

WORK & FAMILY LIFE

BALANCING JOB AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

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for family, workplace
and health issues*

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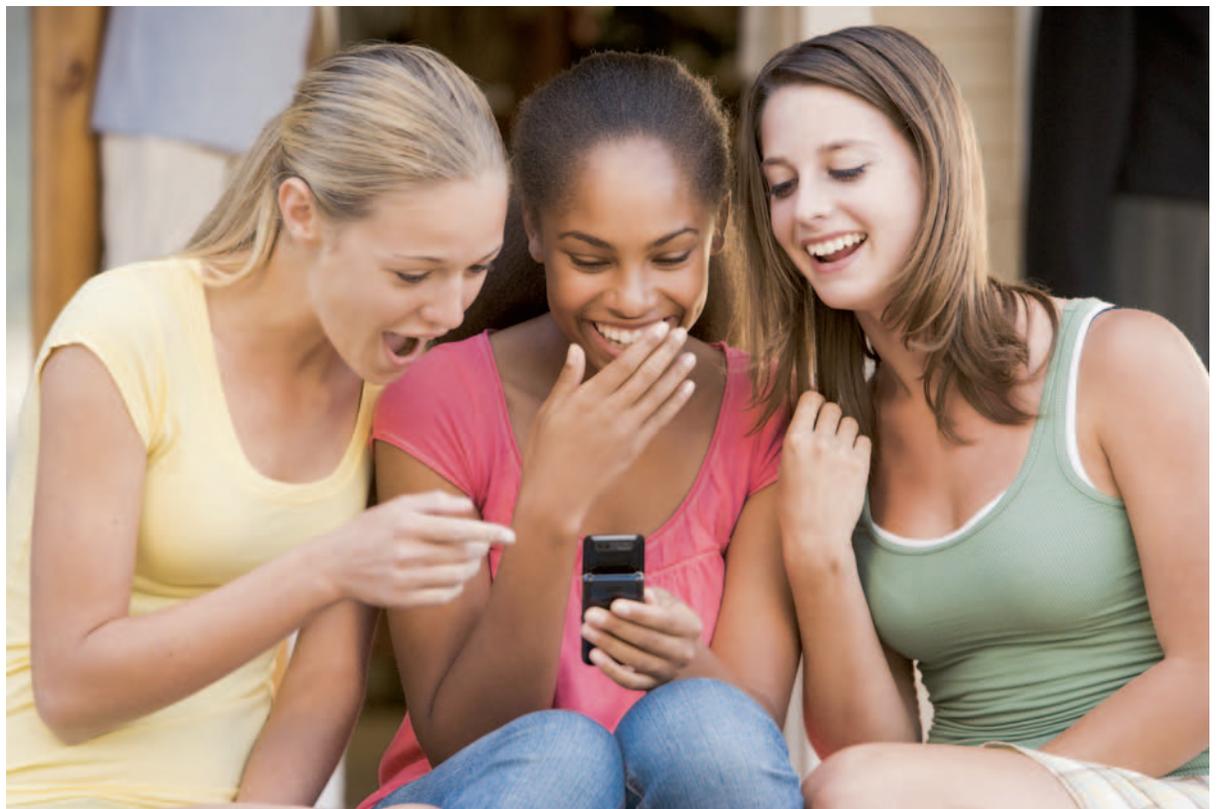
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If you want to get your teen's attention fast, text the message!

How to stay close and connected to a new generation of teenagers

By Ron Taffel, Ph.D.

It's time to look at and listen to what's really happening in teenagers' lives. Sure, adolescents have always set themselves apart, broken the rules and irritated grownups, but today's teens are unlike earlier generations in many ways.

Both boys and girls have a different mindset, a live-and-let-live sense of morality that says, "I won't press my values on anyone else and I'll only speak up in a life-and-death situation." Peer pressure, as we knew it, is not the same. That is, teens are more likely to get into trouble as a result of their own choices—not because their friends put them up to it.

Adolescence is also younger. As early as first or second grade, children are influenced by the "tyranny of cool," a standard-bearer of the pop culture that we've always associated with teenagers. Kids today don't rebel out of revenge or anger toward their parents. It's not generational warfare anymore. They are merely drifting away, yearn-

ing to find a place where they are known and where they feel comfortable.

Teenagers' parents know too little about their kids' involvements and even less about their misdeeds, in part because they don't want to and also because there's an unwritten code on what I call Planet Youth. It's a conspiracy of silence that allows teens to keep from most adults much of what they and their friends do. The peer group and pop culture together have become a "second family," exerting even more influence on teenagers than their parents.

Tune in on the "second family"

The face teens show their parents can be quite different from the face they show their friends. As many kids tell me, "I'm not who my parents [or teachers] think I am. I'm better." They're often right. Indeed, the "second family" can bring out the best in young people. It gives them what so many do *not* get from the adults around them: a sense of

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Stay close and connected...

Continued from page 1...

comfort, belonging, rules, rituals and honest feedback.

Along with a live-and-let-live ethos, there's a do-unto-others attitude that governs young people's actions. As a result, we're seeing a generation of teenagers who are more honest, open and willing to put their feelings on the line with their friends. Girls still tend to be more expressive than boys, but the gap has narrowed. Emotions and confidences are shared across gender lines as boys and girls are becoming good friends.

What parents can do

Given some of the distressing news events that have involved teens, many parents start to see every kid (even their own perhaps) as a time bomb. Feeling powerless and overwhelmed, they think their only recourse is to set stricter limits and hold firm to the rules.

Obviously kids need structure so they'll learn how to act in the world, but parents also need to meet them on an emotional level. We need to balance expectations with empathy. Teens need to be seen, heard and understood. At the same time, parents need to make their expectations clear.

■ Trust should be earned

Instead of asking for permission, teens like to announce their plans: "We're going to Joey's house after school." And parents may hesitate to question or challenge a child because we want to be liked and also to avoid a power struggle.

Young people tend to see their privileges as entitlements. In other words, at a certain age they will get to go to a rock concert, use a smart phone, drive a car, stay out later. But freedoms and privileges are not developmental, based on age. They need to be negotiated on a child-by-child basis.

This concept applies to privacy as well: teenagers like to make their rooms a "sacred domain," never to be encroached upon—by anyone.



A moment of celebration for proud parents and their teenage girls.

Parents should respect their child's privacy, but if you have reason to be concerned about something he or she is doing (including on the Internet), you have both the right and the responsibility to find out what's going on.

■ The next big thing

Parents should expect certain behaviors from their children without having to reward them for doing the right thing. Consequences must mean something to a child and must also be enforceable. Ask yourself: *What does my teenager really want? What can I enforce?* Teens seem to always want the next "big thing"—typically to go somewhere or to buy something.

Denying permission to drive a car or attend a concert or limiting access to media will get a teenager's attention very quickly. It also creates a pause—*time to really talk*—that can help a young person step back from the second family and take the first family more seriously.

■ Creating comfort time

If you ask teenagers what they'd like to see or hear and if you watch or listen to it with them, this becomes "comfort time."

It may mean sitting next to your kid while she reads about Justin Bieber on the Internet. It may require learning how to play a new video game. But when you enter your child's world and get involved with something she or he cares about,

you may find that your teenager is surprisingly receptive.

Just don't start lecturing or try to be someone you're not. "Comfort time" can also help parents become more respectful of second-family values. As you see your child's world more realistically, the delicate balance of being both "accepting" and "authoritative" becomes more possible.

■ Sweating the small stuff

Rather than realizing after the fact that you have granted too much freedom or paid too little attention to your teenager's activities, look for signs of change and step in before something big happens.

Research has shown that, in just about every case where kids slip deeper into second-family trouble, their problems were preceded by breaches of small expectations and a subtle distancing that neither their parents or other responsible adults heeded.

Don't wait for red flags. Look for small dips in school performance, changes in appetite or personal habits, new friends who are not engaged as much in school, more (or less) time on the phone or total absorption in video games and online activities.

Teenagers don't *only* need "more space," as we have been led to believe. Be clear about your standards and enforce them even when small problems come up. ◆

—Adapted from the author's books *"The Second Family"* (St. Martin's Press) and *"Childhood Unbound"* (Free Press and Kindle).

The language of listening to your kids

Here are seven proven, powerful listening techniques to help keep the lines of communication open with your kids.

1. Pace yourself to be on a similar wavelength with your child. Pay attention to his or her breathing, the speed of your own questions and the tone of your voice. If you mirror kids' body language, they're more likely to open up rather than shut down.

2. Don't interrupt, don't assume and don't finish sentences. Kids chronically cite these as our biggest listening errors.

3. Try not to immediately solve a child's problem as in "Oh, that's not so bad." A parent's "quick fix" often results in kids digging deeper into their negative place and shutting you out.

4. Ask concrete questions such as "What happened then?" This tells kids that you do in fact want to hear their story.

5. Help kids tell their story by gently moving them along and, without judgment, bring them from a beginning to the middle and end of their tale.

6. Avoid asking "Why?" After all, who really knows why? Certainly not kids anymore than we adults do. "When, what and who" are much better word choices.

7. Sometime after a discussion or a story well-told, mention to your children how good it made you feel and how well they expressed themselves. Don't take this for granted. Acknowledgment (without exaggerating) leads to more communication. ◆

—R. T.

Is my child ready for sleep-away camp?

Q I had a lot of fun at sleep-away camp and I want my boy, who is 9, to have that experience. My wife thinks he's too young to be away from home for two weeks. Do you agree?

—D.S., Buffalo, NY

A There's no "right" age. It's more about readiness and how long your child can be away from home. Jennifer Kelman, author of an award-winning children's book (see www.MrsPinkelmeyer.com), offers these five signs that a child is ready for sleep-away camp.

1. Your child begins to express an interest in going to camp. As children develop peer relation-

ships in school and spend more time away from you, this may be when they will start to verbalize a desire to go to sleep-away camp.

2. Your child is able to spend longer periods away from home. He or she should be comfortable sleeping through the night at a friend's house without getting upset or wanting to return home.

3. Your child gets along well with her or his peers. This may seem like a no-brainer, but if kids are having behavior problems at home or school, these will likely follow them to camp.

4. Your child is able to follow directions from leaders. Kids can

learn wonderful things at camp. But they have to be able to follow directions and listen to counselors and group leaders.

5. Your child is asking to attend a particular type of camp. Some camps emphasize specific sports, theater, science, horseback riding, etc. If you place your child in a specialty camp, make sure that it truly suits his or her interests, desires and talents.

When parents are discussing the possibility of children going away, talk with them about the realities of camp life—getting up early, following rules and rituals and living without all the comforts of home. ♦



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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

When work intrudes, moms feel guiltier

These days many of us are linked to our jobs through technology 24-7 and this can take a toll on work-life balance for both men and women.

A new study from the University of Toronto reports that women tend to feel more guilt and greater psychological distress than men do when work follows them home via emails, texts and phone calls.

"Although men did report higher levels of work contact while at home, what we saw was that the level of contact did not make a difference for men's feelings of guilt or distress. It did for women," says Scott Schieman, sociology professor and coauthor of the study.

Both women and men felt equally inconvenienced, especially by late-night work emails flagged "urgent," Schieman says, but intrusions into their personal lives seem to disproportionately annoy women.

As one mom puts it, "I am a nurturer first. I'm just more hardwired to feel guilty than my husband is."

Women make a major financial contribution to dual-income households these days, but they have different expectations for the boundaries that sepa-

rate their work and home life. "These forces may lead some women to question their family-role performance when they're trying to navigate work issues at home," Schieman suggests.

Interestingly, although the women in the study were more likely to say they "feel guilty" as a result of being contacted, they were as able as men to successfully juggle the workload.

The study doesn't surprise Toronto work-life consultant Nora Spinks: "Men are increasingly taking on a larger share of household and childrearing tasks, but women are still the primary organizers and planners—especially when there are kids at home."

Since workers at all levels use smart phones these days, family time is more likely to be interrupted, especially for highly demanding jobs, Spinks adds.

The study, published in the *Journal of Health and*

Social Behavior, was based on data from 1,200 Americans who took part in a national survey. It included participants who were single or did not have children in addition to working parents. ♦



Study finds teens bully their rivals for 'popularity'

We often think of socially isolated teens as the main target for bullies, but new research suggests that bullying occurs throughout social ranks as students jockey to gain popularity with the "in" crowd.

"Most victimization is occurring in the middle to upper ranges of status," says Robert Faris, Ph.D., of the University of California, Davis, author of a study reported in "The American Sociological Review."

Rather than picking on kids who are "on the margins," teens tend to target their social rivals—those one rung ahead or right behind them on the social ladder. "They get more benefit to going after somebody who is a rival," Dr. Faris says.

Teen aggression peaked at the 98th percentile of popularity, possibly because the top 2% no longer need to be aggressive, he says.

The most successful programs to reduce bullying are the ones that get kids to stop being passive bystanders. It's when the popular kids say, "This is not cool." ♦

Warning signs of an older person's driving risk

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

Last month we talked about the “driving dilemma” and how to begin a conversation with an older relative who may need to give up driving.

We pointed out that age is *not* the determining risk factor. To drive safely, a person must be able to see, think and move well and with ease. If any of these abilities is limited, the individual should not be operating a motor vehicle.

States have different rules for renewing licenses and testing drivers. Find out from your Motor Vehicle Bureau what the rules are in the state where your older relative is licensed.



“Thanks for taking me to the doctor’s!”

Check for warning signals

Three advocacy groups (AARP, AMA and AAA) have developed specific warning signals that I have categorized by risk level into red, yellow and green.

“Red” points to the highest risk level, and a single red marker should signal the need to begin a conversation about driving with your older relative. “Yellow” points to a lower but still significant risk. One yellow risk is a cause for concern. Two or more should prompt further assessment. “Green” points to risks that can be corrected and, if corrected, can allow a person to continue to drive safely.

Red signals of risk

- **One or more auto accidents in the past five years.** A driver’s recent history is a strong predictor of mishaps to come.
- **Recent traffic tickets or police warnings.** Insurance companies raise their rates after a ticket or accident because such events also tend to predict future problems.

- **Severely impaired vision, cognition or mobility.**

Yellow signals of risk

- **Recent near misses or close calls while driving.** A near miss isn’t always the driver’s fault, but it may be a symptom of declining performance.
- **Having people say they don’t want to ride with the driver or don’t want their children to ride with him or her.** Since people are often reluctant to speak up about their concerns for a person’s driving, these expressions should be taken seriously.
- **Feeling stressed, exhausted or uncomfortable when driving.** These are signs that a driver no longer feels fully competent behind the wheel.
- **Having other drivers honk, gesture or seem annoyed by the person’s driving.** These signs and gestures may be a clue that a person’s driving is too slow, erratic

or outside the norm in some other way.

- **Accumulation of vehicle dents and dings.** Backing into things, scraping walls or other objects and minor fender benders may indicate vision, mobility or navigation problems.
- **Difficulty judging gaps in traffic at intersections and on highway entrance and exit ramps.** Age-related changes in one’s eyes may impair depth perception.

- **Failing to notice vehicles or pedestrians on the sides of roads or streets when looking straight ahead.**

This may also suggest a diminished field of view.

- **Not seeing lights, signs, signals or pedestrians soon enough to respond to them smoothly.**
- **Getting lost more often than in the past, especially in familiar areas.** This could signal memory or other cognitive problems
- **Trouble paying attention to traffic signals, road signs and pavement markings.** This could be a problem with one’s ability to respond to multiple cues.
- **Slow response to unexpected situations.** This could signal an impaired ability to recognize stimuli or a delay in physical reactions.
- **Becoming easily distracted or having difficulty concentrating while driving.**

- **Not using the safety belt.** Extenders and other devices can make it easier to put on a seatbelt. Forgetting to buckle up may also signal a memory problem.

- **A new or worsening medical condition.** Taking medications with side effects can also impair driving safety.

- **Difficulty negotiating turns and intersections.** This may suggest sight or movement problems.

- **Hesitating over right-of-way decisions.** This could mean that the person behind the wheel has a problem with his or her cognitive processing speed.

- **Difficulty keeping the car in its proper lane.** Straddling lanes, drifting or changing lanes without signaling may indicate that a driver has a vision or movement problem.

Green signals of risk

- **Trouble seeing over the steering wheel.** A seat cushion or pillow can usually correct this.

- **Difficulty looking back over one’s shoulder.** See about getting the car fitted for adaptive mirrors. Work on improving flexibility and range of motion.

- **Trouble physically turning the steering wheel or looking out of mirrors.** These also signal movement problems—and exercise may help.

- **Difficulty getting in or out of the vehicle.** Improving one’s total fitness can help with this. Or put something slick over the seat to make it easier to slide in and out.

For more help, check out these Web sources:

- seniordrivers.org
- aarp.org/drive
- itnamerica.org
- thehartcaring.com. ♦

—Adapted from the author’s book *The Driving Dilemma*. For more information, visit Dugan’s website drivingdilemma.com.

Helping kids cope with divorce and what follows

By Vicki Lansky

If you or someone you know is preparing for a divorce, here's some advice to help you talk to your children about what's going on and to create a parenting partnership with your former spouse—because you have the same goal: to provide the best lives you can for your kids.

Talking to children

- ▶ Tell kids what is happening and how they will be affected. Include specific details about the time they will spend with people they love: both parents, grandparents, baby sitters, even a pet.
- ▶ Provide age-appropriate reasons for your divorce or separation. A child does *not* need to hear about your anger or your blame.



- ▶ Be careful *how* you share your money worries. Kids can interpret “we have no money” literally. This is different from saying “we can't afford this right now.”
- ▶ Children need to ask questions and talk about their feelings, but they may not be ready to do this when you are. Give them many opportunities for talks with you.

Children's reactions

- ▶ Children often think in simple, magical ways, believing a wish or thought can come true. It's easy for young kids to believe a divorce is their fault and that they can stop it by wishing hard enough.

▶ It's normal for kids to hope for a reconciliation, especially when their parents' anger was not noisy or visible. Try to respond to their questions in a straightforward but kind manner.

▶ Children experience many different feelings during a divorce: anger, hurt, sadness, loneliness, relief, guilt, fear, confusion, disappointment, grief, etc. Be patient. Divorce is usually a much newer idea for them than it is for you.

▶ Crying is not a sign of weakness for a child—or a parent. Leaving or being left by someone you love hurts, and crying is an honest and natural reaction to being sad.

Telling others

- ▶ Kids may have friends whose parents are divorced, but when it happens to them they often feel embarrassed and don't want to talk about it. Divorce still feels unique when it's in your own family.
- ▶ Telling family, friends, teachers and caregivers about your divorce isn't easy, but it should be done in a timely fashion. How you do it sets an example for your child.
- ▶ Many kids feel self-conscious or angry when teachers are informed of their parents' divorce. Don't allow your child's sensitivity to stop you from notifying the school. Ask that all correspondence be sent to both parents.

Shared parenting

- ▶ Kids in divorced families need to build a relationship and history with each parent—and the only way to do this is to spend significant time with each. Base your parenting plan on this need, but be aware that no two families will achieve it in exactly the same way.
- ▶ Shared parenting is never glitch-free. So don't let bumps in the road be your excuse for thinking it's not working. Time will help smooth out many problems.



- ▶ Try to avoid surprises or last-minute changes in plans involving your child. They create anger, disappointment and loss of trust both in the child and the other parent.
- ▶ A color-coded calendar can help everyone keep track of which days kids are at which parent's home.
- ▶ Bedtime rituals are comforting. Try to maintain generally similar routines in both homes.
- ▶ Send some school work along with your child when he visits the other parent on weekends. Kids need to share their accomplishments with both parents.
- ▶ It's normal to be careless about possessions when kids go back and forth between two homes. Weekly checklists can help.

▶ Parenting plans, like children's clothes, can be quickly outgrown. They'll need to be “altered to fit.”

Parents' interaction with kids

- ▶ Be aware that every problem or difficulty a child has is *not* necessarily related to your divorce.
- ▶ Ask kids for their input as you handle different situations. It will provide insights. Just *don't* ask, “Who do you want to live with?”
- ▶ Acknowledge a child's feelings without passing judgment (“I see you're upset” instead of “don't be upset”) or making light of them (“I know this is hard for you” instead of “you'll get over it”).
- ▶ Don't let another parent's negative behavior get in the way of letting kids know how much you

love them. If you are consistent and there for them, time will work in your favor.

▶ Give your child “permission” to love the other parent, regardless of what transpired between the two of you. And hard as it may be, let your child know that the other parent has many good, decent qualities that you once loved.

Parent to parent

- ▶ If you avoid contact with a difficult former spouse and it results in not seeing your child, it may spare you pain—but not your child.
- ▶ If one parent constantly puts down the other parent (and even if the criticism is valid), the child often feels put down as well.
- ▶ Let the other parent know how much you appreciate his or her parenting efforts. Praise is a good motivator.
- ▶ Be sure kids know they don't have to choose between parents and both will always love them.



▶ Divorce itself does not damage children. How you handle your divorce can, however.

▶ Divorcing parents who act like parenting partners can help kids feel more secure. And that, after all, is the job of a parent. ♦

—Adapted from Vicki Lansky's read-together “It's Not Your Fault, Koko Bear,” which is available online at Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble or by calling (952) 544-1154. It is also available in Spanish.

Thinking ‘great thoughts’ about leadership

What leadership requires and how to make it happen is the subject of countless books, articles and studies. We talk about it often on this page as well, emphasizing the opportunities we *all* have to be leaders—at work, at home and in our communities.

Harriet Rubin, author of *The Mona Lisa Strategem: The Art of Women, Age, and Power*, has a particular interest in breaking the “glass ceiling” for women in top executive positions and on corporate boards. But many of her ideas apply to everyone.

For example, Rubin was one of a small group of participants invited to a mountaintop retreat in Santa Fe, New Mexico for a weekend to think “great thoughts about leadership.” And as they got started, the diverse group discovered three things in common that brought them to the seminar:

A FEELING THAT SOMETHING WAS MISSING in their work lives—a spark or connection that had been lost or perhaps was never there in the first place.

A WORRY THAT THEY HAD SOMEHOW COMPROMISED their personal goals, including those in the group who had realized all of their work-life dreams.

A DESIRE TO BELIEVE that, by shifting their thinking, they could get closer to learning the secret of truly great work.

“It wasn’t that we were burned out,” says Rubin. “Rather, we wanted to know how to focus our distracted energies in order to accomplish something that would last. As one participant put it, we



Sometimes the best ideas come up in a brainstorming session.

felt our challenge was to move from ‘success to significant.’” Here are the “ten commandments” of good leadership that Harriet Rubin’s group brought down from the mountaintop.

1 Become a self-aware learner. Pay more attention to how you absorb new information. What is it that makes you start thinking about something? Be aware of when and how you change positions and how you feel about people whose opinions differ from yours. In terms of leadership, look for (and become) someone who “lives the virtues of listening, learning, making mistakes and reflecting on experience.”

2 Start your own “brain trust.” The world’s great thinkers are available to all of us—from Socrates to Henry Thoreau to Nelson Mandela. Through reading, we can bring the best minds, past and present, into the room with us and try to raise our own efforts to their level. For example, try to have an argument mentally with Plato about whether a leader should be part of a specially trained “elite.”

3 Talk about what’s percolating inside your brain. Say out loud what you believe to be true deep inside. Talking can become what’s known as a “forcing mechanism.” That is, you have to have an idea, whether you know it or not. And when you talk about something you don’t entirely understand or know for sure, you may discover connections that your subconscious has already made.

4 Make a list of the qualities you think make an ideal leader. Draw from your own “brain trust.” For example, is your ideal leader self-sacrificing like Socrates, forgiving like Mandela or a combination of many qualities? Let yourself think big thoughts.

5 Now make another list of what you’re willing to settle for. This is the list to live up to. You may find that it’s more difficult to think in terms of what’s practical. But when we only idealize what a leader is, we never learn to be the best leader that we can be.

6 Try thinking without using your imagination. It’s harder than you think. But it’s worth doing—

because another kind of necessary wisdom for leadership requires dealing with things as they really are in the here and now, not as we wish them to be.

7 Re-read a text that has been important in your life. It’s a good way to check yourself in your mind’s mirror and to measure what has happened to you since the last time you read it.

8 Be yourself. We often pay close attention to what other leaders are doing and saying, and then we

try to emulate those qualities. In the process, we lose our own “authentic self” (the person we were meant to be) as opposed to our “fictional self” (the person the world has told us to be).

9 Try going in a direction that you have been resisting. Ask yourself: “Am I avoiding a particular challenge because I don’t want to face the responsibility or the risk?” Sometimes being honest with other people can be easier than being honest with ourselves.

10 Be a stranger to yourself. Look in the mirror in the morning and ask yourself: “Who are you and what do you know?” Let it be a playful exercise. We often think that leaders need to show depth and *gravitas*. Instead, let your goal be to go on playing, learning and changing.

“We came to the mountaintop thinking that we knew what we wanted out of life. Now we’re not so sure,” says Rubin. “We’re changing our notions of leadership, because we’re changing our notions of ourselves.” ♦

How life has changed in the past 40 years

In 1971, a typical American supermarket carried just under 8,000 items—and now it's more like 50,000. And while you're shopping at most supermarkets today, you can also pick up dinner at the cooked-food bar, get cash from an ATM, fill a prescription at the in-store pharmacy and print out the photos you just downloaded from your digital camera.

Here's how some other things have changed:

○ In 1971, the Big Mac was four years old, and the two-patty hamburger was truly "big." These days it's small compared to Burger King's Whopper, Wendy's Bacon Deluxe Triple hamburger, and McDonald's own Angus burger.

○ In the early 1970s, Americans spent one third of their food dollars on meals outside the home. Today, it's half. Food prepared away from home tends to contain more calories, and the national waistline is ever expanding (see the article on this page).

○ In 1971 one out of every 100 U.S. households owned a microwave oven. Today it's 95 out of 100. In other words, pretty much everyone is microwaving these days.

○ If you read a typical food label in 1971, you would not have had a clue how much fat or sodium or how many calories were in each serving. Shopping for healthy foods is a lot easier now, thanks to the introduction of the "Nutrition Facts" label on food packages in 1993. Most shoppers say they use these labels to help figure out what to buy. ♦

—Adapted from Nutrition Action Health Letter

Douse your fries and other eating-out tips

Tufts University nutritionist Susan B. Roberts, Ph.D., is investigating what she calls "restaurant syndrome." It's a growing trend that involves eating out, eating too much, feeling bad about it and then doing it all over again.

"The problem with eating out is that it's making us fat," says Dr. Roberts.

Her studies at Tufts' Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging have shown a direct relationship: that is, the more often we eat out, the more likely we are to carry excess pounds. And clearly, it's a worsening syndrome. The number of meals Americans eat out or take out annually has doubled since 1983.

Dr. Roberts suggests these strategies to make eating out a healthier, less indulgent experience.

Nip negative cycles in the bud. After a night of eating out, start your day with a bowl of high-fiber cereal.

Go out just as often, but eat less. Eat at home before you attend a social event. Then, at the event, you can talk more and eat less.

Never arrive hungry. Snack on something satisfying before you eat out, such as an apple or raw veggies.

Micromanage your order. Be specific (and polite). For example, ask for salad dressing on the side. Or say "please, no cheese on top of the French onion soup."

Control the signals your eyes and nose send your brain. Try draping a napkin over the bread basket. Or dribble some water on those leftover fries.

As it happens, the parts of the brain that are stimulated by the sight and smell of food are mainly in the lower, unconscious regions where willpower does not reach. "No wonder so many of us struggle with weight problems," says Dr. Roberts.

To return to 1970s weight levels in the U.S., we would need to cut out about 500 calories a day or significantly boost our exercise. Better yet, we should do a bit of both: fewer calories, more exercise. Here are a few more tricks to curb the urge to overeat:

Remove food from your environment. Seriously. If you can't resist cookies, stop buying them.

Make your own rules. For example: "No French fries." Or

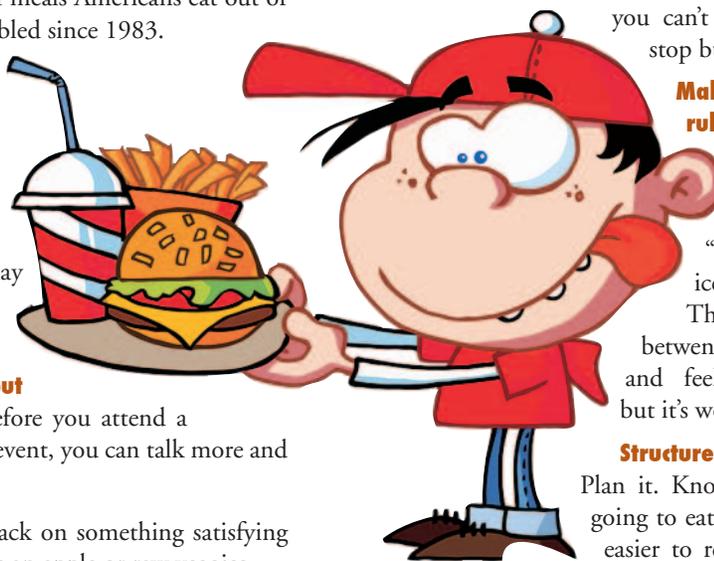
"I kicked my ice cream habit!"

There's a fine line between rule-making and feeling deprived, but it's worth trying.

Structure your eating. Plan it. Know what you're going to eat and when. It's easier to resist food cues that are *not* in your plan.

Substitute rewards. Find something you want even more than the food stimulus. Exercise is one of the best substitutes for the kind of reward we get from foods. It burns calories and helps you achieve a sense of well-being. ♦

—Adapted from the Health & Nutrition Letter

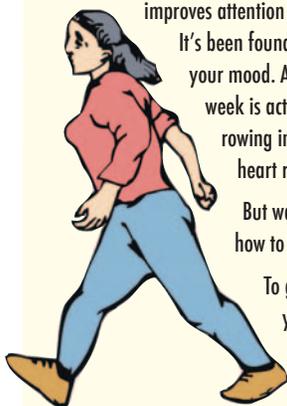


What you can do to get the most out of your walking stride

We have written often about the value of walking: the positive effect on your heart, your brain and your weight. Walking improves attention and your ability to ignore distractions. It's been found to improve memory and brighten your mood. And a low-intensity stroll 5–6 times a week is actually more effective than biking and rowing in preventing obesity and reducing heart risk factors.

But walking is something of an art. Here's how to get more out of your stride:

To get the ideal posture, try shrugging your shoulders and let them fall to a comfortable position.



Bend your arms 90 degrees to create a pendulum motion as you speed up your step.

Strike with the heel, roll through the step and give a good push off with your back foot. Don't lengthen your stride to walk faster. Increase the number of steps you take.

Take a hilly route if possible. If you want to burn fat, incorporate an incline in your walk.

Try to avoid talking on the telephone while you're walking. It draws your focus. It's distracting and puts you at a greater risk of having an accident. Half of all pedestrians on mobile phones have been found to engage in dangerous road-crossing behavior. ♦

—Adapted from Psychology Today magazine

A life-changing guide to getting unstuck

If you're going through a life transition like graduating, getting married, having a baby, moving, divorcing, retiring, starting a new business, or becoming an empty nester, it is possible to "gracefully and optimistically" manage the change, says author Julie Morgenstern. And her book *SHED Your Stuff, Change Your Life* can help you do it.

Morgenstern has been called "the queen of helping people put their lives in order." But this does not mean getting organized. It means getting unstuck from all the "stuff" in your life.

As she explains, organizing has a clearly defined finish point

while shedding is an ongoing process that measures success in a variety of ways. The main portion of the book describes the process and shows how people in different situations can implement it. The S-H-E-D acronym stands for:

SEPARATE THE TREASURES. *What is truly worth hanging onto?*

HEAVE THE TRASH. *What's weighing you down?*

EMBRACE YOUR IDENTITY. *Who are you without all your stuff?*

DRIVE YOURSELF FORWARD. *What direction connects to your genuine, authentic self?*

Morgenstern's approach may sound like *Pollyanna*, but it's not. "It's one thing to divine your unique qualities, talents, and skills," she writes. "It's quite another to possess the discipline to deliver on those core attributes."

She lists the following areas we all need to work on.

DETERMINATION. *This involves the pa-*

tience, optimism and work ethic to see things through to the end.

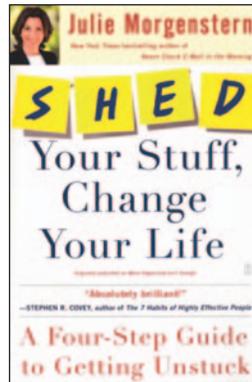
ORGANIZATION. *Creating an environment that brings out your best.*

SELF-CONFIDENCE. *Trusting your point of view and being willing to engage, learn, absorb and grow.*

HEALTHY HABITS. *Keeping yourself in peak form physically, mentally and emotionally.*

ATTENTION. *Staying focused on your goals and not getting distracted.*

SHED Your Stuff, Change Your Life: A Four-Step Guide to Getting Unstuck (Fireside, paperback, \$15) is available in bookstores and online. ♦



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