

Vol. 5, Issue No. 2

support issues fun snippets challenges ideas stories thoughts trivia puzzles

Everything has definitely shrunk! Looking back on my childhood, perceptions of the world around me, people, places and things all seemed bigger, taller and longer. The school playing field stretched into the distance as far as the eye could see. It's actually the size of a football pitch. Richard, the 'big kid' down the street, was a massive hulk of a lad – to be avoided if you had sweets. He's actually only 5' 8" and now works as a computer programmer in Bristol. And Curly Wurly chocolate bars were as long as your forearm! These definitely have got smaller – maybe.

When you're only as tall as a large suitcase, travelling also seems to go on and on. I remember one particularly long holiday car journey to North Wales. It was hot and there was lots of traffic, so the going was slow. My brother, being older and therefore slightly more strategic, had thrashed me too many times at travel battleships, we had spied almost everything there was to spy, and I'd spilled orange juice on my new shorts. I remember being so bored that I spent the rest of the trip trying to extract some very sticky Starburst* sweets – left too long in the glove box – from their wrappers. I think I ate a lot of coloured paper that day. Doubtless I also pestered my parents with the inevitable enquiry, 'Are we there yet?'

If you can remember seemingly interminable journeys as a child, or if you have children who routinely get bored when travelling (despite having their Gameboys, Mp3 players and in-car dvd entertainment), check out Carole's articles on pages 18 and 24.

Incidentally, I still find long car journeys tedious, especially if I'm a passenger. I'd rather drive than be a passenger. At least you've got stuff to do when you're sat in the driving seat.

Hope you enjoy reading the mag.

Lee



COVER PICTURE: © Blend Images

* I'm showing my age here, but at the time the sweets in question were still called Opal Fruits.



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Magazine Aims:

To provide relevant material to help you with day-to-day living. To encourage you to stop and think about a few things that perhaps you haven't given much thought to before. To make you smile.

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flames of passion backfire

An Austrian romeo burnt the house down after making a giant heart out of blazing candles.

Hannes Pisek, 20, from Hoenigsberg in the province of Styria, used 220 candles to make a huge heart on the floor of his flat.

He then lit them and went to pick up his girlfriend from work – but the plan backfired when the flat caught fire.

Pisek was left out in the cold as firemen battled to bring the blaze under control.

He has now lost his home and his girlfriend – she left him afterwards and has moved back with her parents.



you're nicked and you're tricked

Over 200 police in Essex have second jobs with some working as magicians it has been revealed. Other jobs include musicians, therapists, entertainers and florists.

Essex Police admit that more than 200 of their 3,300 officers need extra money so they can afford their own home.

All the jobs have to be approved by Chief Constable Roger Baker reports *The Sun*.

Force records show the most common second job for officers is driving.

PC Sue Kelly, of the Essex Police Federation, said: 'I can see an increase in the number of second jobs as a very significant possibility'.

Since the Human Rights Act has come into force, there has been a slight loosening of restrictions but all police officers have to get permission from the chief constable.

There are various occupations or second incomes out there. I know magicians, a florist and coach drivers.

They often take these jobs to make ends meet or to go on holiday or buy things like a house – especially where prices are so high.

I don't feel so good

A woman who went to hospital fearing she had eaten a dodgy kebab was stunned when she gave birth.

Helen Smitham from Distington, Cumbria, had no idea she was pregnant when she felt stomach pain.

Her mum took her to hospital – and 60 seconds later shocked Helen gave birth to a 4lb 11oz boy.

According to *The Sun* Helen said: 'I had absolutely no idea. When I had stomach pains I thought it was the kebab. At the hospital there was no time for the doctors to see me before it all happened.'

Helen's boyfriend Mark Askew, 41, said: 'She was at work until the Friday before Christmas and we'd gone out doing the normal things, like going for a drink, Christmas parties and socialising. When I got a call to say we had a baby boy it was amazing.'



source: www.ananova.com

car crazy

source: www.ananova.com

3-year-old crashes into cops

Police officers were stunned when a car crashed into their patrol car – and they found a three-year-old boy was responsible.

Oliver Willment-Coster was left strapped in the car by his father, Jeffrey who went into a shop to buy his son a Milky Bar.

But the youngster managed to take the car out of gear, release the handbrake, then steer 15 yards down the road.

He came to a sudden stop when the white Proton car smashed into the police vehicle.

Mr Coster became aware of the incident only when a police officer entered the shop and asked: "Does anyone have a white car?" The 54-year-old ran from the store and found his son unharmed and sitting in the passenger seat with the belt still around him.

Mr Coster said he would never leave his son in the car again. "It is what thousands of parents do every day. I never thought he would be able to take the handbrake off."

drunk driver rang police

A drunk driver was arrested in Germany after he accidentally rang the police instead of a breakdown service when he had a flat tyre.

Before he realised who he was speaking to, the 31-year-old let it slip that he had no licence and was driving under the influence.

The civil servant, who lost his licence eight years ago, had a blow-out in the western town of Monheim while driving a car borrowed from a friend.

He had a blood alcohol level that was seven times the legal limit, and when he tried to call the German equivalent of the AA he became confused and dialled the emergency number for the police.

The drunken man phoned and said: 'My car is broken and I need you to come and fix it. You better be quick because I'm pretty drunk and I don't have a licence so it wouldn't be good if the cops drove past.'

A Monheim police spokesman said: 'He wanted us to come quickly, so we did.'

on the buses

A 15-year-old pretending to be a bus driver stole three separate buses and took dozens of unwitting passengers along for the ride.

The teenager took the first bus in the north-east Dutch town of Apeldoorn and drove it 40 miles down the motorway – where he stole another to drive the return journey.

Police say he stopped several times to pick up passengers and delivered them to their destinations without their becoming suspicious.

The youngster was finally stopped by police while driving a third stolen bus the next day.

Stop, thief!

A Russian thief did not get very far after he stole a car from a repair shop – without realising the brakes had been removed.

The 24-year-old had taken the broken Nissan Primera from the garage in southern Moscow and tried to make a quick getaway.

But witnesses watched him sail through a set of traffic lights and smash into another car just down the road.

A Moscow police spokesman said: 'He told us he had watched mechanics doing a paint job on the car and had seen them leave the keys in the ignition so he decided to take his chance.'

The man was arrested and charged with theft.

Diet changes linked to mental illness

Changes in diet are being linked to a rise in mental illness in Britain over the past 50 years.

New research shows that fast food and modern production methods have reduced the amounts of essential fats, vitamins and minerals we consume. It concludes that this is could be leading to depression, apathy and memory problems.

The *Mental Health Foundation* (MHF) and *Sustain*, which campaigns for better food and farming, says that food affects brain function and structure.

The organisations have launched a Feeding Minds campaign to raise awareness of how the nation's diet could be linked to increasing mental ill health.

Dr Andrew McCulloch, MHF chief executive, said: 'We are only just beginning to understand how the brain, as an organ, is influenced by the nutrients it derives from the foods we eat, and how our diets have an impact on our mental health.'



Detox diet pills 'don't work'

Following a detox diet is a waste of time and money, according to scientists.

Books proclaiming wonder cures for Christmas excesses are trading on people's ignorance of how the body works, researchers claim.

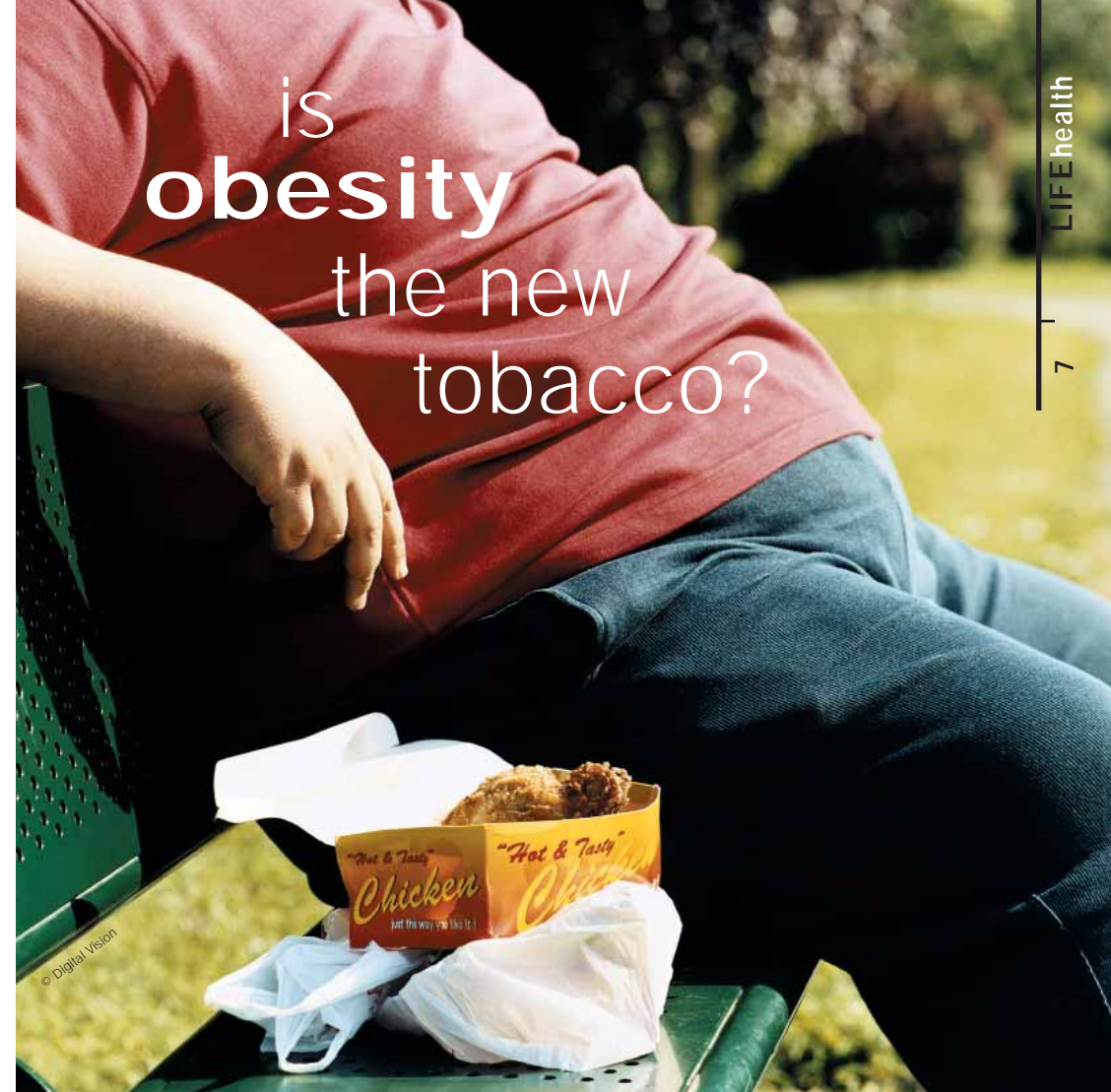
People are better off investing in a few early nights, drinking plenty of water and eating healthily.

The research, *Making Sense of Chemical Stories*, was carried out by leading scientists and toxicologists.

They found that most of the pills, juices, teas and oils sold for their detoxifying effects have no scientific foundation for their claims. They do not increase the rate at which toxins are expelled from the body.

'The detox fad is an example of the capacity of people to believe in (and pay for) magic despite the lack of any sound evidence,' said Martin Wiseman, Visiting Professor of Human Nutrition at the University of Southampton.

Other researchers said that 'detox' was a scientifically worthless term. 'The concept of detox is a marketing myth rather than physiological entity,' said Catherine Collins, chief dietician at St George's Hospital Medical School in London.



Around 30 years ago, at least 45% of people living in the UK smoked, causing a significant rise in health problems, and public health campaigns to help people quit.¹ Today, with just on 60% of the population overweight or obese, there are some interesting parallels.

The health risks

Obesity and smoking are both significant public health threats that can take years off your life. But while smoking rates have dropped over the last 30 years, the rate of overweight and obesity has tripled in some age groups.² The health improvements that have come about from getting people to stop smoking are diminishing because of the obesity epidemic.





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New studies indicate that obese people can lose years off their lives compared to people of normal weight.³ Overweight and obese people are at greater risk of developing chronic diseases that can lead to premature death, in the same way smoking is linked with a number of diseases.

These health problems are not just diseases for the elderly, with a generation of overweight young people developing conditions such as diabetes and hypertension much earlier in life. In the near future, preventable behaviours such as poor diet and physical inactivity may overtake tobacco smoke as the leading cause of death.

Pointing the finger

So who is to blame? Some people see weight problems as a private issue, and that it's only a matter of personal responsibility. But most health experts realise there are much more complicated issues involved.

Just as we once lived in a culture that thought smoking was 'cool', our society tends to encourage over-indulgence and inactivity. This can be seen in the popularity of shops selling cakes, cookies and coffee, along with super-size meal deals and the fast food culture. There is also a strong dependence on cars for transport, while a myriad devices like remote controls and mobile phones save us from walking anywhere. Our environment makes it hard to eat well and be active, because food, especially fast food, is cheap and plentiful, and movement has been engineered out of daily life.

While individual responsibility is important, other factors include government policies, schools, teachers, health-care professionals, community health organisations, social attitudes, the media and the food industry.

Are you addicted?

The argument that nicotine is addictive removed smokers from responsibility for their actions. It has also led people to question whether fast food and junk food is addictive. A brain scan study of hungry people showed their brains lit up when they saw and smelled their favourite junk foods, in much the same way as the brains of cocaine addicts react when they think about their drug of choice⁴.

Just like smoking becomes a bad habit, dependence on fast food can become an automatic behaviour with negative consequences. When people work long hours, it's common to feel too busy or tired to prepare healthy meals. Suddenly, choosing high-fat fast food becomes the norm.

Some suggest that smoking cessation may have been easier, because people were *choosing* to stop a behaviour proven to be deadly. On the other hand, it's harder to convince people of the health consequence associated with excess body fat. Few people would view it as lethal.

Chronic diseases linked to smoking, and to excess body fat

Smoking	Overweight & Obesity
Coronary Heart Disease	Coronary Heart Disease
Cancer of the lung, mouth & throat	Cancer of bowel
Emphysema	Type 2 diabetes
Gum disease	Sleep apnea
Osteoporosis	Osteoarthritis
Cataracts	Gallbladder disease
Chronic bronchitis	Fatty liver disease.

The legal minefield

If fast food is proven to be an addictive substance, there are significant legal implications. After the successes of tobacco litigation, the fast-food industry is now in the sights of lawyers in the fight over obesity. McDonald's has already been taken to court, accused of misleading people through advertising and other publicity that its food products were nutritious.

In 2002, an American unsuccessfully sued four fast-food companies, including McDonald's, alleging the food made him obese and gave him heart disease and diabetes. Other cases have followed, including a case where two teenage girls alleged McDonald's caused their obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure and elevated cholesterol.

McDonald's quotes on its website that the decisions people make about what, how often and how much they eat 'are wholly beyond McDonald's control.' But they do market to children by having playgrounds, kids' meal deals, toys and birthday parties, luring kids to overeat food that is ultimately unhealthy. When you consider that juries are less likely to hold young children liable for their own actions than adults, there is every reason to believe that McDonald's may have a case to answer.

There is also the case of disclosure, where people cannot make healthy choices if they don't have all the information they need. To prevent a class action lawsuit, some major fast food chains are displaying nutrition information in more prominent spots, such as on menu boards or on the wrappers. Recently, McDonald's have also added a range of 'healthier' meal choices to their menu, and also advised people not to eat their food more than once a week.

McDonald's, and other fast-food companies are not totally responsible for the problem of obesity. While it can be proven that smoking can cause lung cancer, it is more difficult to determine accurately how much of a role a hamburger played in a heart attack. Foods are not harmful in moderation, whereas cigarettes are.

Finding a solution

As an individual, you can take responsibility for your actions, and make some changes to your lifestyle to lose, or prevent the storage of excess body fat. Some key healthy lifestyle strategies include:

- * **Diet** – Minimise your kilojoule intake by eating less high-fat food, kilojoule-laden drinks and highly processed foods, while increasing your intake of water, fruits, vegetables and whole grain foods.
- * **Physical activity** – Incorporate regular

movement and planned physical exercise into your life on most days of the week.

* **Age** – As you get older and your metabolism naturally declines, compensate by eating a little less, and exercise a little more.

* **Psychological factors** – Many people use food to medicate feelings of anxiety or depression. Try to find other methods of dealing with problems in your life other than with food.

* **If you gain a little weight, do something about it** – If you do gain a little weight from medication, illness, pregnancy or quitting smoking, try to lose the weight soon (responsibly, of course). The longer that body fat sits on your body, the more your body adapts to it being there, and the harder it is to lose.



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Some of the successful strategies used to change people's attitudes and behaviours towards smoking may be employed to help in the fight against obesity. For example, working with individuals was found to be an unsuccessful strategy in the war against smoking. Ultimately, success came by making changes to the environment smokers live in, making it harder for people to smoke. This was achieved by preventing cigarette advertising and sponsorship, increasing taxes and the price of cigarettes, banning smoking in public places, and educating others about the dangers of secondhand smoke. In relation to obesity, some public health policies that governments and the food industry could consider include:

- * A ban on advertising junk foods
 - * A tax on fast foods and processed foods
 - * Limit the amount of fats in processed foods
 - * Make nutrition information compulsory on restaurant menus and display boards
 - * Ban unhealthy foods such as soft drinks and chips in school canteens
 - * Include daily physical-activity classes in schools
 - * Provide incentives for physical activity in the workplace
 - * Educate the public on the importance of healthy eating and regular activity
 - * Provide funding for obesity researchers.
- Some of these issues have already been debated in the popular media. Ultimately, the best solution is a combined approach from individuals, governments and food manufacturers. By working together, we can learn from the successes and mistakes with cigarettes, and tackle the obesity problem head on.



¹ASH - *Action on Smoking and Health* – January 2005

²Percentage of obese and overweight population by country OECD Health Statistics, 2004

³Annals of Internal Medicine 2004

⁴CNN April 21, 2004

the best day ever!

Anon

Today I awoke with the realisation that this is the best day of my life, ever. There were times when I wondered if I would make it to today; but I did! And because I did I'm going to celebrate!

Today I'm going to celebrate what an unbelievable life I have had so far: the accomplishments, the many blessings, and, yes, even the hardships, because they have served to make me stronger. I will go through this day with my head held high and a happy heart. I will marvel at God's seemingly simple gifts: the morning dew, the sun, the clouds, the trees, the flowers, and the birds. Today, none of these miraculous creations will escape my notice. Today I will share my excitement for life with other people. I'll make someone smile.

I'll go out of my way to perform an unexpected act of kindness for someone I don't even know. Today I'll give a sincere compliment to someone who seems down. I'll tell a child how special he is, and I'll tell someone I love just how deeply I care for them and how much they mean to me.

Today is the day I stop worrying about what I don't have and start being grateful for all the wonderful things God has already given me. I'll remember that to worry is just a waste of time because my faith in God and his divine plan ensures everything will be just fine.

Tonight, before I go to bed, I'll go outside and raise my eyes to the heavens. I will stand in awe at the beauty of the stars and the moon, and I will praise God for these magnificent treasures. As the day ends and I lay my head down on my pillow, I will thank the Almighty for the best day of my life.

And I will sleep the sleep of a contented child, excited with expectation because I know tomorrow is going to be the best day of my life, ever!



15 minute fix

by Anita Marshall

I used to read as I walked to school. Yes, I *did* have accidents, quite frequently, as it happens, but there just weren't enough hours in the day, and as I came home for lunch, that meant four lots of 15 minutes – a whole extra hour for reading! I found out what Katy did, then what she did at school, and what she did next, and flew with Biggles over France in WWI, all on the way along the High Street, past the cemetery with the wall that looked like rotting teeth as it crumbled into broken-bricked chaos, and was even known to miss the sweetshop, so engrossed was I.

It had to stop when I started work, of course. You *can* read while you cycle, but it's really best not to.

In recent years I'd rather let slip the practice of utilising the odd 15 minutes, being more inclined to recline in a chair in the period after lunch and before I need to go back to work. But something got me started again. It happened like this.

We have a green wheelie bin which, if we fill it and put it on the pavement every second Thursday, is emptied by the nice

men from the council. As we have an enormous garden and already have four compost bins and two 'active' heaps, there's really nowhere left to put non-rotting prunings from shrubs and trees, and all those various slimy lumps of stuff that get forgotten behind the summerhouse or stuffed down the side of the shed. So when, for the measly sum of £10 we were offered a green wheelie bin for garden waste, well . . . !

Then, one Monday last autumn I realised the bin was empty and if I didn't get off my bum, the bin men would not find their work quite as fulfilling as they had a fortnight earlier. I had three days to make the bin 'wheelie' full! (Sorry!) But, the evenings having drawn in, I didn't fancy lugging garden grot about in the gloom (spiders – EEK! I can take the frogs, bats, and other creatures of the night, but not the arachnids) so there was only one thing to do. I set aside that sleepy 15-minute slot Monday to Wednesday. And I did it! On the Thursday morning when I wheeled out the bin, it was stuffed! Another load off our minds – not to mention from behind the summerhouse.

There was something else those 15-minute slots did for me, though. Not only did they provide exercise out in the fresh autumn air, they got me unwound. Apart from requiring me to pop into other people's office as the job requires it, mine is sedentary work. And I found that, rather than making me even more tired in the afternoons, as I thought they might, those 15 minutes of activity actually increased my afternoon energy levels, even improving the get-up-and-go of the 'little grey cells'. I've also started whistling again, something I haven't done for years!

In fact, I've begun to feel so well that I'm going to move into that insufferable class of people who can't help giving advice, and suggest a few things that can be achieved in fifteen minutes if you, too, want to feel invigorated and more like whistling as you work!

As the idea is that you do something that must be done but you never seem to have the time for it, and as the idea is also to frolic in a bit of fresh air and sunshine when available, the suggestions are mainly in the garden, and are what I call 'clean' jobs. but you could apply them to other areas of life if all you have is a window box.

Here's what I managed to accomplish in six 15-minute slots this past week:

- * Deadhead a huge patch of daffodils. Later on it will be twenty fuchsias, or fifteen geraniums, or one hanging basket (I'm only planning one this year).
- * Sweep the front drive.
- * Feed the goldfish in my half-barrel water feature, allowing plenty of time for teaching them to take food from my hand. (They're so cute when they suck on my fingers by mistake!)
- * Check our 25 rosebushes for aphids.
- * Edge the lawn (which really makes the garden look so much tidier, even if you can't mow till the weekend).

- * Trim three early-flowering shrubs (half-filling that wheelie bin!).

Well, you can see where *my* passion lies (a long way from the laundry basket) but if you don't have a garden you could:

- * Vacuum a couple of rooms.
- * Clean two windows (in a few days the whole lot will sparkle).
- * Iron two shirts (the editor says he might just manage one in that time!)
- * Give the bathroom a brisk wipe.
- * Change a bed.
- * Have a rough ball-game with the dog or cat (it's OK to have fun too!)

Hopefully, you're bursting with your own ideas by now. And it doesn't have to be chores. You could spend the 15 minutes on the trampoline, fast-walking, jogging, or just junking your junk mail.

Try it. Feel fresher! Bask in the buzz from blotting something from your 'must-do' list. Get the little grey cells galloping around. And while you're at it, start whistling again!



Love your money!



(or at least have a successful relationship with it!)

by Sheila O'Connor

Do you wish you had more money? When you feel down do you go out and spend it to cheer yourself up, then get depressed when you get into debt? Or are you a miser – hanging onto it to make sure you don't end up with none?

We all have differing ideas about money, but when it comes to discussing it, most people would rather talk about their sex lives!

Olivia Mellan, a financial consultant in Washington DC, says, 'Money is the last taboo in life. . . . Everyone believes that if only they had more, life would be better, but that's not true. If a person is cautious with money now, with a little more they only be more cautious. If they're great spenders, they'd only spend more.'

Often our money attitudes are inherited

from our parents, or are a reaction *against* their attitudes. Mandy, 31, recalls, 'Money was never actually discussed at home, although my Dad worried aloud about not having enough, and got mad with Mum for spending too much. I grew up with the idea that we were quite poor but, looking back, I can see that in fact we did very well, with quite a big house in a nice neighbourhood. My brother and I went to university. Today, though, I tend to hold on to every penny.'

Jackie, 29, heard her father say much the same thing, but did not believe it. 'It always sounded like an excuse. One day I asked my dad for money for new clothes and he called a family meeting. He had cashed his pay cheque in notes and put them all on the table. Then he gathered all the bills for that month and set aside the amounts required to settle the bills. Before he got to the end of distributing his salary my sister and I were working out ways we could get part-time jobs so that we wouldn't have to ask our parents for luxuries!



Looking back at how little extra money my parents had, I think they did very well, but I now tend to spend whatever money I have because I don't like to feel deprived in any way.'

Doing the opposite of what our parents did is a common response. Olivia Mellan says, 'People adopt their parents' attitude towards money or do the opposite, but they are equally controlled.'

One way to get your relationship with money sorted is to write down one or two things you feel are positive, and one or two that are negative. On the positive side you might come up with, 'I am always able to save something', or 'I usually have enough to live on', and on the negative side, 'I would like more', or 'I am worth more.'

Olivia advises: 'When you've looked at what you've written down, identify where to start in changing the negative part. Denial is a big factor in keeping us stuck. Realise that there is nothing on your list that is unchangeable.'

For instance, Judith, a housewife, had always considered herself quite stringent with money. When she wrote this down on the negative side, she realised that by being thrifty she had managed to make the household budget go a long way. There had always been food on the table, clothes for the children, and a family holiday once in a while. She realised that her negative was actually a positive.

For many, money is tied up with happiness, love, power, independence, self-worth and security, but Olivia warns: 'Money is only pounds and pence. It's important to be sensible about how much worth you attach to money and also to negate any myths that have a hold on you.'

How do you get rid of 'money myths'?

Myth 1: 'Money equals happiness' This is probably the most common money myth. But people who find that happiness doesn't automatically come with wealth can become disillusioned and depressed.

Instead of falling for this one, try to think of things that make you happy but which require little or no money, preferably those things that can be done with another person such as a walk in



the countryside or park, fun-time with your children, or a heart-to-heart chat with a friend. There's no amount of money in the world can buy these pleasures.

Myth 2: 'Money equals love'. Despite the fact that money doesn't, in fact, equal love, we still go on buying ourselves things because we feel *unloved*. This can lead to overspending, and the problem is more widespread than most people realise. In the first week of operating, *Debtors Anonymous*, in New York, had 25,000 people call for that reason alone.

Debunk the myths!

* Think of all the people you know who have money but who don't have much love in their lives. Then think of those you know with little money who are nevertheless able to give and



receive warmth and affection freely.

* Olivia advises: 'Try to find something that fills you up from the inside. Using money as the answer is just a way of keeping the charade going and masking the pain.'

* Forget the idea that 'money means freedom'. Some people think that if they had enough money they'd give up their jobs and travel the world. The truth is that most people who do travel the world do so on shoestring budgets. They go out and experience the local culture, and they almost never stay in expensive hotels. It isn't money you need – it's motivation! Without that, even money can't get you going.

Do you want to change?

You do? Let's look at one idea.

Practise being the opposite of your money personality for a month.

If, for instance, you're a money *hoarder*, try *spending* a significant amount on an impulsive purchase. (Shock! Horror!)

If, on the other hand, you're a *spender*, *stop yourself* from making an impulsive purchase and put the money in a savings account. (What?!)

Consider, too, taking a risk with your money if you are a risk-avoider where money is concerned.

There's a lot of need in the world, and many people far worse off than you.

Give to a worthy cause. You may never know what good it does, but you can always visualise what you hope it will do.

Have a money goal.

Another solution is to give yourself a goal regarding your spending or saving. Write your goal down. For instance, 'I will save so many pounds a week from now on.' Write it on the calendar you consult most often. That way you can't miss it! You might, of course, have to write: 'I will *spend* so many pounds a week from now on!' You could also punish or reward yourself when you fail in your resolve, but that's up to you.

A sensible money goal can help you handle those money problems that are ruining your relationships.

Take the case of Sandra. Her husband Bill wants a joint account but she insists on separate bank books. She knows that her fear is partly due to messages she picked up in childhood.

'My father was a worrier when it came to money. He made me account for every penny I spent. As a result, when I grew up I went to the opposite extreme, not keeping tabs on what I was spending. When Bill wanted a joint account, I saw it as his way of trying to control me the way my father did and I refused to let that happen.'

While this is one very valid reason for Sandra's strong aversion to a joint account, there can be other reasons – such as feeling your partner doesn't trust you, or that you can't trust him/her! It's important for both of you to try to see the other's point of view.

Talk to your partner.

It's best to choose a quiet time, when each of you can discuss your attitudes to, or problems with money in turn. Share your childhood memories as well as your hopes and dreams about money. Tell your partner how you feel about their spending habits, and be prepared to listen when she or he tells you how they feel about yours!

It's important, however, that this sharing includes positive as well as negative

feelings. If you're a risk-taker and your partner is a risk-avoider, tell him/her that you admire how practical he/she is in money matters. In turn, she/he may feel able to express her/his admiration at your courage in taking chances with money.

Finally, and most importantly, discuss the practicalities of those expressed aims, dreams and hopes. Whether you settle for a shared account or not, you must share a *budget plan* which will help you achieve your individual and joint goals.

Having mutual money goals can help towards a more satisfying and rewarding relationship. It's just important not to allow money, or the lack of it, to stand in the way of your happiness.



There's an old saying you've probably heard: 'Money is the root of all evil.' The quotation actually reads: 'The *love* of money is a root of all kinds of evil.'* Money is only pounds and pence. It's what you do with it that matters, and that applies whether you have little or lots.



*It's in the Bible: 1 Timothy 6:10.

Are we there yet?

Travelling with children
– a survival guide



Just because you have children doesn't mean you have to stop having fun. Or travelling. But if you want to travel with your children and have fun too, you are going to have to do some pre-planning. It is crucial for a successful trip.

One of the most important things to find out in advance is whether the lodging facility you plan to stay at welcomes children. Everyone will have a better time if the management likes them.

by Carole Terwilliger Meyers

It is also a good idea to plan a daily itinerary. But don't pack it too tightly. Leave time for simple pleasures such as napping and slurping ice cream cones. On longer trips, allow for some 'separation' time: adults going their separate ways, each with one child, or adults taking turns staying with the children while one gets free time.

Planning trips

- * Have your children help pick a destination and plan the trip. Look at maps together. Create a flexible travel schedule. Allow sufficient travel time between destinations so that you can make spontaneous exploration stops along the way.
- * Establish guidelines on spending money, snacks, bedtime, TV use, etc.
- * Plan to start the trip early in the morning and to arrive at your destination early in the day, so you will have time to relax. Getting away in the middle of the night means that your younger children will sleep through the journey, and for older children it may add to the adventure. Traffic is generally lighter too.
- * When you arrive, read again the appropriate sections in your guidebook to familiarise yourself with local facilities, or, if you are on a package tour abroad, have a chat with your tourist or hotel management about babysitting service, bicycle rentals, horseback riding/stables, public swimming pools/plunges, restaurants, skating rinks, or other leisure activities and their suitability for your children. Also check the local newspapers and tourist magazines for current special events and activities.
- * Hang a map of the world and of your home country on a wall in your home. Use coloured pushpins or flags to mark places you have visited. Children enjoy doing this.

Accommodation reservations

- * To avoid disappointment and a frantic, last-minute search for anything – and the possibility of finding nothing – make

advance reservations at hotels or campsites. Booking on the Internet can sometimes save you cash as travel firms try to encourage e-business. Always ask for a written confirmation. Take it along as proof of your reservation. If you must cancel, do so as soon as possible. The later you leave it the less likely you are to get any sort of refund.

- * Don't forget to take out adequate travel insurance. 'It' may never happen to you, but then again 'it' just might. . . .
- * If you require a cot, reserve one at the time you make your room reservation, otherwise you might find none available when you arrive. Alternatively, purchase a travel carrycot and take it with you.

Packing

- * Make a checklist of all the items you need to gather or buy for your trip. For instance, if you are going to a beach or river area in the summer, you will want to consider taking along items such as: swimsuits, towels, suntan lotion, beach blanket, back rest, sun umbrella, sand toys, inner tubes, sandals/tennis shoes, air mattress, beach ball. Don't panic if you do forget something. Usually you will be near a shop where you can buy emergency replacements.
- * You can save space by packing less and taking along some travel wash solution.
- * Don't forget travel adaptor plugs when travelling abroad, otherwise you could just find yourself facing a bad-hair week!
- * Take different forms of currency – cash, travellers' cheques, and a credit card if you have one. This strategy should cover all the basics when it comes to buying food or other necessities while you're away.

Goodie bags

A good way to keep children occupied and happy on a car trip is to provide each with their own goodie bag. For the bag itself



you might use a recycled lunch box, a backpack (especially good for plane trips), a small basket, a shopping bag, a small suitcase, a plastic bucket, or a metal cake tin. Whichever container you choose, be sure to have a separate one for each child, and try to fill them with the same items (or equivalent items if their interests differ). Labelling the contents with each child's name will help avoid some conflict. A flat, hard container makes a good foundation for writing and colouring. Things you might put inside include pads of paper, cello tape, coloured pencils, washable felt pens, midget cars, finger puppets, Lego, story-books, car games, workbooks, pencil box, blunt scissors, card games, non-melting crayons, colouring books, pipe cleaners, snap-lock plastic beads, paper dolls, origami paper, play dough, small scraps of coloured paper, gummed paper shapes, stickers, magic slate, eraser, magnetic puzzles, chess, drafts, sewing cards, magnifying glass, small chalkboard and chalk, felt board and shapes, glue stick, Etch A Sketch, spiral notebook, plastic bags to hold collectables.

The items you choose to put in the goodie bag will depend on your child's age. Be sure to keep the bag stocked and ready to go, and keep your eyes open for new items to unveil on future trips. For younger children, don't forget to bring along their lovies – teddy bear, blanket, etc.

Have older children shop with you for new goodie bag items a few days before the trip. The anticipation of playing with the newly selected items will work in your favour.

I think you will find the goodie bag so useful that you will begin using it in other ways – on a rainy day, when your children are sick, when you leave them with a babysitter, when you dine out together in a restaurant.

The goodie bag concept needn't be restricted to travelling or holidays. Here are some other options:

* **Picnic goodie bag.** I usually prefer to stop at a delicatessen to pick up picnic fare. To help make our picnics more comfortable, I always keep in the boot of my car a picnic blanket, a day pack (for those picnic spots that require a hike to reach), and a plastic pull-string bag stocked with paper plates, cups, napkins, plastic eating utensils, straws, a tin opener and a corkscrew.

* **Musical goodie bag.** The following items provide family fun by the campfire or fireplace and can be purchased inexpensively in most music shops: slide whistle, kazoo, small tambourine, plastic flute, whistle, wooden rhythm blocks, jew's-harp, gongs, bells, cymbals, ratchet, rasps, harmonica.



* **Beach play goodie bag.** Many of these items can be gathered from your kitchen. Remember to avoid glass. I like to store them all in one big plastic bucket, which I save especially for trips to the water. Spray bottle, spatula, scoop, pastry brush, plastic cups, measuring spoons, bucket, funnel, biscuit cutters, strainer, pancake turner. Helpful hints in the car

Travelling anywhere in a car with children can be a trying experience for everyone concerned. Even short trips can be exhausting and leave everyone in real *need* of a vacation. (Sometimes I have thought, 'Does anyone know where I can purchase any old taxi – the kind that has bullet-proof, soundproof glass separating the parents from the kids – I mean the driver from the passengers?')

Here are some suggestions on how to make a family car trip a more pleasurable experience.

Safety and comfort

- * Remember it is mandatory in the UK for the driver and all passengers to wear seat belts and that young children be placed in car seats.
- * Use roof racks to handle boot-space overflow. For comfort, leave as much space as possible in the passenger section.
- * Take along blankets and pillows for napping. Pillows are also useful as a lap tray, an arm rest, and as a divider between siblings. Be sure to pack one pillow per child.
- * Buy some new towels for your bathroom and put the old ones in the boot of your car. They make good covers for hot car seats and can be used in countless other ways: rolled up as a pillow, for mopping up spills, etc.
- * Removable screens for the car's windows keep the sun off baby and out of eyes.
- * Keep a first-aid kit in your boot. Stock it with bandages, antiseptic, safety pins,

tweezers, a roller bandage, cotton swabs, washcloth, sunscreen, children's aspirin and aspirin substitute, thermometer, scissors, adhesive tape, gauze pads, soap, torch, a compact sewing kit, a few coins for emergency phone calls. These items will fit inside a large empty coffee jar or an old lunchbox.

* Keep a package of medium-size, zip-lock plastic bags in your car's boot. These are handy for holding many things: messy items such as bibs, nappies, wet bathing suits, items children collect, etc.



Food

Fuel for your vehicle, and for its occupants, are generally more expensive at motorway services. You can save a few pounds by doing some of the following:

- * Pack a supply of non-messy snacks for the road. Some ideas: fruit, raisins, cheese, crackers, fig rolls, dried fruit, muesli bars, small boxes of dry cereal, small cans or cartons of juice.
- * For clean-ups, pack moist towelettes, or make your own by putting either damp paper towels or a damp washcloth in a plastic bag or covered container.
- * Consider packing only water for drinks. When spilled, it isn't sticky.
- * Avoid eating meals in the car. Though it saves time, eating in offers no chance to stretch, and it's very messy.



- * Picnic when possible. After the cramped experience of a car ride, a restaurant can sometimes feel too confining. So, if it's not too cold and damp, get out into the fresh air and have a picnic.
- * Bring a moulded plastic bib for babies. Such a bib is especially wonderful for catching ice cream drops. To clean it all you have to do is wipe or rinse.
- * A bottle warmer that plugs into the car's cigarette lighter can be useful when travelling with a baby.

Entertainment

- * Turn your children into navigators. Give each their own map and let them figure out how far it is to the next town. Give them a wide felt-tip highlighter pen to trace the route as you go.
- * To help younger children deal with distances, thread a number of Cheerios or Froot Loops on to a string. At specific intervals (5 miles, 10 miles, 50 miles) let them

take one off and eat it. Arrange it so that when they eat the last one, you're there.

- * Provide each child with a notepad to use as a trip diary. Encourage them to make entries each day. Older children can do this alone. For younger children, you can write down what they dictate. Have coloured pencils available for illustrations. If you have an instant print camera, let each child take a few pictures each day to illustrate their diary. The diary can also be turned into a scrapbook containing tickets, postcards, foreign currency, and other holiday artefacts accumulated during your time away.
- * Provide each child with a portable music player. My family enjoys listening together to story CDs, but when one of our children turns on the music in our car, they also put on their earphones. If you have a music player that also records, it is fun to record a travel diary as you go.
- * Have a few wrapped presents on hand

to use for distracting children during rest-less times. Select items that make good additions to the goodie bag. If they're learning to tell the time and have their own watch, consider writing specific instructions such as, 'Open at 10.42'.

- * Keep a travel game book in the glove compartment. Use it only when necessary. When everyone is happy, leave well alone.

Rest stops

- * Make a rest stop every few hours or as the situation dictates. This is a good time to eat, to enjoy a sightseeing side trip, or to let children run off some pent-up energy in a park.
- * Organise a scavenger hunt during a park stop or after a picnic. Give each child a list of items (pine cone, twig shaped like a letter, something from an animal, two different leaves, etc) and see who can find the most in a given amount of time. Have a prize for all participants.
- * Keep an inflatable beach ball in your boot. When you stop, blow it up and use it to encourage active movement. Other good items to have along for rest stops: bubbles, skipping rope, frisbee, chalk (for hopscotch), jacks.
- * Don't only stop for fuel, but allow time in your travel schedule for toilet stops.

When things degenerate

As Erma Bombeck once said, 'Families that play together get on each other's nerves,' so . . .

- * Try the Mad Bag/Glad Bag trick. Give each child a bag filled with small change at

the beginning of the trip. Mum and Dad begin the trip with an empty bag. When a child has been deemed naughty, they must give up a coin to the parents' bag. If you are a liberated parent, you can let it work the other way, too. Any coins left in the children's bag at the end of the trip are theirs to keep. This works even better with 50p and £1 coins.

- * Adults take turns driving. The non-driving adult sits in the back seat with one (two, three . . .) child while the other child sits in the front seat with the driver. This helps keep squabbles to a minimum and also gives the back-seat parent and child a chance to spend some time together. Even though many adults will not jump at the chance to sit in the back seat, most children will jump at the chance to sit in the front seat.
- * When all else fails, travel in a motorcycle with a sidecar. Daddy and one child sit on the cycle; Mummy and another sit in the sidecar. This may not be the safest or most convenient form of travel, but you won't hear a word.

If you ever find yourself wondering why you brought the children along, keep in mind that they are very useful in figuring out how to turn strange TVs on and off. And above all remember, as someone once observed, 'Happiness is a journey, not a destination.'



(Carole Terwilliger Meyers is the author of *The Family Travel Guide: An Inspiring Collection of Family-Friendly Vacations and Miles of Smiles: 101 Great Car Games and Activities*, both published by Carousel Press.)

source: www.gcf1.net

At the Movies

After I had purchased movie tickets for myself and my girlfriend, she went inside to find seats while I got some popcorn. By the time I was served, the previews were being shown. I stumbled my way through the dark, sat down, and gave my girlfriend a kiss.

Then I heard a familiar voice say, "John, I'm back here."



© Banana Stock

car games

by Carole Terwilliger Meyers

We all know how tedious and boring certain aspects of travel can become – especially when children are along for the ride. But with the right mind-set and the help of a few entertaining games and activities, you can save the day. Quicker than an adolescent can protest about going along on a family vacation, you can have your family involved in an interesting, even educational, way to pass the time. Here are a few winners to try out on your next family car trip across town or across the country.

Directions: These games appeal to all ages and can be played with as many people as can fit in your car. Feel free to fine-tune any game to make it work for your particular family. For instance, if you don't want to eliminate players, change the rules so that losers receive penalty points. Or play as a group, with all wins being group wins. It is a good idea to set either a time or mileage limit.

The counting game

On road trips we pass many interesting sights. This game helps children take notice of the changing landscape and is especially fun for school children.

Player One silently selects for counting a category of objects that may be viewed outside the car. (If being played with very young children, broad categories such as trucks, telephone poles, or cows work well. If being played with older children, more specific categories such as pink houses or white horses work better.) As the car passes an object, Player One counts out loud, adding to their total. The other players try to guess what is being counted. The first player to guess correctly becomes the next counter.

Slap, Slap, Clap, Clap, Snap, Snap

Help develop your children's sense of rhythm with this exhilarating game. Younger children will probably enjoy practising their finger snaps, but if they have trouble let them substitute another movement.

Players select a category such as animals, flowers, or cities. Then using a one-two-three rhythm, all players together first slap their thighs twice, then clap their hands twice, then snap their fingers twice. The first player says the word they have thought of from the selected category at the same time everyone is snapping their fingers. Play continues with each player taking their turn in order. If a player repeats a name or gets mixed up, they are out. If the category is 'cities', the game might go something like this:

First player: 1. slap, slap; 2. clap, clap; 3. snap, snap/Birmingham

Next player: 1. slap, slap; 2. clap, clap; 3. snap, snap/London

. . . and so on.

Make this game harder by requiring that words be added in alphabetical order.

Remember when?

Sometimes life's better moments seem to pass by too quickly – leaving us with a longing to savour what we've enjoyed. Where better to indulge this pleasant activity than when contained in a car with a collection of restless minds?

Family members select an event to remember that they have all shared together. For example, you might choose a particular wedding, birthday party, or holiday. Then take turns remembering a detail of the event. For example, Mum might say, 'I remember when we went to Cornwall for our holiday. I'm so glad I finally agreed to splash out on renting the tandem bicycles. It was so much fun to ride through the countryside together.' Dad might add, 'I thought it actually worked out well that we forgot to pack sandwiches. Do you remember the size of the portions we got at that chip shop?!' A child might add, 'I really liked our stops for ice cream and for paddling in the river. Except I did get scared that a monster might pull me under the water.' And so on. Take turns remembering as many more details as possible.



© Image Source/Rex Features

Raindrop race

Play this whimsical game during a light rain, or just after the rain stops.

Looking out their window, each player picks a raindrop near the top of the window. One player says, 'Go!' and then each player tracks their drop until it reaches the bottom of the window. The drop that gets to the bottom first is the drop of the winner. If a drop should blend with another drop, it is still the player's drop. If two players use the same window, be sure to leave plenty of space between the racing drops.

Travel Sentences

Don't tell your children, but this game gets them thinking about geography and working on the alphabet at the same time.



On their turn, each player picks a destination and then makes a sentence using a mode of transportation and an activity beginning with the same letter. Examples are, 'I'm going to Italy on an Iguana to Interview the Pope', or 'I'm going to go to France by Ferry to Find some onions.'

Make this game more difficult by requiring the players to proceed in alphabetical order.

Storybook trivia

Children never seem to get tired of hearing their favourite bedtime stories. This simple memory game gives them a chance to relive their favourite storybook moments.

The Story Master begins this game by selecting a storybook tale that all participants are familiar with. For example, they might select 'Little Red Riding Hood'. The Story Master then asks the other players ten questions based on the story. For example, they might ask, 'Who was Little Red Riding Hood going to visit?' or 'What was Little Red Riding Hood carrying in her basket?' Whoever answers the most questions right wins.

In a harder variation of this game – appropriate for older, more 'sophisticated' children – the Story Master asks questions related to a variety of storybooks. For example, they might ask, 'What was the title of the story in which straw was spun into gold?' or 'What was the relationship to Little Red Riding Hood of the person who was eaten by the wolf?'

Make this game harder by asking more obscure questions.



source: www.gcf1.net

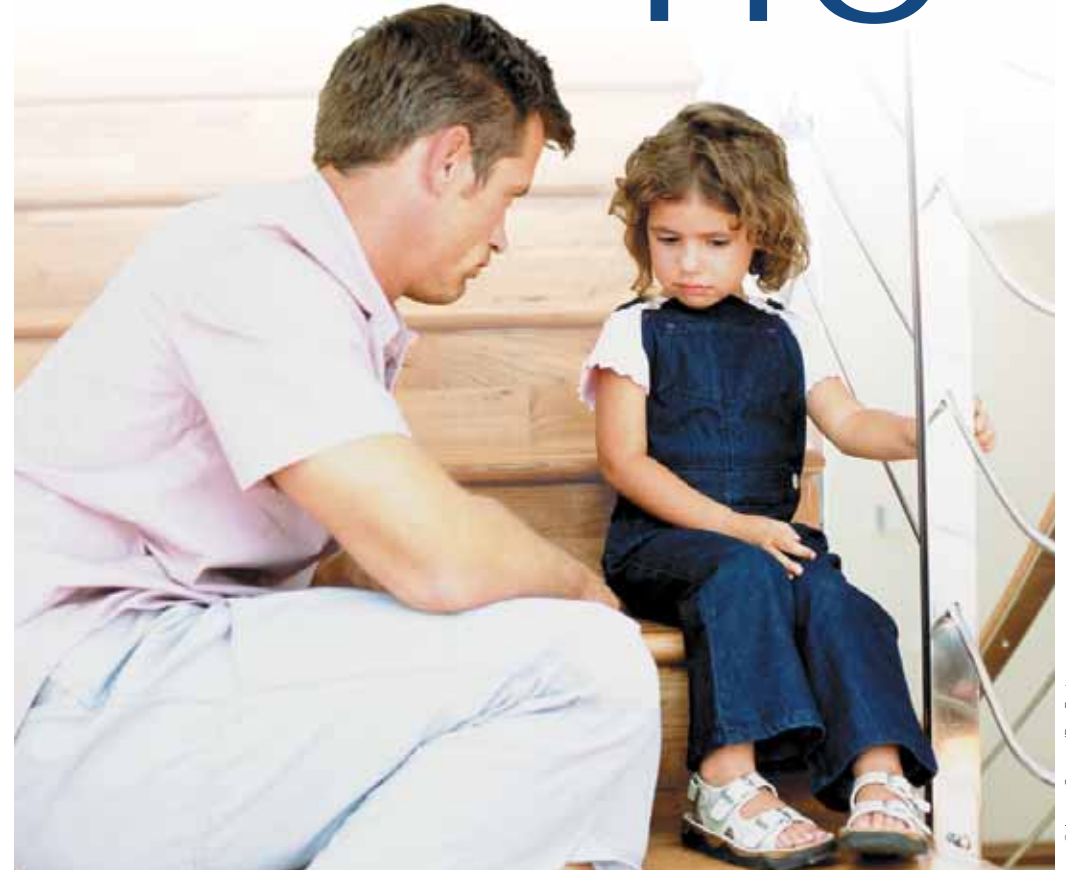
Home improvements?

My wife and I were sitting in the living room and I said to her, "Just so you know, I never want to live in a vegetative state, dependent on some machine and fluids from a bottle. If that ever happens, just pull the plug."

She got up, unplugged the TV and threw out all of my Red Bull!

understanding 'no'

by Ed (Dr No) Dickerson



© Image Source / Rex Features

As Glynis conversed with a friend at the grocer's, her eight-year-old son Andrew tugged at her sleeve, seeking her attention. She shook her head, and continued talking. As a teacher and parent myself, I'm always interested in the ways

parents and children interact, so I kept watching. Almost immediately, Andrew grabbed his mother's hand and started pulling on her arm. Glynis reacted by removing his hands, and said 'No.' Moments later, he was jumping up and



down, jerking his mother's hand so hard her head jerked with each pull. Despite that, Glynis kept talking to her friend, ignoring son's antics.

Why did Andrew persist? Is it because Glynis is a terrible mother, or just that Andrew is a brat? Actually, it's much simpler than that. Glynis has taught Andrew that 'No' means, 'Try harder to get my attention.' Sound weird? Don't forget, context determines the meaning of a word.

For example, while driving in Mexico, I encountered eight-sided red signs emblazoned with the word 'Alto.' With my limited linguistic skills, I interpreted 'Alto' to mean 'Halt,' or 'Stop.' After observing the behavior of local drivers, however, I concluded that 'Alto' actually means, 'Honk your horn and accelerate.' I don't think that's what the Mexican sign makers intended to communicate, any more than Glynis intended to tell Andrew to accelerate his attention-grabbing efforts. In both cases, the context of experience trumps the dictionary definition.

Without intending to, Glynis had actually trained Andrew to step up his attempts to get her attention when she said 'No.' Lots of parents do this sort of thing. It has many variations. Erin's children, 4-year-old William and 2-year-old Sarah, stamp their feet, shout, and throw themselves on the floor when she says 'No.' Other children react by arguing, and in one extreme case, I knew a 6-year-old we'll call Rebecca, who resorted to vomiting to get attention – this latter tactic invariably worked.

The meaning of the word 'No' involves more than just parental convenience. The world abounds with hazards for young children. We may put them in protective carriers in cars, put child-proof gates on staircases, child-proof caps on bottles of medication, and block off electrical outlets, but opportunities for harm simply cannot be eliminated. Dangers that cannot be eliminated must be avoided. Young children do

not know where many of these dangers lurk: that's why we keep watch over them. And our primary safety device is the word 'No,' in its many forms.

'No, don't pull the cat's tail,' has prevented many a scratch. 'No, don't touch the knife,' that someone left out on a low table. 'No, don't touch the hot kettle; no, don't go into the street.' Parents must use the 'N word' again and again. If our 'No' doesn't work, we lack a crucial tool, and put our children in needless danger.

On the other hand, when 'No' means no, both parents and children benefit. Parents benefit because they don't have to expend needless energy dealing with misbehaviour and its consequences. Children gain security when they know their limitations. Here are a few guidelines for keeping your 'No' sharp and true.

Don't overuse it. Any tool can become worn and ineffective when used inappropriately, or used too much. We all change our minds from time to time, and that can be confusing enough. But some parents get in the habit of refusing permission without considering the merits of the situation. The more times we have to backtrack and change 'No' to 'Yes,' the more we encourage our children to ignore our refusal, and the more we encourage them to try and change our minds. Say 'No' whenever necessary, but only *when* necessary.

Don't explain. Some parents get the notion that they should explain everything they require of their children. Later, they wonder why their children argue with them



© Banana Stock

all the time. Arguing makes perfect sense, from the child's point of view. 'This adult speaking to me seems to think they need my agreement, so if I refuse to agree, I won't have to obey.' As parents, we have to accept the responsibility to require compliance from our children for their own good, whether they agree with us or not.

Besides, explaining to a 3-year-old is an exercise in futility. They simply lack the knowledge, understanding, and experience required. That's why they have parents. Older children may benefit from explanations, but such dialogue should come after the child complies, not in an effort to get compliance.

Don't delay enforcement.

Failing to enforce our requirements robs 'No' of its power. When we don't follow up quickly with consequences, children learn to ignore what we say. Annoying at the best of times, it can be dangerous at others. Whether warning an infant against touching an electrical outlet, or cautioning teenagers about driving too fast, an effective 'No' can save a life. So back up your refusal quickly and decisively.

Don't give in.

Parents need to remember the Iron Rule of Behaviour: 'What gets rewarded, gets repeated.' Don't say no unless necessary, but then stick to your guns. Every time you give in after saying no, you tell children that your refusal can be

overcome, if only they are persistent enough. Children can be amazingly persistent. After all, you have to worry about meeting appointments, paying bills, preparing meals, doing the laundry, and a thousand other tasks. Children need only concern themselves with wearing down your resolve. In such a lopsided contest, they often win. When you reward them by giving in, it only encourages them to persist longer the next time. You don't need that.

Give them needed attentions. Earlier I mentioned 6-year-old Rebecca who vomited in order to get attention. How does such an extreme behavior come about? Caught up in her own needs, Rebecca's mother routinely ignored her children. The children quickly learned that the only certain way to get mum's attention was to create a crisis. Rebecca discovered, quite by accident, that vomiting guaranteed maternal action. Without realising it, whenever she felt sufficiently neglected, Rebecca worked herself into an emotional state which produced the desired results.

Even Andrew's near physical assault resulted at least partially from Glynis' inattention. Most public settings such as a grocer's are not very child friendly. It's unfair to expect small children to amuse themselves constructively for long periods of time in such settings. As a rule of thumb, children can be expected to take care of themselves for about one minute per every year of age – at most. Even the best-behaved 5-year-old, for example, will grow

empty

Little Susie, a six-year-old, came home from school whining, 'Mummy, I've got a stomach ache.'

'That's because your stomach is empty,' her mother replied. 'You'd feel better if you had something in it.' She gave Susie a snack and sure enough, Susie felt better right away.



restless after five minutes, a 3-year-old after three minutes, and so on. Teenagers are quite another matter. Let a 15-year-old amuse himself/herself for fifteen minutes at your own risk.

Most often, parents fail to enforce 'no' because they don't want to invest the time or energy necessary to make it stick initially. But this is a case where a small investment early on can yield big dividends later. Dividends like secure, well-behaved children, who don't take your every refusal as an opportunity to annoy you.



source: www.gcf1.net

That afternoon the local MP came to the door canvassing for votes. While he was chatting with Susie's mum, he mentioned he'd had a bad headache all day long.

Susie perked up. 'That's because it's empty,' she said. 'You'd feel better if you had something in it.'

life wouldn't be complete without . . .

Remote-controlled toilets

A US company has come up with the perfect gift for people who have everything – a £3,000 remote-controlled toilet.

The state-of-the-art Neorest toilet, from Toto, is sleek, compact and automated, reports the Arizona Republic.

Approach it, and the lid lifts up, stand in front of it and the seat rises. The Neorest automatically flushes and lowers the lid upon completion.

The remote controls the temperature of the seat. It also activates the gentle cleansing process.

A wand extends from the back of the rim and sprays water upward. Water aim and temperature can be controlled by the seated occupant. Then comes the air dryer.

Leslie Shirey, a salesperson at the Central



Arizona Supply showroom, admitted sales had been slow – because of the price.

But the Neorest has found some converts among Hollywood celebrities, including Will Smith.

The toilets are also installed in the main headquarters of Google.

An air guitar you can actually play

Finnish computer science students have devised a system which enables air guitarists to hear themselves 'play'.

The Virtual Air Guitar project, developed at the Helsinki University of Technology, adds genuine electric guitar sounds to the air guitar.

Using a computer to monitor the hand movements of the 'player', it adds riffs and licks to match frantic mid-air finger work, reports New Scientist.

Aki Kanerva, Juha Laitinen and Teemu Mäki-Patola came up with the idea after being invited to develop a virtual instrument as part of their coursework.

"The first thing that came to mind was an air guitar," Kanerva told New Scientist.

The resulting system consists



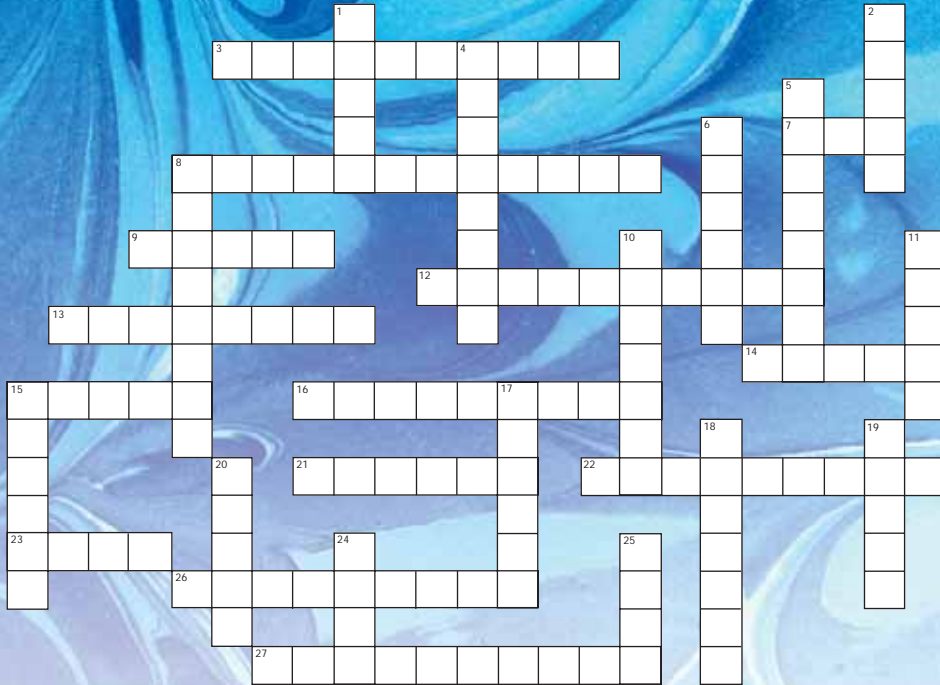
of a video camera and a computer hooked up to an appropriately loud set of speakers.

The player wears a pair of brightly coloured gloves, enabling computer vision software to keep track of their hands and detect different gestures.

source: www.ananova.com

puzzle page

All the words used in the following crossword appear in the article entitled 'Narnia, the Lion, the Author and the Last Battle. (p.46)



ACROSS

3. Historical records (10)
7. The extreme limit (3)
8. A belief system (12)
9. This hazel is an ornamental shrub (5)
12. Changing to God's way (10)
13. Passage to another world (8)
14. Courteous good will (5)
15. Holy book (5)
16. Justice, one way or the other (9)
21. Major seat of learning (6)
22. Living beings (9)
23. Bringing up the rear (4)
26. Made for another (9)
27. Deliverance from damnation (10)

DOWN

1. Literary compositions (5)
2. These can be daring and good (5)
4. A beginning (8)
5. Artistic planner (8)
6. Imaginary world (6)
8. Not adults (8)
10. One who makes (7)
11. Said to be the perfect number (5)
15. Big-scale row (6)
17. Betwixt or between (6)
18. He sacrifices to save (7)
19. aka Aslan (5)
20. Hidden in Atlantis (5)
24. Not tame (4)
25. Beastly king (4)

Answers on p.34
(So don't send in the feedback form before you've done the crossword!)

feedback

Vol. 5, Issue No.2

Please let us know what you think. Your suggestions are a crucial part of enabling us to provide a magazine that is relevant, interesting and useful.

Your overall opinion: (Please tick as appropriate)

- Loved it liked it disliked it hated it

Best bit:

Worst bit:

Comments/suggestions/article ideas:

Do you belong to any type of faith group/church? Yes No

Are we there yet?

On p.18 Carole Terwilliger Meyers looks at the joys of travelling with children and provides some useful travel tips to keep boredom at bay and soak up the stress (with wet wipes). What are your top tips for long journeys? Do you create imaginary cloud patterns in the sky or count telephone poles? Tell us your essential travelling tips:

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Answers:

Across: 3 chronicles; 7 end; 8 Christianity; 9 witch; 12 conversion; 13 wardrobe; 14 grace; 15 Bible; 16 judgement; 21 Oxford; 22 creatures; 23 last; 26 sacrifice; 27 redemption.

Down: 1 books; 2 deeds; 4 creation; 5 designer; 6 Narnia; 8 children; 10 creator; 11 seven; 15 battle; 17 middle; 18 saviour; 19 Jesus; 20 Aslan; 24 wild; 25 Lion.

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How to write good

by Frank L. Visco and others

Source: www.commonplacebooks.com

- Always avoid alliteration.
- Avoid clichés like the plague – they're old hat.
- Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
- Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.
- It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
- One should never generalise.
- Comparisons are as bad as clichés.
- Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
- Understatement is always best.
- Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
- One-word sentences? Eliminate. Always!
- Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
- Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
- Who needs rhetorical questions?
- Don't use commas, that, are not, necessary.
- Never use a big word where a diminutive alternative would suffice.
- Subject and verb always has to agree.
- Be more or less specific.
- Use your spell checker to avoid misspelling and to catch typographical errors.
- Don't repeat yourself, or say again what you have said before.
- Use the apostrophe in its proper place and omit it when it's not needed.
- Don't ever use no double negatives.
- Proofread carefully to see if you have any words out.
- Hopefully, you will use words correctly, irregardless of how others use them.
- A writer must not shift your point of view.
- Don't overuse exclamation marks!!!
- If any word is improper at the end of a sentence, a linking verb is.
- And always be sure to finish what

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Tech support

Customer: I'm trying to connect to the Internet with your CD, but it just doesn't work. What am I doing wrong?

Tech support: OK, you've got the CD in the CD drive, right?

Customer: Yes. . . .

Tech support: And what sort of computer are you using?

Customer: Computer? Oh no, I haven't got a computer. It's in the CD player and all I get is weird noises. Listen.

Tech support: Aaaaarrrggggghhh!!!

Customer: I have problems printing in red.

Tech support: Do you have a colour printer?

Customer: Ah . . . thank you.

Tech support: What's on your monitor now, madam?

Customer: A teddy bear my boyfriend bought for me in the supermarket.

Tech support: Your password is the small letter a as in apple, a capital letter V as in Victor, the number 7.

Customer: Is that 7 in capital letters?

Customer: I can't get on the Internet.

Tech support: Are you sure you used the right password?

Customer: Yes, I'm sure. I saw my colleague do it.

Tech support: Can you tell me what the password was?

Customer: Five stars.

everyone won't like you

© Voisin/Phanie/Rex Features



by Wickham Boyle

Perhaps it was just being the oldest child of an alcoholic father and a suicidal mother. Or my dyslexic brain that seems to reverse and skew things, giving even simple information a remarkably weird twist. But whatever it was: nature, nurture, or lack of it, I grew into a woman who was hell-bent on pleasing people. Most especially I wanted to win over and please those who disliked me or who were unfriendly to me.

I would attempt to befriend the rabid dog, the unrideable horse, the bitchy debutante, the narcissistic man. I dated those too-handsome unavailable guys, their brothers, or my married boss. I had to be the good sport. I felt that I had to be easily accessible to others because at my root I didn't believe I had any real value other than my endless ability to put out, move furniture, clear the table, clean up messes,

– and that's not a **bad** thing

do anything. I tried to win over people who did not like me or my style (too raucous, overly exuberant, wisecracking, occasionally false) or those who already had enough friends.

I had to be the most popular class mother, new worker, or gym partner. If I didn't win the whole world over as active members of my fan club, I was a loser.

This was the all-too-sad truth until, miraculously, I got older. I had weathered a scandal, left an abusive relationship, won child-custody battles, lost jobs, gained weight, found true love, and started on a journey toward elevating my children and myself to a better plain.

One of the truths I needed to embrace was explained to me, in no uncertain terms, by my friend Abigail one day over the phone, 'Everyone won't like you. You need to throw out some of the ideas you have. Your "ex" is never going to say a kind word to you. The same goes for your brother and maybe some of your neighbours. If people behave as if they don't like you, back up! Do not keep going full-force, delivering muffin baskets to serial killers.'

Okay, Abigail, I think I hear you.

Yet there are still times when I catch myself sucking up to the rude neighbour, the woman who dismisses my every salutation unless she wants help finding a parking space. I watch my mind do little gymnastic flips as it considers placing a phone call to my ex to offer a tidbit about the children's success. Then I remember the painful rebukes that only recently spewed from his mouth.

Banish the negative, I tell myself. Don't move toward the enemy. When I see someone on the street who has clearly relayed that he or she is not among my fan base, I now stop myself from hollering a big cheery hello. The deflating lack of response used to send me into a tizzy of sadness. No more of that, thank

you. I yearn to have the calm self-worth that allows me to say: 'Margaret doesn't like me and I am fine with that.' Instead, too often there is a fantasy scenario of how I save poor Maggie from a fire, carrying her children to safety, with Wicki embraced and lauded at day's end amidst torrents of tears and thanks.

I need to get on with life, recognising that I have made some egregious mistakes. I have been an occasional bitch, betrayed people and lied. I did it.

What I need (what we *all* need) is some suck-it-up honesty. Yes, I did wrong, I made rotten choices, but I have decided to flip the script and take the high road; I may still have more than half my life left. As my father-in-law used to say, 'Nothing beats a failure like a try.' And so I try. Now that I'm all grown up, I've decided to enjoy the sensation of being accepted for who I am, warts, scars, big heart, humour, and all; in fact, all that I am.

And it feels good.



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you are invited

Most people like invitations! I know I do, because most invitations are good or fun invitations. For example (speaking as a woman), a close friend gets engaged and one of the first things to cross my mind is, 'I wonder if I will be invited to the wedding,' or a family member happens to win a holiday for five at a luxury resort (which sadly hasn't happened to any of my family members!) and, again, the question is 'I wonder if I will be invited'.

There are all sorts of invitations. Obviously, there are the usual invitations to birthdays, weddings, christenings, etc, but nowadays invitations extend to house-warming parties, baby showers, 'office-warming' parties, boat-warming parties, candle parties, tupperware parties. My sister even had a 'kitten welcoming party'.

There are endless reasons to invite people along to celebrate something (any excuse for a party is a *good* excuse!). And,

by Lydia Gallaher

like I say, the invitations are generally for something good! We don't often sit down and think, what's the catch?

On the other hand, if a card drops through my door inviting me to spend 'a relaxed evening' with a timeshare company, then it's hardly necessary to ask, 'What's the catch?' Come for a lovely evening's presentation and enjoy a drink with us! They rarely mention that they're planning to lock you in a room for hours on end while they give you the hard sell. But the card is nicely presented by way of an invitation and you might be lulled into thinking that everything will be lovely and a good evening will be had by all. Beware!

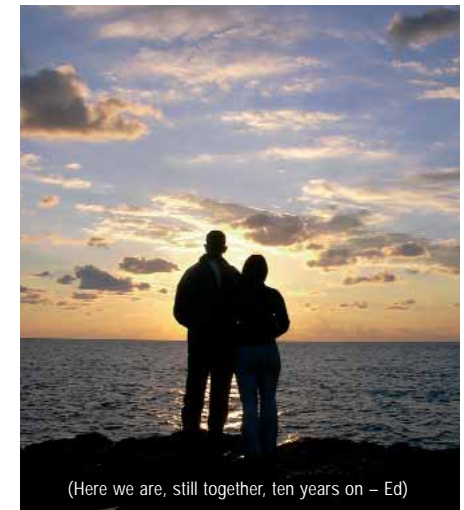
I have had occasion in the past to be the person doing the inviting (though not to a timeshare sales pitch). I think the hardest time I had inviting people along to something was when I got married. I wanted to invite everybody I knew to the wedding but, as finances would have it, numbers were restricted. It was a nightmare working out who could and couldn't be invited. So-and-so? Well, if she's invited we'll have to invite her partner. What about what's-his-name? Well, if he's invited then we should invite what's-her-name as well! Nightmare! (Invitations and seating plans for weddings should be up there in the stress-ometer with moving house!) Some people can get offended if they're not invited to weddings. Personally, having had to make the tough choices, I now don't worry if I don't make it on to the guest list – there are far greater hardships in life!

Talking of weddings, I was thinking that wedding proposals from husband to wife (or the other way round!) are a kind of invitation – an invitation to spend the rest of your life with someone. When I talk to people about the time I was proposed to, I set a very romantic scene. . . . We were on a quiet Spanish beach, the sun glowed orange as it rested on the horizon. We had just enjoyed a lovely meal and I was

wearing a white dress. Lee was beautifully tanned and was wearing a pale blue shirt and light trousers. We were gazing at the sea, in each other's arms, sitting on the stone wall bordering the soft sandy beach. Then, without warning, Lee produced a diamond ring and asked me to marry him! (Mills & Boon eat your heart out!) If, however, you were to ask Lee how he asked me to marry him, you would probably get a response along the lines of: 'We had just had our tea and were sitting on a wall, next to a plastic bin, on a beach in Spain and I asked Lydia to marry me.' Men!

Often, invitations include these four letters at the bottom: RSVP – requesting confirmation by a certain date, as to whether or not you are able to come (perhaps not with a wedding *proposal* though). I don't know about you, but sometimes I'm a bit last-minute with my responses – and have even missed out on a couple of fun days out. Mental note to self: Must try to be more organised.

So, through life we get invitations here and there. Some we can take or leave, some we are obliged to accept, some are really important, and some not so important.



(Here we are, still together, ten years on – Ed)

In my own life there has been one invitation that has been the most important to me, even above an invitation to marry. This invitation was given to me as soon as I was able to read and understand it. It was given to me in writing, but later in person when I got to know the person who had made the invitation. The invitation was:



‘Come to me, you who are burdened down, and I will give you rest.’ (Matt. 11:28.)

This invitation came to me from Jesus Christ, a man who spoke those words over two thousand years ago, and was recorded in the Bible so that *anyone* who reads it can have the same invitation. Jesus is speaking to every human being in every place in every age to go to him and find rest in him. He is inviting you and he is inviting me to come to him. He is promising to take the load from our shoulders, to give us rest from the worries of this world (and there are plenty), to give us peace when life is tough. All we need to do is accept the invitation. The good thing about this invitation is that it doesn't have any hidden catch. It doesn't have any RSVP date. It is an open invitation to everyone for all time that we can come to him and he will give us rest. You don't have to live this life on your own, struggling from one day to the next. You don't have to deal with life's problems on your own. You can have peace in your heart and mind if you accept Jesus' invitation. I accepted it years ago and have never looked back.

If you live in the UK or Eire and don't have a Bible of your own already but would like to check out Jesus' invitation for yourself, let us know and we'll send you one free. Contact details on p.2.

source: www.gcf1.net

Is that you?

St. Peter is very busy in Heaven, so he leaves a sign by the Pearly Gates: 'For Service Ring Bell.' Away he goes; he barely gets started when BING! the bell rings. He rushes back to the gates, but no one's there.

St. Peter goes back to work when suddenly BING! the bell rings again. He rushes back to the gates, but no one's there. A little annoyed, St. Peter goes back to work.

Suddenly, BING! the bell rings again. St.

Peter goes back; again, no one's there. 'Okay, that's it,' St. Peter says. 'I'm going to hide and watch to see what's going on.' So St. Peter hides, and a moment later, a little old man walks up and rings the bell.

St. Peter jumps out and yells, 'Aha! Are you the guy who keeps ringing the bell?'

'Yes, that's me,' the little old man says.

'Well, why do you keep ringing the bell and going away?' St. Peter asks.

'They keep resuscitating me,' he replies.

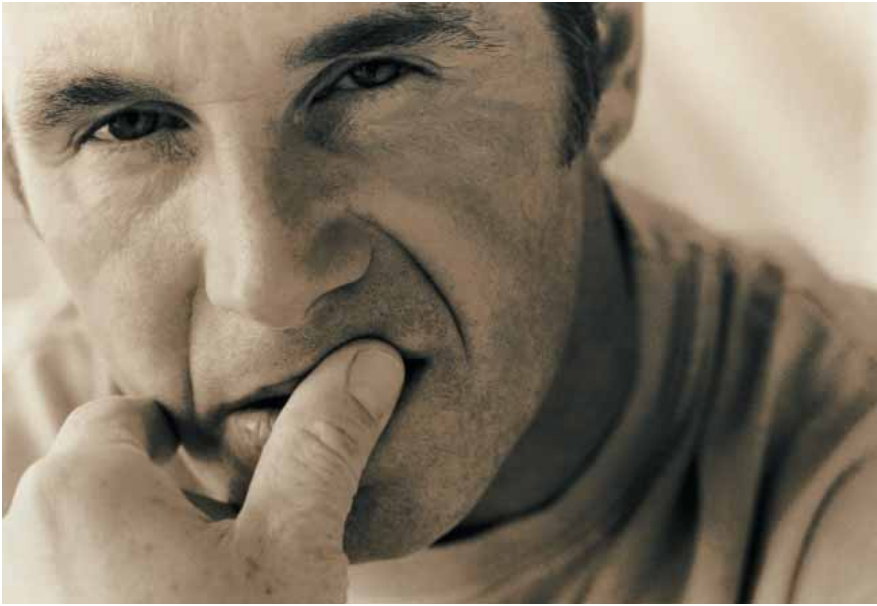
Did you hear the one about the mother-in-law?



There are a thousand jokes about mothers-in-law. Most don't deserve to be the butt of these jokes, but Vera did. She was sour on life and self-absorbed, with a bent for picking good-for-nothing low-lives for husbands.

I fell in love with Lissa, Vera's daughter. Lissa had been passed around various foster homes as a child, but was now living at home. Vera seldom knew or cared where Lissa was. Her only concern was her own woman-chasing boyfriend. When I married Lissa, Vera was happy to be rid of the responsibility. She said now she'd finally have time to be with her man.

by Terrell Bowers



For a while, Vera stopped by for short visits, but it didn't take long for me to realise that she resented me. Perhaps it was because I was nothing like the men she preferred. I didn't smoke or drink and never used bad language. While her men were rough-talking cowboys and bar-room brawlers, I was polite and clean-shaven and kept my hair short and tidy. Her place was a sty, while Lissa kept our house immaculate.

Because of her lack of home life, Lissa had missed much of her childhood. To compensate for that, we did some rather unusual things during our first years of marriage. I played kid games with Lissa and bought her colouring books and crayons. We went sledging in the winter and floated on the stream in inner tubes in the summer.

While Lissa loved the fun we were having, her mother resented it – and me. She was not critical to my face, but she lamented to Lissa that I was driving a wedge between the two of them. In actuality, Lissa resented Vera. It was *her* youth that had

been stolen. *She* was the one who had been left unloved – abandoned for Vera's flighty romances. Rather than accept blame for these things, Vera aimed her guns at me.

When our first child came, we agreed no one should be allowed to smoke when holding the baby. Although it was Lissa who told Vera, she blew up at *me*. I had ruined her little girl, and now I was trying to keep her from her grandchild!

About this time, Vera broke up with her boyfriend and renewed a relationship with Pete, her ex-husband. They got together for a few days, and she ended up moving to Las Vegas, some 400 miles away, to be with him.

Lissa wrote or called her mother on occasion, but that was our only contact . . . until one day the phone rang.

It was my day off, so I was the one who picked up the receiver and heard Vera's quaking voice. She was obviously upset.

'What's the matter, Vera?' I asked.

'What's happened?'

'Oh, Ted,' she sobbed, 'I don't know

what to do. Pete is going back to his wife and doesn't want me here. I haven't got any money. I don't have a job. And now I've got to move out of Pete's trailer!'

'It's OK, Mum,' I said. 'I'll come and get you and bring you home.'

'But it's so far, and I don't have any money.'

'Don't worry about it,' I told her gently. 'I can take a couple of days off work and drive down there tomorrow.'

'Y-you mean it?' She sounded surprised. 'You'll come all the way to Las Vegas to get me?'

'You just get your stuff packed. I'll bring the pickup, and we'll load everything up. You can stay here until you find a place and land a job.'

'Ted, I-I don't know how . . . ' Her voice constricted.

'It's all right,' I said. 'You get everything packed. Lissa and I will leave early. We should be there about noon. With luck, we'll have you home by tomorrow night.'

After a short pause, Vera said, 'Thanks, Ted. I really mean it.'

When I hung up the receiver, I told Lissa about her mother's problem and my promise to get her.

'You know,' Lissa said, 'I believe it was God's intention that you answer the phone. Mum can't possibly think I was twisting your arm. She'll know it was your idea to help her.'

'So?'

'Believe me, Ted, every woman wants a hero in her life. Mum has seen you only as my husband, someone standing between her and me since our wedding. It's time she got to know the real you.'

I stepped closer to Lissa and slipped my arms around her. 'And

that's a good thing – her knowing the real me?'

'We don't have to tell her your faults.'

'Faults?' I asked innocently. 'I have faults?'

Lissa gave me a gentle kiss on the lips, then spun out of my arms. 'Too many to discuss now. I've got a lot to do to get myself and the baby ready for the trip.'

We brought Vera back home, and I helped move her into a trailer of her own a few weeks later and built her a storage shed. From that time on, she was in my corner in every debate. I not only got along with her, I could do nothing wrong. We never mentioned her smoking again, but when she visited, she always went outside to smoke. She willingly tended her grandchild whenever we needed a babysitter, and refused to take a penny for her trouble.

My effort to help Vera not only won her affection, but it also began a close and loving relationship that lasted twenty years, right up until her death. To this day, I don't tell mother-in-law jokes. I've found the reward of winning a person's heart much sweeter than the petty satisfaction of 'getting even' through put-downs.





Narnia

the lion, the author
and the last battle

by Anita Marshall

The Lion ('not a tame lion')

To date, *The Chronicles of Narnia* have sold over 100 million copies. There was an excellent serialisation of *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* on BBC television a few years ago, but now that the film-makers have made a brilliant start with *Narnia*, no doubt we can expect the other six books which make up the Chronicles to follow with much the same rapidity and success as the Harry Potter stories. Unlike Harry Potter, however, Aslan, the 'saviour' of Narnia, has his paws firmly planted in the Christian story. You *can* watch Narnia and see it as a simple tale of derring-do on the part of four children, some charming talking animals and a lion who is 'not a tame lion', but you get a lot more from the tale if you look deeper.

When writing about his seven children's books, C. S. Lewis said: 'Some people think that I began by asking myself how I could say something about Christianity to children, then fixed on the fairy tale as an instrument; then collected information about child psychology and decided what age group to write for; then drew up a list of basic Christian truths and hammered out "allegories" to embody them. This is all pure moonshine. I couldn't write in that way at all. . . . At first there wasn't even anything Christian about them; that element pushed itself in of its own accord. It was', he added, 'part of the bubbling.'

In the *Radio Times* Lewis wrote: 'I had little idea where the story would go. But then suddenly Aslan came bounding into it. . . . I don't know where the Lion came from or why he came. But once he was there he pulled the whole story together. And soon he pulled the six other Narnian stories in after him.'

The stories had been in his mind since childhood, but were only written down when he needed something to entertain four children who had been placed with

him and his brother Warnie during the evacuation of children during the bombing of London in WWII.

The author

C. S. (Jack) Lewis enjoyed a settled and happy childhood in a Christian home, until the untimely death of his mother when he was 9. After that devastating blow he no longer knew *what* he believed. By the time he went to university he was a 'devout' atheist. Sure in his own 'faith', it came as a bit of a surprise when he discovered that most of his closest friends at Oxford were, in fact, 'card-carrying Christians', especially *Lord of the Rings* author J. R. R. Tolkien, one of the fascinating group of writers who met to read aloud and discuss one another's articles and, in particular, stories.

Jack (as Lewis was always known) fought his corner for atheism, of course, but over time he decided it was a losing battle. His friend George Sayer dated Jack's conversion from 1926-31! And his brother Warnie conceded, 'There was no sudden plunge into new life but rather a slow, steady convalescence from a deep-seated spiritual illness of long standing.'

At first, however, Jack was little more than a theist (someone who believes in God alone), not realising that the vital connection between God and the joy he had sought most of his life was, in fact, Jesus Christ. Even so, it was only at the age of 33 that, in his own words, he 'became the most reluctant convert to Christianity in the entire kingdom'. Lewis's biographers, George Sayer and William Griffin, both agreed that in the final stage of Jack's conversion, Tolkien played a vital role through conversations that often lasted all night.

Later on, Lewis would become one of the most prolific writers about and defender of the Christian faith. Once he knew what he believed there was no stopping him, and radio broadcasts, talks, articles and

books flowed from his pen. He also became a firm favourite among the literary crowd which included Tolkien.

About his children's stories (which most *adults* find unputdownable), he said that they came from 'real though unfocused gleams of divine truth falling on human imagination', by which he meant that he had come to realise that his best and most joyous imaginings came straight from God. It was the brief periods of sheer joy piercing like shafts of golden sunlight into some of his bleakest times which led him, albeit most reluctantly, to God, 'the source from which those arrows of joy had been shot at me since childhood'.

C. S. Lewis died on the same day as John F. Kennedy, but I can't help feeling that he has left a much sweeter legacy.

The Last Battle . . .

also, incidentally, the name of the last of the *Chronicles of Narnia*, and one of the most gripping stories I have ever read! As a Christian I found the imagery immensely exciting in this final episode – the imminent demise of Narnia paralleling Earth's decay as it is taken over by self-seeking super-powers who are slowly choking the life out of a once-beautiful world.

'It is Narnia's darkest hour,' states the blurb on the back cover of the little paperback. 'A false Aslan is . . . striking terror into every heart. King Tirian's only hope is . . . to find the true Aslan and restore peace to the land. But a mighty battle lies ahead.'

And what a battle the last one turns out to be, ending, as it does, in the total destruction of Narnia. Yet even as the children weep for

it, they discover that the Narnia they are weeping for is not the real Narnia.

According to the Bible, and in keeping with Lewis's theme about all things being made new, there's a very real battle coming on earth, a final battle between good and evil. Only when that last battle is won will the Earth become the New Earth.

The biblical story is a stirring one, too. And it will be good, then, to have an Aslan (or a Jesus Christ) to get us through the door into a place where 'arrows of joy' become 'everlasting joy' – the sum and total of the '*real Narnia*'.

Who wouldn't want to be there? 

If you didn't get to see it at the cinema, find your friend with the biggest telly, and a DVD player, and rent the film! The animation is excellent and the story of sacrifice and salvation is a touching one.

Sources: C. S. Lewis's *Narnia Chronicles: Surprised by Joy* (Collins, 1955); *Letters to Children*; William Griffin, C. S. Lewis, *The Authentic Voice* (Lion, 1988); George Sayer, Jack: *A Life of C. S. Lewis* (Hodder, 1997).

© Allstar Collection



Not a tame lion

'Narnia is a cosmos, a world with a discernible beginning, middle, and end, whose ordered existence Aslan sings into being. Under Aslan's rule, there are both a natural order and a supernatural or spiritual order. There are the day-to-day deeds, thoughts, and outcomes wrought by each individual, and there is meaning beyond these deeds, thoughts and outcomes that points to Something Else and to Someone Else. In this, we discover that our lives are not our own . . .'

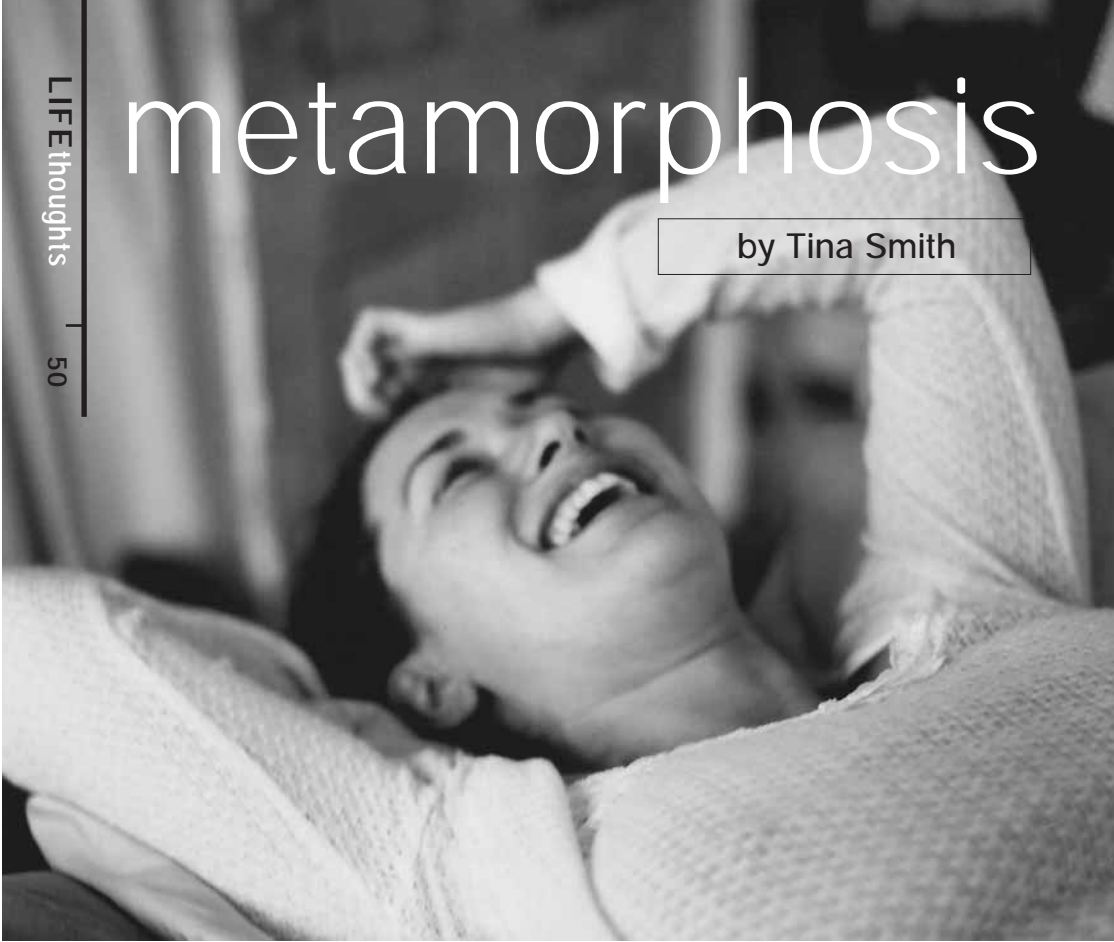
Bruce L. Edwards, *Not a Tame Lion*, p. xv.

'We begin to see our world and our place in it, perhaps for the first time, by seeing Narnia as it is. Our world shares with Narnia the themes of creation, catastrophe, treachery, sacrifice, grace, redemption, love, judgement, and consumption. This is because Aslan, who created Narnia, is a figure of Christ, who created all things . . . That being the case, how could Aslan, the Grand Designer, the All-powerful Lord, the Sovereign of Man and Beast, possibly be a "tame" lion? . . . How could the Creator of this world or of Narnia be anything but wild, free, and untethered, beyond the control or the demands of mere creatures?' Bruce L. Edwards, *Not a Tame Lion*, p. xvi-xvii.

If anything in this article has made you want to look deeper into the Narnia stories, you'll find Bruce L. Edwards' book, *Not a Tame Lion*, a fascinating, equally unputdownable read. Published by Tyndale House Publishers.

metamorphosis

by Tina Smith



Quick fixes continue to elude me.

I'm still searching for a dab of cream to take years off my face and a pill to help me drop those extra pounds. It frustrates me that a toddler has to be told umpteen times not to talk with her mouth full. I frequently mention how much fresh flowers thrill me but haven't seen a bouquet in at least three years. Books on building healthy relationships abound, yet the Cliff notes remain unattainable.

And speaking of delays, wouldn't life be easier if God could speed up his efforts a bit?

Recently, I woke up before anyone else in the house, pulled out my Bible and spent half an hour reading and praying.

Appropriately armed to face the day, I set out with confidence, only to find myself a mess by midday.

An incompetent shop assistant irritated me. I cleaned the bathroom instead of reading to the kids. My husband asked why I was yelling at him. Not once during the day did I pray for my aunt scheduled for surgery that afternoon.

Understanding citizen? Nope. Focused mummy? I don't think so. Loving wife? Not in this house. Supportive family member? Maybe tomorrow.

It seems pointless to begin the day getting in touch with a Higher Power if nothing changes. The hours go by like a runaway truck, gaining speed as control slips away.

I want to feel different, be different, but so much remains the same. The dishes I washed last night are in the sink again. Familiar conflicts arise within our family. I lose my temper and forget a friend's birthday. I sleep through the alarm, and tomorrow comes and goes without my devotional time.

Later in the week, I find a few moments to again talk with my Maker and share my frustration. I listen for a still small voice but hear only silence this time. More questions fill a soul that longs for answers. Some days I'm warmed by my spirituality; others pass without even a flicker of the flame.

Not surprisingly, the revelation comes slowly. I barely notice when a rude driver pulls in front of my car on the highway. Contrary to my normal spit-fire reaction and compulsion to right every wrong, I just let it go. Where did that come from?

A few evenings later, I'm startled to realise I was a calmer parent during the day. Again, what gives? I have also been seeing my husband in a new light and with greater appreciation lately. And a misunderstanding that I had with someone just doesn't seem to be an issue anymore.

Something *is* different. The youthfulness of my complexion isn't boasting much improvement but the inner workings of my heart *are* shifting, and a goodness greater than me is responding to an invitation to live through me. Not every problem is gone, and I'm still stum-

bling and finding my way. I don't fully understand God or his timing, but I'm learning to rely on his wisdom and trust his direction.

These days, I don't throw in the towel when I neglect to spend focused, uninterrupted time with God. Instead, I bend his ear throughout my day – when I'm in dire need of an extra dose of patience as well as when my heart is overflowing with thankfulness. Glimpses of his power motivate me to renew my efforts to know him fully.

God isn't the one who changes or gets distracted or finds life too overwhelming. He's willing to wait, ready to talk and more than able to go to work once I give him the go-ahead.



A songwriter called Chris Rice summed up my thoughts better than I could in his song 'Big Enough' on the album *Past the Edges*:

**When I imagine the size of the universe
And I wonder what's out past the edges
Then I discover inside me a space as big
And believe that I'm meant to be
Filled up with more than just questions**

**So, God if You're there I wish You'd show me
And God if You care then I need You to know me
I hope You don't mind me askin' the questions
But I figure You're big enough
I figure You're big enough
'Cause I am not big enough**

© Clumsy Fly Music



Who wants to make love like a porn star?



© Dave Allocca/Rex Features

Jenna Jameson is the world's top-selling XXX actor. I haven't watched her films, but her autobiography is revealing in another way. It's title *How to Make Love Like a Porn Star* is just marketing. The subtitle is more accurate: *A Cautionary Tale*.

Jenna's book describes a tragic childhood, her mother dying of cancer when Jenna was three, her Vietnam Vet father broken by grief and unable to provide emotional support for the children. He lost himself in police work and restlessly moved from Las Vegas with its criminal underbelly to a cattle-farming town – all unsettling for Jenna and her brother.

Feminine role models? Jenna remembers, 'I used to look at my dad's *Playboy* magazines when I was thirteen and dream of being one of those girls.'²

Jenna lost her virginity underage to a rich college guy who got her smashed on tequila – 'a textbook case of date rape'.³ Her motivation was more than hormonal: 'I wanted to be needed. I needed to be wanted.'⁴ Already she was using sex to try to find love and approval. After another tragic high school relationship, she writes in her diary, 'I thought Pat loved me but he was just like all the others. I now know that only God could give me true love. I don't think God acknowledges my existence, not that I deserve it. I hope, when I read this diary or my children read these lines, that all this is just a bitter memory and I am happy and loved. I pray my children, if and when I have them, never have to experience the kind of pain I have had in my life.'⁵ This is the book's only mention of spirituality or of God, except as a swearword.

In high school, Jenna describes longing for 'someone to talk about my problems with', 'or just to hug me when I was upset and help me feel grounded in this confus-

ing world'⁶. She meets Jack, who is much older, works as a tattooist, uses drugs and (to complete the cliché) rides with a biker gang who treat their 'old ladies' as 'subservient beings'⁷. Jenna is raped by Jack's friend (nicknamed, of all things, The Preacher). She moves in with Jack, and goes from Vegas dancer to stripper (while at high school by day), then from porn magazine model to videos – as revenge, she says, for Jack's cheating. Home is not exactly bliss: '[Jack] says he loves me. But not in the way I want him to. He can't talk to me. I wish he'd sit me down and confide in me or just tell me what I mean to him... I want to be closer to him so badly but he won't let me in... I want an adult, loving, communicating, caring partnership with him.'⁸

Jenna became the best-paid stripper in the cattily competitive club. 'Jack actually seemed proud of me for a moment... I made two thousand to four thousand dollars a night. Somehow, I managed to spend a large share of it on dresses, purses, and shoes.'⁹ (And alcohol and other drugs.)

A constant theme in the book is that Jenna doesn't seem to like herself much, and hungers for transformation. She describes an ordinary make-up job like psychological re-creation: 'After Emma finished my face, I hardly recognised myself: I looked, for the first time in my life, like a woman. And that woman appeared sexy, confident and sophisticated. She was Jenna Jameson. And I liked her a lot more than Jenna Massoli [her real name].'¹⁰ Jenna had a boob job for similar reasons: losing customers and publicity to 'girls with bigger, faker breasts had built deep insecurity.' She later regretted the implants, saying, 'I should have just

by Grenville Kent grenville@rema.tv



© Mark Mawson/Rex Features

been comfortable being myself'.¹¹

Lacking intimacy at home, Jenna begins a sexual and deeply emotional relationship with a female stripper who also has a boyfriend. When the girlfriend gets pregnant, Jenna is shattered. 'I cut that person out of my life to protect myself from getting hurt anymore. . . and I lost one of the only people in my life who truly seemed to have loved me.'¹² After that, she started getting seriously addicted: 'it was easier to self-destruct than to face the truth'¹³ She barely ate. Her porn modelling career disintegrated as her weight dropped and she became gaunt, tense-faced and unreliable. Jack left her, ever the drug buddy. Eventually a friend put her on an aeroplane back to her father who, four years after she ran away, nursed her back to health, feeding her, walking her to the bathroom. She didn't feel grateful: 'All I did was vomit and cry myself to sleep over Jack.'¹⁴ Her father apologised for not being a great dad when she was younger. 'I tried my best', he said.

Cleaned up, Jenna went to LA to re-start

her career. Her career took off. If that sounds glamorous, she describes life for the average porn star as anything but. Show up at a cattle call, be inspected like livestock, be taken 'to a hotel room and . . . shoot a cheap scene' in which she is humiliated in every way possible. She walks home with three thousand dollars, bowed legs, and a terrible impression of the industry. 'It can be a terrible experience.'¹⁵

The hardest thing for porn stars is having a relationship. Partners outside the industry do not understand, and even those in it soon get jealous. A top male star tells her, 'Getting into porn is a death sentence. As a male performer you are doomed to be single for the rest of your life'.¹⁶ Some try 'open relationships' but Jenna finds 'that's not a relationship at all. It's nothing. Even to those of us [on] camera, sex is an intimate thing.'¹⁷

Jenna says, 'I can rationalise the sex if I have to because it's work and I can disconnect myself.'¹⁸ Psychologists call this

disconnection 'splitting', the mental ability to separate sex from feelings, from love, from soul. But deeply felt, loving sex is the ultimate, and training yourself to split can make it harder to achieve this in future. Jenna says, 'You make money, but you sacrifice the chance ever to have a normal life. No one comes equipped – mentally, emotionally, or socially – to deal with. . . the psychological repercussions of the work itself.'¹⁹

It's surprising to think of porn stars as lonely, but Jenna says: 'Most have no support network to lean on. They don't realise that the strength they need has to come within.' But how does a person develop that inner strength without spirituality?

Career didn't do it for Jenna. In Cannes, she collected two adult film awards. 'I looked around the room and thought, "I did it. I'm the most popular girl here." . . . Life was like high school, a popularity contest in a classroom as big as the world. . . . I thought I was finding myself, but in reality I was turning into a monster.'²⁰

As Jenna's career goes platinum, you'd expect her to be happy – but in fact she contemplates suicide: 'I had gotten signed to [porn company] Wicked; I'd taken the first difficult strides toward my goal. . . . Yet I still wasn't happy . . . I needed someone. I couldn't do this alone. . . . But there were these moments – of being scared, of being sick, of being suicidal – where I needed to know that there was a warm, sentient human presence somewhere who would walk through my door. . . and reassure me that someone on this earth actually cared about me.'²¹

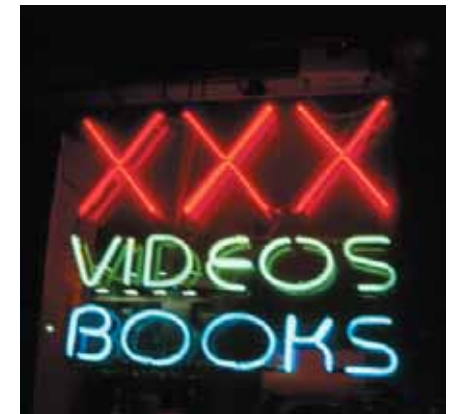
One crushing irony of the book is that someone who 'makes love' for a living manages to live so bereft of love.

Jenna makes one very revealing comment: 'I guess I haven't taken the time to reflect . . . I close myself off . . . I never take the time to feel the effects of my choices. Maybe it's because I would be

ashamed, maybe afraid. I realise I have avoided my pain for as long as I can remember. It's what I've been taught. . . . As life goes racing by me, all the while my soul goes on with sickness. Yes, sickness. . . . Because the one that should be nursing it is too busy trying to succeed and be accepted. I'm certainly scared that if I try to fix what has broken in me, so long ago, I may not succeed. So I go on faking that I am whole, proud, and strong...' (diary, 1996)²²

Jenna's book manages the big happy ending – sort of. At least she is rich. Sick of women being undervalued pawns of porn, she starts her own company, reasoning that if 'women want any respect – especially in an industry built on their objectification – they need to be more than just a pretty face on a box cover.'²³ She is also famous: 'Every article I read about the mainstreaming of porn declared that I was going to be the one to make the industry legitimate'²⁴

Jenna muses, 'I still think, sometimes, that this is all a dream I'm having as I'm lying emaciated on the floor of my old Vegas apartment the day Jack left me. I should have been dead. I don't know why I was spared.'²⁵ She sees a providence behind the scenes of her life, but doesn't know what to name it.



© Frank Monaco/Rex Features

Jenna's story raises many of the issues of postmodern apologetics. Though her book is almost totally secular, except for one mixed mention of God, Jenna borders on spiritual awareness almost by intuition. She shows spiritual hunger. She senses the sickness of her own 'soul' and frequently longs for transformation. She realises a need for unconditional love and grace from a father figure, a love which could be the basis for solid self-esteem. She has the experience of achieving while remaining unsatisfied, and longs for something transcendent. She even learns by experience some of the reasons for morality. And she has moments when she wonders if Someone up there is looking after her. This is all very close to good theology.

I finished the book wishing Jesus or someone like him could meet her and say, 'I do not condemn you' – making her part of a community and showing her what real friendship is, and introducing her to a spirituality that gives her an inner Friend, a constant caring Father, a transformer, a healer of the soul. Eventually she may be ready for Jesus' next comment: 'Go and sin no more'. An encouragement to live by the spiritual values that make relationships work well would be doing her a favour.

While answering rationalists with logical apologetics, there is also a strong case for

the message of Christianity to reach people's hearts, finding the sneaking suspicions of truth, the 3am intuitions of the human spirit, and helping God to tiptoe past reason and win hearts.

Jesus certainly used this approach: 'If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home in him. . . . the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit . . . will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.'²³



¹New York: Regan Books, 2004, 579pp
²p. 51; ³p. 286; ⁴p. 272; ⁵p. 301 ⁶p. 22; ⁷p. 55;
⁸p. 52-53; ⁹p. 49; ¹⁰p. 101; ¹¹p. 171; ¹²p. 171; ¹³p.173;
¹⁴p. 310; ¹⁵p. 325; ¹⁶p.387; ¹⁷p. 334; ¹⁸p. 546; ¹⁹p. 364;
²⁰p. 407; ²¹p. 365; ²²p. 418; ²³p. 542; ²⁴p. 574; ²⁵p. 57.
²⁶The Bible, John 14:23-27.

Grenville Kent is a husband, father of three children, pastor and lecturer in Old Testament at Wesley Institute in Sydney, Australia.

musical sticks

source: www.gcfl.net

A musical director was having a lot of trouble with one drummer. He talked and talked and talked with the drummer, but his performance simply didn't improve.

Finally, before the whole orchestra, he said, 'When a musician just can't handle his instrument and doesn't improve

when given help, they take away the instrument, give him two sticks, and make him a drummer.'

A stage whisper was heard from the percussion section: 'And if he can't handle even that, they take away one of his sticks and make him a conductor.'

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LIFEresources

Obesity – the new tobacco? [p.07]

Bandolier – healthy living

*This is a complex web address but it's a very good site. Ed.

www.jr2.ox.ac.uk/bandolier/booth/booths/hliving.html

ASH – Action on Smoking and Health
www.ash.org.uk

Understanding no [p.27]

www.raisingkids.co.uk

www.parentscenter.gov.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/parenting

www.practicalparent.org.uk

www.workingfamilies.org.uk

Try not to strain yourself

I came across this exercise to build muscle strength in the arms and shoulders. It seems so easy that I am directing you to include it as part of your exercise plan for the year.

Begin by standing on a comfortable surface, where you have plenty of room at each side. With a 5-lb. potato sack in each hand, extend your arms straight out from your sides and hold them there as long as you can. Try to reach a full minute, then relax. Each day, you'll find that you can hold this position for just a bit longer. After a couple of weeks, move up to 10-lb. potato sacks, then 50-lb. potato sacks, and eventually try to get to where you can lift a 100-lb. potato sack in each hand and hold your arms straight for more than a full minute.

After you feel confident at that level, put a potato in each of the sacks; but be careful!

source: www.gcfl.net

harping on about heaven



by Kim Peckham

If heaven were a holiday destination, would it be as popular as Tenerife? I think people would say, 'Heaven? Yeah, we intend to go there sometime. But right now we're saving up to see Madonna.'

Of course, if you ask a group, 'Who wants to go to heaven?' everyone will raise their hands. But if you ask, 'Who wants to go to Pizza Hut?' the next thing you know, the whole group has raced to the car, and

some impatient soul is honking the horn urging you to hurry up and get in. Excuse me for saying so, but it's just not right when the eternal reward of the redeemed generates less anticipation than ice-cream or a Chinese takeaway.

Perhaps heaven needs better advertising. Even if you read the Bible word for word, you don't find much promotion for heaven. We hear that it's the kind of place where the lion lies down with the lamb. This makes it sound like a wonderful place to take the kids. But what if you're a middle-aged adult who is allergic to large cats? Where's the golf? Where are the antique shops?

And don't try to whip up excitement by mentioning the free harp lessons. Deep down, people are not interested in playing harps. When they were at school they didn't dream of starting a band in which they strummed a harp in front of thousands of crazed fans. I'm just saying that heaven would get a lot more out of its advertising pound if it promised that all the redeemed will play the guitar like Eric Clapton.

Speaking of unusual promises, the founders of Islam tell us that each believer in paradise will have a tent made from a hollowed-out pearl 60 miles long. And every man will have a minimum of 72 wives. I can only speak for myself, but the addition of 71 wives does not seem like a drawing card. I have enough trouble cleaning hair clogs out of the sink with one wife. And who could afford 72 wives? According to the law of averages, at any given time of the day or night 26 of your wives would be out shopping. At least two more would be attending *Tupperware* parties.

On the other hand, if your house is

the size of Paris, you're going to need a few extra hands to help with the vacuuming.

Each idea we hear about heaven elicits a variety of reactions. I've heard a rumour that we'll wear robes of light. People who like to be comfortable around the house might say, 'Great! If it's a bathrobe of light, count me in!' But other folks might complain that they prefer the slimming effect of dark colours.

Perhaps it's best not to get hung up on the specifics of heaven. Will there be a Starbucks? Will your free air-miles still be valid? I have one friend who has expressed concern that she will not be able to take her Electric Light Orchestra albums to the world beyond the clouds.

There is only one fact about heaven that we need to know. Jesus will be there. It is his place, and he is in charge of the programming. If you know Jesus, you know that he has a long history of surprising us with blessings that are far greater than we could imagine. Sometimes the best strategy in advertising is to feature a name that everyone can trust.



* Kim Peckham lives in West Virginia, USA with his one wife, Lori, and her 72 pairs of shoes.

lost world

by Josh Gellar

when your children become teenagers you don't have to wave goodbye to healthy relationships with your offspring

Many parents find that once their children have reached a certain age, usually in their mid-teens, the level of communication and closeness of the relationship may begin to fade. Some parents simply assume that their children have matured and no longer have use for such a close relationship. Parents may feel 'un-cool' or disconnected from their children's interests or hobbies. Consequently, they give up on trying to maintain the former closeness with their teenage children's, but parents can very easily stay involved in their children's lives without running into trouble.

Here are my five top tips:

1. Keep an open mind

Times *have changed* since you were a child, but nobody is expecting you keep up with *all* the current trends. Your children's hobbies, the music they listen to or other cultural interests may seem extreme or strange to you. Nevertheless, you can choose to keep an open mind regarding their interests. By being receptive to the new things that your children are involved with, you place yourself in a better position to have a say in their lives. They will be more comfortable discussing their interests around you, knowing that they are not risking a lecture.

2. Ask genuine questions

So, you're keeping an open mind to the seemingly ridiculous hobbies your child loves so dearly. Why not learn a bit about those interests? By becoming genuinely interested, not only will you learn more about how your children are spending their time, but you will learn more about their personalities and what kind of people they are. Furthermore, they will respect the fact that you take an active interest in their pastimes, and will be more than willing to fill you in on current trends or teach you about their passions. Often, parents disqualify themselves

by engaging in discussion that simply does not interest their children. By choosing subject matter they are passionate about, you can ensure that yours will be willing to engage in extended conversation. Afterwards, you might even find them asking about *your* hobbies. But again, I say, your interest must stem from a genuine desire to connect with your children. If you try to fake it they'll know it and you will be able to smell the fires of bridges burning!

3. Give them good advice

At this critical stage in their lives your children need reliable mentors they can look to for advice. They may be having issues with finding their true identity, planning their future, or managing relationships. As a parent, it is your duty to guide them in these times of need. This does not mean you should live vicariously through them and demand they make certain choices, but instead offer guiding advice that can help them to make wise decisions. You have more life experience, and it is this experience that qualifies you to give sound advice. Be honest with your children. Tell them stories about similar situations you were in, describe your method of dealing with them, and explain the outcome (good



or bad). These stories can help your children resolve complicated problems or guide them through matters with which they are inexperienced. Do not be afraid to 'be the parent'. Your children will begin to rely on you to help them through when they are experiencing difficulties in life. This aspect of the relationship will bring you closer together and establish trust.

4. Be fair

Studies have shown that a parent-child relationship is, to some degree, dependent upon the child's perception of fairness. This means that if your children think you are being unfair in any matter of parenting, the quality of the relationship, as far as they are concerned, is in question. Everyone makes mistakes, so it is important to give your children some slack when they mess up. If they're getting poor grades, make sure you attempt to help them find solutions to the problem, instead of yelling at them about it. If they've made a poor decision or two, it is far more important to make sure they've learned from their mistakes than to push them. Negative reinforcement can work occasionally, but too much negativity will make them believe that you are being unfair. Often they can become frustrated with their own shortcomings and failures, and it is much better to help them resolve their issues than to contribute more stress by being unreasonable or negative.

5. Let them breathe!

While it may seem as if your children are uncommunicative or unwilling to spend lots of time with you, it is important to remember that they are passing through a very difficult and confusing phase of their lives. Gauge



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their responses to your attempts to get closer, and act accordingly. Common sense and intuition are keys to helping your child through this unstable time. Ensure that they know you love them and are always available to help them, no matter what. Help them to understand that they should never be afraid to approach you regarding *any* subject, even controversial issues such as drugs, alcohol or sex. If they feel comfortable talking to you about these things, the gap between you decreases. As they mature, they may close the gap naturally themselves as they realise the importance of family relationships. The bottom line is, however distant your children may seem now, a normal relationship can be restored by constantly letting them know that they are loved and by investing your time and energy, not only in providing for their physical needs, but also their mental and spiritual well-being.

L.I. Vol 5, No. 2

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\$100 laptop for developing countries

A wind-up \$100 laptop designed for children in developing countries could be in production later this year.

MIT's Nicholas Negroponte plans to make millions of the computers by the end of the year.

The laptops are powered with a wind-up crank, have very low power consumption and will allow children in remote areas to interact with one another while learning.

The foldable lime laptop was unveiled at the World Summit on the Information Society and was welcomed by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Nicknamed 'the green machine', it can be used as a conventional computer, or an electronic book. A child can control it using a cursor at the back of the machine or a touchpad on the front.

It can also be held and used like a handheld games console and can function as a TV.

There has already been firm interest in the machines from governments, though no laptops have yet been manufactured.



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