Talking to kids about scary events in the news

By Susan Ginsberg, EdD

Horrendous events have become, sadly, a new normal in our lives. Mass shootings, terrorist attacks and natural disasters are upsetting for kids as well as adults. And in our 24/7 news world, it’s nearly impossible to shield our children from these distressing happenings.

All of us are trying to wrap our heads around the world in which we’re living. Scary incidents seem to come so fast, one after the other. Let’s look at some of the things we have learned about children’s responses to shocking events and how we can help them cope.

Provide reassurance. Whether kids are 4 or 14, they need to know that although terrible things happen, life will go on and that you are doing everything you can to keep them safe. Stay calm as you talk through a distressing new event. Children pick up their cues from us, so if we act anxious, they will, too. “Talk to kids about what happened as soon as possible after a violent incident,” Harold Koplewicz, MD, President of the Child Mind Institute, suggests. “Answer their questions, convey facts, set the emotional tone.”

Find out what kids already know before you give them new information. “Listen to them,” says Dr. Koplewicz. “Encourage them to express their feelings. This will help them build healthy coping skills that will serve them well in the future.”

Trust your instincts. You know your child and what she or he can handle better than anyone else. Be aware that some kids may not want to talk about what happened and may not ask you any questions directly. But children will often show you how they feel through their play or conversations on seemingly unrelated topics.

Be present. When a disaster strikes, you need to be the stable, caring person your child knows. Offer honest, simple information, accept your child’s feelings and, most of all, be present. “The best thing you can do as a parent is be available,” says Dr. Koplewicz. “Just spending time with your kids and reassuring them can make a huge difference.”

Here’s a guide to keeping your discussion developmentally appropriate.

Preschool children

Be aware that even young kids can tell when adults are sad and scared. On some level, they are aware that something major has happened. Answer their questions, but don’t provide details they didn’t ask for. Limit their access to the news, especially on TV. Preschoolers do not understand repetitive images. When they see something aired repeatedly such as a building falling or children and...
families fleeing, they assume it’s happening over and over again.

**Take care of yourself.** Talk to friends, relatives and colleagues about your own feelings—when you’re not with your children. This will help you collect your thoughts, so you don’t burden kids with your fears and concerns.

**Early grades**

**Give kids plenty of time for free play.** It’s how they process life. “Don’t judge a child’s play or try to change it,” writes Heather Shumaker in her forthcoming book *It’s OK to Go Up the Slide.* “You might discover new fears by watching or asking questions. Let the play unfold.”

**Don’t ignore kids who seem to be just fine.** They may be, but appearances can be deceiving. Look out for the child who seems to be smiling all of the time but is not showing a range of emotion.

**Follow Mr. Rogers’ sage advice to focus on the helpers.** It’s still useful to comfort children in the face of a disaster. Point out the roles of first responders: fire fighters, the police, doctors, nurses and volunteers. Talk about what they did in this emergency. This will help to build hope and optimism, qualities kids need to be resilient.

**Elementary school**

**Kids this age are comforted by facts.** “Knowledge can be empowering. It helps relieve anxiety,” says Dr. Koplewicz. Answer questions and provide information at a level your child can understand—without unnecessary details. A good rule to follow is if a child is old enough to ask, she’s old enough to get an honest answer. And whatever kids ask, you can assume they also have two unspoken questions: *Am I going to be OK? Are you going to be here to take care of me?*  

**Kids who see violence in movies and video games may not understand the significance of an event in which real people were killed.** “Don’t overprotect,” says psychologist Lawrence Shapiro. “Let kids know it’s real. Sadness and concern are appropriate reactions. Model that. Don’t let kids be uncaring. Let them witness some of your caring, sadness and anger.”

**If your child is having trouble concentrating,** allow more time for homework and getting ready for school. To get a better sense of what’s on in his or her mind, listen—and ask about what the other kids are saying at school.

**Middle school**

**Don’t assume because kids are older that you know how they feel.** Ask what they’ve heard and what they think. “Many middle school children can handle a discussion of threatening events,” says Caroline Knorr, writing for Common Sense Media. “But if a child tends to be sensitive, keep him or her away from TV news.”

**Don’t be shocked if your child seems blasé or indifferent.** Kids react to disturbing events in different ways,” Dr. Koplewicz says. “Some might want to spend extra time with friends and relatives. Some might want to spend more time alone. Let your child know that it’s OK to express things in different ways. For example, a person may feel sad but not cry.”

**Be available for more questions.** “At this age,” says Caroline Knorr, “many kids see the morality of events in stark black-and-white terms and are in the process of developing their beliefs. You may want to take this opportunity to discuss the basics of bias, prejudice and civil and religious strife.”

**Adult help is important**

Heather Shumaker reminds us that children do actually gain peace and safety from having their fears addressed. She says:

“When a disaster strikes, adults are confused and conflicted, too. It’s hard to explain events that defy explanation, so don’t worry if you don’t know all the answers. That’s not what your child needs most from you.”

“Focus on facts and feeling. By allowing difficult questions to be aired and space for angry, sad and scared feelings, you are giving your child the best comfort.”

—For ways to help teenagers during times of stress, see *Parenting on page 5.*

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**Responding to other bad and sad things that happen**

In her new book “It’s OK to Go Up the Slide” (Penguin/Random House), author Heather Shumaker talks about the distinction between being safe versus feeling safe. “You can’t offer complete safety from random events, so don’t give false assurances,” she says. “The trick is to balance direct honesty with a feeling of safety.”

Children feel safe when they feel listened to, when they’re given real answers and when they have space to express their feelings. Shumaker suggests these responses to kids’ concerns about troubling events.

**Refugees.** Focus on the children. Emphasize empathy and safety. Say, “The children live in a country where there’s a war going on. Their families ran away to a new country because they want to stay safe.”

**School shootings.** Even toddlers know that school is a place for kids. And while school shootings are rare statistically, they are particularly frightening. Learn about lockdowns, drills and access procedures at your child’s school. Say to your child, “It’s OK to go to school. I wouldn’t let you go if I thought it was dangerous.”

**Natural disasters.** Explain which natural disasters tend to occur in your area and which ones don’t. Talk about living safely where you live. Explain emergency signals. Come up with a family plan and practice your drill. When something does happen, near or far away, it can become an opportunity to learn more about our planet. The more we engage kids in a sense of wonder and respect for nature, the more they can understand that life is marvelous. A sense of awe and optimism helps develop resiliency.
**INTERCHANGE**

The brain needs exercise to keep fit

Q I read about a study that shows a direct relationship between strong muscles and thinking skills. Are you aware of this research? W.H., Buffalo, NY

A Many studies have found that physical exercise is good for brain health. But you may have heard about the new study of British twins reported in the journal Gerontology.

Studies of twins are especially valuable scientifically because it’s often hard to draw conclusions with randomly chosen subjects. Some people are just luckier than others in terms of their genes and environment. But twins typically have shared the same early home environment and many of the same genes—all of the same genes, if they are identical.

For the UK study, scientists led by Claire Steves of King’s College London found 162 pairs of healthy, middle-aged, female twins who 10 years before had completed extensive tests of their memory and thinking abilities as well as assessments of their metabolic health and leg-muscle power.

Scientists focused on the twins’ muscles rather than their exercise habits, because measurements of muscle power are more objective than people’s recollections of how much they worked out.

The study found that, of the 324 twins, those who had the strongest legs a decade before showed the least decline in thinking skills.

The differences were striking. If one twin had been more powerful than the other 10 years before, she was a much better thinker now. With identical twins, if one had stronger legs than the other a decade before, she now displayed significantly more brain volume and fewer “empty spaces in the brain than her weaker sibling.”

The study was not designed specifically to uncover how muscle power builds brain power, and Dr. Steves says she was personally “surprised by the strength of the findings. This study brings home to me that the brain needs exercise to keep fit.”

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**RESEARCH REVIEW**

The ‘gray’ divorce: splitting up later in life

T hese days more married couples are splitting up late in life (it’s called “silver” or “gray” divorce), and it’s become more acceptable to do so, according to the National Center for Marriage Research and Research at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. People 50 and older were twice as likely to go through a divorce in 2014 than in 1990.

But why? Here are some of the explanations:

**Life expectancy.** We’re living longer. “Let’s say you’re 50 or 60. You could go 30 more years,” says Pepper Schwartz, a sociology professor at the University of Washington. “A lot of marriages are no longer satisfying or loving. They may not be ugly, but you say, ‘Do I really want 30 more years of this?’”

**Status of women.** After age 40, women initiate about 60 percent of the divorces, according to the AARP. Their husbands may not be thrilled with the marriage either, but they are less likely to rock the boat. “Women have been liberated, empowered, moved around, know how to get what they want,” says Aviav Wittenberg-Cox, who runs a gender consulting firm in London. Her marriage broke up five years ago when she was 49. Dr. Schwartz agrees. “Women have higher expectations for their emotional life.” Her marriage ended after 23 years. “It had run out of juice,” she says.

**Role models for change.** It’s not that adult children don’t want their parents to stay together. They often do. But many women especially want to be good role models for their children, according to Wittenberg-Cox. They want their kids to see that they do not fear the unknown.

**Economics.** Women still earn less than men and divorced women over 62 receive smaller Social Security benefits, on average, than men (and other single women). But more than half of women from 55 to 64 are still working, which means they have a source of income. “As women gain financial independence, they feel safe leaving an unhappy union,” says Julie Schwartz Gottman, a psychologist in Seattle.

Interestingly, for many women who divorce late in life, remarriage is neither a goal nor a high priority. “I’ll never say never,” says a Massachusetts writer-editor who got married at 20 and divorced 37 years later. “But it’s highly unlikely.”

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‘Walking while distracted’ injuries are on the rise

T he rise in cellphone-distracted walking injuries parallels the increase in cellphone use over the past 15 years, according to the National Safety Council. That’s no surprise to those of us who have experienced a near miss because of our own—or someone else’s—talking, texting, tweeting or gaming while walking.

A Stony Brook University study found that distracted walkers veer off course by as much as 61 percent while texting and walking. Typical accidents include tripping over curbs, running into obstacles in front and around you. Look where you’re walking. Focus on the people, objects and obstacles in front and around you. Keep headphone volume low so you can hear surrounding traffic. Obey traffic signals and rules.

If you really must use your phone, stop and step out of the flow of other people and traffic.
Warning signs of an older person’s driving risk

By Elizabeth Dugan, PhD

Part Two of a two-part series

Last month we talked about the driving dilemma and how to begin a conversation with an older relative or friend who may need to give up driving.

We pointed out that age is not the determining risk factor. To drive safely, a person must be able to see, think and move well and with ease. If any of these abilities is limited, the individual should not be operating a motor vehicle.

States have different rules for renewing licenses and re-testing drivers. Check with the Motor Vehicle Bureau for the rules where your relative is licensed.

Look for warning signals

Three advocacy groups (AARP, AMA and AAA) have developed specific warning signals that I have categorized by risk level into red, yellow and green.

“Red” naturally points to the highest risk level, and a single red marker should signal the need to begin a conversation about driving with your older relative.

“Yellow” points to a lower but still significant risk. One yellow risk is a cause for concern. Two or more should prompt further assessment.

“Green” points to risks that can be corrected and, if they are corrected, can allow a person to continue to drive safely.

Red signals of risk

One or more car accidents in the past five years. A driver’s recent history is a strong predictor of mishaps to come.

Recent traffic tickets or police warnings. Insurance companies raise their rates after a ticket or accident because such events also tend to predict future problems.

Severely impaired vision, cognition or mobility. Any of these problems can be dangerous for the driver and others on the road.

Yellow signals of risk

Recent near misses or close calls while driving. A near miss is not always the driver’s fault, but it may be a symptom of declining performance.

Having people say they don’t want to ride with the driver or they don’t want their children to ride with him or her. Since people tend to be reluctant to speak up about their concerns for a person’s driving, these expressions should be taken seriously.

Feeling stressed, exhausted or uncomfortable when driving. These suggest that a driver no longer feels fully competent behind the wheel.

Having other drivers honk, gesture or seem annoyed by the person’s driving. These signs and gestures may be a clue that a person’s driving is too slow, erratic or outside the norm in some other way.

Accumulation of dents and dings on the person’s vehicle. Backing into things, scraping walls or other objects and minor fender-benders may indicate vision, mobility or navigational problems.

Difficulty judging gaps in traffic at intersections and on highways. This could be a symptom of declining performance.

Failing to notice signs, signals, lights, vehicles or pedestrians on streets and roadsides when the driver is looking straight ahead—or not seeing them soon enough to respond smoothly. These may also suggest that the driver has a diminished field of view.

Getting lost more often than in the past, especially in familiar areas. This is a very common situation that could signal memory or other cognitive problems.

Trouble paying attention to traffic signals, road signs and pavement markings. This could be a problem with the person’s ability to respond to multiple cues.

Slowing response to an unexpected situation. This could signal an inability to recognize stimuli or a delay in physical reactions.

Becoming easily distracted or having difficulty concentrating while driving. This is a potential problem for people of all ages.

Not using a safety belt. Extenders and other devices can make it easier to put on a seat belt. Forgetting to buckle up may also signal a memory problem.

He just passed his state’s driving re-test with flying colors.

Problematic behavior. Spitting on the person’s vehicle.

Feeling tired or unwell while driving. This is a potential problem for people of all ages.

Trouble keeping the car in its proper lane. Straddling lanes, drifting or changing lanes without signaling may indicate that a driver has a vision or movement problem.

Green signals of risk

Trouble seeing over the steering wheel. A seat cushion or pillow can usually correct this situation.

Difficulty looking back over one’s shoulder. See about getting the car fitted for adaptive mirrors. Work on improving flexibility and range of motion.

Trouble physically turning the steering wheel or looking out of mirrors. These may also signal movement problems, and exercise may help.

Difficulty getting in or out of the vehicle. Improving one’s total fitness can help with this as well. Or it may be possible to put something slick over the seat to make it easier to slide in and out.

For more help, check out these online sources:

www.aarp.org/drive
www.seniordriving.aaa.com
www.nhtsa.gov/Senior-Drivers
www.itnamerica.org

n our front page, we talked about how to help younger children deal with stressful events. What about teens? How should parents respond to their expressed and unexpressed feelings about tragic news? The needs of teenagers change a lot between ages 13 and 17. Like younger kids, their response to a tragic incident depends on the teen’s age, temperament, maturity or some personal connection.

How kids get information
Most high school students read about and see the latest news on social media and talk about it with their friends. Like the rest of us, and maybe even more so, they are getting a constant stream of information from videos, posts, blogs, feeds and alerts on their phones and laptops.

“Since much of this content comes from sites designed for adult audiences, what our kids see, hear or read might not always be age-appropriate, and often parents are not around to immediately help their kids make sense of a horrendous situation,” says Caroline Knorr of Common Sense Media.

What parents can do
Check in. If your teenage son or daughter has absorbed distressing news independently of you, check in as soon as possible. Talking to your teen about what’s going on will offer insights into his or her developing politics and senses of justice and morality. It will also give you an opportunity to throw your own insights into the mix.

Let teens express themselves. Young people may feel passionately about a particular event in the news. They may personalize it if they think it has a direct impact on them or someone they know.

Many teens have become aware that their own lives could be affected by terrorism. For example, they may see an attack in terms of their plans to attend college or join the military. Address these concerns. Don’t minimize them.

Be proactive. Make sure high school kids know what to do in case of an emergency. Have a family plan for where they should go if they can’t get home or whom to call if they can’t reach you.

This could be another opportunity to discuss with an older teen the impact of violence in our society. Talk in terms of what is known and what is not known. These are complex issues, unlikely to be quickly or easily solved.

How some teens face scary events
Take more risks. Teens may express their anxiety through a range of behaviors that seem unrelated to what’s going on. For example, they may “push the envelope” and take more risks.

Try to be cool. In an effort to be cool or get a rise out of their parents, some teens (preteens too) may make inappropriate jokes, downplay a tragedy, refuse to discuss their feelings and immerse themselves in popular culture.

Sometimes teens just want to be with their friends.

More tips for parents
Listen. Stop what you’re doing and really listen to what your kids are saying or trying to say. Hug them more, touch them more and eat meals together, even if this means changing your schedule or giving up on other activities.

Maintain family routines, rules and rituals. It’s more important than ever to set limits and be clear about your expectations. You may not think so sometimes, but teens really do want to be around safe people in familiar situations.

Be watchful. Look out for changes in mood, sleeping or eating patterns or in your teenager’s relationships with friends. Young people may experience some of the same difficulties in concentrating that many adults have reported. So don’t be surprised if there’s a dip in grades when report cards come out.

Think positively. Help teens translate their concerns into positive action. Look for volunteer activities and creative initiatives in your community. Support kids’ connections with school groups, religious institutions and local organizations that are providing safe structures in which to respond positively, as citizens, to difficult events.

Keep an open mind. Be aware that many older teens are talking to each other about specific concerns such as the balance between security and civil liberties, drone attacks, bombing and wars. You may not like what your kids are saying, but it’s important to provide them with a zone of comfort in which they can freely exchange their views.

Keep learning. Most of us have a lot to learn about other peoples, their history, religion and geography. Talking to people who have lived through wars, migration and stressful events can help a thoughtful teenager put current events into a larger perspective.

Talk about fear. A shocking news event can become an opportunity to discuss the human tendency to fear and to distrust people who are not like ourselves. Teach kids that hate-based violence often starts with words and then escalates. Address biased comments and help kids understand that these words are unacceptable under any circumstances.

Encourage media savvy. Point out when individuals or groups of people are stereotyped on TV, in music and movies. If you disagree with a specific media portrayal, don’t just shrug. Explain why. Help your teenager learn to assess the credibility and possible bias of the varied media through which they are absorbing news. Encourage kids to gather information from multiple sources to gain a broader perspective.

“It’s important for kids to see that we care about people, about justice in the world and about bringing an end to people harming people,” says Patty Wipfler, founder of Hand in Hand Parenting.
Using your (swear) words more thoughtfully

By Anne Perryman

The host of a local radio show asked listeners to call in with their comments one morning. “No profanity, please,” he cautioned. “I can’t use it on the air if there’s profanity.”

You might assume that everyone already knows you can’t swear on NPR. But with cable TV, the Internet and increasingly explicit mainstream media, the language rules have become hazier.

People of all ages and occupations feel free to curse like the proverbial sailor. Swearing is in the air around us, and it carries over to the workplace.

Language has coarsened

“When I started teaching in the 70s, if you heard a four-letter word in the hall, kids turned around to see who said it,” says Jane Duell, a retired high school teacher from Indiana. “Now, when you walk down those same halls, you hear the f-bomb dropped every few minutes.”

Our language, both spoken and written, has coarsened. Social media posts contain full, spelled-out curse words, not just partially bleeped ones with hashtags and exclamation marks.

There’s no restriction on Facebook or Twitter forbidding this, which has caused some people to take their own stand on the issue. Detroit writer Marsha Philpot told her Facebook followers that she would “unfriend” anyone who used her public pages to swear or make obscene remarks.

Workplaces vary widely

The idea of managing one’s words on the job may feel uncomfortable or a bit too PC to some people. A lot depends on the culture at a particular workplace.

An account director at a major advertising agency, for example, says his staff swears at each other all the time, but they are very careful not to use profanity when they are speaking with clients.

The head chef at a pub says it’s a misperception that chefs are constantly shouting expletives. In the best run restaurants, he says, chefs are cool and calm—and the design trend for open kitchens means they also need to be on their best behavior, word-wise.

Eric Saylor, a music professor at Drake University, takes a more nuanced position. “I’m not a big fan of random swears,” he says, “but a well-placed swear can be quite effective.”

A Human Resources manager advises people starting out on a job to listen to the other staff members and gauge the culture at the workplace.

“Be cool and don’t swear at all,” she suggests. “But if everybody’s swearing, you can too. Just pay close attention to your choice of expletives. Some work, some don’t. Some are funny, some just sound mean or crude.”

Broaden your vocabulary

A woman who works for a probation service says that teaching her clients who have just come out of prison not to use profanity is part of their rehabilitation back into wider society.

“Swearing is one of the things we talk a lot about, especially if we’re trying to get people ready for a job facing customers,” she says. “Swearing casually does not give a good impression. It shows a poor use of vocabulary. Customers and colleagues tend to look down on people who swear a lot.”

Comments can haunt us

It’s not just profane language that needs filtering. In the give-and-take of friendly banter with our colleagues, we may also say harsh things that could be misinterpreted if they were taken out of context. “I was just joking” or “I didn’t mean it that way” sounds lame as an excuse.

“Some of the jokes we used to make are unacceptable these days and pretty stupid as well,” adds Bob, who works at a hardware store in a small town. “I’m a lot more careful about what I say at work, because I don’t want to offend our customers—and at home too, because I have young kids who hear everything I say.”

Barbara is a graphic artist with a reputation as a truth-teller with a sharp tongue. “Sometimes she says what the rest of us are thinking and we can appreciate that,” says Josh. “But her lack of restraint is a little scary, and I for one never want to get caught in the crossfire around her.”

Many of us have learned the hard way to watch what we say in our email communications, too.

Best defense: listen more

“My problem wasn’t swearing,” says Jim, a college administrator. “I got called on mislabeling my opinions as facts.”

But Jim took the feedback he received in a performance review to heart. “I didn’t want to be that guy who shoots his mouth off and doesn’t know what he’s talking about. I wanted the people I work with to trust my word—and over time it got easier.”

The trick, he says, was to let other people do more talking. “When you spend more time listening, you might be surprised by how much you can learn,” he says. “Then, when you do speak, you’re more likely to have something worth saying.”

Resist the ‘TMI’ urge

Most of us have been on the giving and receiving ends of “too much information.” When someone asks an open-ended question, it’s easy to say a little (or a lot) more than is necessary or appropriate. Sometimes we just nervously spill out a lot of unnecessary words.

For example, if your boss asks how things are going, instead of responding with extraneous details or offering a negative assessment, a better approach would be to adroitly clarify the question. Are you being asked if the project is on schedule, if your team members are getting along or something different entirely?

Some people are very adept at getting others to reveal confidential information. And it can be tempting to share what we have heard or think we know. It makes us feel like we’re savvy insiders. But it’s more important for the people we work with—and for—to see us as mature individuals who express ourselves thoughtfully, show good judgment and can be trusted with a confidence.
New ideas for treating sprains and strains

You have probably heard and may have followed the standard advice for treating a sprained ankle or knee: rest, ice, compression, elevation (RICE). Now the doctor who coined that term, Gabe Mirkin, MD, author of The Sports Medicine Book, says new research has changed his mind about the “rice” and “ice” part.

A recent issue of Consumer Reports on Health suggests this new approach.

First things first

Before you try any treatment at all, decide whether you need to call your doctor. “If you are unable to walk more than three steps, you need to see a doctor as soon as possible to protect yourself from further injury,” says A. Lynn Millar, PhD, author of the American College of Sports Medicine’s patient guide to sprains and strains.

Call your doctor also if you are in a lot of pain, if the joint looks bent or otherwise abnormal, or if there is major swelling.

But if your injury is causing minor pain and swelling and you have a nearly full range of motion, here’s what the experts suggest now.

Forget the bed rest

Instead of stopping activity until the injury is healed, the research suggests gentle exercise within the first two to three days. For example, you might try “drawing” the alphabet with a sprained ankle a couple of times a day.

By contractiing and relaxing a joint, you actually improve blood flow, which improves healing, according to the National Athletic Trainers’ Association (NATA). The group has also found that balance exercises can help reduce the rate of reinjury.

Health alert: 3 tests and treatments to avoid

While there are good reasons to be concerned about mercury, mold and lead, unscrupulous people are making money by overstating the impact of tiny amounts of these substances on fatigue, heart disease and other problems, according to Anthony Pizon, MD, Chief of Medical Toxicology at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. The American College of Medical Toxicology and the American Academy of Clinical Toxicology have identified 10 questionable tests and treatments. Here are three, for example.

Removing mercury fillings.
The EPA and FDA have concluded that the amount of mercury in dental fillings isn’t enough to harm adults or children 6 and older. It’s fine to remove mercury fillings if they’re loose or before other dental work is done. And if you need a new filling, you can ask for one made of ceramic or composite resin. But there’s no reason to have existing fillings removed to avoid mercury.

Testing hair for toxins. These tests can cost more than $100 and are not covered by insurance. They can be highly unreliable as well. If your doctor suspects metal poisoning, he or she should order blood tests and, if necessary, refer you to a board-certified toxicologist for treatment, says Dr. Pizon.

Treating ‘mold intoxification.’ Some people are truly allergic to mold. To them, it can cause sneezing, coughing, wheezing and itchy or runny eyes. But there’s no evidence that it causes these symptoms in most people. Dr. Jeffrey Brent, MD, of the University of Colorado School of Medicine, says the best bet, to rule out these conditions, is to see an allergist or another specialist for testing.

Avoid icing

Dr. Mirkin changed his mind about icing after reviewing a European Society of Sports Traumatology study that found icing injured tissue shuts off the blood supply that brings in healing cells. In other words, it delays healing. Now Dr. Mirkin recommends skipping ice altogether unless you can’t bear the pain. And if that’s the case, he says, apply ice packs two or three times for 15–20 minutes at a time, with at least an hour in between.

For pain relief NATA suggests an OTC anti-inflammatory such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, generic) or naproxen (Aleve, generic) for the first 24–48 hours. Then switch to an acetaminophen with no anti-inflammatory effects (Tylenol or generic).

What stays the same

The compression and elevation part of the therapy still work. Experts say it’s OK to wrap a mild sprain with an elastic bandage until the swelling goes down—and elevating the sprained limb throughout the day and overnight is still a good idea.

A HEALTHY YOU

Weight training may improve cognition

We know that exercise is good for both the body and the brain. Now we’re hearing that a specific kind of exercise—light resistance training with weights—may play a key role in improving cognition.

Professor Teresa Liu-Ambrose, Director of the Aging, Mobility and Cognitive Neuroscience Laboratory at the University of British Columbia, theorized that because weight training strengthens and builds muscles, it could keep aging brains and bodies healthier.

To test her idea, she and her colleagues enrolled a healthy group of women ages 65 to 75 in one of three supervised exercise programs for one year. One group did weight training once a week, another group did it twice a week, and a third group followed a twice-weekly regimen of stretching and balance training.

Their brains were scanned and their gait was assessed at the beginning and the end of the one-year study period.

The women who lifted weights twice a week displayed significantly less “shrinkage of their white matter” than the other women. They also walked more quickly and smoothly than the women in the other two groups.

The findings, published in “The Journal of the American Geriatrics Society,” suggests to Dr. Liu-Ambrose that “a minimum threshold of exercise needs to be achieved” to improve the brain.

“We are just really now gaining an appreciation for how impactful exercise can be,” she says.

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Brighten lives with random acts of kindness

Be a rainbow in someone else’s cloud. —Maya Angelou

Three things in life are important. The first is to be kind. The second is to be kind. And the third is to be kind. —Henry James

If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else. —Booker T. Washington

It’s nice to be important but it’s more important to be nice. —John Templeton

From famous writers through history to plain everyday people, kindness is acknowledged as a bond that helps to hold society together. *Make & Share Random Acts of Kindness* is a wonderful new book that encourages kindness.

“Think of it as a jumping off point,” says Mique Provost, the author. “It is meant to inspire you to look for ways to improve your surroundings through random acts of kindness…within your community, within your relationship, within the walls of your home and more. It will empower you to jump out of your comfort zone to help others in meaningful ways.”

Much of the book is geared to explaining and illustrating an assortment of doable projects. There are nearly 50 kid-friendly crafts, quick and easy ideas, and delicious treats to pass along to friends and strangers alike.

The author gives tips for teaching kids to be kind themselves. To begin with, she suggests, you need to have lots of conversations with your children about kindness—what it means and why it matters. She strongly makes the point that we are the model for our kids. When parents are kind, their children are much more likely to be as well.

No matter where you are or what you have going on, there are little opportunities to serve those around you every day. The author provides insightful advice on how to be encouraging to your friends and relatives in times of trial and sensitive ideas on encouraging kindness in the special-needs community.

*Make & Share Random Acts of Kindness* (Page Publishing) is available in bookstores and online in paperback and Kindle editions.

—Susan Ginsberg, EdD

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Brighten lives with random acts of kindness

—Maya Angelou

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