Family is more than a place where we eat and sleep; it is the place where we learn what matters most. If all we do in families is manage groceries and sleeping space, we have missed the great opportunities to teach the great lessons about being human.

The most important way to teach values is by example. Do we teach kindness by the way we treat each other in the family? Do we teach service by the way we reach out to people around us? Do we teach resourcefulness by the way we solve problems? Children learn by example.

We teach values by the stories we tell. The simple conversations of life tell what we value. When we tell our children how much we appreciate Mrs. Jones’ helpfulness, we are telling them what is important to us.

In addition, many families have a regular program of reading and talking about their heroes. The heroes may be great citizens of the world, literary characters, or scriptural figures. Talking about our heroes and their deeds sends our children powerful messages about the values that we honor.

We teach values by the discussion topics we emphasize. In some families it is a tradition to invite family members at a leisurely weekend dinner to talk about their best experience of the day or the past week. Family members have a chance to review their own best experiences and to learn about what is important to other family members. This can not only help us learn about each other's values but also deepen the bonds that unite us as a family.
We teach values by the traditions we institute as a family. The family that makes a tradition of helping neighbors teaches caring. The family in which family members help each other in times of need is teaching cooperation. The family that goes to the library and talks about ideas is showing its value for learning.

Some families establish a regular family fun time. Some families set aside a regular time for reading or sharing. Some families carefully choose their media (TV, videos, games) to fit with their values.

We teach values by the way we deal with family problems. When a family member is having trouble, do we unite to support and invite that person? When a person breaks important family rules, do we try to help that person find better ways?

Positive family values don't just happen. Family members learn to be strong and caring people partly because the family has carefully cultivated practices that support those values.

Applications: Talk with your family about some of the values that are most important to the family and to different family members. Rather than try to decide which values are the "right" values, notice how each person chooses differently. Enjoy the differences. Maybe each family member would pick the 3 or 4 values that mean the most to him or her.

More Joy and Less Stress for the Holidays

Do you have too much to do, too many events to attend, too much to eat, too many people to visit, too many gifts to buy? If so, you might start wishing the holidays were over before they even start.

Above all, the holidays are about spending special time with the important people in your life. Don’t miss the spirit of the season by working too hard to have a good time. Some careful planning and thoughtfulness can help you celebrate with as little stress as possible.

Taming Your To-Do List: Realize that there are limits to what you and your family can do. Get everyone to write down what will bring them the greatest joy. Then decide on one or two things that will make those wishes a reality. Plan ahead and get organized to avoid burnout, disappointment and fatigue. Ask others to help. Make a prioritized list of things you want to get accomplished, remembering that it’s impossible to do everything.

- Start early on some projects. For example, if baking Christmas cookies is on your list, bake them a month ahead and freeze them.
- Consider catering all or part of your holiday meal. For example order an already stuffed and roasted turkey or a smoked ham.
- Don’t make eating and drinking the focus of your get-togethers. Go caroling or hiking, for instance. Many of us end up gaining several pounds over the holidays and wish we hadn’t.
- Plan some time alone for yourself so the rush doesn’t make you frantic. Try some of the special calming teas or decaf coffees.
- Don’t feel guilty about saying “no” to some of your holiday invitations.
Keep Some Money in Your Wallet This Winter

The average American family spends $1,900 a year on energy bills, much of which goes to heating and cooling our homes. Consumers can save as much as 20 percent annually on total energy costs – and reduce their environmental impact – by following four simple recommendations from the government's Energy Star program.

These four steps will help you "H.E.A.T" smartly while reducing home energy consumption and environmental impact this winter:

- **Home Sealing.** Seal air leaks and add insulation – paying special attention to your attic and basement, where the biggest gaps and cracks are often found. This will keep warm air inside where it belongs and help your equipment perform more efficiently.

- **Equipment Maintenance.** Dirt and neglect are the number one causes of system failure. Get a check-up of your heating system to make sure it's performing efficiently and safely. Clean or replace your system's air filter to help lower energy bills and maintain better indoor air quality.

- **Ask for Energy Star.** Look for the Energy Star label when purchasing products. If just one in 10 households bought Energy Star qualified heating and cooling products, the change would keep 18 billion pounds of greenhouse gas emissions out of our air.

- **Thermostat Use.** Install a programmable thermostat to save energy during times when you're home or away. When properly used, a programmable thermostat can save as much as $150 a year in energy costs.

There is also an easy way for businesses and other organizations to save 10 percent or more on their energy bills this winter: turn down the heat. Many businesses operate their heating systems 24 hours a day, even when no one is using the facility. If businesses cut back just one hour of operation out of every 12, their energy savings could equal about eight percent. If every business in the United States saved 10 percent on their energy bills, Americans would save about $10 billion and reduce greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those from 15 million vehicles.

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**Promoting Safe and Healthy Environments**

**Recycle, Reuse, Reduce**

Between Thanksgiving and New Year’s most of us throw out 25% more trash than any other time during the year. That extra waste amounts to 25 million tons of garbage. This month’s Creative Caring is devoted to trimming the trash while making your Holiday Earth Friendly as well.

**GIFT WRAPPING IDEAS**

odefinitely
- Scarves, handkerchiefs, bandannas
- Old posters and maps
- Old sheet music

continued on page 4
Newspapers
Last year’s holiday paper (*Press with a warm iron if wrinkled*)
Home-sewn bags
Wallpaper scraps
A cake pan, basket or wooden box

**BOWS & RIBBONS**
- Bows saved from gifts
- Reusable items such as hair bows, ornaments, shoe laces
- Stencils or pictures from holiday cards
- Last year’s cards cut up for gift tags
- Old neck ties
- Spices such as bundled cinnamon sticks or cloves in mesh cloth
- Scarves
- Dried or silk flowers

**TREE ORNAMENTS**
- Memorabilia such as a child’s first shoe
- An old shirt as a tree skirt
- Old jewelry
- Items collected on vacation
- Cookie cutters
- Miniature toy cars
- Popcorn and cranberry string
- Buttons knotted on a string

**USE YOUR IMAGINATION:** Before throwing something away ask yourself…
- Can it be fixed or repaired?
- Could it be made more attractive?
- Could it be used to make something?
- Could someone else use it?
- Would it be someone else’s treasure?