

# FAMILY *Ties*



## *Talk to Children*

### ABOUT TOUGH TIMES

Whether due to a natural disaster, a plant closing or other circumstance, many Iowa families are facing financial concerns that are causing changes in how they live. Dealing with these changes isn't easy for adults or children.

Adults often try to keep these difficulties from children, hoping that they either won't really notice or that they will not be bothered by it. It's easy for adults to become so absorbed in their own difficulties that they forget the rest of the family might be in pain as well.

When adults keep information from their children, they open the door for mixed messages, confusion and tension. Kids are able to pick up on the tension and stress that the adults are experiencing. They know something is wrong, even though they may not know what it is. They may think that they are somehow to blame. Children may hear you say things are OK, but see the distress in your face, hear it in the tone of your voice, and experience it in your lack of patience with them and others.

Parents should admit their concerns to their children and stress their abilities to cope with the situation.

### **Change Affects Everyone**

Whenever major changes happen to a family, everyone in the family is affected in some way. How the change affects each family member depends on the person's age and ability to understand the seriousness of the situation, personality, how he or she copes with distressing news and the severity of the change.

In most cases, it is best to be honest and open with your family about what is happening. Think about what message you want to send to your children. Express your feelings in simple words and reassure your children that you are in charge of the problem and they are not. Tell them the family will need to make some changes, and you will appreciate their cooperation.

### **Adults Make the Decisions**

Tell children they will be involved in the discussion, but that the adults will need to make difficult decisions that are in the interest of the entire family. Not everyone will appreciate every decision.

Let your children know their ideas are welcome. Appreciate their help and do not ridicule their ideas, regardless of what they are. Point out the helpful parts and explain why other parts are not workable. And most of all, listen.

Point out what will remain the same, as well as what will change. There may be fewer trips. Spending may be limited to what is really needed, and new fall clothes may not be a priority. Ask children to be patient.

It's your job to worry about money, jobs and housing. It's their job to do well in school and help out wherever possible at home.

And don't panic. This situation may be the most difficult one you've had to face, but it's an opportunity to teach your children how to handle problems and move on in life. This may be the greatest lesson they ever observe you teaching them.

NORTHWEST AREA  
*Family Newsletter*

For more information on family communication and dealing with family stress, contact your local ISU Extension.

Prepared by Eugenia Hanlon, Renee Sweets, and Jan Burks, ISUE Family Specialists

## Shopping FOR FOOD

**In August, look for** locally grown beets, carrots, cucumbers, melon (muskmelon, honey dew and watermelon), onions, peppers, snap beans, summer squash, sweet corn, tomatoes. At the grocery store, you will also see nectarines, peaches, plums, and raspberries.

Consider cost and nutrition when grocery shopping.

Buy large bags of frozen vegetables. Seal tightly in the freezer between uses.

## Healthy Habits

### START AT HOME

Healthy habits start – and are reinforced – at home. Here are some ways that you can help children eat smart and get fit.

**Try it, you'll like it:** Kids don't always know that healthy food tastes good until they try it. Making healthy options fun, like "ants on a log" (celery with peanut butter or low fat cream cheese, and raisins) is another way to add nutrition.

**Enjoy family meals:** Breakfast, lunch or dinner – a meal together is an important time for families to visit and for kids to share what they learned in school. Add cooking together time and you have more sharing time.

**Cook and learn:** There are lots of ways for families to integrate math and science in the kitchen, like learning how yeast works in baking bread. And a lot of math goes into cooking too, like measuring cups and doubling a recipe.

**Play together:** Take a family walk after dinner or in the morning to start your day. Incorporate fun activity, count how many steps it takes to walk around your house ... have fun!

**Be a role model:** Make healthy food choices most of the time. Try new foods. Prepare meals and snacks at home. Include regular physical activity in your day.



## IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY University Extension

Avoid pre-bagged salad mixes. They are usually more expensive and spoil faster.

Buy fresh fruits and vegetables in season, when they generally cost less.

Frozen and canned fruits are a smart choice all year round.

Check out a local Farmers' Market for fresh vegetables and fruits in season.

Getting smart foods onto children's plates and into their mouths is easier than we sometimes think. At [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) you can listen to podcasts about simple steps toward healthier eating, explore inside MyPyramid, and go to MyPyramid for Kids for games, coloring sheets, and helpful tips.

## Wraps Your Way

Makes 1 serving

1 10-inch whole wheat tortilla  
 1 teaspoon spread (such as low fat mayonnaise or ranch dressing, mustard, or dill- or vegetable-flavored dip)  
 ½ cup (or more) shredded, sliced or chopped vegetable(s) (such as fresh spinach, tomato, slaw mix, cucumber, onion, carrot, summer squash, etc.)  
 1 ounce\* protein food (such as cooked sliced chicken or beef, ¼ cup tuna, 1 hard-cooked egg, or ¼ cup refried beans)  
 1 tablespoon shredded mozzarella or other cheese  
 WASH hands. MIX the spread and vegetables together. SPREAD vegetable mixture on tortilla. SPOON on the protein choice, and sprinkle on the cheese. ROLL up and eat. OR wrap in waxed paper and heat in microwave for 30 seconds to melt cheese.

**Menu Idea:** "Wraps Your Way" with watermelon and low-fat or nonfat milk.

\*1 ounce is about 1/3 the thickness of a deck of playing cards.

**Nutrition Facts:** per serving – 188 calories, 56 calories from fat; 6.2g fat, 1.9g saturated fat; 29.5mg cholesterol; 309.4mg sodium; 19.1g total carbohydrate, 1.7g dietary fiber, 2.0g sugars; 13.1g protein; vit A 10%, vit C 10%, calcium 9%, iron 9%.

Source: Food and Fun for Healthy Families, ISU Extension 2008 nutrition calendar

## Looking for Ways

### TO CUT COSTS? —————

Looking for ways to cut costs? With rising fuel costs, are you looking for ways to stretch your dollar?

100 calorie snacks are a popular with families. They are easy and convenient but what does it cost you? Why not have your children count out the 10 graham crackers and put them in a disposal baggie. Cost of a name brand baggie is 2 cents per bag. Glad ware cost is 31 cents per container. Store brand crackers are 6 cents per serving. The costs of 100 calorie graham crackers cost are 55 cents per serving.

Other examples would be cheese nips, pretzels, pudding, or fish crackers. Cost of pudding would be \$.45 per serving (prepackaged) versus \$.22 per serving (homemade). This would be a cost savings of \$138.00 for one year by prepackaging your own snack, if your family ate 5 packages a month.

Not only are you saving money, but your child will learn to count (a math skill) and eye hand coordination skills. You may not have a problem with spending extra money,



but are your children always asking to buy a pizza and pop and then go to a show? How do you handle the pressure to say no? Or maybe it is your spouse who wants to buy convenience food at the gas station or go out to eat all the time.

Try putting \$20.00 in an envelope for entertainment or personal allowances.

When the money is gone and the request comes in, then let the envelope be the “bad guy”. Let your children go and look at the envelope and see if there is extra money in there. If there is not, then perhaps you can say, we don’t have enough to eat carry-out pizza, but we could have a frozen pizza and rent a movie. How about a hot dog roast or a picnic instead? Or, I guess that we will have to save for that next month. Let them make some financial choices and mistakes as well. This can work for yourself or your partner as well. Let the envelope make the determination of what you can or cannot do.

## Tips

### WHEN GROCERY SHOPPING —————

A trip to the grocery store can be like walking through an advertisement. Displays and packages may tempt you to buy foods you do not need. To avoid overspending the next time you head to the store --

- Shop from a list. Write down the items that you need to purchase and shop from that list.

- Eat before going food shopping. If you are hungry, you will be more tempted to buy foods that are not on your list.

- Shop alone, if possible. You will be less distracted.



If you shop with children, help them learn to be good shoppers, too. They could help select an item or two on the list, such as an unsweetened cereal, or a fruit or vegetable for family meals or snacks.

- Learn the layout of the store you usually shop at, so you can find foods quickly.

- Go down only the aisles where you can find foods on your list. “Sight-seeing” in other aisles may tempt you to buy something you don’t need.