Partnership Parenting: How Men and Women Parent Differently—Why It Helps Your Kids and Can Strengthen Your Marriage (Da Capo, \$15.95) is available online and in bookstores. ♦



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