Watch For Good Behavior

If you want to see some problem behavior disappear, pay more attention to the things children do well than to their mistakes.

Without thinking, we often take for granted those behaviors that please us. Then we exaggerate out of proportion those things children do wrong.

Unfortunately, this approach backfires because children tend to repeat those behaviors that get the most attention.

For example, the more you ask a child to stop an annoying habit, such as playing with its food, the more he may do it.

Try ignoring it instead. Then when you notice him eating neatly, compliment him.

As you watch for and compliment children on their positive behavior, you can begin to see some changes in the behavior you don't like.

In previous generations, people didn't have to worry about good communication skills because they had time to talk to one another.

With so many changes in today's fast-paced world, many things can interfere with good interaction between parent and child. Here are some good ways to encourage good communication with your child.

- **Be an attentive listener.** When your child has something important to tell you, give her your undivided attention. Even if the topic seems trivial to you, it may be very important to her.

- **Be patient.** Even though you may want to interrupt what your child is telling you, be patient. Let her finish what she has to say.

- **Paraphrase.** It's helpful to repeat to your child. In your own words, what you think you heard her say. This will avoid misunderstandings and will give her an opportunity to clarify what she wants to tell you.

- **Be sensitive to your child's body language.** Pay attention not only to your child's words, but also to her body language, such as nervous behavior, or facial expression.
Focus on one topic. When you have something important to say to your child, focus on only one issue at a time. It's better to convey a clear message on one topic than to confuse your child by addressing several issues.

Keep your message simple. Use simple words one or two syllable words, is possible which your child will understand. Use no more than nine or ten words in a sentence.

Deal with the here and now. The concepts of time which young children have are different from those of adults. Young children tend to live in the present rather than in the past or the future. Reopening old wounds from the past will only get in the way of what you want to communicate right now.

Be aware of your own body language. When talking to your child, be aware of the non-verbal messages your body may be communicating. Use good eye contact, for example, to convey your message. Young children pay more attention to your facial expression and to the emotional tone of your voice than to the actual words you use.

New Windows offer Energy and Cost Savings

Windows add light and a view, but if they're not energy efficient, they can also bring a chill, excessive heat, or sun damage to a home's furnishings. New windows, skylights and doors particularly those bearing the Energy Star label can reduce heat loss in winter and heat gain in summer. Some window models under development will even be able to turn heat gain into passive solar energy.

Innovations such as low-emittance (low-e) glass, improved frame materials and warm edge spacers make the difference in energy efficient windows. Coatings on low-e glass help to keep warm air inside in the winter, keep warm air out in the summer and reflect damaging ultraviolet light, which can damage belongings such as furniture and photographs. Newer window frame materials including wood composites, vinyl and fiberglass provide improved insulation improved warm edge spacers, which keep windowpanes the proper distance apart, help reduce heat flow and prevent condensation.

In existing homes, the best way to increase the energy efficiency of windows is to replace older single-pane windows with new, energy efficient ones. If new windows aren't in the budget, however, adding storm windows, caulking and weatherstripping can all reduce airflow in and out of windows, which can help reduce your power bill. Drapes, awnings and other window coverings can also help reduce heat loss in the winter and heat gain in the summer. Replacing single-pane windows with Energy Star qualified windows can save about $125-$450 per year; replacing double-paned clear glass replacement windows saves approximately $25 - $110 per year.

When choosing windows for new construction, look for the NFRC (National Fenestration Rating Council) label, which provides information on solar heat gain and air leakage, among other aspects of the window. Also look for the Energy Star label, which identifies products that meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the USEPA and the US Department of Energy.
WHAT IS ENERGY STAR?

The Energy Star label identifies products that meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the EPA and US Department of Energy. Initially limited to energy efficient computers and monitors, the Energy Star program has expanded to appliances, lighting, roofing materials and even entire new homes.

Energy generation and use is a major cause of air pollution and is linked to global warming, or the greenhouse effect. Energy Star products are significantly more energy efficient than federal standards currently require. For Example, refrigerators exceed federal guidelines by at least 15 percent; televisions consume fewer than 3 watts of power when turned off, light bulbs use two-thirds less energy but still meet the operating and reliability guidelines of standard bulbs.

Because energy efficiency is also a financial issue, Energy Star products help consumers save money. Given that the average home energy bill is $1,900 per year in the United States, families are looking for ways to reduce that cost. Energy efficient choices can save households up to a third on their energy bill without sacrificing features, style or comfort.

Through the Energy Star program, consumers can outfit new and existing homes with more than 40 types of energy efficient alternatives, including major appliances, consumer elections and building materials. The Energy Star program also can connect consumers with builders and developers that build Energy Star qualified new homes.

Tips and Tools for Safe Summer Food

The number of foodborne illnesses increases during the summer. There are many reasons why bacteria love the hot, humid days of summer, and grow faster than at any other time of the year. When the temperature is above 90F, the time perishable food can be left outside the refrigerator or freezer drops from two hours to one hour. We're more likely to leave food unrefrigerated for longer time periods. Food sits out at picnics, barbecues and during travel. Beat bacteria this summer with these five tips, tools for safe summer food.

1. **Chill Out** - Keep perishable foods cool by transporting them to a picnic site in an insulated cooler with ice or frozen gel packs. Pack the cooler immediately before leaving home with foods that have been kept chilled. To avoid frequently opening the cooler, pack beverages in one cooler and perishables in another. Keep the cooler in an air-conditioned vehicle for transporting and then in the shade or shelter at the picnic site.

2. **No Poking Allowed** – Poking and stabbing meat with a fork or knife when placing or turning meat on the grill can cause a loss of juices that keep meat moist and tender, but it can also can affect food safety. Bacteria normally are found only on the external surface of larger cuts of meat like beef steaks. However, if a steak is poked with a fork or knife, these bacteria can be pushed into the steak.
3. **What's Hot, What's Not** – Rather than worry about keeping hot foods hot and cold foods cold, limit the number of perishable foods on your menu. For example, serve potato chips instead of potato salad; washed whole fruit instead of a cut-up fruit salad; and cookies or brownies instead of a perishable cream-filled pie.

4. **Get a Handle on Handwashing** – Unwashed hands are a prime cause of foodborne illness. Whenever possible, wash your hands with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds before handling food. If no handwashing facilities are available use disposable towelettes or antibacterial gel.

5. **Shower Power** – Though only the inside of melons (watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew melons, etc.) is eaten, their rind still must be washed. Bacteria present in the soil can contaminate the skin of the melon. When the melon is cut, these bacteria can be pushed into the part we eat and can cause foodborne illness. Wash the surface of melons thoroughly under clean, running water before eating them. Cut melons on a clean cutting surface, using a clean knife.

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**Sunscreens and Sun-Protective Clothing**

Overexposure to the sun's invisible rays ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) – can cause skin damage. The damage can be immediate and long-term, with effects ranging from sunburn, rashes and cell and tissue damage to premature wrinkling and skin cancer. Indeed, many skin changes that often are identified with aging actually result from damage by too much sun.

Any tan is a sign of skin damage. Tanning occurs when the skin produces additional pigment (coloring) to protect itself against sunburn from ultraviolet rays. Indoor tanning devices also give off ultraviolet rays that can be as harmful as those from the sun.

To help reduce your risk of skin damage from sunlight, try to minimize your exposure to the sun between 10 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., when the sun's rays are strongest. Even casual exposure to sunlight – driving a car, walking to the store, taking an outdoor lunch break – contributes to cumulative lifetime exposure. If you're out during the peak hours, wear a hat and tightly-woven clothing that covers your body, and use maximum protection sunscreens.

It's important to understand the labeling information on sun protection products and shop carefully before heading to the beach, tennis court or park. The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) carefully monitors advertising claims in the area and offers this information to help you make wise purchasing decisions.

**Sunscreens**

Most people benefit from sunscreens with sun protection factor (SPF) numbers of 15 or more. The SPF numbers gives you some idea of how long you can stay in the sun without burning. For example, if you burn in 10 minutes without sunscreen and you apply a liberal dose with a SPF number of 15, you should be protected from sunburn for 150 minutes. Sunscreens with SPF numbers higher than 15 may work better for people who are fair-skinned, live at high altitudes, work or play outdoors much of the day or perspire.
Swimming and perspiration reduce the actual SPF value of many sunscreens—even those that are water resistant so you have to reapply the product often.

Although sunscreens with identical SPF numbers give you equivalent sunburn protection from UVB rays, no sunscreen product screens out all UVA rays. Some may advertise UVA protection, but there is no system to rate UVA protection yet.

Many sunscreens—even those with the same SPF numbers—have different ingredients or different combinations of the same ingredients. Because some people experience allergic reactions to various sunscreen ingredients, it's a good idea to test a product first by applying a small amount to a limited area of your skin. To get the maximum protection from your sunscreen, apply at least one large handful about 30 minutes before you go outside and reapply after swimming, toweling dry or participating in any vigorous activity that causes heavy perspiration.

If you're taking medication, ask your doctor or pharmacist if your medications will make your skin sensitive to the sun or aggravate sunburn or rashes. Certain antibiotics, birth control pills, diuretics, antihistamines and antidepressants are among the commonly used drugs that can increase sensitivity to the sun's rays.

**Sun-protective Clothing**

Sun-protective clothing offers another way to protect skin from the harmful effects of the sun. Sun-protective fabrics differ from typical summer fabrics in several ways: they typically have a tighter weave or knit and are usually darker in color. Sun-protective clothes have a label listing the garment's Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) value, that is, the level of protection the garment provides from the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays. The higher the UPF, the higher the protection from the sun's UV rays.

The UPF rating indicates how much of the sun's UV radiation is absorbed by the fabric. For example, a fabric with a UPF rating of 20 only allows 1/20th of the sun's UV radiation to pass through it. This means that this fabric will reduce your skin's UV radiation exposure by 20 times where it's protected by the fabric.

Everything above UPF 50 may be labeled UPF 50+; however, these garments may not offer substantially more protection than those with a UPF of 50. Also, a garment shouldn't be labeled “sun-protective” or “UV-protective” if its UPF is less than 15. Sun-protective clothing may lose its effectiveness if it's too tight or stretched out, damp or wet, and if it has been washed or worn repeatedly.

**Special Precautions For Children**

Experts estimate that a significant percentage of our exposure to sun occurs by age 18. That's why it's especially important to apply sunscreens with a minimum SPF of 15 to children's skin about 30 minutes before they go outdoors. Reapply sunscreens after they swim, towel off or play hard. Talk with teachers, child care providers and camp counselors about scheduling outdoor activities to reduce children's exposure to the midday sun, when the sun's rays are most harmful.

Infants six months and younger should be kept out of direct sunlight altogether. Sunscreens may irritate baby skin, and infants' developing eyes are particularly vulnerable to sunlight.

(Source: Federal Trade Commission website www.ftc.gov)
Germs at the Gym

Protect yourself with good hygiene practices

Not everyone who lurks at the gym has paid their dues! Cold and flu viruses, as well as germs that cause athlete's foot, *Staph* infections and even ringworm, hang around and wait to go home with unsuspecting members.

The gym is full of damp, moist surfaces where bacteria and viruses can thrive. Locker rooms are an obvious source, but exercise machines, free weights, yoga mats and even water-fountain buttons in fact, any place that hands touch or that attracts body sweat are breeding grounds. The germs that lurk there can easily transfer from infected surface to hands and from your hands to your to your eyes, nose and mouth, thus spreading infection.

Gym germ control

When selecting a gym, look for one that is committed to cleaning and disinfecting surfaces on at least a daily basis. But even that isn't enough, cautions Nancy Bock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association, who recommends some proactive protocol:

- Be considerate of flow members – keep a towel handy to prevent your sweat from dripping onto the machines.

- At the beginning and end of each segment of your exercise regime, wipe down the surface of the equipment you use with a clean towel. If your gym provides a cleaning of disinfecting solution, use it as well.

- Wash your hands after using the exercise equipment. If warm water and soap aren't available, gel formulas and wipes can be effective substitutes.

- Launder weight-training gloves after using them, if they are washable or replace them often.

- Avoid bare feet in the locker room and showers – waterproof shower sandals or slides should be an essential part of your gym wardrobe.

Making the Most with Outdoor Time with Preschool Children

Play and learning settings are defined spaces that support specific activities or groups of activities with specific toys or play materials. Examples might include an active play area, a storytelling circle, a sand and water play area, a tricycle path, a vegetable garden and/or puppet theater.

Here are a few questions for planning play and learning settings.

- Is there an array of play and learning settings within the outdoor physical play space? If only large equipment is available for outdoor play, children's experiences and opportunities for well-rounded development are severely limited. Boredom and negative social behavior may result.

- Is there adequate storage for outdoor play items?

- Are there enough materials to eliminate potential arguing over supplies or toys?

- Are there constructed play settings, such as a stage, deck, playhouse, sound wall, or animal habitats?
- Are there natural “loose parts.” such as acorns, pine cones, vegetables or shells?

- Are there manufactured “loose parts.” such as blocks, balls, digging utensils, sand and water toys, pieces of cloth or chalk?

A sound wall is a collection of devices, such as pots, pans, metal tubing, triangles or bamboo that make various tones and sounds. These items are generally hung freely at the child's level so that children can use them to explore sound.

Loose parts help children manipulate their environment to stimulate imaginary and dramatic play. These parts may include a wide variety of small natural and synthetic items, such as sticks and stones, bottle tops and popsicle sticks and sand and dirt, as well as larger items, such as logs, wheeled toys, tires, large blocks and boards.

**Teaching example**

One Spring, the teacher noticed that the children were very curious about nature. They picked up worms, they heard the spring birds singing, they picked the first crocuses of the season and they warmed their shoulders in the sun. To build upon their curiosity, the teacher decided to place several items about the play yard to encourage exploration. He placed plenty of small shovels and seed packets by the four tire gardens, placed several other buckets and shovels near a dirt pile, put magnifying glasses and collecting tray's on the picnic table and placed five sets of binoculars and bird books on the deck. As the children rotated around the play area, teachers asked questions about what the children were noticing or making.

(A collecting tray is any tray, even a plastic microwave tray in which children can collect things like twigs, leaves or bugs.)

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**June/July Spotlight**

*by Greg Clemmons*

**Summer Time is Fun Time . . .**

The Onslow County 4-H Program is pleased to announce the 2007 version of the summer program entitled Avenues of Interest which is available for all youth between the ages of 5-19 years old. The 4-H motto is “To Make the Best Better” and you can do so by enrolling youth into something new and fun while at the same time meet new and interesting people. Any youth in Onslow County may enroll in one or more of these workshops, one does not have to be a 4-H member to do so. To check out the different classes / workshops one can come by the 4-H office at 4024 Richlands Hwy, Jacksonville, NC or check out our web site ([http://onslow.ces.ncsu.edu/](http://onslow.ces.ncsu.edu/)).

Do not let youth you know sit home this summer with the idea there is nothing to do . . . turn to the 4-H program for some great ideas and fun activities. For more information about Avenues of Interest and other 4-H activities call 910-455-5873.

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