

WORK & FAMILY LIFE

BALANCING JOB AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

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*Practical solutions
for family, workplace
and health issues*

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"Look at me! I can make a snowball all by myself."

Your thriving toddler...a how-to guide

By Tovah P. Klein, PhD

Toddlers. They love us, they hate us. They are carefree, secure and playing with confidence one minute—and the next they are afraid of their own shadows, fiercely clinging to our leg. They act and speak rationally one moment and irrationally the next, screaming because we cut their bread the “wrong way.”

What children are expressing, through their seemingly contradictory behavior, is that sometimes they feel in control of the big world they’ve just become a part of and are eager to explore. And at other times they are overwhelmed by this same world.

Toddlers are in the throes of complex emotions (anger, worry, fear, elation, sadness, pride, shame). They’re making new neural connections every day through their senses, their language and their play. But they don’t know how to handle all this information and stimulation. That’s why they throw themselves on the floor in hysterics, or go from happy to angry or sad within seconds.

Self-regulation skills

What toddlers are also starting to learn, however slowly, is a set of social, emotional and cognitive (thinking) skills or processes that come together under the umbrella called self-

regulation. These skills are among the core aspects of what’s referred to as the brain’s “executive function.” It’s what allows a child (and all of us) to make good decisions, handle hard situations, focus attention, solve problems and override inappropriate actions such as wanting to hit someone when you are angry.

And although children do not master these skills until late adolescence, the toddler years provide an amazing opportunity to lay their foundation.

The toddler paradox

At an emotional and social level, toddlers have two instinctual drives: they want to be their own person but they also need to know that you are taking care of them. This is the constant push-pull of young children from ages two to five.

When parents understand how these two developmental challenges affect everything about their toddler’s world, suddenly their child seems a lot less mysterious.

As parents, we also need to think about our own conflicting emotions. Part of us wants that child to grow up and grow up fast, but another part wants to hold on to our baby forever. And often the needs of the child

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Toddler guide...

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(for autonomy and exploration, coupled with support and comfort) clash with the needs of the parent (for time for self or the need for the child to behave).

The key at times like these—when *their* needs collide with *yours*—is how you reconnect with your child. Coming back together again, without blame, lets them know that you are here for them, even when bad moments happen.

Children need to feel this deep trust, to know you'll take care of them no matter what. Otherwise, there's too much risk in exploring, moving out or taking chances of any kind.

What parents can do

Here are some other ways parents can provide a healthy foundation for their child:

► **Keep things the same,** so your child can learn how to deal with change and adapt. The importance and need for routines should never be underestimated. Routines and regularity develop flexibility and resilience. It sounds contradictory but it's true. And it is one of the many paradoxes of being a parent that you have to set basic routines and yet also have the flexibility to move with the moment.

► **Let them lean on you.** This is not over-coddling. This is about recognizing that the more toddlers move away and go out to explore, the more they need you. Dependence leads to independence later. Children learn to count on you no matter how big they grow or how far out in the world they go. You are their rock. So it's about balance—letting them go but also supporting them.

► **Let go of perfection.** Perfect is a fantasy. Life is messy. Let your child (and yourself) make mistakes. Mistakes, mischief and errors make up the perfect human child. Growing up is not about perfec-

tion and there's no such thing as a perfect parent. Kids have to be allowed to try on their own, fall down, make mistakes and then try again—from learning to walk, learning to read, to making friends and how to act at Grandma and Grandpa's house.

► **Be a hands-off, not hands-on parent.** We render our children helpless when everything is done *for* them—when they are micromanaged. When we hover, we make kids feel insecure, not secure. Instead of showing that we trust them, we inadvertently signal that we don't believe in their capabilities. But hands-off is not a free-for-all either. Again, this is where balance comes in.

Our children need both our guidance and limits. We need to give them space to try and try again. And when the going gets rough, we need to reassure them but not criticize or diminish their attempts, successful or not.

► **Let children play,** by themselves, with each other and without adult interference. Set up a safe environment and children naturally will play, indoors or out.

For a toddler, there's no such thing as "just playing." Through play, children learn about who they are, how the world works, how to make decisions and figure things out, how to handle their emotions and get along with each

other, how to think and how to problem-solve. They also learn the foundations of number sense and of reading, of colors and shapes, rhythms and patterns. Play lays the track for their lifelong learning.

► **Stop praising.** Let kids have and enjoy their own successes. If you want motivated, persistent children who feel good about themselves and what they can do—who own both their accomplishments and their mistakes—don't praise them at every turn and every move they make.

Constant cheering actually brings kids down. It's another way of controlling your child: *I am happy for you when you do it this way, my way.*

If rewards come from adults through praise or gold stickers, children are left feeling that they may have made *you* happy, but it's not about them—it's about you. And in a new setting kids will look for the person they need to please rather than feeling motivated for themselves.

► **Let kids be bored.** Boredom can be good for children. It can be a time to think about what to do next, to let new information sink in and get absorbed.

Boredom can also be a warning—if it means that children are so overscheduled and directed in their activities and play, that when left to their own initiative,

they're completely stuck. Unstructured time isn't the same as boredom. It means giving kids the space to play on their own without adult direction—and they need lots of that at these ages.

► **Set boundaries.** They are the frame for freedom and creativity. In fact, kids can only learn about freedom in a context of having reasonable boundaries. They don't feel safe without them—they feel out of control.

Children feel taken care of when they know

when to stop—because you've told them. From ages two to five, kids test out who they are and their level of power. It's too scary to think they can do anything at all. They want to know that you will keep them safe, even if they battle you. The feeling that they are not on their own—that we are setting limits—gives them security and feelings of comfort.

► **Help kids handle the negative.** Parents like to say they want their kids to be happy. But actually, they want their child to grow up to be a kind, productive person who *is* happy. The mistake is in thinking that we can make children be happy—that if we fill their every need, they will be happy.

Kids know how to be happy. What they're not so good at is handling the hard times. This is where we, the parents, come in. Our job is to set them up to handle life more and more on their own, and to gradually let go.

Children who can navigate through life's hurdles become resilient, persistent and confident that "I can handle it." Handling life in all its ups and downs is what puts kids on the path towards happiness. ♦

—Adapted from the author's new book *"How Toddlers Thrive: What Parents Can Do Today to Plant the Seeds of Lifelong Success (Touchstone). See We Recommend on page 8.*



Kids learn about themselves and their world through play.

'Smartphones made our holiday more fun'

A reader writes:

You've talked a lot about digital devices taking up too much space in our personal lives, and I'm sure it's a good idea generally to have family rules such as "no smartphones and iPads at the dinner table" (*December 2013 Interchange*). But I'd suggest that sometimes it's OK to break the rules.

I grew up in a big family that's spread out all over the country and overseas as well—with a sister in the military and one of the cousins in the Peace Corps. The holidays that we used to spend together under one roof are impossible for us to arrange these days, and we miss the fun of being together.

For those family members who were able to be at our home on Thanksgiving Day, smartphones added greatly to the celebration. They helped bring us together again, over the dinner table, in ways that were unimaginable when I was a child.

To give you an idea of our experience, we received pictures of our sister with her two-week-old granddaughter—and the feast she was sharing with her daughter-in-law and son in Tennessee.

We got a hilarious text message from the Peace Corps volunteer.

Our brother, whose wife was in the hospital, checked in with good news, and we were able to say hello and wish them well.

One of the newlywed cousins, who had to work on Thanksgiving, surprised us with a text message that he would be arriving shortly with his wife and their dog for dessert and after-dinner games. That was a big hurrah.

And a missing cousin, who likes to argue about politics with his aunts, texted a comment he knew would make them groan.

When people are doing their own thing on a digital device, it's no fun for everyone else. What made this so special was that we could all share in the communications. Smartphones made our holiday more enjoyable. ♦

—P.J., San Francisco



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This is your column. We invite you to send questions about work and family life or tell us how you solved a problem that you think a lot of people face. Write: Dr. Susan Ginsberg, Work & Family Life, 305 Madison Avenue, Suite 1143, New York, NY 10165. E-mail: workfam@aol.com.

RESEARCH REVIEW

Language gap among kids is growing

A landmark study 20 years ago found that by age three, children whose parents were more educated and affluent had heard millions more words than kids with less educated parents had heard—and that this gave them a big advantage when they went to school.

Now a follow-up study led by Stanford University psychologist Anna Fernald has found that the language gap starts even earlier. She reported in the journal *Developmental Science* that more affluent kids at 18 months could identify pictures of simple words they knew (like dog and ball) much faster than kids from lower-income families. By age two, the more affluent children had learned 30 percent more words in the intervening months than the poorer kids.

Because oral language and vocabulary are so connected to reading comprehension, this means that the most disadvantaged children face real challenges once they start school and are learning to read.

"The gap just gets bigger and bigger, and it's very hard to undo," says Kris Perry, executive director of the First Five Years Fund, an advocate of early education for low-income children.

Currently there are federal, state and city initiatives aimed at providing pre-school for four-year-olds from low and moderate-income families, such as Head Start.

The National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University has reported that 28 percent of four-year-olds and only four percent of three-year-olds in the U.S. were enrolled in state-financed preschool programs.

Literacy experts have shown a strong connection between children's acquisition of early vocabulary and their later success in reading comprehension. In response, publishing companies are rushing to develop materials for teachers and parents.

"The worst thing that could come out of all this interest in vocabulary is flash cards with pictures making kids memorize a thousand words," says Dr. David Dickinson, professor of education at Vanderbilt University.

Early childhood educators and literacy experts agree on the importance of parents and caregivers having natural conversations with children—asking questions while reading books and helping kids identify words during playtime.

In Kentucky, the governor's Office of Early Childhood started a social media campaign last year with tips like "Talk about the weather with your child. Is it sunny or cloudy? Hot or cold?"

And when parents—from any income level—are very engaged verbally with their kids, those children do better in language development. ♦



The word 'Huh?' is understood around the world

Linguists at the Max Planck Institute in the Netherlands have proposed that the word "Huh?" is universally understood, across all countries and cultures.

They studied variations of the word (defined as a simple syllable with a central vowel and questioning intonation) in 10 languages including Dutch, Icelandic, Mandarin Chinese, West African Siwu and the Australian aboriginal Murrinh-Patha. They published their findings in the journal "PLoS One."

The researchers looked for other words and expressions that are used for the purpose of clarification during conversations. But only "Huh?" occurs across languages with widely varying phonetic patterns.

It may seem trivial to do research on "Huh?" but it's part of a movement among linguists to show that language is primarily grounded in social interaction—as opposed to the more dominant view that it is primarily a matter of in-born grammatical structure. ♦

Easy ways for all of us to boost our brain power

Are the reports true that exercising the brain can help preserve it and may even forestall mental decline, Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia?

Can you really teach an old brain new tricks? And if you can, what's the best way to do it? This is information we all need—not only for our older relatives and friends but for the rest of us too, whatever our age may be.

Stay engaged

Brain researchers can rarely prove cause and effect with a particular individual. Someone who never got Alzheimer's may just have had a healthier brain to begin with, for example. But, they emphasize, there's no harm in encouraging people to stay engaged.

Dr. Arthur Toga, a neurology professor at UCLA, points out that much of what we do on a daily basis—even having a conversation with someone—changes the circuitry of the brain.

"You're thinking, taking mental notes, trying to relate to other things," he says. "Conversation requires nerve cells in the brain to fire, and when they fire they're using energy and increasing blood flow to those regions. So exercising the brain is good." Even so, he cautions, that will not prevent a degenerative brain disease.

Work your brain harder

The best thing we can do is to keep our brain as sharp as possible for as long as possible, says Dr. William Jagust, a professor of neuroscience and public health at the University of California, Berkeley.

He agrees with the "cognitive reserve" theory that we can delay symptoms of mental decline by staying mentally active and by working our brains harder.

"We tend to focus on people at 75 in terms of dementia," says Dr. Jagust. "But there's more evidence

that what you do in your life, at 40 or 50, is more important. It's lifelong patterns of behavior."

So while it's not too late for older people to find ways to fire up their brains, it's not too early for younger people either. Researchers at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) suggest these possibilities.

5 things you can do

1 MEDITATIVE ACTIVITIES. Yoga, tai chi and "mindful meditation" demand intense concentration,

(the part that controls movement) is devoted to hand muscles. So any activity that involves manual manipulation can be a brain workout as well. Woodworking, pottery, needlework and playing a musical instrument, for example, all make demands on mental skills such as creativity, hand-eye coordination and spatial-temporal reasoning.

4 SEEK NOVELTY. New people, new places and new experiences can help you exercise "more geogra-

of different computer games vary widely.

Here are some of the positive brain-related changes associated with specific high-tech activities.

■ **TASK-SPECIFIC TRAINING** such as learning a foreign language boosts the formation of new brain cell connections. These gains are specific to the topic being studied and are not generally transferable.

■ **COMPLEX VIDEO GAMES** like *Road Tour* and *StarCraft* require quick thinking and reaction time, learning from past errors and the ability to mentally shift gears in response to changing circumstances.

■ **BRAIN FITNESS TRAINING** involves engagement in challenging mental tasks designed to improve short- and long-term memory, problem-solving, reasoning, mathematical calculations, language usage and visual-spatial processing. One type that's called "N-back training" may improve "fluid intelligence," the ability to solve novel problems, make connections and grasp underlying mechanisms.

■ **RECALL EXERCISES** are online tasks that are often timed and involve competition with others. Players exercise their memory to recall information they've learned. Some are featured on free Internet sites such as *Sporcle*. These exercises build general knowledge while also providing entertainment and online social interaction.

■ **SOCIAL MEDIA** such as *Facebook* may help older users build up working memories and learn to update their recollections by discarding prior knowledge that is no longer useful, according to a recent study presented at the International Neuropsychological Society.

Researchers have suggested that these activities can indeed be worthwhile—if they are used in moderation to replace more passive entertainment such as watching television. ♦



"But it's harder for me, because my legs are longer."

which is challenging to the brain. When you focus on your breathing, awareness and motor skills such as balance, you are strengthening your ability to ignore distractions, an important part of memory and thinking. "It's like doing pushups for the brain," says MGH research psychologist Maren Nyer, PhD.

2 BUILD PHYSICAL SKILLS. Everyday activities like dancing, ping pong or playing pitch-and-catch with a grandchild can strengthen the brain. Physical activities make demands on your attention, coordination and reflexes. They increase blood circulation and reduce stress, all of which is good for the brain.

3 USE YOUR HANDS. About 25 percent of the brain's motor cortex

phy" in your brain, says Dr. Toga. Find a new hobby. Join a book club. Travel. Do things that keep you stimulated, flexible and responsive to your surroundings.

5 SOCIALIZE. Meet and greet people at concerts, church and clubs. Social interactions involve so much of the brain. Most colleges offer lifelong learning classes and programs. Enrolling with a friend may motivate you to stick with it.

Go high tech too

Some computer games and mental exercises have been linked to brain gains. Studies have shown that real-time strategy video games encourage creative thinking and problem-solving. But the benefits

Parents are best model for safe, respectful behavior

By Ken Druck, PhD and
Matthew Koplowitz

To make our kids' world safer, we have to do many things: educate them about safety, make their schools safer, help them develop peaceful ways of dealing with conflict, teach them to manage their anger and, of course, be good role models.

An important first step is to give children the tools they need to handle their emotions constructively and to get along with the different people they will encounter on their life's journey.

Kids learn from us. We can show them how to be respectful to others. We can teach them to deal with their emotions in a healthy, safe way. And our own family interactions can become opportunities to see that conflict can be well handled.

Through our own example, we can teach children to:

► **Show compassion and respect.**

Let your kids see you as empathic and sensitive, not only at home but to all people, whether or not they're "like you." Don't exclude or ridicule people who are different, and don't let your children hear you judging other people harshly behind their backs.

► **Perform acts of kindness.**

Offer words of encouragement. Cushion a hard blow. Show compassion for someone's loss. And don't underestimate the message this sends to kids. Kindness and courtesy spread as they are passed on from one person to another.

► **Develop strength of character.**

Teach kids the virtues of honesty, self-discipline, dependability and how to build bridges rather than burn them. People with character strength know how to share power with others—and sharing power rarely results in violence.

► **Control their anger.** If you get into constant arguments and the

people around you are afraid of your explosiveness, it's time to bring down your boiling point. Decide what anger controls work for you and use them as often as necessary. Put some thought between your impulses and your actions.

► **Observe coping skills.**

Everyday upsets, serious problems and major crises all require coping skills. Show kids how to slow down and consider their options. Keep your cool. Some problems take time to resolve. Be patient and flexible.

► **Relax naturally.** Children need positive examples of how to let go of frustration and stress such as exercising, reading or talking with friends. Overeating, alcohol, drugs and obsessively using digital devices are not effective ways to reduce stress.

► **Lighten up.** Laughter gives our lives balance and perspective. When children only see the serious side of their parents, they miss out on a lot of fun. A lighthearted approach can break down walls and relieve tension. Let your kids see you using humor and fun appropriately, never to hurt anyone.

► **Take responsibility.** If you made a mistake that involves another person, say "I'm sorry"—if possible, with your child present. Show children that apologizing can help reestablish trust and good faith—that no one is above making a mistake and we are all accountable for our behavior.

► **Give second chances.** Forgiving someone doesn't mean you're okay with what the person did. It just means you're willing to let it go and let the other person off the hook. Hurt feelings take time to untangle and get over.



Setting a great example for community involvement.

► **Fight peacefully.** This is not an oxymoron. We can teach kids to stand up for themselves and for what they believe in—and to do it with self-control and respect. We can also show them how to communicate when they're feeling upset, how to argue peacefully, when to call for help and when it's best to walk away from a fight.

► **Handle family conflicts well.**

All families fight, and these fights can be a training ground for kids. When differences get worked out, children will see that family members can be angry and disagree, forgive each other and make up. Kids also learn that some anger is not okay—and that out-of-control anger is not helpful or healthy.

► **Pick their battles.**

Encourage kids to get involved if they can stop a situation from getting worse or if someone is being bullied and they can step forward to do or say something that will help. But be sure to emphasize to your child that he or she should *not* step in if a situation is dangerous, if weapons are involved and if the needed response is to call 911.

► **Talk about bigotry.** Show your children that there's a fine line between some forms of humor and bigotry. Let them know that cruel

ethnic and sexist jokes perpetuate old stereotypes—and that humor can be hurtful when it's tied to sarcasm, teasing, taunting or making light of a serious situation. Have conversations about hatred and discrimination. Provide a model for working out differences and getting along with others.

► **Broaden their world.** When kids grow up around people who look just like them (and many of our neighborhoods are still racially segregated), it's easier to be judgmental about others, to accept stereotypes and even to justify violent behavior. You can also broaden your children's world through the people you work with, your friendships, travel experiences—and by exposing kids to different cultures and ethnic groups.

► **Connect with their community.**

Let children know that you vote, serve on juries, volunteer, take part in community affairs and speak out for what you believe in. If you have school-age kids, get involved in school activities. Support the PTA. Our children learn to make a difference when they see us making a difference. ♦

—Adapted from the authors' book "How to Talk to Your Kids About School Violence" (Onoatopoeia).

Staying calm and confident when the pressure's on

It's an everyday fact of our modern work life that there's a lot to do and not enough time to do it—and that causes stress for many of us.

But stress isn't necessarily the result of one's workload, interruptions or the "traffic jam" of unfinished projects and over-extended commitments. Instead, it's when the demands of any situation exceed your perceived ability to control them, says business psychologist Sharon Melnick, PhD.

Perception is key

The more you *perceive* that you can control, the lower your stress, and that goes both ways. Stress is internal. It's not the beeping phone and your daily, daunting email inbox that makes you feel overwhelmed. It's that you are processing that situation as *Stop! Help! Go away! I'm overloaded!*

Learning to exercise control can take you from a survival mode to a success mode, Dr. Melnick says. And each time you do it—for example, by changing a thought, breathing more slowly, carefully choosing your words, or blocking time in your schedule—you are determining what's happen-

ing in your brain, your body and the situation itself. In other words, you are influencing the outcome.

Work better and faster

When you're feeling calm and confident, you can work faster, solve problems more easily and make fewer mistakes. You'll react more positively to others—and can motivate them to help you get your desired results.

Of course, some things are simply beyond your control: market trends, new technologies, reorganizations, blizzards, illnesses, and what's going on around the world. So focus your internal lens on those things you can control.

In Dr. Melnick's new book *Success Under Stress* (Amacom), she offers the following strategies



"Now I can give you my full attention."

to make your overload manageable, use time more efficiently and reduce your level of stress.

○ **CONTROL YOUR DAY**, or it will control you. Think of each moment as an investment of your time, energy and attention. Are you suddenly confronted with a new issue or problem? Pause. Think through your response.

With practice, you'll start to tip the scales toward doing more of what is truly relevant to your success and meaningful to you.

○ **PRIORITIZE AMONG PRIORITIES.** Are competing demands pulling you in different directions? Stress often results from operating above, below or outside the level your job requires.

Know (or clarify) your role and level in the organization. But don't get stuck in your job description either. Try to keep up with the changing requirements of an evolving role.

○ **PLAN FOR INTERRUPTIONS.** Most office workers are interrupted an average of about seven times an hour or 56 times a day. To help you figure out how to respond to continual interruptions, try using the acronym ACT, for *Accept, Curtail, Triage*.

It works like this. Have a thoughtful criteria to *Accept* an interruption—and when you do, give it your full attention. To *Curtail* involves arranging to talk later with the interrupter (or you may decide to hold some form of "office hours"). To *Triage*, allow for a brief interaction—a sign to the interrupter that you can't be disturbed at that moment.

○ **BECOME INTENTIONALLY UNAVAILABLE.** Schedule time to unplug, unwind and process your thoughts. Taking time for reflection will make you smarter. You'll be better able to come up with innovative ideas and be more prepared in meetings. People will respect you for only being available when you can give them your full attention.

○ **BE A SERIAL MONOFOCUSER.** If you think multi-tasking is the most effective way to tackle an overload of demands, think again. In reality, you are losing efficiency and focus each time you switch between topics and projects. And as you do that over the course of the day, it can take up to 30 percent longer to complete a task—and you'll make twice as many mistakes.

Granted, serial monofocus is easier said than done, but cognitive studies have shown that it really does work. Give your full attention to what you are doing in the moment—and then shift your attention to the next task. You will become more effective and faster at completing your work. What's more, you'll find it easier to relax and make good decisions in stressful moments. ♦

How to use your energy more skillfully

The energy you bring to your job is more important than the number of hours you work, says Tony Schwartz, CEO of The Energy Project and author of "Be Excellent at Anything." By managing your energy more skillfully, you can do more in less time. And when you renew your energy, he says, truly renew it. So, when you go back to work, you can really work. Here are a few more of Schwartz's suggestions:

Get enough sleep. Sleeping too little (less than six hours a night) is one of the best predictors of on-the-job burnout. A Harvard study estimated that sleep deprivation costs U.S. companies \$63.2 billion a year in lost productivity.

Make your vacation time truly restorative. An internal study by Ernst & Young found that for each additional 10 hours of vacation time employees took, their year-end performance ratings improved by 8 percent. People who took more frequent vacations were also significantly less likely to leave the firm.

Work in 90-minute intervals for maximum productivity. This is based on Florida State University studies of elite performers, but it works for the rest of us too.

Avoid exhaustion. Aim to completely recover from the energy you expended on a daily or, at most, weekly basis. ♦

What everyone needs to know about shingles

If you know anyone who has had shingles, you are aware of how very painful this illness can be.

Shingles is characterized by a blistering rash on the body (usually the torso). It is caused by the same herpes virus that causes chickenpox. And once you've had chickenpox, the virus stays dormant in your body and can re-emerge decades later to cause shingles.

But what if you've never had chickenpox? Can you catch shingles from someone?

Experts at the University of California, Berkeley "Wellness Letter" say that everyone needs to know the following about this illness.

➡ Almost all older adults have had chickenpox, even if they don't remember it.

➡ Chickenpox is highly contagious, which is why so many people get it when they are kids in school or preschool.

➡ The virus that causes chickenpox is not easily transmitted from shingles patients. So people who've never had chickenpox or the vaccine for it usually will not contract it if they are exposed to someone with shingles.

➡ Even so, it's very important to not expose a pregnant woman who's never had chickenpox (or the vaccine for it) to anyone who has either chickenpox or shingles, since the virus can be harmful to the fetus.

➡ The shingles vaccine has been approved for people 50 and over. It will prevent about half of all cases and reduce the severity and duration of shingles if it does occur.

➡ You can get the vaccine even if you've never had chickenpox. It will protect you from both chickenpox and shingles. ♦

Count calories at small local restaurants too

To eat healthier and with fewer calories, the conventional wisdom is to steer clear of the big chain restaurants, especially the fast-food places. But new studies by Tufts University food researchers have found that meals at smaller, local restaurants are typically just as fattening.

In other words, both chain and non-chain restaurants are contributing to the American obesity epidemic, says Susan B. Roberts, PhD, of the Tufts Energy Metabolism Lab.

These findings come at a time when federal rules are requiring chains with 20 or more locations to post calorie content information. The rules do not affect the local establishments tested in the Tufts study, which was reported in the journal *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

The Tufts research team analyzed 157 full meals of popular food choices in the most common types of restaurant: Mexican, American, Chinese, Italian, Japanese, Thai, Indian, Greek and Vietnamese. Meal items

were chosen based on customer rankings of their favorite foods and from web searches of popular dishes at those restaurants.

"On average, the meals studied contained 1,327 calories, which significantly exceeds the estimated energy needs of an individual adult at a single meal," says Dr.

searcher Lorien Urban, PhD.

Restaurant categories delivering the most average calories per meal were Italian (1,866), American (1,494) and Chinese (1,474). The lowest averages were from meals at Vietnamese (922) and Japanese (1,027) restaurants.

Here are some suggestions to help you avoid overloading on calories in restaurants that don't post data:

➡ **Assume that a healthy portion** is about half of what you're being served. Ask your server to box up half or most of your meal before the dish is served. Or ask for a carry-out box and do it yourself.

➡ **Micromanage your order.** Ask for sauces, dressings and other high-calorie elements on the side.

➡ **Watch the bread.** Yes, restaurant breads taste great. So it can be easy to eat two or three rolls while you're waiting for your entree. Control the urge. Better yet, tell your waiter, "Hold the bread." ♦



Roberts. "Meals from all restaurant types provided substantially more energy than is needed for weight maintenance."

Eating only 100 extra calories per day can lead to a weight gain of 6 to 15 pounds a year, says Tufts energy metabolism re-

Did you know that...

Cutting calories can be as easy as 1, 2, 3.

Various calorie-cutting strategies were tested at Cornell University food labs and also in a Dutch study. Here's what works:

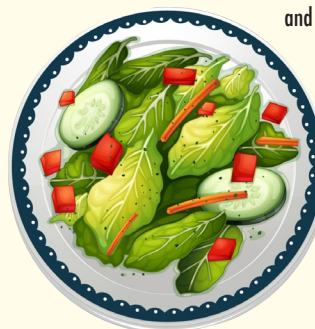
- (1) Eat a smaller treat. Smaller portions were found to be equally satisfying.
- (2) Use smaller utensils—a teaspoon rather than a tablespoon, especially if you tend to eat while distracted. People who took smaller sips of soup consumed 30 percent less and were just as satisfied as people who ate more, using a large spoon.
- (3) Don't shop for food on an empty stomach. In one study, hungry shoppers bought 31 percent more high-calorie foods, including more meat and snacks, compared to shoppers who were not hungry.

Weight lost from fasting tends to come right back. Experts explain: it's mostly water loss. They also suggest that fasting or going on an extreme liquid diet to "cleanse the body of toxins" isn't necessary—and would definitely be something you'd

want to talk about first with a health professional. The point is: your digestive system, kidneys, liver and lungs are very efficient when it comes to ridding the body of toxins.

Exercise is key to bone health. A nutrient-rich diet is important for healthy bones and muscle strength—and so is physical activity that includes weight-bearing exercise. Weight-bearing activities include walking, jogging and dancing.

Vegetables make a meal more inviting. In another Cornell food labs study, participants were served chicken, steak and pasta meals—with and without vegetables. In evaluations, the meals that included a vegetable dish were described as more "tasty" and more "loving." And the food preparers got extra points for being "thoughtful" and "attentive." ♦



New guide to understanding and raising a toddler

Tovah Klein, PhD, lives in what she calls “toddlerdom.” She directs the Barnard College Center for Toddler Development in New York City, teaches psychology at Barnard and advises on the TV program “Sesame Street.” And whether she’s watching, researching or interacting directly with young children, she asks herself over and over: “What are they doing and why are they doing it?”

The answers to these key questions form the basis of her forthcoming, wonderful book *How Toddlers Thrive: What parents can do to plant the seeds of lifelong success*. If you have a toddler in your

life—or may have one soon—this is the book for you.

With wisdom, sensitivity and humor, Dr. Klein describes the push-pull of children from two to five: their needs to push out into the world and do things by themselves and, at the same time, to pull back to the comfort of the familiar and to be reassured of your secure presence (*see Front page article*).

She takes the mystery out of seemingly conflicting advice: for example, that structures and rou-

tines may seem rigid but, in fact, they will help develop resilience and free up your child to better handle transitions and change.

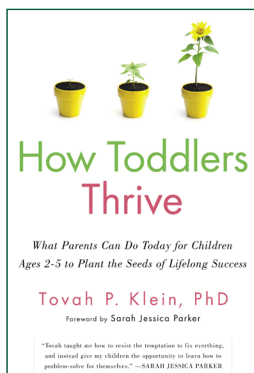
Dr. Klein talks about what’s happening to young kids’ brains and bodies, how they learn best, why it’s important to see the world through their eyes, setting limits, and how to provide a safe, inviting environment for play.

You’ll also learn to troubleshoot the daily challenges all parents face with their toddlers: sleep-

ing, eating, playing with peers, tantrums and more.

“Parenting is not an occasional role—it is an always role,” Dr. Klein writes in a wise, supportive “final note” on raising children. “To be there, sitting back, while being available, letting them go, yet being at the ready for comfort, not interfering but not forgetting what they need. It is likely the hardest role you will ever have, but at the same time, the most pleasurable and deeply meaningful one as well.”

How Toddlers Thrive (Touchstone) will be available next month in bookstores, online and in a Kindle edition. ♦



Work & Family Life provides information and practical solutions to a wide range of family, job, and health issues. Our purpose is to help our readers reduce their stress and find pleasure and satisfaction in their many roles at work, at home, and in their communities.

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