Parents say to me, “My daughter is a perfectionist. How can I help her not be so hard on herself?” Or “My kids are sloppy. Why can’t I get them to pick things up?” These are tough questions to answer because, quite often, the mom or dad who asks them is not doing too little but is already doing too much.

For example, the parent who is trying to convince an anxious, perfectionist daughter that things are okay should not stay up until one in the morning keeping her company while she does her homework. And children may never start picking up their clothes if their mother does it for them—especially if the trade-off is to simply tolerate a mom’s familiar and not-all-that-scary anger.

**Encouraging kids’ responsibility**

Parents also ask me about more subtle problems such as how to help a child overcome her or his fears, learn to take risks and become more responsible. And often I ask, “Have you thought about sending your child to sleepaway camp? Have you considered that he or she may need to be away from you to take this particular developmental leap?”

It seems to me that no matter how loving you are, there’s a limit to what you can and should do for your children. It’s going to take a child’s friend or perhaps an aunt, uncle, family friend or a camp counselor to give him or her the courage to grow in these ways.

**What we would like to do, but can’t**

In the final analysis, as parents, we cannot do everything we would like to do for our children. Kids have to do many things on their own—and often away from us—sometimes overnight and sometimes for days, weeks or even months.

There are a number of fundamental things we just can’t do for our children. We can provide guidance, of course, but we cannot accomplish what are essentially their developmental tasks.

Nor can we make our kids happy or give them high self-esteem. We cannot make friends for them or control their friendships. We cannot successfully double as our child’s agent, manager or coach—or compete with his or her electronic world. We can’t keep our children totally safe—but we can certainly drive them crazy trying. And we cannot make our kids independent.

Once you accept the idea that you cannot make your children independent—that you have to let them try...
things and fail, that they have to experience boredom, anger, giddiness and romance away from you to get the hang of it on their own. Then you are in a better position to appreciate what does happen to kids when they are away from you and what they can make happen for themselves.

Why sleepaway camp?
When we see the tremendous gains in character and confidence that children make outside of school and away from their families, it is clear that they benefit from a variety of away-from-home experiences including weekends with friends, overnight school trips or just about any situation where a child sleeps away from his or her parents.

I have focused on sleepaway camp—for a week, a month or all summer—because, for many kids, this is their first extended time away from home and perhaps their first bout with homesickness.

What I discovered by visiting a variety of camps is that family values are alive and well-lived by campers, counselors and staff. Camps evoke an earlier era in a setting where time slows down: an electronics-free, multigenerational community with family-style dinners, older kids caring for younger ones and meaningful daily rituals.

The magic of camp
Not all kids love camp, of course. Some have an okay time, others hate it. But for most children, the days and weeks they spend at camp become so vivid and life-changing they are remembered forever. Some have an okay time, others become so vivid and life-changing those experiences include weekends with friends, overnight school trips or just about any situation where a child sleeps away from his or her parents.

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Friendships formed at camp often last a lifetime.

A space in which children can experience strong spiritual feelings, even in secular camps.

Kids come home feeling more independent, confident and with higher self-esteem.

Counselors share their wisdom, and kids teach their counselors patience, caring, communication and empathy.

“Childsick” and happy
Parents’ own feelings of longing for their absent camper can make any child’s homesickness even worse through constant efforts to make contact. I call this “childsickness,” and it’s a big challenge for camp directors these days.

My advice to parents is: Learn to let go.

Here are some suggestions to avoid suffering too much from childsickness or intruding on your child’s camp experience.

Think of letting go as a gift to your child. This means accepting the reality that your kids are going to have a lot of fun that you will not see, photograph or share, and that they will discard forever some of their childish selves when they are away from you.

Prepare your child for homesickness. Symptoms of mild or severe homesickness are universal. It doesn’t help to either hope or pretend that this won’t happen.

Discuss the strategies your child can use to manage homesickness. Give him or her a chance to practice being away from home under favorable circumstances. Three or four successful overnights can give a child more confidence than any amount of verbal reassurance.

Don’t make the “we’ll take you home if you’re unhappy” deal. If you do this before camp or during a painful phone call, you may well undermine your child’s chance of success. And you might even be creating an incentive for him or her to feel miserable.

Say instead, “We think you’re going to be able to conquer your homesick feelings and make a go of it at camp.”

Help kids practice skills they will need before they leave. Send them away for different kinds of trips before going to camp: sleepovers with friends, a week with grandparents or an overnight YMCA or scouting adventure.

Use slower forms of communication. Letters and postcards are uniquely powerful in the lives of parents and campers. They can be read, re-read and saved for years. Some camps allow parents to email their children, but we send kids to camp to practice being independent. Frequent parental contact undermines the sense of separation.

My advice: Forego the email. Send your child one or two packages, and stop checking the camp’s online photos.

Take a vacation from parenting. Have some fun and don’t feel guilty about it. It doesn’t help your child’s camp experience for you to feel anxious and sad while he or she is away. Enjoy being proud that you have raised a child who can go away, make new friends, learn new skills and have a good time. You deserve the credit for supporting your child’s independence and for letting go.

The universal goals of parenting
At many points in our children’s lives, we need to step aside, ask other adults to take over and even send our children away to help them become more loving, productive, moral and independent young adults. For me, these four adjectives capture the central, universal goals of parenting.

• You want to raise a child who can both find love in this world and show love to others.
• You want your child to make a contribution to society and to not break laws or exploit others sexually or financially.
• And you need for your child to be able to live without you and to not be a dependent burden on anyone else.

That is a reasonable description of what it means to be a responsible adult. ◆

—M.T.

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Getting a handle on our digital dependence

I enjoy the apps on my mobile phone. Having an information bank at my fingertips is a major convenience. But when you look around, you can see that all this portable technology is addictive. Nancy Colier’s book The Power of Off helped me, and I would like to recommend it to your readers.

—J.M., Waterford, Michigan

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We agree. As Colier explains, “The only difference between digital addiction and other addictions is that this is a socially condoned behavior.”

Most people check their smartphones about 150 times a day, young adults send an average of 110 texts a day and 46 percent of smartphone users say they couldn’t live without them.

“The World Unplugged Project” at the University of Maryland found that a clear majority of students in 10 countries reported experiencing distress when they tried to go without their devices for 24 hours.

“I fear we are turning into digital robots,” writes Well columnist Jane Brody in The New York Times. “Will future generations know how to converse with one another face to face? Will they notice the birds, trees, sunrise and the people with whom they share the planet?”

Why is it important to limit our digital lives? “Without open spaces and downtime, the nervous system never shuts down,” says Colier. “Even computers reboot, but we’re not doing it.”

Screens also steal time that children should be spending on physical activity, reading or creating and engaging with other kids.

Colier suggests a three-step process: (1) Figure out how much digital use you actually need. (2) Make little changes such as adding one thing a day that’s phone-free. (3) Become more conscious of what is truly important to you—what nourishes you. And devote more time and attention to it.

Looking for signs that we might be wrong

Scientists call it confirmation bias. It refers to the human tendency to believe what we want to believe—and to hold on to these beliefs, even in the face of evidence to the contrary.

“It’s worth pointing out that we’ve been doing this forever,” says Jonathan Ellis, PhD, philosophy professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz. “Thucydides, an ancient Greek historian, wrote that it’s a habit of human beings to use sovereign reason to thrust aside what they do not fancy.”

Now, in this era of pervasive social media, “fake news” and “information silos,” there’s new research to try to understand the subconscious processes that can distort our ability to reason.

“One thing we all need to do,” says Dr. Ellis, “is to acknowledge that we’re all susceptible to it.”

University of Illinois economist Shahram Heshmat, PhD, agrees. “Seeking to confirm our beliefs comes naturally. We pick out those bits of data that make us feel good,” he says. “But self-deception can be like a drug, numbing us from harsh reality—or turning a blind eye to the tough matters of gathering evidence and thinking.”

Researchers have shown, for example, that our perceptions of a speaker depend on whether we have been told ahead of time if he is confident or shy. “Our judgment of a child’s academic skill depends on whether we’ve been led to believe that she’s from a rich family or a poor one,” writes Julia Galef, founder of the Center for Applied Rationality. “And when we serve on a jury, we quickly form an impression about whether the defendant is guilty, and then disproportionately interpret new evidence supporting that impression.”

In other words, it’s a challenge for any of us to actively look for signs that our assumptions may be wrong. Scientists have suggested that one such sign is the feeling of surprise.

“If I could ensure that kids come away from science class with one thing only, it would not be a set of facts,” writes Galef. “It would be an attitude called ‘scientific integrity.’ It’s the willingness to bend over backward to examine the reasons your pet theories about the world might be wrong.”

To that end, some science teachers are asking students to keep a “surprise journal” where they record moments of surprise or confusion, and use those moments as a cue to re-examine their assumptions.

New study tells why fidgeting is good medicine

Has anyone ever asked you to “just sit still?” If you are a toe-tapping, foot-wagging fidgeter, the answer is surely “yes.”

But the fidgeting that annoys other people is, in fact, good for your health, according to a University of Missouri study that was published in The American Journal of Physiology.

Sitting for long periods has a vascular (blood vessel) impact, says Jaume Padilla, PhD, who led the study. He explains that unused leg muscles don’t pull sugar from the blood. This leads to a rise in blood sugar and increased risk for weight gain and diabetes.

For the study, volunteers kept one leg completely still and they fidgeted with the other. In the unmovinf leg, blood flow declined precipitously—but it rose in the fidgeting leg. More striking, retested later, the vessels in the unmovinf leg no longer worked as well.
If you’re new to long-distance caregiving

We are a mobile society, always on the move—off to college, a new job or a warmer climate. Our families are extended not just through marriage but by our physical proximity to each other.

As a result, nearly 7 million Americans are caring for an older relative from afar these days, and this number is estimated to rise significantly by 2020, according to the Family Caregiver Alliance.

If you are in this role now or expect to be in the near future, here are some helpful Q&As:

**What is long-distance caregiving?**
It can involve many activities, from online research on a specific health problem to contacting the references of a new home-health aide or filling in for a sibling who lives near your older relative.

If you live an hour or more away from the person you are helping, you can think of yourself as a long-distance caregiver.

**How will I know if I’m needed?**
You may not have even considered the possibility that you might be called on for help one day, or you may have already discussed the matter with your parents.

For many people, it involves a visit with your parents or a call from their neighbor or physician alerting you to a new health situation and the need for your assistance. It may be related to the onset of Alzheimer’s disease or a sudden event like a stroke.

In either case, you may feel unprepared or unsure about where to begin. Each family’s experience is different, but there are three keys to being a successful long-distance caregiver: planning, organization and flexibility.

As a first step, an assessment of your loved one’s care requirements is essential. It should include the person’s current medical diagnosis and prognosis and a professional evaluation of her or his needs for assistance.

**It's important to get to know your older relative’s caregivers.**

**Realistically what can I do from across the country?**
Actually, you can do a lot in our computerized world. Now, for example, most pharmacies and health care organizations prefer to interact online with their customers. This puts you in a position to troubleshoot problems with medical claims and stay abreast of any new research in areas of interest to your older relative.

You can collect and maintain an online directory of email addresses and telephone numbers of family members, neighbors, friends, doctors, hospitals and local home health services. And, most importantly, you can provide emotional support to your parents and siblings. Simply staying in close touch can take the pressure off a local caregiver. Using Skype or Facetime can make your calls feel even more personal.

**Can I help with paperwork?**
Yes! Effective caregiving often depends on keeping a great deal of information in order and up-to-date. Gathering and organizing this information can be a lot of work at first, and from far away it may seem challenging. But once you have everything together, many caregiving tasks become easier.

**Resources for long-distance caregivers**
For those of us who provide elder care from afar, a growing body of information is available simply for asking.

- The National Institute on Aging, a branch of the National Institutes of Health, offers free information in English and Spanish. Call (800) 222-2225 or visit www.nia.nih.gov or www.nia.nih.gov/Espanol.
- The NIA’s Alzheimer’s Disease Education and Referral Center (ADEC) offers free information, including caregiving advice, at www.nia.nih.gov/Alzheimers. Call (800) 438-4380.
- Visit the American Geriatrics Society at www.healthinaging.org or call (800) 563-4916.

Make sure that all financial matters, including wills and life insurance policies, are in order. If your older relative is unable to handle financial and property issues, someone will need to have a durable power of attorney to pay bills and taxes.

**Can I call my parent’s doctors?**
Developing a relationship with health care providers is a smart idea, and it’s best to meet them face to face during an office visit with your older relative.

Ask to be kept informed of any significant medical issues that may arise. To avoid future frustration, be sure to ask your older relative to sign privacy releases, giving doctors the authorization they need to speak with you by phone regarding your relative’s care.

**Is a geriatric care manager a good idea?**
It can be, depending on the health status of your older relative. Care professionals are often licensed nurses or social workers who specialize in geriatrics. They can identify problems and help provide solutions that you might not be aware of. They can be especially helpful in making an initial assessment of your relative’s care needs.

Geriatric care managers can also screen, place and monitor in-home help and arrange for short-term or long-term assistance for long-distance caregivers. For more information, visit the Aging Life Care Association at www.aginglifecare.org. Ask about the per-hour cost of an initial consultation.

**What about an alert system?**
If your relative lives alone, talk with her or him about an electronic alert system for emergencies. These are typically lightweight devices that can be worn around the wrist or neck and only require a push of a button to generate an automatic call for help. You might also want to arrange for a daily check-in call or email message.
Young children can start early to make friends

We all want our children to have good friends. Friends help kids feel liked and accepted. Their presence brings joy and they are missed when they’re not around.

But it’s not easy for busy parents to find the time to help their kids develop friendships. It may require some creativity and a conscious effort on our part.

**Friendships change as kids grow**

We used to characterize the interaction between infants and toddlers as “parallel play.” But now it’s apparent that young children can interact with each other, play simple games together and form attachments.

Toddlers tend to play in pairs while preschoolers form groups of three or more in activities such as playing house or building blocks. Preschoolers can develop close relationships although early friendships tend to be fluid.

“Preschoolers can play happily with other kids and they don’t even have to know their names,” says New York psychologist Matti Feldman. “A four-year-old likes to say ‘you’re my friend’ or ‘you’re not my friend’ and constantly let you know who’s in and who’s out.”

Because three- and four-year-olds find it hard to put themselves in another child’s shoes, they can often seem manipulative. For example: “I’ll be your friend if you’ll give me a piece of candy.”

**Sharing in early friendships**

Since so much of young children’s play together involves toys, the issue of sharing can feel troublesome to many parents.

Ellen Galinsky, coauthor of *The Preschool Years*, explains that two- and three-year-olds are in the process of “consolidating their sense of self.” Their toys, clothes,

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**THE 8 RULES OF TODDLER PLAY**

In their book *The Baby Whisperer Solves All Your Problems*, Tracy Hogg and Melinda Blau include this list from an anonymous author, which aptly illustrates how toddlers see their world.

1. If I like it, it’s mine.
2. If it’s in my hand, it’s mine.
3. If I can take it from you, it’s mine.
4. If I had it a little while ago, it’s mine.
5. If it’s mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way, shape, or form!
6. If I am doing or building something, all the pieces are mine.
7. If it looks like mine, it’s mine.
8. If I think it’s mine, it’s mine.

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But no matter how well prepared you are, you can expect some disputes. One technique is to use a kitchen timer. Set it for short, toddler-size times, so no one waits too long for his or her turn.

Plan a few neutral activities that do not involve one child’s toys. Make a snack, play with play dough, dance to music or chase bubbles. These are good ways for young kids to have fun together.

**If you don’t like your child’s friend**

Parents may gravitate toward a young child’s friends for convenience: the child lives nearby, goes to the same school or is the child of a relative or friend. But when kids start choosing their own friends, adults are not always happy with their choices.

“Many young children attract friends who seem like ‘opposites’ and this can be scary to parents—especially if they think their child is getting pushed around in the relationship,” says Feldman. “But these early friendships come and go so quickly, parents don’t need to move in too fast to cut off a relationship they don’t like.”

Feldman encourages parents to try to figure out the reason for their dislike. Is it based on a real threat to their child’s healthy development? Does it stem from a parent’s attitude about how a friendship should be? Or is it because they just don’t like the child’s parents?

In friendships as in other areas of life, children need a diversity of experiences. Even a little conflict between friends can be good sign.

“Adults are constantly telling kids to be polite, to share and to not fight,” says Feldman. “But these are our needs. In a good friendship, children can fight and learn to maintain the relationship—an important life skill.”

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Making critical feedback work for you

Most of us give lip service to how much we want and need feedback from our coworkers, supervisors and teachers. But when it comes, and it is negative, we’re often more sensitive than we care to admit.

Receiving criticism, especially when it seems accurate, is uncomfortable indeed. But when we get defensive, people may assume that we’re egotistical. Or maybe we just don’t really care one way or the other or our self-esteem is so shaky, we can get “blown away” when anyone suggests we should do something differently.

In any case, we may be seen as someone who does not want to grow and change.

How to respond to criticism

A good way to start is by doing our best to maintain what Judith Sills, PhD calls “a public smile,” no matter how provocative or painful the criticism.

This doesn’t mean you should look happy if you are challenged unfairly. It just means that you are following her first rule of facing criticism: “Take it in. Save your defense—your explanation, your justification, even your legitimate outrage—for later when it might do you some good.

A public smile also helps you to listen, or at least appear to listen, to what is being said to you. But the best technique for showing that you are listening is by rephrasing what your manager or supervisor has said.

However, suggests Dr. Sills, “Mirroring under the fire of critical assault requires calm focus, but it works like magic to make the boss stop browbeating you.”

For example, let’s say your boss tells you that you’re putting too much detail into your presentations, and he only wants to hear about the large business drivers. You might respond, “You want me to concentrate on making brief presentations with a big-picture focus.”

When you let your supervisor know that you have heard what he or she said and you understand the implications in terms of what you might do differently, you’ve made a big step forward.

Even when the criticism seems distorted or misinformed, Dr. Sills recommends that you put on a public smile anyway.

She reminds us, too, that the concept of mirroring is not necessarily agreeing with the criticism: “It’s just not actively disagreeing at this moment when an argument with your boss will only make him or her more invested in proving a point.”

Styles differ but we all need strokes

Some people provide feedback very diplomatically while others are “in your face.” One’s frankness or formality has a lot to do with personality, family background and our workplace culture.

For example, in Great Britain, the feedback style is much more direct and “brutally honest” than it is in the United States.

Age can also make a difference. In their book When Generations Collide (Amacom), Lynne C. Lancaster and David Stillman say that a “one-size-fits-all approach” to feedback usually does not work in a diverse workplace.

Older workers, they say, can be so cautious and so political in the way they phrase everything that the recipients of their feedback may not even understand the intent of the message.

Younger workers, on the other hand, are so used to getting and sending information via technology, they can be insensitive about other people’s feeling when they give feedback.

Whatever our age or generation, however, we can all use some positive feedback. “The need for more and better feedback is pressing,” the authors say. “In our survey, the generations were amazingly consistent in this need. Over half of each generation said they do not get relevant feedback on the job.”

Barriers to accepting negative feedback

One major difficulty with making criticism work to our advantage is that we tend to get diverted from what was actually said. Instead, we obsess over how the message was delivered or on our relationship with our supervisor. We may start wondering, “Will this affect my next promotion, an annual bonus or even my job security?”

Getting past any hurt and angry feelings is not easy, of course. Dr. Sills suggests giving yourself some time—up to 72 hours, if that’s what it takes.

During that time, you can vent to a close friend or family member. You can even think mean thoughts about management—but keep them to yourself at the workplace.

Start the process of looking at negative feedback as constructive criticism and using it to your own advantage by asking yourself a few key questions:

■ Where did the criticism come from? Was it based on a genuine concern and support for my well-being and advancement on the job? Or was it given from a place of jealousy, envy or perhaps even politics?

■ What part of this is true?

■ Is there a pattern to the feedback I’m receiving? Have I heard some of the same points before?

■ What would I have to give up if I were to change?

While the answers might not come easily, this soul-searching process will direct your thinking toward professional development. Be aware, too, of another point that may be helpful: You are more likely to receive critical feedback if you have been identified as someone who is moving up in the company.
Comparing frozen and fresh produce

You might assume that fresh produce is always more nutritious than frozen, but that’s not the case, says nutrition researcher Ali Bouzari, PhD, who runs Pilot R+D, a culinary research and development company in Sonoma, California.

“There’s no clear winner. It really depends on which plant you’re talking about,” Dr. Bouzari says.

Freezing changes the nutritional composition of fruits and vegetables to some extent, sometimes in favor of the frozen produce and sometimes in favor of the fresh.

“Minerals like iron are almost bulletproof, and fiber doesn’t care whether it’s heated or frozen,” he says.

In a study of the vitamin content of carrots, broccoli, spinach, peas, green beans, corn, strawberries and blueberries, Dr. Bouzari and his UC Davis colleagues found no consistent differences over all between fresh and frozen.

To get the most nutrients out of fresh fruits, Mary Ann Lila, Director of the Plant for Human Health Institute North Carolina State University, says to eat them right away.

She notes that frozen berries will deteriorate when they’re kept in a home freezer that is opened and shut often.

Her advice is to store fruits in the back of the freezer and, for best quality, to look for produce that is frozen under a process called “individually quick frozen” (I.Q.F.).

The truth behind 6 popular food myths

With all of the food “noise” out there, it’s hard to know for sure which eating decisions are the most important.

We got some help from a new Consumer Reports on Health. Their experts tackled six common food myths—that make healthy eating easier and more enjoyable.

Myth 1: Avoid fruit if you’re trying to cut back on sugar.

Truth: When we’re told to limit our sugar intake, nutritionists are talking about the added sugars in baked goods, candy, cereal, fruit drinks, tomato sauce, soda, etc.

Natural sugar is processed differently—and the fiber in fruit serves to lessen sugar’s impact on blood sugar levels. Plus, fruit gives us vitamins, minerals and other nutrients. Fruit juices contain vitamins and minerals, too, but they lack fiber. (A cup of apple slices contains 50 calories and 11 grams of sugars, while a cup of apple juice contains about twice those amounts.)

Myth 2: You should remove the skin from chicken before you cook it.

Truth: This advice dates back to when all things fatty were considered “unhealthy.” Yes, the skin contains fat, but it’s unsaturated. Removing it will save about 50 calories and 1 gram of saturated fat on a medium-size chicken.

Practice portion control instead and enjoy the flavor from perfectly crisped skin. If you still want to remove it, do it after the chicken is cooked. The skin keeps it moist while cooking.

Myth 3: Vegetarians need to combine foods to get enough protein.

Truth: Our bodies do that for us. We’re told, for example, to eat rice and beans in the same meal to get complete protein. But experts say eating a variety of plants throughout the day is sufficient.

Myth 4: White vegetables offer little nutritional value.

Truth: As we have reported, good nutrition comes in many colors, including white. Mushrooms, turnips, cauliflower and even white potatoes are packed with nutrients. To ensure a healthy array of nutrients, put a variety of plants and colors on your plate.

Myth 5: Peanut butter is too fattening to be healthy.

Truth: Only if you overdo it. Peanut butter provides protein, fiber and “good” fat for those calories. Just practice restraint when you’re slathering it on toast, apple or celery stick.

Myth 6: Eating tofu boosts cancer risk.

Truth: No conclusive research shows this. Tofu is a good source of protein, fiber and other healthy compounds. These compounds have been well studied, and the findings are still mixed.

You are unlikely to experience negative health effects from eating tofu unless you are allergic or have a condition that can be made worse by estrogen. As always, talk to your doctor before making a major dietary change.

What are the least harmful late night snacks?

It’s hard to resist those late-night cravings, but we’re encouraged to limit bedtime snacks to 100 or 200 calories, 300 tops.

Snacking contributes to weight gain, and studies have found that nearly a quarter of the calories we consume daily come from snacks.

With that in mind, Isabel Maples of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics says “to really make those snacking calories count” by choosing nutrient-rich items that may be lacking in your diet such as fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy foods, whole grains and nuts.

Try a banana, apple, plain yogurt with sliced fruit or low-fat cottage cheese. Other good choices: raw veggie sticks, a small bowl of high-fiber cereal, a couple of whole grain crackers with a bit of cheese, a handful of nuts, or celery sticks spread with a tablespoon of peanut butter.

Combining carbs with protein produces a filling feeling even from a small snack, says Maples.

Senior scientist Susan Roberts of the USDA Nutrition Center at Tufts University suggests that some people feel hungry at night because they eat too little during the day. Or perhaps they are mistaking thirst for hunger.

Her advice: drink more through the day and with dinner, and remember that the best thing to have before bed is, hands down, a glass of water.
How your child can grow from a camp experience

Consultant, psychologist and author Michael Thompson, PhD says that kids are often capable of taking responsibility that their parents cannot imagine—and many children actually do less well when their parents are supervising them.

Dr. Thompson says, too, that self-esteem doesn’t grow from parental support, but from kids building skills themselves. And much of the growth in character and confidence that children exhibit takes place outside of school and away from their families.

The coauthor of Raising Cain and other important books on parenting, Dr. Thompson sees the summer camp experience as a good example of how kids can benefit from time away from home. (See front page article.)

He notes that camps are one of the last places on earth that are reasonably free of electronics. And when you think about it, this opens up a huge amount of space for kids to relate to each other.

Eating with fellow campers teaches patience, respect and cooperation. “Kids can’t manipulate Mom into making something else if you don’t like what is being served,” he says, “and you can’t graze in the fridge later on in the evening.”

Camp rituals such as reading aloud are very special for a digital generation. Camp friendships often develop into powerful lifelong bonds. And there’s so much more.

On the challenging side, Dr. Thompson talks about what parents can do to prevent or lessen a child’s homesickness, how to know when kids are ready for the separation, how they mature away from home and ways to support their growth.

The author also identifies a malady that he calls “childsickness.” When it hits, he says, parents have a hard time letting go and not interfering with their kids’ camp experiences. As in every section of this wonderful book, Dr. Thompson presents clear, cogent advice on how to deal with this issue.

Homesick and Happy: How Time Away from Parents Can Help a Child is available in book stores and online (Random House). 

Consultant, psychologist and author Michael Thompson, PhD says that kids are often capable of taking responsibility that their parents cannot imagine—and many children actually do less well when their parents are supervising them.

Dr. Thompson says, too, that self-esteem doesn’t grow from parental support, but from kids building skills themselves. And much of the growth in character and confidence that children exhibit takes place outside of school and away from their families.

The coauthor of Raising Cain and other important books on parenting, Dr. Thompson sees the summer camp experience as a good example of how kids can benefit from time away from home. (See front page article.)

He notes that camps are one of the last places on earth that are reasonably free of electronics. And when you think about it, this opens up a huge amount of space for kids to relate to each other.

Eating with fellow campers teaches patience, respect and cooperation. “Kids can’t manipulate Mom into making something else if you don’t like what is being served,” he says, “and you can’t graze in the fridge later on in the evening.”

Camp rituals such as reading aloud are very special for a digital generation. Camp friendships often develop into powerful lifelong bonds. And there’s so much more.

On the challenging side, Dr. Thompson talks about what parents can do to prevent or lessen a child’s homesickness, how to know when kids are ready for the separation, how they mature away from home and ways to support their growth.

The author also identifies a malady that he calls “childsickness.” When it hits, he says, parents have a hard time letting go and not interfering with their kids’ camp experiences. As in every section of this wonderful book, Dr. Thompson presents clear, cogent advice on how to deal with this issue.

Homesick and Happy: How Time Away from Parents Can Help a Child is available in book stores and online (Random House).