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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

The kids are back in school- some from the comfort and safety of their own homes, while some have masked up and headed back to the classroom. As we all know, things aren't perfect- online school is difficult for many kids, young children wearing masks all day is hard- the list of challenges during this pandemic is long for everyone. I am personal friends with many teachers and I know they are working harder than they ever have in their career, and they want to be able to help every child have a successful semester. With that in mind, I am doing my best to show kindness, patience and go with the flow as everyone learns this new way of doing school. Keeping a positive attitude not only helps your mental state, it makes a huge difference in your children's mindset. We wish all of you the best this semester and hope you are able to make the best of a not so great situation. (We have a Virtual & Distance Learning Resource Guide if you need any help with that.)

If you're looking for extracurricular activities, there are many options. My daughter does cheer, and the gym has done a great job of following the proper safety guidelines to keep the kids healthy. Check out our After School Guide for some ideas, and then visit their websites for more information about their Covid safety procedures.

Grandparents Day is Sunday, September 13th. We may not be able to physically hug them this year, but make sure you tell them how much you love and appreciate them! This month, we have some adorable baby photos submitted by readers along with some child safety tips from local experts Precious Baby Protectors. We also have tips on step family harmony, as well as how to manage marital conflict better.

They tell me we have a "COLD" front coming in next week! I'll believe it when I feel it, but I sure hope they got it right! Wishing you all a wonderful Fall season!

Kim Carlisle, Editor

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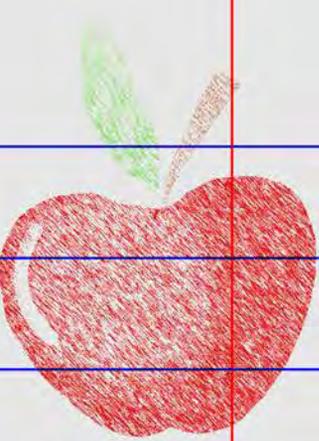
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BACK TO SCHOOL



MCKENNA

McKenna is 6 years old and has the personality the size of Houston. She loves all things unicorns and rainbows and is very kind and courageous.

FAVORITE SUBJECT:

Art

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?

When she grows up she wants to be a dance teacher.



KYSON

Kyson is 9 years old and loves video games and being a big brother! He is very athletic, smart, and a great friend.

FAVORITE SUBJECT:

His favorite "subjects" in school are recess and lunch.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?

He wants to be a cop when he grows up!



NOAH

Noah is 3 years old, loves Paw Patrol, riding his bike and exploring the outdoors. He is a very sweet boy who loves giving hugs. Enjoys staying active and bringing "George" (monkey) along for all his adventures.

FAVORITE SUBJECT:

Building

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?

When he grows up he wants to be an astronaut.



STELLA

Stella is 6 years old, but will be turning 7 on Sept. 4th! She is a sweet, sassy, silly, and very social girl. Stella is always up for a dance party, loves singing along to her favorite songs, creating artwork to add to her bedroom art gallery, and vanilla ice cream!

FAVORITE SUBJECT:

Art

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?

She wants to be an artist when she grows up.



AUBREY

Aubrey is 7 years old. She loves to dance, swim and play with dolls. She is an awesome big sister to two brothers.

FAVORITE SUBJECT:

Art

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?

She wants to be a fashion designer when she grows up.



KENY

Keny will be 7 in September and loves her dolls, dressing up and playing with her Guinea pig. She loves going to ballet/tap class and playing volleyball. She a great kid with a huge heart.

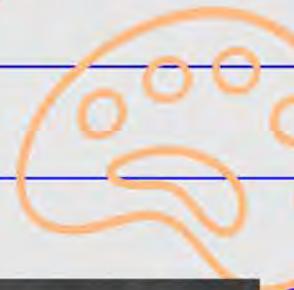
FAVORITE SUBJECT:

Math

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?

She wants to be a volleyball coach when she grows up.

COVER CUTIES



MAGGY

Maggy is 4 years old and loves dancing, Superhero Girls, animals, and eating cheese pizza. She is very loving, inquisitive, and is always making everybody laugh. Maggy's favorite center in preschool is the kitchen center and wants to be a cake baker when she grows up.



MOLLY

Molly is 5 years old and loves dancing, singing, playing dress up, and eating hamburgers. She is very outgoing, friendly, and always full of joy. Molly is also an amazing big sister. Molly's favorite subject in school is writing and when she grows up she wants to be a music teacher.



JACE & JETT

Jace is 7 years old and loves baseball, soccer and jiu-jitsu. Jett is 5 years old and loves bugs, dinosaurs, and sea creatures. They are the sweetest boys that love their family, their dog Slaton, and Jesus too!

Jace's favorite subject is math and he wants to be baseball player when he grows up. Jett's favorite subject is art and he wants to be a veterinarian.



TATE

Tate is the most kind hearted 8 year old. He loves the beach and being the catcher for his baseball team. Tate's favorite subject is Social Studies. He wants to be a professional baseball player when he grows up.



TYLER

Tyler is a sweet 7 year old. He loves his friends, his brother and anything baseball. Tyler's favorite subject is science. He wants to be a professional baseball player when he grows up.



OLIVIA GRACE

Olivia Grace is 4 years old. She has autism, but doesn't let her diagnosis hold her back. She has never met a stranger and loves to tell jokes to everyone she meets. She enjoys singing, dancing, and riding roller coasters at the Kemah Boardwalk! She is super "ausome!"

FAVORITE SUBJECT:
Art. I love to color!

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?

A pilot! I want to fly planes!



KAILANI

Kailani is 5 years old. She loves to dance, gymnastics, and fashion. She loves doing science projects, cooking and baking.

FAVORITE SUBJECT:
Her favorite subject in school is math.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?

She wants to be a doctor when she grows up, because she likes taking care of people.



LUKE & LAILA

This is Luke and Laila. Luke is 5 years old. He love dinosaurs, superheroes and race cars. He loves to cuddle and give big hugs. His favorite subject in school is Music and he wants to be a doctor or astronaut. Laila is 6 years old. She loves princesses, barbies and Harry Potter. She is very smart and loves learning new things. Her favorite subject in school is science and she wants to be an astronaut or singer.

5 Ways to Help Blended Families Blend

Melding two families together can be a challenging time for kids and parents alike. Follow these steps to make sure your step kids feel just at home with you as they do in their other household.

1. Set the ground rules.

Letting everyone know ahead of time what expectations are will save a lot of frustration. Sit down as a family and make the rules and set the consequences should the rules be broken. Everyone knows the same rules apply to everyone so there is no accusing anyone of playing favorites.

2. Team Building.

Make time for some bonding experiences together as a family. Things like miniature golf, bowling, or laser tag are fun for kids of all ages. Try to find activities that everyone likes, or let each child take a turn choosing the activity.

3. Let Them Be.

Unless the fighting is physical or just really mean, it is best to let them work it out amongst themselves. Part of growing up is learning how to handle conflict appropriately, and who better to practice on than our siblings? If you do have to step in to help them talk out their issues, be very careful not to choose sides.

4. A Family that "Laughs" Together, Stays Together.

Play silly games, watch funny movies, play good natured practical jokes on each other. Laughter is a key ingredient in keeping family harmony.

5. Seek Support.

Whether it's from a mom who's been there, a Facebook support page, or a family therapist, there is no shame in reaching out to others for guidance and support when needed.

Keep in mind this is a hard transition for everyone. By staying calm and doing a little planning, you will quickly blend in to one big happy family!



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As parents, our children's safety is one of our biggest concerns. The best way to prevent a serious or fatal accident is to educate yourself on risks and take precautionary measures. Below are ten common household items that can injure or kill a child or pet.

Latex Balloons. More children have suffocated by uninflated balloons and pieces of balloons than any other type of toy. Keep latex balloons away from children under 8 years old. Consider Mylar balloons instead.

Stuffed Toys. Be aware that seams can separate and allow stuffing or plastic pellets to be released, presenting a choking hazard to young children and pets. Check also for small detachable parts, security of eyes, nose and mouth of stuffed toys.

Garage Doors. If your automatic garage door does not already have one, install a sensor such as an "electric eye". It signals the door to reverse its motion if anything is in the way.

Storage Chests. Suffocation deaths occur in these when a child or pet cannot escape. The best choice is one without a lid or with a lightweight removable lid. If a chest closes, make sure it has ventilation holes.

Disc Batteries. They may, if swallowed, stick in the throat or stomach, causing serious burns as the chemical leaks out.

Window Treatments with Hanging Cords. Those manufactured before 2001 can pose a potential strangulation hazard. Replace them with today's safer, cordless products, especially in children's bedrooms and play areas.

Antifreeze. Children or pets could drink large amounts of this sweet tasting liquid if it is left out in an open container or if spilled on your driveway. The main ingredient is extremely toxic. Windshield washer fluid is also highly toxic. It can cause instant blindness.

Large and Heavy Furniture and Appliances. 8-10 thousand victims are treated in emergency rooms annually for furniture tip-over injuries, some of these are fatal. Use angle braces or anchors to secure.

Hazardous Plants. Dieffenbachia and Philodendron, two common household plants, are frequently ingested and can cause very serious symptoms. A popular yard plant is the beautiful oleander. Everything about this plant is toxic, including the water in which cut flowers are placed and any smoke.

Recalled Products. These are products found to be unsafe, hazardous or defective. Keep up-to-date by visiting www.Recalls.gov. "Don't take chances when it comes to your children's safety," warns Debra Holtzman J.D., M.A., an internationally acclaimed safety and health expert and best-selling author of "The Safe Baby: A Do-It Yourself Guide to Home Safety".

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CLIMBING THE FAMILY TREE

5 IDEAS TO ENGAGE KIDS IN FAMILY HISTORY

By Jen Henderson

Kids are notorious storytellers, gifted in their ability to recite details from their day on the playground, invent imaginative worlds with their friends, and even spin a tall tale—especially when they think their parents don't notice. Given their natural creativity, why not harness these skills and let your children help you capture your family history? Below are five activities that will do just that.

Computer Savvy Investigator

Of course, one of the easiest ways to find relatives is through one of several online search engines, such as Ancestry.com or Familysearch.org. And there's nothing like playing detective to make learning about ancestors fun. Simply sit with your child as she enters different names and dates on the screen and see what you can uncover in a few hours. Once you've found someone, head to the library for books on a particularly interesting period of time from that relative's life.

Artwork Archivist

Encourage your kids to archive a few of their most important school artwork and schoolwork. "For children that struggle in school, keeping key papers that show improvement are a great way to positively reinforce their academic progress. You'll have the proof." Then, gather a few loose-leaf binders, some markers, scrapbook materials, and a box of their work. Tell your kids to choose 3-4 items per year of school and write a caption explaining why they like these particular examples. "You'll be surprised at what they say," Taylor notes.

Family Photo Expert

For tweens and teens who have some computer experience, assist them in scanning family photographs and organizing them by person, date, or lineage in a folder on the desktop. No scanner? No problem! Take the pictures to a local copy center and let your kids lend a hand. Who knows? They may even discover a hidden talent for or interest in photography by archiving these precious heirlooms.

Intrepid Interviewer

Gathering together for an upcoming holiday or vacation? Plan ahead to capture family stories. Allow your kids come up with questions to ask cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents about their lives. What do they enjoy doing as a hobby? What was their prized toy as a child? What is their favorite memory? Then have them walk around with a recording device. Letting children participate in the process helps them to learn about history first hand and reinforces that genealogy is a living experience, as well.

Scrapbook Storyteller

Instead of having your young ones write down their stories, encourage them use their visual imaginations. Staple together scraps of paper into a homemade book and have them illustrate a particular family trip or memory with drawings, cutup magazines or newspapers, and other supplies. For instance, they can show the story of their last birthday party in pictures or draw their different perspectives on the most recent vacation. What was their favorite moment? What was their least favorite? What did that moment look like?

Experts note that an important benefit of having our youth explore their lineage is that it gives them a sense of history and provides them with a context for understanding the complexities of life. "By spending time helping kids understand family history, all of us benefit," says Taylor. "A little less history is lost and you've given them a sense of how the world works."

September 13th is National Grandparent's Day!

A time for families to honor their elders and to help children understand the love, experience, and guidance older generations can offer.

One way to celebrate grandparents is to include them in their grandchildren's genealogical adventures. For more ideas, visit www.grandparents-day.com or www.grandparents.com

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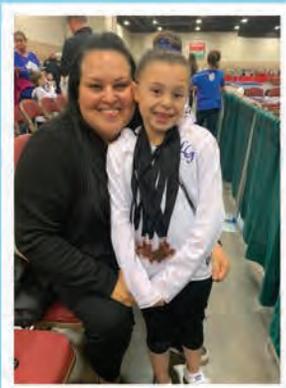
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Keeping it Clean

Manage Marital Conflict Better

By Gayla Grace



Conflict co-exists with relationships. It's unavoidable (no matter how satisfied you are together). It's how we manage conflict that dictates how healthy our relationships are, and oftentimes, whether we end up in divorce court. When properly handled, healthy, fair disagreements can actually strengthen relationships.

In their book, *The Remarriage Checkup*, marriage and family therapist Ron Deal and researcher David Olson discuss the differences in how couples handle conflict. "Research has suggested that happy and unhappy couples alike share the same number of conflicts. Unhappy couples just can't get through the differences. They get stuck in them. Healthy couples, by comparison, are much more likely to find creative solutions to their differences and work them out."

Conflict doesn't have to be bad. It's simply a sign that something needs to change in the relationship. It turns bad when we attack the person instead of the problem.

Researcher James McNulty reports that relationships can benefit from healthy conflict. Short-term angry discussions let your partner know that certain behaviors are unacceptable.

TIPS FOR FIGHTING FAIR

So how do you properly address conflict? Here are twelve tips to help:

AGREE TO REMAIN IN CONTROL.

When emotions escalate and nasty words start flying, resolve never occurs. If the situation proves to be too volatile, take a time out and come back when both of you can discuss the matter calmly.

BE FAIR AND FLEXIBLE WITH SOLUTIONS.

Come to the discussion with both ears open to hear your partner's take on the disagreement. Don't insist your way is the only way even if you think it's the right way.

STATE THE PROBLEM CLEARLY. Be specific. Use I instead of you. I statements take ownership of our feelings and needs and communicate them to others without placing blame. It's easier to hear, "I feel insecure when you ignore me" rather than "you make me angry when you don't listen to me."

ADDRESS CONFLICT AS IT OCCURS.

Don't let issues pile up until you're ready to explode. If your partner neglects to address your stepson's lack of respect, don't let it go ten times before discussing it.

KEEP CONFLICT AWAY FROM YOUR CHILDREN. If you and your husband can't agree on discipline, don't argue about it in

front of the kids. Take tough discussions behind closed doors.

BE A TEAM PLAYER. Your partner is your ally. If you insist on winning for a successful outcome, that means your partner has to lose. It's a partnership, not a competition.

DON'T ARGUE VIA EMAIL OR TEXTING.

Give your relationship the respect it deserves and take time to confront conflict face-to-face. If you begin a disagreement while texting, stop. Resolve to finish the discussion in person.

DON'T BRING UP OLD ISSUES.

Put boundaries around the subject at hand and resolve one issue at a time, thus helping to prevent explosive arguments.

PICK YOUR BATTLES.

Life's too short to argue about every little thing. Choose what topics are important enough to argue about and leave the others alone. When "disagreeable" spouse comes home after a bad day, don't engage.

STEER CLEAR OF NAME CALLING OR CHARACTER ASSASSINATION.

Hurtful words create deep wounds that don't heal easily. Stick to the issue instead of diverting to the person.

LISTEN MORE THAN YOU TALK.

I've heard that women speak about 20,000 words per day, close to 13,000 more than the average man. I'm convinced God gave us one mouth and two ears so we would listen more and talk less.

OFFER GRACE FREELY.

Be quick to apologize and slow to hold grudges. When we don't forgive, we suffer mentally, emotionally, and physically. Forgive and let it go.

It's also important to recognize our part in conflict.

In *Peacemaking for Families*, Ken Sande says, "It takes two to tangle. The fact is, we frequently contribute in some way to relational problems. Whether it be through our words, our thoughts, our motives, our attitudes, or our deeds, we are more often than not guilty of either starting or at least aggravating any conflict we are involved in."

Taking a personal inventory and considering how we contribute to conflict requires courage and humility. After a fight early in our marriage, my husband told me I always had to be right. I insisted I knew best how to handle every situation and had little regard for his opinions. It wasn't the first time I'd heard those words, and I knew he was right. I've worked hard to overcome my prideful attitude and recognize how it contributes to conflict. As a result, my husband and I work through conflict now with a win-win ending.

When conflict comes knocking at your door, don't despair. If you commit to practicing healthy conflict management, you'll find your relationships deepen through resolve. You don't have to get stuck arguing about the same old thing.

Are you up for a challenge? Pick your weakest link when it comes to conflict. Where could you improve? Then determine to do conflict differently and watch what a difference it makes in your relationships!



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