By Kenneth Ginsburg, MD

What is there about resilience that makes it such a key trait for a child to have? Simply put, if we want our kids to experience the world as fully as possible, with all of its joy and its pain, we need to help them develop resilience. For children to thrive despite adversity, we need to do more than protect them. We need to make them resilient.

Resilience is not an inborn temperament trait. It’s affected by the circumstances of a child’s life and the supports surrounding him or her in good times and bad. Research repeatedly finds that a supportive, nurturing connection with an adult is the key ingredient that determines how a child fares through adversity.

**Keys to building resilience**

Three recurrent themes are at the core of how adults can help kids develop resilience.

**Unconditional love.** This gives children the deep-seated security that allows them to take chances when they need to adapt to new circumstances and know that they are safe. It does not mean unconditional approval. Parents can love a child fully and reject certain behaviors. The key is to not withdraw or threaten to withhold love based on a behavior. There’s nothing more powerful than comforting a child with a hug accompanied by the simple words, “I love you.” Not “I love you because…” or “I love you when….” Just “I love you.”

**Expectations are important.** Kids tend to live up to the high standards parents set for them. These aren’t athletic or academic achievements, but about being good people:

**Resilience** is not a trait of “perfect” people. Perfectionists fear making mistakes. Resilient people are able to push their limits and learn from their mistakes.

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The keys to raising resilient children

By Kenneth Ginsburg, MD

What is there about resilience that makes it such a key trait for a child to have? Simply put, if we want our kids to experience the world as fully as possible, with all of its joy and its pain, we need to help them develop resilience. For children to thrive despite adversity, we need to do more than protect them. We need to make them resilient.

**Resilience** is the capacity to move forward with hope and confidence. It’s what it takes to navigate life’s bumps and bruises and use them as opportunities for growth.

**Resilience** is a mindset. Resilient people don’t look for problems, but they understand that strength comes from facing them. Rather than engaging in self-doubt, catastrophic thinking or a “Why me?” sense of victimization, they look for solutions.

**Resilience** is uneven. People can be very resilient in one area and need much higher levels of support in another.

**Resilience** is not a trait of “perfect” people. Perfectionists fear making mistakes. Resilient people are able to push their limits and learn from their mistakes.
Resilient children...
Continued from page 1...

considerate, respectful, honest, fair, generous and responsible.

When we expect kids to be lazy, argumentative, thoughtless and selfish, they sense this and may say to themselves, “Why try if that’s what they think I am?”

Young people absorb messages from outside the family as well and adjust their behavior accordingly. They notice if others expect them to be moody, impulsive or irresponsible. Pervasive low expectations can harm teens’ self-image and lead to unhealthy behaviors they see as “normal.”

Role models. Kids from toddlers to teens observe us closely. They tend to do as we do, not as we say. If we show them negative ways of coping with stress, they’ll follow our example. Kids want healthy parents—and they learn from us what it means to be healthy and balanced emotionally, physically and spiritually.

Building the 7 C’s

To build resilience in kids, we need to consider the following seven integral, interrelated components:

- **Competence** is the ability to handle situations effectively. It’s not a vague feeling that “I can do this.” It is gained through actual experience. Children develop competence when they have a skill set that allows them to face difficult situations, trust their judgment and make responsible choices. As parents, we can help our kids by focusing and building on their strengths.

- **Confidence** is the belief in one’s own abilities, and it’s rooted in competence. Kids gain confidence by demonstrating competence in real situations.

  Confidence is not built by falsely elevating a child’s self-esteem, however. Telling kids how special and unique they are can leave them unprepared for times when they feel less than special or unique.

  Children who experience their own competence and know they are safe and protected develop a deep-seated security that gives them the confidence to face and cope with challenges.

  When we support children in finding their own islands of competence and building on them, we’re helping kids gain enough confidence to try new ventures and trust their ability to make sound choices.

- **Connection**. Kids with close ties to their family, friends, school and community are more likely to have the kind of security that produces strong values and deters them from looking for destructive alternatives. Family is the central force in any child’s life, but connections to civic, educational, religious and athletic groups can also increase a young person’s sense of belonging to a wider world and being safe within it.

- **Character**. Children need to have a fundamental sense of right and wrong. It’s what prepares them to make wise choices, contribute to the world and become stable adults. Kids with character tend to enjoy a strong sense of self-worth and confidence. They are more comfortable sticking to their own values and demonstrating a caring attitude toward others.

  A child with tenacity or grit, who can delay gratification, will ultimately be more successful. As parents, we can help our children see and understand how their behavior affects other people in good ways and bad.

- **Contribution**. It’s a powerful lesson when children realize the world is a better place because they are in it. Kids who understand the importance of making a contribution gain a sense of purpose that is motivating. For example, teens who contribute to their communities are surrounded by reinforcing “thank-you’s,” not the negative comments or low expectations that so many young people endure.

  It’s good to remind ourselves that the ultimate act of resilience is to reach out to another human being for support. And what enables us to ask for help is, in part, our own experience of giving help to others. When we contribute, we learn how good it feels. We serve others for our own pleasure and a sense of purpose.

  After all, we all need to receive support from time to time. We want our kids to be able to ask for help when they need it, without feeling that they are being pitied. Giving prepares us to receive.

- **Coping**. Kids who learn to cope effectively with stress are better able to overcome life’s inevitable challenges. And the best protection against unhealthy behaviors is a wide repertoire of positive, adaptive coping strategies. So it’s important for parents to model these strategies on a consistent basis.

- **Control**. When kids realize that they can influence outcomes through their decisions and actions, they’re more likely to know that they also have the ability to bounce back after a mistake.

  If parents make all of their kids’ decisions, we’re denying them opportunities to learn control. Children who feel “everything happens to me” tend to become passive, pessimistic or even depressed. They see control as external: what they do doesn’t matter because they have no say over the outcome. But resilient kids know that they have internal control. By their choices and actions, they can determine results—and know that they have made a difference.

—Dr. Ginsburg’s chapter on resilience in the book “Tough-LOVE” (see We Recommend) was adapted from “Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings,” published by The American Academy of Pediatrics.

How the 7 C’s are interwoven

Children need to experience competence to gain confidence. They need connections with an adult to reinforce points of competence. They need character to know what to contribute to their families and the world, and character is forged through connections with others.

Contributions build character and strengthen connections. Kids who contribute gain confidence as they feel more competent.

Kids who have a sense of control will more tenaciously tackle a problem until they find a solution. And their growing competence enhances their confidence and reinforces their ability to control their environment.

Children who know that they can control their environment are more likely to use healthy coping strategies—because their need to escape reality will be lessened. And a key coping strategy is turning to people with whom you have strong connections.
A time to choose your words carefully

Q: I work with cancer patients, who tell me about the things people say to them, such as “Don’t worry, you’ll be fine.” Or they ask, “How are you?” which, depending on what’s going on medically, can feel meaningless or intrusive. Or some just totally avoid the subject, which can also be painful.

For your readers who would like to know what to say to a friend or family member who has cancer, I encourage them to check out Dr. Stan Goldman’s wonderful book Loving, Supporting and Caring for the Cancer Patient. I agree with his advice to talk less, listen more and offer ways to be helpful.

—B.G., New York

A: We agree and here are a few more of Dr. Goldman’s ideas for what to say and not to say to a cancer patient:

- Don’t say “you’re lucky” to have one kind of cancer rather than another. And don’t volunteer information about people with similar cancers, even if they fared well. No two cancers are alike.
- Instead of saying “I know how you feel,” ask “Do you want to talk about how you feel?” Or you might ask an open-ended question such as: “Do you want to tell me what you’re going through?”
- Don’t preach to a cancer patient about “staying positive.” It’s better to say, “I’m here for you, whatever happens.” And mean it.
- Don’t ask about prognosis. If the person volunteers information, it’s okay to talk about the implications. But do not probe.
- Don’t burden a patient with their own feelings of sadness, although it’s fine to say “I’m so sorry this happened to you.” It’s better to say, “I don’t know what to say” than to say nothing at all.
- Actions, not words are the most helpful. Instead of, “Tell me what I can do to help,” try something like “I’ll be bringing dinner for your family this week. What day is best for you?”

INTERCHANGE

Young athletes’ eyes need more protection

A new study published in the journal JAMA Ophthalmology has found that eye injuries in sports, especially youth sports, have become more common than you might imagine—and often involve activities that most of us do not think of as particularly risky.

Researchers from Johns Hopkins, Harvard University and other institutions examined data from the Nationwide Emergency Department Sample, which has compiled information on emergency room visits to a representative group of more than 900 hospitals around the country. Their findings are important for parents and for anyone who works with young athletes.

More than 30,000 sports-related eye injuries are treated annually at ERs in the database. A large majority of those injuries are in people younger than 18 and a few are in kids younger than 10.

The sport most likely to cause harm to the eyes was found to be basketball, accounting for more than a quarter of the injuries. Baseball and softball, together, were the second most common cause, followed, among boys, by air guns. Football resulted in very few eye injuries for children, probably because most players wear full-face helmets.

The researchers were surprised to find cycling as a frequent contributor, as well as soccer, especially among girls. But eye injuries were not necessarily the main reason for a visit to an emergency room, the study found. Often, people fell from a bicycle and scraped their face on the pavement, causing eye lacerations.

While most of the eye injuries were minor (cuts and bruises around the eye or on the eyelid), some were quite serious. Reducing eye injuries among young athletes can be both relatively easy and rather daunting, depending on the sport, according to Dr. R. Sterling Haring, the Johns Hopkins ophthalmologist who led the study.

For example, the study found that eye injuries were frequent and severe from air guns—but not from paint guns, since they are usually used at paintball facilities that require safety goggles.

“If you’re dealing with projectiles or fast-moving objects, protective eyewear is definitely worthwhile,” Dr. Haring suggests.

Clearly, wraparound glasses with shatterproof lenses can protect kids’ eyes from undesirable objects such as fingers, debris and curveballs. But getting young athletes to actually wear them is a whole other story.

New study finds women drinking as much as men

The gender gap on alcohol use and abuse has narrowed, according to a study reported in BMJ Open (the open access version of the British Medical Journal).

Using data from 68 studies of alcohol consumption published worldwide from 1948 to 2014, researchers divided their findings into three categories: alcohol use, problematic use of alcohol and alcohol-related harm. Then they arranged their data by age.

The key research finding is the big difference in drinking patterns between the oldest and youngest groups.

Generally, the consumption of alcohol is declining, says lead author Tim Slade of the University of New South Wales. “But women are now drinking as much as men, particularly in recent cohorts,” he says. “And we need to be thinking about what will happen to their health as they get older.”

This is your column. We invite you to send questions about work and family life or tell us how you solved a problem that you think a lot of people face. Write Dr. Susan Ginsberg, Work & Family Life, 305 Madison Ave., Suite 1143, NY, NY 10165. Email: workfam@aol.com.
Selling Mom and Dad’s house may be the easy part

We all have our inheritance stories: the cousin who got the pearls Grandma promised to you or the sibling who didn’t visit Dad when he was in hospice care but swooped in for the treasures.

Disputes over estates can tear families apart, and these feuds are often more about the disposition of personal possessions than about money. But there are some ways to keep the peace among heirs. For starters, we need to talk with our older relatives about how they want us to handle their belongings and financial affairs after they die.

**Have the conversation**

This may take some convincing, of course. Many people avoid talking with their adult children about death or money, according to a UBS report. For one reason, your older relative may not want to think about dying. Or he or she may not want family members to know who’s getting what. And potential heirs may be reluctant to ask because they don’t want to be perceived as greedy.

Research over two decades by the Williams Group of San Clemente, California has found that 70 percent of families lose a portion of their inherited wealth, mostly due to battles over estates. So it’s in everyone’s interest to have “the talk” with your older relatives, and here are some ideas for getting this conversation started.

- **Think about what you really need to know.** Does a will exist? When it comes to the division of property and possessions, it’s almost impossible to be equal,” says Marlene Stum, University of Minnesota family social science professor and author of *Who Gets Grandma’s Yellow Pie Plate?*

  - **Bring in trusted people:** other relatives or professionals. Or ask to tag along with your parents on a visit to their lawyer or financial advisor. “Sometimes one sibling does most of the helping,” Goyer says, “but the parents may trust another sibling more when it comes to talking about money.”

  - **Start a life planning guide.** The site www.resourcerestoremember.com/gwen-morgan can help you put in place detailed information family members will need such as account numbers, contact information, and preferences for a funeral, memorial service, burial, cremation and organ donation. The websites Aboutone.com and LegacyLocker.com may also be helpful.

  - **Come up with a plan**

- **Don’t assume that fair means equal.** When it comes to the division of property and possessions, it’s almost impossible to be equal,” says Marlene Stum, University of Minnesota family social science professor and author of *Who Gets Grandma’s Yellow Pie Plate?*

  - A good place to start, she says, is to decide on what “fair” means in the context of your family. For example, a sick or disabled child may need money for long-term care but would not find much use out of the family’s vacation home.

- **Prevent feuds.** A key to keeping the peace is for older relatives to have a will that lists all assets (savings, life insurance, bank and brokerage accounts) and to specifically name the beneficiaries of those assets.

  - Consider how the family home and big-ticket items like artwork, jewelry and heirlooms will be divided. Get input from family members, too: your parents may be surprised to learn that grandchildren don’t want their piano or collection of ceramic figurines.

- **Talk with family members** also gives older people an opportunity to explain their inheritance decisions while they’re still alive. For example, they may have helped one son with a down payment on a house, but not the other. So the first son’s inheritance will be smaller.

  - “It’s not so much about the money,” says elder law attorney David Cutner. “It’s more about ‘Did Mom or Dad love me?’

**Other approaches**

- **Let people choose.** Rather than itemizing who gets what, another approach is to let children and grandchildren take turns picking what they want while parents are still alive. New York Fiduciary Trust director Ronnie Ringle suggests that disputed items could be offered for bidding in a family auction. Or parents might set things up to allow heirs to bid on a coveted property after their death.

  - **Set up a trust.** A revocable living trust is often used instead of a will because it allows assets to immediately transfer to beneficiaries outside of probate. For the trust to work, parents need to retitle all assets to the trust. Then, after their death, the trustee they have named distributes everything according to instructions in the document.

- **Have a joint account.** Some lawyers say setting up a trust isn’t worth the trouble if you live in a state where the probate process is relatively painless. The easiest ways to pass on assets or give adult children access to cash is to set up a joint account. If parents don’t want an adult child to have access to cash until after they die, they can add a “payable on death” provision to most bank accounts.

**Be realistic about assets**

In many families, there’s not a lot of money to pass on, but there is a whole lot of stuff that needs to be disposed of—and that can be a real challenge.

“We sold Mom’s house in five days, and it took us more than two months to distribute the contents,” says Katie. “No one wanted her big armoires or sets of gilded bone china. Young people want light furniture and dishes they can put in a dishwasher.”

Just be aware that a certain amount of anxiety is an inevitable part of the process of dealing with an estate—even if there are no conflicts with siblings. Disposing of certain possessions can feel like throwing away your family history, especially if you’re still grieving. It can be sad to part with the table where you ate family dinners as a child.

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*EldEr IssUeS: Better living through planned giving* 

*AARP caregiving expert Amy Goyer suggests using “I” statements with older relatives, such as, “I’m concerned about doing the right thing.”*
Young kids can make lots of choices themselves

It’s important for kids to feel like they have at least some control over their own lives. And while most parents understand this, it’s not that easy to practice.

Either we don’t give children enough say or we go overboard and give them too much. We may assume that, if a few choices are good, more must be better.

Some parents ask their kids to decide things that should not be open for discussion, like whether to eat breakfast and when to get dressed. And parents often turn what should be direct statements such as, “It’s time to get dressed” or “We’re eating breakfast now” into questions.

“Their voices go up at the end of the sentence, and it sounds like they are asking their kids if they want to do something rather than telling them it’s time to do it,” says early childhood educator Sally Tannen.

**Toddlers and preschoolers**

Young kids may feel anxious if you ask them to make too many choices. The trick is to give them opportunities to exercise control within age-appropriate boundaries, says parent educator Michael K. Meyeroff, EdD of the Romp ’n Roll Advisory Board. He suggests letting toddlers and preschoolers make decisions in these areas:

**Dressing.** Lay out two or three outfits and allow your child to pick the one she or he prefers. Or ask, “The blue shirt or the red shirt?”

**Eating.** Don’t ask young kids, “What do you want to eat?” That’s too confusing. Instead, Dr. Meyeroff suggests, let young children weigh in on the menu: “We’re having chicken and string beans tonight. Do you want rice or mashed potatoes?” And try to be patient. A three year old may take some time to pick a cereal. If he or she is having trouble deciding, ask: “Do you want me to help you make up your mind?”

**Bathing.** While this is not an option for young children, you can still let kids be in charge of the order in which their body parts are cleaned. Ask, “What are you going to wash first?”

**Play activities.** Don’t ask a young child, “What do you want to do?” Offer choices of toys and play areas. For example: “You can play with your blocks or dolls or crayons. Which do you want?” Or “You can play in your room or here in the kitchen with me.”

**Grocery shopping.** Let a child choose within basic categories: “We’re buying fruit today. Would you like apples or oranges?”

**Bedtime routines.** Give young children a say in the order of their routines: putting on pajamas, brushing their teeth, using the toilet. You can also allow kids to choose the book they want you to read to them, even if it’s the same one night after night.

**Expand choices for school-age kids and build in some consequences**

Give school-age children a say over all the decisions preschoolers make and add some others as well. Emphasize flexibility and the sharing of choices: “You picked the movie last Saturday. Your sister gets to choose today.”

Encourage kids who have made a decision to reflect back on what factors influenced them and how they think it turned out.

In terms of clothing, offer as much leeway as your personal sense of aesthetics and the weather will allow. If you ask children for their input on what to make for dinner, you might also ask them to help you cook. It’s a good way to learn what’s involved in meal preparation.

In the tween years, give children more say. Let them be part of the family discussion when you’re making decisions such as where to go on vacation, what instrument to play or which activity to participate in.

Tweens also need to learn that their choices mean something and may be costly as well. For example, the girl who was dying to take ballet classes and changed her mind a month later.

Encourage kids to stick by their decisions for a trial period. This helps them develop the skills to make better choices in the future.

When not to offer choices

When children are feeling tired and cranky, this is not the time to offer them choices.

And some decisions are simply inappropriate for a child to make, such as what table to sit at in a restaurant. That decision is based on factors kids are unaware of, like how close the table is to a noisy wait-staff station.

At the same time, don’t act as if kids have a choice when they do not. For example, when it’s time to go home, don’t ask, “Do you want to go now?” Instead, try the 5-3-1 system. Hold up five fingers and say, “You’ve got five minutes left to play,” then “three minutes left to play,” then “one minute.”

**Expanding children’s choices**

Give kids between three and five limited say over play activities and entertainment (such as whether to watch something on TV or play a computer game) or how to spend family time (a trip to the park or a board game at home).

Children may also be allowed to expand some of their choices: for example, whether to stay overnight at Grandma’s or come home with the family after dinner.

Parents just need to make it clear that there’s a difference between household rules and personal preferences. That is, you might allow four year olds to choose what flavor of toothpaste they prefer—but not whether to brush their teeth. ◆
Mary was having difficulty getting people to do things around the office that were nobody’s job in particular: “I’d say something like ‘this table is a big mess’ a few times. Then on Friday, when everybody was getting ready for the weekend, I’d see it was still messy and I’d clean it up myself—feeling annoyed at my staff, of course.”

A better approach for Mary would have been to raise the issue of how to handle shared spaces at a staff meeting, work out a clean-up routine and post it so everyone knows who’s responsible.

Some of us are highly responsive to suggestions, but most people are not. That’s why it’s important on the job to state our messages clearly and directly—and to make sure that our coworkers have the same understanding we do.

Observational learning is overrated

Many supervisors believe that reasonably motivated employees should be able to figure out on their own what is expected of them. But it doesn’t work that way. Studies have shown that only about one person in five is a good observational learner. That leaves the great majority of us who need some teaching and direction at the workplace.

Also, many managers perform well themselves but are less adept at analyzing and explaining to their employees or coworkers what they’ve done and why. For one thing, they may not appreciate the practical reality that people have different learning styles.

And the typical workplace is diverse. Employees come from different generations, cultures and backgrounds. English may be a second or third language. And many people have some difficulty figuring out the nuances of a supervisor’s behavior or what she or he expects of them.

Matters of style count too

Getting ahead on the job requires more than picking up new skills and information.

“People need to understand matters of style—the way things are done—and to be sensitive to the political realities of their company,” according to Albert Bernstein and Sydney Craft Rozen, authors of Sacred Bull: The Inner Obstacles that Hold You Back at Work and How to Overcome Them. “Your future on the job may depend on how well you are able to learn the things nobody ever tells you.”

New strategies to try

Whether people report to you or you are leading a work team, chairing a committee or mentoring a coworker, the fact is that all of us need some help at one time or another to figure things out at the workplace.

This is primarily a communications challenge. If our messages are vague or seem to be getting lost in the shuffle, Bernstein and Rozen suggest these strategies:

- Be clear in your own mind what you think someone ought to know and what you want her or him to learn. Let the person know in advance what your expectations are.
- Be specific. Do not assume that everyone will know how a particular task should be handled. Even if it’s something very routine, be clear about your expectations, especially with new employees.
- Make sure you were heard. When you’re giving directions or explaining a procedure, confirm that everyone who needs the information is listening and that you are all on the same wave length. If a staff member is out that day, have a plan for catching him or her up.
- Communicate your priorities even if you think the worker should know them already. Break down complex assignments into manageable chunks, and encourage employees and coworkers to ask questions.

If you are training someone new on the job, check back from time to time to make sure he or she understood your directions. For example, Nancy discovered too late that she had not specifically told a new office assistant to file medical records in the back rather than front of each folder.

- Be clear. If you want a task to be done in a certain way, show the person how to do it and explain why you think your approach works best. If a particular approach is not important, let people do it their own way, and offer to answer their questions if they need help.
- Share information. Shine a light on any of the unspoken rules in your workplace. For example, Gary told his staff: “Some of us are very active in our churches and in politics, but we don’t talk a lot about those things at the office.”
- Learn more about the people you work with. Talk with and listen to your coworkers. Get to know a bit about their values, concerns and interests—without being intrusive. The point is to be aware of what people need to learn in order to be more successful on the job.
- Reward positive behavior. If there’s a payoff for pleasing a manager or supervisor, it will happen more often. It means a lot to say the words, “Job well done. Thank you.” Even better, you can put it in an email or letter.
- Good communications go both ways. Just as employees can’t read your mind, the same is true for the people to whom you report. Communicate clearly, both as a speaker and writer.
Sesame seeds offer big health benefits

They’re called the “queen of oil seeds” for good reason. Little sesame seeds are a rich source of nutrients including iron, protein, zinc, copper, vitamin E, thiamin, calcium, magnesium and manganese, among others. About half of the sesame seed is unsaturated fat, and a full ounce contains 160 calories, 5 grams of protein and 4 grams of fiber.

Here’s a brief look at the sesame science, some of it from the Middle East, where the seeds have long been used for cooking and medicinally.

**To lower cholesterol.** A *Journal of Nutrition* study found that postmenopausal women who ate 2 ounces of sesame powder a day for five weeks had a 10 percent reduction in LDL (“bad”) cholesterol. A study in the *International Journal of Food Science and Nutrition* reported that consuming an ounce and a half of sesame seeds for 60 days produced a similar reduction in people with high cholesterol.

**To reduce blood pressure.** Three studies suggest that sesame seeds lower blood pressure. One, in the *Nutrition Journal*, found that people with prehypertension who consumed black sesame meal in capsules for four weeks had a reduction in systolic blood pressure of about 8 points on average.

**To fight oxidative stress.** An analysis of clinical trials in the *Journal of Medicinal Food* concluded that sesame seeds reduced markers of the so-called oxidative stress that is implicated in some chronic medical conditions.

**For arthritis.** In a small study published in the *International Journal of Rheumatic Diseases*, people with knee osteoarthritis who added 4 tablespoons of powdered sesame seeds daily to their usual treatment for two months reported greater pain relief than those on their normal treatment.

**For diabetes.** For a study reported in *Clinical Nutrition*, people with type 2 diabetes were given sesame oil, diabetes medication or both. Those in the group that got both had the greatest blood sugar reductions over 60 days.

**On all things sesame**

- **Sesame oil** has a low smoke point, so it’s not recommended for cooking. But you can add a bit to dressings or sauces or drizzled over vegetables and stews.
- **Sesame flour** has a mildly nutty aroma and can be used for making bread, cakes and biscuits. It’s rich in fiber and gluten-free.
- **Tahini (sesame paste)** flavors hummus, eggplant dip and other traditional Middle Eastern and Asian dishes.
- **Halvah** is a dense and crumbly confection made from ground sesame seeds and typically blended with sugar or honey and nuts.

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Old bones can learn some new tricks

We keep hearing this advice: Do more weight-bearing exercise (which refers to anything we do, particularly desserts) and more alcohol when a waiter was overweight compared to when the waiter was thin. Researchers suggested the presence of a heavy person sets a social norm, giving diners a sort of “licensing effect.”

**The takeaway:** You can’t control your waiter’s appearance, but you can control what you order and eat. It helps to have a strategy in mind, with a rule of thumb such as “no dessert at lunch,” and stick with your plan.

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A HEALTHY YOU

Environment has an impact on overeating

Researchers in the Food & Brand Lab at Cornell University are making us aware of surprising ways that our so-called “food environment” affects when, what and how much we eat. For example:

**Cluttered room effect.** For this study, half of a group of 98 young women were assigned to a quiet, well-organized kitchen and the other half to an extremely disorganized, noisy one. Both groups were “primed” in advance for their food context and were told to eat as much as they wanted from large bowls of cookies, crackers and carrot snacks.

Those in the chaotic room ate more cookies than those in the quiet kitchen. So chaos may be a risk factor for unhealthy eating, but one’s mindset has an impact as well.

**The takeaway:** Try to keep distractions to a minimum when you eat.

**Weighty waiter.** A study of 497 people at full-service restaurants found that diners ordered more food (particularly desserts) and more alcohol when a waiter was overweight compared to when the waiter was thin. Researchers suggested the presence of a heavy person sets a social norm, giving diners a sort of “licensing effect.”

**The takeaway:** You can’t control your waiter’s appearance, but you can control what you order and eat. It helps to have a strategy in mind, with a rule of thumb such as “no dessert at lunch,” and stick with your plan.

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How to raise confident, kind and resilient kids

Don’t be misled by the title of this truly wonderful new book. The authors don’t mean “tough love” in the sense of getting tough on your kids. They define (and they spell) toughLOVE as being both firm and kind, setting limits while giving as much age-appropriate feedback as possible, and respecting children while giving them consistent boundaries.

What makes this book special is that it brings together the thoughts and advice of 18 prominent experts who share their strategies for how to deal with some of the key questions and issues faced by parents today.

In the first section of the book, work and family life writer Lisa Belkin tells us why we need toughLOVE now. Peggy Drexler, PhD asks if one parenting style is the best. Robert MacKensie, EdD talks about how to set limits with love. And Kenneth Ginsburg, MD has excellent ideas on how to raise resilient children and teens. (See front page story.)

Michael Bradley, EdD talks about parenting the new millennium teenager, and Madeline Levine, PhD has a terrific chapter on “Gimme’ kids: the toxic cocktail of entitlement, narcissism and materialism.”

Fran Walfish, PsyD tells us why empathy matters and how to raise kids who will be empathic adults. Ellen Galinsky, MS talks about engaging with your kids and how to make the most of family time.

In the second section of the book, the authors put these ideas into action. Anne Corwin, PhD suggests ways to identify your family values and to put these values into action.

Dan Peters, PhD discusses the stress of homework on children (and parents) and offers helpful suggestions. Lynne Kenny, PsyD convinces us of the value of preparing and planning each day’s activities and incorporating routines into your daily life.

Sandra Bryson, MFT is focused on raising good digital citizens. And Christina McGhee, MSW offers ways to get it right for kids when parents part.

ToughLOVE: Raising Confident, Kind, Resilient Kids (Simon and Schuster), edited by Lisa Stiepock and Amy Iorio, is available in bookstores and online in paperback and Kindle editions.