Extension to Families At Work...At Home

Relationships with Aging Parents Important, Complicated

"Adjusting to the changes we see in our parents is not easy," McKinnon said. "We watch our parents decline physically and perhaps mentally too. They retire and their world gets smaller. Sometimes our parents move, leaving the family home for a smaller one. One parent may pass away, changing the family situation even more."

Adult children’s reactions to the various aspects of their aging parents can be varied, from denial to acceptance and everything in between. "Depending upon what’s going on in our own lives, we can be positive one time and negative the next. Feelings are a big part of the changing relationships. These will affect your reactions," McKinnon said.

"There are many strong feelings that adult children may have," McKinnon said. These include love, respect, sadness, fear, anger, and guilt.

In relationship based on love, children want to do whatever they can to help. Sometimes in a troubled relationship love may not be a factor, but there may be respect for the parents. It is natural to feel sadness about the realities of the situation.

"Fear is a powerful feeling," McKinnon said. "We are fearful of what will happen next with our parents. We worry about their deaths. At the same time we can see ourselves aging, and we think about how this will be ‘us’ someday."

Anger and guilt are two feelings that are difficult to acknowledge and express. The anger may stem from many reasons: what is happening to aging parents, the disruption to the adult children’s lives, parents who are hard to handle and dissatisfaction with siblings or medical professionals.

"And then we feel guilty," McKinnon said. "We feel guilty about what we did, what we should have done, what we’re wishing and what we’re thinking."

As aging parents become less independent and more dependent on their adult children, stress increases for all involved. McKinnon said. "It is important to talk with your parents and siblings. Build a support network to help navigate the times ahead. The network could include neighbors, friends, family, volunteers, paid help and professionals. Each has a unique role to play. As your parents’ needs increase, so will the stress and the importance of what the network provides."

As parents age, change will continue to occur. Adult children will notice that their own feelings and reactions also will continue to change. Honest communication and a respectful relationship can help all parties cope and make necessary decisions.

Caregiving relationships: Conversations on Aging is a program to help adult children learn to recognize how caregiving affects relationships. It helps them discover their role in making decisions about their parents’ as they age. This program also helps adult children build communication and listening skills and gain ideas on how to start difficult conversations. "Contact our office if you want to see this program offered in your community."
File Return to Take Advantage of Tax Credits

-- For many Iowans, tax time is the most important financial event of the year. Working families with moderate or low incomes qualify for important tax credits that frequently result in substantial tax refunds.

“This time of year our goal is to ensure Iowans take full advantage of the tax credits for which they are eligible,” said Barb Wollan, a family finance specialist with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. “That requires two types of outreach. First, we want to make sure people are aware that they must file a tax return to take advantage of the credits. Second, we encourage people to spend little or no money in order to receive their credits.”

Families with children typically have the most to gain from filing their tax returns, but some benefits are available to lower-income households without children, as well. It’s true that some people may not be required to file a tax return, such as single individuals with income below $10,000 in 2013. However, Wollan said, they should file a return to take advantage of the tax credits.

“We work to make sure that people are aware of the benefits of filing a return,” said Wollan.

In addition, Wollan and her colleagues want consumers to be aware that there are options for filing tax returns for little or no cost. Most people with incomes below about $51,000 are eligible for free tax preparation by IRS-certified volunteers, through VITA — Volunteer Income Tax Assistance — and also the AARP Tax-Aide service. Iowans are encouraged to call 211 or go to http://irs.treasury.gov/freetaxprep/ to find a free tax clinic near them. ISU Extension and Outreach is actively involved in organizing VITA programs in a number of Iowa counties. For a list see http://www.extension.iastate.edu/human sciences/vita.

Another way for many income-eligible households to file taxes for free is through IRS FreeFile. With this program taxpayers do their own tax returns online, using software made available free by commercial vendors through the IRS. To learn more about FreeFile, go to www.irs.gov and select the FreeFile icon.

Most families with substantial tax refunds benefit from three key tax credits, Wollan continued. The Child Tax Credit of $1,000 per child below age 17 is available to most households with children. The American Opportunity Credit is available to households with full-time college students in their first four years of school. The Earned Income Tax Credit is available to people whose income is below certain limits, if they had income that they earned through work, and did not have investment income above $3,300. The income limits are related to the taxpayer’s number of children and marital status.
The Diet that is all Fluff

Many crazy diets appear in the headlines. Some recent offerings include the feeding tube diet and the tapeworm diet. The latest diet to make headlines is the cotton ball diet, and the science behind it resembles the structure of cotton—unsupportive fluff. The diet involves consuming five cotton balls dipped in orange juice, lemonade, or a smoothie. The claim is that you will feel full without gaining weight. Some dieters consume these before their meal to limit calorie intake, while others rely exclusively on the cotton balls as their “food” intake.

Medical experts agree that nothing good can come of this diet, and in fact it is very dangerous for the following reasons:

- Cotton balls may not be cotton—most are bleached polyester fibers that contain lots of chemicals
- Eating synthetic cotton balls is similar to eating cloth, or even buttons or coins
- Risks include choking, malnutrition, or even worse, a blockage in the intestinal tract, which can be life-threatening

A healthier and safer approach to feel full is to make sure you get plenty of fiber in your diet. Follow these tips to get the recommended 25 to 38 grams of fiber each day:

- Eat fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and legumes (beans and peas), which are all good sources of fiber
- Look at the Nutrition Facts Panel for a product’s fiber content—20 percent or more is considered high
- Include fiber-rich foods with meals and snacks

The adjacent smoothie recipe is a good source of fiber and includes 5 grams per serving!

For more information on how to safely achieve and maintain a healthy weight, visit http://myplate.gov/weight-management-calories/weight-management.html

Want to know more about choosing high fiber foods? The Whole Grains publication, https://store.extension.iastate.edu/ItemDetail.aspx?ProductID=13930 provides information on how to choose whole grain foods.


Raspberry Mango Spinach Smoothie

Serves: 2

(Serving size: 1½ cups each)

Ingredients
2/3 cup frozen raspberries
1 cup frozen mango
1/2 cup frozen chopped spinach
6 ounces vanilla yogurt
1 cup milk

Directions
1. In a blender combine all ingredients and mix until smooth.
2. Serve immediately and enjoy.

Optional
Add 2 tablespoons ground flax or chia seeds for about 3 to 5 grams of added fiber.

Nutrient information per serving
190 calories, 0 g fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 80 mg sodium, 37 g carbohydrates, 5 g fiber, 30 g sugar, 14 g protein

Raspberry Mango Spinach Smoothie
Family Storyteller Program Coming this winter

Family storyteller is an early literacy program designed to increase the amount and quality of time parents and young children (ages 3-5) spend together in literacy programs. Bring the magic of books alive in this FREE 6 week program. Each week you will receive a new book, crafts and activities. Prepare your child to grow in independence and succeed in school. Children will: increase their language skills, come to love reading, have special time with parents. Don’t Miss out! If interested call Becky @ 641-584-2261.

Soil Health and Cover Crop Presentation

How would you like to learn more about Cover Crops?
Join us on:
February 27th from 9:30 to 2:30 at the Diamond Joe Casino in Northwood

NRCS and local farmers along with Midwest Cover Crop Coordinator from Midwest Cover are bringing you this presentation to help you understand some of the questions with cover crops along with programs and cost share availability with all nutrient reduction practices from the Natural Resources and Conservation.
Questions you may call NRCS at 641-584-2211.

Extension programs are available to all without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age or disability.