Wish List for the New Year

Wishing you...

Enough happiness to keep you sweet,
Enough trials to keep you strong,
Enough sorrow to keep you human,
Enough hope to keep you happy,
Enough failure to keep you humble,
Enough success to keep you eager,
Enough friends to give you comfort,
Enough wealth to meet your needs,
Enough enthusiasm to look forward,
Enough faith to banish depression,
Enough determination to make each day a better day than yesterday!

Source: Author Unknown

Best Wishes for 2006!!
Q: I am really concerned with expired usage dates (sell by dates). I see a lot of food pantries and "dented can stores" giving or selling these items. How long after these dates are the food still good? I am worried that anything expired is unsafe to use.

A: Expiration dates don't mean as much as many people think they do. Most food is still edible after the expiration date but may not be very tasty. In fact, stores are not legally required to remove food from their shelves once the expiration date has passed. The dates are merely supposed to be "advisory" in nature. The only federally required expiration dating is for infant formula and baby foods, of which the laws vary from state to state. Remember that these expired usage dates are the manufacturer's recommendations for MAXIMUM freshness, taste and nutrient value. Several vendors have indicated that their products are edible long beyond the published recommendation dates. For example, mayonnaise is still good for 2 to 3 months from "sell by" date. After this time, color or flavor may be affected, but the product is still generally safe to consume.

Also it is important to note the differences between the following:

**“SELL BY”**: the manufacturer's way to tell grocers when to remove this product from their shelves; usually there is some leeway for usage at home, as milk usually stays good for a week past the sell by date.

**“BEST IF USED BY”**: flavor or quality of the food is best by this date, but still edible after this date has passed; it is not a purchase-by or safety date.

**“USE BY”**: the manufacturer will no longer guarantee the product's quality after this date.

Naturally, use common sense. Discard any food product exhibiting changed color, odor, or taste. Try to keep food items at their ideal storage temperature (i.e. in a cool, dry environment where light will not interfere). Storage temperature is an important deciding factor of a product's shelf life. Even a 15-degree change reduces expected shelf life by 50%.

Q: Does “freezer burn” make food unsafe?

A: Freezer burn is a food quality issue, not a food safety issue. It appears as grayish-brown leathery spots on frozen food. It occurs when air reaches the food’s surface and dries out the product. This can happen when food is not securely wrapped in air-tight packaging. Color changes result from chemical changes in the food's pigment. Although undesirable, freezer burn does not make the food unsafe. It merely causes dry spots in foods. Cut away these areas either before or after cooking the food. When freezing food in plastic bags, push all the air out before sealing.
UPCOMING EVENTS

Cornell Cooperative Extension Herkimer, Madison and Oneida Counties presents:

“Military Kids in Our Own Backyard”

This workshop, facilitated by Kelly Sherman, 4-H Youth Development Educator in Jefferson County and State 4-H Military Liaison, is designed especially for youth workers, educators, counselors and community service agency staff who may work with military families. The workshop will offer an insight into military culture and the deployment cycle; and suggest ways to best provide for, understand the needs of, and support military kids and their families through pre-existing community resources. The workshop will involve hands-on activities, power point presentations and ample time for Q&A and discussion.

WHEN: .............................................................. Monday, January 9, 2006
WHERE: ........................................................... Herkimer BOCES, 352 Gros Blvd, Herkimer
TIME: ............................................................... 9:30 – 11:30 AM
TO REGISTER .................................................. call CCE at 315.866.7920

Sponsored By: Cornell Cooperative Extension of Herkimer, Madison, and Oneida Counties.
“Connecting with Kids” is supported by a grant from the Slocum-Dickson Foundation.
All “Connecting With Kids” Workshops are free and open to the public.

FROM THE HOLIDAY BOOK TREE

We would like to extend a heartfelt “thanks” to all who donated books to our Holiday Book Tree benefiting the Even Start Family Literacy Program. Over 125 books were collected and will be put to good use.

WINTER WEATHER OFFICE CLOSING POLICY

Please note that our office will close if the Herkimer County offices close due to inclement weather. Please listen to local radio and TV stations for closings. If in doubt, call our office at 866.7920.
Soups are a great “warmer-upper” that can make good use of leftovers. Here are a few ideas:

**Leftover Mashed Potato Soup**

2 tablespoons oil  
1/2 cup minced onion  
1 small rib of celery including the leaves, minced  
1 carrot, grated coarsely  
2 cups unsalted chicken broth or stock (fresh or canned)  
2-1/2 cups leftover mashed potatoes  
1/3 cup fresh parsley, minced or 1-2 Tablespoons dried parsley flakes

In a large saucepan, sauté the onion, celery and carrots in oil over moderately low heat for about 1 minute, stirring constantly. Stir in the broth or stock and bring to a boil.

Break potatoes up with a fork. Using a wire whisk, add potatoes a half cup at a time. Continue whisking until smooth, reduce to a simmer and add parsley.

**Yield:** 12 servings; serving size 1/2 cup, (70 calories, 3 grams fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 135 mg sodium)

**Cream of Broccoli Soup**

1-10 ounce package frozen chopped broccoli, thawed and drained  
1/2 small onion  
dash garlic powder  
2 tablespoons flour  
1-1/2 cups chicken broth - homemade* or canned  
1-2 cups fat-free milk

Place broccoli, onion, garlic powder, flour and chicken broth in blender container. Process until almost smooth. Pour into saucepan and add milk. Stir often until soup comes to a boil. Reduce heat to low and simmer 5-10 minutes to cook onion.

**Yield:** 8 servings; serving size 1/2 cup (45 calories, 0 grams fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 50 mg sodium)

**Soup Tips**

- Skim off fat after soup cools and before serving.
- Soup is best one day old when its flavor is intensified and its seasoning is higher than on the day which it is cooked.
- A soup or stew may be thickened with instant potato flakes. Stir in and gently simmer until thickened.
- To avoid starchy soups: cook noodles or pasta separately and put into soup bowls first. Then pour hot soup over pasta. When storing, store pasta separately.
- Save leftover vegetables and meat and put them in a plastic container in freezer. When it gets full you have a “ready to heat” soup.
- Remember to cool soups quickly. Divide soup into shallow pans and refrigerate. Use within 1-2 days or freeze for later use.

*For homemade chicken broth:

Simmer chicken bones with celery, onion, carrots (if desired) and water for at least one hour, covered. Refrigerate overnight. Skim off any hardened fat. Remove bones. Strain if desired. Freeze if you do not plan to use within a day.

**Shared by:** Joan Clanton, Nutrition Staff
Even Start wishes you a Happy New Year! Ring in 2006 with 10 easy ways to include reading every day with your children from Marie Christine Ulmen and the November 2005 “Young Children” magazine.

1) **Read and reread your child’s favorite books.** On those nights when you just can’t read the same story again, ask your child to read the story to you!

2) **Read comic books to your child.** Comics are coming back. They are inexpensive, and publishers have started to print child-friendly versions.

3) **Subscribe to a child’s magazine.** Many magazines are inexpensive, and children love to get mail of their own.

4) **Let your child be the story teller.** Record your child telling their favorite story and play it back for them over and over.

5) **Let your child read to you.** Keep a basket of books in the car and listen to your child read a good story while you drive.

6) **Save and recycle junk mail.** Ask your child to hunt for and circle letters to make their name. Provide scissors and let children cut out and label pictures.

7) **Leave closed captioning on while watching television.** Your child can see relationships between spoken and written words.

8) **Cook with your children.** Use monthly holidays to introduce new words and foods. Let them help you prepare the food by measuring and chopping. Then, let them help you clean up.

9) **Find some giant sunglasses and play “I Spy”**. These glasses can be found in dollar stores or party stores. It’s so much fun to spy objects in the car, house, or even the grocery store. You can add to this game by asking questions such as where does cheese come from? Or what letter does carrot start with?

10) **Talk to your child.** Talk while you’re driving. Talk while you’re shopping. Talk while you’re cleaning, walking the dog or waiting in the doctor’s office. Talk, talk and talk some more.

Helping a child learn to read includes more than opening books. Begin by picking an idea from the list and include it in your day. Both you and your child will be surprised at what can be accomplished!

*Shared by: Becky Benson, Even Start Program Educator*
GETTING ORGANIZED

Time flies. For many people it seems there are never enough hours in the day to do what they want to get done.

So if you want to get certain things done, on schedule, you have just got to get organized.

Getting organized is easy to say; the barriers are difficult to overcome. The barriers are lack of a plan, clutter, and procrastination.

Start by getting organized. Figure out what you really want to get done. Look at your own needs for dressing, grooming, eating, and sleeping. Look at what you must do for your children, their personal needs and school needs such as getting to school with a lunch. Getting younger children to child care takes time and energy. And every home needs attention for cleaning and maintenance, meal planning, and food preparation.

Make a plan. You have to get to work on time, the children have to get to school on time, and everybody has to have meals and clothing. Some of these chores you can do on your schedule, others have to be done on someone else’s schedule. You have to do some of the job, but you also in turn to other family members to take over chores.

Family members need to talk and share to plan what each member can do and when they can do it. Consider everything as new and be creative. There are no absolute rules. If you are a morning person, and your spouse is an evening person, plan the chores for the best time for each of you.

Create a family routine that includes fun time and family time. Fit the household chores into the routine where they fit best. But when the chores are in a routine, they can get done without becoming a scheduling problem.

Try to get the clutter out of your life. Clutter in the kitchen makes it more difficult to prepare meals. Clutter in school children’s area makes it more difficult for them to study and learn. You want to have your favorite things around you, but if you have to clear off the couch before you can sit down to talk to the children, maybe the space can be rearranged.

Procrastination is an attitude and a lifestyle. It isn't easy to overcome. Procrastination often keeps us from getting started on what needs to be done. It may be that the motto for procrastinators should be 'just do it!'

Source: Connie Kratzer, Extension Specialist, Family and Consumer Science, Mary Ann H. Johnson, ARE Communications, Virginia Tech as printed in Chautauqua Living 10/05
2005 brought you some of the best health information of all time. First the Dietary Guidelines for Americans came out early in the year and then in the spring we saw MyPyramid - a personalized version of the government's Food Guide Pyramid system. Now is an important time to take heed of their advice so you will eat better and be more physically active for better health.

Here you will find 24 top resolutions for 2006. You can use 2 every month to make a big difference in your health. For more information visit MyPyramid.gov and learn how you can eat better and exercise more!

1. **Exercise** 30 minutes or more most days of the week. Find ways to stay motivated with physical activity and keep it enjoyable.

2. Be more **active** around the house. Cleaning, cooking and gardening all burn twice the calories as sitting.

3. **Sit less.** Instead of watching TV, clean the house and run errands. Instead of watching the kids play sports, walk for half of their playing time. Instead of sitting for lunch, walk the mall or a park.

4. **Cook** more and eat out less.

5. **Find eating out choices** that are lower in calories and fat. Where can you get more low-fat items like: soups, salads, beans and rice, fish, pasta, etc?

6. Learn to cook and eat with **less fat.**

7. Get 4.5 cups of **fruits and vegetables** each day.

8. Eat **beans** at least 3 times per week.

9. Eat **fish** twice per week.

10. Switch to low-fat or **non-fat dairy products.**

11. If you drink cappuccinos or lattes, ask for them with **fat-free** (skim) milk.

12. Become aware of the **calories** you are eating: -especially in treats and snacks.

13. For **everything** you eat, find a way to make the portion a little smaller or to choose a more low-cal option.

14. Include **strength training** in your schedule a couple of times a week. This could mean lifting weights at the gym, taking a class, working with resistance bands or Pilates.

15. Switch from refined **grains** to whole grains.

16. Eat a healthy **breakfast** every day.

17. Reduce the amount of **sugary items** that you eat. You will crave sweets less if you eat them less.

18. Drink more **water** instead of soda and other sugary drinks.

19. Take **healthful snacks** with you instead of making poor spontaneous choices when you are hungry. Fruit is always the best snack choice.

20. Get more **sleep.**

21. Wash your **hands** more frequently.

22. Control the consumption of **alcoholic beverages** you consume. Learn to drink one or two and then switch to something else that is non-alcoholic.

23. Concentrate on eating more **high-fiber**, low-cal foods instead of refined foods that are high in calories and low in nutrients.

24. Plan active **vacations** and weekends for your family or loved ones.

*Source: Communicating Food for Health, 11/05*
THE PERFECT SWEATER

When choosing a sweater, price is just one consideration.

✓ **Construction.** Harder, tighter yarns are more durable than soft, loose ones, which tend to stretch easily. That's why a fisherman's sweater is more suited to rugged, outdoor activity and a cashmere sweater is happier in the office.

✓ **Care requirements.** Sweaters can be machine-washable, hand wash-only or dry clean-only. Read the care label before you buy so there are no surprises later on! Choose care styles that match your lifestyle.

✓ **Trim.** Special trims, such as suede, leather or beads may influence the care requirements. Check the store's return policy before purchasing in case the trim creates maintenance problems.

Cleaning

Read and follow the care label instructions:

✓ **Machine washing.** When in doubt about water temperature, choose a cold water wash. Use a detergent formulated for delicates.

✓ **Hand washing.** Gently swish the sweater around in the wash. Do not rub or wring. Rinse thoroughly, then roll the sweater in a towel and press gently to remove excess moisture. Some washers, though, do have hand wash cycles.

✓ **Drying.** Hand wash-only sweaters should be dried flat. Machine-washable sweaters can sometimes be dried in the dryer on low heat. Check the care label to be sure.

✓ **Blocking.** Soft, hand wash-only sweaters may lose their shape during washing. To restore them, trace the outline of the sweater onto a piece of brown or craft paper before cleaning. Use it as a pattern to block the sweater to its original size and shape.

✓ **Dry cleaning.** In-dryer cleaning kits can be used to remove odors and light soil. For stains and heavy soil, take dry clean-only sweaters to a professional drycleaner.

**Daily Care**

Sweaters should be folded for storage. Hanging a sweater can stretch it out of shape. And be careful what jewelry you wear with your sweater. Some knits are delicate and easily snagged.

Source: Cleaning Matters, The Soap and Detergent Association newsletter, Nov/Dec 2005
New research shows dust bacteria can trigger asthma and asthma-related symptoms

New research is helping scientists to better understand the relationship between house dust and asthma. Studies supported by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) show that bacteria lurking in household dust produce chemicals that may trigger asthma and asthma-related symptoms such as wheezing.

These chemicals, called endotoxins, exist in the cell walls of bacteria. When bacteria rupture or disintegrate, the endotoxins that are released can cause inflammation of the airways.

Asthma Patrol

The studies found that households with higher endotoxin concentrations experienced higher prevalence of respiratory symptoms. Although dust samples from kitchen and living room floors had higher levels of endotoxins than those collected from bedrooms, researchers found that the health impact was greater in the bedroom where factors such as duration and timing of the exposure come into play.

Dust Control

Understanding the impact of household endotoxins on human health and knowing what triggers asthma will lead to new insight into how to prevent and treat asthma. By controlling the amount of dust in the bedroom, you can help reduce the impact of this serious asthma trigger. Here are some tips:

- Wash sheets weekly; wash blankets, mattress pads, bedspreads and comforters at least monthly.
- Use special dust mite-proof covers, sometimes called "allergy impermeable" covers, to help keep dust from going through pillows and mattresses. Wipe covers with a damp cloth every week. If you don't use covers, wash pillows at least four times a year, and replace them every year.
- Use smooth blinds or washable curtains. Wipe blinds weekly with a clean, damp cloth. Wash curtains monthly.
- Don't use carpet in the bedroom. Use linoleum, vinyl or wood flooring and washable area rugs. Wash rugs once a week.
- Dust furniture weekly, using a dusting product or a special cloth that attracts dust (a dry cloth just spreads dust around).
- Vacuum and wet mop floors weekly.

Web Resource: Check out the Soap and Detergent Association’s educational materials on Cleaning to Control Allergies and Asthma at www.cleaning101.com/asthma.

Source: Cleaning Matters, The Soap and Detergent Association newsletter, Nov/Dec 2005
WHEN INCOME DECREASES BUT THE BILLS KEEP COMING...

Don't ignore the situation…contact creditors NOW.

Explain your circumstances before you become delinquent. Creditors are much more willing to work with you if they are forewarned that there are problems. If you’re already 90 days late, they'll probably turn the account over to their collections department.

Contacting creditors early can help minimize the damage:

$ The creditor may eliminate late charges.
$ They may not report your delinquency to credit reporting agencies.
$ You may have to pay only interest charges for a short period of time.
$ You may be able to prevent utilities being cut off.
$ They may not turn your account over to a collection agency.
$ They may forego current payments if you agree to add payments to the end of your loan (e.g. auto loans).

While the initial contact can be by telephone, it may be best to contact your creditors in writing. A letter is recommended because:

$ You have a chance to think things through without the creditor interrupting or redirecting you.
$ Both you and your creditor will have a written record of your proposal.
$ You may avoid being intimidated by the creditor.

When writing your letter, determine:

- How much take-home income can you count on?
- Your current fixed expenses? (housing, car payment, etc)
- Your current variable expenses? (food, clothing, recreation, contributions, etc.)
- How long will your income be reduced?
- Suggest to the creditor what you think is a reasonable amount - DON'T promise more than you can pay!

All debts are important, but some impact your family more than others. Make sure you contact higher priority creditors first. Utility bills are more critical than department store charge accounts, for example.

Priority List:
1. Mortgage/rent
2. Auto loan
3. Insurance (auto, medical)
4. Utilities
5. Loans (banks, finance companies, student loans)
6. Credit cards (bank cards, retail cards)
7. Miscellaneous bills

After you’ve written, make sure you have a file copy of each letter and indicate the date you mailed it.

Keep a copy of your overall plan near the phone. If creditors call, refer to your other obligations and stick to your proposal if at all possible. Be honest and courteous but don't promise to increase any payments if it means reducing what you promised to another creditor.

Source: Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Central NY
KEEPING WARM AND SAFE

Safely heating your home and being aware of the potential dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning go hand-in-hand. With the concerns over the high costs of heating fuel this year people are looking to alternative sources for heating their homes.

There is a renewed interest in using wood, coal and kerosene as energy sources. No matter which energy source is used they all require proper ventilation. Even if the manufacture promotes “efficient burning and no outside ventilation required”, the potential for carbon monoxide exposure is possible.

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that comes from incomplete burning of fuel. It is one the leading cause of poisoning deaths in the United States.

The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are: headache, vomiting, sleepiness, nausea, dizziness, trouble breathing.

If you even think you are being exposed to carbon monoxide poisoning call your Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

Follow these safety tips to keeping warm and safe this winter.

♫ Properly install at least one carbon monoxide detector in or near the sleeping area.
♫ Have your furnace, fireplace or alternative heating source inspected by a heating professional.
♫ Never use your stove or oven to heat your home.

For more information on safety questions call your energy provider or local Fire Department.

TAX TIME IS APPROACHING

♫ If you think you may need a tax preparer, services can vary greatly in accuracy and cost to you. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) publishes a free brochure available to consumers titled “Income Tax Preparation Services.” Requests for this brochure should be sent to: Office of the Secretary, FTC, 6th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, D.C., 20580. This publication will help you find a tax preparer best suited to your needs.

♫ Organizing your paperwork can be a pain, but doing this in advance can make tax season less confusing. Keep ONE folder of documents needed to complete your tax return (include: W-2’s, mortgage interest statements, etc).

♫ Go through your checkbook and locate any charitable donations that you have made in the past year (Cancer Society, etc).

♫ Gather your receipts for tax deductible expenses (business, moving, medical costs) and the total you spent for the past year.

♫ What you don’t know can hurt you. Visiting the IRS website for the latest updates will assist you in knowing what questions to ask concerning your eligibility for tax breaks and benefits. The web address is: www.irs.gov.

♫ If your annual tax preparation activities include plowing through piles of receipts, bank statements, medical records and other documents. “Do You Know Your Valuable Papers?” can be your guide to deciding what to throw, what to keep and where to keep it. To obtain a copy simply visit the website, www.cccscny.org, click on “Keep or Toss” and be on your way to organizing the paper chaos in your life. If you do not have access to the Internet you can call 1-800-479-6026.

Source: Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Central NY
HELPING KIDS BEAT CABIN FEVER

Winter weather often means that children spend more time indoors. Without fresh air and opportunities for vigorous outdoor play, kids can get that cooped-up, bored, restless feeling we call "cabin fever." Stuck indoors, too many children spend long hours watching television or playing video games, neither of which help them release excess energy or use their time creatively. Children with cabin fever may behave in unacceptable ways: whining, fighting with siblings, acting out to get attention or roughhousing to release tension. Here are some ideas for reducing cabin fever and curing the "I'm bored. There's nothing to do" blues.

1. Provide opportunities for vigorous physical activity. Bundle up children for cold weather and let them play outside for short periods of time. When that isn't possible, allow them to play actively indoors. Parents and children can dance or practice aerobics together. Parents may designate a space in the house where it is OK to wrestle and roughhouse. Furnish the space with old rugs and cushions and set limits on how rough kids can get. When you're changing the sheets on a bed (and you're in no particular rush), take a few minutes to play with your child. Wrap them up like a mummy or, with another adult, swing them in the blanket or sheet. Drape the sheet over furniture and pretend it is a cave to explore.

2. Drop everything when it snows. Unless it's bitterly cold outside, let kids play in the snow. They can build snowmen or snow forts, make snow angels, go sledding and throw snowballs (at safe targets only, please).

3. Ice-skating is a great winter sport, providing lots of challenge and vigorous exercise. Many rinks are open to the public. Bowling is a terrific indoor activity that offers friendly, fun-filled competition.

4. Put together a creative arts and crafts kit. Get a good-sized storage box and fill it with some or all of the following items:

- Crayons
- Construction paper
- Washable markers
- Felt and fabric remnants
- Pencils/pens
- Ribbon bric-a-brac
- Scissors
- Yarn or string
- Hole punch
- Beads and buttons
- White glue/glue stick
- Pipe cleaners
- Tape
- Plastic drinking straws
- Glitter
- Lunch bags
- Tempera paints
- Wiggle eyes
- Paint brushes
- Popsicle sticks

Bring the kit out when your child is looking for something to do or when you want to do something interesting with him.

5. Help children start a hobby. They may want to build model cars or rockets. They may want to start a card, comic book, coin or stamp collection. Or they may want to learn a skill, like playing the guitar or dancing. Hobbies can sustain children's interest in activities that foster learning, creativity and a sense of competence.

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HELPING CHILDREN BEAT CABIN FEVER (continued from page 12)

6. Winter is a good time to see those places you usually don’t think about on warm, sunny days. Visit the library, local historical sites, a museum, art galleries, a university and other places of interest. Check out other community resources like indoor play/amusement centers, craft centers, indoor pools, school recreation programs and church activities.

7. Many children’s libraries host a variety of craft, science, reading and play activities. Kids can often enroll in reading enrichment programs and receive stickers, prizes or certificates for reading a number of books.

8. Kids have a choice of many extracurricular activities like PAL or youth league athletics, after-school recreation, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and 4-H Clubs. Let them join a team or club, but help them balance commitments to the team or club with schoolwork and free play.

9. Turn off the television and use the time for family games and activities. Play board games together or put together family photo albums. Share your family’s history and your own childhood experiences with your children.

10. Let children participate in household tasks of their choice. Children who never seemed anxious to do household chores before may be willing to help out when they have nothing better to do. Cooking with kids is a great family activity. Teach kids how to bake and decorate a cake. Spend a chilly, rainy Saturday afternoon preparing meals together. You’ll not only have fun doing something constructive, you’ll find that the workweek is less hectic because of the meals you prepared in advance.

Your family doesn’t have to be stricken with the winter doldrums. A little imagination and a lot of flexibility are all that’s needed to pass the time until spring. By encouraging children to pursue creative alternatives to television and expecting a degree of indoor activity and messiness, parents can reduce their children’s cabin fever.

Source: Caring for Kids, January 2005

HOW Colds ARE SPREAD

Children between the ages of two and six get colds twice as often as nine-year-olds, and nine-year-olds get colds twice as often as twelve-year-olds.

Although we don’t know why, the majority of colds occur during the winter. One possible reason may be that since we spend more time indoors during the cold-weather months, there’s more opportunity for close contact between people and easy transmission of a virus.

Most cold viruses are spread either by direct contact or by droplet spray from coughing or sneezing. A person can contract a cold if they have physical contact with a cold sufferer. A person can also contract the cold virus by touching a contaminated surface and then rubbing their eyes or touching their nose. For example, if you wipe your sniffling child’s nose and then rub your eyes, you may transmit the virus to yourself.

Although there is no surefire way to prevent colds, there is something you can do to minimize the chances of catching one: All family members should wash their hands frequently.

Source: The American Academy of Pediatrics
WHY CHILDREN LIE

Children exaggerate, twist the truth, hide the facts, manufacture stories and deny the obvious. They do not need instruction or encouragement to lie. Typically the behavior is a normal part of their development. Lying is very common among preschool children, who still have a rich fantasy life and can’t yet, distinguish between right and wrong. How lying should be handled often depends on the age of the child, the specific situation, and the established family rules about lying.

Parents naturally get angry when their children lie. Lies undermine trust and they make us worry about defects in our child’s character. It is important to encourage your child to tell the truth and provide them with a good role model by telling the truth yourself.

Why Children Lie

In his book, "Parents Under Siege," James Garbarino, Ph.D., states the following:

"As children develop the intellectual competence to recognize the difference between what is reality and what is fantasy, the world of truth telling changes for them and for us as parents. At some point, we as children realize that our parents are not all-knowing. It dawns on us fairly early that it is possible to influence what our parents know about our actions and thoughts. We become aware that it is possible to conceal something and get away with it, or at least try.

As we get into our teens, we learn that information is power, and that to successfully conceal information makes us feel powerful. It may make us feel guilty, or upset, but the sense of power behind a successful lie is tangible. It gives us a sense of control over the environment and the people in it. It also gives a sense of influence over our fate, as in 'If I don’t reveal the truth of my wrongdoing, I will not be punished' kind of thinking. Lying and truth telling have powerful consequences and the drive to gain control of the consequence by hiding the truth is something that manifests early in life."

Garbarino goes on to describe five particular motivations to lie or tell the truth that have come about from research in recent decades. These include:

1. to avoid punishment
2. to keep a game going
3. to keep a promise (e.g., "this will be our secret")
4. to gain something personally, and
5. to avoid being embarrassed.

"The bottom line," says Garbarino, "is that children will lie about events when they have sufficient reason to gain something from lying." As mentioned earlier, lying at the preschool age is quite common. However, at this age it is important to not confuse exaggeration with lying. Young children often exaggerate. Embellished stories are more a sign of a creative imagination than of a person who does not tell the truth. It becomes a problem only if you - or your child - can no longer distinguish truth from fantasy.

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WHY CHILDREN LIE (continued from page 14)

A preschooler might also lie to avoid punishment. For example, they may have broken something while playing and decided that lying was a less serious offense than what they actually did. It's up to us as parents to teach children that it's more important to "fess-up" and that lying is the graver misdeed. It's equally important to stay even-tempered and calm when a child confesses so they will be less afraid to tell the truth the next time.

During the school-age years, when a child lies, they know they are being deceitful. Many pressures can cause children of this age to lie. They may lie because they are afraid of disappointing their parents. They may lie when they are under significant stress to meet impossible demands.

In the American Academy of Pediatrics book, "Caring for Your School-Age Child," the authors remind us that, "lying shows that a child is aware that they have done something wrong. By attempting to protect themselves from parental disappointment and disapproval, they are demonstrating that their conscience is working. Parents who overreact and become extremely negative may push their child into a position of having to lie again and again to protect themselves."

How To Deal With Children's Lying

Colorado State University Cooperative Extension has some good suggestions as to how to deal with children's lying:

- Combine kindness with directness. It will get you further than demanding confession, trapping, playing detective or a long lecture. Keep it simple and state the fact. For example, say, "The book on your desk is overdue," or "That doesn't sound like the truth to me." In time, children can learn to work with unpleasant truths. They can learn to work with other people and solve problems with honesty, kindness and respect.

- Be prepared for unpleasant truths and how to help a child understand their feelings. Being understood is soothing to a child. It helps them get past their angry feelings and on to solutions. Balancing honesty with kindness and avoiding deliberate deception is an art to be learned. Be a positive role model for your child.

- We may become upset when we discover a child is lying. We need to take some time to sort out our feelings. Do this to avoid overreacting or making the fear even greater. Find a quiet space, breathe deeply and try to see the situation from the child's viewpoint. Remember the behavior is bad, not the child.

- Do not be too severe or frequent in giving punishment. Children may lie to protect themselves from this punishment, which can then become a vicious cycle.

- As the adult role model, always try to be truthful.

Source: Bonnie-Jo Westendorj, Extension Educator, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia County, "The News", as seen in Caring for Kids April 2005, CCE Chautauqua County
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