



# Work & Family Matters

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1.877.682.2472

UAW-Chrysler Family Resource & Referral Program

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## Tips for Parents Who Are Co-Parenting

School conferences, Open House, sporting events, and the need to attend any function for your child or children can be very stressful for separated or divorced parents.

Here are some tips to help make it a little easier for both of you AND the child too!



### Ways to Praise a Child

Following are some positive expressions you can use to praise your child. These expressions are good esteem builders and are bound to make the child in your life feel special and good about him/herself.

- ♥ You are awesome!
- ♥ Outstanding job!
- ♥ You are on the right track!
- ♥ Good for you. What a good job you did!
- ♥ You always try your best.
- ♥ Good thinking, what a creative job.
- ♥ Beautiful work!
- ♥ You tried so hard. I am so proud of you!
- ♥ You are so smart!
- ♥ You're a winner in my book!
- ♥ You make me very happy.

(Cont. on next page)

- ✓ **Focus on the children.** Remember, it's for the benefit of your child or children that you are attending these events. You are not going to them to look good for others in the community, or as a competition with your former partner. If you do not get along well with your child's other parent, put it aside for the good of your child. If you are not able to speak without arguing, a cordial nod of the head will be fine. Do not use the fact that the two of you do not get along as a reason to miss attending these events. It is important for your child to have both parents there when possible.
- ✓ **Coordinate ahead of time.** It is better to inform the other parent that you will be attending so that there will be no surprises when you arrive. Remember, you don't have to sit together or talk to one another—although it would certainly be nice for your child if you could.
- ✓ **Be courteous to one another.** When you see your child's other parent at the event, make sure that you are courteous to him or her. If you were in a business meeting with someone you did not care for, you would most certainly be polite anyway. You can do the same here. This also goes for any stepparents or other people accompanying your former partner to the event. You do not have to like them, but at the very least you do have to behave in a socially acceptable manner. This is not the time or place for an argument or a discussion about any other matters besides the event you are currently attending.
- ✓ **Tolerate the discomfort for the sake of your child.** Chances are you may be uncomfortable around your child's other parent, or he or she may be uncomfortable around you—especially if you are newly separated or divorced—or if a new person has come into the life of either one of you. If you feel you may be uncomfortable attending an event, take a friend or relative along with you. This may help lessen your discomfort. But, as indicated above, you can be civil for the short amount of time that you will be spending together. It is vitally important for the good of your child that you do so!

## Praising Kids (Continued)

- ♥ You're really catching on!
- ♥ You figured it out! What a good job!
- ♥ You are acting very responsibly.
- ♥ You have made some really good choices lately.
- ♥ You have a wonderful imagination.
- ♥ You have helped me so much. I really appreciate how hard you work.
- ♥ You are doing so well.
- ♥ I knew you could do it!
- ♥ You gave it your best effort.
- ♥ You are so good at (fill in the blank yourself here).
- ♥ I was so proud when you helped your sister/brother with the chores.
- ♥ That was very thoughtful of you.
- ♥ Nothing can stop you now!

*And, the most important comment of all ...*

**I LOVE YOU!!!!**



*Adapted from an article in Mrs. Alphabet, a newsletter for parents, September 2008.*



## Taming a "Picky" Eater

Many parents face a daily challenge finding a healthy and nutritious food that their child will happily eat. Although childhood obesity is frequently in the news these days, many other parents are worried that their child is not getting enough good food to eat.

Being fussy about foods is a normal part of a child's development. Young children naturally have a distrust of anything new. Many children will opt to eat nothing rather than put a new food into their mouth. Their determination not to give in and try the new food can make mealtimes stressful for the whole family. Here's a quick look at some common mistakes that parents make when feeding their children.

- **Keeping the kids out of the kitchen.** The kitchen can be a dangerous place—the hot stove, boiling water, sharp knives—all of these things pose a hazard to the young child. But, studies suggest that involving the child in meal preparation is an important step in getting them to try new foods. Researchers have found that children who help with meal preparation are more likely to try new foods.
- **Pressuring them to take "just a bite."** Taking just one bite of everything on their plate seems like a reasonable expectation, but in reality it's one that is likely to fail. Studies show that children react negatively when parents pressure them to eat foods, even when a reward is involved. When a parent says, "Eat all your peas and you can watch TV," you may get the child to eat the peas, but in the long run you just may be programming them to dislike peas. A better way is to put the food on the table and encourage the child to try it. But don't complain if he/she doesn't, and don't offer praise if they do—just stay neutral.
- **Hiding the "good stuff."** Since parents often worry that the child will binge on junk food, they often hide it or keep it out of reach. But studies have shown that if parents restrict a food, children just want it more. In a study at Penn State University, children were seated at tables and given unlimited access to plates of apple or peach cookie bars—foods the youngsters had rated as just "OK" earlier. Another group was served the bars on plates, while some bars were placed in clear cookie jars in the middle of the table. The children were told that after 10 minutes they could snack on the "cookies" in the jar. The researchers found that the restricted foods were the most popular, with consumption nearly triple from that of the food served on the plates. The study concluded that children whose food is highly restricted at home are far more likely to binge when they are given access to forbidden foods. What is the lesson here? Don't bring restricted foods into the house. Buy healthy snacks and give the children unlimited access to them.
- **Serving "boring vegetables."** Many calorie-counting parents often serve plain, steamed vegetables, and often children are reluctant to eat them. Adding a little butter, ranch dressing, cheese sauce, or brown sugar to a vegetable dish will significantly improve its "kid appeal." Also, adding a little fat to vegetables helps unlock their fat-soluble nutrients. The few extra calories are worth the tradeoff for the nutritional boost and the opportunity to introduce your child to a vegetable.

*(Continued on Page 3)*



## Fire Safety Tips

National Fire Prevention Week is October 8–14. Keep your family safe by using the following tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

- Never leave small children home alone—not even for a second.
- Do not let children play near fireplaces, radiators, space heaters, or stoves.
- Do not wear loose fitting clothing near a stove, fireplace, or space heater.
- Dispose of cigarette butts, matches, and ashes safely.
- Do not leave matches or lighters in reach of children.
- Clean your fireplace yearly—fall is a good time to do this.
- Leave plenty of room around space heaters. They should be at least three feet from anything flammable such as curtains or furniture.
- Unplug space heaters when you go to bed or leave the home.
- Check electrical appliances and cords for wear or loose connections.
- Use only appropriate fuses—never use a substitute for a fuse.
- Check the batteries in your smoke alarms every year—fall is a good time for this.
- Test smoke alarms monthly.
- Plan escape routes from the home. Practice using them.
- Place working fire extinguishers in places where the risk of fire is greatest.
- In the event of a fire, get everyone out of the house and call the fire department from the neighbor's house.

## Taming a “Picky” Eater (Cont.)

- **Giving up too soon.** You often hear kids say, “I will never eat that.” And, while it may be true for the moment, eating preferences often change over time. So parents should keep preparing a variety of healthy foods and offering them to their children, even if the child refuses to take a bite. In a young child, it may take 10 or more attempts over many months before the child will choose to sample a new food. Sibling rivalry and friendships also will play a part in a child's eating habits. Watching a best friend eat broccoli may make it much more tempting for your child. Try the “Rule of 15.” Put a food on the table at least 15 times to see if the child will accept it. Once a food is accepted, use a “food bridge”—find similarly flavored or colored foods. For example, if a child likes pumpkin pie, offer mashed sweet potatoes, and then mashed carrots.



### October is National Work & Family Month



In 2003, the United States Senate unanimously passed Resolution 210 designating October as National Work & Family Month indicating that, “supporting a balance between work and personal life is in the best interest of national worker productivity” and “that reducing the conflict between work and family life should be a national priority.”

Since 2003, we have come a long way in the attitude of many employers toward a good work/life balance. But some of the key issues cited in 2003 are still applicable today:

- 85 percent of U.S. workers have immediate, day-to-day family responsibilities along with their work responsibilities
- 46 percent of U.S. workers are parents with children under the age of 18 who live with them at least half time
- Over 45 million—nearly one in four Americans—have provided or arranged care for a family member or friend in the past year
- As the baby boomers reach retirement age in record numbers, more and more Americans are becoming “sandwich” caregivers—responsible for caring for children and elderly parents or other relatives

As these numbers grow from year to year, more and more employers will have to become responsive to the work/life balance needs of their employees. You are fortunate to have an employer who has recognized the importance of work/life balance in your life.

Please take advantage of your Resource & Referral hotline for assistance in the areas of child and elder care, pet care, adoption, and the Homework Hotline. Telephone Assistance Specialists are available to help with your needs every day of the week, 24 hours a day.

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## Common Mistakes of Pet Owners

- ◆ **No yearly exam.** Yearly exams are important and can find and isolate potential health problems early, while they are most treatable.
- ◆ **No tag or ID.** It is very important that your pet wear a current ID tag or embedded microchip for identification. If your pet is lost, these items will provide the best information for their safe return. Sadly, a lost pet whose owner cannot be identified will be put up for adoption or, worse, euthanized.
- ◆ **Letting the pet run free.** This is a problem for many reasons. The most obvious one is traffic, but there are others. Pets who run free can get into trash and ingest toxins. There may be fights with other animals—some of whom could be rabid.
- ◆ **Skimping on nutrition.** A good quality food is important. Pets need a balanced diet that is formulated to their particular life-stage needs.
- ◆ **Don't monitor the animal.** It is important to monitor your pet on a daily basis. Animals are good at hiding when they are ill, and if you don't check on them daily, you could be missing early signs of illness.
- ◆ **Pay attention to toxins in the home.** Just as it is important to childproof your home, it is also important to keep potential toxins and medications away from your animals. You could throw something away in the trash that could cause harm to your pet.



## The Elderly Parent & Driving



The ability to drive is a precious privilege that few people will give up willingly. If you suspect that your parent may be a danger to him/herself or others on the road, it may be time for you to step in and take action. Shown below are some ways for you to assess the risk factors.

- ✓ **Is your parent able to walk a block a day?**
  - A New Haven, Connecticut study of seniors found that those who walked less than a block a day were in more accidents than those who walked more frequently. The reasons why are not clear, but an extremely sedentary lifestyle is something you should consider when evaluating your parent's ability to drive safely.
- ✓ **What does the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) consider a red flag in assessing an elderly person's ability to drive?**
  - If you, another family member, or a neighbor has expressed concern after actually observing your parent drive, you should trust your instinct and arrange a formal evaluation with their doctor or an organization such as AAA.
- ✓ **Accidents involving the elderly are most often caused by ... ?**
  - The answer that most people give is drive too slowly, but the actual cause of most accidents for the elderly is failure to yield at an intersection. Research has shown that 45 percent of fatal crashes involving elderly drivers occur at intersections. If you observe your parent failing to yield or stop at an intersection, it is time for a driving evaluation.
- ✓ **What should cause you the most concern about whether or not your parent is fit to drive?**
  - If your parent has a tendency to forget recent events, it may be a sign of cognitive impairment or dementia. Surprisingly, in the early stages of dementia, your parent may still be able to drive safely, but an evaluation by their doctor or an organization such as AAA is definitely called for; and, if they are still able to drive, they will need to be carefully monitored for any further deterioration in their condition.
- ✓ **If you are concerned about your parent's ability to drive, what is a good way to assess his/her skill outside of a formal driving evaluation?**
  - Ask your parent to draw a clock face showing a specific time and assess the accuracy. The "clock drawing test" is used to evaluate cognitive abilities in people showing signs of dementia, and the accuracy corresponds to an increased likelihood of accidents. Give your parent approximately five minutes to draw a clock from scratch and indicate a specific time—say, for example, 10:11. While interpreting the results is best left to professionals, an obvious inability to complete the task is a clear indication that you need to take further action.
- ✓ **If your parent seems able to drive safely right now, but is clearly less able than in the past, should you assume the decline will continue and start preparing him/her emotionally?**
  - Yes, many people have said that getting their parents to stop driving is one of the hardest tasks they have ever undertaken, so it is best to start preparing your parent ahead of time. When you do talk to them, make sure to let them know that they will be part of the decision, and that all options will be explored for alternate means of transportation for them.

*Adapted from an article on Caring.com, September 2008.*