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"Young Families"

January 2007

Dear Young Families,

The holiday decorations have been taken down and stored, the boxes and wrappings have been tossed, and the gifts have found a spot on a shelf or in the closet. Do you still have some of the candies and decorated cookies left and you are tempted to eat them up so the containers can be stored?

The days and weeks after the holidays are often as stressful as the time we spend getting all the preparations done. We have extra bills to pay, admit that we ate too much, and have to deal with colder temperatures and staying inside. Now is the time to sit down together as a family and decide what your priorities and goals are regarding these issues. Involving children in these discussions are important and, of course, based on the age of the children. For younger children, role modeling of older siblings and parents in, for example, choosing healthy snacks and playing games may be effective.

After the family meetings, consider these ideas to keep on track with your goals.

- Keep a list on the refrigerator (Remember these are priorities so keep the list manageable.)
- Use pictures as a reminder for younger family members.
- Review your progress in fun ways at family meetings.
- Involving all family members in your plan helps everyone feel more committed to doing their part.
- Set short term goals that can be met in a month or two. Reaching a goal keeps all family members motivated and wanting to work towards the next family goal.
- Reward yourself for the progress made. Rent a video or DVD and pop some corn for a "movie night", go sledding or skating as a family,

Have a special and energized 2007.

Sincerely,

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This document can be made available in alternative formats, such as large print, Braille, or audio tape, by contacting the Pierce County Extension Office at 715-273-3531, ext. 6663 or 1-800-947-3529 (TTY).

This newsletter was written by Nancy Burchard, Jackson County Family Living Agent.

Feeling Financially Overextended After the Holidays?

To avoid this feeling next year as well as throughout the year, consider these suggestions to preparing for a workable spending plan for your family.

- Put away all of your credit cards. Pay with cash or check until your balances are paid.
- Determine the total amount you owe creditors.
- Determine your priorities according to creditor. Determine who to pay first based on highest interest rate, amount of balance, charges for late payments, and minimum payment due.
- If you consolidate bills to one credit card, do so carefully and cautiously. Any denial of new loan or credit line can show up as a negative point on your credit report. Consider that once a card is paid off, destroy the card and only have one or two at the most to use for purchases.
- Reduce your spending. Set a realistic spending plan. Say no to some of those extras for a period of time.
- Set goals
- Once you have eliminated your debt, revise your spending plan, and stick to it.

- Remember to spread your holiday shopping and spending throughout the year to take advantage of sales and to avoid overextending yourself next year.



More Meals, Snacks and Just Extra Eating Over the Past Weeks?

Are you thinking that a diet in the new year will help you deal with the extra treats enjoyed during the holidays? Instead of a new year's resolution of starting a diet, consider some life style changes that can be enjoyed all year long. Yes, these changes are enjoyed because you can do them on your own, with family and friends, and there is variety in what you choose.

- Be physically active everyday. Go for a brisk walk or jog, swimming may be available at some local sites in your area, go sledding, skating, tubing, or skiing with the family.

- Increase the fruits and vegetables in your meals and snacks. They are a healthy choice of convenience foods and there are many to choose from.
- Avoid “grazing” during the day and evening. Many nibbles lead to extra calories that are not obvious. When you find yourself with time and you are headed toward the refrigerator, grab a glass of water, go for that walk, suggest a game with family members at home, or pick up a book to read.
- If you have been thinking of reducing fat in some of your food preparation, now might be the time to look for some new recipe ideas or ingredient substitutions. Try using applesauce in place of oil in breads, use egg substitutes/whites in place of whole eggs, or try plain or nonfat yogurt in place of sour cream.



How to Deal With Children’s Moods and Behavior “After the Holidays”

The excitement of special events, changed routines, extra attention through gifts and treats, can over-stimulate children and adults. Whether children admit it or not, routines bring comfort and stability to the day. Children have a balance of active and quiet time. They are on schedules for meals and snacks. They have more of a chance to have personal space as well as interaction time with family and with their friends at school.

How do we bring the children back to the pace and routine of a January winter day?



- For pre-schoolers follow the routine for snacks, meals, and rest time during the day.
- Early elementary-aged children may benefit from some free time when they get home after the school day. If they need to get back into planning time for homework, make yourself accessible to encourage and answer their questions.

- Encourage them to share what went on at their day care or school. Share what you did during the day.
- Plan time for family activities. Have a game night on the weekend or plan some physical activities such as sledding or skating. As this letter is being written you can still enjoy bicycling in Wisconsin, too. Involve the children in the planning. Maybe an idea from school will be their suggestion.



How to get Children to Help Out with Chores

Teaching children to be responsible and learn what it means to be a part of a family helps them to be accountable for their choices (i.e. doing chores or not) and the consequences of choices (i.e. loss of play time or item because it was not put away or opportunity to play a game because chores got done). Some suggestions to getting children to help with chores:

- Be clear and specific when giving instructions for a task.

- Provide choices in assigning chores. Try a “job jar” or job rotation.
- Avoid nagging about getting the chore done.
- Brainstorm ways to help children remember to get jobs done
- Make sure consistent consequences are in place when a job doesn’t get done
- Rotate the jobs “no one wants to do”
- Try to avoid re-doing a job. Children may not complete a task the way you would do it, but the important thing is that they tried.
- Consider safety when assigning and supervising tasks.
- Offer praise and express appreciation when children complete or attempt tasks. Be specific about what the child did (i.e. “You did a good job putting your books on the shelf.”) Appreciation is a great motivator!

If you CAN TIP

Dress the children appropriately for cold weather and take a quick walk.

When indoors place music, make music, and march to use up energy.

Feed the Birds

Pine Cone Bird Feeders

Supplies: Large Pine Cones
A Plastic Knife
String
Peanut butter
Bird Seed

Tie string around pine cone. Spread peanut butter on pine cone and roll in bird seed. Hang on your Christmas tree just placed outside or on any tree branch.

*Spread peanut butter on dry piece of bread and sprinkle with bird seed. Hang in tree.

If you CAN TIP

Create an Artwork Emergency Kit. Fill it with crayons, colored pencils, scissors, stickers, glue sticks, white & colored paper, stamps, stamp pads (all depending on age of children). When it is time for a sit-down activity pull out the kit and all is ready. No need to search for scissors or stickers.

Snowman Craft

Materials:

- Toilet paper roll
- Paper
- Egg carton
- Black construction paper
- Paper or some red ribbon

Instructions:

- Cover the TP roll with white paper (if it is not already white)
- Cut out a snowman to fit the TP roll standing up
- Cut a black circle from construction paper
- Use one egg carton section for the top of the hat. Glue it upside down to the black circle.
- Use a ribbon for scarf
- Draw eyes, mouth, nose and buttons

