



July 2015 | A Special Supplement to
The Easley Progress, The Newberry Observer,
The Pickens Sentinel, Powdersville Post,
The Herald Independent & The Union Daily Times



Family & Parenting

Managing Money
How to build your household budget

Mastering the Balancing Act
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Weeknight activities the
whole family can enjoy





"Sunglasses protect a child's sensitive eyes from the sun's radiation".

Dr. Kara Jo Dodgens, Clemson Eye

Summer Safety: Eye Health for Kids

Summertime means a lot of outdoor activity for your kids. And although you want them to have fun, you worry about their safety. Along with concerns about sunburns, cuts from broken shells on the beach, and dehydrating from over activity in the hot sun, are you also thinking about their eyes?

Children are outside a lot more than adults and because of that, experts say kids get anywhere from 25 to 50 percent of their *lifetime* exposure to damaging ultraviolet (UV) rays by the time they are 18.

The sunlight that reaches us is made up of two types of harmful rays: long wave ultraviolet A (UVA) and short wave ultraviolet B (UVB). Both are harmful to our eyes as well as to our skin.

Dr. Kara Jo Dodgens, an optometrist at Clemson Eye, says sunglasses are the most important thing a parent can do to protect their child's sensitive eyes from the sun's radiation.

A child's eye is more susceptible to retinal damage from UV rays because the lens is clear and allows more light – and UV – to penetrate. This UV exposure has been linked to cataracts and macular degeneration later in life, Dr. Dodgens notes.

Not All Sunglasses Created Equal

Dr. Dodgens says parents need to look for sunglasses that block out 99 to 100 percent of both UVA and UVB rays. "You can pick up cheap frames at the dollar store that don't have any UV protection. They're just fun, fashion frames. They're cute, but the kids aren't going to get the UV protection we're after," Dr. Dodgens says.

In addition to UV blocking, choose sunglasses with impact-resistant polycarbonate lenses. They can take the beating a child's active day dishes out. The frame should be close fitting and, if possible, wrap around the eye to block the sun from all angles.

Along with sunglasses, children should wear hats in the sun to further protect their eyes.

Glasses and Sports

Kids who wear prescription eyeglasses and play sports should have special sports glasses. They are usually a polycarbonate frame that will not break, protecting the child from a potential impact eye injury. Dr. Dodgens would like to see all kids wear sports glasses during activities like baseball, basketball or volleyball. She strongly recommends that kids not wear their regular eye glasses for sports. "I worry more about kids who wear their everyday glasses on the court," she says. "They can break and cause an injury. Regular eye glasses just aren't built for that."

Responding to Minor Problems

A day's outdoor play can sometimes end with a crying

child and a parent trying to get that grain of dust or sand out of their eye.

Rubbing, poking and pulling can potentially make the situation worse. Start by getting yourself and your child away from the source of dust, sand or wind. Then wash your hands, keep the child's eye open and flush it with water.

Kids will rub their eyes, so if the flushing doesn't work and the eye gets red and irritated, get your eye doctor to take a look.

Fireworks and Eye Injuries

Sand and other 'specks of summer' getting in your child's eye are fairly common mishaps, but more serious problems can happen around fireworks and sparklers.

Children running carefree through the dusk with sparklers is an iconic image of summer holiday fun. But sparklers are magnesium-tipped sticks that burn at 1200 degrees, roughly 1000 degrees hotter than boiling water. A shard from a sparkler or a firework exploded too closely can cause serious injury. If this happens to your child, grab a Styrofoam cup and cut it in half. Cover the eye with the bottom half of the cup and tape it on. This protects the injured eye and keeps your child from rubbing it, giving you time to get to an eye doctor, which you should do immediately.

Watching for Signs

Unless you're right there, how will you know if something has happened to your child's eyes? Look for visual cues, advises Dr. Dodgens. "Children aren't necessarily going to complain. But if you notice they're squinting or rubbing their eyes, there is likely a problem that needs to be addressed."

Pediatric Eye Exams

Long before they experience any vision problems, children should have an eye exam. Dr. Dodgens and the American Optometric Association recommend the first eye exam before a child's first birthday, and again at ages three and five. "In reality, though, the first exam usually comes after a child's already in school and experiencing some learning issues," she notes.

"A short attention span, not reading at the level they should be or not keeping up are usually the signs. We think it's a learning problem or a disciplinary problem when often they really just need an eye exam and prescription glasses."



Dr. Kara Jo Dodgens

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Household budget building how-to



The majority of families must live on budgets. Heads of households where money is no object may be able to spend at will, but many men and women must develop budgets so their families' everyday needs are fulfilled and so there is a safety net should an unforeseen situation arise and threaten family stability.

Building a budget can be a significant undertaking, but there is a method men and women can employ when developing a family budget to make that process go as smoothly as possible.

Gather pertinent documents. The first step toward building a household budget is to gather pertinent documents, such as earnings statements, utility bills, mortgage documents, and any other documents that can help you figure out your earnings and expenses.

Determine what's coming in and what's going out. When building a budget, you must determine how much income your household is generating and how much of that income is already earmarked for necessities like mortgage payments, car payments, etc. Make a list that includes an incoming and outgoing category for expenses, and make a separate category for outgoing expenses that are not necessities, such as the amount of money you spend each month on dining out. Peruse past bank statements to determine those discretionary expenses.

Determine which discretionary expenses

can be trimmed. Certain expenses, such as mortgage and car payments, are likely fixed. Unless you can refinance your mortgage to earn a lower monthly payment or pay off your car loan so you no longer have to make monthly payments, you probably need to examine your discretionary spending to find opportunities to save money. It's best that men and women working together to build a household budget come to a consensus on where to make cutbacks, as you don't want any resentment to build because one person was forced to sacrifice something important while the other was not. Be respectful of each other's concerns and plan on each of you making a sacrifice so resentment does not develop. Agree to make initial cutbacks a trial run that you will revisit in the near future to determine how the sacrifices are affecting your quality of life.

Prioritize paying down debt. One of the best ways to clear up money long-term is to eradicate debt, and consumer debt in particular. It is unrealistic to eradicate certain debts, like a mortgage, in the short-term. But consumer debt, which includes credit cards, tends to come with high interest rates, and carrying substantial consumer debt can negatively affect your credit rating. When attempting to pay off consumer debt, resolve to avoid using credit cards unless it's a genuine emergency and you don't have the cash to cover the associated expenses.

Periodically revisit your budget. Men and women should periodically revisit their household budgets to determine if their budgets



are effective and how those budgets are impacting life at home. Expect to make some minor tweaks whenever revisiting your budget, and don't be averse to making more significant changes if the budget is proving especially difficult on certain members of your household. Building a household budget is no small task. Men and women willing to work together and revisit their budgets every so often may find that such an approach eventually creates a more financially stable and enjoyable situation at home.

Safety guidelines for new parents

Welcoming a new child into a family dynamic requires certain adjustments on the part of family members. New parents have come to expect shortened sleep schedules as they handle early-morning feedings and babies who haven't quite adjusted to their parents' sleep/wake schedules. Parents soon learn another aspect of childcare that fills their days is safety. Keeping little ones safe, whether at home or on the go, becomes the utmost priority.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Childhood Injury Report" indicates more than 12,000 children die each year in the United States from an unintentional injury. Injuries involving transportation, drowning and suffocation account for the largest number of accidental deaths among young children.

One of the first safety steps parents can take is to become informed about common childhood injuries and statistics. Educating oneself about the potential for injury is the key to preventing accidents from occurring.

The next step is to take measures to childproof areas in and around the home. Various organizations, including Kids Health, the Consumer Product Safety Commission and the National Safety Council, recommend caregivers take the following safety measures.

- Use safety latches and locks for cabinets and drawers to keep children away from potentially harmful poisons and household items.
- Employ safety gates to prevent falls down stairs and to keep children from entering rooms that are not supervised or contain possible dangers.
- Keep track of baby's milestones, including when infants learn to pull themselves up in the crib. The crib mattress should be set to the lowest position and items removed so curious kids cannot climb out of the crib.
- Bathtubs are a common location for injury. Never leave a child unattended in a bath — even for a minute. Bathrooms can be made safer by installing a soft cover on the bath faucet head, using a secure and non-skid bath seat for the child and relying on a thermometer to check the temperature of the bath water.
- Use knob covers to prevent access to the stove. Always supervise children in and around the kitchen, where there are many hazards and hot surfaces.
- Use bolts or anchors to secure items like televisions, bookcases or dressers to the wall to prevent them from tipping over.
- Getting a shock is easy when babies with saliva-drenched fingers touch electrical outlets. Use safety plugs or special covers to prevent access.
- Make sure area rugs are secured with a nonskid backing and repair any tripping hazards so children do not fall while learning to walk.
- Drapery and blinds cords should be kept out of youngsters' reach. Window coverings that are cord-free are safer options.
- Parents can benefit by learning CPR and other first aid techniques. You never know when they might come in handy.
- Window guards and safety netting can prevent falls from windows, balconies, landings, and decks. Check these safety devices frequently to make sure they are still secure.
- Be sure to check that smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are functioning as they should and have fresh batteries.
- Create layers of protection around a swimming pool, which includes installing self-latching fences, alarms and safety covers.
- Make a first aid kit and store emergency instructions inside. Post important phone numbers close to a land line phone or program them into a mobile phone.
- Use corner guards to protect young heads from falls against furniture or fireplace hearths.

These are just some of the safety measures parents can take to safeguard their young children from injury at home. Kids' pediatricians also may have other information that can help prevent accidents and save lives.

Various types of family caregivers



Working parents frequently rely on the services of nannies, daycare centers and babysitters to provide care for their children.

Data from Pew Research shows that, since 1965, mothers have almost tripled the amount of paid work they do each week, and dual-income households have become more the norm than the exception. Equal shares of working mothers and fathers say it is difficult to balance work and family responsibilities and often they feel rushed or pulled in different directions. Still, many working parents feel that remaining in the workforce is a necessity or beneficial for their families. Busy parents often seek assistance to help manage their families' daily activities. Parents must weigh a host of factors when choosing among the various types of caregivers who specialize in looking after children.

Daycare

One of the first types of places working parents turn to when looking for caregivers for their children are neighborhood daycare centers. These generally licensed and state- or province-managed centers charge a tuition for enrollment in a set number of hours per week or month. Daycare centers may operate out of private buildings or be associated with churches, schools or community centers. Some daycare facilities are run out of private homes. Larger centers may have more flexible hours to coordinate with parents' schedules. Some daycare centers also may provide some measure of educational support to children in addition to general care, meals and entertainment. Daycare centers can be ideal places for childhood social interaction and give kids an early taste of traditional school environments.

Nanny

Some children flourish under the care of a nanny, or an individual who comes into a private residence to watch children from the comfort of the children's homes. While the primary job of the nanny is to be in charge of the children, according to the Nanny Network, some nannies may be willing to do other domestic activities related directly to the children they watch. This may include cleaning, laundry and shopping. Advantage to hiring a nanny are that the childcare comes to you and the nanny can provide more focused attention for a child than that afforded kids in group settings.

Au pair

An au pair is typically a young person from a different country who comes to work for a family in exchange for housing and a weekly salary. (Note: The term "au pair" also may pertain to


live-in domestic childcare providers.) Au pairs may be placed through an agency, which helps regulate and screen potential caregivers. Childcare provided by an au pair can be affordable because some costs are offset by the room and board provided. However, some au pairs also are given a certain portion of funds to be put toward educational expenses. Much like a nanny, an au pair can offer one-on-one interaction with a child and other household services as they relate to watching and managing the kids.

Babysitter

Parents often need a few hours here or there to bridge scheduling gaps in childcare. This is when a babysitter can be a good choice. A babysitter is often a young person who watches children for a few hours when parents are away from home. Many babysitters are family friends or neighbors with no special training in childcare. Yet, an increasing number are seeing the benefits of carrying CPR certification and other types of babysitting training offered through organizations like the Red Cross and Safe Sitter. According to the United States Department of Labor, while wages for many American workers have stagnated, babysitters have seen their wages rise exponentially, about nine times faster than inflation rates, since the early 1980s. Sitters may fetch anywhere from \$10 to \$17 per hour depending on their experience. High wages also are attracting older sitters to the babysitting pool. Working parents also have the option of relying on family members to care for their children, but this may not always be a viable long-term solution. Some families use a variety of caregiving solutions to fit their needs. Any care provider should be thoroughly screened and vetted to ensure kids' safety.



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How to keep connected kids safe



The popularity of mobile devices and smartphones has produced more tech-savvy kids. Based on a 2013 survey by Scratch Wireless, nearly one in five kids uses a mobile device every day. Other children regularly go online through tablets, laptops and home PCs. Connectivity is ever more in reach — and often outside of the watchful eyes of parents and other caregivers. Although statistics vary, Symantec, maker of Norton Internet Security software, estimates that at least 20 percent of kids will receive harassing, hateful or insulting messages via the Internet. That's not the only hazard of browsing the Internet. According to the *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 65 percent of online sex offenders use social networking sites to gain home and school information about their victims and 82 percent of online sex crimes against minors originate from online social information. The Internet also can put children in touch with age-inappropriate media content and pornographic or racy imagery. Mobile devices can provide a distraction

for teenagers, which can be dangerous when used while they are driving. While parents worry about their kids going online, smartphones enable families to stay readily in touch, and many students turn to the Internet for school assignments. Parents who want to protect their youngsters from less reputable online elements can take certain measures to reduce the risk that their kids will come across questionable people and/or content when surfing the Internet.

Set up parental controls

Parental and security controls are built into most devices that connect to the Internet. Parents can customize the settings, limiting what kids can and can't do on each particular device. Websites with questionable or adult content can be blocked, and location services or chatting may be turned off. Security settings also enable parents to set up passwords so that purchases can be prevented or that certain applications require entry of a password before they can be accessed.

Keep personal information to a minimum

Whenever children and even adults create new online accounts or profiles, they should limit the amount of personal information they provide. Try not to set up usernames that include full first and last names. Avoid any mention of birthdays, addresses, phone numbers, and names of schools. Vague profiles protect user information and make it more difficult for online predators to target people.

Turn off geolocation services

Many mobile apps use something called geolocation to automatically share a person's location with others. Other apps may require location information for maps or to provide directions or recommendations for businesses in the area. In addition, some photos taken with geolocation services activated may be geo-tagged, meaning the digital image is imprinted with a code that can tell others where it was taken. Location services can identify where a child is and put this information in the hands of people trolling for personal information online.

Use hotspots cautiously

Wi-Fi hotspots provide free Internet connectivity when customers are at restaurants, parks or other areas with Wi-Fi service available. Hotspots can be particularly attractive to kids with limited data plans. However, hotspots are less secure than home Internet connections, and Wi-Fi hotspot users are vulnerable to cyber criminals. Kids should never share personal information, account

numbers or other intimate details when using a hotspot.

Avoid compromising photos

The "selfie" craze invites people from all over to post pictures of themselves on social media sites. While it can be fun to share images over the Internet, availability of photos can lead to trouble. Photos could give others clues to where kids go to school, work or live. Images posted while on vacation may alert others that someone is not home.

Compromising or suggestive photos can harm a child's reputation or even lead to exploitation. Stress to children that they should only take photos they would be willing to share with their parents and that they should keep posted photos to a minimum. Exercise caution whenever posting images, and rely on security measures to limit who can view those images.

Be on alert for malware

A program or app may contain malware that steals information behind the scenes. Only download content that can be verified as valid. Free offers and email messages that advertise software for download or Web links should be avoided.

Don't interact with online strangers

The Web puts many people who live all around the world in instant contact with one another. Children should never send information or interact on a personal level with someone they do not know. Parents should stress the importance of avoiding strangers online just like they do when teaching kids to avoid strangers in public.

The Internet has changed the way parents must safeguard their children from dangers in the world. Practicing common sense and employing safety measures and software can limit kids' vulnerability to the dangers that lurk online.

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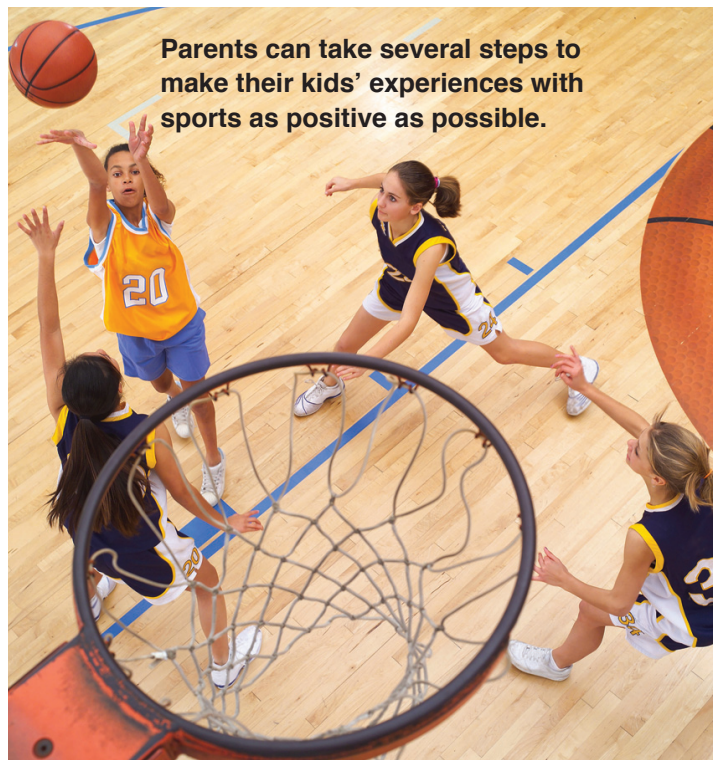
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How to be a good youth sports parent



Parents can take several steps to make their kids' experiences with sports as positive as possible.

Extracurricular and summer season sports leagues keep thousands of children occupied. Youth sports promote physical fitness and teamwork while helping children acquaint themselves with sportsmanship and camaraderie. The *Journal of Sports Medicine* says three out of four American families with school-aged children have at least one child playing an organized sport. While many kids play just for recreation, others play competitively. Sports are meant to be sources of enjoyment for children, but parental pressure and poor adult behavior on the sidelines can make kids reluctant to compete. Parents who behave poorly may inadvertently pass on bad habits to their children or cause kids to prematurely abandon their athletic pursuits. The following are a few tips for parents who want to encourage their kids' passions for sports in positive ways.

Show respect for coaches and officials. Parents should not act like they are the final authority on calls

or how team members should play. Respect should always be shown to coaches and referees.

Let your child have fun regardless of his or her performance. Too often parents get swept up in how their children are performing when the goal for young athletes should be to enjoy themselves. Resist the urge to focus on performance and focus instead of whether or not your child is having fun.

Recognize college scholarships may not be in the cards. Although some children are destined for athletic greatness, many will not play sports after high school. Pressuring older children to improve their performance in the hopes of landing college scholarships can make the little time they do have to play their favorite sports less enjoyable.

Take cues from the child. Children are often great indicators of parental behavior at sporting events. Parents whose children seem unenthusiastic about mom and dad attending their sporting events may be trying to

tell you they don't appreciate your behavior at the games.

Provide constructive criticism. Early coaching and practice with parents can give kids a leg up on the competition. But keep your advice constructive. Parents who become pushy or force constant practices can make sports unenjoyable.

Place emphasis on fun and learning skills. Find out what the kids hope to accomplish by playing sports and help them to achieve those goals. Focus on being supportive rather than emphasizing winning, as doing so can help children view sports participation in a more positive light.

If children seem to have lost interest in sports, parents can ask why in an effort to make sports fun again or encourage other pursuits. Many sports now require year-round participation, which can cause burnout in some youngsters. Sometimes a brief break and some fine-tuning may be all that's needed to rekindle a child's passion for sports.

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Tips for grandparents helping to raise children

As retirement age approaches, many older adults envision themselves downsizing and moving to a quaint community to enjoy their golden years in as relaxing a fashion as possible. However, for a growing number of seniors, their retirement years are being spent helping to raise grandchildren. United States Census data from 2010 indicates 4.9 million American children are being raised solely by their grandparents. CanGrads, a National Kinship Support organization, says approximately 62,500 children are being raised by grandparents and other family in Canada. Many grandparents provide part-time care when their older children have to move back home with their families, as roughly 13 million children are now living in homes with their grandparents. Although being raised by grandparents may not be the ideal situation for all parties involved, such situations are a necessity for many families. Seniors who are once again thrown into the caregiver arena may need a crash course in childcare or a few pointers on parenting in the modern age.

Get the right equipment. Children certainly require a lot of gear, more than grandparents

likely used when raising their own children. Certain safety requirements are in place to safeguard young children, and that often means investing in new cribs, car seats, high chairs, and other items. Grandparents should resist the temptation to use old items they may have kept in storage, as such items may no longer be safe and could put grandchildren at risk for injury.

Gather important documents. Grandparents should keep pertinent documents in one easily accessible place in their homes should an emergency arise. These include birth certificates, health immunization records, death certificates (if the child's parents are deceased), dental records, school papers, citizenship papers, and proof of income and assets.

Speak with an attorney. Lawyers can help grandparents wade through legal arrangements, such as filing for custody, guardianship or adoption. Options vary depending on where petitioners live, but lawyers can provide peace of mind to grandparents concerned about their grandkids' futures.

Investigate financial assistance. Seniors may not earn the income they once did and

may be on assistance programs or living off of retirement savings. Grandparents who find themselves caring for a child may be eligible for financial assistance. The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families is a joint federal and state program that can provide need-based financial assistance. The AARP or the organization GrandFamilies may be able to put grandparents in touch with financial advisors in their areas.

Contact schools and daycare centers. School-aged children will need to be enrolled in school. Grandparents should contact the department of education where they live to learn about local school systems, especially when grandkids are moving in with their grandparents. Some grandparents can qualify for free or low-cost daycare, and such programs can be discussed with local Social Services offices. Enrollment in school or daycare can provide grandparents with much-needed free time during the day.



Find emotional support. Taking care of grandchildren is a full-time job. At times, grandparents may feel stressed or out of sorts. Having a strong support system available can help grandparents work through the peaks and valleys of this new and unexpected stage in life. Church- or community center-based counseling services may be available. Grandparents also can check with their healthcare providers to determine if counseling or therapy sessions are covered under their plans. Caring for grandchildren is a life-changing event. Although it can be fulfilling, it also requires a lot of energy and commitment. But grandparents needn't go it alone, as there are numerous resources available to seniors who suddenly find themselves caring for their grandchildren.

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How families can cut vacation costs

costs without sacrificing the quality of their vacations.

Stay closer to home. It may sound simple, but vacationing closer to home is perhaps the best way for families to save a substantial amount of money on their vacations. Airline tickets can take up a sizable portion of a family vacation budget, and once the plane touches down families may need to add the additional expense of rental cars so they can get around their destination and enjoy all its sights and sounds. But families who choose to vacation closer to home can take their own vehicles, paying only for gas instead of airline tickets, car rentals (including rental insurance) and gas. Find a location close to home that still offers everyone an escape, but one that's not far enough away that car travel will prove burdensome and exhausting.

Plan to make some of your own meals. Dining out is another considerable expense for families on vacation. Depending on the size of their families, parents may find

that their dining budgets will approach or even exceed the cost of air travel by the end of a single week. But parents can drastically reduce those costs by planning to make some their own meals while away on vacation. Bring along a couple of cereal boxes so breakfast is simple and inexpensive, and try to book accommodations equipped with kitchens or outdoor areas where the family can fire up a grill a few times during the week to save on costly dinner tabs.

Travel light. Families who must travel by air can trim some of the cost of flying by traveling light. Many airlines now charge fees for bags that exceed preestablished weight limits and may charge for additional baggage as well. Leave hefty jackets and extra footwear behind when traveling during the warmer months, as everyone can likely get by with just some lighter summer attire and less formal footwear. If traveling to a ski resort in

the winter, consider renting bulky skiing attire, including boots, so baggage limits are not exceeded.

Work with a travel agency that specializes in your locale. Many families may feel they can now plan their own vacations and save money, but planning through a travel agency may still be a family's best bet. When booking trips via a travel agency, families can often negotiate with a representative, who can work to tailor a vacation that fits families' budgets. Such negotiation is much more difficult when going it alone or working through a travel website. In addition, many travel agencies include tours and other attractions in the price of their packages, and that can be a great way to earn discounts to local sights and activities.

Travel is expensive, especially for parents traveling with kids in tow. But cost-conscious moms and dads can still plan relaxing and enjoyable vacations without breaking the bank.

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While it might once have been necessary to scan grocery store circulars and break out the scissors to take advantage of store discounts, more and more consumers are now turning to digital coupons offered via their mobile devices to save money. According to eMarketer, a firm that covers digital marketing, media and commerce, the number of adults who redeem coupons via their mobile devices is expected to rise to roughly 104 million people by 2016. That's a significant uptick from the number of digital couponers in 2014, when a little more than 78.5 million adults took advantage of digital coupons offered via their mobile devices. The growing popularity of mobile coupons has sparked increased interest among marketers, as eMarketer projects that 44.5 percent of marketers will offer mobile coupons in 2016, compared to just 36.5 percent in 2014. Families looking to save money on their next shopping trip would be wise to take their mobile devices along with them.

Tips for juggling work and family



Balancing work and family is a juggling act faced by many working parents. Responsibilities to work and family often overlap, and that can make solving the riddle of balancing work and family that much more difficult. Single-income households have decreased dramatically over the last several decades, as escalating costs of living have made it difficult for many families to get by on just one income. But working parents can employ several strategies, both at the office and at home, as they attempt to make the job of juggling commitments to work and family a little less difficult.

Around the office

A major concern many parents have as they attempt to balance work and family is that they are not spending enough time at home with their children or not paying enough attention to their kids or even their spouses when they are home. One way to find more time at home is to inquire about the possibility of working remotely. Advancements in technology that have made it easier to remotely communicate with clients and coworkers has led to an influx of work-from-home employees. While working from home does not mean workloads will diminish, it does save men and women the time they would spend commuting to and from work, and that translates to more time at home with the family. If working remotely full-time is not a possibility, men and women can ask if it's possible to do



so one or two days a week, as such a schedule will still provide more time at home. Another avenue men and women can explore as they attempt to achieve a better balance between work and family concerns how efficiently they do their jobs. Chatting with coworkers about issues that do not pertain to work can be a great way to reduce work-related stress, but professionals who feel as if they never have enough time to get their jobs done in a typical work day should determine if they are working as efficiently as possible. Avoid too much water cooler chitchat and resist the temptation to check personal emails or text messages while at work. Such distractions can eat up a considerable amount of time over the course of a workday, making it harder for men and

women to get their jobs done in a typical workday and forcing them to stay late or bring work home.

Men and women working to achieve a greater balance between work and family also can examine how willing they are to take on additional work. While coworkers love a team player willing to pitch in, routinely accepting extra work can drastically cut into the time men and women have to do their own jobs as well as the time they have to spend with their families. Helping coworkers out in a pinch is fine, but men and women should resist any urges to take on more than they can reasonably handle.

At home

Men and women also can take steps at home to create a better balance between work

and family. Working parents who want the time they have with their children each night to be more substantive can turn off their devices upon arriving home from work. Devices such as smartphones and tablets keep working professionals attached to their offices, and many men and women are tempted to check work emails or answer phone calls and voicemails even when they have left the office for the day. Parents should resist that temptation so their families know their focus is on them and not back at the office. Another way to create a greater balance between work and family life is to make more efficient use of time at home. For example, rather than spending an hour each night making dinner, working parents can use a slow cooker so family meals are ready the moment everyone arrives home at night. That frees up time the family can spend together and gives working parents one less thing to do when they arrive home. Working parents looking get more quality time with their families also can cut back on the time families spend watching television each night. Limit television time to an hour or two each night, using the extra time to connect with one another. Many working parents strive to create a greater balance between work and family. While doing so is not always easy, men and women can employ strategies at work and at home to make the challenge a little less complicated.

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Weeknight activities the whole family can enjoy



Many families have their own routines on weeknights. Kids may tackle their homework before dinner, and once everyone's plate is clean, family members may spend time together or go their separate ways, spending time online with friends or watching their favorite television programs on the couch.

Parents who feel their weeknights don't include enough family time are often on the hunt for more family-friendly activities the whole family can enjoy even if everyone has to go to work or school the next day. The following are a handful of family-friendly weeknight activities that can bring families closer together.

Movie night: Family movie night is a tradition for many families, and parents who want to spend more time together as families may find that movie night is a great way to share a few laughs or even facilitate discussions about important topics broached in certain films. Each week let a different family member pick that week's movie and ask him or her to explain his or her choice and why they think it's a film the whole family will enjoy. Let the kids join you as you get the popcorn ready or make special treats to enjoy while the movie is playing.

Family walk: Walking is a great way for parents to instill a love of physical activity in their children, and nightly walks also make great opportunities for families to leave their devices behind and discuss the goings-on in their lives. Weather permitting, take a family walk after dinner each night, which can help make your family healthier and strengthen the bonds between family

members.

Writing activities: Another way families can escape their devices and resist the temptation of social media on weeknights is to get together for weekly writing sessions. Ask each family member to create brief lists on a range of topics, whether it's a list of favorite books or countries each person wants to visit or a bucket list of things each family member wants to do at one point in their lives. Allow about 15 minutes for each person to write his or her lists, and then discuss each person's list, including the inspiration behind each item that made it onto the lists.

Game night: Classic board games or games like checkers might not be as popular today as they were prior to the advent of the Internet, but that does not mean a night centered around such games does not still make for a very family-friendly evening. Stock up on some classic board games and share the responsibility of choosing which game to play each week. Board games can take up to a few hours to play, and that's a great opportunity for families to share some laughs without being interrupted by their devices.

Crafts night: Arts and crafts night is another great way for families to spend time together. Parents can choose age-appropriate projects that can help kids and adults alike tap into their creative sides. Solicit ideas when planning crafts night so everyone feels like they played their part. Nights together as a family do not need to be limited to weekends. Parents willing to get a little creative can enjoy family-friendly evenings no matter what day it happens to be.

Encourage a love of physical activity in youngsters



Parents who resolve to exercise with their children may find their youngsters more receptive to the daily physical activity they need to promote long-term health.

According to the United States Department of Health and Human Services, children and adolescents should engage in physical activity for 60 minutes or more each day. While fulfilling those requirements might not have been a problem for kids who grew up before the dawn of the Internet, nowadays kids are spending less time playing outside and more time on their computers or other devices.

That reality is problematic for parents who want their kids to embrace physical activity thanks to the positive impact that exercise can have on kids' physical and mental well-being. Parents hoping to instill a love of physical activity in their youngsters may find that taking a more active role by exercising with their kids is an effective way to get them off the couch and away from their computer screens.

Turn errands into exercise opportunities. Many parents take their children along with them when running errands. When such errands don't necessarily require the use of a car, consider riding bicycles instead. Kids who otherwise

don't enjoy errands may now find them more fun, all the while fulfilling their daily recommended quotas for exercise and spending quality time with their parents.

Include kids in your own athletic pursuits. Parents might not be able to take younger kids along with them to the gym, but that does not mean your youngsters must be excluded from all of your athletic pursuits. If you have any upcoming athletic activities or challenges on your schedule, such as a new recreational sports season or community fun run or 5K, let kids tag along as you train or practice. Parents of adolescents can inquire at their local gyms if they offer discounted memberships to teens. If so, take kids along with you on trips to the gym so they learn the value and benefits of daily strength and conditioning exercises.

Make more time to play. Parents may already have busy schedules, but finding time to play with their kids is a great way to get youngsters to embrace physical activity. Kids might be reluctant to shoot hoops in the driveway if no one is willing to join them,

but they will likely be far more willing to do so if mom and dad are willing to play with them. This is not only a good way for parents to ensure their kids get enough exercise, but also a great and fun way for moms and dads to make time for physical activity.

Recognize that physical activity does not have to mean organized sports. Some kids have no interest in team sports while others do not have the athletic ability to compete after a certain age. Parents who want their kids to exercise more should recognize that there are plenty of ways to be physically active that do not involve organized team sports. Hiking; riding bicycles; swimming at a nearby pool, lake or ocean; and even going for nightly walks are all physical activities that people of all ages and athletic abilities can enjoy. Physical activity is an important component of a healthy lifestyle. While getting kids to put down their tablets and gaming system remote controls may not be easy, parents who resolve to exercise with their children might find their youngsters more receptive to regular physical activity.

Questions to ask when looking for an afterschool program

Many of today's working professionals grew up in single-income households where only one of their parents went to work each day. But that once-common dynamic is now largely a thing of the past, as economic necessity has driven both moms and dads to continue their careers even after they have had children. That reality has led many working parents to lean heavily on afterschool programs to serve as safe havens that provide structure for their kids while mom and dad are still at work. Choosing an after-school program is a decision many parents find difficult, but there are some questions parents can ask during their searches for programs that should make those decisions easier.



Can I tour and observe the facility?

When considering a particular afterschool program for their children, parents should ask to tour the facility, paying specific attention to the areas of the facility where their youngsters will spend the bulk of their time. Do the classrooms look clean? Are the materials up-to-date? Is the playground equipment safe and well-maintained? Well-maintained facilities with new supplies and equipment can make the program more enjoyable and safer for kids.

Parents also should ask to spend some time observing the facility when it is abuzz with activity. Such observation can give parents an idea of what their kids' afternoons will be like should they enroll in the program. Stay out of the way, but watch to see how engaged kids and staff members are and how conducive to doing homework the environment is.

What is the program schedule?

Schedule is a significant issue for working parents, many of whom want a program that is open on holidays when schools are closed. Flexibility also is a concern for working parents, some of whom may need a facility that is open before school starts. Parents also may want a facility that allows youngsters to attend just a few days a week, which might make certain programs that require parents to commit to full weeks less enticing. When discussing the facility schedule with staff

members, be sure to get as specific a schedule as possible, inquiring about any additional costs associated with extending the typical schedule as well.

What are the activities available to the kids?

Many afterschool programs provide more than just a place for kids to sit and do their homework until their folks come to pick them up. Ask staff members at the facility how big a role activities play in their programs. Many programs try to offer an array of activities that range from academic programs to athletic events and more. A wide range of programs can increase the chances that youngsters will find activities that pique their interests and make the afterschool program more enjoyable.

How are staff members vetted?

Parents also may want to ask about the program's hiring practices. Ask about the background checks performed on staff members and if the facility requires any specific certifications for staff who will be dealing directly with children. When asking about hiring practices, parents also may want to inquire about the ratio of staff members to children. The smaller the ratio, the more attention youngsters will receive. Facilities with an especially high ratio of staff to children may not be able to provide the type of environment parents want for their children.

Finding an afterschool program requires parents to exercise their due diligence. Parents who can be patient and learn as much about facilities as possible are more likely to find the right fit for their children.

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