Hello, Arthur. This is your mother. Do you remember me? ... Someday you'll get married and have children of your own and Honey, when you do, I only pray that they'll make you suffer the way you’re making me. That's a Mother’s Prayer.

In “Mother and Son,” the old Mike Nichols and Elaine May comedy skit, the “son” is a NASA scientist interrupting a countdown at Cape Canaveral to take an emergency call from his mother. She wants to tell him that she’s going into the hospital to have her nerves X-rayed because he hasn’t called lately. Within minutes, this competent adult is reduced to infantile blathering.

At least in part, we are all still children throughout our lives, but never so overtly as when we are in the presence of our parents. We wear the mask and perhaps the clothes and posture of grown-ups, but inside our skin we are never as wise or as sure or as strong as we want to convince ourselves and others that we are. We may fool the rest of the people all of the time, but our parents can see past the mask of adulthood. To them, we seem always to be works-in-progress. In part, this is because they fear they will lose us if we grow up and become secure and independent.

It is less threatening if our security and independence don’t carry us too far away. It is easier to treat a grown child as an adult if we stay around for any fine-tuning they need to provide. A parent’s work is never done. There are always little nips and tucks by which we can be made better.

Stripping away our masks

Parents who would like to show that their child is still imperfect—and is still in need of parental attendance—have a variety of time-honored techniques at their disposal. For example, they can simply remind us that we...
are not quite who we pretend to be. They can bring up stories from our childhood at the most amazingly deflating moments, like telling a new boss a few of the gems our second-grade teacher had to say about us.

Or parents can fail to cheer our successes as wildly as we expected. More subtly, they can cheer our successes too wildly, forcing us into the awkward realization that our achievement did not truly warrant fireworks and a brass band.

Parents may also undercut our sense of mastery by making us distrust our values. They may feel betrayed when their children adopt different styles and habits. But each generation’s job is to question what their parents may have accepted on faith and to adapt the previous generation’s system of values for a new age.

No parents a generation ago could have anticipated the world we find ourselves in now. Children don’t get to be grown-ups until they understand that grown-ups don’t have a magical ability to see the future.

What it takes to be an adult

These days many parents have become the villains of their children’s lives—the people the children blame for his or her shortcomings or disappointments. I’m sure our parents did make a lot of mistakes—like most parents, including my own, and including me.

But that was then and this is now. A lot of parents reached adulthood as they raised us and they are better people now than they were then.

If our identity comes from our parents’ failings, then we remain forever a member of the childhood parents’ failings, then we remain forever a member of the childhood parents’ failings, then we remain forever a member of the childhood parents’ failings, then we remain forever a member of the childhood parents’ failings, then we remain forever a member of the childhood parents’ failings, then we remain forever a member of the childhood parents’ failings. A hallmark of maturity, and surely the biggest factor in success, is the willingness to seek and accept expertise, coaching and supervision, and then the willingness to make our own decision after hearing the opinions of others.

Give up any lingering childlike sense of parental power. I refer either to the magical ability we give to our parents to solve our problems or the dreaded ability to make us turn back into a child. When we are no longer hiding from our parents or clinging to them—and can accept them as fellow human beings—then they may do the same for us.

Forgive our parents for all the ways they didn’t raise us right—whether their errors were in loving us too much or too little. All parents, when their children become adults, do things that make you feel like a child. And if you have kids, you’ll do those things too.

How to tame your parents

Here’s what you can do to get your parents to see you as an adult and treat you with respect. These techniques are guaranteed to work better than whining childishly or storming like an adolescent.

Tell them about you. Tell them what you like and what you don’t like. You be the expert on you.

When your parents try to tell you more about you and your shortcomings than you really want to hear, ask them about themselves at your age. Explore them, not you.

On the gifts of parenthood

Understand that the greatest gift you have given your parents is the opportunity to raise you. The things a child gets from parents can’t compare to the things a parent gets from raising a child. Only by experiencing this can you understand the degree to which children give meaning to parents’ lives.

Hands-on, fully invested child raising is the main event in life, the experience that takes you out of the child generation, where you are only able to take, and puts you squarely in the parent generation, where you are able to give as well.

The end product of child raising is not only the child, but the parents, who get to go through each stage of human development from the other side and relive the experiences that shaped them and rethink everything their parents taught them. They get, in effect, to re-raise themselves and become their own person.

—F.P.
**Do babies understand video chats?**

Q Two sets of loving grandparents want to Skype with our baby a couple of times a week. We’re doing it, but I’d really like to know just what a baby gets from this kind of screen experience.

—B.A., Memphis

A Good question! As it happens, scientists at several universities have been studying video chats with babies, and in a recent issue of The Atlantic, technology writer Adrienne Lafrance reported some of the key findings. They include:

**Video calls are all the rage.** A Georgetown University survey found that 85% of families with babies under age two said they used video calls. Almost 40% said they did so at least once a week—with many calls lasting for 20 minutes or more.

**Infants as young as six months** can tell the difference between, say, a broadcast of Mister Rogers and a video call with their actual grandfather. “ Babies who are pretty young are able to pick up, in particular, whether or not an adult is actually responding to them in real time,” says Georgetown researcher Elisabeth McClure.

**Babies end up learning best** with guidance from a trusted caregiver who can help them navigate and understand the screen experience. For example, you might play a game with a child that helps establish the video chat as an interaction rather than a one-way broadcast. And we don’t say to a baby, “Kiss the screen.” We say “Kiss Grandma.”

**A growing body of research** suggests that babies actually do appear to thrive on real-time video interactions. And toddlers have been found to be more comforted by their mothers via video chat than through an audio call alone. Video chats seem to be conceptually easier for babies to grasp than a phone conversation. As Rachel Barr, a development psychologist at Georgetown, puts it: “Babies are really bad with phones.”

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**Lots of ways to exercise the brain**

We hear over and over again that if you want to live long, age well and stay mentally sharp, you have to be physically active. But some encouraging new brain research suggests that you don’t have to spend as much time exercising as you might imagine.

In 2015, the interest among scientists in exercise and brain health seemed to reach a critical mass. Gretchen Reynolds, who writes The New York Times “Well” column, explains.

“Many of the new studies highlighted previously unexplored ways in which exercise changes our brains and minds,” she writes. “One was a brain-scan study in which Japanese scientists found that the brains of fit older men used fewer resources during thinking than the brains of out-of-shape men of the same age.”

In other words, much as a fit body uses less energy to perform the same physical task as one who is less fit, the brains of aerobically fit older men also worked more efficiently.

In another study, healthy older women who completed a year-long, twice-weekly program of light resistance training showed fewer and smaller lesions in their brain’s white matter afterward than women of the same age who completed a stretching and balance training program or went to the gym once a week.

Not all of the exercise science research involved the brain, of course. In one study, researchers found that people who reported participating in any physical activity at all—such as walking, weight lifting and even gardening—generally had longer “telomeres” than those who reported being wholly sedentary. (Telomeres are tiny organic caps on the ends of our chromosomes that fray and shorten as we age.) And the more types of activities people reported trying, the longer their telomeres were.

Many other new studies examined the question of precisely how much exercise we will probably need to live a long and healthy life.

“The answer, in a nutshell, is that any amount of exercise, no matter how slight, will probably decrease someone’s risk for premature death,” says Reynolds, “but the ideal seems to be about an hour a day of moderate exercise such as walking—and less if we ramp up the intensity of a workout and make ourselves really sweat.”

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**Don’t blame personal traits on birth order**

We often attribute character traits to oldest, middle and youngest children. But a new study suggests that birth order has no effect on our personality.

Researchers examined three major collections of data on more than 20,000 people in the U.S., the U.K. and Germany. They looked for differences in extraversion, emotional stability, agreeableness, conscientiousness, self-reported intellect, I.Q., imagination and openness to experience.

They studied families with sisters and brothers, large and small age gaps and different numbers of siblings. But no matter how they spliced and diced the data, they could find no association of birth order with any personality characteristic. The study was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Birth order can have an effect, says lead author Julia Rohrer, if, for example, your older brother bullied you. “But these effects are highly idiosyncratic.”
Making travel safer and healthier for older people

Part 2 of a 2-part series

Last month we reported on some interesting travel options for seniors. This month we’ll talk about making travel safer and healthier, whether your older relative is traveling alone or with you.

See what’s available

Special services at airports. Many seniors need no help at all at airports. But if they do, specific services must be requested in advance. You might ask for a seat assignment in a row designated for the disabled or wheelchair service. If the wheelchair is staffed by airport personnel, just be sure to offer a tip.

Walking from gate to gate at a large airport can be tiring. Your relative may also wish to ask for a ride on a motorized cart. Tip the driver for this service, too. On a long flight that offers meal service, you may also specify any dietary needs.

Plan for checkpoints. Going through airport security gets easier at age 75. People are no longer asked to remove their shoes and a light jacket. For someone in a wheelchair, the process is quicker as well. See tsa.gov/travel/screening-passengers-75-and-older.

Remind your relative about any condition that would set off alarms, such as hip and knee implants. To avoid a delay, get a physician’s statement about implanted steel, and make sure that documentation is readily available.

TSA personnel will often ask an older person to step aside and do a wand screening, rather than pass through sensors. If someone is in a wheelchair, personnel will use a wand while the person is seated.

Organize medical information

Make copies of any prescriptions, Medicare and insurance cards, and/or statements of medical conditions. Keep a set in the older person’s hand-carry bag and another in his or her luggage. It’s a good idea to keep another set for yourself at home.

Pack medications (both prescription and OTC) in a zip-lock bag in the hand-carry bag. Don’t put pills in a separate daily-dosage dispenser. Put medical appliances such as an extra back brace in a zip-lock bag as well and keep it in hand-carry or roll-on luggage.

Manage your meds. Many older people take several drugs daily and some (like glaucoma drops) need to be timed. The transportation staff has no obligation to assist someone with dosing, but you could ask ahead for your relative to be reminded (for example, at 6 pm local time) to take a pill or eye drop. Or give him or her an alarm watch set for that time.

Be a practical packer

Pack light. Aim to pack everything necessary in a roll-aboard suitcase plus a medium-size over-the-shoulder carry-on bag. If possible, don’t check the roll-on luggage. It will save a lot of time at the final destination.

For added comfort, you might want to carry an inflatable travel pillow or a c-shaped balloon that supports the neck and head when resting aboard transportation.

Wear shoes that are safe, comfortable and easy to slip on and off. Uncomfortable footwear can ruin an otherwise pleasant experience.

Think about safety

Don’t give a thief an opportunity to steal—and, sad to say, there are thieves aplenty on the lookout for any opening in busy terminals and popular tourist destinations.

Instead of a purse, encourage your mother to wear a money belt under a jacket or carry a neat “passport wallet” on a neck cord that’s hidden under her shirt or coat. Remind your father to never carry a wallet in his back pocket but, instead, tucked into his pants and secured to his belt. And don’t carry a lot of extra credit cards or forms of identification that you don’t need or plan to use.

Keep carry-on bags between your feet when you’re standing or with a strap looped around the leg of a chair when you’re seated. Keep your eyes on your luggage on a transit shuttle and in hotel lobbies. If your parents are carrying gifts to relatives, do not wrap them. Place the items in the luggage.

If an older person is flying alone to visit family members, schedule a telephone conference with your relatives to go over any caregiving support needs. But do this with the older traveler—don’t take a domineering, dictating role.

Advise family members of any food restrictions. Describe medical and medication regimens that must be followed. Make sure your relative carries key documents, in case an emergency arises. If you are the agent for an elderly parent’s Advance Directive, this information should be with the person when he or she travels.

Check your parent’s smart phone. Program your phone number as the first emergency contact. If a relative is traveling abroad, put the phone in airplane mode so potentially costly data will not be used by accident. Talk to your relative about roaming charges, “push notifications” and auto updates that can break the bank when they’re abroad.

Get to the airport early. If you’re seeing your parents off, get to the terminal a couple of hours ahead of time so you can visit without pressure, review the travel plan and check on any special services that were requested.

In case of an emergency

Be prepared. If your older relatives are traveling abroad, talk to them about getting worldwide insurance coverage. Plans can include medical expenses, trip interruption, emergency travel services and more.

You might start by talking to an insurance agent or shopping online and comparing prices. A short-term premium may be pricey, but an emergency medical evacuation to bring someone back home or to a hospital from a cruise ship or another country can cost more than a $100,000.
Helping a shy child deal with new situations

All kids are shy at one time or another, but a child who clings fearfully or finds it hard to connect with other kids can be a source of concern. We want our kids to grow up to be independent, able to cope with new situations and handle change. We’re afraid that shyness will make this more difficult.

An adult issue too

To understand shyness, we need to start by looking at ourselves. Experts at the Shyness Clinic in Palo Alto say that a large majority of adults consider themselves to be shy or say they were shy when they were younger. One example of how those feelings of self-consciousness stick with us is the fear so many of us have of speaking before an audience.

But, as adults, we’re better able to hide our feelings. Shy grown-ups may just seem to be aloof or standoffish in new situations.

“Most adults will do anything to avoid going to a party where they don’t know anyone,” writes Cathy Rindner Tempelsman in Child-Wise. “But for some reason we may be impatient with the young child who hesitates on the first day of school, or recoils from the commotion of a birthday party where there are no familiar faces.”

What parents can do

There’s no reason to assume that shyness in children will result in emotional problems when the kids grow up. In fact, according to Dr. Melvin Lewis of the Yale Child Study Center, if parents can help shy kids cope with their sensitivity to new people and new situations, those children can thrive.

Research suggests that shyness may be genetically based. In other words, it’s part of your child’s temperament but, like other personality traits, it can be, and often is, modified by experience.

Parents can help a child overcome shyness—a little bit at a time.

Harvard psychologist Jerome Kagan describes it this way: “Genes only set the stage. Life experiences and parenting style have a major effect on how a child’s personality develops.”

Work with your child

The key is to find a comfort level with your child’s personal style: not to fight it but to join it. Parents can help a child overcome shyness a little at a time. In practical terms, Cathy Tempelsman says, this means to “work with your child to make social situations less threatening, providing extra support when needed.”

One of the common mistakes in handling shyness is to try to make a child feel better by telling people, “Oh, he or she is just shy.” When children hear this often enough, they think this is the way they are expected to act. Indeed, labeling a child can often become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Instead, says Tempelsman, we should try to help children understand their feelings.

For example, parents can point out that it’s normal to feel uneasy about starting a new school or going to a party where you only know one or two kids. Just don’t tell a shy child “there’s nothing to be scared of.” This can make kids even more fearful. It’s better to urge a child to try new things and for parents to provide some built-in safety nets.

Don’t over-prepare

Keep in mind also that children can become even more anxious if you “over-prepare” them for a new situation. Sometimes it’s better to talk to a child about where you are going (and what is going to happen when you get there) a few hours—rather than a few days—before the upcoming event.

Whether your child is temperamentally shy or temporarily overwhelmed, some preparation will help ease the way. For example, with a preschooler, if you can, visit and meet the teacher before school starts and have a look at the playground and bathroom.

A variety of experiences such as trips to the park and family visits with friends can help kids practice interacting with their peers without making them take on situations they’re not ready for.

Encourage talking

Role play or talk through anticipated anxieties such as what it will be like meeting a new teacher or going to the dentist, for example.

Encourage children to talk about what they will gain from trying a new experience, even though they may be somewhat afraid. Expect slow progress. Be persistent, but don’t nag.

As Tempelsman notes, the key to treating adult shyness is to practice social skills—and it’s the key to helping children too.

“Every time your child goes to a party or makes a new friend in the park, he or she has reason to tell a shy child ‘there’s nothing to be scared of.’” This can make kids even more fearful. It’s better to urge a child to try new things and for parents to provide some built-in safety nets.
To get it done...when you don’t feel like doing it

By Steve Levinson, PhD and Chris Cooper

Whether you run your own business or are employed by a large company, you will always have work that you truly feel like doing—along with things you know you should do, but would rather not. The better able you are to follow through on your good intentions and do those things you’d rather not do, the more you can achieve in your business, job or career.

What draws attention at work are usually the squeaky wheels, stuff that’s right in your face or is naturally interesting, or those wheels that are easy and immediately rewarding to grease. Meanwhile, we often neglect the quiet wheels—the unsexy tasks that don’t demand our attention but could be key to our success.

Barriers to follow-through

Motivation would seem to be enough to get us going on boring or unpleasant tasks. But, in fact, for most of us, being motivated is just not enough to overcome the resistance to doing things we don’t feel like doing.

Nor is the “try harder” method: that is, when you failed to do what you intended, promising yourself to try harder next time.

Another popular approach to improve follow-through is to “become inspired.” Inspiration-fueled motivation can give your good intentions a healthy push, but you can’t count on it to keep pushing. Inspiration, enthusiasm, optimism and a positive attitude all have value, but they are unreliable as a sustainable source of power to transfer good intentions into action.

Get serious about your intentions

You can improve your ability to follow through by taking your intentions more seriously. And this means thinking about them in a totally different way. It requires becoming more aware, more deliberate and more formal about how you produce, adopt and manage your intentions.

Think thoroughly about what your intentions are and what they represent—and how they can benefit you.

A good intention should be a serious commitment to take a specific action that will help you achieve a particular goal or objective. It’s a promise to yourself to act in accord with a piece of good advice you’ve given yourself.

It takes thoughtfulness

It’s important to be thoughtful, deliberative and selective about promises you make to yourself. Take into account likely obstacles and costs, such as the time and energy you will have to divert from other promises you have made or will make in the future.

Never allow a piece of advice you’ve given yourself (no matter how brilliant it may be) to masquerade as a serviceable intention unless you have decided that, all things considered, the advice is a promise worth keeping.

Making your intentions as specific as possible increases their effectiveness. That’s why you need to eliminate as much “wiggle room” as possible. Leaving wiggle room—a lack of clarity about what it is exactly that you’re promising to do—is an invitation to poor follow-through.

Let’s say, for example, that you intend to do a better job of keeping up with new developments in your field. What does “do a better job” mean? Be specific. Does it mean that you will spend an hour a week reading? If so, what publications will help the most?

Strategies that work

The trick to successfully following through is knowing how to put more power behind an intention and less resistance in front of it.

Let the situation do the heavy lifting. The most air-tight way to follow through on your intentions is to create a situation that forces you to do it—that leaves you feeling that you have no choice.

Make an official commitment. Sign a legal contract, put some money on the line or create expectations among family members.

Make a public promise. Make it something you truly feel (not just think) you absolutely must keep. For example, two professional friends announced to their colleagues, clients and friends that they would be writing a book together. In effect, they locked themselves in a cage they couldn’t get out of without getting the job done.

Burn your bridges. Remove the opportunity to go backward. Put yourself in a jam you can’t get out of without doing what you intend. This takes courage. But situations where you feel worse about retreat than about advancing will also force you to follow through on your intentions.

Adjust your strategy to your particular style of working. For example, some people actually do better if they have less time to complete a project. They need to feel that sense of urgency. We know one entrepreneur who waits until the last minute on purpose. Getting to where he has no choice is what it takes for him to get the job done.

Strip the work of everything that makes it avoidable. Lower the bar to make it more doable. You might start by committing to doing just the first or the easy part. Breaking it down like this makes it seem more manageable, and once you gain momentum, it’s easier to keep going.

Maintain your follow-through ability. Create a plan for every good intention you adopt in the future. It doesn’t have to be a big deal. Just ask yourself these key questions: What will prevent me from acting on this intention? What steps can I take to keep it on the front burner of my mind? What can I do to make it easier to do? How can I make it feel like I absolutely must do it?

—I adapted from “The Power to Get Things Done (Whether You Feel Like it or Not)” by Steve Levinson, PhD and Chris Cooper, by arrangement with TarcherPerigee, a member of the Penguin Publishing Group, a Penguin Random House Company, Copyright 2015 by Steve Levinson and Chris Cooper.

“I promise to get to the bottom of this stack by next Friday.”
What to do if your dog eats some chocolate

When it comes to sharing food with your begging canine, there’s one snack to hold back on: chocolate. Vets say it’s one of the most common causes of dog poisoning.

If your pooch did eat some chocolate (darker kinds are the worst), call your vet. He or she will ask about your dog’s size, what kind of chocolate was eaten, and how much.

A chocolate chip cookie can sicken a little dog and a bag of chocolate chips can spell trouble for a big one.

Tina Wismer, DVM, medical director of the ASPCA’s Animal Poison Control Center, says that often dogs will throw up on their own after eating chocolate. If not, vets might say to watch their behavior or give them hydrogen peroxide (1 tablespoon for every 20 pounds), using a turkey baster or a medicine dropper.

To encourage a smaller dog to throw up, try putting some peanut butter in a bowl and the peroxide on the rim, since dogs tend to lick a bowl clean. Once they throw up, don’t give them any food or water.

Dr. Wismer says warning signs can take 6–12 hours to show up. Symptoms include extreme thirst, diarrhea, pacing, panting, shaking or seizures.

The stimulants in chocolate stay in the body a long time and symptoms can last up to 72 hours. Early treatment will help your dog recover quicker, says Dr. Wismer. And the good news is that most dogs survive because of quick-acting owners. (Interestingly, cats don’t seem to have a sweet tooth.)

The ASPCA’s 24-hour poison hotline (888-426-4435) gets about 27 calls a day involving dogs and chocolate.

Scoping out the jazzy new hot cereals

The hot cereal aisle is not just oatmeal, Wheatena, farina and grits anymore. These days we’re seeing “ancient” and “superfood” grains like quinoa, chia, flax, hemp and amaranth.

The new cereals promise to help us “stay full longer” and “jump start our day.” They come in jazzy flavors like blueberry hazelnut and mango almond. Our friends at the Center for Science in the Public Interest sorted through these products, and here’s what they say.

Make it whole. Lucky for us, the grains in most hot cereals are whole. Exceptions include Cream of Wheat (farina), Cream of Rice and grits. All oats are whole grain but steel-cut oats are less processed than old-fashioned or instant oatmeal. Bran is not a whole grain, but it’s loaded with heart-healthy, unprocessed fiber. And the brown rice cereals are not the nutritional powerhouse you might expect.

Skip added sugars. Many of the new cereals are loaded with sugar. If you want some sweetness, your best bet is to add fresh fruit. Or look for Best Bites products that add dried fruit (but skip the sugar packet). Also sweet is Quaker 50% Less Sugar Instant Oatmeal. It is sweetened with stevia leaf extract and about a teaspoon of sugar.

Minimize the salt. For the most part, packets of instant hot cereals have added salt. One exception is Whole Foods 365 Organic Original. But who needs “instant” anyway? Quaker makes Quick 1-Minute Oats and 3-Minute Steel Cut Oats. Bob’s Red Mill, Country Choice Organic and McCann’s also sell steel cut oats that cook in 4-6 minutes.

Read the labels. You may not be getting the nuts or fruit you’re expecting. For example, Cocomama Almond Cookie Quinoa Cereal has no almonds—but it does have 8 grams of saturated fat. Likewise, Quaker Weight Control Banana Bread Instant Oatmeal has no banana, and Quaker Bananas and Cream Instant Oatmeal contains more “creaming agent” than banana flake powder.

More protein, less weight? Protein is all the rage, and you do get it from Nature’s Valley Protein Oatmeal, but you also get a lot of calories and added sugars. By contrast, a half cup of dry oats cooked in low-fat milk delivers 13 grams of protein and no added sugars.

Kashi GoLean products are designed to promote a feel of fullness. But Kashi GoLean and Think-Thin cereals sound better than they are.

Heart healthy? Low-fat foods with or without oats can call themselves “heart healthy.” Bottom line: oatmeal is a healthy, whole grain cereal that’s worth eating if you enjoy it. Just don’t expect it to slash your cholesterol.

Energy crisis? When you see the word “energy” on a food label, it just means “calories.” So don’t fall for the claims that a cereal offers “energy to help get you going” or that oatmeal make you feel more energetic than other foods? Food company make “energy” claims without providing any proof.

Practical implications of the Zika virus

The widely reported Zika virus is causing such alarm in Latin American countries and the Caribbean because it’s been linked to microcephaly and brain damage in newborns. That’s why the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has warned pregnant women, especially during the first trimester, against travel in those areas. The CDC explains:

THE VIRUS is a mosquito-transmitted infection that people in Africa and Asia have some immune defense against. But it’s new in this part of the world, so people are more vulnerable.

ZIKA VIRUS symptoms are often relatively mild and can include red eyes, rash, fever and joint pain. There’s no widely available test for Zika and it can be easily confused with other viruses.

SCIENTISTS don’t fully understand how the virus damages newborn infants, but they believe it enters the placenta—and the most dangerous time to be infected is the first trimester.

DOCTORS in Brazil noticed a surge in babies with unusually small heads and damaged brains only last year. In some Latin American countries, people are being asked to delay childbearing until they get a handle on the situation.

TRAVELERS to those countries are advised to: (a) stay in screened, air-conditioned rooms or sleep under mosquito nets, (b) wear insect repellent at all times and (c) wear long pants, long sleeves, shoes and hats. For a list of countries reporting Zika virus transmission, see the CDC Travel Health Notices website.
Keeping kids and dogs safe and happy together

The relationship between kids and dogs is both treasured and misunderstood. Of 4.5 million dog bites reported to the CDC every year, most are to children from their family’s own dog.

In her new book Please Don’t Bite the Baby, dog trainer Lisa Edwards offers helpful advice for families on raising a child with a dog in the home and for bringing a dog home with kids in the house.

“People want to believe their dog is a good dog and they are mostly right,” she says. “But even a friendly, trusted dog can be hurt or startled by a child or just fed up and lash out.”

Edwards talks about how she introduced her new son to her “motley pack of animals” and how her dog-training techniques carried over into how she navigated her first year with her baby.

She sets out practical and potentially life-saving rules for raising kids and dogs to be friends. Her guidelines cover tricky situations—from what to do when family members sneak people-food to the dog to how to handle growling, nips and bites. At the end of each chapter, she breaks down training techniques for everyday pet owners on topics ranging from crating to basic commands.

“Human language works by having one word mean different things in different contexts,” she says, “but dogs need each command to have one meaning.” Her list of basic commands: all done, down, drop it, go say hello, go sniff, leave it, off, come, settle, sit, stand, stay, wait.

For example, if you’re nursing or feeding your baby: Give your dog the command sit or down. Have treats handy and occasionally give him/her one for staying at your feet in that position.

She tells how to walk a dog beside a stroller and when it’s okay to let your dog and baby play together. She devotes an entire chapter to toddlers who, from the dog’s perspective, are “completely unpredictable.”

Please Don’t Bite the Baby (And Please Don’t Chase the Dogs): Keeping Our Kids and Our Dogs Safe and Happy Together (Seal Press) is available in paperback, Kindle and Audible editions.