

Extension to Families At Work...At Home

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All in the
family



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Instilling Kindness and Compassion in our Children



We all want warm-hearted children—children who will care about the welfare and feelings of others and act on those emotions without thought to their own gain. The question is, how do we go about creating and nurturing that kind of child? It sounds like a tall order, but in reality, instilling values in children happens one day at a time, one teaching moment at a time.

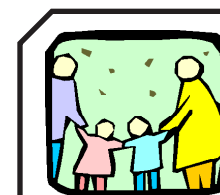
Psychologist Harriet Heath, Ph.D., author of *Using Your Values to Raise Your Child to Be an Adult You Admire*, points out that the value of being caring and compassionate is not present at birth. This is something that must be taught. How do we do that?

Here are a few ideas for parents on instilling kindness in children.

- Be a good role model. Children learn from what they see you do. If you take the time to bring meals to a sick person, help elderly friends with yard work, take someone to their doctor appointment, or care for a friend's children—your kids will notice. Don't be afraid to comment on your own kindnesses—when you're role modeling for your kids, it doesn't count as self-congratulation. You can say things matter-of-factly—like, "Grandma was really cheered up when we brought her those flowers and visited with her. It really makes me feel good to do something kind for her."

- Talk about kindness. Have conversations with your kids about what kindness really is and why it's important. Comments could sound like, "It's good to notice how people feel—then you can tell if they need help. Lots of people are shy or too embarrassed to ask for help so you have to be on the lookout" or, "Being kind means that you don't expect anything in return. The person doesn't have to pay you or do something nice back. You're kind because it's the right thing to do and it makes the world a better place."
- Notice when your child is kind. Watch for moments of kindness in your children and quietly remark on them. It's a parenting truism that whatever behavior you give attention to, that's what you'll see more of—so make it kindness. If you see your preschooler give the baby a toy, say, "That was kind of you." If your ten year old helps his younger sister with her homework, pat him on the shoulder and say, "It makes me feel good inside to see you help your sister."

(Source: Parenting Press, Inc., 2006, reprinted with permission)



Remember:
If you are too busy
to spend time
as a family

YOU ARE TOO BUSY

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**For your
health**



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Say Yes to Family Meals

Family schedules can get so busy that there is little time to eat together. Shared meals have proven benefits, even when it is not possible on a daily basis.

In 2006, the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University compared teens and children who shared family dinners at least five times per week to those who shared family meals twice or less per week.

Children who often ate dinner with their families were more likely to:

- Do well in school
- Be emotionally content
- Be at a lower risk for thoughts of suicide
- Have parents who took responsibility for teen drug use
- Have positive peer relationships...they were less likely to have friends who drank alcohol and used marijuana
- Be at a lower risk for substance abuse...half as likely to try cigarettes or become daily cigarette smokers, one third less likely to try alcohol, and half as likely to get drunk monthly

Even though it may be challenging, make an effort to schedule meals when most (or all) family members can be present. A shared family meal doesn't have to be a fancy, roast turkey feast. It can consist of take-out food, such as pizza, plus celery sticks, apples, and milk. Family meals can be shared at home, at a restaurant, in a park, or near a playing field.

Eating together increases each family member's sense of belonging and provides a setting for discussions that can reinforce values that are important to the family. The bottom line is...Make shared meals a priority!

"Urban Legend" or the Truth?



“Is it safe to reuse single-service plastic water (or soda) bottles?”

According to Dr. Sam Beattie, Iowa State University Extension Food Safety Specialist, “Yes, you can reuse these bottles... with care.”

Dr. Beattie explains that the reuse of single service plastic bottles and the potential for migration of carcinogens from the plastic into the water is blown way out of proportion. Research has shown that the highest level of carcinogens found in water from reused plastic bottles is only in the part per billion range. The risk assessment indicates that the level is below concern levels for cancer.

PET (polyethylene terephthalate, glasslike plastic) bottles are widely used for water, soft drinks, and sports drinks. Additional research on solarized PET bottles showed that the levels of the compounds of concern were very low--in the subparts per billion range. “Therefore, the concern about carcinogens is not warranted,” says Dr. Beattie.

However, there is some indication that reused water bottles may have significant bacterial contamination. Proper sanitation of water bottles is important to maintain water quality. This means bottles need to be washed completely with detergent, rinsed well, and allowed to air dry. A simple sanitizing step would be 4-5 drops of bleach in a full bottle, followed by air drying.

Long-Distance Telephone Tax Refunds



Telephone customers who had long-distance service anytime in the months after February 28, 2003 and before August 1, 2006, may qualify for the Long-Distance Telephone Tax Refund. Those who qualify have a standard land-line telephone with long-distance service; cell phone service; or Internet long-distance calling plans (Voice-over Internet Protocol service). Even if the specific telephone service plan did not distinguish between local and long-distance calls, customers receiving these services qualify. Self-employed workers, businesses and non-profit organizations that paid for long-distance service may also file for the refund. Long-distance service through pre-paid cards, do not qualify for refunds. Refunds do not apply to taxes paid on local telephone service or federal access charges.

Taxpayers can file a request for telephone tax refund with any 2006 federal tax return forms. Individuals entitled to the telephone tax refund who otherwise have no reason to file a federal tax return may use a special short form, 1040EZ-T. The form is not a tax return and can only be used to request the telephone tax refund.

Filers may request a standard refund amount which is based upon the size of the filer's family and will amount to \$30 - \$60. Those requesting the standard amount may request only one refund, even if they had more than one long-distance service (such as land-line and a cell phone). Individuals who prefer to request the exact amount of the long-distance tax they paid each month for all services will be required to complete and attach Form 8913 to the 1040EZ-T or their tax return. Businesses and non-profit organizations cannot claim the standard amounts.

Free Help Filing

Many families that apply for the Earned Income Credit pay someone to complete their

tax forms. This can often cost between \$55 and \$100. Getting a "quick tax refund", that comes back in a few days, costs even more. Paying for tax preparation takes away from the value of the EIC. Low-income workers can get free help with tax preparation through a program called VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance). For a VITA site near you, contact your local ISU Extension office.

Earned Income Credit



Earned Income Credit (EIC) is a special tax benefit for working people who earn low or moderate incomes. Those who qualify and file a federal tax return can get back some or all of the federal income tax that was taken out of their pay during the year. Even workers whose earnings are too small to owe income tax can get the EIC. EIC also offsets any additional taxes workers may owe, such as payroll taxes.

Workers who were raising one child in their home and had income of less than \$32,001 (\$34,001 if married) in 2006 can get an EIC of up to \$2,747. Workers with more than one child in their home who earned less than \$36,348 (\$38,348 if married) can get an EIC of up to \$4536. Workers with no children between the ages of 25 and 64 who earned less than \$12,120 (\$14,120 if married) can get an EIC up to \$412.

"Qualifying Children" must live with the worker for more than half of the year. They must be under the age of 19, or under 24 if they are full-time students. Children of any age who have total and permanent disabilities also may also qualify. Qualifying Child is defined as: sons, daughters, stepchildren, grandchildren and adopted children, brothers, sisters, stepbrothers, or stepsisters, as well as descendants of such relatives. Foster children who are placed with the worker by an authorized government or private placement agency.



Your money's worth



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