



Family and Consumer Science

Family Ties

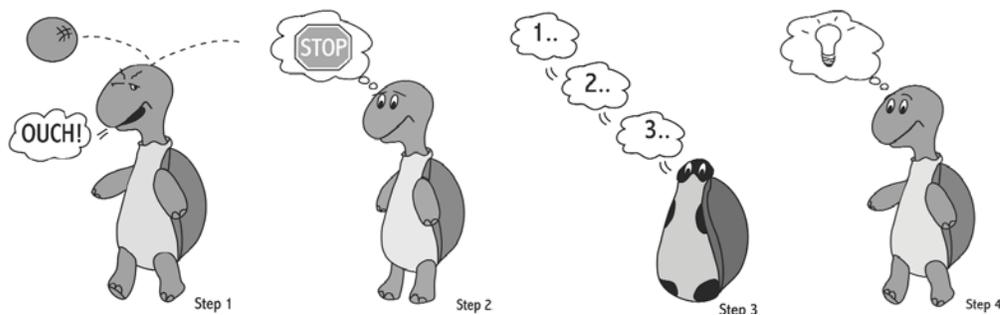
University of Tennessee Extension

Helping Children Deal with Disappointments

Disappointments are inevitable. As caregivers of children we must teach them the realities of life and give strategies to handle them.

One way to do this is by modeling. Children watch adults to learn behaviors; they repeat what comes out of our mouths and repeat our actions. It is crucial as a parent or teacher of a child to model appropriate behaviors. When we experience a disappointment we can model positive ways to handle it. For example, a mom could share with her child how she felt angry that someone hit her car while she was parked at the store- but then she decided that feeling mad wasn't helping her think of good solutions- so she took three deep breaths and thought calming thoughts, then when she felt calm she thought of solutions for fixing her car. We need to remember to model such behaviors when disappointments naturally occur in front of the child too.

Another way to help a child handle disappointments is the turtle technique. The steps are to recognize that you feel angry, go into your "shell", take 3 deep breaths and think calming thoughts, once you are calm come out of your "shell" and think about possible solutions.



A turtle puppet could be used to teach this technique to a child or group of children. Let the child or children practice this often. Offer them praise and recognition for using this tool with disappointments as time goes on. Reinforcement activities could be done as well, such as receiving turtle stickers or turtle die cuts to hang on a wall when a child has practiced the turtle technique on his own.

Compiled by: Leila Myers, FCS Union County Extension Agent and State Human Development Leadership Team

Source: The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning <http://www.vanderbilt.edu/csefel/>



Back to School — Don't Go Broke!

The summer gets shorter and shorter, meaning less time for you to save and shop for those back to school supplies, clothing and other expenses associated with school. This is all the more reason for you to have an itemized budget for each child before heading out to make these important purchases.

The 2009 annual back-to-school survey of more than 1,150 parents and teens from Capital One found that:

- More than 80% of parents reported they had not worked out a budget with their teens for back-to-school shopping.
- 58% said that their back-to-school shopping will be impacted by economic concerns.

Before heading to the store, go through the school supply list for each child with your children. See if you have usable items left over from last year. I know my son's backpack still has packages of pens, pencils and paper that are still usable. Check the advertisements for discount stores, office supply stores, grocery stores and drug stores. Sometimes you would be surprised at the good deals you can get! Budget a realistic amount to spend on each child for supplies. Let your children help make the lists and budget. The expensive backpack they want is a "want," while the one from last year may still work just fine to fill the need. Use this time to teach them good money management and consumer skills.



The fifth annual Sales Tax Holiday is scheduled for **Friday, August 6** and continuing through **Sunday, August 8**. During these three days of savings, you can save almost 10 percent on tax-free clothing, school and art supplies and computer purchases. However, don't buy "extra items" for which you did not budget or charge purchases you won't be able to pay for in September. The interest you will be charged could offset the sales tax savings. A complete listing of qualifying items can be found at www.Tennessee.gov/revenue

Clothing and uniforms can be real budget busters if you don't plan these purchases. Consider shopping at thrift stores for clothing and outdoor wear. Those school picture costs can hit before your child even goes back to school. These costs as well as doctor and dentist checkups, school fees, club fees, etc, are also expenses for which you need to plan.

By: Ann A. Berry, Ph.D.
Extension Specialist - Family Economics

End of Summer Activities

The end of summer is drawing near as school starts back for many. It might be a little late now to plan a two-week vacation with your family and friends, but that doesn't mean you can't take advantage of doing some fun activities with your kids before the school routines start back up! Here are some ideas:

- Camp out in your very own backyard. It can be as easy as rolling out a sleeping bag, or with a little preparation, it can be almost like the real thing.
- Have a movie night outside with a projector and a white sheet. **Have** the kids invite all their friends over for their own special **movie** party complete with popcorn & snacks.



- Arrange a slumber party for your kids. Make it extra special by having your child select a fun theme, such as outer space, movie night, or spa makeover.
- Go swimming at the pool or have a pool party. Ask some friends or family members to bring some food or drinks.
- Set up some backyard games and have some friends over. It's really that simple! Croquet, horseshoes, badminton and bean bag tosses are just some of the easy and fun games that everyone can play.
- Have a BBQ and cook up some of your kids favorite foods. Let them help too!
- Take your kids on a weekend trip to somewhere they've never been.
- Head to the Lake — Is there a better way to have fun than by spending the day at a lake? Spending an afternoon at the lake gives you the best of some of the other activities on this list—grilling out by the water, playing backyard games, and even camping out if you choose.



Although the kids are heading back to school, there is still time for at least a little last minute summer fun. These “close-to home” ideas will go a long way in helping get the most fun out of summer's final days.

CONNECTING TO YOUR DISTANT TEEN



Do you find it almost impossible to carry on even the smallest conversation with your teen or pre-teen kid? You are not alone . . . this is normal for parents of teens. Don't give up – here are four simple strategies to help you break through the silence.

Keep Communicating. Even if your teen doesn't engage in conversation, keep talking to them and ask questions that require a sentence answer instead of just "yes" or "no." Practice active listening as they answer your questions - pick up on something they said to ask them another question.

Be Understanding. Remember what your teen child is going through physiologically, mentally, and spiritually. Your child's body is going through many changes and he/she is forming the core of her identity. Remind yourself to have extra patience and understanding - this is a difficult age.

Initiate. Don't wait for your teen to come to you. Create some opportunities to do things they would enjoy doing with you, like watching their favorite movie or listening to music together. Go for a bike ride, help them practice for a favorite sports team, or go out for an ice cream cone.

Laugh with Your Teen. Laughter provides a way to release the pressure built up in a relationship. Bring up inside jokes you've had over the years or just be silly and create some new ones. But, be careful not to embarrass your teen with old childhood stories or events about which he/she might be sensitive.

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO THE TEEN YEARS

Before you become paralyzed with fear, read these five ideas for surviving the teen years. Hopefully, you will become even closer to your kids as they grow into adults.

1. **Talk To Your Teen.** It may seem nearly impossible to have a conversation with your teenager. However, research shows that teens are very interested in staying connected to their parents, but, too often, parents only want to talk when something has gone wrong. Talk often with your teen, use your active listening skills, and use an affirmative tone to bring out positive ideas, opinions, and behaviors. Talk to them about the things that are important to them; attend school events, and other activities so you always have something to talk about.
2. **Say, "I Love You."** Even if they don't act like it, your teens still want to hear it! And, they need to hear it. Also, don't be afraid of the occasional hug, even if your kids protest.
3. **Know Your Teen's Friends.** Pay positive attention to your teen's friends. Make them feel welcome in your home and organize activities that make your home the place where friends want to be. Your teen's friends are a very important part of his/her world and your efforts in this area will pay big dividends in strengthening your relationship with your teen.
4. **Communicate With Other Parents.** Open up lines of communication with the parents of your teen's friends. Let them know that you are very interested in helping your children and theirs develop in productive ways.
5. **Encourage, Encourage, Encourage.** Recognize your teen's positive characteristics and accomplishments, and then encourage your teen to make good decisions and act maturely to capitalize on their strengths.

Yes, the teen years are frustrating, but your child needs your presence and involvement now more than ever.

Mealtimes Focus on Healthy Choices & Strengthening Family

Family mealtimes are the perfect time to make sure your family eats healthy. Family time can also strengthen families by building commitment, loyalty, trust, understanding of each other and being able to support each other. These family traits help children avoid risky situations and provide them with resources to handle the challenges of life.



One idea is to get your family together to make and eat a family meal. During the preparation process you and your children can discuss about the importance of eating a lot of fruits and vegetables in various

colors. Red fruit and vegetables, for example, have a pigment that helps reduce the risk of cancer and promotes healthy cells. Orange and yellow fruits and vegetables help eyes to function properly and are beneficial to the heart. Green leafy vegetables are also good for the eyes, and help reduce birth defects. Blue and purple fruits and vegetables reduce the risk of heart attacks, stroke, and cancers. Teaching your children why they should eat healthy will encourage them to eat healthy as they grow up and leave the home. These times will also show your children how to cook and prepare their own healthy food, which will build necessary skills that will last a lifetime.

As you work together make sure you show each member appreciation for the work each member does. Use mistakes as teachable moments not as times to criticize.

One characteristic of a strong family is that they show appreciation for each other. As you demonstrate how to show appreciation for your children, you build their confidence, and they may show more appreciation for you as well.

Another characteristic of a strong family is that they communicate with each other. As you eat the meal together, it's a perfect opportunity to have a conversation with your children. Find out what they did that day, and how their projects at school are going. Ask about their friends. Perhaps you can find new ways to support them in their endeavors. Tell them about your day, how you handled various situations that came up in your life. This can be a training time.

Children don't always know how to show character in a challenging situation. Perhaps they can learn from how you handled a similar situation. Sometimes children can also come up with creative solutions to problems. You might be surprised when they suggest another way that you could have handled a situation. Invite them to ask you questions as well. These discussions can give children creative ways to deal with the stressors of their lives. (Another characteristic of strong families is that they find creative ways to deal with stress.)

Family meals can become very meaningful and give family members sufficient time with each other. Strong families typically have these characteristics and are good examples of how we can work together to strengthen our communities. Enjoy your family time together.

Compiled by: Shelly Barnes - Wilson County FCS Agent and State Nutrition and Food Safety Leadership Team
Christie Foster - Career Edge summer 2010 Inter, Wilson County

Sources:

What color is your food, <http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn595.pdf>

Building a Strong Resilient Family, <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/he326>

The Importance of Family Meal Times, <http://www.extension.umn.edu/parenting/components/mealtime.html>

What Do Kindergarten Teachers Really Expect?



Parents hear a wide range of what schools expect children to know before they come to kindergarten. Parents have heard such things as the children must know their colors, or the alphabet, or how to write their name, etc. Much of what is heard is really a myth, passed on from person to person. In most states the only requirements are that the child be five years old by a certain date and that they have their immunizations up to date.

Kindergarten teachers said the most important quality for kindergarten readiness is for a child to be physically healthy, rested, and well nourished. A substantial number of teachers also felt that children should be able to verbally communicate their needs and that they be enthusiastic and curious about approaching new activities.

The following is an excerpt from an article in Tallahassee's Family Forum magazine from 2002. When asked about readiness and the skills necessary for kindergarten entry, Dr. Lucia French, a professor at the Warner School of Education and Human Development at the University of Rochester stated, "Some parents fear that they have somehow failed to prepare their child if he doesn't already have substantial academic skills under his belt before he enters school. In the year before kindergarten, it may be possible for children to learn to count and to learn letter names and some letter sounds," says Dr. French, "but these are not really the important skills for kindergarten readiness. Children can learn numbers and letters easily once they enter kindergarten or first grade. There are much more important things to learn during the preschool years, things that will provide a more important foundation for school success."

The Action Alliance for Children states that a child is ready when his . . .

- ✓ Approach to learning is confident, curious, and excited, and when he is familiar with books and print, and able to pay attention.
- ✓ Knowledge and skills are at an appropriate level. For example, he is learning to count, can identify similarities and differences, is learning to write his own name, understands the basic idea that writing represents speech.
- ✓ General health is being cared for. He gets enough rest and a balanced, nutritious diet and has had necessary immunizations and regular medical and dental care.
- ✓ Physical skills have matured enough. He has small-muscle skills like holding a pencil and can control his own body (move, run, sit still).
- ✓ Emotional abilities are progressing. He can work alone, cooperate with others, express his own needs, listen to others, follow simple instructions and handle impulses and negative emotions.

So what should parents do to prepare their child for kindergarten? We see that what really matters is that we present children with a variety of experiences and materials which allow children the time and opportunities to grow and develop at their own individual rate. Don't go overboard teaching your child with flashcards or similar inappropriate methods. Just love your child, hug them, tell them you are proud of them...there is no better preparation than love and attention. The rest will fall in place.

Making the Switch from Summer to School

It's almost school time again! After a summer of sleeping in and doing things on your own time, the first day of school can be a rude awakening. Heading back to school after a long summer signals a time of transition. Dread it or love it, the kids have got to go to school. Here are some ways to make the transition from summer to school a little easier:



- **Restart Routines.** Kids need time to adjust, so provide a head start. About two weeks before school starts, make bedtimes earlier and dust off the alarm clock. Aim to have meals ready at approximately the same times your child will be eating throughout the school year.

- **Sharpen Skills.** Add more factual brain-bending activities into the everyday mix. Sudoku games, crossword puzzles, word searches, and trivia all encourage your child to sit still, focus, and complete a task from start to finish.



- **Go Over Ground Rules.** Decide when and where they will do homework. Be sure to cover tricky topics: can they watch TV after they finish their work? How late can friends visit on school nights? Establishing guidelines and going over them together will make sure you're on the same page once school's in session.



- **Set Up a Homework Area.** Create a quiet, well-lit space for study. Prevent first day freak-outs by hauling out the necessities: backpack, art supplies, paper, and pencils. Make it personal and fun, but free from distractions.

- **De-stress Dressing.** Let your child choose special first-day clothes. To avoid arguing over school-appropriate clothes, bring the fall wardrobe front and center.

- **Develop a Game Plan — Together.** Discuss goals for the upcoming year, accomplishments from the year before, and some skills they would like to improve. Listen and ask questions. Letting them set their own priorities will make them more meaningful. Throughout the year, track their progress and encourage their efforts.

Effective transitions happen gradually and help prepare children for the impending change. By involving them in the planning and giving them choices about **how** the change occurs, they will manage the transition and change better.



Avoiding the Bite & *Scratch* Cycle

It's a fact: fingernails are at their busiest and most valuable in the summertime, put to work by adults and children alike in the bite and scratch cycle. Flying and crawling insects, it seems, harbor a natural resentment to the humans sharing their outdoor playground and exact revenge in the form of bites. Itch, scratch, itch, scratch, itch, scratch

While few are fortunate enough to escape the bite and scratch cycle entirely, it is possible to give the fingernails (and the hydrocortisone!) a bit of a break by observing a few basic tips for avoiding Tennessee's most common itch-inducers, the mosquito and the chigger.



The mosquito is most active in the early evenings, at sunset, and at sunrise. If it is not possible to remain indoors during these peak times, covering up with appropriate clothing can help. Long pants, long sleeves, and socks may ward off bites, although a mosquito's bite can penetrate clothing. Applying insect repellent to clothing is another protective action, with repellents containing permethrin recommended by the CDC for clothing and DEET or *oil of lemon eucalyptus-containing sprays recommended for skin. Only clothing or *exposed* skin should undergo the application of repellent; it should not be applied underneath any garments. Moreover, caution is warranted in using repellent on the facial area. Always apply the repellent to hands and then transfer to the face. (Note that oil of lemon eucalyptus should not be used on children under the age of three.)

Because mosquitoes require standing water to lay their eggs, mosquito breeding can be greatly reduced by eliminating any such source. Common household sites include buckets, tarps or other coverings, discarded tires, and children's wading pools. While less common than pesky itching, mosquito bites *can* cause serious diseases such as encephalitis and West Nile Virus, rendering protection that much more important.



In the United States, chiggers do not transmit serious disease, but their bite is responsible for dramatically more intense and persistent itching than that of the mosquito's. Typically, exposure to chiggers results in numerous bites, which cause itching, swollen welts. Chiggers,

technically, are not insects, but mites, closely related to ticks.

Contrasted to mosquitoes, chiggers are most active in the afternoons and thrive in temperatures between 77 and 86 degrees. Their habitat is high grass – in lawns, fields, woods, along streams . . . virtually everywhere that grass, weeds, and undergrowth exist. Homebodies can often keep chiggers under control by vigilant mowing and weeding, but the adventurous place themselves at greater risk.

The same covered-up approach to clothing that discourages mosquitoes will likewise be helpful among chiggers. Because chiggers lack the long proboscis of mosquitoes, they cannot bite *through* clothing but may travel inside any loose garments – e.g., pant legs or shirt cuffs. Living on grasses, chiggers are most likely to access adults' feet and knees. Children's relative closeness to the ground makes them candidates for upper body bites, as well. Men fare somewhat better against chiggers than women and children, a result of their thicker skin.

In addition to avoiding chigger-prone areas and using repellent, another simple solution is effective. Chiggers' tiny size often allows them to traverse the skin unnoticed before attaching. For this reason, a hot shower with lavish amounts of soap can wash away or kill them before they unleash their quotient of misery.

Enjoying the summer shouldn't necessitate fatiguing the fingernails or craving the calamine. Avoiding the bite and scratch cycle makes more time for summer fun.

Keeping Your Brain Healthy as You Age

One of the most frequent concerns I hear mentioned about growing older is the fear of mental decline. Though mental decline is associated with aging, researchers have found that older people with healthy brains are just as competent as younger people, and that older people even have some advantages over their younger counterparts. So, if we want to avoid mental decline, we need to think about how to keep our brains healthy. The first step in brain health is to maintain good physical health by eating nutritious foods, being physically active, and getting adequate rest. Beyond that, the best way to increase your chances of vitality in your senior years is to start now by doing things that will challenge your brain, give you enjoyment, and enhance relationships with others.

In his book, *The Mature Mind: The Positive Power of the Aging Brain*, Gene Cohen, M.D., Ph.D., listed five ways to keep our brains fit.

✚ **Exercise Mentally** – The brain grows stronger with use, but gets “flabby” with lack of use. Scientists have learned that the brain continues to generate new cells and new connections throughout life. These new connections are developed and strengthened when you engage in challenging new experiences such as taking courses, joining book discussion groups, keeping a journal, writing or painting, or engaging in challenging work, whether paid or unpaid.



✚ **Exercise Physically** – Physical exercise, especially aerobic exercise that comes from using large muscle groups in continuous, rhythmic patterns, boosts your brain. Several research studies have found that physically active people have reduced risk for developing cognitive impairment, Alzheimer’s disease, and dementia. This may be through increased blood flow, decreased blood pressure, and/or stimulation of chemicals in the brain that encourage development of neurons.

✚ **Pick Challenging Leisure Activities** – If you spend your time engaged in stimulating leisure activities, you can reduce your risk for dementia. Cohen listed the following activities as being most effective (from most effective to less effective): dancing, playing board games, playing a musical instrument, doing crossword puzzles, and reading.

✚ **Achieve Mastery** – People who feel a sense of control and mastery tend to be healthier mentally and physically than those who feel incapable. It is important to develop your skills in at least one area where you can excel. That will help you to feel confident and able. These positive feelings have been found to boost the immune system.

✚ **Establish Strong Social Networks** – Having strong social networks is associated with reduced blood pressure, which reduces the risk of stroke and its damaging effects. Also, social networks reduce loneliness. You might have noticed that the most effective leisure activities have a social component, while those that are less effective tend to be individual activities. So, even if you have to push yourself, make opportunities to connect to others.

By practicing these five fitness habits, you will be well on your way to a healthy style of living and better quality of life in your senior years. It is never too late to start these habits, so share this list with seniors you know. For more information, visit the Center on Aging, Health & Humanities, established by Dr. Cohen, at www.gwumc.edu/cahh

By: Denise J. Brandon, PhD
Extension Specialist – Family Relations