



Family Matters

May/June, 2006

A Family Newsletter prepared by Iowa State University Extension Family Specialists

Conquer family over-scheduling

William Doherty, in his book "Putting Family First," describes over-scheduled families as ones that hurry through family meals, rush to and from kids' activities, and only "wish" for time to hang out at home with family or spend with extended family or friends. According to research, there are many families over-scheduled.

A study by University of Michigan's Survey Research Center says that kids have lost 12 hours per week in free time – play time cut by one-fourth and half the time for unstructured outdoor activities. The study says free time has been replaced with things like structured sports and passive, spectator leisure – or bleacher time.

Research is also showing that children doing well in almost all areas of life have regular family dinners, family rituals (especially at bedtime) and rich family life and community involvement. In other words, they have overcome over-scheduling by connecting with their family.

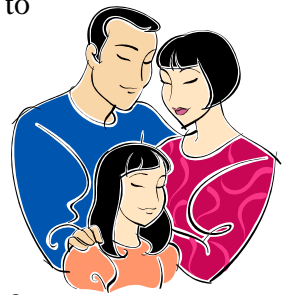
Reconnecting with family is as easy as:

- **Turning off the television one night a week** and playing board games, card games, pencil-and-paper games or engaging in physical activity.
- **Eating one meal a day together** and talking with each other.
- **Setting a time to do household chores** and enjoying a treat together when they're completed.
- **Turning off the radios, DVDs and phones**, and using car travel time for games and conversation.
- **Reclaiming or starting bedtime rituals.** Connecting with family members at the end of a day is an important way to let kids know they are important and loved.



Teens benefit from parents' "follow through"

"Following through" improves a golf swing. It is also an important skill for parents to use in helping their kids learn to accept responsibility.



Parents "follow through" when they *do* what they *say* they will do. For parents of young children it may mean taking away a child's privilege of playing with a favorite toy for the rest of the day after he or she ignores a warning not to use it as a weapon.

Follow-through with teens starts with a friendly discussion and information gathering and sharing. As part of this conversation, kids decide what they will do, and parents decide what the consequence will be if the child doesn't follow that decision.

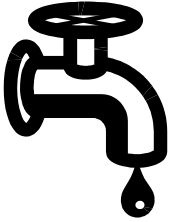
Use simple reminders. If the teen fails to keep the agreement, simply saying "*agreement*" in a respectful manner often works better than a lecture or wordy reminders. Sometimes a look - a raised eyebrow, a pointed finger or hands on the hips - can be more effective than any words at all. This nonverbal communication works best when done with a friendly attitude.

If your child follows through, then it's a good idea, later on, to thank him or her for keeping the agreement. Follow-through never involves threats. It allows parents to keep their power while letting kids keep theirs.

Finding extra money

There's no question about it – money is tight these days as gas prices and associated costs inch up. Just when we'd like to have money for some summer fun, it seems like we don't have a dime to spare.

Good news! Even when it *seems* like there is no money, it is often possible to find some. Nearly everyone has **spending leaks** they don't really notice. A spending leak is just like a dripping faucet – a tiny drop of water at any given minute doesn't get much attention. But when a drip continues minute after minute, day after day, it adds up to many gallons down the drain.



In the same way, a small expense can add up to big bucks if the expense is repeated regularly over time.

Examples:

- * A 50-cent can of pop, twice a day, adds up to \$30 per month (or \$365 per year).
- * A magazine purchased every week for \$4 will add up to \$208 per year.
- * Eating out for lunch (\$5 every weekday) will cost \$1,300 per year.

If you are looking for extra money – for summer activities, a special purchase, OR just to keep gas in the car – finding your spending leaks may help.

What are *your* spending leaks? What expenses do you repeat on a regular basis? Is it pop, coffee, movies (renting or at the theater), vending machines, fast food, cigarettes, going out with friends, lottery tickets, gifts, greeting cards, magazines? *Anything* can be a spending leak, if you do it on a regular basis. Even driving across town can be a spending leak. You may not realize it, but it could cost \$1 each time you drive across town. It might even cost \$2 or more. Think about how many trips you make “across town” – or to a neighboring town. Without realizing it you may be spending \$10 or \$20 or more each week on those small trips.

Think back to the three examples above (pop, magazine, lunch). Suppose all three were true for you. You would be spending over \$1,800 per year on these small items, but because each purchase is only a small expense, you might not realize how much you are spending. By cutting that spending in

half, you could save \$900 per year. That's \$900 that is available for something else.

Does this mean you **should** stop buying pop, or stop driving across town or eating out for lunch? Not necessarily – only you can decide that. What you **should** do is to figure out how much you're spending on these “leaky” items. Then decide what it is worth to you. If something else is more important, you may decide that it is worthwhile to cut back on coffee or magazines or movies.

When it comes to “spending leaks,” the choice is up to you. The key is **realizing** the choice is yours. If eating out is more important than new furniture, then you'll continue eating out and you won't mind living without new furniture. On the other hand if the summer vacation is more important than driving across town 5 times a day, you may cut back on trips by walking, biking or combining trips. In managing money, **success** comes when you spend your money on the things that are most important to you and your family.

Do the math. Figure out how much your “little” expenses add up in a year. Then make your decisions, and spend money on what is most important to you!

Take control of your money

A free web-based course from ISU Extension offers ideas and tools that will help you make the most of your money. Check it out today!

www.extension.iastate.edu/financial/money/

Tip for teaching kids

Share your financial decisions with your children. Seeing your example helps them learn to make choices.



Example: “Remember how we wished we had enough money for vacation? I figured out that eating out every week costs over \$1,000 a year. From now on we'll eat out only twice a month, and save the extra \$500/year for vacation!”

Safe food preservation

Home food preservation is not difficult but it does require following specific directions. Always use tested recipes and directions from a reliable source. Ignoring the recommended procedures can result in home canned and frozen products that are of poor quality and may make you and your family very ill.

For reliable food preservation information, call the ISU Extension Answerline at 1-800-262-3804. You can also go to www.extension.iastate.edu/store to read and print food preservation publications or ask for them at your County Extension Office.

Pm 1045 Freezing Fruits and Vegetables
Pm 638 Canning and Freezing Tomatoes
Pm 1043 Canning Fruits
Pm 1044 Canning Vegetables
Pm 1366 Making Fruit Spreads
Pm 1368 Making Pickled Products

100 calorie packs

Frito-Lay has announced the introduction of the snack maker's 100 Calorie Mini Bites line. The new portion control line has 100 calorie packages (about 2/3 ounce) of Cheetos® and Doritos®. Most people like chips as a treat from time to time, so this could be a convenient way to splurge and control the amount of your snack.

Nabisco has already produced 100 calorie packs with cookies and crackers. And Proctor & Gamble and Kraft have also followed suit.

Note that for that same 100 calories you could be eating 2 cups of carrots, 1.3 apples, 1 banana or 1.75 cups of salad...all are much more nutritious.

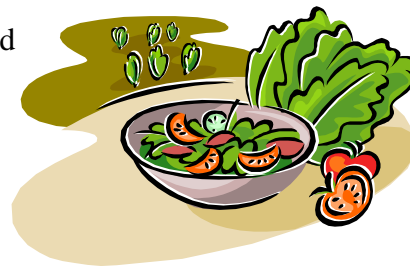
It takes 17 minutes of walking to burn 100 calories. It certainly does not take that long to eat a bag of chips that weigh less than an ounce!

While the calories are restricted, the snacks are still highly processed snack foods. A piece of fruit is really the perfect snack—it is usually less than 100 calories and is full of fiber and other nutrients.

*From Jan Temple, ISUE Nutrition Specialist
Food for Fitness and Fun Newsletter*

Do salads help you lose weight?

If you want to lose weight, having a salad every day could help you reach your goal, depending on what you put on your salad. One study showed that participants who ate a low-fat salad before a meal consumed fewer calories at that meal. But, those who loaded their salad with high-fat toppings actually consumed MORE calories.



BEST TOPPINGS:

Vegetables, nuts, fruit, dried tomatoes, and chopped peppers along with vinegar, lemon juice and fat-free dressing are best toppings.

WORST TOPPINGS:

Cheese, high-fat dressing, croutons and bacon bits contain a fair amount of fat and/or sodium. Use these sparingly.

When making a lettuce salad, remember to use more spinach and more dark green leafy vegetables to get higher nutritional value.



<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/answerline/>

1-800-262-3804 (in Iowa)

Monday through Friday

9 a.m. - noon and 1 - 4 p.m.