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Director

1 Greetings

Family Development

3 Spanking as a Tool of Discipline: Promises in Use and Effectiveness
4 Youth Suicide Rate in Rural Areas is Nearly Double the Rate in Cities

Nutrition Education

5 Fast Food or Sports Supplements: Which is Better for Post-Exercise Recovery?
6 Night Owls More Likely to be Less Healthy
6 Watching Television Cooking Shows May Result in Gaining Weight

Personal and Family Finance

7 Financial Well-Being: What it Means and How to Help
8 Understanding and Improving Consumer Health in America
Greetings

Crazy busy! Who coined that phrase? I certainly do not know, but it describes the last few weeks in the Margaret Ritchie School of Family and Consumer Sciences. It was good to spend the first of the month in Boise with so many of our county faculty at Annual Extension Conference. It is always fun to connect with everyone, and it is always great to hear what everyone has going on in their counties. I really enjoy the updates given by specialists and county faculty. I would love to be a student in one of the pilot classes for the potato curriculum. The personal and family finance updates hit a nerve (good one) with me as much of their sharing brought to light personal financial issues I let slip since our move to Idaho.

When the In-service planning committee requested some of the FCS swag for the attendees, I had no idea it would be so popular! We have had several requests for items since conference. It looks like we will be able to fill all requests to date. And, I was concerned we would still have salad containers five years from now. So, I am glad you all enjoyed your special gifts and, you can use them to help promote our FCS Extension programs throughout the state.

Two weeks after Annual Extension Conference ended we held our Margaret Ritchie Distinguished Speaker Series event here on campus. Due to an unexpected medical issue one of the three speakers I hoped could participate was unable to do so. Since I participated in the program that speaker founded, I filled in for her. It was quite an honor to share the microphone with Linda Eagle and Stephanie Pollaro. It was also good to bring awareness of this growing concern to the UI campus.

The topic, though not an easy one to discuss, raised a darker side of childhood. The week of April 12th through the 18th was the Week of the Young Child. The panel presentation occurred on Thursday afternoon. Friday afternoon brought to light a fun and educational side of young children. Under the leadership of Dr. Nancy Deringer the Child, Family and Consumer Studies unit sponsored Block Fest. This provided a wonderful opportunity for community parents and children to experience learning fun playing with blocks provides. Several students in the CFCS program received training and were paired with members of the UI football team to supervise the different block and activity areas. I am not sure who had more fun the children, the parents, the FCS students, the observers, or the football players. Our Week of the Young Child activities ended on Saturday with the School’s Alumni Brunch in the morning and the Moscowrade Show that evening.

The Alumni Brunch is always a fun time. I hope our alumnae enjoy it as much as I do. It was really nice to have several of our students attending this year, many of who will soon join the ranks of our alumnae. For those who are not familiar with Moscowrade, it is a wearable art fashion show featuring the design work of students in our Apparel, Textiles and Design program, faculty, and members of the community. The proceeds from the show go to help support Alternatives to Violence on the Palouse. Not only do our students have the opportunity to showcase their work and experience having their work judged, they also support a very important service in the community.

I am happy to report that we ended this past busy week with interviewing candidates for the Consumer Food Safety Specialist position. We interviewed two strong candidates and I hope that within the next month I will have some good news to share.
want to thank the search committee for their dedicated effort in this process: Mike Howell, committee chair; Joey Puetz; Martha Raidl; Laura Saunt; Grace Whitman; and Cinda Williams. They started this process early fall, but due to some delays in the approval process they were not able to really start the search process until late fall semester. So keep your fingers crossed that everything else falls into place so an offer can be made soon.
Spanking as a Tool of Discipline: Promises in Use and Effectiveness

A recent study based on real-time audio recordings of parents practicing corporal punishment discovered that spanking was far more common than parents admit, that children were hit for trivial misdeeds and that children misbehaved again within 10 minutes of being punished.

Advocates of corporal punishment have outlined best practices for responsible spanking. But real-time audio from this study revealed that parents fail to follow the guidelines, said psychologist George Holden, who is lead author on the study and a parenting and child development expert at Southern Methodist University, Dallas.

The real-time audio interactions revealed that parents were not always calm, as the guidelines recommend, but instead were often angry when they spanked or hit their child; they didn’t spank as a last resort; and they gave spankings for minor infractions, not just serious misbehavior. And while many spanking advocates recommend hitting children no more than twice, parents in the audio recordings were slapping and hitting their children more often.

“From the audio, we heard parents hitting their children for the most extraordinarily mundane offenses, typically violations of social conventions,” Holden said. “Also, corporal punishment wasn’t being used as a last resort. On average, parents hit or spanked just half a minute after the conflict began.”

Parents who used corporal punishment in the audio commonly violated three of the six “use” guidelines the researchers examined: spank infrequently, use it only for serious misbehavior, and only as a last resort. “The recordings show that most parents responded impulsively or emotionally, rather than being intentional with their discipline,” said Holden, who favors alternatives to corporal punishment.

The findings are reported in “Eavesdropping on the Family: A Pilot Investigation of Corporal Punishment in the Home,” which was published in the Journal of Family Psychology.

Parents agreed to wear tape recorders to capture home interactions. The recordings captured parent-child interactions in 33 families over the course of four to six evenings. Most recorded parents were mothers at home with their children after a day’s work. The recordings captured 41 instances of corporal punishment, mainly during everyday activities such as fixing supper and bathing children.

More than 80 percent of the moms were married and had completed more education than the general population. About 60 percent were white and worked outside the home, and their children averaged just shy of 4 years old.

In 90 percent of the incidents, noncompliance was the immediate cause, such as sucking fingers, eating improperly, getting out of a chair, and going outside without permission. In 49 percent of the incidents, the parent sounded angry prior to spanking or hitting. On average, less than 30 seconds elapsed from the time when parents initiated nonviolent discipline to when they used corporal punishment. In 30 of the 41 incidents, the children misbehaved again within 10 minutes of being hit or spanked. The youngest child hit was 7 months old. One mother hit her child 11 times in a row.

Most remarkably, the researchers noted an unusual finding: The rate of corporal punishment exceeded
estimates in other studies, which relied on parents self-reporting. Those studies found that American parents of a 2-year-old typically report they spank or slap about 18 times a year. “The average rate we observed using the real-time audio equates to an alarming 18 times a week,” said Holden.

Source:  www.smuresearch.com, April 2014.

Keyword: parenting.

Youth Suicide Rate in Rural Areas is Nearly Double the Rate in Cities

The adolescent and young-adult suicide rate in the United States was almost twice as high in rural settings than in urban areas between 1996 and 2010, and new research suggests that the gap appears to be widening. Of the nearly 67,000 suicides analyzed, the rate of suicide for both males and females living in rural areas was about double the rate in cities.

The research, published in JAMA Pediatrics, also showed that gun use has decreased and that hanging has become a more common method of youth suicide. Suicide rates by firearm and hanging were both disproportionately higher in rural areas than in urban regions for both sexes.

“These kinds of surveillance studies can really help us identify areas to target our prevention efforts, and it’s clear we need to target rural areas for primary prevention of suicide,” said Cynthia Fontanella, of The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, and lead author of the study.

Fontanella and colleagues analyzed mortality data from the National Center for Health Statistics National Vital Statistics System. Between 1996 and 2010, 66,595 youths between age 10 and 24 died by suicide in the United States. Among males, the rural versus urban suicide rate was 19.93 and 10.31 per 100,000, respectively, and for females, 4.40 and 2.39 per 100,000, respectively. When the researchers controlled for a number of other potential contributing factors, the rural and urban suicide rate disparity increased over time for males. The analysis also showed the suicide rate for young males is four times higher than for young females.

Clinicians have identified many risk factors for suicide, but two in particular stand out, said John Campo, chair of psychiatry and behavioral health at Wexner Medical Center and senior author of the paper. About 90 percent of people who commit suicide suffer from a major psychiatric problem such as depression or bipolar disorder. Substance abuse, which can increase impulsivity and interfere with mood, is also frequently linked to suicides.

Between the dispersed nature of rural populations and a severe shortage of mental health practitioners, access to care is a major problem. “If a rural child is depressed, it’s much harder to get state-of-the-art care. And it’s especially difficult to receive psychotherapy in a rural area,” Campo said.

Of the 1,669 federally designated shortage areas for mental health services in the United States, 85 percent are in rural regions. And more than half of the counties in this country—all rural—do not have a single psychiatrist, psychologist or social worker serving the region.


Keywords: children at risk, youth.
Fast Food or Sports Supplements: Which is Better for Post-Exercise Recovery?

During a grueling workout, athletes rely on glycogen (which is stored mainly in their muscles) as their fuel source to keep them going. At the end of a workout, most of their glycogen stores are depleted and many of them routinely consume powders, energy bars, protein drinks, and supplements as a way to help them recover and rebuild glycogen stores.

Is a sports supplement diet the best way to rebuild glycogen stores and does it help athletic performance? That’s what researchers at the University of Montana studied; they wanted to find out if there was a difference in athletes’ exercise performance and glycogen recovery when they consumed either a sports supplement diet (SS) or a Fast Food (FF) diet. The SS diet consisted of Gatorade, chewable energy cubes, organic peanut butter and power bars. The FF diet consisted of hotcakes, hash browns, hamburgers, fries and Coke. Both diets had similar amounts of calories, carbohydrates, and protein but the fast food diet was much higher in fat and sodium.

They had eleven elite athletes complete two exercise periods and two recovery periods that included the following:

- 1st exercise period: Ride a stationary bike for 90 minutes to deplete glycogen stores
- 1st recovery period: Have a four hour recovery period during which:
  - half of the subjects consume a SS or FF diet immediately after the ride and two hours later
- 2nd exercise period: Ride on a stationary bike for 12.4 miles as fast as they can
- 2nd recovery period: Same as above

One week later the athletes repeated the experimental trial on the opposite diet.

The results showed there were no differences in blood glucose and insulin levels as well as glycogen recovery levels when athletes consumed either the Sports Supplement or Fast Food diet. In addition, diet made no difference in the length of time it took them to complete the second exercise period, i.e. the 12.4 mile cycle test. These results should make athletes using sports supplements wonder if it is worth the extra cost.

Lead researcher Michael Cramer stated, “these data suggest that a wide range of appropriate nutritional strategies can be implemented to initiate exercise recovery and prepare for subsequent bouts of performance.” He did not claim that fast food is healthy, but it could be an alternative to using expensive sports supplements, as an aid to muscle recovery.
The bottom line is that indulging in fast food occasionally will not hurt athletic performance.


Keywords: physical activity, diet.

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**Night Owls More Likely to be Less Healthy**

Researchers in Korea studied the sleep habits, blood lipids, muscle mass and body fat of 1,620 subjects between the ages of 47 and 59. They completed a sleeping habits questionnaire that covered their sleep-wake cycle, sleep quality and lifestyle habits which included physical activity. Their cholesterol and triglyceride levels were determined from blood samples, and body scans were used to measure total body fat, lean mass, and abdominal visceral fat.

Based on the questionnaire results, 480 participants were classified as morning people, rising early and being more active in the morning. Ninety five were categorized as being night owls, sleeping late and being more active in the evenings, and late at night. The remaining participants had sleep-wake cycles and activity patterns that were between these two extremes.

The individuals who were night owls were younger but were significantly less healthy than the morning people. They had higher levels of body fat and serum triglycerides, and more likely to have diabetes and sarcopenia or loss of muscle mass. Researchers found that these differences occurred, even when the morning risers and night owls had the same amount of sleep.

Lead researcher Dr Nan Hee Kim of Korea University College of Medicine in Ansan, Korea theorized that these differences could be due to, "night owls' tendency to have poorer sleep quality and to engage in unhealthy behaviors like smoking, late-night eating and a sedentary lifestyle."


Keywords: sleep, health.

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**Watching Television Cooking Shows May Result in Gaining Weight**

Watching cooking shows on television and making some of those very calorie-rich recipes may result in gaining weight. That’s what researchers at the University of Vermont found.

In this study, researchers asked 501 women, ranging in age from 20-35 years-old, where they obtained information about new foods, how frequently they cooked from scratch, and their height and weight. They found that women who got most of their food information from food television and cooked recipes from scratch weighed about 10 pounds more than women who obtained information from family and friends, magazines, newspapers and cooking classes. Those who cooked from scratch but didn’t watch food TV also did not weigh more.

Lead researcher Lizzy Pope suggests that, "Food TV should be a viewing experience only, not a cooking experience, and that viewers should learn to modify recipes to be more healthful or find recipes from other sources."


Keyword: cooking.
Financial Well-Being: What it Means and How to Help

Since my dissertation entitled, “Testing a Model of Financial Well-Being,” I have been interested in what financial well-being really means and how it can be measured. I am not alone and the quest to explicitly define and measure it continues.

Many experts contend that the ultimate measure of success for financial literacy efforts should be improvement in financial well-being. A recent report from the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) provides a conceptual framework for defining and measuring success in financial education by delivering a proposed definition of financial well-being as “…a state of being wherein you 1) have control over day-to-day, month-to-month finances; have the capacity to absorb a financial shock; are on track to meet your financial goals; and have the financial freedom to make the choices that allow you to enjoy life.” The definition was formulated based on research which included: 1) interviews with working age consumers, older consumers, and financial professionals to determine how people experience financial well-being and 2) an analysis of existing studies of financial literacy, psychology, decision making, and related fields. Insights gained led to the following list of factors that contribute to a person’s financial well-being at a specified moment: social and economic environment, personality and attitudes, decision context, knowledge and skills, behavior, and available opportunities.

The researchers acknowledge “…that at any given time, some factors of financial well-being are within a person’s control, and some aren’t.” They also note that the research is ongoing, but in the meantime offer suggestions in four areas where practitioners and educators can continue to help improve consumers’ well-being:

Balance: Live Within Their Means—Practitioners can help people develop sound habits and make conscious adjustments in day-to-day money management: 1) Practice contentment and cut down mindless spending; 2) Stay out of debt and use credit responsibly when it’s needed; and 3) Act like an entrepreneur in generating income and avoiding interruptions in paid work.

Ask: Gather Information and Evaluate the Results—Practitioners can help people ask good questions, find facts, and apply them effectively: 1) Identify situations when they need financial information; 2) Explore how to get trustworthy information; and 3) Decide what choice makes the most sense for them.

Plan: Focus on the Future—Practitioners can help people connect their aspirations for the future to concrete plans: 1) Identify specific, realistic goals; 2) Make step-by-step plans to reach those goals; and 3) Feel confident about their ability to make a difference in their own lives.

Act: Set Themselves Up for Success—Practitioners can help people carry out their decisions consistently: 1) Figure out how to take the steps needed to put decisions into action; 2) Determine how to motivate themselves to take those actions; and 3) Take advantage of existing ways—from auto-pay to peer support—to simplify staying on track.


Keywords: financial well-being, financial literacy, finances.
Understanding and Improving Consumer Health in America

“Financial health is achieved when an individual’s day-to-day financial system functions well and increases the likelihood of financial resilience and opportunity” according to the report of a recent survey commissioned by the Center for Financial Services Innovation. Further, the report states that “While income significantly influences financial health, consumer behaviors—particularly those related to planning ahead and saving—also have a significant impact...” Based on the analysis of a survey of financial behaviors and attitudes, the authors describe three financial health tiers of consumers: 1) the Financially Healthy tier (43.5%) which exhibits positive behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes across all elements of financial health; 2) the Financially Coping tier (28.2%) which tends to display more moderate behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes; and 3) the Financially Vulnerable tier (28.3%) which tends to have less healthy behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes. Each tier was further sub-divided into two or three segments.

The authors acknowledge that the different components of financial health are interrelated. “…managing one’s day-to-day financial life is intimately connected to building a financial cushion for the future and being well-positioned to seize opportunities to achieve financial security and mobility.”

The survey was conducted from June to August 2014, yielding 7,152 responses from adults residing in the United States at all levels of income. However, consumers with annual incomes under $50,000 were oversampled to provide robust data on lower-income consumers. It is challenging for the Financially Vulnerable tier, including the Financially Unengaged (15.9%) and the Financially at Risk (12.4%) segments, to manage their day-to-day financial lives, to establish a cushion for financial resilience, and to position themselves for financial security and mobility.

The Financially Coping tier, including the Financially Striving (16.1%) and the Financially Tenuous (12.1%) segments, are more likely to struggle with management of their day-to-day financial lives, to have less of a financial cushion for an emergency, and to be less well positioned to take advantage of financial opportunities than the Financially Healthy tier.

The authors suggest that, “while increased income might help, a household’s financial health might improve with the adoption of beneficial financial habits, even if its income stays the same. Together, financial products and services, social programs, and policies that enable individuals to cultivate these behaviors can be instrumental in helping households achieve financial health.”

The Center for Financial Services Innovation is a new organization to me. However, Jeanne Hogarth, Vice President, is a former Extension Specialist at Cornell University and former consumer behavior researcher with the Federal Reserve Board. It is important to note that the Center is supporting consumer-focused policies and advocating that consumers should have access to high-quality financial products and services. The potential for bias may exist as the research is used to determine what types of financial products and services are determined to be consumer focused and high-quality.


Keywords: financial health, behaviors, finances.