

Jean's Journal

Jean Wheelock
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Happy springtime to everyone
Jean Wheelock,
FCE Council
Chair

Kind of hard to think spring because as I write this we just had six inches of snow. So as I look out on the brilliant glistening snow, doesn't seem as though the hidden flowers will soon peek through. As I took a walk this morning to check out

who had visited our fields during the evening/night hours, I saw our maple tree in full bloom. What a beautiful sight of the reddish buds bursting open against the blue of the sky. I hope all of us can take time this spring to just walk quietly and observe how nature renews itself each year (and in the process we can renew ourselves).

Our spring council meeting has an interesting speaker. LaVonne Uffelman has a collection of buttons and presented a fun program.

We are still collecting embroidery thread. Please drop it by the extension office.

FCE has a theme for this year, "double our membership in 2000." So clubs, let's promote our organization and see if Nebraska and especially Lancaster County can do just that.

Have fun digging in the soil, planting all those wonderful seeds or plants, so we can later enjoy the fruits of our labor.

Sending messages of love

Every child (and adult) needs to be reminded often that people love and value him or her. Often we get busy and forget to send messages of love to our children or we send messages poorly or we send only angry messages.

Sometimes we send a message of love, but the child does not get it. It is as though we are talking different languages. There are at least three "languages" of love: showing, telling and touching.

A child who likes show-me messages may want you to do things for her. She may want you to wash the dishes for her, to buy her a gift, or to take time with her, to take her for ice cream, or to repair her bike. A tell-me child wants to hear

words like: "I love you." "You're important to me." "I love to be with you." A touch-me child may want a parent to hug him, rock him, cuddle him, or just hold his hand.

You can learn to send the right messages of love to your children. As you read the following list, think of each of your children and consider whether this method (or something like it) would be effective in sending messages of love.

Ways to send messages of love:

- Say, "I love you."
- Take a bike ride together.
- Hug the child.
- Take a nature walk together.
- Say, "I sure enjoy being with you."

Keep it simple

Simplifying your life as a parent is not about being better organized. Simplifying is about finding time for the essentials of parenting—fostering independence, demonstrating understanding and providing lots of love. Simplifying is about helping you free up time by making family life easier and more fun. Here are a few suggestions:

Simpler meal times: Creating four separate meals at different times because one child doesn't like what you're serving or another wants to eat earlier becomes very complicated. An easier way is to try to arrange a dinnertime that everyone can make. If schedules conflict, set aside at least one night a week when family dinner takes precedence over all other activities. On nights when someone must eat later than the rest of the family, make a meal that is easily reheated. If a child doesn't like what is being served, he or she can make a sandwich or have a bowl of cereal. Extend your time together as a family by having kids help you with the food preparation and clean-up.

Simpler household chores: Everything your child can learn to do for himself is one less thing you will have to do for him. When your child learns to do something for himself, you have given your child the gift of independence. To make everyone's life simpler, institute some important household rules like:

If you use a dish or glass, wash it and put it away or put it in the dishwasher.

Eating is allowed only in the kitchen, dining room or outdoors.

Wipe off counters after you've used them.

Simpler bedtime: To make bedtimes simpler and less stressful, develop a routine. Routines work because they prepare children for sleep and keep bedtime from being a surprise. Choose a reasonable hour that fits your schedule and stick to it. If a child gets out of bed, calmly and lovingly return him to his bed again—and leave. Do not get involved in another bedtime story, a third glass of water or more back rubs. If you do, constant demands for these things will continue to stretch out bedtimes. If you firmly set washup time one-half hour before bedtime, getting the lights out will be easier.

Simpler laundry: Getting the laundry done can be frustrating and time-consuming. Wash clothes only when they are dirty and not just because they've been worn. Whenever possible, use shortcuts. Examples:

- Buy pairs of identical socks—no more time spent sorting and pairing.
- To avoid losing socks, put clean socks in a zippered mesh bag in each child's drawer. As kids wear the socks, they place the dirty ones in another mesh bag. When the dirty-sock bag is full, just throw the entire mesh bag—with socks inside—into the washing machine.
- Place clothes in the hamper right side out to save time folding.
- Create separate hampers for different items, such as towels,

whites, etc. The hampers will make laundry easier to sort.

Simpler household organization: The less stuff you have in the house, the fewer things you need to organize and the simpler your life will be. Have kids help you decide what clothes and toys to give away. This trains them to think of others. If you haven't used an item in a year, get rid of it. You can probably get rid of 50 percent of your stuff. Teach kids not to take out one toy or activity until the prior one is put away and establish a place for everything.

Simpler life: Stop trying to do it all. Once you realize that you can't clean the house the way you'd like every night, you'll stop wearing yourself out or irritating your spouse and kids by trying. If the phone rings while you're making dinner or reading to a child, don't pick it up. Let your answering machine get it.

Simpler discipline: How you treat your children will be reflected in the way they treat you. Be firm, not mean. Don't yell. Be polite and respectful, and trust your kids to do the right thing. For example, when children fight over favorite seats in the car, tell them they will have to take turns. Instead of blowing your stack, let them decide who will sit in the choice seat first.

Take a few minutes and think what it is in your life that you can simplify and do it.

Adapted from Bottom Line Personal, Vol. 19, No. 7, April, 1998. (LJ)

Family Living



HOUSEHOLD HINTS



by Lorene Bartos, Extension Educator

For spring house cleaning an all-purpose cleaner will do a good job on painted wood, but not on unfinished or varnished wood. For these surfaces, use a cleaning and/or polishing product formulated for wood. Similarly, all-purpose cleaners are not recommended for use on carpets. These products may affect the carpet dyes or remove the soil guard. For safe, effective cleaning on carpets, use a carpet cleaner.

All-purpose and multi-purpose cleaners work well on a multitude of surfaces and are truly convenient to use. The label directions will specify the surfaces on which they can be used. (LB)

Eliminate negative discipline

Some parents use negative discipline approaches to control their children's behavior. This often results in children who are angry and aggressive or have low self-esteem. Some of these negative behaviors include:

- Commands: "Go over there and sit down!"
- Forbidding statements: "Don't touch that!" or "Don't do that!"
- Criticizing statements: "Oh no, you're going to spill that!"
- Belittling statements: "When will you ever learn to get ready for bed on time?"
- Threatening statements: "If you don't eat right now, you

will stay home from the movies."

Unreasonable punishment: "Go to your room for the entire day."

Explosive anger: Emotional and verbal expression of negative feelings.

There are more positive ways to deal with anger and frustration. Some parents tell children, "I need a moment to calm down, I'm very angry right now." Others cool down by leaving the room for a few minutes. Some parents describe their feelings to their children to help them understand what annoys them. (LJ)

10 simple phrases that help build character

1. Words that Affirm—"You did a great job."
2. Words of Encouragement—"I know you can do it."
3. Words that say Thanks—"You're really appreciated."
4. Words for Sagging Spirits—"What can I do to help?"
5. Words of Celebration—"Congratulations! You did it!"
6. Words that Show Interest—"I'd like to know more about you."
7. Words for Sharing—"What's the good news?"
8. Words that Heal Relationships—"I'm sorry, I was wrong."
9. Words of Laughter—"Want to hear something funny?"
10. Words that Teach—"Let me show you how."

Adapted from Hal Urban author of "Twenty Things I Want My Kids to Know". (LJ)

Do you recognize any of these people?

The Yes-People
They agree with any commitment, promise any deadline, yet...they rarely deliver. While they're always sorry (and often charming), you just can't trust them to do what they say.

The No-People
Negative and pessimistic, they're quick to point out why something won't work. Worse, they're inflexible and resist change. They can throw a wet blanket over an entire organization.

The Know-It-All
They're experts on everything. They can be arrogant and they usually have an opinion on any issue. Yet, when they're wrong they pass the buck or become defensive.

The Complainers
Is anything ever right with these people? You get the feeling they'd rather complain about things than change them. Even though they're often right, their negativity and nit-picking put people off.

The Passives
You can spot them with their dead-pan faces, their weak handshakes, their blank stares. Avoiding conflict and controversy at all costs, these people never offer ideas or opinions and never let you know where you stand.

The Dictators
They bully, cajole and intimidate. They're blunt to the point of being insulting. They're constantly demanding and brutally critical. These folks cause ulcers.

Do you recognize yourself in any of the above? If so, are there more positive ways to share with those around you? (LJ)