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News for Parents • Activities for Kids

DECEMBER 2017



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SPECIAL SECTIONS**

Holiday Shopping

Celebrations

Activities

The Healthy Family

Family Matters

Recipes & Dining

Grandparents

Home & Haven

Pet Pages

Kids

Pregnancy & Birth

Moms & Dads

Teens & Tweens

Special Needs

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THE MILLSTONE TIMES
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The Greater Princeton Area ASK THE DOCTOR**

Publisher Cami Gunther	Marketing Consultants Jolene Conoscenti Elizabeth Newman Susan Heckler Dawn Gibson Leanne Swallowood	Director of Recruitment/ Event Coordinator Jolene Conoscenti
Art Director/ Graphic Designer Stephanie Frederick		Writers Susan Heckler Pam Teel
Managing Editor Susan Heckler		Interns Danielle Testa Gabriella Mancuso Nicole Iuzzolino
Editor Elizabeth Newman		

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CONTACT US: PO Box 7632, Freehold, NJ 07728
Cami@GuntherPublications.com
Phone (732) 995-3456 Fax (732) 677-3390



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Christmas Events around New Jersey

By Pam Teel



The Historic Village at Allaire

Make Allaire part of your annual Christmas tradition! Enjoy music, singing, craft demonstrations, hearth cooking, a visit by St. Nicholas and MUCH more at Christmas at Allaire! Learn about various Christmas traditions through the ages from our costumed historical interpreters! The historic buildings will be decorated for the season. In the evening they offer guided lantern tours of the village. Christmas at Allaire, 11 am to 4 pm, (Dec 3, 10, 17). Lantern Tours (Dec 2, 8, 9, 15, 16) offered every 15 minutes from 5 pm to 8 pm. Advanced ticket purchase is required for the Lantern Tours and strongly recommended for Christmas at Allaire. Tickets can be purchased through Eventbrite or by visiting <http://allairevillage.org/events/>



Cape May, NJ Christmas Tours

Every holiday season, both daytime and night time trolley tours prowl through the streets of Cape May, letting visitors get a look at holiday decorations from the comfort of a heated trolley.

Ghosts of Christmas Past Trolley Rides

Members of the East Lynne Theater Company regale you with a holiday ghost tale as you ride through Cape May's decorated Historic District.

Adults \$10; children \$7.

Holiday Lights Trolley Rides

Ride through Cape May's Historic District to see decorated inns and homes as guides talk about Victorian Christmas traditions, lead sing-alongs, and play Christmas music. Rides last about 30 minutes.

\$8 per seat.

Cape May's Christmas Carol Tour

Enjoy a Victorian holiday tale on an evening trolley ride through Cape May's festive streets. Then, visit the authentically decorated Emlen Physick Estate for a living history holiday presentation. Tours last about 2 hours.

Adults \$15; children \$7.50.

Emlen Physick Estate Christmas Tours

Visit the 1879 Physick Estate, Cape May's only Victorian house museum, decorated in authentic Victorian style. Learn about Victorian Christmas decorations and traditions on this guided daytime tour. Can also be combined with a historic district trolley tour.

Adults \$10; children \$5.

The trolley tours rides are sponsored by the Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts. You can buy tickets at the Washington Street Mall Info Booth, Ocean and Washington Streets, Cape May. That's where the rides usually begin. For info and tickets: capemaymac.org.



Jenkinson's Aquarium Winter Wonderland

Join Jenkinson's Aquarium on the boardwalk in Point Pleasant Beach for the annual Sea of Lights Holiday Festival on December 15, 16, 22, 23 & 26-30 from 6 pm - 9 pm, as they light up the Boardwalk in December during Jenkinson's Sea of Lights.

Join their Indoor Holidays Lights Spectacular in the Aquarium; a real gift to your family at the special admission price of only \$8. Sea of Lights will be held on December 15, 16, and 22, 23, 26-30 from 6 pm until 9pm. The Sweet Shop, Aquarium Gift Shop, and Pavilion Arcade will be open! Crafts, Holiday Treats, Photos with Santa & friends, Games, Holiday Gifts and more! <https://jenkinsons.com/events/sea-of-lights/>

The Cranbury Home Christmas Lights

Help bring joy to those in need, a small donation optional, Dec, 14-27, 6 to 9 pm. Go and see a fabulous display of Christmas lights that brightens up this Cranbury house every year. See site for info and times at: CranburyChristmaslights.com

Cook's Christmas Lights

The show will begin Saturday, November 25, 2017 and run through New Year's Day. The Light Show can be seen Sunday through Thursday 6pm to 10pm, as well as Friday and Saturday 6pm to 11pm, 1 Carlson Ct., Jackson, NJ.

The Cook's Christmas Lights display returns for another season to raise money for the National MS Society. This year's display features over 20,000 lights, 4 singing faces and a 1,008 bulb pixel matrix, playing through 7 Christmas-themed songs and runs for about 25 minutes. Pull up to this marvelous display, turn your radio to the designated station and watch the magical light show from the comfort of your vehicle. . The Cook's Christmas Lights display is free, but donations are greatly accepted and 100% of proceeds are donated to the National MS Society. <https://www.facebook.com/cookschristmasnj/>



Holiday lights at the Zoo

Come for an unforgettable Holiday Lights Spectacular at Turtle Back Zoo in West Orange. The zoo is illuminated with over 100,000 bulbs, 50 displays and holiday sights. Starting Nov. 17th to Jan. 2nd (Closed Dec. 24 and 25th.) Come see lit up animal shapes and more. Ride the Christmas train. <http://turtlebackzoo.com/events/holiday-light-spectacular-5/>

Jackson Holiday in the Park at Great Adventure

Lots of holiday events planned. November 19th through January 2nd. Come and see the park transformed into a winter wonderland with more than a million twinkling lights. Visit peppermint Path, Dot and Drop Gingerbread dance party, come see the 52 foot Christmas tree come alive with music and dancing lights. Stroll down the tranquil pathway of lit trees, luminaries, and stained glass showcasings of religious holidays from around the world. See the stage spectacular, Trouble in Toyland, come and visit with Santa at Santa's house, visit the North Pole village, listen to the carolers, ride the rides and more. Check out website for days and time. <https://holiday.sixflags.com/greatadventure/things-to-do/>



Come visit Dot and Drop Gingerbread at Great Adventure Holiday in the Park and Visit Santa's house at Great Adventure.



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Frugal Family Fun Ideas for Gift Giving

Being creative is a great way to save this holiday season. Presenting a gift for the entire family creates great memories, great gift giving and quality time without spending a ton of dough.

Movie Night

The easiest and least expensive on the list is the Family Movie Night package. Get a basket or reuse an old gift box and fill it with a two-liter soft drink or bottled waters. Fill also with several bags of microwave popcorn, some large boxes of candy from the dollar store and some inexpensive DVD's. Create a gift card to look like a strip of film or ticket stub.



Super Sundaes

Who doesn't love ice cream—especially when you get to make it just the way you like it? This gift looks extra special when presented in a big basket (from the dollar store, of course). Include a bunch of bananas, various toppings, sauces, nuts, a jar of Maraschino cherries and a \$10 grocery store certificate for the purchase of ice cream and toppings. Search your dollar store for inexpensive sundae glasses, banana split dishes or dessert spoons to give the gift some extra punch. Create a gift card that looks like a banana or tub of ice cream.

Homemade Desserts

Make your own homemade version of your favorite dessert. Cinnabons make a great idea along with a Mason jar of homemade hot chocolate mix. These yummy treats can be enjoyed as a family.

Family Game Night

A family game night package can include inexpensive card games, puzzles and board games. Add like popcorn and candy to cheese, sausage and crackers to a batch of your favorite brownies or cookies.

For the Sports Fan Family

Sports fans will appreciate a gift based around their favorite team or sport. Set the theme with some Team-Brand items, snacks for tailgating and a gift card to your local deli for a Tail Gate. You might include seat cushions, hand warmers, sun visors or knit caps, all in appropriate colors. Be sure to include water bottles, trail mix and peanuts.



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Calendar of Events: December & January

- **December 15**-Asbury Park Holiday Bazaar @ Asbury Park Convention Hall Asbury Park, NJ. This amazing evening will be filled with music, art, food goods and joy in one of Asbury's most astonishing buildings.
- **December 16**-Lights and Carols for A'Claus @ Iantosca Home Manalapan, NJ 2pm-9am. Come and visit this lovely home in Manalapan to see Christmas lights and music.
- **December 17**-The Christmas Express with Santa @ Wall Township, NJ Museum of Transportation. Take a ride on this Christmas train and get a visit from Santa himself.
- **December 18**-Christmas Wonderland @ Maple Leaf Farms Manalapan, NJ 11am-7pm
- **December 19**- 40th Festival of Trees @ Basking Ridge, NJ 9am-4pm.
- **December 20**-Didonato's Magical Holiday Express @ Hammonton Didonato Family Fun Center.
- **December 21**-Santa Photos/Caring Santa @ The Mills @ The Jersey Gardens Elizabeth, NJ. Come and visit Santa at his jolly little workshop at this merry mall this holiday season. Photo ops will be available.
- **December 22**-Holiday Lights Spectacular @ West Orange, NJ @ Essex County Turtle Back Zoo. Walk through the beautiful scenic path decorated with Christmas Lights.
- **December 23**-Weihnachmarkt @ Asbury Park. Toys, homemade goods and more are available at this market for you to view and purchase.
- **December 24**-Merry Christmas Eve! Get ready for Santa to come!
- **December 25**-Merry Christmas! Enjoy time with your family on this wonderful holiday, and open all your gifts!
- **December 26**-Jenkinson's Aquarium Sea of Lights Festival @ Point Pleasant, NJ 6pm-9pm. Jenkinson's Aquarium is lighting up their fish tanks in Christmas colors, and see your favorite fishes during the winter time!
- **December 27**-Holiday Week at Crystal Springs Resort @ Hamburg, NJ @ Crystal Springs Resort. Crystal Springs Resort is kicking in the New Year and celebrating the holiday season with music, parties, games, decorations, friends and family and more.
- **December 28**-The Gingerbread House at Great Wolf Lodge's Snow Land @ Scotrun, PA. The Great Wolf Lodge is dressing up as a Gingerbread House for you to come and stay in! Family fun for everyone this time holiday edition.

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- **December 29**-The Flanders Hotel Gingerbread House Building @ Ocean City, NJ. Visit The Flanders Hotel and compete in the Gingerbread House Competition to create a hopefully awesome and yummy winner!
- **December 30**-Princeton Holiday Trolley Tour @ Nassau Street Princeton, NJ. Take a trolley through the decorated streets of Princeton
- **December 31**-Happy New Year's Eve! Ring in the New Year with the people you love!
- **January 1**-Relax after a week of holidays and lots of food! Spend the day in your favorite pajamas!
- **January 2**-Campgaw Mountain Ski Resort @ Manwan, NJ. Enjoy a weekend of skiing with your family and friends at one of New Jersey's best resorts.
- **January 3**-New Light Exhibit @ The Museum of Early Trades and Crafts @ Madison, NJ. Visit the Museum of Early Trades and Crafts to see the new light exhibit.
- **January 4**-Museum Detectives: What Is It? @ Morris Museum @ Morristown. Come and view tools and equipment that are used to solve crimes and mysteries everywhere.
- **January 5**-Satisfaction Rolling Stones Tribute @ Bergen Performing Arts Center @ Englewood.
- **January 6**-Model Railroad Snow @ North Haledon, NJ @ NJ Garden State Model Railway Club. Come and view amazing model trains and tracks built by dozens of people.
- **January 7**-Wayne PAL Antiques and Collectibles Show @ Wayne, NJ.
- **January 8**-A Season of Wonder Toy Collection @ Morris Museum @ Morristown. At this museum you can come and view the wonderful selection of toys for all children ages.
- **January 9**-Dancing with the Stars @ State Theatre @ New Brunswick at 8pm
- **January 10**-Winter Tales from Around the World @ Reeves-Reed Arboretum @ Summit, NJ 11pm-2pm
- **January 11**-Skiing @ Mountain Creek @ Vernon, NJ. Come and enjoy a day of skiing at this beautiful resort with family and friends.
- **January 12**-Rob Thomas @ Borgata Music Box @ Atlantic City, NJ
- **January 13**-Theresa Caputo @ Borgata Events Center @ Atlantic Center, NJ
- **January 14**-Rutgers Scarlet Knights VS Ohio State Buckeyes Basketball Louis Brown Atlantic Center @ Piscataway, NJ. Watch and support New Jersey's own Scarlet Knights at this basketball game.
- **January 15**-Storybook Style: A Selection of Words from the Minds of Living Illustrators @ Morris Museum @ Morristown, NJ. Fiction becomes reality at this event where all your favorite characters come to life through art and storytelling.

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SURVIVING HOLIDAY ROAD TRIPS

By Teena S. Patel
Owner, Lightbridge Academy of Eatontown

According to many U.S. news outlets, this past Thanksgiving was one of the busiest travel days in the past 12 years! Now, with weeks away from Christmas & Chanukah, the travel days ahead are looming in the back of parent's minds. Here are some useful travel tips to help you conquer the holiday commute while still keeping your sanity!

MAP IT OUT: Now with advance mapping systems, it's easy to plan your route ahead of time. Be mindful of your children's schedules and how long they can sit in a car, as well as when they will need meals, snacks and potty breaks. Create a rough itinerary, keeping in mind that you may need to adjust your plans if your children are not cooperating. It's ok to improvise and adjust as you go! That's part of the fun when on a road trip.

ACTIVITIES: Let's face it, even adults can get a little squirmy after being in a car for too long. Packing activities such as travel packs that include crayons and a coloring book is a great way to keep the little ones occupied. Age appropriate books are also another great distraction, or download songs and belt out to your favorite family tunes. "I spy" is always a family-favorite game and gives children the opportunity to explore the car and even things they see along the way. No matter what you do, keep it fun and fresh by rotating activities every so often.

AGE-APPROPRIATE LIMITATIONS: Bear in mind that younger children may require more attention and stimulation in the car. Planning trips around nap and sleep schedules may make for an easier trip.

SNACKS: If your children are anything like mine, they're always ready to snack on something. Pack plenty of snacks and beverages to keep those tiny little tummies full. And don't forget to pack a trash bag, napkins and perhaps some cleaning supplies – it's bound to get a little messy along the way!

FIRST AID KIT: Do you ever wonder how a Band-Aid takes away the pain from the slightest little cut? Well those miracle pieces of tape may save you from endless tears, so be sure to pack plenty for those "what if" moments. And of course, children's over the counter fever medicine and a thermometer is a must-have.

HAVE FUN: Although traveling with children can seem daunting, it can also be inspiring! There are so many wonderful things they may explore and observe along the way. You never know, you just may discover your family's love of the open road that will lead to future adventures! Here's to the beginning of your very own travel diaries!

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Popular Baby Names 2018

By: Gabriella Mancuso

If you are expecting a little bundle of joy for 2018 statistics have shown these to be the predicted most common baby names of the year to come. Girls names include Emma, Stella, Olivia and Emily. Along with some unique names like Charlotte, Sadie, Violet, Zoe and Ella. Boys names include nice ones like Jack, Oliver, Dylan, Adam, James, Lucas and my personal favorite Liam. Many names are also making a comeback like Ava and Logan. These are just a handful of the wonderful names you can choose for your soon to be son or daughter!



Girls:

- Emma
- Charlotte
- Sadie
- Violet
- Stella
- Zoe
- Ava
- Olivia
- Ella
- Emily

Boys:

- Jack
- Oliver
- Dylan
- Adam
- Liam
- Noah
- Logan
- Mason
- James
- Lucas



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A Safe Traffic Stop

By John Bazzurro

As a result of social media, the news and police "reality" shows, we have all seen a routine traffic stop by a police officer escalate to a point where either the officer or an individual is fatally injured. In order to help prevent such tragic results, I am writing this article to provide information to citizens in an effort to avoid such an outcome.

Because I represent a number of law enforcement officers, I often times see things from their point of view as well as from the view of an average citizen. The bottom line is that a law enforcement officer who is effectuating a traffic stop is genuinely concerned for the safety of the driver and occupants of the vehicle as well as his or her own safety. Typically, if various simple protocols are followed by both the law enforcement officer as well as the citizen, a safe outcome is more than likely.

First and foremost, when you are being pulled over, you should immediately acknowledge the fact that you are aware that you are being pulled over by placing on your turn signal. Thereafter, you should attempt to pull onto a portion of the side of the road that fully removes both your vehicle and the police vehicle from the traveled portion of the roadway (i.e.-shoulder).

After both you and the police vehicle are safely off of the roadway, you should open your driver's side window and place both of your hands upon the steering wheel so that the officer can visually observe both of your hands as he or she is approaching you. Often times, people make the mistake of reaching across their vehicle into their glove compartment or into their pockets for purposes of getting out their license, registration and insurance card as the officer is approaching their vehicle. Although law enforcement officers are highly trained in this regard, depending on the circumstances, they could potentially believe that you or the occupants of your vehicle are attempting to reach for a weapon or hide contraband. Obviously, such actions could potentially escalate an otherwise innocuous situation.

After the officer approaches your vehicle and requests your documentation, you should verbally advise the officer as to where in your vehicle the documentation is located and advise the officer that you are reaching for it. This will allow the officer to anticipate your moves inside the vehicle so they are not surprised. Additionally, you should immediately respond to any of the officer's requests. Failure to do so could be a signal to the officer that you are attempting to hide something or that the officer's safety may be in jeopardy.

Importantly, when engaging in a conversation with the officer, you should be courteous and friendly regardless of whether or not you believe you committed a traffic offense. Of course, any aggressive or abusive language could cause to escalate the situation. From the officer's perspective, he is only doing his job. Any arguments or positions you may have with respect to the situation are more properly raised in Municipal Court. From a lawyer's perspective, it is generally much easier to have the summons dismissed outright or plea to a favorable deal when a client is courteous and respectful to the officer at the time the ticket is issued. On numerous occasions, I have seen law enforcement officers take notes when an individual is uncooperative, rude or abusive and then refuse to "work with" the prosecutor or the lawyer at the time a plea deal is sought.

Basically, all of the above boils down to common courtesy and common sense. If you follow the officer's instructions, are respectful and do not engage in any actions which the officer may construe as jeopardizing his or her safety, there will be no issues concerning the traffic stop and you may receive the benefit of the doubt from the officer when it comes time to appear in traffic court. On the other hand, if you are disrespectful, rude, abusive, and aggressive, chances are that the situation will escalate to the point where you may receive additional charges and may even be subject to arrest.

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Relocating Before the Holidays

Moving around the holiday season can be stressful for the whole family. From social factors, to learning a new city or school, there are many reasons that moving can cause anxiety. Consider the following tips as you guide your family through the transition to a new home.

MAKING IT EASIER FOR KIDS

Moving can be a scary thing for children — especially if they are leaving the only place they've called "home" for the first time. Are you moving out of your child's current school district? When you conduct school visits, take your child with you. If it's possible, have them sit in on a class. The first day will be a lot less stressful if they already know some of the classroom routines or recognize a few friendly faces. Also look for ways to turn anxiety into excitement with the new home. Allow kids to help pick out the paint color of their new room or create a scavenger hunt in the new house for the first night.



MAKING IT EASIER FOR PETS

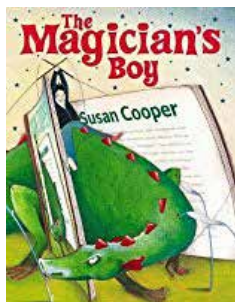
Moving to a new home can make pets feel insecure, but there are things you can do to alleviate their tension and help them adjust to their new space. One of the most important things you can do for your animals is to adhere to their usual routine. This means feeding them, walking them or playing with them as you normally would. Also be sure to bring along their favorite toys. Packing might entice you to throw out the old and buy new toys for a new house. This is not a good idea. Familiar items such as toys, blankets and bedding help pets feel more in control of new spaces.

MAKING IT EASIER FOR YOU

Remember that those around you — kids and pets included — pick up on and absorb your emotions. If you feel anxious, they might act out or be extra-sensitive. Do things to stay calm and avoid getting overly stressed. This could be as simple as lighting a candle in your favorite scent or taking the pressure off yourself to cook the first few nights by ordering take-out.

The Best Books for Younger Kids

By Gabriella Mancuso



The Magicians Boy by Susan Cooper-A young boy who works for a magician is transported into a mystical land filled with fairytales. Ages 8-12

Beans on the Roof by Betsy Byers-Unable to enjoy he roof of his apartment building George Bean joins a poetry contest competing against his sister Anna, so he can

play on the roof. Ages 9-12

My Happy Life by Rose Lagererantz-A young girl is constantly happy even when it rains. Ages 4-8

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendk-A young boy who desires adventure and excitement runs away and ends up in a wild place filled with all sorts of creatures. Ages 4 and up



The Bear's Song by Benjamin Chaud-Papa Bear is searching for his cub who ran to follow some bees and their honey throughout the city. Ages 1-4

The Boy Who Loved Math by Deborah Helligman-A boy who has loved math from a young age travels the world, and uses math and math problems to live life. Ages 4-8



Wonder by RJ Palacio- A young boy with a facial deformity and his family are dealt with many challenges and changes when the young boy starts school. Ages 9-12

The Cats of Tangled Wood Forest by Charles deLint- When a young is strolling through the woods as she usually does but is then bitten. The magical animals of the forest help save

her. Ages 9-12

Thank You and Goodnight by Patrick McDonnell-Enjoying friends and slumber parties never seemed so fun before! Ages 4-8

Harry Potter (the series) by JK Rowling-a young boy learns he is a wizard and is invited to a magical town where he faces villains and spells, while attending the wizarding school of Hogwarts. Ages 9 and up



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Very Cool DIY Party Favor Ideas for Your Next Party

By Gabrielle Mancuso

*With a little planning, you can easily make unique favors for your next party!
These items can be made to go home as favors.*

Kandee- Kabobs

Take a skewer and thread fruit gummies such as Sour Gummy Worms or Twizzler Bites until the stick is covered. Or use wrapped mini chocolate bars, which makes it easy for kids to take home.

Mini Chalkboards

Kid-sized chalkboards are a great way for guests to practice spelling, numbers or drawing. They are also inexpensive. Buy mini chalk boards from your local craft store and attach packages of chalk to the boards with ribbon. Write the kids' names on the boards so each person can find their own.

Party Pets to Take Home

Purchase small stuffed animals like puppies and kittens and place inside a wooden crate or basket. Make an "adopt a pet" sign and hang above. Kids will love getting to adopt their very own stuffed animal when leaving the party and choosing a name for their new pet.

Bug Catcher

Fill bug catchers with gummy worms for a snack and give to guests. Kids can use later to catch outside bugs like caterpillars or other critters.

Party favor Toy Bar

Cover a table in different sized bowls and containers. Fill each container or bowl with candies, art supplies, nail polish, toy cars etc. and give each child a small bag. Let them pick items of their choosing and add them to their bag to take home.

Beach Pail

Fill a child's sand bucket with items to match a beach or pool theme. Add inexpensive action figures, gardening supplies and glow sticks. Tie a thank you note to the bucket's handle.

Potted Plants

Give out clay pots, a packet of seeds and soil. Kids can plant the flowers when they get home and wait for the seeds to grow. As a birthday party activity, decorate the pots with paint pens.

Decorated flashlights

Place flashlights and other decorative items on a table and let them have fun decorating and being creative with their own design. Do this at the beginning of the party so the paint can dry. Each child can take home their flashlight to use camping, in their rooms for reading or playing outside.

S'mores Kit

Make a S'more to go kit for children to take home. Take graham crackers, marshmallows and chocolate bars and make a s'mores stack. You can even make a printable thank you, thanking a friend for attending and attach it to the bags.



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Get to Know the Quinceañera

A quinceañera is no ordinary birthday party. Celebrated in many Latin American countries and communities, the quinceañera (or 15th) birthday is a special coming of age celebration for girls.



The event is celebrated differently depending on the culture, but all quinceañeras (also known as quinces) mark a transition for the girl between childhood and adulthood. In some cultures, girls are not supposed to dance in public until their 15th party, so you can imagine that music and dancing play a huge role in the event.

The Quinceanera celebration traditionally begins with a religious ceremony. A Reception is held in the home or a banquet hall. The festivities include food and music, and in most, a choreographed waltz or dance performed by the Quinceanera and her Court.

It is traditional for the Quinceanera to choose special friends to participate in what is called the Court of Honor. Usually, these young people are her closest friends, her brothers, sisters, cousins - the special people in her life with whom she wants to share the spotlight. The Quinceanera traditionally wears a ball gown, with her Court dressed in gowns and tuxedos. Guests usually receive small tokens, cápias, to commemorate the celebration.

There are many traditions throughout the quinceanera celebration. One of the most popular is the Changing of the Shoes. The father or favored male relative ceremoniously changes the young girl's flat shoes to high heels. This is a beautiful symbol of the Quinceanera's transformation from a little girl to a young lady.

At the church ceremony, a special Kneeling Pillow, sometimes personalized with the Quinceanera's name, is placed in position for the young girl to kneel on during the ceremony. And, a touch of elegance is added with smaller decorated Ceremony Pillows for the presentation of the Quinceanera's ceremony gifts, such as the Tiara, the Scepter and the Shoes.

At the reception, there is always the toast to the Quinceanera, known as the brindis. With decorated Champagne Glasses, the guests are invited to offer their congratulations and best wishes.

The Last Doll is used as part of the ceremony or as decoration and keepsake. The Quinceanera doll represents the last things of a child now that the Quinceanera will focus on the things of a young lady and to symbolize leaving childhood things behind.

The Quinceanera is a glorious celebration that remains a cherished and honored tradition.



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OPPOSITIONAL DEFIANT DISORDER

And What Every Parent Should Know

All children are oppositional from time to time, particularly when tired, hungry, stressed or upset. They may argue, talk back, disobey, and defy parents, teachers, and other adults. Oppositional behavior is often a normal part of development for two to three year olds and early adolescents. However, openly uncooperative and hostile behavior becomes a serious concern when it is so frequent and consistent that it stands out when compared with other children of the same age and developmental level and when it affects the child's social, family and academic life.

In children with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), there is an ongoing pattern of uncooperative, defiant, and hostile behavior toward authority figures that seriously interferes with the youngster's day to day functioning. Symptoms of ODD may include:

- Frequent temper tantrums
- Excessive arguing with adults
- Often questioning rules
- Active defiance and refusal to comply with adult requests and rules
- Deliberate attempts to annoy or upset people
- Blaming others for his or her mistakes or misbehavior
- Often being touchy or easily annoyed by others
- Frequent anger and resentment
- Mean and hateful talking when upset
- Spiteful attitude and revenge seeking

The symptoms are usually seen in multiple settings, but may be more noticeable at home or at school. One to sixteen percent of all school-age children and adolescents have ODD. The causes of ODD are unknown, but many parents report that their child with ODD was more rigid and demanding than the child's siblings from an early age. Biological, psychological and social factors may have a role.

A child presenting with ODD symptoms should have a comprehensive evaluation. It is important to look for other disorders which may be present; such as, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), learning disabilities, mood disorders (depression, bipolar disorder) and anxiety disorders. It may be difficult to improve the symptoms of ODD without treating the coexisting disorder. Some children with ODD may go on to develop conduct disorder.

Treatment of ODD may include: **Parent Management Training Programs** to help parents and others manage the child's behavior. **Individual Psychotherapy** to develop more effective anger management. **Family Psychotherapy** to improve communication and mutual understanding. **Cognitive Problem-Solving Skills Training and Therapies** to assist with problem solving and decrease negativity. **Social Skills Training** to increase flexibility and improve social skills and frustration tolerance with peers.

Medication may be helpful in controlling some of the more distressing symptoms of ODD as well as the symptoms related to coexistent conditions such as ADHD, anxiety and mood disorders.

A child with ODD can be very difficult for parents. These parents need support and understanding. Parents can help their child with ODD in the following ways:

- Always build on the positives, give the child praise and positive reinforcement when he shows flexibility or cooperation.
- Take a time-out or break if you are about to make the conflict with your child worse, not better. This is good modeling for your child. Support your child if he decides to take a time-out to prevent overreacting.
- Pick your battles. Since the child with ODD has trouble avoiding power struggles, prioritize the things you want your child to do. If you give your child a time-out in his room for misbehavior, don't add time for arguing. Say "your time will start when you go to your room."
- Set up reasonable, age appropriate limits with consequences that can be enforced consistently.
- Maintain interests other than your child with ODD, so that managing your child doesn't take all your time and energy. Try to work with and obtain support from the other adults (teachers, coaches, and spouse) dealing with your child.
- Manage your own stress with healthy life choices such as exercise and relaxation. Use respite care and other breaks as needed.

Many children with ODD will respond to the positive parenting techniques. Parents may ask their pediatrician or family physician to refer them to a child and adolescent psychiatrist or qualified mental health professional who can diagnose and treat ODD and any coexisting psychiatric condition.



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New Study States Snorers Face Higher Risk of Alzheimer's

By: Gabrielle Mancuso

Those who suffer from sleep apnea are at a higher risk of developing Alzheimer's disease. The study found those with sleep apnea had a buildup of a toxic protein in their brain called beta-amyloid which triggers Alzheimer's, the progressive brain disease known for slowly causing impairment in memory and cognitive function.

Researchers found the protein formed due to the obstructed breathing from heavy snoring because of sleep apnea. But experts say there is a silver lining: the study showed treatments used to calm the snoring and increase oxygen flow may be able to prevent Alzheimer's disease.

Researchers performed spinal taps to analyze the amount of amyloid in their cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), fluid that protects the spine and brain and then scanned the brain to measure deposits of the toxic protein directly in the brain. And though none of the participants were referred by a sleep center, were known to have sleep apnea or had a condition that might affect their brain function, more than half were found to have sleep apnea - 36.5 percent with a mild form and 16.8 percent whose condition was moderate to severe.

Exactly half the original group (104) were then followed for two years, which found a link between sleep apnea severity and an increase in amyloid deposits in the brain.

The toxic proteins clump together in the brains of Alzheimer's patients and were found to increase over time due to snoring severity, meaning those with more sleep disturbances per hour had greater accumulation of amyloid over time.



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Let Your Grandkids Teach You Something

Establishing a bond between grandparent and grandchild is important. Grandparents can be positive role models and influences but kids can be too! Spending time together and sharing lessons between the both of you are memories that will always be cherished.

As the grandparent, you have shared a lesson or two. Bit now it's your turn to be the student. Your grandchildren are growing up in a time of amazing new opportunities, technology and entertainment. Show them how important it is to never stop learning and pick up a few new tricks yourself by asking them to share the things they're passionate about with you.



Catch A Show for The Holidays

By Gabrielle Mancuso

Performances have a dash of magic to them in that way that everything seems more enchanting during the Christmas season.

There are many Christmas festivals, plays and musical performances in the months of November and December, and it is likely that even if your town isn't hosting one, you can find one nearby. Get in the holiday spirit and enjoying local performances is a great way to experience some holiday joy. The end of the year is cold in most places and routinely filled with stress over meeting end-of-year deadlines and quotas.

Seeing a concert or going to a festival will allow you to unwind, relax and remember that the most important aspect of the holiday is spending time with loved ones and helping others.

An important part of seeing a holiday performance can be the way you choose to treat yourself. Plan to be out for the evening and eat dinner at a local restaurant either before or after the show. Enjoy coffee and dessert — even if you don't normally partake in such indulgences. Walk your dinner off with a quick stroll through your town's shopping district where you can enjoy the lights and holiday window displays.

Your local chamber of commerce should keep a regularly updated directory and a calendar of events. This calendar should not only include events such as ribbon cuttings and business spotlights, but also record local events happening in your area. Your town's tourism bureau also is a great resource for any upcoming entertainment. Don't forget to check out local universities, which normally schedule productions around the holidays.



SENILITY IN DOGS

What Is Dementia?

Senility in dogs also known as CCD (Canine Cognitive Dysfunction) is real.

Pet owners have long been frustrated by age related behavioral changes in their older dogs. These include—house training problems, memory loss, confusion, staring, wandering, getting stuck in corners, sleep disorders, restlessness, barking, separation anxiety, etc. These changes are not always “normal aging” symptoms. Many such dogs are suffering from Canine Cognitive Dysfunction (CCD). Recent studies have shown that majority of dogs with this illness show the same pattern of brain abnormalities as human patients with Alzheimer’s disease.

There are several drugs which may help this condition as well as dietary changes and environmental enrichment. Some drug therapy and dietary changes may take a few weeks to take effect, and Veterinary advice is necessary, but the wait can be well worth while. Dietary changes may include a formulation of dry food made specifically for this condition, which is a completely balanced diet. They also contain antioxidants such as omega-3 and Vit E—Improvements are usually seen within 2-8 weeks.

Just because a dog is old does NOT mean that he can’t learn new things. Use your dog’s intelligence to improve the quality of his life. If your dog’s vision is still good, teach signals. This will serve as a back-up if hearing fails, which it often does. Signals are fun for dogs, and a more natural way of communicating than words. Grooming & touching will help your dog cope with vision & hearing loss. The combination of diet changes and environmental enrichment provided the best results in CCD especially about learning ability. Don’t forget that before assuming your dog has CCD it is important for him/her to be thoroughly checked for any other physical conditions which may be playing a part such as arthritis or cardiac conditions.

Taking your older dog for a short walk every day if they are willing and able is a great for older dogs. The ‘smells’ act as environmental enrichment and the exercise will help keep your old friend’s joints in working order.



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A LOVING FAMILY

By Pam Teel

TIS the Season to Give a Home to a New Pet!!!!!!

THINKING ABOUT BRINGING HOME A NEW PET FOR THE HOLIDAYS, PLEASE CONSIDER ADOPTING ONE FROM A SHELTER. Sure kittens and puppies are cute, but older animals are just as cute and cuddly!!!! If you can't physically care for an animal, why not be a sponsor for one. You can find out more about sponsoring a pet on the Animal Assistance website.

Animal Assistance, located in East Brunswick, a 501c3 Organization, is a perpetual, lifetime animal care, pet adoption, and pet boarding facility in a peaceful country atmosphere. The family oriented animal center has a purpose to provide a home for animals whose guardians can no longer care for them, or animals down on their luck, on a case-to-case basis. They are one of the few animal facilities in the area that are actually located on a farm in a country setting with over 60 years experience. They are all about the animals. Their strays are LOCAL abandoned dogs and cats, with complete health and medical support. You get an animal that is ready to go, crated trained, and socialized. To read up more about Animals Assistance and their policies for adoption, go to: animalassistance.org. To view their pets for adoption on petfinder - <http://www.petfinder.com/shelters/NJ538.html>

All proceeds and donations taken in are for the animal's medical fund. Animal Assistance personnel do not take salaries. To read more about a specific pet go to website or give them a call. You can come on down and meet the pet of your choice in person during business hours. If you want to know more about one of the pets' personalities, please don't hesitate to call!

If you are interested in adopting any of these homeless, sweet, lovable pets, please call Linda at 732-251-3210. Morning working hours (7-10 AM Mon-Thurs, 7-4 PM Fri, 8:30-10:30 AM Sunday) only. Afternoons are spent with the animals. They are closed on Saturdays, Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. Email: linda@animalassistance.org.



Scotty



Ralphie



Smokey



Nala

Scotty- is a young sweet declawed cat who is house trained and super friendly. He's gray and silver-blue. Scotty has been at the shelter far too long. Please consider giving Scotty a home this Holiday Season

Bruce Wayne- adult male pointer

Thea- large female Chow-chow

Bones- pit-bull adult male

Jacob- young pit-bull terrier

Ginny- adult female

Jasmine- 4 year old adult female

Minnie- medium beagle found ties to a tree

Josie- very quiet loving cat

Randy- pit bull terrier- happy-go-lucky, trains easy. He would make a great therapy dog.

Ralphie is also declawed and very tame. This orange fellow is around two years old.

Smokey- young adult male

Nala- adult medium sized female

Amber- young adult female

Lexus- beautiful all black young and playful

Ginger- Adult female boxer

Trudy- young adult female

Kimmie- young adult female



Amber



Lexus



Ginger



Trudy



Kimmie



Bruce Wayne



Thea



Bones



Jacob



Ginny



Jasmine



Minnie



Josie



Randy



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Sweet Potato Granola Bars

Looking for the perfect healthy on-the-go snack? This quick and easy homemade sweet potato granola bar recipe is a great source of protein, vitamin A, vitamin C, manganese, magnesium, and dietary fiber.

Ingredients

- 2 ½ cups rolled oats
- 1 cup Special K Original Breakfast Cereal
- ½ cup dried cranberries
- ½ cup dried pumpkin seeds
- 1 tsp, cinnamon
- ¼ tsp, nutmeg
- ½ tsp, salt
- 1 medium sweet potato, roasted & skin removed
- 1 large egg
- Optional: 1-2 Tbsp. honey or brown sugar

Directions

1. Set oven to 350°F.
2. Line an 8"x 8" baking dish with parchment paper and spray with non-stick cooking spray.
3. Combine the oats, breakfast cereal, dried cranberries, pumpkin seeds, and spices in a bowl.
4. In a separate bowl, combine the sweet potato, egg, and honey or brown sugar, if using.
5. Add the dry ingredients to the bowl with the sweet potato mixture and gently mix together until the sweet potato mixture appears to be well distributed.
6. Press the mixture into the prepared pan, and bake for 15-20 minutes, or until the top is brown and firm.
7. Once cooled, remove the granola bars from the pan and slice into 12 portions.



Purple Potatoes

By Alexandra Tringali

In my opinion, purple potatoes are the most exciting-yet-least-used potato in the whole starch family. They're tender, extremely versatile, packed with flavor and nutrients, and they are an absolutely gorgeous color. They can be prepared in the same way golden potatoes, baking potatoes, or red potatoes can, but often times their color throws some people off. This article is going to throw a spotlight on the health benefits of these colorful potatoes.

Purple potatoes are loaded with health benefits. A half cup contains 1.4 grams of protein, 1.3 grams of fiber, 10% of the daily value of potassium, and 11% of the daily value of vitamin C, as well as a plethora of other vitamins and minerals. In addition to all of the goodness that purple potatoes contain, they also provide a variety of health benefits.

Lower and Regulate Blood Pressure

The potassium content of purple potatoes coupled with their concentration of the phytochemical chlorogenic acid positively affects the capillaries and blood vessels, helping to lower and regulate blood pressure. They lower the diastolic blood pressure – the bottom number of the blood pressure reading by 4.3% and the top number, the systolic pressure, by 3.5%.

Helps to Prevent Blood Clots

The chlorogenic acid can also help to prevent the coagulation of proteins and peptides and break down blood clots.

Antioxidants and Phytonutrients

The high levels of antioxidants and phytonutrients, including anthocyanins – a chemical found in blue and purple fruits & veggies – lower inflammation, prevent disease, and zap free radicals that can cause an array of health problems. The compounds found in blue potatoes are also used in medicines to treat high blood pressure, liver dysfunction, and prevent eye diseases.

Fiber

Potatoes – regardless of color – contain high amounts of soluble and insoluble fiber. Their high levels prevent constipation and keep your body running smoothly and effectively. Other foods high in fiber include green beans and nuts.

Preparing purple potatoes is incredibly easy: whether you want to roast them, smash them, or slice them very thin to make purple potato chips, their possibilities are endless!

Purple Potatoes and String Beans

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 pound string beans
- ½ pound potatoes
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 shallot
- 1 clove of garlic
- Basil
- Salt & pepper
- Enough water to fill half of the saucepan

DIRECTIONS:

1. Put olive oil, sliced shallot and garlic, chopped basil, and a heavy pinch of salt and black pepper in a large saucepan with sides over medium-low heat. Cook until fragrant, about 5 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, quarter the potatoes and chop the ends off of fresh string beans. Add to the saucepan when ready.
3. Sprinkle with more salt, and add enough water to fill the pan halfway. Place a lid on the pan and cook over medium heat. You want to steam everything together.
4. Stir every so often, and cook until the potatoes are soft.
5. Remove from heat and using a fork, gently smash the potatoes somewhat. You don't want mashed potatoes, but you want them a little squashed!
6. Add more salt to taste, and a little fresh basil (optional.) Serve hot, room temperature, or cold.



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Cashew Cream Recipe

Cashew cream is the preferred substitute for cheese, cream, and sour cream. It is an easy vegan substitute for a wide array of dairy foods and has many health benefits. Cashew cream has almost 1 gram of protein per tablespoon and is high in magnesium. It is cholesterol-free and are also a good source of copper, fiber, and healthy monounsaturated fats (necessary—in moderation—for a healthy diet).

Ingredients:

- 2 cups raw cashews
- 8 cups boiling water

Preparation:

Cover 2 cups raw cashews with 8 cups boiling water in large bowl. Cover with clean kitchen towel, and let stand 6 to 8 hours. Drain cashews, then blend in blender with 1/3 to 1/2 cup cold water 5 minutes, or until smooth and thick, like sour cream.



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Bad Sugars Are Addictive

By Gabriella Mancuso

Sugar is one of the most controversial food products since its creation. A little more than a century ago sugar was believed to be an extreme source of energy. The people who believed this were not wrong, however there were and still are many other side effects to the consumption of sugar. The reason earlier generations were unable to figure this out was due to how unadvanced medicine was, but the reason you may have not known about sugars many side effects is for a completely different reason.

Food companies do an outstanding job at covering the symptoms that come with eating sugar. Classifying sugar under different names such as sucrose, glucose, fructose and maltose the food industry fails to advertise that when sugar is added to a product, it becomes dangerous. Sugar can cause many diseases such as obesity, liver disease, kidney disease and diabetes. Sugar consuming is also extremely addictive. When a product contains natural sugars, it is usually beneficial and good for you. It is when the sugar is added to the product that you should be worried. These are the addictive sugars that cause mood swings, anxiety and uncomfortableness. Once you start eating these you won't be able to stop, and it will become a habit. Seventy-five percent of unnatural foods you find in the supermarket contain addictive sugars.

It might seem impossible for you to avoid sugar and the side effects it consists of, but there are always ways to help. We can suggest the removal of products with sugars from the shelves of our schools and hospitals. We can also fight for labels to be placed on all addictive sugar products warning people of the side effects. Daily ways we can fight sugar is by reducing our intake of highly sugared food.





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Why Charging Your Teen Rent May Be a Good Thing

By Susan Heckler

Would you charge your own child rent? My parents did. When I graduated college, and was still living home, my father decided that I should contribute to the household. He charged me \$250/month! I was an adult working full time. At first, I was furious and couldn't believe he was doing this to me.

Would you charge a teenager rent? What is your motivation? Do you need the money to make ends meet? Are you trying to teach your child about the value of money? Are you encouraging them to leave your nest?

Those in favor bring up these thoughts:

- Teaching financial independence and budgeting is an important life skill
- Independent living encourages facing fears and leaving your comfort zone
- Having that extra person in your home adds to your personal expenses
- Knowing rent is expected will change your teen's spending patterns

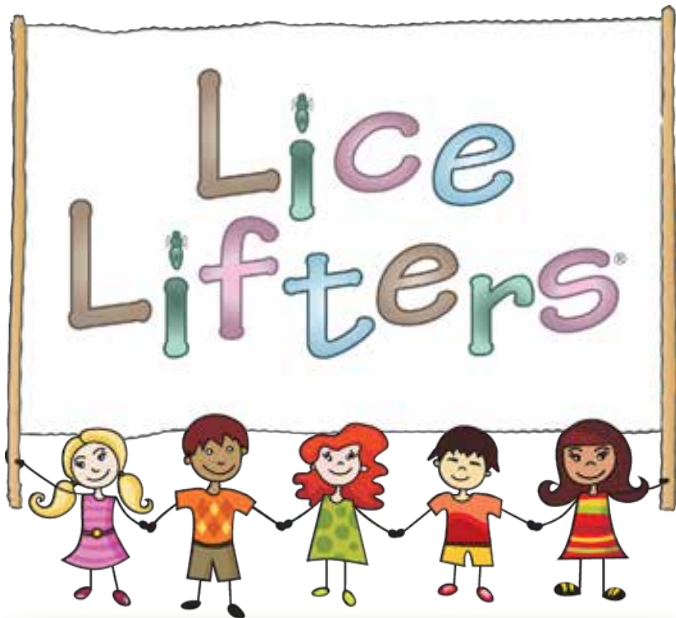
Many 'millennials' end up back at Mom & Dad's after graduation or never leave at all. The job market has been sketchy, and the cost of living is high. Many kids get out of school overburdened with school loans. It is not easy to afford to be on your own.

Additionally, once your child is no longer a student, do you make them take responsibility for car payments, gas, insurance, and everything else you have been carrying for them?

There are negatives and positives on both sides of the argument. You know what works for you and your family as there is no one answer that encompasses every situation.

Oh...by the way. At my wedding my father handed me a check for every penny I paid him plus interest to go toward a down payment on our first home. He didn't need the money. He was teaching his baby girl how to save for the future and a lesson I will never forget.





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How Dads Parent Different Than Moms

By Susan Heckler

Parenting Styles differ between all parents, but the difference between how a mother parents and a father parents can be night and day for the children and can be a source of conflict for parents. Each parent brings unique contributions to the job of parenting a child. The key is to get the right blend that works for your family.

Many women feel their children's father's way of parenting is more demanding, more physical and focused on dealing with the real world. They practice more tough love than many women are comfortable with.

Mom is the nurturer in the family. They parent from emotion and tend to be more verbal and descriptive with their children. Mothers put their children's needs first, possibly a throwback to pregnancy. Mom prefers to establish firm, consistent rules. Mothers help boys understand the female world and develop a sensitivity toward women. Mothers tend to see the rest of the world in relation to their child.

Fathers set the bar high and expect the kids to meet expectations consistently. They prefer to challenge the kids and take a firmer disciplinary standpoint. Dads are more spontaneous. Their words are fewer and their instructions are more concise with less explanation. Girls with involved, married fathers are more likely to have healthier relationships with boys in adolescence and men in adulthood because they learn from their fathers how proper men act toward women. Dads tend to see their child in relation to the rest of the world.

There are some negatives when a family's parenting styles aren't blended well.

- Children may feel confused or conflicted with dissimilar expectations
- Children can be drawn more to one parent or the other because of their like-mindedness for the specific parenting style
- The conflicts can result in alienation or depression as the child matures
- Frustrating at best and destructive at worst
- Creating dissonance and distance between partners

This is not all bad though, opposing parenting styles can help kids prepare for a world of negotiating with various types of people. It is best for your children if both parents can act as a partnership, showing unity in parenting. Issues come up, but maybe they should be worked out between adults without the children observing the conflict and manipulating the situation to their advantage. Parents with different styles need to find a balance by negotiating, showing support for each other, protecting key values, and seeking help before damage is done.

Dr. Kyle Pruett of Yale Medical School stated, "By 8 weeks of age, infants can tell the difference between a male or female interacting with them. This diversity, in itself, provides children with a broader, richer experience of contrasting relational interactions—more so than for children who are raised by only one gender. Whether they realize it or not, children are learning at earliest age, by sheer experience, that men and women are different and have different ways of dealing with life, other adults and children."



Our Postpartum Truth - In Her Words: My Relationship

By Michele Inzelbuch, LCSW, LCADC

It can be difficult for a struggling new mother to open up about what they are experiencing, making it difficult for their partner to understand, support or help them. A woman has an expectation by society to be happy when they have a baby, but what about when she is not? What happens to the relationship with a partner when the mother of their child does not share the joy? When society continues to expect a mother to manage the home, the children, and herself, but what she needs is someone to help manage her needs.

Having a baby, post-partum depression or anxiety, and medications can cause an array of changes to a woman, not only emotionally but physically as well. A woman's body does not return to its pre-pregnancy shape right away, if ever. A woman's self-esteem may decrease in many different areas. Her sex drive may decrease and for some completely vanish. These changes can lead to difficulties in a relationship.

PPD/PPA is caused by a sudden decrease of estrogen and progesterone that greatly increases in the body when a woman becomes pregnant. Women who suffer from PPD may have a prolonged hormonal imbalance and do not adjust to the life changes as quickly as someone else might.

This month, women in recovery from PPD/PPA share their experience of how their postpartum symptoms affected their relationships with their spouses in hopes of bringing about a deeper understanding of PPD/PPA and recovery to the community.

N.D. PPD affected her relationship with her husband on different levels. Her "need for constant attention and validation which is difficult for any spouse to give" created additional stress on him. Her self-esteem decreased as a result of the depression, but along with the hormonal imbalance, her marital relations suffered. She said, "It

damaged intimacy because I was (and still am at times) disgusted with myself." She felt bad that her husband had to care for her and see her in a constant state of depression and crying. N.D. shared, "We communicate about it and it has since improved, but it took almost 5 years." N.D.'s husband was patient and understanding with her and helped with the house and the baby.

L.M. also suffers from a decreased sex drive, though her husband was understanding of this, it changed their relationship. Her anxiety continues to make her feel uncomfortable with herself and question her self-esteem. Though her relationship with her husband is "different," she explained, "He is super supportive... completely hands on, calm, understanding." L.M. said that her husband is a wonderful father and she is grateful for him.

J.D. shared, "My husband is and always has been very supportive. He was a tremendous help, caring for both boys when they were born and doing more than his fair share. I feel very lucky to have him by my side. I think if anything, it made us stronger."

M.W. suffered from post-partum six years ago with her older child, and her husband was aware of what she was going through. "PPD

definitely affected my relationship," she said. "At one point, I remember crying on the bathroom floor, telling him he ought to divorce me and find a new wife, someone who wasn't mentally falling apart, someone who would love our son and be a better mom. Thankfully, my husband rejected that! Although he had to work, he was (and is) a hands-on father, taking feedings at night, for example. When I was hospitalized, he had to be both dad and mom, the sole parent for our child, though thankfully our parents spent time at our house to help out.

With the right support and many times, medications, the journey to recovery and finding joy is possible.

For the new mom from a survivor: Find support and have hope, after all, hope means Hold On Pain Ends.

If you or someone you know has concerns regarding PPD or is showing symptoms, do not ignore them. You are not alone and there is help out there. Please reach out to the Central Jersey Family Health Consortium at 732-937-5437, the Perinatal Mood and Anxiety Disorder Program at Monmouth Medical Center at 732-923-5573, or Michele Inzelbuch, LCSW, LCADC at 732-704-4331.

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Trying to Conceive: 10 Questions to Ask

By Susan Heckler

Starting a family is a big decision for most people. Big changes are in store for you, your relationship, your checking account and so many other things. Once you make that choice, immediate gratification is appreciated but rarely granted.

Keep in mind, 'ready, set, go' is not the way to proceed. Due diligence is best, so conception is done under the best of possible conditions for the best possible outcome.

Thoughts to ponder and questions to ask yourself or your doctor:

1. If you have been using birth control pills, how long should you be off before trying to conceive? You have been ingesting hormones which need to leave your system before you start a pregnancy and while the levels return to normal, your menstrual cycle may be affected. Check with your doctor but the rule of thumb is stopping oral contraceptives 2 months before trying.
2. When is the best time to try to conceive? A few days before ovulation occurs is optimal as the sperm lasts for several days in the woman's body while the egg will only be viable for 24 hours.
3. How can I tell if I'm ovulating? Ovulation typically occurs 10 to 16 days before your menstrual cycle begins if you have a regular cycle. You may notice changes in your cervical mucus signally ovulation. If you are irregular, you may need to rely on ovulation kits that can be purchased over the counter.
4. How long before becoming concerned if I don't conceive? A medical diagnosis of Infertility can be made after 12 months of trying but there is still not necessarily a cause for concern. 70% of couples do not conceive in the first 3 months, 50-60% will have success after 6 months, 60-70% after 9 months and 80-90% after one year. Even after 2 years there is only a 95% success rate.
5. Are there natural ways to increase fertility? Happily, yes! You can try weight control, watching your caffeine and alcohol consumption, stop smoking, take supplements, eat clean and healthy, and minimize stress.
6. Can I continue my current medications when I become pregnant? Speak with your doctor and your pharmacist, they are the best sources for this answer.
7. Are there vitamins or supplements I should take during this time? Yes, there are multi-vitamin and mineral supplements which should include Vitamin D, Vitamin E, CoQ10, Vitamin C, Lipoic Acid, B6, B12, Folic Acid, Iron, Selenium, Zinc, and Essential Fatty Acids .
8. What are the considerations about our family's health background? It is important to alert your doctor to any genetic problem or pregnancy health condition that runs in your family to allow them to monitor you extra closely.
9. Are there any vaccinations that I should consider before getting pregnant? CDC has guidelines for the vaccines you need before, during, and after pregnancy. Some vaccines, such as the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine, should be given a month or more before pregnancy. You should get the Tdap vaccine (to help protect against whooping cough), during your pregnancy. Other vaccines, like the flu shot, can be given before or during pregnancy, depending on whether or not it is flu season when you're pregnant. It is safe for you to receive vaccines right after giving birth, even while you are breastfeeding. Be sure to discuss each vaccine with your healthcare professional before getting vaccinated.
10. How will my emotional health affect my ability to conceive? Both the stress of trying to conceive a baby and pregnancy can affect a woman's mental health. Researchers are not sure if mental health can affect fertility, although infertility can affect mental health.



Boy or Girl?

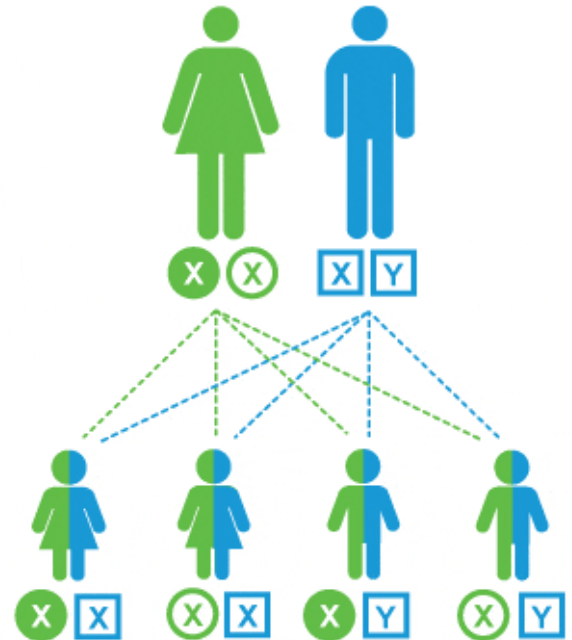
How Genetics Determine Gender

By Gabriella Mancuso

A baby's sex is determined by X and Y chromosomes. With the X chromosome being female and the Y chromosome being male the gender of a baby is usually a 50/50 chance.

However, there are certain situations in which the father can have something to do with the determination of gender. The father is in charge of producing the chromosome that determines whether the baby will be a girl or a boy. The family tree of the dad influences these results. If the dad comes from a family of all boys, meaning he has all brothers, he will most likely produce a male chromosome. If the dad comes from a family of all girls, meaning he has all sisters, he will most likely produce a female chromosome.

Unfortunately, the mother's family tree has nothing to do with the gender of the baby, but there are other things that the mother can do that can influence the gender as well. For example, nutrients and living conditions can help with the determination of gender.



3 Myths For Determining Your Baby's Gender

By Daniella Mancuso

Many women will experience cravings during their pregnancy due to an increase in hormones. Some women are even unable to eat for a short amount of time while they are pregnant. An old wives tale claims that the type of food cravings a woman experiences may be able to predict the gender of her baby. Women who crave sugary or sweet foods are said to be pregnant with a girl while women whose taste buds point them in the direction of savory or salty foods are thought to expect a baby boy.

All pregnancies are unique to the individual woman. Some experience morning sickness while others are never sick. Some women are even sick at night or all day long. Legend has it that women who experience severe morning sickness are pregnant with a girl. Boys are associated with less illness or even none at all. Symptoms of morning sickness may include a queasy feeling, nausea, vomiting, headaches, diarrhea, and excess sweating coupled with the inability to keep anything down.

Acne and other skin problems are a common symptom of a pregnancy due to an imbalance of hormones. In early pregnancy especially, a woman's pregnancy symptoms may be similar to her premenstrual symptoms, which often include acne or skin problems. While there is no scientific evidence to back this up, an old wives tale claims that a woman who is pregnant with a girl will develop pimples because the baby steals the mother's beauty. Acne and other skin conditions usually go away after the baby is born and a mother's hormones return to normal.



Fertility Boosting Foods

By Susan Heckler

If motherhood is on your mind, the sooner you prep your body for growing a healthy baby-to-be, the better! There are actually foods you can add to your diet that may make conception easier.

There are many possible reasons for infertility, and then there are the unexplained issues. Researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health published findings from a study of more than 18,000 women tracked over an eight-year period to determine if their diet was influential in their ability to conceive.

Their research concluded that women who ate foods containing greater quantities of trans fats, animal proteins and carbohydrates, along with other contributing dietary factors, were more likely to have an ovulatory disorder. This ovulation problem is responsible for about 20 percent of women seeking help in becoming pregnant.

If you find you are not ovulating or are not on a regular cycle, you may want to try:

Alternate protein sources such as vegetable protein sources. • Add some high-fat dairy • Don't forget your vitamins

Some suggested super food ideas that can tip your fertility scales in your favor:

Brown rice is a good source of complex carbohydrates and folic acid. In a six-year study of 18,000 Harvard nurses, those who chose white rice were 92% more likely to experience infertility compared with those who ate brown rice. Three servings a week is recommended for overall good health.

Whole milk contains a good amount of calcium, which is great for reproductive health as well as your bones. The extra fat you don't get from skim or low-fat is needed for pregnancy. One serving of whole milk or full-fat ice cream, yogurt or cottage cheese in your diet will give your body the required calcium.

A study done at the Harvard School of Public Health concluded that higher consumption of monounsaturated fat, such as olive oil is directly associated to higher odds of childbirth.

Vitamin C-enriched foods are essential for women planning a pregnancy. Broccoli is loaded with B vitamins as well as calcium, iron, and zinc. Broccoli can help boost fertility due to its high content of vitamin C. Vitamin C also improves sperm quality and protects sperm from DNA damage.

According to the Centers for Disease Control's Assisted Reproductive Technology report, low levels of zinc in women have been directly linked to miscarriage in the early stages of a pregnancy. **Oysters** are an excellent source of zinc for Moms to be and in males, zinc helps increase testosterone and semen levels.

A Yale University study concluded infertile women often suffer from vitamin D deficiency. **Eggs** contain vitamin D, are rich in antioxidants and carotenoids that boost fertility in women. You can safely enjoy up to six eggs per week if you do not have a weight issue.

Salmon has a high content of omega-3 fatty acids, which can help regulate reproductive hormones, increase blood flow to reproductive organs, and even minimize your stress. Selenium is a mineral that produces antioxidants, which protect the eggs and sperm from free radicals. Have a serving of oily fish like salmon, sardines, mackerel, herring, and anchovies into your diet two to three times a week.

Black beans are high in fiber that helps regulate blood sugar levels, which helps reduce fertility issues such as polycystic ovary syndrome and immunological issues while helping a healthy hormonal balance. This is a vegetable protein which, according to a study published in the American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology can make you more fertile. Black beans contain folate, manganese, protein, magnesium, and iron.

Almonds is one of the best super foods as it contains vitamin E. A diet high in vitamin E has been shown to improve sperm health in men and a deficiency in women can be one cause of infertility. Vitamin E is also an important antioxidant that helps protect DNA in sperm and eggs.

Avocados boost fertility as it is high in folic acid, monounsaturated fat and good enzymes. The monounsaturated fat in avocado helps regulate the hormones involved in reproduction and increase your chances of conceiving.

You can increase your chances of conceiving by reducing your stress, sleeping properly, drinking plenty of water, exercising regularly, managing your weight, quitting smoking and avoiding alcohol.

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**Dr. Helen Simigiannis,
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QUESTION: What can I do to control my heavy periods?

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most women report no pain and can return to most activities within a day. This is how it works: Each month during a period, the uterine lining is shed and a new lining starts to grow. By preventing the re-growth of this uterine lining, we can stop periods sometimes permanently. Prior to the introduction of endometrial ablation as a treatment option, hysteroscopy with D&C was performed to thin the lining of the uterus. Alternatively, hormones and hysterectomy were offered. With advancements in medicine, Novasure endometrial ablation has become a well recognized treatment. Dr. Simigiannis will use the Novasure to permanently remove the cells that grow a lining in the uterus. Dr. Simigiannis is committed to providing you the best experience possible by having a Board Certified Anesthesiologist available making the experience pain free. You may return to work the day following your procedure.

Please call Dr. Simigiannis at 609-448-7800 for more information and a consultation. A full exam and evaluation is always necessary prior to any procedure. If you are still considering child bearing, this is not the procedure for you. Medical insurance eligibility is evaluated and we encourage patients to check this as well.

For more information feel free to contact:

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Sled Safely

If you live in an area that receives its fair share of snow, you probably have taken a sled for a ride. For many families, sledding is a holiday tradition, if the conditions are right. Be sure to take proper precautions to protect the children and adults while on the hill.

While sledding as a child, you probably didn't realize how dangerous it can be. Now as a parent with safety in mind, you are likely aware of the steps you need to take to make sure sledding remains a safe, enjoyable family tradition for everyone involved.

FINDING THE RIGHT HILL

Your first level of responsibility with sledding is to find a suitable hill. There are many factors to think of before you begin. The experts at Kidshealth.org have listed some extremely important things to look for.

- Choose a hill that isn't overly steep and leads to a long, flat bottom. This help your child's sled glide to a stop.
- Never attempt to sled on a hill that ends near a street, parking lot, pond or fence.
- Look for a clear path to the bottom of a hill. You should avoid obstacles such as bumps, rocks or other hazards that might cause the sled to leave the ground.
- Avoid sledding on icy hills. Aim for one with a coating of snow to create a softer landing spot in case your child falls off his sled.

PROPER ATTIRE

- Always dress in heavy clothing and keep your ears and hands protected. Exposing skin to the snow for long periods of times can cause frost-bite.
- Children should wear helmets when participating in sledding. Kids Health experts recommend this as a crucial safety precaution for children 12 and under. Try to find a helmet designed for winter sports, as this it will be the most effective.
- Forgo letting your children wear scarves. They can pose a risk of strangulation. Keep necks warm with a turtleneck instead.

SAFEST SLED

There are many different styles of sleds on the market. The safest option for children is one that can be steered and slowed down with a braking system. Avoid saucers, toboggans or tubes, as it is harder to influence where they will wind up.

Never use a substitute such as a large shovel or cardboard box. You might receive points for creativity, but these options pose serious safety risks.

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QUESTION:

We have always heard of UV protection from the sun but now they are talking about harmful blue lights. What does this mean to me and my health?

ANSWER:



Dr. Steven Linker, OD

UV is short for ultraviolet, a color on the light spectrum. This light is electromagnetic radiation, which is present in sunlight (even through cloud cover), and also produced by electric arcs, and specialized lights such as mercury-vapor lamps, tanning lamps, and black lights. UV light is associated with suntan, freckles and sunburn on skin which are the familiar effects of over-exposure to it, along with higher risk of skin cancer. It has similar effects to your eye and is known to be responsible for cornea burns and cataracts.

Less known is the effect blue lights have on your health. Blue lights are found inside and outside in your environment. It is naturally emitted by the sun but also comes from fluorescent bulbs, and LED screens like your computer and phone. Blue or Blue-violet is very close to Ultraviolet and is penetrating and harmful to your eyes. It has been linked to damage to the retina, causing long term visual impairment such as Macular Degeneration. It has been estimated that without protection, by the year 2050 over 265 million people could suffer with this condition.

While we are all susceptible to these rays, children are particularly vulnerable. Their eyes are developing and they are exposed more-so due to their lifestyle. They are three times more exposed, spending more time outdoors. Their pupils are larger, letting more harmful rays in and a younger lens is more crystalline and transparent, letting in more light than an adult.

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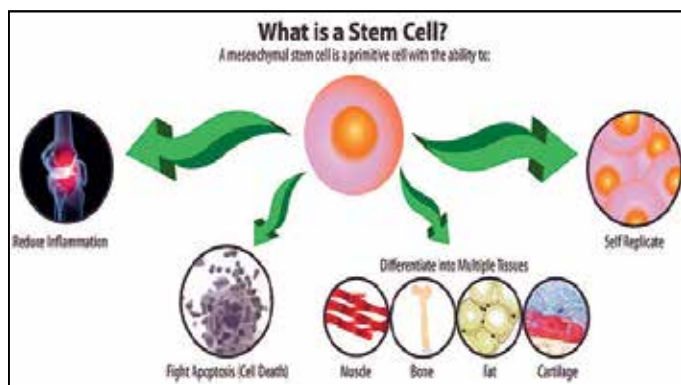
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QUESTION:

Can amniotic stem cell therapy help my knee pain?

Millions of patients suffer with knee pain due to arthritis. The options for treatment, until now, have been limited to physical therapy, steroid injections, viscosupplementation injections, or joint replacement surgery. Central Jersey Spine & Wellness now offers a new cutting-edge treatment option called **amniotic membrane stem cell injections**. **Amniotic membrane stem cell injections** may be used to successfully treat patients with knee osteoarthritis when other conventional treatments have failed.



HOW DO AMNIOTIC MEMBRANE STEM CELL INJECTIONS WORK?

Amniotic stem cell injections offer the ability to heal damaged tissue naturally. With amniotic stem cell therapy, stem cells from amniotic tissues are injected directly into your knee. These stem cells have strong anti-inflammatory properties. However, stem cell therapy goes far beyond the benefits of standard "injection therapy." While cortisone and other drugs only provide temporary pain relief, stem cells actually restore degenerated tissue while providing pain relief. The growth factors in amniotic stem cells may replace damaged cells in your body. Additionally, stem cell injections contain hyaluronic acid, which lubricates joints and tendons, easing the pain and helping restore mobility. We also use precision guided fluoroscopy to ensure the stem cells are injected into exactly the right location. For optimal results.

WHAT BENEFITS DOES AMNIOTIC STEM CELL THERAPY OFFER?

- Amniotic stem cells contain no steroids. Instead, the injections rely on **naturally occurring anti-inflammatory agents**, such as cytokines.
- Amniotic stem cells contain **hyaluronic acid**, which lubricates cartilage and promotes new cartilage growth.
- Amniotic stem cells contain **growth factors**, which stimulate tissue growth.

- With amniotic stem cells, there is **no threat of patient rejection**.
- Lastly, amniotic fluid is a **highly concentrated source** of stem cells, which makes this type of stem cell injection preferable over embryonic stem cells and the patient's own stem cells (from fat or bone marrow).

ARE AMNIOTIC STEM CELL INJECTIONS SAFE?

Yes. More than 10,000 injections have been performed without a single reported adverse side effect.

- Amniotic stem cell therapy is a preferred type of stem cell therapy because the cells come from an immunoprivileged site, which means that patient-rejection is extremely rare.
- The use of amniotic stem cells is well researched, safe, and effective. Amniotic stem cells have been used by ophthalmologists and plastic surgeons for about 20 years.
- All amniotic stem cell donors go through a rigorous screening process, as determined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and American Association of Tissue Banks (AATB).

AM I A CANDIDATE FOR STEM CELL THERAPY?

Patients suffering with knee pain due to arthritis may be considered as candidates for amniotic stem cell therapy. Regenerative medicine is growing in popularity and is helping more and more people live with less pain and suffering. If you have already tried conventional treatments, and are looking for another safe and effective option, consider amniotic stem cell therapy.

Call to schedule a consultation with one of our doctors to determine if amniotic stem cell therapy is right for you.



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QUESTION:

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WHAT IS HYALGAN AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Hyalgan is a natural lubricating fluid that acts as a lubricant and shock absorber inside the knee joint. The substance in Hyalgan is hyaluronic acid which is normally found in high levels in healthy joints. Replacing the hyaluronic acid with Hyalgan lubricates the joint and reduces pain. Hyalgan has been administered over 40 million times and has been proven to provide long-lasting relief of knee pain from osteoarthritis.

WHAT IF YOU ALREADY TRIED KNEE INJECTIONS?

If you have had injections like this in the past and experienced poor results, there is still hope! Many doctors in this area offer similar injections, but very few use precision fluoroscopy guidance. Fluoroscopy guidance ensures that the pain relieving Hyalgan reaches the knee capsule where it bonds with the joint fluid to create a lubricating and cushioning layer. Without fluoroscopy, it is estimated that doctors "miss" the capsule over 30% of the time resulting in poor results. We want each and every one of our patients to have the greatest chance of success, so every injection is done with precision fluoroscopy guidance to ensure that the Hyalgan gets into the capsule 100% of the time. Because of this, patients who previously felt little to no relief with non-fluoroscopy guided injection are now getting excellent results.

The other "big difference" in our results is the multitude of other supportive care options that we have available to enhance the effectiveness of the Hyalgan procedure. These options include state of the art medical laser treatment, physical therapy, manipulation, corrective osteoarthritis bracing (takes pressure off the damaged section of the knee), and natural anti-inflammatory products. The combination of these treatments offers you what we feel is the most comprehensive non-surgical knee treatment program available.

DOES IT HURT?

Many of our patients report that they feel little to no pain at all! We do everything possible to minimize any pain from the procedure, from pain relieving spray and a local anesthetic, to precision guidance that ensures we are always in the right spot.

WILL MY INSURANCE COVER HYALGAN?

This procedure is covered by most major insurance companies including Medicare. Our insurance department pre-verifies every patient.

WHO WILL BE PERFORMING THE HYALGAN PROCEDURE?

Dr. Scot Paris is the medical physician who performs the Hyalgan injection. Dr. Paris is trained as a general surgeon and has extensive experience with a variety of surgical procedures. With his conservative approach, he has excelled in the non-surgical treatment of knee pain with the use of fluoroscopy guided Hyalgan injections.

SO HOW DO I KNOW IF YOUR KNEE PAIN TREATMENT PROGRAM WILL HELP ME?

If you are tired of suffering with painful arthritis of the knee, and you want to see if the latest advances in non-surgical treatment can help, all you have to do is call 732-683-1800 to set up a risk free consultation. During the consultation all of your questions will be answered in a warm and friendly environment. Knee replacement surgery is a very extreme measure to take without considering all of your other options first. Once it's done there is no turning back. For that reason we encourage you to schedule an appointment to see if you are a candidate for Hyalgan treatment.

We are proud to offer our patients a comprehensive knee pain treatment program that includes the best non-surgical methods to relieve pain all under one roof. We look forward to having the opportunity to help you feel better. Take the first step in ending your knee pain and call to schedule an appointment today!



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Don't forget to Winterize Your Lawn Mower

By Susan Heckler

Hooray, lawn mowing season is at an end, one last pass to mulch those leaves and you are done!

Lawn mowers, like any other mechanical item, will last longer if you do the routine maintenance suggested in your owner's manual. It is best to follow it step by step, but many people just don't have the time.

Step 1: Clean the Deck

You should be in the habit of doing this routinely throughout the season. If you keep the blade housing clean, it ensures ideal mower performance. This is a must before winter so moisture from grass clippings won't cause rusting and corrosion to the underside of the deck.

If your garden hose doesn't work to knock it loose, try a plastic paint scraper or old bristled pot scrubber. Always protect your hands with heavy work gloves. Use silicone spray on the underside of the deck to prevent future buildup.

Put a container of mothballs near the deck to prevent critters from nesting in the dormant machine.

Step 2: Stabilize the Fuel

Never leave fuel in the tank all winter! Water from condensation can mix with ethanol in the gas; this causes clogs, corrosion, and other problems throughout the fuel system.

Run the tank dry, especially if you are storing it in the basement. You can also siphon larger quantities of fuel. If you are storing in the garage or a shed, fill the tank with gas and use a fuel stabilizer, letting it run so it reaches the carburetor.



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Plan To Prune

- ✦ If branches are dead, diseased or unsafe, it's best to have them removed.

Inspect For Ice

- ✦ If you see your tree is bending or drooping because of snow and ice accumulation, think twice before shaking the branch, walking or parking underneath a tree. Ice can cause branches to become brittle and high winds make them vulnerable to breakage.



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Staging Your Home in Winter

Be sure to always show off your home's best features

THINK 'CHEERY AND BRIGHT'!

Cold and dreary weather doesn't make it easy for your home to put its best "face" forward. Take extra care in the presentation of your front entryway. Brighten it up with a colorful wreath or a swag of fresh greenery. Consider giving your front door a fresh coat of paint and add planted seasonal bushes — such as holly — on your front porch or stoop. Consider greenery on the mantel for a cozy touch.

MAKE IT COMFORTABLY WARM

A chilly house can be uncomfortable. Turn your thermostat up before a showing. Arrange an extra coat rack near your front entrance so potential buyers can take their coats off and view your home in a more relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. Bonus tip: A warm house invites lingering in colder months — giving them more time to fall in love with the space.

DE-PERSONALIZE — TO AN EXTENT

Ever wonder why "show homes" sell new builds so well? It is because building companies have mastered the balance between enough furniture and decor so that a space looks lived in and cozy, but zero clutter and personalization. Removing personal photos and replacing them with inexpensive, general artwork is a great first step. Removing all clutter (like those stacks of paperwork you've been meaning to get to or the piles of toys littered throughout the house) is a must. Staging your home is a great way to both show potential buyers all your home can be and depersonalize it a bit so that they can better imagine themselves in the space.

Be sure to always show off your home's best features — even in the "off-season."



Bowling with Corey

By Susan Heckler

Everything old is new again, at the bowling alley. Did you know that fragments of balls used in ancient Egypt going back to 3,200 BC were found? The sport dates back over 5,000 years; no wonder Corey Gold loves it!

Corey is an 11-year-old Manalapan resident who attends The Pinebrook School. He has tried a bunch of other sports, but nothing has been as exciting for him as bowling.

While fairly new to the sport, Corey is making up for lost time. He had played as a family fun activity growing up but really started taking it seriously around 6 months ago. He gets inspired watching professional bowling on television. He takes bowling lessons weekly and has a Coach, Dave Kline who teaches out of Bradley Beach. Coach Dave is a Certified USBC Silver Level Coach and the owner/operator of DKJ Pro Shop in Bradley Bowl located in Bradley Beach.

In speaking with Dave, he said, "I've been coaching Bowling athletes of all different ages and calibers for a long time. Corey has made physical changes in his game at probably the fastest rate I've ever seen. Those changes are the key to his rapidly increasing average. His hard work and dedication is something he should be proud of. I certainly am very proud of him and his progress."

Corey bowls in a youth league on Friday nights at Bradley Bowl and is in a father-son league at Knob Hill Country Lanes. As incentive for finishing homework early, Corey gets in a game or two during the week too. Corey will compete with his coach's son, Andrew, in a tournament on December 17 in Howell. Good luck boys!

Corey remembers getting excited when his high score hit 120. His all-time high is 247! Wow, what an improvement! All of Corey's hard work and dedication has paid off that he more than doubled his score in 6 months.

Corey has 3 bowling balls; his favorite is the yellow one. He has no lucky socks or good luck charm except for Mohawk Man. This is an adult that Corey sees at the lanes who he is helping to play. He said he does best when the man bowls when he is also bowling.

So where do you go from here Corey? Corey explained that bowling is a very competitive college and colleges recruit bowlers and offer scholarships. Each tournament Corey competes in offers the winner college scholarship money! Corey piqued my interest, so I did a little digging. In New Jersey; Princeton, Rider, Rutgers, Seton Hall, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Monmouth University, New Jersey City University, NJIT and Saint Peter's University all have competitive teams.

So, when you address the ball, give it some respect. Bowling is great fun, great sport and can give your future a sure strike (all 10 pins down in one throw). You can be a turkey (3 strikes in a row) when you use your spare (all 10 pins down in 2 throws) time to learn bowling.

I can't wait to watch Corey compete on television and can say I knew him back when his high school was only 247 (3 times my norm).



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Helping Your Teen Beat Emotional Eating

by Susan Heckler

What Is Emotional Eating?

Emotional eating is when people use food to deal with feelings instead of to satisfy hunger. What would cause someone to do this?

Emotional eating patterns can be a learned response. A child who is given candy after a big achievement may grow up using candy as a reward for a job well done. A kid who is given cookies to stop them from crying may learn to link cookies with comfort.

How you parent can set your child up to be an emotional eater so be cognizant of this.

Comfort foods, the ones that call our name when emotions flare, release opioids in our brains. Opioids are the active ingredients in cocaine, heroin, and many other narcotics so the soothing affects you feel are real. This almost addictive quality may make you reach for these foods again when feeling upset.

They need to understand it is a problem. Here are some questions for them to ask themselves:

1. **Do you eat without realizing you are putting food into your mouth?**
2. **When you feel stressed about an important project or emotional issue, do you dive into a package of cookies or candy (a treat)?**
3. **Do you feel guilty or ashamed after overeating or blowing your “diet” again?**
4. **Do you feel like you deserve a treat when do something good or need to celebrate?**
5. **Do you feel that your weight is spiraling out of control and you cannot stick to your plan?**
6. **Do you eat to procrastinate something that you do not want to do or seems difficult?**
7. **Do you need to feel stuffed to be satisfied?**
8. **Do you tend to overeat when you are fatigued because it is the only thing you have the energy to do or it is the quick fix?**
9. **Do you tend to overeat when you are alone, bored and lonely to entertain yourself?**
10. **Do you crave certain foods and feel like you “have to” have them?**
11. **Do you feel like you can’t get what you REALLY want, so you “settle” for food?**

Want to stop your teen from emotional eating? It takes some introspection and soul searching on their part and some carefully worded talking points on yours:

- Explore why they're eating and find a replacement activity
- Keep track of the emotions that trigger their eating
- Change your habit of heading to the frig when you walk in the door
- Remove temptation and keep healthier choices around
- Keep a food journal
- Get them some professional guidance

Set an example for your child and observe your own patterns.



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How To Deal With Tween Drama

By Susan Heckler

You have all heard the term *Drama Queen* whose definition according to Webster is "a person given to often excessively emotional performances or reactions". We all know them and some of us even love them...but do we want to raise one?

Drama and tweens seems to be inseparable. If you have a middle school girl or have any dealings with them, your head is emphatically shaking yes. Puberty seems to rewire a young girl's brain making them more prone to stress and emotions that may polarize them. Pretty much any time from 11 years old and up...duck and cover. Attention and sympathy seems to fuel this, and it isn't only for the girls.

Young men are experiencing this to a lesser degree, but they express themselves differently. Boys allow the frustrations to build up and eventually blow like a pressure cooker. Girls tend to let out their angst little by little with a more constant flow.

We all have that adult friend that loves to embellish stories to make them more interesting and exciting. That is the epitome of a Drama Queen. If you don't want to raise one, don't be one yourself as you are modeling the behavior. When your child comes home all wound and dramatizing the events of her day, it can be a dose of the same behavior. It is a mix of hormones, peer pressure, trying to fit in, trying to stand out, and needing a little extra of your time and patience.

It is best to try not to reinforce the drama, your reaction to it is key. If you take the story and run with it, you are setting yourself up for more of the same. Be calm and expect calm. Listen and really hear what they are saying as this is an attempt to gain your attention and support for them in a conflict situation. Use the opportunity to communicate and sort out a solution. If the problem is real, such as bullying, you need to take action. You need to triage the problem to determine the importance.

Gently point out how your child could have handled a situation better than may have avoided a dramatic situation. Do they need to take some responsibility for their action and maybe correct it for the future? Unchecked behaviors in a child or a tween can lead to nightmare behaviors for adults. Think of this as The Terrible Two's all grown up.

Commiserate in a positive direction and brainstorm for solutions to the current situation that will diffuse it and maybe avoid a repeat performance. You are their audience, but you do not have to be indulgent unless you deem it necessary. You are the rock your child leans on and depends on, but you are also the arms they need to wrap around them for comfort. You need to decide on strength or softness on a case by case basis. If you can teach them how to manage life without tears and melt-downs, they will be a happier adult for your efforts. You want them to have the tools to get past this phase and move forward in a positive direction.

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GET CRAFTY WITH HOME MADE JELL-O-PLAYDOUGH

This activity is a great opportunity to teach the kids cooking skills, like measuring. It is also a fun activity to do with the children on a lazy weekend afternoon.

What you need:

- 1 cup white flour
- 1 cup warm water
- 2 Tbsp. salt
- 2 Tbsp. cream of tartar
- 2 Tbsp. cooking oil
- 1 3-ounce pack of Jell-O

Instructions:

1. Mix all the ingredients in a small saucepan.
2. Cook over medium heat until it thickens. It will look like a ball of dough and be difficult to stir when it's ready.
3. Place the dough on a floured cutting board to cool.
4. Knead, adding flour until it isn't sticky anymore (about 1/2 cup).
5. You can add more food coloring to make the colors really pop!
6. Store in the refrigerator in an airtight container. It should keep for at least a week. If it starts to get sticky, just add flour.





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