



Barb's Home Notes & Quotes

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September/October 2011

Dear Homemaker:

The nights are getting a little cooler and the days aren't quite so hot. Football excitement is in the air, and it's time for yummy fair food. School bells are ringing and produce is plentiful. Autumn will be here very soon – my favorite time of year!

This fall brings a host of changes in our office. Susan Russell, 4-H Extension Educator, retired June 30 and we will be interviewing for her position very soon. Gary Wilson, Ag and Natural Resources Extension Educator is retiring August 31st, and we hope to fill that position as soon as possible.

On a personal note, our son Matt, was married on August 27th in an outdoor wedding at Plantersville, Texas and his wife, Chelsea, became our first daughter.

Have a wonderful autumn - - enjoying all the sights, sounds and tastes of the season!

Sincerely,

Barbara A. Brahm

Barbara A. Brahm
 OSU Extension Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences
 Hancock County, Maumee Valley EERA

Autumn

I love to see the autumn come
 And touch the wooded hill.
 With flaming torch she lights the trees;
 Above, the haze stands still.
 The world is caught in peace today;
 All time has stopped to greet
 This moment of bright and splendor
 When fall and summer meet.



- - Beulah Fenderson Smith

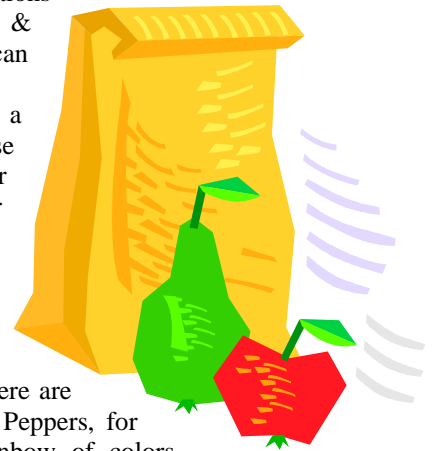
Brown Bag Lunches

By Karen McDougall, Family Nutrition Program Assistant

What's for lunch? Does that sound familiar? It seems we get in a rut for lunch, eating the same thing day after day. But if you use the "My Plate concept" that divides a lunch plate into four sections (vegetables, fruits, grain & protein), the lunch ideas can be endless.

If refrigeration is a problem, you can use freezable ice packs, or freeze 100% fruit juice or a water bottle to keep your lunch cool.

Early fall is a great time to take advantage of all the fresh fruits and vegetables in season. There are so many colors to use! Peppers, for example, come in a rainbow of colors – green, red, yellow or orange. Other colorful vegetables such as broccoli, carrots, cauliflower, cucumbers, radish, cabbage, and tomatoes are wonderful, fresh & healthy lunch options. Do you have a hard time getting these fresh veggies into your diet? Try eating the vegetables with hummus? It's a healthier alternative than cream cheese or sour cream dips. Fresh fruits also bring lots of color variety: melons, strawberries, pears, raspberries, blueberries, cherries and apples are great lunch items. For occasional variety, consider using peanut butter or yogurt as a dip? Purchased "in-season", fresh vegetables and fruits are often quite reasonable. Many times local gardeners are happy to share their excess produce, or check the sale ads for local grocery stores and produce markets to see what's "on sale". Vegetables and fruits should cover more than half of your lunch plate, so be sure you include several options!



When it comes to breads, “make ½ your grains whole grain”. The first ingredient reading “whole grain”... not just “enriched...”. Instead of bread, why not try whole wheat pita bread, tortillas, bagels, low-fat crackers or whole wheat pasta or rice?

Protein can be many things: beef, pork, poultry, tuna or fish, nuts, eggs, peanut butter or nut butters, and tofu.

Dairy foods aid in building strong bones and teeth, and can be easily included by adding yogurt, cheese or low-fat milk to top off your meal.

Now for a few lunch ideas that are safe, nutritious and colorful.

- Whole wheat bread with peanut butter, carrot sticks, radishes, green peppers, melon cubes & low-fat milk.
- Whole-grain pita bread with tuna salad made from low-fat mayo, lettuce, tomato, banana, & ice tea.
- 4 Tablespoons hummus, romaine lettuce, roasted red pepper, shredded carrots, sliced tomato wrapped in a whole wheat tortilla, mixed berries, & water.

Tips for School Success

Every parent wants their child to do well in school and to learn as much as they possibly can. To be good students, children need to develop good study habits at home and at school.

You can help develop good study habits at home by approaching homework with a positive attitude and by providing an atmosphere that encourages learning.



Here are some ideas that can help!

Set a homework schedule. Set up a regular time for homework to be done each day and stick to it. Expect homework and plan it into the daily routine, just like meals, sleep, and recreation.

Plan the time that best suits the child. Some children may work best in the afternoon when they get home from school, while others may need to unwind first.

Provide an appropriate place to study. If possible, choose a place that is quiet and free from distractions such as TV, radio, and other family activities. Make sure there is good lighting.

Provide a desk or table with a comfortable chair for your child. The kitchen table will work if other family members agree to stay out of the room during study time.

Keep basic study supplies handy. Store needed items such as pencils, pencil sharpener, glue, erasers, markers, scissors and paper near the study area. It is easier and faster to do an assignment when everything is at hand. A basket or shoebox can be decorated to store these items.

Help your child keep track of assignments and projects. At the first-grade level, the teacher will usually send home some type of printed daily or weekly homework assignment sheet to let you know what work your child is to do. Be sure to find out from the teacher how and when this information will be provided to you.

Be sure to check the backpack every day and read any messages or papers sent home by the teacher.

Help your child with homework when needed, but do not do it for him/her. The child only learns when they do the work.

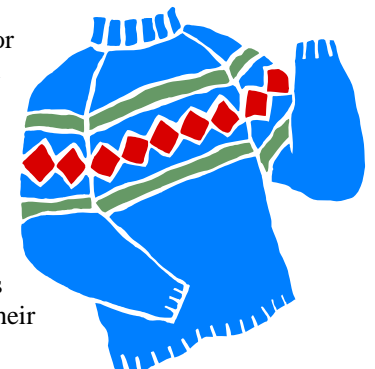
Check over all homework and have your child correct any mistakes. Turn mistakes into positive learning opportunities!

Encourage your child to always do their best. Praise all papers and projects brought home. Display them in a special place for all to see!

Getting Sweaters Ready for Fall

First, clean sweaters before storing them. Otherwise, warns The Soap and Detergent Association, food stains can attract critters that will harm the fabric. Plus, “invisible” stains can oxidize over the summer, ruining a sweater’s appearance. Before cleaning, check and repair snags and split seams. Then, clean them, follow the sweaters’ care label recommendations.

The best method for storing sweaters is flat in an air-tight container. This protects them from dampness and artificial light. Keep the container away from fumes, which can harm some fibers. Never store sweaters by hanging them in a closet. This will stretch and distort their shape.



When it’s time to reclaim the sweaters, take them out of the storage container and air tumble dry them with a dryer sheet. This will remove any wrinkles and fluff them back to life!

Source: Soap and Detergent Association

Sweaters that are properly packed away will be “ready to wear” when that first chilly fall day un-expectedly arrives.

Autumn Energy Tips

Here are many thrifty ways to cut down your energy costs. Most of these suggestions won't cost you one cent, but they will save both money and energy.

- ☑ Close all doors leading from living areas into unheated (or uncooled) basements, garages, attics or crawl spaces.
- ☑ Change furnace filters when dirty. Check monthly.
- ☑ Have your heating system checked before the start of the heating season to make sure it is in top operating condition.
- ☑ Set your thermostat at no higher than 65 degrees in winter and no lower than 78 degrees in summer.
- ☑ If you're going to be away for a weekend, lower your thermostat to 60 degrees. For a longer time, set at 55 degrees.
- ☑ Lower thermostats 5 – 10 degrees at night during heating season.
- ☑ Clean and adjust thermostats and heating stoves at least once a year.
- ☑ Close the damper when the fireplace isn't in use. Or block the opening with a removable cover.
- ☑ Keep all windows and doors shut when furnace or air conditioner is working.
- ☑ Close doors to rooms not being used and shut off heating and cooling outlets. If electric heat, turn thermostat low or off.
- ☑ Keep draperies and shades open in sunny windows; close them at night in winter. In summer, closed draperies will block some of the sun's heat.
- ☑ For comfort in cooler indoor temperatures, use the best insulation of all – warm clothing.
- ☑ Insulate heating ducts or pipes running through unheated spaces with mineral wool-type insulation.
- ☑ Eliminate air leaks in heating pipes by taping joints.
- ☑ Move furniture, curtains, or anything that blocks air circulation from heating and cooling outlets and return air grilles.
- ☑ Keep all heating and cooling equipment clean.

Excerpted from Energy-Saving Tips by Judith Wessel and Roger Miller. FS-4 was prepared & funded through a cooperative effort of the Ohio Department of Energy and Ohio Cooperative Extension Service.

Happiness: How to Relieve Stress "The Old-Fashioned Way"

Stress management has become a \$9-billion-a-year business. Yet there is no evidence that it is working. We seem to have forgotten how to be content.



Important lessons that won't cost you a dime

Appreciate what you have

Before you rush to buy your 16th pair of black pants or 10 more music CDs, ask yourself how much pleasure it will give you – and how that compares to the pleasure you get from sharing a quiet moment with a friend or simply enjoying the starry night sky.

Be eccentric

The pressure to conform creates tremendous stress. You can't be truly happy when you are always worried about other people's opinions of you.

Cultivate community

Strike up a conversation with another person at the bus stop . . . bring a plate of brownies to your neighbor . . . volunteer a few hours a week at the local library . . . visit a co-worker's office instead of calling on the phone.

It's good for your health

A study of Italian immigrants found that they lived longer and had fewer health problems when they lived together in one community after their arrival in the United States. Once they went their separate ways, they started dying earlier. *Another study:* Women with breast cancer who form support groups have higher remission rates.

Take care of your health – but be sensible

People are terrified about bacteria in bathrooms . . . fat in their food . . . chemicals in the water. It is impossible not to be stressed when the simplest things seem fraught with danger. Follow common sense. Pay attention to the news – but don't become obsessed with it.

Savor simple pleasures

The first taste of coffee in the morning . . . seeing flowers bloom in your garden . . . a quiet meal with your spouse.

Life isn't all about business. It's about waking up every morning and feeling grateful that you are about to have another good day.

Source: Bottom Line/Personal September 2003

Trick-or-Treating?

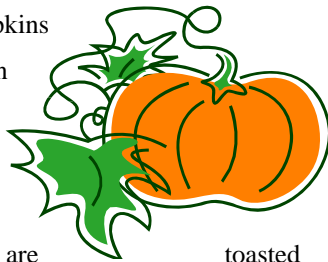
Autumn events like Halloween and Harvest Day are fun times to dress up in costumes, go trick-or-treating, attend parties and eat delicious treats. These events are also opportunities to provide nutritious snacks, get physical activity, and focus on safety. Below are tips to help make the festivities fun and safe for trick-or-treaters and party guests.

- S** Swords and knives should be short, soft, & flexible.
- A** Avoid trick-or-treating alone. Walk in groups or with a trusted adult.
- F** Fasten reflective tape to costumes and bags to help drivers see you.
- E** Examine all treats for choking hazards before eating them. Limit the amount eaten.
- H** Hold a flashlight while trick-or-treating to help see.
- A** Always test make-up in a small area first. Remove it before bedtime.
- L** Look both ways before crossing the street. Use established crosswalks.
- L** Lower your risk for serious eye injury by not wearing decorative contact lenses.
- O** Only walk on sidewalks or on the far edge of the road facing traffic.
- W** Wear well-fitted masks, costumes, and shoes to avoid blocked vision, trips, and falls.
- E** Eat only factory-wrapped treats. Avoid eating homemade treats.
- E** Enter homes only if you're with a trusted adult.
- N** Never walk near lit candles or luminaries. Be sure to wear flame-resistant costumes.

Source: *Center for Disease Control and Prevention*

Toasted Pumpkin Seeds

Fall has arrived, and with it . . . the pumpkin season. There are always plenty of pumpkins to carve up around Halloween time, and a great way to make use of the pumpkin seeds is to eat them, salted and toasted. If the shells are on and are properly, they are wonderfully crunchy and easy to eat. The trick? Boil the seeds in salted water first . . . then toast them in the oven.



Toasted Pumpkin Seeds continued . . .

Ingredients: One medium-sized pumpkin
Salt
Olive Oil

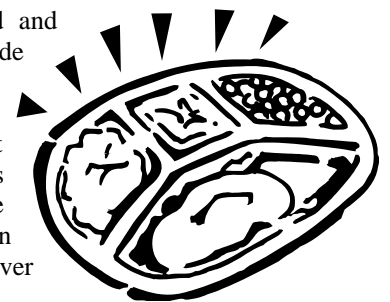
Method:

- Preheat oven to 400° F. Cut open the pumpkin and use a strong metal spoon to scoop out the insides. Separate the seeds from the stringy core. Rinse the seeds.
- In a small saucepan, add the seeds to water (about 2 cups of water per ½ cup of seeds). Add 1 ½ tsp. of salt for every cup of water (more if you like your seeds saltier). Bring to a boil. Let simmer for 10 minutes. Remove from heat and drain.
- Spread about a Tablespoon of olive oil over the bottom of a roasting pan. Spread the seeds out over the roasting pan, all in one layer. Bake on the top rack until the seeds begin to brown, 10 – 20 minutes. When browned to your satisfaction, remove from the oven and let the pan cool on a rack. Let the seeds cool all the way down before eating. Either crack to remove the inner seed or eat whole.

Source *Simply Recipes*

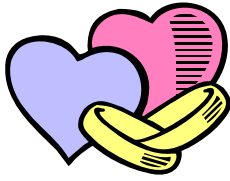
Packaging Leftovers for the Freezer

You have just prepared and eaten a delicious homemade meal, but have a lot of it left over. What do you do with it? Instead of throwing it away, freezing it for later is always a good option! Here are a few things to keep in mind when preparing leftover food for the freezer:



- Cool all foods before packing.
- Cold foods should be packed tightly into containers with these characteristics:
 - Moisture and vapor resistant
 - Durable and leak-free
 - Resistant to oil, grease, and water
 - Not susceptible to becoming brittle and cracking at low temperatures
 - Able to protect foods from absorbing other flavors or odors
 - Easy to seal
 - Easy to label
- Allow ample space between food and closure.
- Press out excess air before sealing bags.
- Label each package with the date and number of servings.

Source: *Ohio State University Extension*



Strategies for Strengthening Midlife Marriage

A vital and satisfying marriage requires marital maintenance.

Here are a few ways to maintain that marriage potential.

Spend Time Together – It is ideal for a couple to spend time together when they are at their best (e.g. well-rested, alert, calm). Scheduling time with your spouse may reduce the chance of it being “leftover time”. Make this time together fun by enjoying simple things like a walk, a sunset, or a cup of cappuccino.

Common Goals and Teamwork – It is essential to support each other in the achievement of individual and marital goals. Revisit and revise your goals periodically to adapt to changing life events. Use these goals and values to set priorities and make decisions as a team. Strengthening marital teamwork will encourage cooperation rather than competition.

Communication and Expectations – Communication is a vital component of a successful relationship. Couples must listen attentively, avoid blame and sarcasm, and validate each other’s feelings. Try not to assume that you know your spouse’s preferences and opinions. Ask questions to clarify each other’s position on issues before decisions are made. Each partner has an obligation to verbalize his or her own expectations to avoid misunderstandings.

Appreciation and Affection – Sometimes partners who have been married a long time may unknowingly take each other for granted. Simple expressions of appreciation can be forgotten. Showing appreciation and affection are powerful methods of strengthening a marriage. Love must be shown in words and actions.

Sexual Fulfillment – Sexual responsiveness can also contribute to a satisfying marital union. Sexual difficulties at midlife are most often the result of normal physical and emotional changes that reduce desire. There are many ways to compensate and adjust to these diminishing desires. For instance, exercise and good eating habits can enhance sexuality. It is important to communicate with your spouse about how you feel and what you desire.

Agreement on Gender Roles – Even if a couple has worked out their gender roles (e.g. who does what) for the early years of marriage, midlife may be a time when partners want to revise their role assignments. Reduced work schedules, new tasks added to the workload, retirement, or caring for aging parents, for example, may require renegotiating roles and responsibilities.

Commitment to Growth – Examine your commitment to each other and make a commitment to grow together for the second half of your marriage. Let go of disappointments in each other and look forward to the second half of married life, making it the best it can be!

Because marriage is a constantly evolving process, couples need to learn new skills as well as sharpen existing ones to navigate the changes of a midlife marriage.

Most couples have a great deal of unrealized potential in their relationship, but it takes a lifetime of sharing and caring to achieve it. The goal of marital maintenance is to develop, through a process of growth and behavior change, the potential for a mutually satisfying and creative relationship.

The potential for a stronger relationship is realized as spouses develop a realistic appreciation of their partner as a person and value each other’s contributions to the marriage. Through communication and mutual sharing, couples are well on their way to enriching and strengthening their marriages.

Excerpted from “Enhancing Midlife Marriage” 2008. By Carol Chandler, OSU Extension Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences in Union County

and Joyce Fittro, OSU Extension Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences in Delaware Co. FLM-FS-3-02-R08 A Fact Sheet publication of Ohio State University Extension available on the internet at <http://ohioline.osu.edu/flm02/pdf/FS03.pdf>

Memo from Your Child

Don't put me off when I ask questions. If you do, I may stop asking and seek my information elsewhere.

Ten Steps for Step Families



By Dr. Jeannette Lofas
[Stepfamily Foundation](http://StepfamilyFoundation.com)

Step 1. Recognize that the stepfamily will not and can not function as does a natural family. It has its own special state of dynamics and behaviors. Once learned, these behaviors can become predictable and positive. Do not try to overlay the expectations and dynamics of the intact or natural family onto the stepfamily.

Step 2. Recognize the hard fact that the children are not yours and they never will be. We are stepparents, not replacement parents. Mother and father (no matter how AWFUL the natural parents) are sacred words and feelings. We are stepparents, a step removed, yet in this position can still play a significant role in the development of the child.

Step 3. Super stepparenting doesn't work. Go slow. Don't come on too strong.

Step 4. Discipline styles must be sorted out by the couple.

The couple, ideally with the help of a Stepfamily Foundation trained professional, needs to immediately and specifically work out what the children's duties and responsibilities are. What is acceptable behavior and what are the consequences when children misbehave? Generally, in the beginning, we suggest that the biological parent does the disciplining as much as is feasible. The couple together specifically works out jobs, expected behaviors and family etiquette.

Step 5. Establish clear job descriptions between the parent, stepparent and respective children.

What specifically is the job of each one of us in this household? We need to be as detailed as we are in business.

Step 6. Know that unrealistic expectations beget rejections and resentments.

There is no model for the step relationship except for the wicked stepchild and invariably cruel stepmother of fairy tales. Note the absence of myth around the stepfather. It is vital for the survival of the stepfather to be able to see and delineate expectations for each member of the family, especially the primary issues of upset in step: e.g., money, discipline, the prior spouse, visitation, authority, emotional support, territory and custody.

Step 7. There are no ex-parents . . . only ex-spouses.

Begin to get information on how to best handle the prior spouse.

Step 8. Be prepared for conflicting pulls of sexual and biological energies within the step relationship.

In the intact family, the couple comes together to have a child. The child is part of both parents, generally pulling the parents' energy together for the well-being of the child. In step, blood and sexual ties can polarize a family in opposite energies and directions.

Step 9. The conflict of loyalties must be recognized right from the beginning.

The conflict is particular to step and is a round robin of confused emotions. Often, just as the child in step begins to have warm feelings toward the stepparent, the child will pull away and negatively act out. He/she feels something like this: "If I love you, that means I do not love my real parent." The feelings are normal and must be dealt with. The pulls of "Who am I loyal to first?" go all the way around in the stepfamily.

Step 10. Guard your sense of humor and use it.

The step situation is filled with the unexpected. Sometimes we don't know whether to laugh or to cry. Try humor.

Boost Savings by Depositing Coins during "Count Your Coin Week"

By Melanie Gerlach, Program Coordinator
Hancock County Saves

Count Your Coin Week is a great way to encourage your friends and family to start or continue positive saving habits.

Hancock County Saves, a program of Ohio State University Extension Hancock County, will be hosting its annual Count Your Coin Week, October 17-22, 2011. In a stressful economic time, saving is even more important for financial stability. Count Your Coin Week

is a week dedicated to encouraging Hancock County area residents to gather up loose change and put it to work toward saving and debt reduction goals. It is estimated that over \$10 billion dollars in loose change are lost in homes across the US. This amounts to about \$99 in coins per household stashed away in jars, mugs, couch cushions and desk drawers.

Events for the week will take place at area participating financial institutions and will feature free coin counting and prize incentives for children and adults. Anyone making a deposit of coins at any of the participating banks and credit unions is eligible to participate in the activities and prize drawings. Children 18 and under who deposit coins during Count Your Coin Week will be entered to win a prize valued at \$100 and other prizes from Hancock County Saves. Adults who deposit coins will be entered to win a \$500 payment toward a bill of their choice such as a credit card, mortgage, heating bill or loan.

Last year the 11 financial institutions participating took in over \$8,000 in loose coin with 140 deposits. Hancock County Saves is asking that you consider taking part in Count Your Coin Week and bring in your loose change to your financial institution. We would like to increase the number of participants this year. Please help us promote the valuable lesson of planning ahead and saving for a healthy financial future and encourage positive saving habits.

For more information, and to be a part of this worthwhile event, please contact Melanie Gerlach at OSU Extension – Hancock County, 419-422-3851 or send e-mail to gerlach.23@osu.edu

Hancock County Saves is generously supported by United Way of Hancock County and is recognized as a Partner Agency. Visit us on the web at <http://hancocksaves.org>



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