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kern county **Family** free

February 2022

Technology:
**Are We
Screwing
Up the
Kids?**

Valentine's **DAY FUN**

- Readers' Favorite Venues
- Pampering Your Spouse
- At-home Date Ideas

**SIBLING
RIVALRY:**
Banish The
Green Eyed
Monster

plus:

11 simple ways to build healthy habits *pg 11*
recipe: local youth's soul food *pg 19* four tips to help love your heart *pg 8*

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MEMBERS OF



20 Parent Feature
Pampering Your Spouse & At-Home Date Night Ideas



Happy Hearts Everywhere!
It's the season of Love!

Our lovely cover model Ellie S. was photographed for KCFM by Stacey Leigh Photography.



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Friendly Mama Vaun Thygerson



18 Feature: Dealing with Jealous Siblings



11 11 Things:
11 Easy Ways to Add Healthy Habits

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dear reader



Vaun Thygerson,
Contributing Writer

As a mother of two boys who attend Liberty High School, I was so excited that they recently attended a school-sanctioned formal dance, since they didn't have one last year.

High school dances are a rite of passage complete with formal attire, flowers, dinner plans, and of course, the after party. With the theme "Met Gala," my older son was all decked out in a red tuxedo to match his beautiful date's red lace dress. My younger son, who always has to stand out in a crowd, wore the coolest gold paisley pants and black velour dinner jacket and went sans date but danced the entire time with his friends. I would have loved to be a fly on the wall to watch them at the dance. While I received a full dance report, it's not the same as seeing them in action.

One of my favorite parts of the dance experience is the photos. I went down to Mill Creek with my older son to take pictures with his group near the iconic covered bridge. One mom even brought a confetti popper to take a party photo when it exploded. It was such a clever idea and turned out so cute; it looks like an advertisement for a tuxedo company.

When I went to formal dances in the 1980s, taking pictures wasn't a thing. We were lucky to get a group photo snapped in my family's entry way. The picture-taking process has become an integral part of the night. In fact, we had to wait in line at some parts of the park for our turn while other dance goers were posing near us. My son's friend even said that nowadays the photos are the most important part of the night. Being a little photo-obsessed myself, I kind of agree!

With love in the air this month, KCFM asked its readers where the best place in Kern County is to spend Valentine's Day. Answers range from restaurants to a night-in. You might even be able to sneak in an Instagram photo on your date, too! To find out where our readers will be on February 14th, turn to page 10.

As you're brainstorming your own ideas for Valentine's Day, turn to Sarah Lyons' article, "Pampering Your Spouse" on page 20. Her ideas are great for couples who may not get as much "date" time as they'd like.

February is all about hearts, both artistic ones and the real ones beating in our bodies. As American Heart month, check out the article, "4 Loving Tips to Help Your Heart," on page 8. Heart disease is the number one cause of death worldwide, so it's important to pay attention to yours. These four tips will help you lead a heart healthier life.

Special thanks to Callie Collins for her article, "Hello, Happy (Friendly) Mama," on page 14. As a writer who is usually on the other side of the articles, this month she turned the tables and interviewed me about life in Bakersfield. I love this community and am thrilled to promote it as best I can through my family's endeavors and monthly articles.

This month whether you're documenting your child's first steps or your son's last high school formal, these photos are the ones that will last after the moment is gone. I am thankful for the few photos I have from my own childhood, and thanks to my photo obsession, my kids have every milestone of their lives in full Kodak color! Valentine's Day is the perfect time to capture that perfect memory that you can keep in your heart forever!



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STUFF WE LOVE

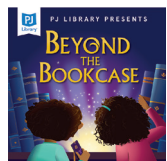
FEBRUARY

By Elena Epstein, Director of the National Parenting Product Awards

For more product reviews, visit nappaawards.com

PJ Library Presents Podcasts: Afternoons with Mimi and Beyond the Bookcase

Two new podcasts from the beloved organization that has been sharing



free children's book with Jewish values throughout the world. Well-known tales come to life in a fun new way that connects kids to Jewish traditions, culture, holidays and values. "Afternoons with Mimi" is designed for younger kids and "Beyond the Bookcase" is for kids ages 6 to 12. Free, PJLibrary.org/podcast

Mightier

Designed to help children better understand and regulate their emotions, including anger/aggression, irritability, frustration, anxiety or a diagnosis like ADHD, ODD and Autism Spectrum Disorder. Developed by clinicians at Boston Children's Hospital and Harvard Medical School

to help children practice coping skills by playing biofeedback games. Starting at \$40/one month membership, tablet and heart rate monitor included; ages 6 to 12 who struggle with their emotions, mightier.com



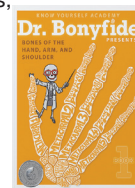
Little Hero's Journal

Guides children through a 13-week journey of self-discovery. From daily challenges that promote developing new skills to the weekly habit tracker that helps them create routines, children develop a growth mindset and the self-esteem. \$25, ages 7+, bestself.co



206 Bones of the Human Body- 4 Book Set

From your head to your toes, this 206 Bones of the Human Body- 4 Book set has a lot to discover about the human body, especially for children. Includes Hands, Arm & Shoulder; Foot, Leg & Pelvis; Rib Cage & Spine; Head, Face & Neck. \$79 for set or \$19.99 per book, ages 8+, knowyourself.com



Star Forest

An album filled with imagination, adventure and play. Musicians Hawk, Fawn, Sluuth and Rocktapus VII (and a whole bunch of star slugs) take you on a musical journey where anything is possible if you dream big. A mix of rich bodied melodies, dreamy ballads, toe tappers and pirate rapper. \$11.99, ages 5-8, starforest.rock



Alzheimer's Disease Association of Kern County, Inc.

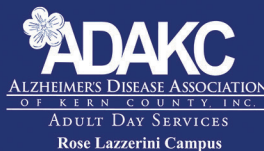
"Families Helping Families"

Adult Day Service Program and Caregiver Support - Specializing in Alzheimer's disease and Dementia.

Hours of Operation:

Monday - Friday

8 am - 5pm



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WWW.ADAKC.ORG

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Kern County Man Completes Walk Across America Raising Awareness and Aid in the Prevention of Child Abuse

Y-Empowerment recently held a Welcome Home event for local hero, Robert Schrader, who completed the task of walking across America while raising awareness of child abuse and domestic violence. He walked 2,686 miles and visited 153 cities, where he provided information about local child abuse statistics and resources. Schrader kept a VLOG on his journey that you can watch at www.followthewalk.org where he provides daily routines of his 12-hour walk each day along with entertaining comical sketches to keep the viewers laughing and smiling.

Y-Empowerment, Inc., a non-profit organization, helps youth who have experienced domestic violence overcome their adversities and encourage them to live healthy and productive lives. Some of the services it provides include domestic violence counseling and advocacy, anger management and parenting classes, sexual abuse prevention classes, supervised visitation, as well as CPR and First Aid certifications.



CALM's Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Closed For Renovations Through March 2022

CALM's (California Living Museum) Wildlife Rehabilitation Center will be closed for renovations and construction of a new clinic building through March 2022. Since its founding in 1983, CALM has treated and released thousands of injured, orphaned, and abandoned animals back into the wild through its Wildlife Rehabilitation Center. With the increase in wildlife cases over the past decade, CALM needed to make major renovations to keep up with demand.

An exciting, related project is now also underway – the construction of CALM's new Veterinary Clinic in partnership with UC Davis and the Oiled Wildlife Care Network. "The new building is expected to be complete in Spring 2022, and the construction also impacts our ability to take in new wildlife," says CALM Director Meg Maitland.

To complete these renovation projects appropriately, CALM has temporarily closed its rehabilitation center, but the zoo itself will remain open. Any wildlife cases that need to be addressed during this time will be directed to the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and/or other wildlife rehabilitation centers in the area on a case-by-case basis.

Anyone interested in donating to support these renovations may do so at <https://www.givegab.com/campaigns/oiled-wildlife-care-network-vet-clinic-build>, by e-mailing Meg Maitland, CALM Director, at Memaitland@kern.org or by sending checks payable to CALM Foundation to 10500 Alfred Harrell Hwy Bakersfield, CA 93306.

You Could Be a Match For a Local Teen Leukemia Warrior

Liberty High School senior, Tatum DeMontmorency, is currently seeking treatment at City of Hope after an acute myeloid leukemia diagnosis last year. She needs to find a match for a bone marrow transplant, and with just one swab, you could be the answer to her family's prayers. If you are ages 18-40, you can register online to request a home testing kit at www.bethematch.org.



photo from Team Tatum Facebook Page

The community has shown so much love and support by rallying around Tatum and her family with #teamtatum fundraisers, most recently at Jersey Mike's. You can also donate to her family's GoFundMe and follow her journey on Facebook at Team Tatum.

Kern County Virtual Education Fair Scheduled For February 5th

The Kern County Superintendent of Schools will host a Virtual Education Fair on Saturday, February 5, 2022, from 9:00 a.m. to noon. This virtual fair is exclusive to Kern County School Districts. Individuals who are fully credentialed, intern-eligible, and have completed a bachelor's degree or higher are invited to attend. **Pre-registration is required at bit.ly/educationfair2022 and will be open until February 4th at 5 p.m.**

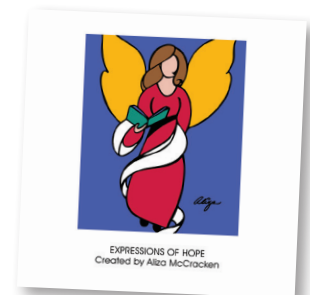
As Kern County's largest gathering of school district recruiters in one location, this event is an excellent opportunity for those who are credentialed, intern eligible, or interested in teaching to see what positions or anticipated future openings may be available in the 2022-2023 school year. Districts are interested in meeting individuals who qualify for multiple subject, special education, speech pathologist, school nurse, school psychologist, single subject credentials, and substitutes.

Additionally, several school districts are recruiting Career Technical Education (CTE) teachers. People who possess a high school diploma or equivalent and at least three years' experience in the following industries are in need: agriculture and natural resources; arts, media, and entertainment; building and construction trades; business and finance; engineering and architecture; health science and medical technology; manufacturing, and product development.

Expressions of Hope

Local author and artist Aliza McCracken releases a new book, "Expressions of Hope," just in time to make the perfect gift for Valentine's Day. This delightful new creation spreads love and hope with Aliza's unique optimistic perspective and whimsical artistry.

"In the spirit of embracing new beginnings, we invite you to nurture your wonderful self. It is always a joy to share our inspirational art and affirmations with the community. Your lovely gifts of friendship, kindness, and generosity reflects the true meaning of hope," says Aliza McCracken.



A portion of the proceeds will benefit fine arts and educational programs throughout Kern County. **Her books are available online through <https://aliza-mccracken.square.site>.**



Healthy Teeth, Healthy Child!

1. Brush your teeth twice a day for at least two minutes
2. Floss every day
3. Limit the number of sugary snacks you eat each day
4. Visit your dentist every six months or as recommended



Need help finding
a dentist for your child?
Call (661) 321-3000



KERN COUNTY
Public Health Services
DEPARTMENT

kernpublichealth.com

Funded by the California Department of Public Health under contract 17-10695

Longevity: Floss Today—And Every Day—For More Tomorrows

Did you know? Flossing can help you live longer! More than just a healthy habit, flossing daily correlates with a longer lifespan, as confirmed by major studies, with some indicating extended lifespans of more than six years. Most dentists agree it is helpful for teeth in preventing gum disease, but having less plaque has overall benefits for the heart, too.



Modeling good oral hygiene is always important for your children's teeth, too! If they watch a parent brushing and flossing regularly, they may be more agreeable about doing it themselves.

February is National Children's Dental Health Month. Are your kids due for a check-up? If it's been six months or longer since their last cleaning, call and schedule an appointment today!

Rubber Duck Dilemma: Clean Them or Toss Them?

Dark, warm, wet: the inside of a rubber duck or other molded plastic bath toy is the perfect environment for mildew, mold, and bacteria to thrive. Photos of these items cut in half to reveal flourishing biofilms and fungi, which host mycotoxins, have been shared on social media but are also considered in medical journals. Eye, ear, and open wound infections, vomiting, diarrhea, and other maladies have resulted from contamination in the bathwater, or more specifically, squirting water from bath toys into mucous membranes or previous injuries.



Hold your rubber duck or other bath time friend up to the light, and you may notice mold. Squeeze out all existing bath water trapped inside after each use, fill with distilled vinegar and let sit overnight; empty before next use. When in doubt, throw it out, as not all mycotic and bacterial life will be visible. Replace with sealed bath toys.

Virus Antibodies Present in Breast Milk

A new study shows COVID-19 antibodies in mothers are present in their breast milk. The study, co-authored by researchers at University of Rochester Medical Center and NYU, has found that mothers with two-types of immunity from COVID-19 produced breast milk active antibodies. "The study does not imply that children would be protected from illness, and breast milk antibodies may not be a substitute for vaccination for infants and children, once approved," says study co-author Kirsi Jarvinen-Seppo, PhD, MD. Researchers are now studying whether vaccination and illness-acquired immunity provide antibodies against other seasonal corona viruses. (jamanetwork.com)



4 Loving Tips to Help Your Heart

Heart disease is the No. 1 cause of death worldwide, and is the leading killer of women in the U.S. The American Heart Association says one in 16 women has some form of heart disease by age 20 and older—so what can you do about it? Heart disease is mostly preventable by changing your lifestyle and managing risk factors. In honor of American Heart Month, here are four ways you can prevent becoming a statistic.



1. Reduce Your Salt Intake

Even if you don't already have high blood pressure, eating less sodium can help blunt the rise in blood pressure that occurs with age. It can also reduce your risk of heart attack, heart failure, stroke, kidney disease, osteoporosis, stomach cancer, and even headaches.

A teaspoon of salt is 2,300 mg of sodium. The WHO recommends that adults consume less than 5 g - just under a teaspoon- of salt per day. The American Heart Association suggests that if Americans decreased their sodium to an average intake of 1,500 mg a day, it could result in a 25.6 percent overall decrease in blood pressure.

Ways to decrease your sodium intake include limiting the consumption of salty snacks, choosing products with lower sodium contents, and limiting processed foods. Ready-meals, breads, cheese, and processed meats like bacon, ham, and salami are particularly high in salt.

2. Eat one extra vegetable or fruit a day.

Fruits and vegetables are inexpensive, taste good, and are good for everything from your brain to your bowels. A 2019 study found that millions – yes millions – of cardiovascular deaths around the world could be attributed to not eating enough fruits and vegetables. Opt for veggie-heavy meals and swap fruits when in snack mode.

3. Take a 10-minute walk

If you don't exercise at all, a brief walk is a great way to start. If you do, it's a great way to add more exercise to your day. Being outdoors is known to both lower blood pressure and improve your mood. And taking a moderately intense walk is just as effective as running for reducing your risk of hypertension and high cholesterol, according to a study in the journal *Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis, and Vascular Biology*.

4. Count Your Blessings

Taking a moment each day to acknowledge the blessings in your life is one way to start tapping into other positive emotions. These have been linked with better health, longer life, and greater well-being, just as their opposites — chronic anger, worry, and hostility — contribute to high blood pressure and heart disease.

For more guidance on improving your heart health, visit www.Heart.org.



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Where is the best venue to spend Valentine's Day in Kern County?



Our readers have confirmed what we know to be true: love is in the air in Bakersfield and beyond. While we are privileged to see the love in our communities, homes and families each day, it has a special way of coming together on Valentine's Day. We asked our readers' advice for help choosing a place to spend the date. [Here are some of our favorite responses:](#)

Eating pasta like the dogs in Lady and the Tramp.

- Heidi Frye

The Petroleum Club.

- Beatriz Guzman

With the one you love, it can be anywhere.

-Christina Sanchez

Frugatti's.

- Anna Arroyo

Considering the new outbreak, I would think home is the best place to be this year.

- Candice Gonzales

Flame & Fire Brazilian Steakhouse.

-Tuan Nguyen

In the current state of our world: at home. Besides, my husband is a wonderful chef!

- Susan Holland-Hewitt

The Patio at The Mark

- Josh Jones

Picnic at the park/or any Italian restaurant in town

- Gabriel Figueroa

At home, curled up with my love.

- Brandi Serda

Black Bear Diner. It is cozy and quiet!

- Jayla Gonzales

Wherever my wife wants.

- Josh Carpenter

Black Angus! It has the right lighting to make it feel romantic!

- Courtney McMahan

Urrichio's

- Rhonda Glenn

Home! Because the hospitals are full, the nurses are sick, and there is a national blood shortage. Save a life and donate today because it's a jungle out there.

- Lindsey Panick

I think dinner and a movie never goes out of style.

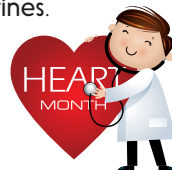
- Ariel Gomez



11 Simple Ways to Add Healthy Habits

New year's resolutions often start with the best of intentions but tend to go off-track by February. Building good habits takes time and consistency. However, small changes can make an important difference, especially as we add them gradually into the ways we approach eating, exercise, rest, and care routines.

February is National Heart Health Month, so it's a good time to reevaluate your own wellness. **Try these 11 ways to start living healthier this year:**



Plan a Meatless Monday

Start with eliminating meat for at least one meal each month. Try eggplant, mushroom, rice and beans, pasta, salad or other main dishes instead. Make it once a week or more to jump-start your new habit to lower your risk of heart disease.

Sneak in exercise

Park farther away, take the stairs instead of the elevator, and go for a walk at lunchtime. Figure out what works in your existing schedule. If you are able to add a fitness class or home workout session, every minute counts for improved flexibility, less anxiety, and better health overall.

Swap salty or sweet snacks for fruit

Control your carbs by exchanging your snack habit for an apple, orange or banana. Change it up with kiwi, dragon fruit, mango, or another favorite.

Kick unhealthy habits

We know you know but smoking, vaping, and excessive drinking all correlate with shorter life spans, heart attack, stroke, and other complications. Make the choice to cut back, stop cold turkey, or seek help to make permanent changes.

Get more sleep

Adults should sleep at least seven to nine hours per night. If your schedule doesn't currently reflect that advice, add in one extra hour of sleep at least once a week.

Check in with your health insurance provider: Are your benefits going unused? You may be eligible for free annual screenings.

"I really regret eating all that healthy food today."*

**No one has ever actually said this.*

Schedule those appointments

If you have been putting off annual appointments, pick up the phone and schedule physicals, dental cleanings, or special visits. Prevention and minor procedures can be life-saving. Ask questions or email a list in advance to your doctor's office.

Get vaccinated

Sign up for your annual vaccines, including the flu shot, COVID-19 immunizations or a booster, or others your doctor recommends. Ask your doctor if you are due for tetanus, pertussis, pneumonia, or others. If you had chickenpox as a child, you may be eligible for a vaccination to prevent shingles.

Have your blood drawn

Donating blood with a read-out in return or arranging for lab exams can help you learn more about your blood sugar, cholesterol, thyroid, and more.

Mental health matters, too

How are you doing? If you need to speak with a mental health professional, find out about community-based services or what is available on your insurance plan. Don't delay. There is no shame in seeking counseling or taking medication.

Try something new

Build your skills by taking up a new habit like painting, yoga, or just intentional time out. Even when living well, life is short. Change up what you usually do for what you've always wanted to do.



"Kern Autism Network Inc. provides support, awareness, information and education to families and the public throughout Kern County"



Happy Valentine's Day!

Parent Support Group Meeting
Wednesday, February 16th • 6-7:30 p.m.
Winter Swimming Scholarships are open.

Email kernautism@gmail.com for further information or go to our website kernautism.org

EARLY SIGNS OF AUTISM:

- Delayed language development
- Repetitive language
- Little or no eye contact
- Repetitive mannerisms
- Inflexible routines or rituals
- Preoccupation with object parts
- Little interest in friendships

SERVICES OFFERED:

- Monthly Parent Support Groups
- Adults on the Spectrum Support Group
- Law Enforcement Trainings
- Autism/Asperger Workshops-Seminars
- Local Resources, Community Projects
- Camps & Activity Scholarships
- Evening & Weekend Phone support

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2200 Oak Street, Suite A



My Kids Happy Teeth: A Happier Dental Experience Committed to Healthier Habits

By Callie Collins

Parents know: the idea of children visiting the dentist may not usually be anyone's idea of a happy experience. However, that's the idea behind a new dental office in Bakersfield committed to the concept of healthy teeth as happy teeth. My Kids Happy Teeth at 6001 Truxtun Ave. in Building D, Suite 490, began seeing some of Bakersfield's youngest patients in December 2021.



Drs. Engineer & Bhatt

Together, Dr. Cheryl Engineer and Dr. Raj Bhatt own the practice, with its characteristic smiley sunflower logo and intentionally warm aesthetic. The husband-and-wife practitioners worked separately in other local Kern County offices before forming their partnership. In addition to graduating from the University at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine, Dr. Engineer also holds a master's degree in public health from Florida International University, where she specialized in epidemiology. Her experience in community health continues to influence the couple's decidedly different approach.

"Community dentistry is my passion. I have always liked working with kids and felt a sense of responsibility since they're the future of the nation," said Dr. Engineer. "My husband and I really have the personality to go with kids. We have very patient, easygoing personalities, which separates us from the other providers we have seen."

Dr. Bhatt, who prefers to be known as "Dr. Raj," is a graduate of the Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry at San Francisco's University of the Pacific. He served for more than three years on the California Dental Association's Board of Managers, which helps coordinate continuing education and collaborative opportunities for dentists. Like his wife, Dr. Raj sees the potential for changing a generation's outlook on dental visits one patient at a time through gentle dentistry.

"The behavior management aspect is a challenge for us, to turn a patient into a very happy patient by making them feel safe in our kid-friendly environment," said Dr. Raj. "We don't just want to fix your teeth and fix your cavities. We want you to stop getting them. We want to be the best dentist office that provides for care, prevention, and knowledge."

Detailed explanations of at-home care, the daily maintenance routines learned in early childhood, are an integral part of the practice, with a clear focus on forming good habits. A common misperception dentists see, for example, is that baby teeth do not require care since they will soon be replaced by adult teeth. Pain, abscesses and the need for more intervention are problematic issues, Dr. Engineer explained, but the lack of care can also impact personal care habits and affect permanent teeth.

"Oral hygiene instructions, why and how to brush their teeth, are what we love to teach," said Dr. Engineer. "We choose employees who are super nice and sweet to them." Their staff of five includes hygienists who share the philosophy of a kind approach, with the societal impact of teaching children to care for themselves properly from the very beginning.

The cozy, comfortable My Kids Happy Teeth office includes toys, stickers, and balloons, specially-selected toothbrushes in animal shapes and intentional design for a fun experience. Each exam area includes a book the doctors created together that details what to expect. Unlike some other dental practices, parents are encouraged to accompany their children rather than sit in the waiting room, if preferred.

My Kids Happy Teeth is currently accepting new patients ages 1 to 21. The practice accepts most PPOs and Medi-Cal. **Find more information at <https://www.mykidshappyteeth.com/> and check out the office's Instagram profile @mykidshappyteeth.**



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Sons Cade and Zane, with Vaun, husband Scott, and daughter, Bryce

friendly

Hello, Happy[^]Mama: Turning the Tables on KCFM Writer Vaun Thygerson

Catching up with Vaun Thygerson feels like chatting with an old friend, someone you've known for years, even if she's actually a new friend. Our readers know her best as a contributing writer to Kern County Family Magazine, with almost every edition featuring a "Dear Reader" open letter from Vaun. A Bakersfield resident since 2004, she is originally from Idaho but is proud to call our community home.

Vaun recently made time to sit down with our staff for a question and answer session in which we turned the tables and interviewed her.

A professional writer, Vaun earned her master's degree in marketing and communications at Roosevelt University in Chicago. She is an adjunct faculty member at Bakersfield College, where she teaches communication-related courses, including interpersonal communication and public speaking. Her expertise is recapped in a textbook to which she contributed which is currently in use. Vaun's effective communication skills are evident in even a casual conversation; the personal rounds out the professional, with her bubbly demeanor evident through phone and email.

Vaun and her husband, Scott, recently celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. Scott is chief executive officer at Kern Medical, and together they've raised their busy family: Bryce, 23, who is navigating independent life, Cade, 18, and Zane, 15. As their children transition into adulthood, the Thygersons are navigating the phase of life parents of older children know well, with jobs and scholarships, sports practices, and learning to drive.

Vaun is supportive of Bryce's independence as an individual living with spina bifida, watches as Cade plans a career in nursing after committing to play lacrosse for Dominican University of California, and smiles as Zane works as a DJ at events around town while also being involved in lacrosse and football. Every parenting phase has its challenges, but friends can be a source of support through each age and stage, she reminds readers. Groups like Moms of Preschoolers (commonly known as MOPS and found at many local churches) can be an excellent resource in more ways than one.

"I met women who were in the same boat as me," she explained. "We had park days with church friends and other friends to sit and talk with. As a mom, you need to find those opportunities to find your community. We're not alone. There is a shared experience in storytelling, in finding a network of other moms you can rely on. It really does take a village."

Even though the activities have changed for both the children and the moms who gather, the friendships have remained the same and, in fact, grown through the years.

"I have become really good friends with my kids' friends' moms. We still do a lot of girls' nights out to this day. These connections you're making when the kids are young really can carry you through the gamut of your kids' lives. It really can sustain you if you put effort and energy into it," she said. "Even at different life phases, we often need the same thing, so instead of hanging out at the park, now we're out at a restaurant, but we're still talking about what crazy things the kids did."

An avid skier, Vaun and her family enjoy getting away to the mountains to ski. "Getting away to Mammoth is a good break for us. It's focused family time, something we all love and can do," said Vaun. Bryce is an avid skier with Disabled Sports Eastern Sierra, which focuses on adaptive sports and inclusive recreation.



Vaun and sons. (We think!)

Three questions with Vaun Thygeron

Q Our readers have to know: Do you have any hidden talents? What's something we would never guess upon meeting you?

A. When we lived in Chicago, I became insanely good at parallel parking. It's kind of like this challenge now. I park in the absolute smallest space I can find and then I have to get out and take a picture. It is an incredibly useful hidden talent.

Q What should families in the Kern County area know more about in their community?

A. People are sometimes like 'Oh, there's nothing to do in Bakersfield.' That's not true. I really believe if you want to do something, you can find it. A fencing society in Bakersfield? Yes, we have one. You have to look for it, but hot yoga, ASL [American Sign Language], fencing, they're all here. Like lacrosse for my sons. I had to Google it, but it's around in Bakersfield. You can find your niche and anything you want to do. The magazine is a great place to find those classes and activities. Cloud 9 has a candle workshop. I wanted to learn to line dance, and I found a place to do that. Often, when I post about these events or activities I found, someone will say 'I didn't hear about that' and my response is 'I didn't either. I looked

it up and found out it was happening.' I love to experience life and do something unique, do something different.

Q What is your parenting PSA?

A. Celebrate your children's uniqueness and let them be them. They'll be happier and more successful. What they wore to picture day, fights over clothes or hair and haircuts, now looking back, it doesn't matter. It does not matter if my son wore a collared shirt to picture day. Let your kids be themselves and don't try to make them something they're not. Embrace their uniqueness. I spent so much time trying to mold them into what I thought they should be, but all three of them are so different. At the time, it matters so much, but years later, I can say it actually doesn't.

Fun fill-ins with Vaun:

I'm always laughing at...My dog, Lincoln, a standard poodle named after Abraham Lincoln, in response to my child's obsession with the historical figure.

The first thing I do when I wake up in the morning is...Drink a Diet Coke.

Today, the strangest thing in my purse is...I grew up in the '80s, so I have a Gumby keychain that's my pride and joy.

Hello, Happy Mama!

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My favorite food is...Italian.

My favorite dessert is...Anything with ice cream, Dewars, Ben & Jerry's.

In my pantry, you will always find... Peanut butter.

Before I go out, I always make sure I have...My phone and lip gloss. I love this one particular kind of Rimmell. I have tried everything from Fenty to Kylie Jenner and this \$6 Rimmell from Rite-Aid is the best.

My favorite music group is...'80s alternative. A Social Distortion concert was the first official date I went on with my husband in 1989.

The best book I've read lately is...Malcolm Gladwell's "Talking to Strangers"

Favorite book..."Whack on the Side of the Head" by Roger von Oech

So far, my best life advice is...Don't be afraid to try new things. You never know what will spark an interest

Vaun credits her involvement here at the magazine with helping her get to know readers and the community: "My life has been better in Bakersfield because of my affiliation with KCFM," she said. From a ride along with fire fighters to knowing more about what is happening around Kern County, we are grateful for Vaun's contributions and look forward to years of friendship.

For more information about what's happening in and around Bakersfield, turn to page 24 or sign up for our e-newsletters at bit.ly/KCFMsignup.



KCFM Publisher LJ Radon and Vaun at Boys and Girls Club event Farm to Table (aux) 2021



Are We Letting Technology Screw Up the Kids?

What if children actually did come with a parenting manual? If tucked inside your baby's swaddling clothes was a step-by-step guide for raising your little one from infancy to age 21? Wouldn't it be great? You could just flip to the chapter on kids and technology and follow along for the well-being of your child.

Well, the joke's on us. There's no manual, and even if there was, the chapter on technology wouldn't be there, because it's not available yet. This era we're in, when nearly all homes have a smart device, is one big grand experiment.

Looking at her three year old completely wrapped up in his iPad, a mom laughs, "He's completely addicted!" and throws her hands up in the air. "But, so am I!"

What do you do when your toddler starts making "gimme" hands for your smartphone? Hand it over, right? Yes, technology is fantastic...except for when it's not.

Psychologists are starting to see links between the overuse of technology and our kids' mental health. Psychiatrists are seeing an uptick in childhood depression while eyeing the effects of social media and technology on children.

Common Sense Media (CSM), a California nonprofit that studies the relationship between kids and technology, says an electronic childhood has "pro-

found implications for parenting and childhood." Chief Executive Jim Steyer, a dad of four, says, "These devices have great benefits, but the downsides are very significant; you've got all of these parents glued to their blanking devices, and so are their six year olds."

The evidence is clear that parents with toddlers have caved into "modern" society's clamor for more and more technology at younger and younger ages. The good news is, if you raise your kids with common sense and authority (consistent, firm and loving; being the parent, not the friend), you stand the best chance of parenting your child through the weedy world of what's good for him and what's not.

Kids Know More Than Parents

So you've heard that Bill Gates refused to let his kids have a smartphone before age 14, and here's why: He knew about their highly addictive quality, and he wanted his kids to know the value of restraint and face-to-face communication. In other words, you'll never ace a key college interview if you can't talk to adults.

Nathaniel Clark, M.D., chief medical officer for Vanderbilt Psychiatric Hospital and associate professor of clinical psychiatry and behavioral science, says the right age for a smartphone varies by child, but that "as late as possible" is best. Yet parents give their 18 month olds smart devices and set up parental controls with little thought to the child's capacity for it.

“Our brains continue developing until well after we reach age 20,” Dr. Clark says. “Particularly in the frontal lobe that is responsible for planning, reasoning, and inhibition of impulses.”

Ah, impulsivity. It’s why kids love Snapchat. Take a pic, write a comment with an Emoji, share it and poof, it’s gone. A 15-year-old boy (who requested anonymity for this article) witnessed a girl, age 7 or so, on Snapchat sitting in front of him at TPAC. He looked disgusted when he said, “She shouldn’t be on Snapchat. She doesn’t know what she’s doing. You just want to do it all the time.” A savvy 24-year-old blogger told me, “The problem is, kids are faster at doing things online than parents are. Even if parents think they know what their kids are doing, they don’t. That’s what’s going on. They can’t possibly keep their kids safe.”

While technology is a huge source of pleasure, we also know it can be incredibly overwhelming. With smart devices providing that individual, deeply immersive experience, homes are sort of circuses with parents struggling to balance screen time with everything else in their lives.

Jean Twenge, Ph.D., is the author of *iGen: Why Today’s Super-Connected Kids are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood*. Dr. Twenge’s eye-opening generational research compares children born in the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s and later. She says the year 2012 (when those having iPhones went above the 50 percent mark) is the same year that kids started saying they felt “sad, hopeless, useless, and that they couldn’t do anything ‘right.’” Kids started describing feeling left out and lonely to her researchers, and Dr. Twenge saw a 50 percent increase in teen clinical level depression.

Addiction & Stress

Children being given devices at younger ages means addiction starting earlier and human connectivity waning. You know that awful irritability you witness when you take the iPad away from your three year old? That’s what we’re talking about. The struggle of it all.

According to Gabor Maté, M.D., the best-selling author and expert on addiction, when you put an iPad or other smart device in the hands of your chubby little toddler, you are giving him a one-way relationship; an indifferent, unloving, inhuman babysitter. Human beings must have human connections or they can become lonely, often deeply so. The iPad, iPhone, Facebook, and all of the other social media platforms promise connection, but it’s not there, Dr. Maté says. Technology provides a temporary relief from loneliness; when it’s taken away, the “pain” returns and you need more.

So think: If your child is addicted to his device at age three, what are you going to have on your hands when he’s a teen? If Snapchat and Instagram monopolize your preteen’s social life now, what’s going to be running your toddler’s life 10 years from now? And another thought: before all of these social media apps, a kid could go home and not take the mean kids at school with her. On social media, they are with her all day long. Parents have to be keenly observant when kids are entering puberty, going underground with their feelings and becoming experts at masking what they really feel.

Psychologist Catherine Steiner-Adair wrote *The Big Disconnect: Protecting Childhood and Family Relationships in the Digital Age*. To counter a teen’s feelings of being “left out” or judged, she says meditation can offer health benefits to help reduce anxiety and depression.

But what if your child is experiencing deep stress? Results from the 2017 National Poll on Children’s Health, show that children today are experiencing worse mental health than their parents did when they were young. If you think technology is to blame for making the world faster and meaner, it doesn’t take much to connect the dots for children.

It’s important to work on your connection to them starting from a young age and to keep it going as they grow. This connectivity will help tremendously when the going gets tough in the teen years.

“If we have a strong connection with our children, we can help them verbalize what’s going on inside,” Dr. Clark says. Stress in particular, he adds, produces the situations that provoke dangerous thoughts and the word no parent likes to hear—suicide. With the rate of childhood suicides on the rise, the medical community is initiating mental health screenings for kids in school now, but parents must also be on the alert for behavior changes. “Smartphone addiction is becoming recognized as a societal, if not a behavioral, health problem,” says Dr. Clark.

Mindfulness to the Rescue

Say you have a preschooler and a baby on the way. You love your device, and your toddler loves her iPad. That’s OK, but Dr. Clark says you do need to incorporate a sense of mindfulness so you’re not constantly distracted. Your baby and toddler need you. “Mindfulness as a lifestyle decision has been demonstrated to be helpful in coping with stress, and there is evidence to suggest it can also help with depression and anxiety,” Dr. Clark adds. That means we need to pay attention.

“When we are not mindful with our children, or distracted by digital technology, we do two things,” says Dr. Clark. “The first is modeling that distraction is normal, even for the people to whom we need to be attentive. The second is that our children may feel unimportant. Infancy is a crucial time for developing a sense of attachment and stability. It sets the stage for how our children experience relationships in the world,” he adds.

So, don’t buy into pop culture’s view that limits are old fashioned or that being authoritative with your children is the wrong way to go. Be the parent, and set clear tech limits for your children. “Say no to all screens for your child’s first two years, says Dr. Steiner-Adair. “Everything she needs to grow into what she can be is available from her relationship to you,” she adds.

“If we can approach our children with empathy and respect and can avoid being punitive,” Dr. Clark says, “we can often set good limits that help our children grow.”

Originally published in Nashville Parent.

If you’re joking about being addicted to your smartphone, why are you handing the thing to your two year old?

Dealing with Jealous Siblings?

Getting the green-eyed monster under control.

"Are you really going to buy her a brand-new car?"

That was Kate's (name changed for privacy) response when she learned that her younger sister would be driving a new car while she drove an old "beat-up boat," as her peers lovingly referred to it. Her parents had a long list of reasons why they were buying her sister a car, but it didn't help Kate to feel any less jealous.

Jealousy is a normal human experience, but it's important to get a handle on it. A recent study in the *Journal of Family Psychology* found that strained family relationships rooted in jealousy can cause health issues and chronic illnesses to worsen. "One way of thinking about jealousy or envy between siblings is that we think we are competing for limited resources or status. If my sibling gets more attention from dad, then I get less. Or if my brother is making more money than me then I may feel that I am inferior," says Dr. Robert L. Leahy, a psychologist, and author of the book, *The Jealousy Cure*.

Dr. Leahy explains that our emotions are based on the past when resources were scarce and life was competitive. "In the past, people in society with higher dominance or status often experienced higher self-esteem, better access to valued food and shelter, and better access to sexual partners," he said.

Often people use the words jealousy and envy interchangeably, but the words have different meanings.

"Jealousy involves competition for the affection of a valued person. Envy refers to someone doing better than I am doing at something that I value. Jealousy involves three people and envy is about your position in a status hierarchy," says Dr. Leahy.

Dr. Jennifer Bevan, who researches jealousy and is a professor at Chapman University, explains that sibling jealousy is often due to parental favoritism. She says, "From the beginning, sibling relationships are often shaped by jealousy, which involves competing with one another for the recognition or gain of their parent's attention. This jealousy begins in infancy and can last into adulthood."

So, what can you do when you are feeling jealous or envious of your siblings?

Notice that you are feeling jealous

The first step to change your jealous feeling is to identify when you feel that way. "We say that we 'feel' jealous, but our jealousy often involves a wide range of thoughts," says Dr. Leahy. When people have jealous thoughts, it is their reaction or behaviors that create problems with their siblings.

Accept that this feeling is normal and part of being human

Jealousy is based on the evolutionary need to survive, so it is a normal and possibly at times helpful feeling. Dr. Leahy recommends allowing jealousy to nag or scare you without it taking over everything. He says, "Think of jealousy as an alarm sounding off, many of them false alarms."



Dr. Bevan explains that not all jealousy is bad or needs to be stopped. She says, "In the case of siblings, it might be a sign that a parent is indeed showing favoritism or expending more time or resources on a particular child and that there is a problem within a family." Within a stepfamily, jealousy can be an indication that something is out of balance and that a child might need to be heard or that the arrangements may need to be recalibrated. "Jealousy is often a symptom that something is wrong within the family and that something needs to change," says Dr. Bevan.

Recognize that you can feel jealous without acting on it

Dr. Leahy recommends using mindfulness to recognize your jealous thoughts. He says, "When we are jealous, we pay too much attention to our jealous thoughts. Mindfulness allows us to find a safe space in the present moment where we let go."

Examine problematic behaviors

When a person feels jealous, they may attack the other person, avoid them, or complain and ruminate about the person or situation. It is important to figure out how your behaviors are influencing your life.

Dr. Leahy says that once you assess your problematic behaviors ask yourself, "How would my relationship improve if I didn't do these behaviors?"

Communicate with family members

One common issue among family members is the need to be "right" all the time. "The need to be right leads you to attack your sibling and bring up past misunderstandings," says Dr. Leahy. Instead, it is important to focus on understanding, compassion, and empathy. "It is especially important to communicate feelings of jealousy within an adult sibling relationship, since adult siblings tend to prefer avoiding expressing their jealousy to one another," says Dr. Bevan.

Dr. Bevan explains that communication in sibling relationships differ from other close relationships, such as romantic partners and friends, where they prefer to be open, direct, and constructive when talking about their jealousy. Before having a discussion with your sibling, you should try to approach it from a viewpoint of having a good relationship, not winning an argument. "It's about listening and sharing, not about dominating and controlling," says Dr. Leahy.

Soul Fried Chicken

— made with love —

Arleana Frink Waller, founder and ShEO of ShePower Leadership Academy, says fried chicken has long been a staple in her family. She can remember her mother Loretta preparing it for her father Willie for breakfast with homemade biscuits made from scratch. Now her 16-year-old son Bentley, or as many call him, Chef B, has taken over the recipe and made it his own. He especially likes to air fry it. Arleana says, “Although we loved a good piece of fried chicken, we understand the significance of the delicacy and how it came to be a mainstay in Black soul food.”

Bentley is affectionately called the “Chicken King” and has started a business around it, claiming his as the “best clucking chicken in America.” His business, Bentley Bowl, a Soul Food Truck, plans to start serving his amazing creations in March 2022.

“Chicken truly is a part of our celebrations, especially fried chicken,” says Arleana. “We hope you enjoy one of our favorite family recipes and share it around the table with those you love, create more memories, more love, and louder laughter.”

Chef B, photo courtesy Arleana Frink Waller



Bentley Buttermilk-Brined Soul Fried Chicken

Ingredients

→ Spice mix

- 2 tbsp Bentley Signature Season (available at bentleybowl.com/shop)
- 2 tbsp paprika
- 2 tbsp freshly ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper

→ Buttermilk brine

- 1 cup buttermilk
- 1 large egg
- Kosher salt

→ Finishing the chicken

- 1 whole chicken, about 4 pounds, cut into 10 pieces or 3 1/2 pounds bone-in, skin-on breasts, legs, drumsticks, and/or wings
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour – make sure to season, do not keep the flour white
- 1/2 cup cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 4 cups vegetable shortening

Directions

1. Combine the Bentley signature season, paprika, black pepper, garlic powder, oregano, and cayenne in a small bowl and mix thoroughly with a fork.
 2. Whisk the buttermilk, egg, 1 tablespoon salt, and 2 tablespoons of the spice mixture in a large bowl. Add the chicken pieces and toss and turn to coat.
 3. Transfer the contents of the bowl to a gallon-sized zipper-lock freezer bag and refrigerate for at least 4 hours, and up to overnight, flipping the bag occasionally to redistribute the contents and coat the chicken evenly.
 4. Whisk seasoned flour together, cornstarch, baking powder, 2 teaspoons salt, and the remaining spice mixture in a large bowl. Add 3 tablespoons of the marinade from the zipper-lock bag and work it into the flour with your fingertips. Remove one piece of chicken from the bag, allowing excess buttermilk to drip off, drop the chicken into the flour mixture, and toss to coat. Continue adding chicken pieces to the flour mixture one at a time until they are all in the bowl. Toss the chicken until every piece is thoroughly coated, pressing with your hands to get the flour to adhere in a thick layer.
 5. Adjust an oven rack to the middle position and preheat the oven to 350°F. Heat the shortening or oil to 425°F in a 12-inch straight-sided cast-iron fryer over medium-high heat. Adjust the heat as necessary to maintain the temperature, being careful not to let the fat get any hotter.
 6. One piece at a time, transfer the coated chicken to a fine-mesh strainer and shake to remove excess flour.
 7. Transfer to a wire rack set on a rimmed baking sheet. Once all the chicken pieces are coated, place skin side down in the pan.
 8. The temperature should drop to 300°F; adjust the heat to maintain the temperature at 300°F for the duration of the cooking.
 9. Fry the chicken until it is a deep golden brown on the first side, about 6 minutes; do not move the chicken or start checking for doneness until it has fried for at least 3 minutes, or you may knock off the coating.
 10. Carefully flip the chicken pieces with tongs and cook until the second side is golden brown, about 4 minutes longer.
 11. Transfer chicken to a clean wire rack set in a rimmed baking sheet, season lightly with salt, and place in the oven.
 12. Bake until thickest part of breast pieces registers 150°F (65.5°C) on an instant-read thermometer, and thigh/drumstick pieces register 165°F (74°C), 5 to 10 minutes; remove chicken pieces as they reach their target temperature, and transfer to a second wire rack set in a rimmed baking sheet, or a paper towel-lined plate.
- Sprinkle Bentley Sig. Season on top to taste.



Pampering Your Spouse: Tips for Busy Parents

by Sarah Lyons

When you become a parent, it seems like life can become very busy, very quickly.

Lack of sleep, work, school, activities, and taking care of little ones often takes center stage in the home. While juggling schedules and managing the household, parents must become more intentional about spending quality time with each other. Show your spouse how much you love and appreciate them with a little extra pampering this Valentine's Day. Here are some ideas that are meaningful, but aren't impossible for a busy couple.

Go to the spa

What could make your spouse feel more pampered than a day at the spa? Offer to take care of the kids and send your partner off to the salon for a day of relaxing, or get a babysitter and go as a couple. If a spa isn't your partner's thing, offer to take the kids while he or she spends the day doing a favorite pastime. Your spouse is sure to come home rejuvenated.

Dinner in

When our children were young, a babysitter was not in the budget. My husband and I would put the kids to bed early once a week and either get take out or cook a special meal at home. No television, phones, or electronics; just conversation and quality time together. For busy parents, a quiet night is a perfect way to unwind.

Date night

A date night is always a great way to connect with your spouse. Plan a night on the town doing things that you and your spouse enjoyed before you became parents. If hiring a babysitter isn't an option and family is unable to help, try swapping with another couple. Watch their children for them while they enjoy a date night one weekend and they can watch your children the next weekend while you and your spouse go out on the town.

Surprise

Let your spouse know you are thinking about them by sending a surprise to their workplace. Flowers are nice but also try cookies, balloons, a homemade treat, or even mail a card with a

special note to their workplace. You could also take them to lunch if their schedule allows.

Do their "job"

In most relationships, responsibilities are divided up between the two people, whether intentional or not. As a way to pamper your significant other, do one of their "jobs" without them asking. For example, if your spouse always mows the lawn, do it for them. If your spouse usually does all the grocery shopping, offer to do it one evening. Another idea is to let them have the "day off" and do all of their normal responsibilities that day.

Leave a note

If you want to make your spouse feel special, leave them love notes. Simple and sweet notes like "Thinking of you", "I love you", or "Have a great day" will let them know you care. Have fun with it and try leaving notes in a coat pocket, in their coffee mug, in their car, or anywhere else you know will surprise them.

You pick

If your marriage is anything like mine, we come to a compromise on what we would like for dinner, what movie to watch, or what activity we will do. Give your spouse the chance to pick what you both will do the whole day. There can be no complaining about their choices, just focus on doing the activities your partner enjoys doing with you.

Pick up a fave

One of my favorite ways to let my husband know I am thinking about him is to just pick up a favorite of his while I am out. If I am at the gas station, I grab his favorite drink, gum, or candy. At the grocery store, I pick up his favorite ice cream or snack. I rent a movie he likes, cook his favorite meal, or buy him a shirt with his favorite sports team logo. It doesn't have to be an expensive gift, just something to let him know I was thinking of him while I was out.

The demands of parenting can leave little time for romantic dates with your spouse.

This doesn't mean that working on your marriage and making your spouse feel loved and appreciated isn't a high priority. During the busy years of parenting, try these tips to show your spouse you care and keep your marriage going strong.

Sarah Lyons and her husband, Justin, have been married for 20 years and have six children together.



How to create a romantic night at home

Romance takes center stage on Valentine's Day. February 14th is a chance for couples to express romantic sentiments that reflect just how much they care for one another.

According to relationship site Marriage.com, happily married couples with long histories together manage to preserve some elements present in the early stages of their relationships — a time when couples typically make a concerted effort to show affection for one another.

Romance is a key component of successful relationships. Couples may discover they don't need to leave the house to enjoy a romantic night together.

Hide romantic notes

Engage in a romantic scavenger hunt by hiding notes that express thoughtful sentiments and give your partner a list of clues to guide the hunt. Start with a clue such as "Where did we go on our first date?" If it was an Italian restaurant, you can attach the next clue to a bunch of basil in the refrigerator, and so on.

Alternate watching films

Both of you probably have all-time favorite movies, but they may not be the same films. Encourage bonding time by queueing up two separate films to watch, yours and your significant other's. Whether one is a rom-com and the other is an action flick, watch them in succession while cuddling on the sofa.

Prepare a meal together

Valentine's Day dinner can be all the more intimate when you dine alone at home. Together, shop for the ingredients for a delicious meal you both enjoy. Pour two glasses of wine and divvy up meal preparation tasks. Steal a few sample bites (and kisses) along the way. Cook to a romantic playlist to really enhance the ambiance.

Dress up the bed

Create a warm and inviting bedroom with some luxury bedding. Splurge on sheets with a high thread count and a new down duvet. Fluffy new pillows and room accents can make the space even more inviting. This new bedding may inspire extra cuddling together under the covers.

Slow dance

When was the last time you enjoyed a dance in each other's arms? Turn up "your song" and sway to the beat. Dancing together can rekindle romantic feelings and needn't be reserved for special occasions like weddings.

Dialing up the romance at home for Valentine's Day comes down to simple, thoughtful gestures.

Story from Metro Creative.

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John 14:6



How Do I Love Thee?

My Child Counts the Ways

I opened the cabinet in the bathroom in search of a clean towel. I found a stack of Samantha's clean, folded clothes. The ones I had asked her to put away yesterday.

This is proof she loves me.

It is like when your cat drops a nearly dead mouse at your feet and looks up at you waiting for the praise that is not coming out of your mouth.

The scream you might emit when faced with the dying mouse is about on par with the thoughts screaming in my head when I saw my daughter's surprise gift of perfectly folded clothes.

There is one difference between my child and a cat, though. She knows exactly what she is doing and is just waiting for me to shriek. Because she loves shrieking, whether she is making the shrieks herself or listening to someone else shriek.

This is why she bowls into my abdomen headfirst with all of her weight. From a run. Across the house. While screeching, "I love you, Mommy! Let's cuddle!"

I may have simply misplaced the memory, but I just don't remember doing that when I was eleven.

And her "cuddles"? They consist of her elbows jabbing into my thighs with all her weight. Actually, more than her weight. She is not satisfied with allowing gravity to squish me; she helps it along with some pushing.

The best time to cuddle, obviously, is when she is supposed to be getting ready for bed or doing school work. She will give me this look that seems to say, "I am going to love you so much that you cannot refuse to give me the attention I seek." Her actual words are something like, "Mommy," (while cocking her head to the side and giving me her best sad dog face). "Mom-

my. I loooooooooooooove you. Let's cuddle."

And I love this child, but every time I have ever tried to cuddle her, she simply pushes me away (hard).

She has been saving up all those unused, discarded cuddles from infancy to this moment. And now, at twelve minutes past her bedtime, she is determined to see if she can get me to remember how much I wanted to hold her and gaze into her eyes when she was a baby.

So when my little love bug decides to get snuggly, I guess I am a bit suspicious. And so I do this battle in my mind. It goes something like this:

ME: No! This is not the time to cuddle. Don't fall for it! She is manipulating you!

ALSO ME: But it's Sammy. I love her. She will only get older and push away more. Carpe diem. Let her.

ME AGAIN: Ouch! I cannot get close to this child. She will squash me.

ALSO ME: But... Sammy.....But ouch! And no! It is bedtime...But Sammy....

And all along there is Sammy with her sparkly eyes that seem to betray her true motive: "I know you cannot resist me. I am your child. I am going to get away with this."

So then I'm like, "Sammy, I love you. Get off me." And then she pouts. And then I say, "I love you," and she lights up. Then she squishes me and I get all stern and tell her to get off and she pouts and I say, "Just be gentle," and she pouts, and I start to walk away, and she grabs my arm and gives me the sad dog eyes.

And we pretty much go on like that for a while.

Until the next time she needs to stall to get out of doing something.

KERN COUNTY FAMILY MAGAZINE *daily happenings* THE BEST LOCAL CALENDAR OF EVENTS!

Our printed version of the calendar has been edited for space. For more details about these events or activities not listed please visit www.kerncountyfamily.com



FEBRUARY Happenings



February 5 25th Anniversary Father-Daughter Valentine Dance

This year's celebration will include: Red Carpet Welcome, Live DJ, Dancing, Professional Photographer to commemorate the special evening, Refreshments (provided), Balloons and candy for days, Door Prizes and a Disneyland themed Grand Prize!

This year we are offering a limited number of tickets and two start times (4pm and 7pm), in order to promote a safer environment for our attendees and volunteers. When you purchase tickets you will select your start time and have the opportunity to pre-purchase your photo packages and a souvenir t-shirt. Tickets are available online only through Feb 4. Tickets will not be sold at the door.

First Presbyterian Church of Bakersfield
1705 17th Street, Bakersfield
661-325-9419
Time: 4-6pm or 7-9pm
<https://fpbchurch.com/father-daughter-dance/>



LOCAL SPORTS Home Games

CSUB Women's Basketball

Cal State Bakersfield
9001 Stockdale Hwy., Bakersfield
(661) 654-3081
Time: 4pm
Feb. 5, 6, 19, 20

CSUB Men's Basketball

Cal State Bakersfield
9001 Stockdale Hwy., Bakersfield
(661) 654-3081
Time: 7pm - 9pm
Feb. 10 & 12

Bakersfield Condors Home Games

Rabobank Arena, Theater and Convention Center
1001 Truxtun Ave., Bakersfield
Time: 7pm
<https://www.bakersfieldcondors.com/schedule/schedule-list/>
Feb. 4, 5, 11, 12, 14, 16 & 19

February 11 Frankie Valli and The Four Seasons

The original Jersey boy himself, Frankie Valli is a true American legend. His incredible career with the Four Seasons, as well as his solo success, has spawned countless hit singles - unforgettable tunes like "Sherry," "Walk Like A Man," "Big Girls Don't Cry," "Rag Doll," "December '63 - Oh What A Night," "Can't Take My Eyes Off of You," and of course, "Grease." His songs have been omnipresent in other iconic movies such as The Deer Hunter, Dirty Dancing, Mrs. Doubtfire, Conspiracy Theory and The Wanderers. As many as 200 artists have done cover versions of Frankie's "Can't Take My Eyes Off of You," from Nancy Wilson's jazz treatment to Lauryn Hill's hip-hop makeover. Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons have sold over 100 million records worldwide. They continue to tour throughout the U.S. and abroad to packed houses receiving nightly standing ovations from thrilled fans of multiple generations.

Rabobank Arena, Theater and Convention Center
1001 Truxtun Ave, Bakersfield, CA
Time: 8pm
(661) 852-7300
<https://www.mechanicsbankarena.com/events/detail/frankie-valli-and-the-four-seasons>

February 14



Happy
Valentine's
Day!

HAPPENINGS CONTINUE →

PLANNING A LOCAL EVENT YOU'D LOVE TO SHARE?

Our Happenings section is dedicated to bringing the most current local events to our readers, but we need your help! You can submit your calendar events at

kerncountyfamily.com

"Submit Calendar Event" can be found under the Calendar tab. Please submit calendar events by the 10th of each month prior to ensure we have enough time to consider your event. We don't have room for all happenings to be listed in print, but all appear online.

Best of all, it's FREE!

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Beatles Tribute Featuring Abbey Road

Since 2002, Abbey Road LIVE! has been rocking the music of the Beatles at clubs, theatres, festivals, and private events. Initially a tribute to the monumental "Abbey Road" album, the band has expanded its scope to include more than 100 Beatles tunes, from all eras of the Fab Four's career. The band specializes in complete, start-to-finish album performances of masterpieces such as "Abbey Road", "Magical Mystery Tour", "Rubber Soul", "Revolver" and "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band".

Abbey Road LIVE! is not your typical Beatle look-alike tribute act; don't expect mop-top haircuts and vintage Rickenbacker guitars. Rather, this show is about bringing to life some of the more mature and complex Beatles material in a raw & spirited fashion, while remaining true to the original recordings. Combining attention to detail with a creative exuberance, the band always delights its audiences with its diverse repertoire of hits and more obscure favorites.

Bakersfield Music Hall of Fame
2230 Q St, Bakersfield, CA
(661)864-1701
Time: 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm
info@bakersfieldmusicalloffame.com

February 15 Disney Princess - The Concert

For generations, Disney's Princesses have enchanted us with their courage and kindness. Their music has been the soundtrack to our lives. Now, for the first time in forever, that beloved music will be celebrated in "Disney Princess - The Concert"! Be our guest as an all-star quartet of Broadway and animated film icons celebrate all the Disney Princesses in an unforgettable evening of songs, animation, and stories, alongside their magical Music Director and enchanting Prince. Your every dream will come true as these acclaimed performers sing your favorite Disney Princess

songs, and share their exclusive, hilarious and heartfelt behind-the-scenes stories from their time portraying princesses on the stage and screen. We invite you to become part of our world ... dress up in your best royal attire and get ready for an unforgettable evening at "Disney Princess - The Concert", presented by Pandora Jewelry.

Rabobank Arena, Theater and Convention Center
1001 Truxtun Ave., Bakersfield
Time: 7pm
(661) 852-7300
<https://www.mechanicsbankarena.com/events/detail/pandora-presents-disney-princess-the-concert>



February 18 Harlem Globetrotters

The World-Famous Harlem Globetrotters are bringing their newly reimagined Spread Game tour to over 200 cities in 2021-2022.

The Spread Game Tour is a basketball event like no other. Ankle-breaking moves, jaw-dropping swag, and rim-rattling dunks are only some of the thrill you can expect from this fully modernized show. Part streetball from the players who defined it, part interactive family entertainment, the new tour will show off the best of the Globetrotters in a dazzling exhibition of talent and game. The Spread Game Tour introduces new premium fan experiences with unprecedented access and interaction, including celebrity court passes, meet and greets with players, and the #SQUADZONE, where fans have the opportunity to feel like part of the show.

Rabobank Arena, Theater and Convention Center
1001 Truxtun Ave., Bakersfield
Time: 7pm
(661) 852-7300
<https://www.mechanicsbankarena.com/events/detail/harlem-globetrotters-6>



HAPPENINGS CONTINUE →

ONGOING HAPPENINGS

Saturdays

F St Farmers Market

Come and meet your local Farmers and Craftsmen and buy local, buy fresh! Chat with the people who grow your food and the craftsmen who hand make their products while supporting local businesses.

City Center: 3201 F St.
Parking Lot, Bakersfield, CA
(661) 342-4671

Time: 7:45am – 12pm
www.visitbakersfield.com/events-calendar/
valley-farmers-market/

Lakeshore Farmer's Market - Wofford Heights

We have some great farmer's markets in Kern County, and this is another one. Give your whole family the gift of fresh fruits, vegetables, and homemade goodies. Drive up the hill for some amazing finds on Saturdays.

7466 Wofford Blvd., Wofford Heights
(760) 417-9575
Time: 9am – 1pm



Mondays

Hoffmann Hospice Grief Support HEALING HEARTS

(Parents that have lost children)

This is a particularly difficult time to experience the death of a loved one. Hoffmann Hospice Grief Support groups are led by trained grief counselors. The meetings are free and open to all. You do not need to have a loved one on our service to attend.

Space is limited, reservation required for all groups. Please call (661) 410-1010 to schedule.

ZOOM (online group)
Bakersfield, CA
(661) 410-1010

Time: 5:30-6:30pm

https://www.hoffmannhospice.org/grief-support-groups/

Art Classes for Children with Charlotte White

All Media Art Classes with Charlotte White. First Grade through 8th Grade. Materials are provided by the instructor. Cost: \$10.00 per class. For registration and additional information contact Charlotte White (661) 330-2676 or charlottewhiteartist@icloud.com.

Bakersfield Art Association Art Center Gallery
1607 19th Street, Bakersfield (661) 330-2676

Time: 4pm – 5pm,
5pm – 6pm

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LESSONS & CLASSES



Organizing Kids' School Papers and Art Projects

By Sarah Lyons

If you have school-age children, you are most likely dealing with an ever growing stack of school papers and artwork. Some of the papers may go straight to the recycle bin but what do you do with the important papers and special artwork you would like to keep?

Start by sorting

Before you can start organizing your child's paperwork and art projects you need to decide what to discard and what to keep. Set aside papers that show your child's writing skills and artwork that you feel is unique to your child's personality. Discard worksheets or daily papers. Make another stack of papers that have information you need such as calendars, directories, or spelling lists. Try to sort items at least once a week so the paper stack does not get out of control. "Parents may want to feature their child's artwork by hanging it in frames on the wall. This gives them the opportunity to enjoy it, then change the pictures over time." says Stephanie Davis, a Certified Professional Organizer from Let's Get Organized.

Start a keepsake box

A keepsake box is a space for you to save items that mean something to you or your child. Davis, suggests using a file box. "A keepsake box causes you to constantly purge and evaluate what you really want to keep," says Davis. Some parents may have a file for each grade level but Stephanie suggests sorting items by type, such as

artwork, invitations, pictures, projects, and adventures. This will give the file box a more defined purpose and is easier for the parent to maintain. "The keepsake boxes should be stored where they are easy to get to. If it is stored on a closet shelf it is less likely to be used than if it is stored somewhere that is easily accessed."

Create a family binder

As a mom of six, our family has our fair share of paperwork. Creating a family binder for important information has helped me stay organized. Each family member has a tab and their sports calendars, school directories, and medical information are stored there. When I need something in a hurry, I know right where to look. "I encourage families to go digital. They can use one family calendar app so everyone knows what is going on and important papers can be scanned and computerized as well." says Davis. "I try to be flexible and figure out what works for each family."

The main thing to remember is the items we want to keep will develop and change over time. As you add to your keepsake box, you may find that some items don't seem as important a few years later and it is okay to discard them to make room for the things that you value now. Parents should never feel guilty about not keeping every single paper, painting, and essay. Realistically it's only important to keep the items that mean the most.

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Think Outside the Lunch Box

By Sarah Lyons



Some kids are more likely to eat their lunch if they are given a variety of foods rather than the same old thing every day. Here are some ideas to get you thinking outside the lunch box.

Wrap it up - fill a tortilla with meat, cheese, and veggies, then add your favorite dressing.

Send pasta or lettuce salads.

Dip it—hummus with veggies or crackers, guacamole with chips, or ranch with veggies.

Homemade lunchables Mix cheeses, meats, and crackers.

Leftovers. Send last night's dinner—chicken and pizza make a great lunch.

Fill a Thermos with soup or pasta.

Different sandwich— put meat and cheese on a sub sandwich instead of bread, or send something unusual like peanut butter and banana (use sunbutter for a nut-free option).

Kabobs - fill skewers with grapes, tomatoes, cheese cubes, or meat.

Quesadillas - they taste great cold, too.

Try breakfast for lunch.

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ACTIVITY CORNER ANSWERS

PAGE 30

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| 3 | 2 | 6 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 8 |
| 5 | 9 | 4 | 8 | 7 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 3 |
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| 4 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 4 |
| 9 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 2 |
| 7 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 4 |
| 1 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 2 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 |
| 2 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 9 |
| 6 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 1 |

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|-----------|-------------|
| Across | Down |
| 1. Beak | 1. Birdseed |
| 3. Eat | 2. Adore |
| 6. Seek | 4. Treats |
| 8. On | 5. Fat |
| 9. Dreary | 7. Only |

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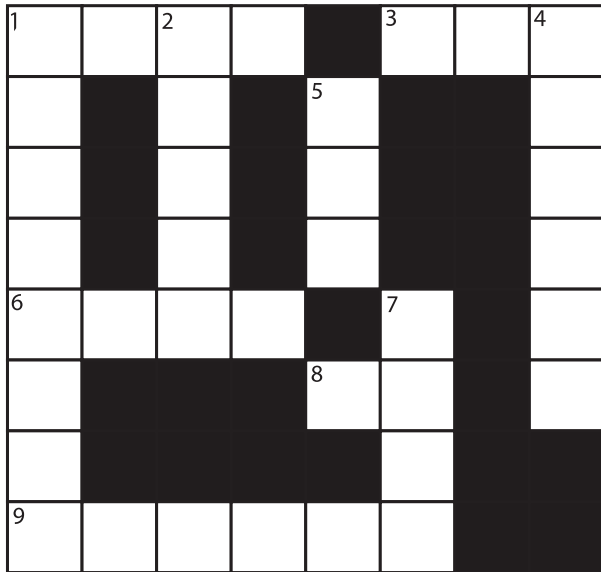
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February ACTIVITY CORNER

answers on page 29



Crossword



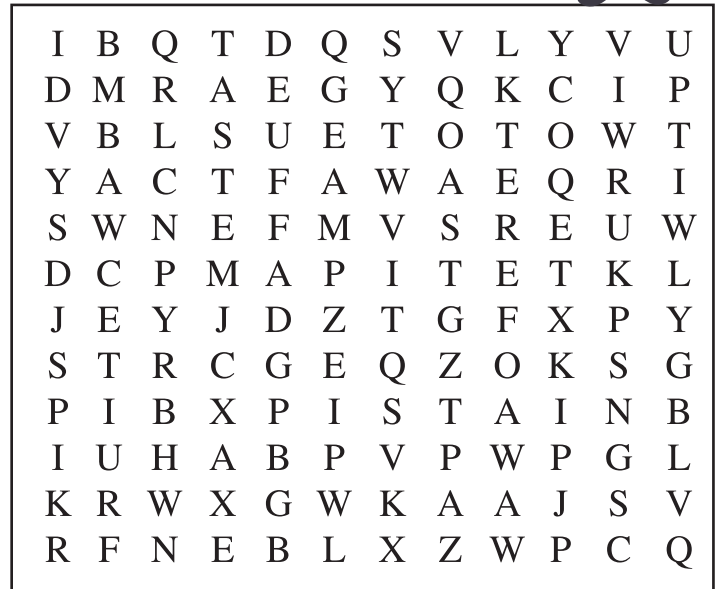
ACROSS

1. Part of a bird's face
3. Consume
6. Look for
8. Opposite of "off"
9. Gloomy

DOWN

1. Food for birds
2. Love deeply
4. Food rewards
5. Oily or greasy substance
7. Solely

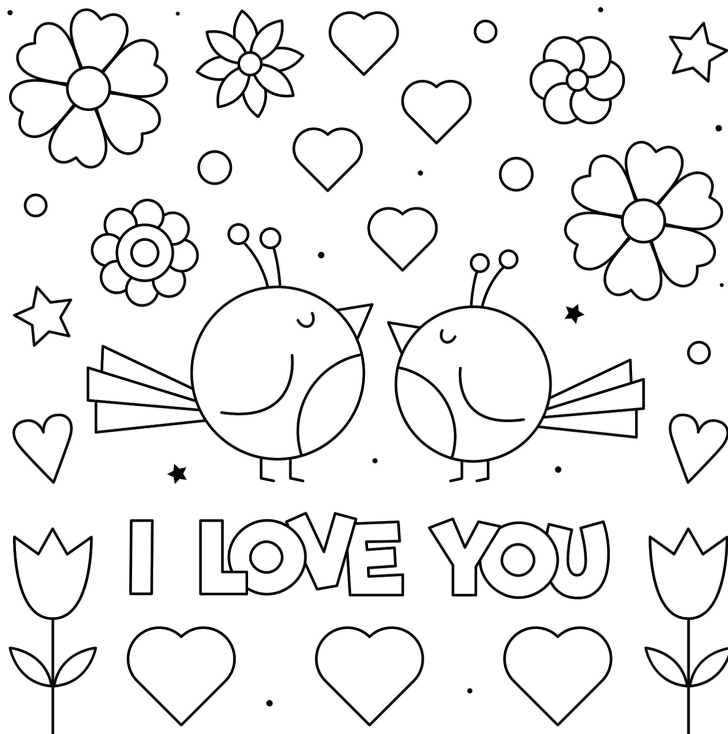
Word Find



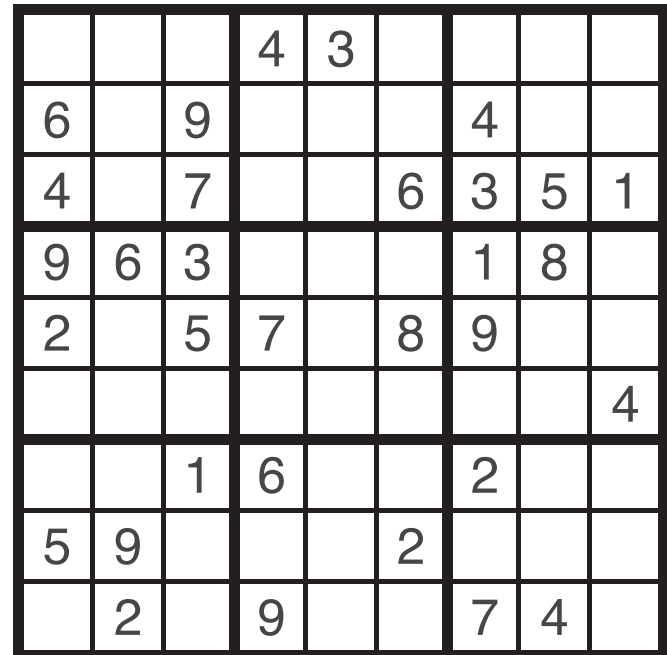
FRUIT
JAM
PICK
PIE

PIT
RED
SALAD
STAIN

STEM
SWEET
TART
TREE

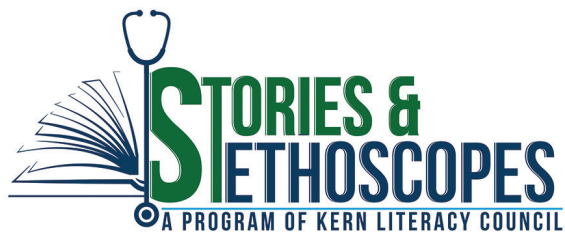


Sudoku



Level: Beginner

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve: the number 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. Figure out the order the numbers will appear by using the clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets!



Books in Boron

The beautiful desert landscapes of East Kern welcomed the Stories & Stethoscopes program for a read-aloud session this month.

The featured guest reader for the program was Josh Pierce, Community Integration and Community Well-Being manager for Adventist Health Tehachapi Valley.

Josh and Laura Wolfe, Executive Director of Kern Literacy Council, traveled to West Boron Elementary School to read a variety of books from the Stories & Stethoscopes program to their two Kindergarten classes.

All eyes and ears were focused as Josh read aloud from books about health, wellness and one big book about, well, dreaming big! Along with a great story time session, the 45 students also received Stories & Stethoscopes backpacks filled with books and rulers.

After story time finished, Josh commented that “it’s important for me to share not only the benefits of reading and writing, but the benefits of a healthy lifestyle to the children. It’s never too early learn about health. My hope is that some of these children in class today will be encouraged to read more about health and wellness and choose to work in a health profession one day.”



Speaking of learning about a healthy lifestyle, check out Josh’s tips in the Stories & Stethoscopes Healthy Tips section.

Stories & Stethoscopes focuses on teaching children the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, from healthy eating to physical wellness and is a great way to inspire, encourage and advance literacy in pre-K through elementary age children. Sponsored by a generous donation from Adventist Health Medical Staff Kern County, the program takes place throughout Kern County.

Look for additional read-aloud story time sessions from other Adventist Health medical team members in 2022.

Stories & Stethoscopes...Health, wellness, and literacy...the perfect prescription!



READ
FOR
SUCCESS

For more information on Kern Literacy Council, call us at 661-324-3213, or check out our website at www.kernliteracy.org.

Stories & Stethoscopes HEALTHY TIPS

-With Josh Pierce



There are a lot of ways to create a healthy life, but having a mind-body connection is one of the best. What do I mean by a mind body connection? It’s having the proper skillsets to help you make the right decisions for your life and health. Here are my tips to get connected:

Reading: It’s important to have the ability to read in life. Reading offers not only educational opportunities, but will help you learn and grow to make healthy life choices. Reading is fundamental for a healthy life and reading opens doors to all kinds of adventures!

Writing: Writing and reading go hand-in-hand. As your reading improves so will your writing and just like reading, writing can open new educational opportunities and help you navigate life.

Wellness: I have two key points here to remember:

- **Wash Your Hands!** Handwashing is the number one way help to reduce illness. Always use soap and warm water. Wash for at least 20 seconds and dry thoroughly. This is a simple, yet very effective wellness habit.
- **Get Vaccinated!** Vaccines are created to help mitigate disease and provide a path to health. Vaccines help eliminate and reduce many diseases and continue to advance in new ways.

Vaccines reduce risks of getting a disease by working with your body's natural defenses to build protection and build health. They're an important part for your overall health.

There you go. Reading, writing and wellness are your best ways to live a healthy mind-body connected life.

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