What could possibly be wrong with praising our kids, rewarding good behavior and telling them we think they’re great? After all, we are their parents. If they don’t hear it from us, when and where will they hear it? Naturally, we want to show our kids we’re proud of them, have confidence in them and enjoy their company. But we need to be careful how we express those feelings.

If we’re dishing out empty praise and lavishing rewards for behavior that should be expected, we’re writing the recipe for an “entitled child.” Instead, we can look for opportunities to foster internal motivation that will serve our kids better than any words from us.

It’s all about motivation

Two kinds of motivation push us along to accomplish goals in life: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation is something outside ourselves. We work for a paycheck, we study for a grade. We give kids a lollipop to keep them quiet when we’re on the phone or we may pay them for the A’s they bring home from school. Praise, like rewards, is simply a type of extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is what propels us to volunteer at a soup kitchen (because helping others feels good), clean our house (we like how it looks), or undertake a science project (we’re fascinated by genetics). Both kinds of motivation can be valuable. But when parents favor extrinsic (external) motivation, it’s easy to slip into the habit of using rewards or bribes to get our children to do what we want them to do.

How rewards work

When we hand out rewards at every opportunity, we create a whole rash of entitlement issues. Kids who are used to getting treats, stickers and prizes for good behavior are less likely to pitch in or do anything beyond the very minimum—without promise of a payback. Children quickly get used to thinking, “What’s in it for me?” When they expect payback, they develop an entitled mindset and are often self-centered and materialistic as adults.

In his book Punished by Rewards, Alfie Kohn says the more we use rewards with children, the more they lose interest in the task we want them to do. And when there’s a reward at stake, it’s human nature to choose the job that involves the least work to get the payoff.

Isn’t praise good for a child’s self-esteem?

Rewards can be anything from candy to cash, and one of the most prevalent is spoken praise. Parents who’ve
been raised on the “self-esteem message” dutifully toss around “You’re so awesome,” “Good job,” “I’m proud of you.” It’s an attempt to reinforce good behavior and boost kids’ psyche. The problem is that hollow praise has the same negative effect that other types of rewards do.

Kids know when their work is good and when it’s not. When we say things like “That’s the best picture of a dog I’ve ever seen,” our words lack sincerity.

Plus, this kind of praise puts the focus on what we think, not on what our child thinks. When we say, “I love your flower picture” or “I’m so proud of you,” we’re teaching children to tune into other people’s judgments rather than their own.

Kids who rely on parents or teachers to validate everything they do are not developing the skill to self-assess and make their own decisions, which they will need as teens especially. To turn the tide and help kids be their own biggest fan, try asking, “What do you like best about your picture?” Or we might exclaim, “You must be so proud of yourself.”

The power of encouragement

Rest easy, our children will be fine with some praise or a reward here and there. Think of it like candy. A little won’t hurt, but it should not make up 90% of our diet. But there are other ways to commend kids—to let them know that we’ve noticed their willingness to work hard or they have shown kindness or another positive trait.

It’s simply encouragement, a great tool to use whenever you feel the urge to say, “I’m so proud of you” or “Good job.” As psychologist Carol Dweck says, “More than three decades of research shows that a focus on effort—not on intelligence or ability—is key to success in school and in life.”

Here are a few tips on using encouragement.

**Comment on the behavior** that produced a particular outcome, not the child. “You’ve really shown dedication, taking the dog out every day after school without being asked.”

**Avoid assigning labels** like “the funny one” or “the soccer champ.” Natural abilities can come and go at any age. That’s why it’s important to keep from labeling your kids, lest they lose their identities when circumstances change.

**Comment on behavior** that is good and when it’s not. When your son wins a tennis match, in your child got the lead in the play that he or she was hoping for or a minor role. Focus on the positive behaviors: “You put a lot of effort into your performance at tryouts. Bringing that energy to the game will come more naturally. Just remember, in a pinch, a simple, heartfelt “thank you” will be sure to reinforce her extra practice time in a quiet moment after the game.

**Use encouragement in both win or lose situations:** whether your child got the lead in the play that he or she was hoping for or a minor role. Focus on the positive behaviors: “You put a lot of effort into your performance at tryouts. Bringing that energy to the game will come more naturally. Just remember, in a pinch, a simple, heartfelt “thank you” will be sure to reinforce her extra practice time in a quiet moment after the game.

**Don’t get paralyzed by the focus on encouragement.** Feel free to shout, “You’re so awesome” when your child scores a winning goal in her soccer game. Just be sure to reinforce her extra practice time in a quiet moment after the game.

**Offering this kind of encouragement can feel awkward at first, especially if it’s something you have not done consciously before. You may not always be able to think of the perfect encouraging phrase that your child will benefit from. But with practice, it will come more naturally.**

Just remember, in a pinch, a simple, heartfelt “thank you” will let kids know that you appreciate the responsibilities they took on. Or the comment, “You worked really hard on that” will do the trick too—as long as it’s true.

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**The best way..**

Continued from page 1

Watch out for “piggybacking,” when you say to your child “Your hard work really paid off,” and then you add, “Why can’t you work that hard all the time?” It’s that zinger you tag on to the end of an encouraging comment.

Yes, you do want to drive home an important point, but it can undo the positive effects of your encouragement. It can put kids on the defensive, distract them from positive behavior and make them feel angry, guilty or frustrated.

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**Talk about what you can see.** If you have asked your kids to tidy up their playroom and they have done a good job, you might say, “Books are on the shelf, toys are in the bins, the floor is clear. Mission accomplished.”

**Focus on positive traits** like effort, teamwork, kindness, persistence and improvement. When your son wins a tennis match, instead of saying, “You’re the best,” try “Your backhand has improved since you’ve been lifting weights.”

**Don’t focus on the end result.** Link the result to the behavior that made it happen. Instead of, “You’re so smart,” say “Your extra study time earned that A.”

**Consider asking a question** rather than making a comment. Your child will love explaining her technique as she answers, “How did you manage to fit everything so nicely into your closet?”

**Refer specifically** to the character trait that was shown. Instead of “You’re so sweet,” try “You showed generosity when you shared your new toy with Johnny.” Another option is to say, “You are really a generous person.”

A simple “thank you” can work wonders as encouragement in helping your child feel a strong sense of significance. Instead of "You must be so proud of yourself."
Do you have a toddler at home?

A reader writes

I read Tovah Klein’s wonderful book How Toddlers Thrive when you recommended it last year. I saw an email from Dr. Klein recently with some suggestions for parenting our young kids in the new year. Here are just a few of her ideas that have made a difference for my husband and me: 

Be good to yourself. We’re at our best when we stop trying to be perfect, when we lighten up on our own expectations of ourselves and live more in the moment. 

Connect with your partner. This could be a phone call in the middle of the day, an unexpected “thinking of you” text, a note, or just relaxing and watching a favorite TV show together. 

Reframe mishaps by laughing together. Recognize the humor in the daily toddler challenges and stumbles. 

Listen to your child. As parents, we tend to talk a lot, ask questions and make multiple requests of our children. “Do this. Don’t do that.” Instead, take a break. Pause. Invite kids to express themselves—and listen to what they have to say on their own. 

When children feel listened to (even when you cannot meet their requests), they feel respected, cared for and understood. This creates a solid base for building confidence, self-respect and reliance. 

Let your child just be. However hands-off you are (or are not) as a parent, take a step back and let kids figure things out for themselves. Your three-year-old can’t get that puzzle piece in? Give her or him a moment to figure it out rather than jumping in and showing where it goes. 

It’s so easy to direct, do for and control when what is most helpful and encouraging to children is to simply observe them. Kids will feel your presence and your support while they connect the dots and find that last puzzle piece on their own. 

Changing attitudes about working parents

New research reveals some interesting shifts in attitudes about working parents. More than 90 percent of Americans now approve of mothers working in many situations and 77 percent support fathers not working when it’s better for the family for a dad to stay home. “Americans no longer buy into the notion that gender is the most important defining criteria in how families operate,” says Kathleen Gerson, PhD, a New York University sociologist and coauthor of a paper in the journal Gender and Society. “Americans increasingly understand that families face a lot of pressures, and they don’t make judgments about what men and women should be doing.” 

Dr. Gerson and Jerry Jacobs, PhD, a sociologist at the University of Pennsylvania, did a survey using questions based on eight different family and work situations. Here are some of their findings: 

People tend to support working mothers who need the income. They are more likely to support single mothers working than married mothers, and less likely to favor both parents working when the family does not depend on the extra income. The debate seems to be shifting from whether mothers should work to how company policies could be helpful to working parents. 

Support for mothers’ employment varied widely. Only about 10 percent of people thought married mothers who were not satisfied with their jobs or child care and whose families did not need the income should work. But 92 percent thought single mothers who like their jobs and their child care—and needed the money—should work. 

The most striking shift is with fathers. Overall, Americans are still more likely to think dads should work than moms should, but their support for working fathers is as conditional as it is for mothers. In other words, there’s still a “breadwinner ideal,” but when it comes down to the everyday, practical decisions parents make, especially in dual-income families, there’s a huge change. 

Apparently, job options and earnings for men and women have “converged to the point where it’s no longer a given that dads should spend more time working than moms.” 

People recognize that the realities of our lives are complex. They take into account that families make decisions based on their individual needs. They consider such factors as a parent’s health, the chance of someone getting a promotion or being laid off, and whether there is extended family nearby to help with child care. 

What’s wrong with eating on the go

Eating on the go may lead to overindulging later, according to research at the University of Surrey in the UK that was reported in “The Journal of Health Psychology.” 

In the study, subjects snacked on a cereal bar under different conditions: while walking, while taking a friend and while watching a TV clip. Then they were given taste tests that allowed them to eat as many M&Ms, carrot sticks, grapes and salty crisps as they liked. 

Participants watching their weight ate less during the taste test—if they had eaten the cereal bar in front of the TV. But those who ate it while walking ate much more during the taste test. 

“Eating on the go may not register in the mind as eating, and may even register as exercise,” says Jane Ogden, PhD, lead author of the study. “The trick is to eat in a conscious and focused way—mindfully.”
Interesting, affordable travel for seniors

Part 1 of a 2-part series

Some of the happiest travelers these days are older people who have learned to take advantage of bargains, discounts and group travel.

The Internet has revolutionized travel research, and many seniors are comfortable using computers and smart phones. They check out destinations, accommodations, tour operators and ways to negotiate their own perks. The research has become part of the fun. Here are some ideas—for you or an older relative who enjoys traveling.

Go online

Cross-reference destinations. Know where to get the most for your money. New York Times Frugal Traveller columnist Seth Kugel suggests the site Numbeo (numbeo.com/travel-prices). It ranks cities and countries by hotel and restaurant costs, traffic, crime and transportation. The website Fareness (fareness.com) compares how much you might have to pay on the dates you’re planning to go.

Schedule airfare purchases. Is there a right time to buy plane tickets? Yes. Kayak’s Travel Hacker global pages offer the best data-based guess and will search for affordable travel packages. Or you can set an alert (on Airfare Watchdog) in case cheap tickets come up in the meantime. The Hopper app (or hopper.com/research) will also watch prices for you.

Look for bargains

Plan ahead or be flexible. One way to get a bargain is to plan well in advance and lock in a price you can afford. Or, if you can be flexible in terms of timing, you may be able to pick up a tour, cruise or plane tickets at the last minute. The latter approach may not suit a traveler’s personality and temperament.

Take advantage of senior fares. For example, the National Parks Service offers its Lifetime Senior Pass for just $10. Buses and trains offer discounted fares for seniors, and many cities have reduced fares on their public transportation systems. Sometimes you have to ask, but it’s worth it.

Go with a group. Check out AARP tours (advantages.aarp.org) or Road Scholar (www.roadscholar.org) for educational tours. The Elder Treks site (eldertreks.com) offers pricey but amazing adventures for travelers 50+ ranging from game-viewing in Africa to exploring the Arctic to rainforest or jungle tours.

Look for an all-inclusive package. Cruises are one way to lock in your costs in advance, since meals and lodging are included. Many group travel packages also include hotels, air fares, guided tours and two meals daily. River cruises tend to be a little more expensive, but they’re smaller and can be a lot of fun.

Consider bus travel

These days many tour buses offer plush seats, nice bathrooms, wi-fi, movies, soft drinks and savvy guides. And for many older people, traveling on a bus is more enjoyable than flying and usually more affordable.

Bus travel can also relieve seniors of the stress of long-distance driving, and most bus stations are conveniently located in or near the heart of a city.

Broaden your concept of vacation

Consider volunteer opportunities. Many older people these days opt for trips that combine traditional travel activities with volunteer work. For example, a Michigan couple spent a month in Mexico—relaxing and doing building repairs part-time at a Yucatan orphanage.

“We loved the kids, and the people were so appreciative,” says Tom. “Plus, the weather was great and we got to practice our Spanish.”

A retired couple from New York City wanted to see the autumn leaves upstate. They signed up with Senior Corps (seniorcorps.gov) to be “horse leaders” at a therapeutic riding center (walking beside a horse and helping disabled riders keep their balance).

The couple found a cozy inn near the riding center that gave them a great deal including breakfast and home-cooked dinners. They enjoyed their work as volunteers a couple of hours a day and made new friends in the process.

Look online for “senior volunteer travel opportunities” in the U.S. and abroad. For many older people in good health with a range of skills, it’s a great way to give back.

“Part 2 next month we’ll offer a survival guide for safe and healthy senior travel.”

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More online resources for elder travel

Reading about travel destinations and planning an adventure can be almost as much fun as the trip itself. Here are some more sites online to check out:

smartertravel.com, vacationstogo.com, travelzoo.com

A quick look through the special offers will show you where the bargains are. Be sure to compare different offers and read blogs or reviews from people who have made the trips.

evergreendub.com

Members 50 and older stay in private homes for less than $25 a couple, per day—and offer the same in return. The annual membership fee is $75. Another popular option for home stays is airbnb.com.

Visit the AARP Travel Center at expedia-aarp.com for seasonal and year-end savings on hotels, flights, cruises and vacation packages.

The cruisecheap.com site can be searched by destination, by cruise line and by cruise deals. You can also talk to an agent at the 800 number about the best deals for seniors. Just be sure to always compare prices and make sure your older relative knows what’s included. It’s important to also know about trip insurance and the cost of cancellation.

U.S. national parks are a sight to behold. For older people who enjoy wildlife and the outdoors, check out volunteer.gov for meaningful stewardship projects.

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Airport wi-fi can make the waiting time a bit more enjoyable.

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When Mom or Dad becomes ‘the favorite’

By Susan Ginsberg, EdD

ine-month-old Joey wants only his mother to feed him and give him a bath. His nurturing and attentive father feels left out and upset.

Three-year-old Julie wants her dad to give her dinner and read her a bedtime story. Her mom is bewildered and a little angry.

All children go through stages of development when they prefer their mother or father. Temperament often plays a role. Some kids just feel more comfortable with a parent who has a similar personality or style of interaction.

For example, when children do not feel “engaged” by one parent, they may pull back and try to get the attention they need from the other parent. Or, if kids are dealing with something new, such as moving or starting preschool, they may gravitate toward the calmer, more reassuring parent. And we have all seen how sometimes kids will try to play one parent off the other.

Whatever the reason, the left-out parent can feel rejected, resentful and inadequate. In families with younger children, and especially with a new baby, it can also create logistical problems. It’s difficult to divide the feeding, bathing and bedtime routines between two parents when a child wants to interact with only one of them.

Ages and stages

Babies between 6 and 12 months old get used to the routines established by their primary caregiver, whether it’s Mom or Dad. They don’t like it when things are done another way. And, when babies are tired, have a cold or are teething, they prefer to be comforted by one or the other parent.

At around 8 months, babies start to exhibit a wariness toward strangers and cling to the caregiver who interacts with them most—often the mother. The mommy attachment is strongest from 9 to 13 months as babies go through a period of separation anxiety, according to Dr. Michael Yogman, a Boston pediatrician.

Both the child’s sex and age play a part in who becomes the “favorite.” Boys around 18 months and girls between 2 and 3 years often develop a special relationship with their father. And sometimes, between ages 3 and 6, kids fall in love with their opposite-sex parent. The signs are unmistakable. You’ll know when you hear your daughter say, “When I grow up, I want to marry Daddy.”

What parents can do

Don’t take it personally. It doesn’t mean you have done something wrong. “It’s just a reflection of your child’s feeling at that particular moment, not a reflection on your relationship,” says Dr. Lawrence Kutner. Even if you are rejected today, you may be adored tomorrow.

Be patient. Don’t withdraw from your child when you feel rejected. The situation will evolve and change as your son or daughter goes through different phases. And, by all means, don’t get hung up on your own feelings. Stay focused on the developmental stage and needs of your child.

Try not to show hurt feelings. Children should not feel that if they choose one parent, they will be abandoned by the other. Your kids love you both, in spite of what it may seem sometimes.

Start early with a set routine. Each parent should have some special activity that is “just theirs,” such as giving your child a bath, reading books at a certain time of day or playing a favorite game together.

Don’t insist that the baby go to the other parent. But if you are the favorite at any point, you can do a lot to help your child and the other parent by making opportunities for togetherness: “I have to go out for a little while. Daddy will read you a story.”

Keeping Dad on your child’s radar screen

 Mothers may unconsciously discourage fathers from being involved with caring for their kids. Some new moms especially find it difficult to delegate child care responsibilities. Others are critical of what dads do, thinking their way is the only “right way.”

Here are some suggestions:

On consistency. It’s a good thing but it doesn’t mean sameness. Children quickly learn that Dad does things one way, Mom another—and the same goes for Grandma, Grandpa and the kindergarten teacher.

Be careful with language, too. For example: “My husband is babysitting Zoey today.” No one would think of calling a mother a “babysitter” when she’s home with the kids.

Don’t become the only “expert.” This can often happen with a new mother especially. Encourage dads to read articles about child development, attend parenting classes and learn along with you.

Fatherhood author Dr. James Levine also suggests:

Listen to your kids. When they say things that are Dad-related (“I miss Dad” or “When’s Dad coming home?”), pass it along so a father knows that his children are thinking about him.

Talk with children. Let them know in advance about special activities they will be sharing with their father, such as going to the movies or to a favorite playground.
How Millennials see their careers…and their lives

much has been written about the Millennial generation, that large cohort of young adults from ages 18 to 35. But many of the assertions are contradictory. This group has been described as driven, lazy, hard-working, entitled, ambitious, self-centered, socially responsible, disloyal, and committed. Take your pick.

It’s hard to generalize about any large group connected only by their birth dates. As Eric Hoover says in *The Millennial Muddle*, we’re being asked to swallow two big assumptions: (1) that Millennials are fundamentally different from people of other age groups, and (2) that they’re similar to each other in meaningful ways.

What the experts agree on

Of course, the times we are raised in do make a difference on how we act and think. A new study of how Millennials manage their careers by the Center for Work & Family at Boston College has found that researchers generally agree that Millennials are different from those born in prior generations in the following ways.

Increasing impact of technology. Young adults today have grown up with omnipresent technology. Smart phones and other devices that connect to the Internet have altered the speed and the way they gather information, communicate with each other, find destinations and shop for products.

Delaying “adult commitments.” Millennials are less likely to have completed the traditional milestones of “adulthood” by age 21. They get married later, have children later and are less likely to own a home by age 30 than was the case a generation ago.

Changing gender roles. Women now earn a majority of college degrees. In one of four dual-career couples, wives earn more than their husbands, and women are the primary breadwinners in two of five U.S. households. At the same time, young men express a strong desire to be involved parents. They see their family role as being an equal balance between breadwinner and caregiver.

Changing nature of careers. As downsizing reached record levels in the 1990s and early 2000s, the notion of “job security” in the U.S. workplace was dramatically altered. Many young people now see themselves more as free agents, willing to change jobs frequently to reach their goals.

Changing expectations. A number of studies have documented Millennials’ high expectations for work-life balance, career advancement, training and development, meaningful work and career satisfaction. And while young adults have low expectations for job security, they still value it highly.

New research findings

The Boston College research team surveyed 1,100 employees ages 22 to 35, with at least two years of professional, full-time work experience at five large U.S. companies. Here are some of the key takeaways from their study.

Job satisfaction is important. Survey participants who rated themselves higher in “career navigation skills” (i.e., who know what they want and how to communicate their desires) were more satisfied with their jobs. And those who were more satisfied with their jobs scored higher on work-effort and intention to stay with their employers. They also tended to be happier with their lives overall.

How they measure success. Six measures stood out as key to how Millennials measure their career success. These dimensions (and the percentage of participants rating them extremely important) were: work-life balance (44%), job satisfaction (43%), salary and salary growth rate (35%), achievement of personal goals (27%), work achievements (25%) and development of new skills (24%).

On job loyalty. Much has been written about employee loyalty being “a thing of the past” and not a value held by most Millennials. But this did not hold true in the new study. As a rate of more than 2-1, young adults said that staying with their employers was their preferred strategy to advancement.

They expressed the importance of finding a role that aligns with their passions. Millennials want to grow and develop in their careers as well as be part of a workplace culture that supports the whole person.

How men and women compare. Overall, Millennial women have made great strides in higher education and the workplace, and young men have become more engaged as parents at home. In many parts of the study, men’s and women’s responses were almost the same. But differences were noticeable in a few areas.

For example: Millennial men rated “career advancement” higher than women and were more willing to put work ahead of other obligations. Interestingly, however, more young men (51%) than women (44%) said they wouldn’t mind being a full-time at-home parent if their spouse’s or partner’s income could support the family.

The importance of a supportive spouse/partner. Some 82% of survey participants said they talked a lot about their work and family goals and plans with their spouses or partners. More than 60% did this daily or weekly.

Participants who discussed these goals with their partners at least monthly scored much higher on life satisfaction than those who did so only once or twice a year. For Millennials juggling careers and a family, having these conversations and making decisions as a team was a key determinant of their satisfaction.

The importance of life over work. Most young adults in the study see their lives outside of work as much more important to their sense of identity than their careers. Rather than being work-centric, they see themselves as dual-centric with a strong desire for a meaningful life. They are deriving more satisfaction from important relationships and family than their careers.

—The Boston College report is available online. Enter the keywords: How Millennials Navigate Their Careers.
When canned foods are a better choice

Most of us are trying to eat more vegetables and fruit these days. And we know that fresh, locally grown produce is our best option. But it’s not the only option—and, in some cases, studies suggest it may not even be the best.

Food lab research has shown that some canned vegetables and legumes are not just cheaper and more convenient, they may also be healthier than you think.

“While some vegetables and legumes lose nutrients in the canning process, others actually see their healthy compounds increase,” according to Gene Lester, PhD, a research plant physiologist at the USDA’s Food Quality Lab in Beltsville, Maryland.

That’s because canning calls for heating, which causes certain raw vegetables, namely corn and tomatoes, to release antioxidants and make them more available.

A report in the journal “Nutrition & Food Sciences” also found that canned foods often beat fresh in price, prep time and food waste.

Pinto beans, tomatoes, corn and spinach have been found to cost less per serving than fresh and/or frozen options when you factor in cooking times, peeling and pitting or removing stems.

What about the sodium content?

It is a factor. Experts advise choosing sodium-free varieties or rinsing off foods that contain sodium before eating.

We all need more of the sunshine vitamin

Vitamin D helps the body absorb calcium, an essential nutrient, which is why it’s so important. But if you’re like most Americans, you are not getting enough vitamin D, especially during the winter months.

The recommended daily value is 600 IUs for people from 1 to 70 and 800 for people over 70.

Follow the sun

Here’s how it works. Ultra-violet (UVB) rays from the sun penetrate uncovered skin and convert a compound in the skin into what eventually becomes vitamin D.

The skin’s ability to make vitamin D depends on many variables. Almost everyone in the U.S. could get enough natural sunlight during the summer months. But by December, except for Florida and a few pockets in the Southwest, that’s no longer the case.

Other factors that apply include altitude, the amount of cloud cover and time of day. Sunlight makes less vitamin D when it comes in through a window or you’re wearing a hat or sunscreen. Lighter skinned people also tend to get more UVB rays from sunlight than darker skinned people.

Vitamin D from food

Most foods, other than fatty fish like tuna, salmon and mackerel, are not naturally rich in vitamin D. But many foods such as dairy products, cereals and orange juice are fortified with vitamin D.

Food labels often list vitamin D as a percent of the RDA. It comes in two forms: D2 is from plants and D3 is manufactured from the lanolin in sheep’s wool. They are equal in potency.

Impact on the brain

Kids need calcium for growing bones. And, as people get older, those with low levels of vitamin D lose bone more rapidly and are more likely to fracture a bone.

But there’s more to it than that, says Health columnist Hana Estoff Marano in Psychology Today. “Twenty years ago, everyone thought that vitamin D’s contribution to health was the making of strong bones. That may be the least of it.”

New studies show that vitamin D plays a regulatory role in almost every system in the body. And its most notable actions may be in the brain, says Marano.

Vitamin D deficiency puts older adults at risk for cognitive decline and dementia, according to Michael Holick, professor of medicine at Boston University and an expert on vitamin D.

It’s not just a health issue for older people either. Dr. Holick says that a vitamin D deficiency is widespread among all age groups these days. And those most at risk are young adults who spend almost all of their time indoors, working.

How much do you know about the sense of taste?

Taste plays a vital role in our choice and enjoyment of food.

See what you know about the sense of taste by taking this quiz from the University of California, Berkeley Wellness Letter.

True or False: Taste and flavor detection is all done by the tongue.

False. Taste buds are also located on the roof of the mouth, inside the cheeks and in the upper throat. What’s more, the flavor of food goes beyond taste. It depends largely on the sense of smell.

True or False: Foods taste different to different people.

True, to some extent. Humans vary genetically in their perception of taste. Some people have more (or fewer) taste buds than others. Taste can also be shaped by cultural or psychological factors.

True or False: Some taste preferences are inborn.

True. All mammals prefer sweetness from birth and dislike bitterness. But research shows that eating a lot of sugary foods increases the attraction to sweetness. The enjoyment of bitter foods is usually an acquired taste.

True or False: The preference for salt is also inborn.

False. It’s learned, like most taste preferences. People who eat lots of salt from a young age may even crave it.

True or False: The number of taste buds decreases with age.

False. But the nerve receptors within taste buds live are replaced from time to time.

True or False: Some chronic illnesses, oral conditions, medications and tobacco can impair the sense of taste.

True. If your sense of taste or smell is seriously impaired, there’s no way to enjoy food.

False. Talk to your doctor about the problem. You can also chew your food well to boost saliva release and choose stronger-tasting foods flavored with spices and herbs (not salt and sugar).
Encouragement, not praise, motivates children

Entitlement, the idea that life owes us something, is wreaking havoc on our kids’ generation, says Amy McC ready, author of an important new book, The “Me, Me, Me” Epidemic.

“The entitlement problem spans culture and classes,” she says. “It’s not only about stuff. Entitled kids believe the world revolves around them. They expect things to be done for them—a path to happiness cleared and smoothed without putting in much effort themselves.”

Whether you are in the trenches of the entitlement epidemic with children who can barely lift their feet so you can vacuum under them—or you are trying to ward off this behavior to begin with—the 35 tools McCready describes are for you. The “Un-Entitler Toolbox” strategies in every chapter will give you the confidence, know-how and even some specific, helpful words to use to rid your home of this entitled behavior.

The author suggests ways to deal with crying, whining, yelling children as well as strategies to cope with power struggles. She explains that when we help our children too much—and do things for them that they could do perfectly well for themselves—we are taking away extremely rewarding opportunities for our kids to learn from their mistakes, work toward and achieve a goal, tackle a challenge, collaborate, take pride in their work and build confidence for taking on challenges in the future.

Constantly saying “good job” and “I’m proud of you” in an attempt to reinforce kids’ good behavior and boost their psyche is another factor that has backfired, says McCready. She suggests using encouragement instead of praise (see front page article) and offers ideas on how to kick the praise habit and use encouragement in positive ways.

Whether you are the parent of a young toddler or you’re navigating the teen years, you will find valuable ideas that will help your kids develop the responsibility, resilience and respectfulness they need for a successful adult life.