How To Really Love a Child

“A baby is born with the need to be loved -- and never outgrows it!

-Unknown

Children are a precious and valuable resource. Every adult who interacts with children should aspire to help develop healthy self-concepts in children. Developing children to their fullest potential is needed for success in life.

As Valentine's Day approaches, I want to share a special poem published by Red Rose Collections and called "How to Really Love a Child." This poem acknowledges the importance of children and how we adults can affirm our love for them.

“How to Really Love a Child"
Be there. Say yes as often as possible. Let them bang on pots and pans. If they're unlovable, love yourself. Realize how important it is to be a child. Go to a movie theater in your pajamas. Read books out loud with joy. Invent pleasures together. Remember how really small they are. Giggle a lot. Surprise them.


Handle with caring--children are miraculous.
How Do I Teach My Children To Be Safe Without Frightening Them?

Teaching children to avoid danger is a concern for parents. The following are ideas to prepare a child to be street smart without frightening them.

Identification – Have your children memorize their telephone number and how to contact you at work. Older children should also know their name, address, and telephone number of a neighbor or relative to call in an emergency.

Getting There on Foot - Begin with basic rules about staying on sidewalks and crossing at corners. Map out the shortest, safest route with your child. Warn him never to take shortcuts through alleys or deserted areas.

Safe Places – Identify “safe houses” for your children. Ask two or three neighbors if your children can count on them for help if necessary. Introduce your children to these adults if they are not yet acquainted. Point out other safe places where your children can find a telephone and helpful adults, such as a nearby gas station, the corner store, the police or fire station, or the library.

The Buddy System – The old adage about safety in numbers is true. Talk with your child about traveling with a friend. A child alone stands out like a red flag along the road.

About Strangers – Explain the difference between good strangers and bad strangers. Good strangers are people like a police officer, mail carrier, store clerk, who can be asked for help if needed. Impress upon your child not to follow or assist a stranger.

Role Play – It’s most effective to practice and give a child general guidelines rather than a long list of specific rules that are difficult to remember. Helping children grasp general principles for judging people and situations is the best way to teach them how to take care of themselves.

Source: Family Information Services

GET HEART HEALTHY!

“The first wealth is health.”- Ralph Waldo Emerson

February is known as the love month and everyone gets busy buying candy, flowers and cards for their loved ones! However, how much thought do we give to our Valentine’s Day “mascot”, the heart?

From the moment it begins beating until the moment it stops, the human heart works tirelessly. In an average lifetime, the heart beats more than two and a half billion times, never pausing to rest, providing the power needed for life.

There are three simple rules to keep your heart healthy for the rest of your life:

2. Follow a good diet.
3. Keep your heart clean and drug-free.

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By incorporating exercise into your daily schedule you reduce your risks for coronary heart disease (nation’s leading cause of death), stroke, colon cancer, diabetes and high blood pressure. Regular exercise also helps control weight, maintains healthy bones, muscles and joints, decreases chances of falls, relieves arthritis, reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression, and is linked to fewer hospitalizations, medications and physician visits.

Another way we can lower our chances for heart disease is to eat a healthy diet. Consider these simple guidelines;

1. **Eat less fat** - Some fats are more likely to cause heart disease. These fats are usually found in foods from animals, such as meat, milk, cheese, and butter. They also are found in foods with palm and coconut oils.

2. **Eat less sodium** - Eating less sodium can help lower some people's blood pressure, reducing the risk of heart disease. Sodium is something we need in our diets, but most of us eat too much of it. Much of the sodium we eat comes from salt we add to our food at the table, or food companies add to their foods. So, avoid adding salt to foods at the table.

3. **Eat fewer calories** - When we eat more calories than we need, we gain weight. Being overweight can cause heart disease. When we eat fewer calories than we need, we lose weight.

4. **Eat more fiber** - Eating fiber from fruits, vegetables and grains may help lower your chances of getting heart disease.

There are nine factors that we can watch to keep our heart healthy

1. **Abdominal Obesity** - more than doubles heart attack risk.

2. **Alcohol** – More than one drink a day can promote heart disease, cancer and alcoholism.

3. **Bad Cholesterol/Good Cholesterol** – High cholesterol can quadruple heart attack risk. Bad cholesterol (LDL) carries fats into the artery wall; good cholesterol (HDL) takes it away. A sedentary lifestyle and a fatty diet increase LDL and lowers HDL. Exercise and a healthy diet switch that ratio and keep arteries clear.

4. **Diabetes** – Diabetes doubles a man risks and quadruples a woman’s risk of having a heart attack. Diabetes causes platelets to stick together, resulting in tiny clots. The clots clog microscopic blood vessels that feed nerves and arteries, which causes circulation problems. Diabetes also raises the level of harmful fats in the blood.

5. **Eating Fruits and Vegetables** – Eating fruits and vegetables on a daily basis can cut heart risk by 40%. They lower bad cholesterol, improve blood sugar and replace less healthy foods.

6. **Exercise** – Moderate exercise can reduce a woman’s heart risk by 43% and a man’s by 23%. Exercise improves cholesterol, keeps diabetes at bay by improving blood sugar and promotes blood vessel growth.

7. **High Blood Pressure** – High blood pressure more than doubles a woman’s risk of heart attack while a man’s risk is nearly tripled. Narrower blood vessels force the heart to work harder, thus slowly wearing it out. The blood’s friction against artery walls also can promote the rupture of plaques, which can lead to heart attacks.

8. **Psychosocial Stress** – Stressful life events, behavioral disorders and depression nearly triples the risk of heart attack. People suffering from depression and heart disease are four times more likely to have a heart attack or die, with depression being prevalent among 20% of people in the US with heart disease.

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9. **Smoking** – Smokers are two to three times more likely to have a heart attack than a non-smoker. Cigarette smoke damages the artery wall, allowing a path for inflammation and cholesterol build-up. Arteries become narrower, platelets are activated, sticky cells cling together and promote clotting. When cholesterol deposits burst inside arteries, clots form. When clots tear loose, you are susceptible to a heart attack.

**Sources:** Department of Health and Human Services - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
Department of Health and Human Services - Food and Drug Administration  
USA Today article, “Nine Factors That Affect Your Heart Health” - Steve Sternberg

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### How Can I Learn How to Relax?

In order to cope with stress, you need to learn how to relax. Relaxing is a learned skill -- it takes commitment and practice. Relaxation is more than sitting back and being quiet. Rather, it's an active process involving techniques that calm your body and mind. True relaxation requires becoming sensitive to your basic needs for peace, self-awareness and thoughtful reflection. The challenge is being willing to meet these needs rather than dismissing them. There are a number of methods you can use to relax, including:

- **Deep breathing.** Imagine a spot just below your navel. Breathe into that spot, filling your abdomen with air. Let the air fill you from the abdomen up, then let it out, like deflating a balloon. With every long, slow exhalation, you should feel more relaxed.

- **Progressive muscle relaxation.** Switch your thoughts to yourself and your breathing. Take a few deep breaths, exhaling slowly. Mentally scan your body. Notice areas that feel tense or cramped. Quickly loosen up these areas. Let go of as much tension as you can. Rotate your head in a smooth, circular motion once or twice. (Stop any movements that cause pain!) Roll your shoulders forward and backward several times. Let all of your muscles completely relax. Recall a pleasant thought for a few seconds. Take another deep breath and exhale slowly. You should feel relaxed.

- **Mental imagery relaxation.** Mental imagery relaxation, or guided imagery, is a proven form of focused relaxation that helps create harmony between the mind and body. Guided imagery coaches you in creating calm, peaceful images in your mind -- a "mental escape." Identify your self-talk, that is, what you are saying to yourself about what is going on with your illness or situation. It is important to identify negative self-talk and develop healthy, positive self-talk. By making affirmations, you can counteract negative thoughts and emotions.

- **Relax to music.** Combine relaxation exercises with your favorite music. Select the type of music that lifts your mood or that you find soothing or calming. Some people find it easier to relax while listening to specially designed relaxation audio tapes, which provide music and relaxation instructions.

- **Biofeedback.** Biofeedback helps a person learn stress-reduction skills by using various instruments to measure temperature, heart rate, muscle tension and other vital signs as a person attempts to relax. The goal of biofeedback is to teach you to monitor your own body as you relax. It is used to gain control over certain bodily functions that cause tension and physical pain. If a headache, such as a migraine, begins slowly, many people can use biofeedback to stop the attack before it becomes full blown.

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Once you find a relaxation method that works for you, practice it every day for at least 30 minutes. Taking the time to practice simple relaxation techniques gives you the chance to unwind and get ready for life's next challenge.

*From: www.webmd.com*
Fire Prevention Tips

Being good to the environment also means making sure your fireplace habits are safe and will not pose a danger to your home or your neighborhood.

Remember:

1. Clear the area around the fireplace and chimney. Debris too close to the fireplace could cause a fire. Check the flue for obstructions like birds' nests, and trim any overhanging branches or large trees near the chimney.
2. Always use a fireplace screen.
3. Never overload the fireplace with too many logs. Don't use the fireplace as an incinerator, and never burn garbage, Christmas trees, or piles of paper.
4. Keep a fire extinguisher on hand and place smoke detectors throughout the house. Test the smoke detectors and batteries regularly. See that the extinguisher is in good working order and that all family members know how to operate it.
5. When building a fire, place logs at the rear of the fireplace, preferably on a grate.
6. Never leave fire unattended. Be sure the fire is extinguished before you go to bed.
7. Keep wood stacked, covered, and out-of-doors, away from the house and off the ground. Bring in only as much as you need for one evening to prevent insects that may be in the wood from entering your home. Manufactured Firelogs, which are packaged to eliminate insects and mess, can also prevent this problem.
8. Have your fireplace inspected annually and cleaned when necessary by either a CSIA Certified Chimney sweep or a National Chimney Sweep Guild Certified chimney sweep. A dirty fireplace can cause chimney fires or contribute to air pollution. Your local CSIA Certified Chimney Sweep will diagnose your fireplace and recommend what it needs in order to burn cleanly and safely.

Think Clean

1. Choose the right fuel. In general, hardwood firewood (oak, madrone, hickory, ash, etc.) burns cleaner than softwood firewood (fir, pine, cedar, etc.). Independent tests (conducted by Shelton Research Labs, Santa Fe, NM) have proven that manufactured firelogs burn much cleaner than firewood.
2. Use seasoned wood. Wood with a moisture content of less than 20 percent burns much cleaner than green (high moisture content) wood. Check with your cordwood supplier to make sure that the wood you purchase is seasoned.
3. Burn smartly. Good fireplace habits can decrease fuel consumption in the home while maintaining the same level of warmth. Make sure the fire gets enough air to burn properly. Close the damper when the fire is out to keep warm room air inside.
4. Minimize creosote buildup which causes chimney fires. Creosote is the black tarry or flaky substance formed in chimneys during the wood burning process. While firewood leaves flammable creosote and carbon deposits on chimney wells, tests show firelogs leave significantly less creosote accumulation than wood.

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6. **Make a fire that fits your fireplace.** A fire that's too large or too hot not only wastes fuel, it can crack your chimney.

7. **Keep your fireplace in good working condition.** If you notice any cracks in the chimney, and any loose mortar or brick, have your chimney repaired. Have the chimney liner inspected for cracking or deterioration.

8. **Read and follow the label when using firelogs.** Use one firelog at a time, starting it with a fireplace at room temperature. Don't poke or break manufactured logs. This will cause them to crack apart, releasing their energy at a high rate and resulting in a shorter burn time. Firelogs perform best when burned on a supporting fireplace grate with a maximum of three to four inches of space between support bars.

9. **If your fireplace is equipped with glass doors, leave them open while burning a firelog** to allow proper draft and cleaner burning. Once you're sure the fire is extinguished, close the damper and glass doors to retain warm air inside the house.

Source: www.duraflame.com

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