

# WORK & FAMILY LIFE

BALANCING JOB AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

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*Practical solutions  
for family, workplace  
and health issues*

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Classmates giggle over a joke and share a pizza together after school.

## Yes, children's friendships really do matter

By Eileen Kennedy-Moore, Ph.D.  
and Mark S. Lowenthal, Psy.D.

**D**o you remember playing with friends and becoming so absorbed in your game or adventure that you lost track of time? Do you remember the delights of discovering and creating a whole world apart from adults? The favorite childhood memories of many adults involve friends—in a sense, friendship is what childhood is all about.

### Friendships create a sense of belonging

Friendships are not only a source of fun, they help kids grow in meaningful ways. They create a sense of belonging through shared interests: “my friends and I like this kind of music...” or “we play soccer.” Friendships can provide acceptance and help children feel good about themselves: “Michelle is my friend and she wants to play with me.” Having friends also makes it easier for kids to tolerate stress, rebuffs or aggravation. And friendship encourages children to go beyond their own self-interest. Caring about a friend, or just wanting to play with that friend, can temper selfish urges and open the way for negotiation, compromise and even generosity.

### Kids are busier these days

It's a little harder now for children to learn how to get along with their peers. Schedules are packed with homework and after-school activities, so there's less time for casual get-togethers with friends. Kids' activities tend to be orchestrated by adults—with more focus on enrichment than on unstructured interactions with other children.

There's been a big change in kids' social lives too, especially for boys, that involves increased technology-related play. For some children, virtual friendships are their main way of relating. Video and computer games can help them to basically tune out the social world.

Of course, there's no point in bemoaning the passing of a “simpler era.” The times are what they are. But this may mean that your child will need some additional support to learn how to make and keep friends.

### Responding to friendship problems

Learning to connect with peers can be complicated. Some children connect effortlessly, whereas others struggle. Friendship problems can range from a simple argument

*Continued on page 2...*

## Friendships matter...

Continued from page 1...

to more enduring difficulties. Kids can be quirky or different in ways that push other kids away. Some hold back too much, some come on too strong. Here are a few ideas for what parents can do.

■ **Start with your child's feelings.** When kids are feeling rejected, they need extra caring from parents. Listening and empathizing will help a lot. "Sounds like you had a rough day" or "how embarrassing" or "how frustrating."

■ **Manage your own feelings.** Hearing that our child was left out can make us feel helpless or, when it's about a friendship, may remind us of a painful incident in our own childhood. Try not to overreact and burden your child with something that happened to you.

■ **Resist the urge to rush in** with advice or suggestions. Your child may be able to solve the matter on his or her own. Most friendship issues just blow over. Kids often forgive, forget and move on faster than their parents. Your son may insist he hates Stuart's guts today—and next week Stuart will become his "best friend."

■ **Don't ask leading questions** such as "Was anyone mean to you today?" Michael Thompson, Ph.D., author of *Best Friends, Worst Enemies*, calls this approach "interviewing for pain." It encourages a child to focus on slights and feel like a victim.

■ **Sort out the facts.** If friendship problems persist at school, talk to your child's teacher. They see kids interacting with their peers daily, and may have a better sense of how serious a situation is. Teachers can be your allies in guiding children toward better choices or intervening with other children.

## Helping your child reach out

■ **Plan activity-based playdates.** Since most friendships are based on doing things together, help your child make plans to go to a movie or bake cookies with a friend. Having a plan beforehand helps kids get past "What should we do? I dunno" awkwardness at the start of a playdate.

■ **Be a good host.** If a play date is at your house, go over "host etiquette" rules with your child. For example:



"Let's ask our moms if we can have a sleepover tonight."

...It's *not* okay to act bossy and be territorial: "My house, my rules."

...Offer a snack, drink and choice of a few activities rather than asking, "What do you want to do?"

...Before a guest arrives, put away toys or anything else you don't want to share. When the guest leaves, say "Thanks for coming."

■ **Be sincere.** Kids may think they need to attract friends by being or doing something "impressive." But this is backwards. Making friends involves reaching out, and one way to do this is to offer simple, genuine compliments such as: "Good hit!" or "I like your sweater."

■ **Let others have their say.** If your child tends to rattle on, you may need to explain that con-

versation involves taking turns. Encourage your child to watch a person's reaction while he or she is speaking and *not* to talk on and on. Pause, ask a question and let the other child speak.

■ **Be careful with humor.** Kids with a sense of humor tend to be well liked, but trying too hard to be funny often backfires. When that happens and another child becomes annoyed or angry, the joker may protest self-righteously, "I was just kidding. Can't you take a joke?" If that sounds like your

## Show the way

The need for friendship doesn't lessen when we leave school. Our friends make stressful times more bearable and good times more fun. Help your child develop a healthy perspective on friendship by demonstrating it in your daily life.

■ **Make time for friends.** Let your child see you set aside time to get together with friends even though you're busy. Plans do not have to be elaborate. Meet a friend for breakfast, invite a family over for pizza, organize a potluck gathering in your neighborhood.

■ **Reach out to neighbors.** Look for ways to be neighborly and let your child participate. Cook twice as much and take dinner to a family with a new baby or a traveling parent. Introduce yourself to people who just moved in and give them a list of local service providers. Offer to drive an older neighbor to the store and help with shopping. Care for a vacationing neighbor's cat. Small acts of kindness build a community.

■ **Treat family members with kindness.** We are often nicer and more respectful to strangers than to our own family. The people we love and live with deserve our best, not our worst, behavior. When a home is filled with yelling, name-calling and put-downs, this carries over to kids' peer relationships.

Showing warmth, interest and kindness to family members is no guarantee that your child will have lots of friends at school—but it will increase the odds that she or he will reach out to other children in a friendly way. ♦

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# What to do with all that preschool art

Another year, another child in preschool, and our refrigerator door is covered with art work. Will I ruin my kids' lives if I throw it away? Seriously, I love their art work but need some guidelines on what to save or toss and when.

—C.D., Indianapolis, IN

You've touched on a classic dilemma of early childhood parenting! It's great that kids are being so creative, but it can get a bit overwhelming. Here are some suggestions.

**SHARE THE WEALTH.** Give children's art to grandparents and others who will appreciate it but feel no responsibility to keep it forever.

**SHOW IT OFF.** Take a few choice pieces to the office and display them there.

**MAKE SOME RULES.** For example, save the flat items only—it will take years to fill a box! Three-dimensional creations made of macaroni shells are not meant for the long term in any case.

**ENCOURAGE SELECTIVITY.** Ask your child to choose five or six favorite works of art every so often and save those pieces. Decide together which one you both like the best and frame it.

**GO DIGITAL.** Scan kids' paintings and drawings and save the digital

images. Photograph three-dimensional or oversized artwork on a plain background. Select and crop photos on your computer, and either send out for color prints or make them at home. Save the photos in an album—and be sure to include the name of the artist and date of creation for posterity.

Some parents who tried this were so pleased with the results, they burned everything onto a CD or DVD, set it to their child's favorite music and gave it to grandparents as a gift.

**ANTICIPATE.** Of course, on the off chance that your child will be the next Matisse, just save it all! ♦



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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](mailto:workfam@aol.com).

## RESEARCH REVIEW

# New insights on what makes us happy

Why does the billionaire want more money when he can't think of anything to spend it on? Why do some people keep playing bridge joylessly, without a smile, even when they win? Dr. Martin Seligman, who conducted some of the early research on what makes people happy, has lately taken issue with the "positive psychology" movement he helped to start. He suggests that our concept of happiness is sorely limited.

Bridge players want to win simply for the sake of winning, Dr. Seligman concluded. They are willing to "win ugly" and even to cheat. "It kept hitting me that accomplishment is a human desire in itself."

The feeling of accomplishment contributes to an ancient Greek concept that translates to "well-being" or "flourishing," an idea Dr. Seligman borrowed for his new book *Flourish*.

He came up with the acronym PERMA for what he sees as the five critical elements of well-being: (1) Positive emotion, (2) Engagement (the feeling of being lost in a task), (3) Relationships, (4) Meaning and (5) Accomplishment.

Well-being can't just exist in your own head. "It's a combination of feeling good as well as

actually having meaning, good relationships and accomplishment," he said.

But how do you measure it? Dr. Seligman said most people answer survey questions about happiness based on how they feel at the moment—not how they judge their lives overall.

A better gauge, he suggested, was a recent study of 23 European countries by researchers at the University of Cambridge in the UK. They asked not only about people's moods but about their relationships with others and their sense of doing something worthwhile. (Denmark and Switzerland ranked highest in Europe with more than a quarter of their citizens meeting the definition of flourishing.)

Economist and author Arthur Brooks agrees. In his book *Gross National Happiness*, he argues that

what is most crucial to your well-being is *not* how cheerful you feel or how much money you make, but rather the meaning you find in your life and your sense of "earned" success: the belief that you have created value in your life and in the lives of others. ♦



## Study finds one advantage to a HARD-TO-READ FONT

Is it easier to remember a fact if it was printed in normal type or in big, bold letters? Neither, it seems. New research found that font size has no effect on memory, but font style does.

In a study published in the journal "Cognition," psychologists at Princeton and Indiana University asked 28 men and women to read about three species of aliens, each of which had seven characteristics, such as "has blue eyes" and "eats flower petals and pollen."

Half of the participants studied the text in the 16-point Arial font, and the other half in 12-point Comic Sans MS or Bodoni MT, both of which are much less familiar.

After a short break, the participants were tested, and those who studied the harder-to-read fonts outperformed the others, 85% to 73%, on average. Researchers suggested that unusual fonts may force us to read more carefully—and thus think a bit more deeply about the material. ♦

# Talking to an older relative with dementia

By Peter Silin, M.S.W., R.S.W.

If an older relative is having trouble with his or her memory, you may wonder, “Is this the beginning of dementia?”

Dementia is a term for a cluster of symptoms caused by the death of brain cells. Memory loss is often, but not always, the first major symptom. Others include changes in personality and difficulties with reasoning, judgment, solving problems, language or controlling emotions. Generally, dementia is irreversible.

Of the various types of dementia, Alzheimer’s disease is the most common. If your loved one is told that he has dementia, he may or may not have Alzheimer’s. If she’s told she has Alzheimer’s, it means that she has one type of dementia.

## It’s not just ‘old age’

Faced with symptoms that may suggest a problem, family members should be prepared to act as advocates and see that an appropriate medical assessment is carried out. Saying “it’s just old age” is an inappropriate response to a relative’s memory loss.

One form of dementia attacks the emotional centers of the brain, and you may notice that your relative has less control over her or his feelings. Another form attacks the brain’s frontal lobe. This affects the ability to plan, make sound judgments and carry out tasks.

As dementia worsens, the ability to interpret social cues may be lost. Your relative may be unable to ask for what she or he needs. As the disease progresses, the person’s sense of time may be distorted.

If this occurs, it isn’t helpful to tell a relative that something will happen in a week or day or even an hour. On the other hand, if you have news that brings happiness—such as “your granddaughter is going to have a baby”—there’s nothing wrong with saying it every day.



Our loved ones will always enjoy a warm embrace.

The joy will be like hearing it for the first time.

## Short-term memory loss

The memory loss that we associate with dementia is due mainly to temporal lobe damage. Typically, the person loses short-term memory first but is able to maintain longer-term memory.

When this happens, people may revert to living in the past. Just follow their lead and talk to them about people they knew and events that happened long ago. It’s where they feel more comfortable and competent. It may even help maintain some of the person’s reasoning ability for longer.

In dementia’s early stages, your relative may know something is wrong but may not know what it is. This can cause fear and embarrassment. People feel like they’re losing control of their world. It can lead to denials and cover-ups. It can also be expressed as anger, withdrawal or depression.

## Try to be understanding

In the later stages of dementia, people may still be capable of understanding what’s being said. But they may stop trying to express

themselves. And if they do express themselves, they may not remember what they said.

As time goes by and more and more brain cells are lost, it’s important to remember that your loved one still has feelings. Insist that he or she be treated with respect by family members and caregivers. Try to interpret what the person is attempting to say.

People with dementia will still respond to a warm embrace, holding hands or gentle massage. They can sense warmth, compassion and acceptance. Rough, abrupt treatment is frightening.

## Communication tips

- **Make sure your relative** can hear and see you as you are talking. Are his glasses on? Is her hearing aid working properly?

- **Give your loved one a choice** between two things. For example, instead of “What do you want to drink?” ask “Tea or coffee?”

- **Don’t keep trying to reorient** someone to the present by correcting the person as to his or her age, location or whether a spouse has died. It may just make the person feel sad and confused.

- **Acknowledge the frustration,** fear, embarrassment or anger that your relative may be feeling.

- **Focus on your older relative’s strengths**—what they can still do or talk about.

- **Give assurance with nonverbal cues.** Use touch appropriately to convey meaning. Try other nonverbal activities as well.

- **If your relative is trying** unsuccessfully to express something, it can help to ask a few simple, direct questions. You may also need to supply a word or two.

- **Approach your relative slowly** to get his or her attention. Say what is going on or what is going to happen. Give one-step instructions.

- **Go to quiet places.** Avoid high-stimulation environments, such as a noisy restaurant.

- **Instead of asking “do you remember” questions,** remind your relative of who you are and say things like “that was so much fun seeing Joey at the park yesterday.”

- **Be patient.** Try different ways to explain something and try at different times of the day.

- **If your older relative becomes anxious** and repetitive, distract her or him with a new activity. Change the subject, have some tea or move to another room.

- **Monitor your own feelings** and frustration level. Get some help if you’re angry and want to withdraw from the situation.

- **Remind yourself** that a physical condition in the brain is the problem. Your relative is not acting this way on purpose. ♦

—Adapted from articles by the author in the online newsletter *Elder Voice*, a publication of *Diamond Geriatrics*.

# Staying on top of your child's online activities

By Common Sense Media

It's 8 pm on a school night and, chances are, your children are sitting in front of a computer. And if they're like many kids, they're on a social networking website. A new Pew Research Center study found that 90 percent of kids from 12 to 17 use the Internet and 75 percent are on social networking sites.

Social networks are places where kids hang out together online—like Club Penguin and Webkinz for young kids to the ever-present Facebook. The sites work pretty simply: kids sign up and get a profile to post pictures, poems, art and links to songs. They write about the things they enjoy and connect with their friends.

Kids feel a lot of pressure to use social networking. Sharing photos and videos, instant messaging and playing online games have become an important part of their lives.

## Why it matters

Unless they use privacy controls, everything kids “show and tell” is available for all the world to see. And people do see these pages—strangers, college admissions officers, even potential employers.

The fact that a child is savvy technically doesn't mean he or she is mature enough to appreciate the consequences of online activities. And even with privacy controls, there are ways to get into someone's pages. Revealing personal information is a bad idea, but it's

a major challenge for parents and teachers to convince kids of that.

## Parent tips for kids 5–8

Stick with age-appropriate sites with strong safety features that help kids play—without risking inappropriate content or contact.



Is she doing homework with a friend?

## Tips for middle school kids

**FACEBOOK** officially is for kids 13 and over, but younger children just make themselves older. And even if schools block Facebook on their computer networks, students say it's easy to get around the ban. Check your child's browser histo-

ry. If you see Facebook, he or she very likely has an account.

**THINK BEFORE POSTING.** Remind kids of the vast, invisible audience in cyberspace. It's a good idea to have access to middle school kids' pages, at least at first, to be sure you approve of what's being posted. Help keep children from doing something they will regret later.

**ENSURE PRIVACY SETTINGS.** They're not foolproof, but they're all we have. Activate them on your child's favorite sites, and teach your child how they work.

**KINDNESS COUNTS.** Many sites have anonymous features such as “bathroom wall” or “honesty boxes” that allow users to tell their friends what they think of them. *Rule of thumb:* If your child would not make the comment to someone's face, he or she should not post it.

**GO ONLINE.** Open an account and check out your kids' favorite sites. See what they can and can't do.

## Tips for high school kids

**KEEP TALKING ABOUT THE “FOREVERNESS” OF CYBERSPACE.** Remind teens that anyone can see what's on their pages—and, as we've learned, the wrong people often do. Ask kids to consider who might possibly see their pages and how their posts might be interpreted.

**REMIND YOUR KIDS THAT ANYTHING THEY CREATE** or communicate can

be cut, altered, pasted and sent around. Once they put something online, it's out of their control and can be taken out of context. This includes talk and photos of sex, drugs and alcohol. Tell kids if they would not put something on a bulletin board at school, they should not post it on their pages.

**IF THEY MEET AN ONLINE FRIEND** in person, it should be in a public place, with another friend. And let your child know that you want to meet that friend, too. We would all like to think that our kids would never agree to meet a stranger—but sometimes they do.

**WATCH THE CLOCK.** Social networking sites can be real time suckers. Hours and hours can go by, which isn't great for getting homework done.

## Social network alternatives

There's a whole lot more to social networks than Facebook and Twitter. Here are some sites for younger children (from 5 to middle school age):

**SCUTTLEPAD.** Social network with training wheels. Safe but limited.

**WHATSWHAT.ME.** Tween network with top-notch safety features.

**EVERLOOP.** Super-safe social networking site for tweens.

**GIANTHELLO.** It gets a lot right, but watch out for the games.

**GIRLSENSE.** Safe, creative community for tween fashionistas.

**SWEETY HIGH.** Fun, closed network for girls. Strong on privacy.

**IMBEE.** Safer social networking if parents stay involved.

**YOURCAUSE.** An easy, fun, socially networked way to fundraise. ♦

—Adapted from *Common SenseMedia.org*, a resource for advice, recommendations and reviews of movies, games, books, software and websites.

## 3 steps to help guide kids' media use

**1 Get involved.** Make sure you know what your children are doing online. Play games with them. Look at their digital projects. Once you have a sense of their online interests, you can help kids make better decisions about what they watch, play and do.

**2 Set limits.** Work with your children to create a schedule that incorporates all the things they need to do in a day and over the course of a school week. Homework, after-school activities, hobbies and good learning games come first. Try to schedule a little downtime too—busy kids need it.

**3 Set a good example.** It's harder to balance children's media usage if they don't see you doing the same. Do you keep the TV on during dinner? How much time do you spend on the phone and answering email? ♦

# College degrees bring higher pay

The media is rife with stories about students saddled with debt and college graduates who are unable to find a good job. It makes you wonder: *Is a B.A. still valuable these days? Will it be worth my time and effort to keep working on a master's degree?*

The answer to both questions is a resounding “yes,” according to a new study from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. A bachelor's degree pays off in two ways. It allows graduates to enter higher-paying occupations and it brings higher pay in many fields that do not require a college degree—from cashier to hairdresser to plumber (see the sidebar on this page).

Of course, in our struggling U.S. and global economy, attending college is still no panacea. But not going will make a worker's lifetime prospects much worse, the Georgetown study found. College graduates are far less likely to be unemployed than non-graduates.

## Choice of majors is key

Although there's a wide variation in earnings over a lifetime, all undergraduate majors are “worth it” financially, the study found—even taking into account the cost of college and lost wages during one's years as a student. The lifetime pay advantage for four-year college graduates ranged from \$241,000 for Education majors to over \$1 million for Engineering majors.

“The bottom line is that getting a degree matters—but what you take matters even more,” says Anthony P. Carnevale, director of the Georgetown Center.

In its study, the Center tracked earnings by college majors, with break-outs for race/ethnicity and gender differences. The new report, titled *What's It Worth? The Economic Value of College Majors*, found that, with few exceptions, majors are highly segregated by gender. In other words: men are



The No. 1 lesson for our time is to keep learning new skills.

concentrated in the highest-earning majors like Engineering, while women are concentrated in the lower-earning majors like Education. Here are some of the findings:

**Top Fields** College majors with the highest median annual earnings are: Petroleum Engineering (\$120,000), Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences and Administration (\$105,000), Mathematics and Computer Sciences (\$98,000), and six other fields of Engineering (from \$87,000 to \$80,000).

**Lower Paying Fields** College majors with the lowest earnings are: Counseling/Psychology (\$29,000), Early Childhood Education (\$36,000), Human Services and Community Organizations (\$38,000), Social Work (\$39,000), Performing Arts and Studio Arts (\$40,000).

**In the Middle** Liberal Arts and Humanities majors, who represent a third of college graduates, are in the middle of the pack, with median annual incomes of \$47,000. About 40 percent of these majors go on to earn a graduate degree, reaping a return of almost 50 percent. As a group,

they generally fare well in the workforce—ending up in professional, white-collar and education occupations.

## Graduate degrees help

The Georgetown report shows that a graduate-level degree leads to higher earnings but, again, what you study makes a difference. The biggest earnings bump was for graduate degrees in areas of health care and biology.

The report also found virtually no unemployment in the fields of Geophysical Engineering, Military Technologies, School Student Counseling and Pharmacology.

## New jobs forecast

Another new Georgetown Center report, *Help Wanted: Projecting Jobs and Education Requirements through 2018*, forecast that 63 percent of all jobs by 2018 will require at least some post-secondary education. “America needs more workers with college degrees, certificates and industry certification,” said Carnevale. “If we don't address this need now, millions of jobs could go offshore.”

For more information, visit the Center's website [cewgeorgetown@georgetown.edu](mailto:cewgeorgetown@georgetown.edu). ♦

## Same job but higher salary with a degree

A college degree brings higher pay—even in fields that do not specifically require one. Newly released data from Georgetown's Center on Education and the Workforce—based on the Census Bureau's American Community Survey—shows the annual median salary differences for workers with a high school diploma versus those with a four-year college degree:

CASHIER: High school \$19,000, college \$29,000.

HAIRDRESSER: High school \$19,000, college \$32,000.

WAITER/WAITRESS: High school \$19,000, college \$25,000.

DISHWASHER: High school \$19,000, college \$34,000.

DENTAL HYGIENIST: High school \$30,000, college \$53,000.

CHILDCARE WORKER: High school \$10,000, college \$18,000.

TEACHER ASSISTANT: High school \$18,000, college \$22,000.

SOCIAL WORKER: High school \$28,000, college \$38,000.

PLUMBER: High school \$37,000, college \$52,000.

FIREFIGHTER: High school \$53,000, college \$66,000.

Granted, not all job categories show a large pay increase for having a college degree. But even where the bump is smaller, it's still there.

For example:

ELECTRICIAN: High school \$43,000, college \$44,000.

SECRETARY: High school \$31,000, college \$35,000.

CLERGY: High school \$35,000, college \$36,000.

COOK: High school \$19,000, college \$22,000.

CASINO WORKER: High school \$35,000, college \$36,000. ♦

## Use F-A-S-T to remember the signs of stroke

Each year nearly 800,000 Americans experience a stroke—and one out of four will have another stroke at some point in their lives.

Because fast response and immediate treatment are so important, the National Stroke Association urges us to use the acronym F-A-S-T to remember the following warning signs:

**F**ACE Ask the person to smile. Does one side of the face droop?

**A**RMS Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

**S**PEECH Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Is his or her speech slurred or strange?

**T**IME If you observe any of these signs, it's time to call 9-1-1 immediately!

You may also have read about another symptom that's been widely emailed. It says to ask the person to stick out his or her tongue. If the tongue is crooked or goes to one side, that too is a sign of a stroke.

The online fact-checker [www.snopes.com](http://www.snopes.com) says that while this may be true, it's less reliable because it requires interpretation. So just use F-A-S-T and, if needed, get the person to an emergency room as soon as possible.

At [www.stroke.org](http://www.stroke.org) you can download an "Act FAST" wallet card—and also check out the STARS program that focuses on educating and empowering stroke survivors to reduce their risk for a recurrent stroke by making lifestyle modifications and managing their medical conditions. ♦

# No. 1 infection fighter...wash your hands

Remedies come and go, but there's still no cure for the common cold. Proper handwashing remains the single best way to prevent colds and fight infections.

The Center for Disease Control encourages us to lather up with soap and rub all surfaces of our hands together for 20 seconds—the time it takes to sing "Happy Birthday" twice. The World Health Organization says the whole process—from washing to drying—should take from 40 to 60 seconds.

Experts agree that we should wash our hands: (a) before and after eating or preparing food, especially raw meat, fish and eggs, (b) after using the toilet, (c) after blowing our nose, (d) after changing a diaper, (e) after playing with pets or cleaning up their waste, (f) before and after touching someone sick or treating a wound, (g) before putting in contact lenses and (h) after gardening. And here are some answers to frequently asked questions about handwashing:

• **DOES WATER TEMPERATURE MATTER?** Two studies suggest it has no significant effect on reducing bacteria. Hotter water does cut through oil faster but it can be an irritant, and cooler water will do the job.

• **HOW SHOULD I DRY MY HANDS?** What works best: paper or cloth towels or a warm-air dryer? A Mayo Clinic study found no differences between these methods. Other research suggests paper towels are more ef-

fective. Whichever method you use, make sure your hands are fully dry. Wet hands are more likely to transfer bacteria to/from the next surface you touch.

• **IS HAND SANITIZER A GOOD SUBSTITUTE?** It's a convenient option when soap and water are not available. Products with 60 percent alcohol (ethanol or isopropanol) kill most bacteria and viruses on contact. But they are less effective on visibly dirty hands, after go-

ing to the bathroom and after handling food. If you use a sanitizer gel, rub a dime-size amount over all of the surfaces of your fingers and hands until they are dry.

• **WHAT ABOUT BACTERIAL SOAPS?** Regular soap and water are all you need—and be aware that antibacterial products contribute to the growing problem of bacterial resistance, which is causing many essential antibiotics to become ineffective.

• **WHAT IF I CAN'T WASH MY HANDS AND DON'T HAVE A HAND SANITIZER?** Take care not to rub or scratch your eyes or nose or touch your mouth. The purpose of washing is to get germs off your hands so they won't get into your body or be passed on to others. ♦

—Adapted from the UC Berkeley Wellness Letter



## Avoiding eggs because they're high in cholesterol?

If so, you may want to rethink your decision. A new USDA report shows that today's eggs contain less cholesterol and more vitamin D than previously thought.

The findings are based on a random sampling of large eggs from 12 locations around the country. The USDA found that one large egg, on average, contains 185 milligrams of cholesterol, which is 14% less than in a 2002 study. An egg also contains 41 International Units (IU) of vitamin D, a 64% increase from previous measures.

"Eggs are considered a nutrient-dense food because, in a small package, they contain several key nutrients," says Amy Taylor, a clinical dietitian with New York's Weill



Cornell Medical Center. In addition to vitamin D, eggs contain phosphorus, vitamin B12, riboflavin, selenium and the antioxidant lutein.

Of course, many people turn to eggs as a source of protein, which is the building block of all our cells. "Protein also has a good satiety factor, meaning it helps you feel full for a longer period of time," says Taylor.

The new findings are not a license to eat as many eggs as you please, of course. You still need to consider your cholesterol levels, in consultation with your doctor.

"One key to a healthy diet is variety," says Taylor. "For example, eggs are a great source of protein and other nutrients, but there are other protein foods that provide more iron, vitamin D and vitamin B12 than an egg."

She offers this tip: To receive the full nutritional benefits without the cholesterol, substitute two egg whites for one whole egg. ♦

—Adapted from Weill Cornell Medical College's Food and Fitness Advisor

# A fresh take on parenting our kids for life's journey

Let's look at "potential" in a different way, say Eileen Kennedy-Moore and Mark S. Lowenthal, authors of *Smart Parenting for Smart Kids*. It's not an end point but a capacity to grow and learn. And talking about kids "not living up to their potential" makes no sense because the miracle of children is that we just don't know how they will change or who they will become. Our job as parents is to equip our kids for their journey, rather than dictate their path (*see front page story*).

Nurturing children's potential, in the broadest sense, means supporting their abilities to reach out to others with kindness and

empathy, to feel part of something larger than themselves, to find joy and satisfaction in creating a life that is personally meaningful—and so much more.

This book is full of practical strategies to help kids cope with their feelings, embrace learning and build satisfying relationships. Drawing from research and clinical experience, the authors address seven basic challenges: (1) tem-

pering perfectionism, (2) building connection, (3) managing sensitivity, (4) dealing with authority figures, (5) handling cooperation and competition, (6) developing motivation and (7) finding joy.

These are core issues kids struggle with and parents worry about. Vivid anecdotes in each chapter describe familiar and painful dilemmas involving school-age children as well as in-depth discussion and doable solutions.

Examples and strategies focus on kids during a period of intense intellectual growth, between the ages of 6 and 12. Bolstering coping skills during these early school years can equip children to deal with the stresses that lie ahead in high school and beyond.

*Smart Parenting for Smart Kids* is an enormously readable, interesting and valuable book focusing on the essential skills children need to make the most of their abilities and become capable, confident and caring people.

*Smart Parenting for Smart Kids* (Jossey-Bass, \$16.95, soft cover) is available in bookstores and online. ♦



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