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Love is the Reason

Grandma on Parenting

The 3 M's of a Woman's Life

Adoption, a special baby

A real mother

The mean mother

By Olive Redmond

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Introduction

Each of these articles was written for a specific reason, and all were written for other people. The first, *Love is the Reason*, came about through one of those disagreements we all have in marriage. I had been out for the evening and asked my husband David to record a detective story on TV for me because it was the last part and I wanted to know how it ended. He assured me he would do that. Sure enough, when I came home, he was carefully recording the TV programme. He asked how my evening had been and we talked about it for a while before I went into the kitchen.

An hour later I decided to watch the TV programme. David suddenly realised he had switched off the recording when I came home and we were talking, and then forgot to turn it on again. He told me he had recorded all of the programme except for the last 10 minutes. I felt utterly disappointed because I really wanted to know how the detective story was solved. Instead of apologising for it David simply told me that I could watch the rest of the programme - just not the end of it, and not to make a big fuss about it. He could not understand why I was so upset and said it was only a TV programme. I could not believe he did not think it was important enough to apologise for. He seemed to think that it was not important to him therefore it should not be important to me either.

This showed me very clearly that we had completely different ways of looking at the same situation. Around the same time our sons' friends were getting married and I wondered how they would manage to understand each other if David and I could not achieve that after over 30 years of marriage. Later I found ideas coming to my mind and as time went on they formed the basis of *Love is the Reason*. I had to do the work of actually constructing the sentences and putting the ideas together but the inspiration was given to me, not of my own doing. Eventually I had 300 copies of the book printed and

sold them for a small amount each copy, so was able to raise money which was all given to help poverty-stricken people in other countries, particularly to provide wells for water.

The second article, Grandma on Parenting, was created from short articles I wrote for patients at the hospital where I was working as a staff nurse. The paediatricians wanted pamphlets for the parents to take home to better understand their child's condition. After I wrote each article it was checked by the paediatricians for accuracy before copies were made for the parents to read. I was also asked quite often to teach basic parenting skills to some of the parents. After I left the hospital I had copies of all the pamphlets and then added to them as my own grandchildren arrived.

The third article, the 3 M's of a Woman's Life, was the result of a talk I was asked to give to a women's conference. After that I was asked to give the same talk again at other events.

Although the article, Adoption a Special Baby, is listed as number four, it was the first that was written. Our son who we adopted as a newborn baby, was always told about his adoption, but around the age of 11 years found difficulty in accepting family life. He was sure that his 'real' mother would not make him make his bed, or do his homework, or whatever else he did not want to do. I was at my wits end to know what to do about it and felt inspired to write his story for him. No names were mentioned in it. He read it all the way through and made hardly any comment about it, except that he 'knew most of it anyway'. However, after that he was calm and accepted family life much better. A poem comes after that with my thoughts about adoption.

The last article is my viewpoint, looking back over many years, and being glad I was able to endure to the end!

Love

is the

Reason

How to love the important people in your life ...
starting with yourself

This book was written and dedicated to my husband David, who has so far journeyed with me through over 30 years of marriage, to our sons Owen, Craig, Scott and Fraser, and our extended family and friends, who have helped form the network of experience that brought this book into being. Having been a nurse for 35 years I have listened to thousands of people and wanted to use some of that knowledge to help others. I particularly wanted to keep this book very short because people do not have the time or energy to read long books. I am grateful for the inspiration I was given to write it.

Olive Redmond - December, 1998

Love is the Reason

Love is the reason for our existence. Love is the reason we do the best we can for those we care about and the greatest lesson we can learn. We are on this earth to fulfill our own potential - to live, to love and to learn. Each of us is a unique individual. No-one else has exactly the same personality and abilities that we have. We must find out what we are to do in this life - and do it.

Love is the greatest gift we can give or be given.

Many excellent books have been written on improving communication between couples, but they are sometimes so long that people lose their way and give up reading. Instead, here are the lessons of a lifetime condensed down to a few pages.

If many of us did as little about our work as we do about our marriages, we would lose our jobs.

Love is a verb, and a verb is a "doing" word. Love is different from being "in love." When people are "in love" they are different emotionally, even physically, having such a rosy outlook on life that they become virtually a different person at that time. This state usually lasts several months. Therefore, when two people are "in love" they are different from the people they usually are. Obviously, this is not a good time to choose a life-long partner, but is the time when many marriages are formed.

So many people today are living in the "fast lane" rushing from one relationship to another, wanting to experience everything in life, but ending up only skimming the surface, valuing little and feeling cheated.

A couple may meet, "fall in love," move in together, "fall out of love," and move on to the next person, several times, becoming more disillusioned with love every time. Children may be born and raised in a home with little permanence and stability, only to grow up and perpetuate the same

transient life-style. Young people often do not feel ready to settle down with just one person. However, each time a relationship comes to an end they do not know how to deal with their feelings of failure.

Many men, especially in their teens and twenties, are constantly looking for "conquests" that will raise their status among their peers, whereas women are looking for "the one and only" to spend their life with. This behaviour can even be seen while watching T.V. with men clicking the remote control from programme to programme, catching a bit here and a bit there, hunting, not wanting to miss anything, whereas women tend to stay with one programme, seeing it through to the end even if it is boring.

We can choose what we do but we cannot choose the consequences of what we do.

A lot of men appear to have great difficulty in coping with failure of any kind and seem programmed only to deal with success. When faced with business failure or unemployment they sometimes see suicide as the only way out. Men and women have just as many hopes and dreams for the future as each other, but when life takes a more disappointing path than the one they had planned then anger is the result of their unfulfilled expectations. People who do not know how to cope with their feelings of rejection and anger at the end of a relationship will cover up their feelings, so they are "locked in" and often erupt in aggression and violence. Others also shut off their feelings but instead of exploding outwards are more likely to go inwards and become depressed or nagging.

We are only as strong as our weakest link. Find out what that is and strengthen it.

People's feelings may be locked away inside for many years, never being brought out into the open for fear they will destroy the present way of life. A couple may live together for years, never knowing the real hopes and dreams and nightmares of each other, living parallel lives that run along

side by side but are separately enclosed in their own security blanket .

Many people have idealistic thoughts, often from childhood, about how their wedding and marriage will be, and are disillusioned when reality sets in. They may look for love elsewhere, not realising they will not be satisfied with anyone else, no matter who it is, because they are not happy with themselves. The grass may be greener over the other side of the fence, but you will still have to mow it! The reality of life is that there are dirty clothes to wash, the car to fix, bills to pay and disability, disease and even death, no matter who you are married to. The help of good counselling is vital to discover the real values and opinions of each partner.

Questions about money, children, jobs, relatives, housework, need to be discussed before marriage, not left until afterwards.

When a man and woman come together as a couple they bring with them not only two different personalities, but also two different backgrounds, standards and ideas. Too many people expect their spouse to be a thought-reader. Ideas, frustrations or hurt feelings need to be explained. The only way we can understand each other's point of view is to talk, talk, talk to each other, and listen carefully - that's why we have two ears and only one mouth. When we first meet, that is easy, but as time moves on and the novelty wears off, the silence settles in as gradually as rust forming.

Each person needs to be shown love in the particular way that they need it, that it indicates love to them, not how we think they should be loved. Ask your spouse to say or do for you what you need. Be specific. Do not wait for your spouse to change - you change.

To love someone is to love their potential into reality.

Laughter is so important. Without it we cannot thrive. There will be many times when life seems to make us travel through an emotional desert. Sometimes we think we are too sad ever to smile again and we long for the release of

laughter. It has been said that one of the ways to judge the success of a business is by how happy the employees are at work. That can apply to the home too. Actively look for ways to make yourself and others smile. Encourage a sense of humour. A smile is of no value to anyone until it is given away. We all have our faults but we can forgive a lot if someone makes us smile.

A smile shortens the distance between two people.

Look at what you want in life. If what you have got now is not what you want, then change direction. If you were driving north but later realised you should really be driving east you would not continue driving north and still expect to get to where you wanted to. Either stay with what you've got because that is all you are ever going to get, or give up what you've got now for something better. Often the something better means changing ourselves and our outlook. This does not necessarily mean separation or divorce, but a re-think and discussion. It is scary to leave our comfort zone to do this but the results can be wonderful.

Challenges in life are either obstacles blocking our way, or stepping stones to progress, depending on how we view them.

We know we shall have opposition in all things, and this becomes easier to cope with when we understand that eventually we become stronger through facing our challenges. When we can view even the wreckage of our past in a positive way and see what we have learned from it, that we may not have learned any other way, then we free ourselves from endlessly blaming others, and ourselves, and can move on and progress.

One of the main purposes of this life is for us to learn to love ourselves and other people. We need to have the rough edges of our personality smoothed off. Often when the novelty of being "in love" has worn off we find we are married to someone the complete opposite of ourself, an introvert with an extrovert, a thinker with a do-er, a tidy with a messy. This realisation may be accompanied by shock and horror, but the

reality is that this combination of personalities is the most effective way for us to see our own weaker points and improve them, eventually turning ourselves from sour lemons into sweet lemonade.

We need to understand more about ourselves and our individual personalities. A saucepan and a kettle are different but both boil water. Repeating that - a kettle and a saucepan both boil water, but they are different. It does not matter what people look like - it's who they are that counts. If a saucepan or kettle is not replenished with water it will boil dry and crack apart. If people do work they are not really suited to, but endure just because they must have a job, they need to be replenished when they go home. Someone who enjoys being with people, but whose job involves working alone, will need to be with people when off-duty, to be re-energised. A person who prefers to be alone, but whose work involves interacting with other people, will need time alone after work to recuperate - hence the slump in front of the T.V. or behind the newspaper.

All people, no matter what their age or different types of personality, need to get plenty of A's in their life - Acceptance, Approval, Affection, Attention, Achievement, Appreciation.

One of the keys to success in any relationship is consultation, whether it is in business, friendship, marriage or child-rearing. When people are not consulted they feel undervalued, and that they do not matter. They complain and protest to those around them but realise in despair that they are powerless to change anything. They are not taken seriously because they are not considered important enough. Their way of life no longer seems worth the struggle and they withdraw from the people closest to them. A long line of disasters including divorce, alcoholism, eating disorders, drug addiction and suicide can follow. When we view each person not just as a physical body, but also consider their personality, or spirit, we shall always be more aware of how we treat that person.

It's not just at Christmas that the phrase applies, "It's the spirit that counts."

Many people are weighed down by treatment they received in the past at the hands of others, particularly in their childhood and youth. When these emotional hurts are taken into marriage they cause that partnership to be out of balance right from the start. Ideally, these issues need to be sorted out with a good counsellor before marriage, but we do not live in an ideal world, and this does not usually happen. Rejection feeds insecurity and inferiority, and to make ourselves feel better we often say or do things to undercut the value of others. We blame and resent them, then feel guilty about our own behaviour and blame ourselves. All this guilt and resentment builds a wall of anger around us that shuts us away from those we love.

Depression may stem from frozen rage - which is anger that has never been dealt with.

Anger often results from pain felt in the past. Perhaps you were too young to know how to handle it then. Now you are an adult, work out what hurt you in the first place, and decide what you want to do about it. Often we punish our nearest and dearest, when they had nothing to do with the original cause of the pain. Do not be imprisoned by the actions of others. Unlock the door and set yourself free. You have been given this life to learn and progress and achieve the potential that is in you. Search for ways to do this. Work at it.

There are many ways to success, but nothing works unless you do.

Sort out your emotional baggage just the same as you would clear out a dingy attic or garage. Bring things out into the light. Have a good look at them. They are part of the past and cannot hurt you any more. You do not need to hold on to them anymore, unless you choose to. Learn to be more open with others. They have made mistakes in their past too, but you may not know about them. We often think people would

be shocked if they learned about our past, and maybe they would be for a little while, but the nature of life is to keep moving on, and most people soon put things into perspective and get on with the rest of life. So do not feel you have to continue hiding some dark secret of your past. That can cause a festering of the emotions, a shrivelling of the spirit, and even produce physical illness.

Maybe, subconsciously, we do not want to get well, lose weight, deal with a traumatic event, or look too deeply into our past because we feel we cannot face the changes this will entail. We may become dependent on counselling services or a support group, without meaning to, because we are scared to try and manage without them.

Sometimes we are sick because of our secrets.

Seek good counselling or talk to an older, wiser, trusted friend. It may help to write down on paper the hurts of the past, then burn them as a sign that they no longer have a hold over you. Set yourself free from the past, not only the long ago past but the hurts even as recent as yesterday, and let yourself progress unburdened into the future.

Marriage is a career, not a part-time hobby.

Marriage is not self-sustaining and will not continue to grow unless it has emotional energy put into it. A strong indication that a marriage is in difficulty is when one person withdraws from the other and becomes distant and uninvolved. Or when one wants to put some distance between them so uses blame, criticism and nagging to cause a rift, ignoring all the things the other person did right and latching on to the one thing they did wrong. Real honesty is needed to look at the situation and see the difficulties on both sides and how they can best be sorted out.

Before you get married everyone is so excitedly expecting you to live happily ever after, that no-one warns you to prepare for the bad times when you can't stand the sight of him and she drives you mad.

We would like to sail on calm waters all the time, but real life is not like that. A ship in a harbour is safe - but that's not what ships are built for.

Realise that difficult times are going to happen to you - because they happen to everyone - and be prepared ahead of time to hold on until that particular storm is over. Then you can both move forward in your marriage, all the stronger for having gained valuable experience about yourself and each other.

Most people want a successful marriage and are willing to work at it, but do not know what to do. It is very important that we view most of the ideas set forward here as being applicable to both men and women, of all types of personality, but there are a few subtle differences in viewpoint that it helps to understand.

Mainly for Men

It is important to learn to say, "I'm sorry." This seems more difficult for most men than for women. For much of their lives women everywhere endure negative comments, discrimination, and even violence. When a man apologises to a woman for his mistakes, it not only soothes the hurt of his own mistake, but helps to heal the pain of past injustices done to her by other men. It increases her trust in men and renews her own value of herself.

Disagreements are often mind over matter - one person doesn't mind, and the other one doesn't matter.

If a man does not apologise for his mistake the woman sees it as not taking responsibility for what he has done wrong, and whatever he says after that will be taken as empty words. She will have lost some of her trust in him. Trust is particularly important to a woman. How can she feel safe that he will take care of her if she cannot even trust his words? "I'm sorry" must be said straight away.

A late apology is better than nothing, but will have lost its impact, rather like saying "Happy Christmas" in January.

Most people remember when Christmas is, but it is important to a woman that four other special days are remembered too - her Birthday, Wedding Anniversary, Valentine's Day and Mother's Day. If you had a job interview or inter-city trip to make, you would remember the date, and you must find your own way to remember those four special days. You might have help with reminders from someone else, but it is still your responsibility to remember.

Flowers are always lovely, and appreciated by most women, but also look for other novel ways to make those days special. Maybe get up early and tie a bunch of balloons to the fridge door, or put a huge Happy Birthday notice across the living room wall or door, or put wrapped chocolates or paper hearts into a balloon before you blow it up and hang it in an

easily seen place. Make sure the surprise really will be seen in the morning and she does not have to wait all day wondering if you have remembered.

If you have something planned for the evening, let her know beforehand so she can look forward to it. Discuss babysitting if it is needed. If you are really well organised you can put a note in the mailbox every day for three days or so before the special event to tell her to "prepare for it," "get ready," "it's tomorrow." This is particularly important when you have children. A woman needs something to look forward to, to get her through the often not-very-interesting days of putting right other people's messes. Changing dirty nappies and cleaning up after someone has been sick are hardly classified as inspiring, even though they are absolutely necessary!

Good manners are important to a woman, not just the opening of a door at a restaurant - you might go there only rarely - but the ordinary, everyday "please" and "thank you" at home.

A good marriage is not about finding the perfect person to marry and then life is bound to be perfect. It is about marrying a good person and treating that one in such a special way that they become a special person, giving that one so much love that they become the love of your life.

In ancient history, when a man wanted peace and quiet, he would retire to his cave. A century ago a man would go into his study, or den, when he wanted to be on his own for a while. In the average home today there is not enough room to have your own den, so you must make your own space for yourself by going out for a walk, or in the garage, or to sports, fishing, or even while sitting in an armchair watching T.V. or reading. When a man retreats into his own space like this a woman often feels she is being given "the silent treatment." Tell her this is not so, but you just need some quiet time on your own for a while to recharge your batteries.

Many women do not recharge their batteries on their own, but with other women, especially out shopping where the

sights and sounds and colours add energy to the soul. There are speech centres in both hemispheres of the female brain, not just one as in the male. This is why most men cannot speak after suffering a Stroke, but women can usually relearn speech. Women have a greater verbal ability than men, vital in the upbringing of children, and important in many of their occupations. This does not necessarily mean that women are superior to men, or vice versa, just different.

The only person you have to be better than is the person you were yesterday.

Most women have a physical need to talk. If women do not have meaningful, adult conversation, they may become emotionally drained, as is often the case with mothers of young children, or women living alone. A woman does not necessarily need solitude to think. Often she thinks better out loud and needs a listening ear, not to guide her or solve her problems for her, but simply to listen. Make occasional comments like, "Really?" "Oh no!" "How awful," "Wow! That's great," but in appropriate places, of course. Do not watch T.V. or read the newspaper while you are listening to her, or she will feel you do not value her enough to give her your time. Do not tell her to hurry up and get to the point - she doesn't necessarily know what it is yet. Give her your undivided attention and let her know you are on her side. She will gain a strength from you in direct proportion to how much you have listened to her. This in turn will increase her energy.

Many women are tired, depressed, and irritable because they are giving out to others all the time, especially in the home, without having anyone to listen to them. A lot of people do not need tranquilisers or stimulants but someone important in their life to listen to them.

To be listened to and to be loved are so much alike that most people think they are the same thing.

It is not only men who shut themselves away into silence, women may do it too. It depends on different personalities.

If one person is shut away on the inside, the other person has no idea what to do about the situation. They imagine the "worst case scenario" and may feel panic, guilt and loss of their own value. The shut-away person is oblivious to all this and may later despise the other one for reacting in a way they regard as clinging and helpless. This causes the gulf of misunderstanding to grow even wider. When we get a negative feeling from someone we tend to keep away from them, whereas a positive person draws us to them. This applies to ourselves as well, with us either drawing good experiences or people to us, or pushing them away, depending on our outlook at the time. We owe it to ourselves to recognise our own good points and build ourselves up, be independent and confident of our own ability. That is not conceit but putting value on our self. It is self-esteem.

Sometimes when people realise life at home is not going very well, they don't know what to do about it, so they spend more time at work, or in other outside activities. Then they convince themselves that they cannot do anything about the home situation because they are busy at work and have no time left over. They tell themselves and their families they are doing all this for the sake of the family. Everyone on this planet has exactly the same amount of time as each other, every day. It all depends on our priorities.

Each person must look at their own life and see where their time is spent, and why. Men often feel unnecessary and left out at home, especially if the woman has immersed herself in child-rearing, so some men start to look elsewhere. Women often realise that men have withdrawn themselves from the home, but feel powerless to change the situation on their own. They feel of little value as a woman. They, in turn, withdraw from the man and a never-ending circle of emotional destruction spirals downwards, out of control.

No-one on their death-bed ever wished they had spent more time at work than with their family. Don't leave it till death to find this out.

Women are not the only ones to miss out when a man

withdraws emotionally from the home. In a survey of children asking which they would prefer - to have more T.V. or more time with Dad - the overwhelming result was to be with Dad. Yet the same survey discovered that most children spend less than an hour a week one-to-one with their fathers. Have we become so engrossed in T.V. and computers that we have forgotten about banging nails in bits of wood, building huts, fishing in a little stream, planting a child's own garden and reading story books?

Youth violence and suicide have increased at exactly the same time as men have become separated from their families. Whether divorced or still at home, fathers need to come back into the lives of their children. Even when those children are grown-up the need is still there. Spending time with those we care about is love in action, and there is no substitute for love.

No-one can change the past, but it's never too late to improve the future.

A woman needs to hear the words, "I love you," not just in the bedroom, but in the kitchen and living room too. The difference in men's and women's viewpoints about physical intimacy may be very briefly summarised that men will give affection and love to gain sex, and women will give sex to gain affection and love. The word intimate is often not understood. It does not refer only to physical satisfaction but means to care deeply for the other person - to be very best friends.

Learning to love someone is a skill that comes with practice over time, not something like a Driving Test, that once you have passed it and got the certificate you can forget all about it. If a woman asks, "Do you love me?" and you tell her you do, then from her point of view it does not mean as much because she had to ask you.

A hug is the body's battery re-charger.

A hug, a kiss on the cheek, a touch on the shoulder as you

walk past, are all ways to communicate your love for her. Do them often during the day. They are like Love Deposits you are putting in to her Love Account that she can build up and draw on at some future time. Remember, if you don't keep putting in the Deposits you can't expect to look for a Bonus later!

Romance is something you create. It does not just happen all by itself.

Some other ideas that most women think of as romantic are to have a bubble-bath run for her by candle-light, give her a foot-massage with scented hand lotion, prepare a candle-lit takeaways dinner after the children are in bed, or a birthday-type celebration, even when it is not her birthday. Be aware though that the romantic event will not be a joyful celebration if it has blown the budget while there are bills waiting to be paid.

Bubbles, balloons and candles are inexpensive and bring pleasure to people of all ages.

Romance does not have to be expensive, just imaginative and thought about. If a man rushes into a shop and buys a gift at the last minute with little thought, he may be disappointed that the woman is not as appreciative as he had hoped, even though it may well have cost a lot of money. It is not just "the thought that counts" but the effort and preparation the man has put into the event that will show the woman how much he values her. This in turn will increase her own value of herself.

We all want to make a difference in the world, so start making a difference in your world. Say those important words - Please, Thank you, I am sorry, I am listening, I love you, Happy Birthday, Anniversary, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day.

Womanly Wisdom

Much of what has already been written applies just as much for the woman to do for the man. Men also live in the workday world of criticism and negative comments, so it is important that they be "built up" at home. Research shows that it takes about twenty positive comments to undo the harm of one negative comment, so we can see how important it is to speak positively. Make your home a haven - only one letter different from heaven. Make it safe from criticism or negative comment. We shall not always do everything right, no matter how hard we try, but the important thing is to keep trying and never give up.

As the advertisement says, "It's the putting right that counts."

When a man comes home from work, what he really wants is tranquillity and to know he matters. That is not easy to produce when there are children in the home, but what he wants is not hours of your time, but a few moments to acknowledge who he is and that he is there. Leave till later on the vital information that the cat was sick on the carpet, or the washing machine broke down and there is not enough money to mend it.

Women who have spent hours alone in the company of young children may well be desperate for adult conversation by the end of the day, but no man can fill this need entirely. Women must actively seek the companionship and conversation of other women during the day.

You do not have to be related by birth to have extra mothers and daughters and sisters.

Young women will often find a rich source of inspiration about life from listening to older women as they discuss how they coped with the challenges and disappointments that make up what is lightly termed "the rich tapestry of life." Experiences that help the next generation to appreciate what they have. Older women can in turn be strengthened by the

energy and enthusiasm of the younger ones.

Men find it physically tiring to talk as their brain impulses have to jump from one side of their brain to the other, from the thinking part to the feeling part, from decisions to emotions, and back again many times during a conversation, whereas women can do that automatically. Men appreciate it when women come straight out and say what is bothering them, or what they would like to have happen, but women have usually been conditioned as little girls to be "nice" and feel guilty if they ask for help or if they offend someone.

We are told that man was created first and woman was created after that as a companion. Left by himself he may well have died of boredom! History indicates that the second time we do something we usually add a few improvements learned from the first time. A woman can feel grateful for her generally more refined nature and realise that it is a privilege given to her to teach the man how she wants him to love her.

When you value yourself, and know your own worth, you can do what you believe to be right, no matter what others may say or think.

Sometimes a woman feels inferior when she compares her body with models in magazines that the man may enjoy looking at. She must realise that when her man is with her, she is the one he wants. Remember the ancient myth about the weather. The wind challenged the sun to see who was the stronger in getting a man's coat off him. The wind used all its force but only succeeded in making the man pull his coat around him even more tightly, whereas the sun shone gently, warming the man until he took off his coat himself.

Just as it is important for a woman to hear "I am sorry" and "I love you," so a man needs to hear the words, "Thank you" and "I am proud of you." Look for times where you can say "Thank you." Notice things that are done for you and acknowledge them.

When a woman expresses appreciation to the man for what

he has done, he translates it as recognition of his worth as a person. Women often feel that they do so much in the house that is taken for granted, so why should they go out of their way to notice or comment when a man does something to be thanked for. However, even in today's changing times when men do more work in the home than they used to, they still do not consider housework as their number one priority, therefore when a man does help with something it needs to be acknowledged out loud with the words, "Thank you."

Remember, a husband is the only labour-saving device you can cuddle.

Do not hold back saying "Thank you" because he has disappointed or hurt you, and you do not think he deserves it. The world does not hold back good things from us because we make mistakes. The sun still rises every day. There is still rain to grow our food. When you give love out it grows and multiplies and envelopes you. Do not postpone your life, or put it on hold, until things get better. Start enjoying your life now.

To forgive others for the way they have hurt us often seems more difficult for most women than men. Women seem to have a better memory for remembering what happened in the past, not because they try to, it's just there. People may have done things to you that were wrong, dishonest, irresponsible, stupid and hurtful, but they cannot take away your peace of mind and self-respect unless you allow them to. Forgive them and let it go, and move on with your life. It is not worth someone of your calibre hanging on to.

Even if people never know you have forgiven them, you will have found a freedom that was not there before, and it will change your attitude to life.

People often feel "let down" by life and that it has not come up to their expectations. They may think that if they had married someone else, or had a different job, or a better house, life would be better. This may carry over from childhood with romantic dreams of marriage and living

happily ever after. Real life is not a story book. We only have to watch the TV News and see war-torn countries with famine and starvation, to see how much we truly have to be thankful for. Learn to notice good things that happen each day, nothing earth-shattering, just a bird singing on a branch, the taste of fruit, seeing a rainbow or someone's smile. Buy yourself a little notebook and jot down three things each day that you were grateful for, maybe including one thing your spouse did and one thing your children did, and show it to them.

Psychologists have discovered that children develop their memories better by re-living the day's events, good or sad, before bedtime, and talking about them in a positive way.

Enjoy being with your children. Realise they are gifts that are not really given, but only lent for a short time. Babies grow up so fast, it seems hardly any time before they are walking, then off to pre-school, and once they are at school every day the years start tumbling past so quickly they are gone before you know it. Hold on to those special times, those picnics and bonfires at the beach or river, those library trips and stories round the fire, those sports events and shouting yourself hoarse with encouragement, making biscuits and gifts for other people, telling stories of your own childhood and weaving the generations together.

No other success can compensate for failure in the home.

No career can give the immense, deep fulfillment of parenting, even with all the mistakes we inevitably make due to inexperience. Raising children is a skill to be learned from others. Older people have learned it well - that's why children have grandparents! As children grow older the career will still be there - but they won't.

When deciding whether to put babies and children in day-care and return to outside work, women must be very clear in deciding what is necessity and what is not, what they will gain and what is lost forever. When you think about who that baby may grow up to be and achieve in life, you realise it is

the most amazing experience for yourself to teach another human being, and at the same time to learn yourself. If careers fade while children are young, they are compensated for by the experiences gained, and women often find they later prefer employment in a slightly different direction.

When seen in its true light, raising your own child is too good an opportunity to miss.

It seems to be a basic part of a woman's nature to want to improve things - and people! This causes strife if the man is perfectly happy with himself as he is, and does not want to be changed. Also he will see it as a lack of respect for himself as a person. A positive form of encouragement that works in any relationship, whether it be with spouse, child or workmate, is to notice something good the person has done and give immediate praise and recognition for it. At first it may sound artificial to your own ears, but is usually music to theirs. "Well done," "That was great," "You did well," or "I'm proud of you," are all words that will stay in that person's mind long after the actual event has happened. Maybe the recognition could even be taken a little further, after all, gold star stickers are not necessarily just for children, and who wouldn't repeat a good action when a bunch of balloons is tied to the chair or bed of that person. A man especially needs to hear often the words, "I believe in you," or "I am proud of you," so that they will stay in his mind to strengthen him over the rough patches in his life, when he needs encouragement to keep on trying.

It's not our job to change other people, it's our job to love them while they change themselves.

Most of life is rather like the weather, very ordinary with patches of sunshine and occasional showers. We remember the beautiful, sunny days best, leaving us with wonderful memories that live on through the years, but there are also storms that wreak havoc and at the time are so frightening and difficult to live through. Family and friends may gather round us to help, but in the end there is no way to go around these terrible times - only through them. Much as we would

rather avoid these experiences, their purpose is to make us stronger and give us understanding of others' troubles, so that together we can find solutions to our problems, and help the world progress. Anciently, a man was condemned to push forever against a huge rock. After many years he pleaded to be released because no matter how much he pushed it would not move. He was released and told to look at how strong his muscles had become. The real aim was not to move the rock but to become stronger himself. We are not being punished - we are being strengthened. If we see our challenges as being too difficult to cope with, and give up, we become like a cardboard box that has been left out in the rain - no longer firm and dependable, but soggy and useless.

Knowledge tells me it is raining. Experience tells me I shall get wet. Feelings tell me that being wet is uncomfortable. Wisdom tells me to get in out of the rain.

We must listen to the wisdom that is in each one of us. That still, small voice, so easily lost in the hustle and bustle of our everyday lives. We must take time to be quiet so we can listen to it, value it and act on it. We have been given all the raw materials we need in our lives to achieve our full potential as a successful human being, but the choices are left up to us. We must continually look for the good in ourselves and others each day. So here are eight words that will help build any relationship - **Inspire, Learn, Observe, Value, Encourage, Yield, Overlook, Understand**, or -

Inspire

Learn

Observe

Value

Encourage

Yield

Overlook

Understand

For Discussion

This is a summary page to help with discussion of the book.

- ❖ People who feel of no value feel rejected, insecure, inferior.
 - ❖ Unlock yourself from blame and resentment.
 - ❖ Do not be imprisoned by past wrongs of others or yourself.
 - ❖ Say "I'm sorry" straight away.
 - ❖ Celebrate special days.
 - ❖ Show good manners and respect for each other.
 - ❖ Listen with undivided attention.
 - ❖ Get off the treadmill of long hours at work.
 - ❖ Spend more time with those you care about.
 - ❖ Say "I love you" often.
 - ❖ Put Love Deposits in each other's Love Account.
 - ❖ Create romantic events often.
 - ❖ Make your home a Haven.
 - ❖ Acknowledge each other's homecoming.
 - ❖ Notice help that has been given, and say "Thank you."
 - ❖ Forgive others even if they never know you have done so.
 - ❖ Develop an attitude of gratitude.
 - ❖ Enjoy your children before they are grown and gone.
 - ❖ Consider what may be lost before re-entering the workforce.
 - ❖ Say "I'm proud of you", look for ways to build people up.
- Once a month read this list together and discuss how to be more effective in what you are trying to achieve together, choosing one thing to improve. Both write your own thoughts in the book and underline or highlight parts that are special to you, making it your very own book. Love is not so much gazing into each other's eyes, but looking together in the same direction. Once a year have an Anniversary Reading of this book, and make it a special romantic event of discussion and reflection.

On the following page are His and Hers reminders to be copied and put on the fridge or elsewhere, if you wish.

His

- ❖ Say "I'm sorry" straight away
- ❖ Celebrate special days
- ❖ Show good manners
- ❖ Listen with undivided attention
- ❖ Spend more time with those you love
- ❖ Say "I love you"
- ❖ Make Love Deposits throughout the day

Hers

- ❖ Make your home a Haven
- ❖ Welcome him home
- ❖ Notice his help and say "Thank you"
- ❖ Forgive the past
- ❖ Develop an attitude of gratitude
- ❖ Enjoy being with your children
- ❖ Say "I'm proud of you" and show it

Grandma on parenting

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The first 3 items were written in 1987 when I worked as senior staff nurse in charge of the Children's Clinic, Palmerston North Hospital for nearly 10 years. I worked with some of the best paediatricians in New Zealand and they encouraged me to write articles for the clinic, not only as a nurse but using my experience as a mother, because they saw a need for parents to learn more about parenting. I wrote the Alphabet in 1997 and the rest over the next 20 or so years, keeping each item short as parents have neither the time nor energy to cope with too many words.

Olive Redmond , January 2011

Value Yourself

You would not let a burglar steal your TV, stereo, microwave, or purse, without making a big fuss, but you let your baby steal your sleep, your child steal your energy, and other people steal your self-worth, all with hardly a complaint.

Babies over the age of about 6 to 9 months, if they are not ill, need to learn that night is the time for sleep, not play or conversation, and just have a nappy change if it is needed, or a mouthful of water, and be tucked down in bed again. No talking, no cuddles, no nice comfortable times in the middle of the night, nothing. Just sleep.

It may help to write down each evening the time your child goes to bed, how long it takes to get settled, and what time the waking occurs. Sometimes after a few days, a pattern is seen that can perhaps be re-routed. It is very difficult to do this, and may need a relative who is willing to help for a few nights to make it happen, until a new habit is formed. Have a set bedtime that is kept to, and a half-hour routine before bed as a transition from daytime to night. Then if waking occurs in the night, brace yourself to keep to your decision. Far easier to establish this from the beginning, but often that is easier said than done!

A good principle to remember is that your child is an honoured guest in your home, but it is still YOUR home. You are in charge. You make the rules. If there are times as your child grows older when your decisions are not liked or agreed with, then so be it. You are not there to be liked all the time as your child's best friend, you are their parent, and are there to give the upbringing that will teach the child how to be a happy, responsible adult. It is time consuming to teach children who are quarreling, how to see the other person's point of view, while still valuing their own ideas. It seems easier to say, "Sort it out yourselves," but they don't know HOW to. Once they have been shown how to have their say, and to listen to the other person, and continue this

backwards and forwards until the matter is sorted out, they will see there is a better way than using their fists. Eventually, they will carry this method over into all their dealings with people, and in the end it will save your energy

We teach people how to treat us by the amount we let them get away with in how they speak to us, and how they behave towards us. Sometimes we accept behaviour from a family member that we would not allow from someone outside the family. This may be because we get used to being treated badly, and do not notice when it gradually gets worse. We must stop and think, "Is that all I am worth? Is that how I think someone else should be treated?" If the answer is, "Of course not!" then do not allow it to go on. Go to someone for help and advice, your doctor or nurse, Citizen's Advice Bureau, church minister, or an older friend. Do not let family or friends steal your self worth.

Teach your child he or she is wonderful and clever, but with every ability comes the responsibility to care about others and help them achieve their own potential. A good definition of real love is to do everything possible to help someone else to achieve their highest potential.

Keep Away from the Yellow Line

A programme to increase children's safety was developed by the New Zealand Traffic Department, in the mid 1980's. Tauranga was chosen as a middle-sized city to test it. A yellow line was painted on the footpath, near the road, and pre-school children were taught they were not allowed to go over the yellow line unless they were with an adult, or someone similar, and holding their hand. Previously, children heard, "Don't go near the road, or you'll get run over," or "Mind the cars don't hurt you." However, they knew they crossed the road every day without getting run over, and went for a ride without the car hurting them, so they knew these things were not true.

When the yellow lines were painted there was a boundary set up which they could understand. If they went past the yellow line, they were brought in from their play and made to sit in the house, not allowed to play for a short length of time, till they were bored, and could see "cause and effect".

The same principle can be used in danger zones around the house. For instance, if a saucepan is boiling on the stove, not only must the handle be turned inwards, but the child needs to be kept away from the stove. A row of shoes, or blocks could be lined up across the kitchen doorway, and the child given this as a boundary. Be creative in setting up boundaries in necessary areas, but do not have too many, or they lose their effect.

Just as good fences make good neighbours as each recognises their own territory, so children need boundaries so they too know where they are. They will test these boundaries - they must, to see where they are - but they want to know the boundaries are definite and put in place by people with more wisdom than they have yet learned.

Would You Like a Biscuit, Dear?

Children need to grow up knowing there will be no compromise on basic family values, and no argument about them either. If something is right, there is nothing to argue with. For instance, if one of the family values is 'No hitting' then there is no compromise about that. This, though, has to be thought about when the children are little and a decision made about smacking. How is it right to smack someone when they are smaller than you, but wrong for them to hit you when they grow up? Is it wrong for them to hit each other - if you hit them? Sometimes we 'hit' with our words, instead of our fists. The principle is still the same.

If 'honesty' is one of the family values, then the child must not be punished for owning up to breaking something. The object could perhaps be paid for out of pocket money, but

there should not be punishment for the actual breakage. A child should never be punished for telling the truth.

If it is known a certain T.V. programme, film or event the child wants to attend will have unacceptable standards, then the event will be put 'out of bounds'.

There can be discussion explaining the family values, but in the end, there is nothing to argue with, so soften the child's disappointment with, "Would you like a biscuit, dear?"

The Alphabet for Parents and Children

A

All people need straight A's - Attention, Affection, Admiration, Acknowledgement, Achievement, Approval, Appreciation, Acceptance, Affirmation. Even Admonition is needed but make it positive and able to help the person do better in the future.

B

Some of the most useful, low-cost items to help children learn, begin with the letter B.

Bubbles - blowing them, and washing hands with them, bathing in them - one of the best places to put a tired child is in a bubble bath - or a tired adult, come to that!

Balloons - can be used for games indoors or outdoors, are light to carry in a pocket, and inexpensive.

Boxes - come from most grocery stores, and can be glued, painted, cut up, and made into all sorts of creations - or even hidden in!

Books - needed for learning and relaxation by everyone from the age of 3 months up - yes, 3 months!

Blocks - wooden blocks teach balance and dexterity. How high can they be stacked up before overbalancing? Blocks can be laid out around the room to form roads and obstacle courses. Stick simple pictures on the sides of some of the blocks and a child can find the pictures that match. Stick on lower-case letters and a child becomes familiar with the alphabet and can form simple words from them.

Buttons - teach grouping according to colour and size. Then each person can choose 3 buttons that have something the same about them all, and explain, colour, size, texture, holes. There is no right or wrong, only different opinions and creative discussions. Make sure the children are old enough not to put buttons in their mouths, and pick up any dropped on the floor that babies may find.

Birthday cards, Christmas cards and magazine pictures can all be cut up to create notelets to post to grandparents, or a collage to hang on a child's bedroom wall.

By-gone era clothes from an op shop for dressing up in - hats, skirts, shoes, necklaces, handbags, scarves. Wash them all first.

Blankets over a table create a tent to sit in for meals or stories.

Bread - make it together. All that mixing and kneading is fun to do together, and the baking smell is wonderful. Feed bits of old bread to birds in town or ducks in the park.

Biscuit making is fun, creative - and you can eat the results!

C

The world, would be a better place with more C's - and not just for children, but adults too.

Caring, Consideration, Co-operation, Consultation, Control.

It is important for children to see their family care about others less fortunate, and show consideration for each other in the family too. This is demonstrated with discussing things as a family, not just giving a child an order, such as Go to bed, or Get in the car. Adults would not appreciate being spoken to like that. Children learn how to speak to other children by listening to how their parents talk to them.

More useful C's are Craftwork and Colouring-in. While making something with children, or colouring a picture, you can be talking together. Doing something that requires no concentration means your mind can flow from one thought to another. Often children will open up to talk about what is bothering them when involved in an easy activity together.

Charts work well with children getting a tick when they have completed each job. You can see at a glance what is done, and what is not. It does not get ticked until it is done, not half done or nearly done. Have a 'shop' stocked with small items costing very little. Let children choose one at the end of a week of good work. Adults get paid at the end of the week, so why shouldn't children? Remember, there must also be some things that are done unpaid, to help the family along.

The most important control is self control. If children can be taught self control at a very early age, even as toddlers, they are likely to grow up to be more healthy and successful in their lives than if they need instant gratification. People who 'want what they want when they want it' are more likely to turn to alcohol or other drugs to help them feel better about life situations.

D

Discussions formulate Decisions forming Democracy. Decisions are best made at a Family Conference. This can be an informal chat in the kitchen with a drink and a biscuit, or in a more formal setting, seated around the table with a

written agenda, and someone taking brief minutes to read at the next meeting. Each person is listened to, with no-one else talking. You could have the person talking holding a piece of purple paper or some other object that indicates they have the right to speak. No-one else can interrupt, or speak unless they are holding the piece of purple paper or other symbol of the right to speak. Recognising that another person has the right to their own opinion, even when it conflicts with yours, is the beginning of democracy. Democracy is based on truth. Truth is the foundation of freedom.

E

Every child absorbs the way its parents live and tends to continue that behaviour on into the next generation. Every worthwhile event we achieve will carry on its effects for ever. One of the most important words in our lives is Every. It is the things we do Every day that determine what kind of life we live. It is doing our best in Everything we do whether it is acknowledged or not. It is being honest in Every action whether someone sees it or not. As parents it is Enjoying and Encouraging our children in Every way possible, knowing the time will come all too soon when they have grown and flown. Often we are so busy going to work to buy things for our family that we have no time or energy left to enjoy being part of a family. Work out what family life is really about and enjoy it while you can.

F

Feelings. Emotions are a baby's first language. Little children 'feel' and recognise our state of mind. They know when we are happy, sad, angry etc. Everyone has the right to their own feelings, but not to act on them in a way that is dangerous to others, such as when venting anger.

G

Generosity. Show children how to have a generosity of spirit.

By your own attitude of sharing and caring towards other people, children will learn to be like this too. Do not expect a child under the age of about 4 or 5 years to share their toys or other special things as they simply have no concept of sharing until around that age. Christmas is a good time to give unwanted toys, or even new ones, to a special collection, and to make gifts for family and friends, but do not limit these activities to only one time of the year. Discuss with children what we have in our lives every day that we are grateful for, and how we can share our advantages with others.

H

Here! Have a place where your children must meet if there is an earthquake, fire or other disaster. Practise crawling in the dark to that place so everyone knows what it would be like if there was smoke all around. I used to have a whistle that I blew every so often and our children had to come running, and see how fast they could reach me. I would count in seconds and they used to try and better that number every time. They had to leave whatever they were doing and run to the whistle, and the only exception was if they were in the toilet. Often they would have a reward for fast running, but not always. Sometimes I used the whistle if I heard quarreling, but not very often as I wanted to keep the whistle as a novelty.

I

'I' statements are clear for others to hear. I love you. I am proud of you. I am cross with you. I am fed-up with what you just did. I am so glad you are in our family. I need time to myself for one hour. I need a hug. All these are 'I' statements. They let other people know what we are thinking and feeling. They are short. They are specific. They do not nag or criticise. We need to communicate like this with children - and adults.

J

Joy. The joy you feel when you look at your newborn baby may fade with experiences of diarrhoea and vomiting, family quarrels, dismal school reports, hospital visits, juvenile shoplifting, teenage pregnancy, drug offences, or even death. Do not be alarmed! This is a real human being you are raising. The challenges are vast, but the rewards are great - if you manage to live that long! So look for joy in the little things of life, and you will find they are there, even though at times they are hard to see.

K

Kindness. There is no substitute for it. Children have an inborn sense of fairness. Channel it with kindness towards them and they will grow with a desire to better the world they live in.

L

The other letters of the alphabet are interesting but the main aims of life are written with the letter L.

Live, Love, Learn, Listen, Laugh. Your Left hand is a great teacher of these 5 important aspects of our life, and the real reason we are here, as the thumb and first finger form the letter L.

Live. We are here, first, to gain a body to put around our spirit. We already are a spirit, a person, when we are born. People often forget that, or do not know it, and treat a baby as a "blank slate" instead of realising this is an adult spirit we are dealing with. The spirit could not arrive in an adult body, though, as it needed to be born into a family who would form a strong attachment to it, while caring for it as a helpless baby. The way people speak to, and behave towards, a child is often negative and even destructive, and they might not do that if they could see the grown adult there.

Love. We are taught how to love by first being given love.

Learn. We learn many things, but the greatest thing we learn is to love.

Listen. We learn to listen even before we are born. We have 2 ears and only 1 mouth, as an indication that it is twice as important to listen as it is to speak.

Laugh. We need the positive, healthy effects of laughing. We need to teach ourselves and our children to see the funny side of life, otherwise it becomes an endurance test.

M

Memories are the glue that holds families together. Take photos of all the special occasions, and some of the ordinary ones too. Put them in some sort of book as soon as possible. When photos are left they accumulate until they become an insurmountable job that gets left for 20 years! Photos that are not looked at and enjoyed might just as well not have been taken.

N

Nursery rhymes. For generations rhymes have taught us to memorise, taking one sentence and pegging another on to it. They help a child learn new words and how to talk. They are colourful, rhythmic, funny, and a shared activity.

O

One. One thing at a time. One day at a time. A friend of ours, the mother of 9 children, who was a cub leader and worked night shift as a maternity nurse, managed to do more than anyone else I knew. She told me she just concentrated on one main thing at a time, and when that was done, she went on to the next thing. Of course, she was speaking generally, as she did several smaller things as well, at the same time as the

'main thing', but the principle is to deal with the main priority first. The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. When life is extra stressful, sometimes all you can do is get through one day at a time.

P

Praise and pride are two words that have become unpopular because people do not want their children to grow up conceited. As they get older we spend so much time telling children all the things they are not doing right we forget to praise them for what they have done well. Adults get paid money for doing a job well, children do not get this and need praise for their achievements. How can they learn the right way if we never tell them about it, and praise them when they do it? Remember how proud you were when your baby said that first word or took that first step? Do not lose your sense of admiration just because that baby is now an adolescent! They are still learning new things - some of them not so praiseworthy, but they will gradually move away from those if you keep on praising the good stuff.

Q

Questions! Questions! Questions! Will they ever stop! Unfortunately, yes they will stop when your child has left home, so make the most of the time you have together and learn all you can alongside your child. See the world with new eyes and discover all the incredible things you never realised were there before.

R

Reading. If there could be just one thing changed about family life in any home, in any country, that would help to change the world, it would be to turn off the TV for 20 minutes and read to children EVERY day. Most libraries are free for children's books. Many schools have books children can borrow. Go and have a look at them, and borrow some

for yourself.

S

Special. Create special times such as picnics and bonfires at the beach or river, watching the stars in the night sky, library trips and stories round the fire, sports events and shouting yourself hoarse with encouragement, making biscuits and gifts for other people, telling stories of your own childhood and weaving the generations together. Events such as these cost little in terms of money, but the 'pay-off' is immense.

T

Time. People try to reduce their guilt feelings by saying it is quality time that counts more than quantity time spent with children. In fact, children need both. Often, love is spelled T.I.M.E. Children do not care how clever, rich, famous, or goodlooking you are - or are not! Children just want to know they are really important to you, and you love them. Before the age of 4 years, children need to know they are indispensable to the complete happiness of their parents. Not that you could not manage without them, or that life revolves around them, but that you love and value them so much your life would be the poorer without them. When they each know this they relax and do not have to strive for dominance in the family. The quarrels grow less and they learn the meaning of the word T.E.A.M. - Together Everyone Achieves More.

U

Useful skills for little children are large motor skills of walking, running, jumping, skipping. This is making the brain work the body. If children are not able to do these well before they start school they find it more difficult to learn the fine motor skills such as using scissors, drawing, reading and writing.

Useful skills for older children to learn are basic campcraft and how to survive outdoors, how to grow a few vegetables, do easy sewing, cook simple foods, manage pocket-money, practise basic first aid, so they can build on those ideas later. In fact, by the age of 14 years, children should know the basics of how to be self-sufficient for when they leave home.

V

Value. Your child will pick up your personal values as unconsciously as breathing, but it is also important to talk together about what your family values are. Most schools and businesses have a mission statement of what they stand for. Work out with your children what your family values are and write a mission statement. Put it in some place where it will be seen every day. Now is the time to get it right, not in 10 years time when you see results that make you wish you had tried harder. Value your children, and tell them so, and they will grow up with confidence in their own abilities to succeed in the world and a willingness to help others.

W

Warm water has a soothing effect on children, probably because that was what they lived in before they were born. From babies to teenagers, children of all ages benefit from a bath, or shower, and not just for getting clean. Because young children should never be left alone in the bath I used to take mending, knitting and letter writing to the bathroom to do while my children played in the bath. They enjoyed it, and I caught up on things I wanted to do, so we all came out of it feeling better.

X

X is the symbol for the unknown. Raising children is definitely venturing into the unknown. It is the most difficult job in the world. There is no training, no pay, and very often no-one to ask for advice exactly when you most need it.

Fortunately, X is also the symbol for a kiss and there will be plenty of those in a loving family.

Y

You. You are the only one who can change your situation. When life is going wrong and you want to make some changes, but don't know where to start - look in the mirror! When you feel critical of someone, especially among your nearest and dearest, and feel like pointing the finger, look at your hand and see that there are three fingers pointing back at yourself.

Z

Sleeping ZZZ's are what you need to be successful, whether you snore or not! Most problems seem worse when we are tired. Or maybe it is really that when we are overtired things get worse and become real problems.

Newborn Babies

Baby care is a skill to learn

Think of any skill you had to learn, such as driving a car, cooking, swimming. There seemed to be so many things to remember to do all at the same time, you wondered if you would ever be able to do it all. That is the same situation for you and your baby. You are learning together, so be patient with each other. Watch how other people settle their babies, or borrow books or a DVD from the library or Plunket nurse. Caring for a newborn baby is a skill that takes several months to learn, and unfortunately, just when you get one part of it going right, the baby has gone past that stage and there is something new to discover. Remember though, that is what parenting is, a time of discovery, so enjoy it as much as you possibly can because one day you will look back on it as having gone past so quickly.

The baby's view

Try to see life from the point of view of the baby. He or she has suddenly been thrust into a strange new world, not speaking the language, and having to ask somehow for all the most basic bodily functions to be taken care of. We would all cry in that situation, and want a cuddle, a warm drink, a clean bottom-end, soothing words, soft, slow music, and to feel safe. Imagine yourself in a foreign country where you don't speak the language, you are tired and hungry and don't know where the toilet is. Babies are the same as big people, but in a smaller package!

Crying babies

Some newborn babies cry almost the whole time they are awake, and they seem to be awake an awful lot! The first

language a baby learns, before learning words, is 'emotional feelings'. Unfortunately babies pick up feelings of insecurity in parents whether they are new to parenting or not. This makes the baby more nervous, with more crying, leading the parents to become even more distraught. Eventually the parents are crying as much as the baby and this leads to despair and possible violence. The cycle needs to be broken by practical help from a doctor, nurse, extended family, and others in the community. Some mother-and-baby clinics offer help during the day, and your family doctor can arrange for this, or a referral to a paediatrician.

Get a check-up

A paediatrician specialises in the care of babies and children and should examine any baby who cries a lot, to find out if there is a physical cause for the crying. Often there is nothing specific to find, and the only conclusion is that babies arrive in this world in an 'unfinished' state. There may be some part of the baby's inside that is not yet 'finished' and is hurting, but will gradually get better as the baby grows. It takes up to 9 months for this finishing stage to be complete, with most of it being done in the first 3 months.

Life takes its own time

Our fourth baby had something wrong with his tummy so the muscle in his stomach did not hold milk in when it got too full, and there would be an eruption of milk shoot out when his wind was brought up. Some babies need an operation to strengthen this muscle but I was glad he did not need that. The problem eventually started to right itself when he was about 9 months old and using his arms to pull himself up to a standing position, but in the meantime my clothes and his were constantly soaked with milk. One day my husband came home to find me standing in a pile of milk-soaked clothes on the floor, crying, wearing my dressing gown because I had nothing left to wear. People were mystified

why my baby could not take solids even when nearly a year old, and they sometimes tried to give custard or something similar, only to have it all brought up again. Our family doctor was concerned the baby was anaemic and gave me the impression I was not trying hard enough to give solids, and relying on breast feeding alone. When the baby was 14 months old, sitting in his high chair watching me cut up corned beef, he reached out and took a small piece and ate it. I waited for the usual vomiting, but it did not happen so gave him more to eat, and he never looked back. Sometimes we have to be patient while life takes its own time.

Ask for help

Do not try and get through the newborn stage on your own especially if the baby is crying a lot, or you feel too tired to go on. Start with your midwife, doctor, nurse, family or friends, whoever you feel comfortable asking. Go out for walks as much as you feel able to, even if the baby is crying, as it does not sound so loud when you are outdoors! This is a great time for the baby's father or grandparents to take the baby out, giving the mother time to rest. Generally, if the baby is not unwell it is safe to go out in winter except in snow and fog, as long as you have a good pram cover to keep the rain off, and of course the baby is warmly wrapped up. At all times of the year, but especially in hot weather, make sure there is no sun shining directly on to the baby. Do not worry that people will think you are not a good parent if your baby is crying. Most people are sympathetic and want to help, but do not want to intrude until you ask them to.

Make life as easy as possible

If ever there was a time for using all the modern conveniences of life, this is it. As much as possible use a washing machine, drier, disposable items, microwave dinners, and whatever else you can think of. Whenever the baby sleeps, you need to fall on to your bed and sleep too. Of

course, if you have other children, this is not practical but it may be possible to lie down and read to the children or watch them playing from your horizontal position.

Baby slings

A kangaroo baby is born and then spends several months in the mother's pouch, but human babies do not have this option. However, it may help to simulate a pouch to carry the baby around in, which is why baby-slings can be very helpful. I carried my babies around in a sling on my back, and, now grown-up, they carry their own babies around in front-packs. Some slings are worn sideways, and some are worn on the front for the first few months, and then can be transferred to the back later.

Chiropractor or osteopath

Some parents may wish to consult a chiropractor or osteopath who specialises in baby care as the baby's neck may have been damaged slightly during the birth process. Bones may press on nerves causing headaches or difficulty with feeding. If you do not already go to a chiropractor or osteopath ask around and research the subject so you are comfortable about your choice. I took all my babies, and later my grandchildren with their parents, to our family chiropractor or osteopath in their earliest days for a check up, and treatment if necessary. It is good for the mother to have treatment too, after the stress of the pregnancy and birth.

Breast feeding

Most people recognise it is best for a baby to be breastfed but may not realise how exhausting and often painful this is. I did not realise how tired I would be or how long it would take me to learn to breast-feed. For the first 3 weeks I was

often in tears because I could not get our baby to feed properly. My first baby, who we adopted at age 3 weeks, had cried a lot with tummy ache from being milk intolerant, which we did not know until some months later, and he has never chosen to drink milk even as an adult. There is nothing wrong with giving a baby formula if that is what you decide is best but I thought I was hopeless and it was a struggle to persevere with breast-feeding. Some city hospitals have midwives who are trained as Lactation Consultants and you can be referred to them by your midwife or Plunket nurse, but you must ask. A hand held expressing machine is great for expressing milk to store in the freezer to give by bottle either by the father or babysitter. Fathers love to give bottle feeds and have that bonding time with their baby.

La Leche League and similar support groups

Wonderful support and teaching can be gained from other mothers at La Leche League and I thoroughly recommend new mothers find the phone number and meeting times of that organisation or a similar one in their area. In fact, even though we adopted our first baby and I could not breast feed, I wish that I had known then about La Leche League as I met mothers with the same viewpoint as myself and made some good friends there. Also, I gained increased emotional confidence and self esteem from having persevered enough to overcome my problems with breast-feeding, and felt a great sense of achievement. Even a bad experience is not wasted if we learn good from it, and I was glad to have the opportunity to help my lovely daughters-in-law have a better time with breast feeding than I had.

Sleeping

Most people do not realise that the ability to fall asleep is a skill babies have to learn because before birth there was no

night or day for them. If a young baby does not settle you may need to pat them gently for a few minutes, or if still fussing after about 5 minutes, pick them up and see if there is more wind to come up. Lie the baby on your lap face up, and massage just above the waist for 2 or 3 minutes, then sit the baby bolt upright supported by your hand against their back and your other hand under their chin and around their chest, or put the baby up against your shoulder. It is best to put the baby to bed while awake, to learn how to go off to sleep, rather than establishing a habit of being put to bed once asleep. Make a chart of when the baby wakes and sleeps, and how long in between, then you may see a pattern occurring during each 24 hours. If the baby remains unsettled in bed, pat or massage, over the bedclothes, for a few minutes to see if that helps. This is yet another habit that should not be used all the time though.

Feeling desperate

Sometimes, after all we have been able to think of and do, the baby is still unsettled and crying. This is very upsetting for the parents as well as the baby, but we have to realise we cannot change everything in life to the way we want it. Definitely do not take it as a sign of your failure or inadequacy. More likely you are overtired. Sometimes you may have to hand the situation over to someone else and go for a walk or to the other end of the house to have a break.

Visitors and visiting

People often want to visit and congratulate you, and bring gifts, which is very nice. However, although their visit may be for only half an hour, it might be just when you hoped to have a rest. Put a note on your door, take the phone off the hook, and go and lie down. Even if you only get twenty minutes to lie down, a few times a day, it will give you the energy you need to keep going through one of the most tiring times of your life. When people visit you they may not realise

how tired you are. It is surprising how quickly we forget the strain of waking up in the night to care for a baby. You may need to use a phrase that will encourage your visitors to go home. My mother often used to say to people, "Well, this won't get the baby a new bonnet, so I must get on with my work." We did not wear bonnets. It was just a phrase. However, it brought the visit to an end even if my mother was chatting to someone in the street. Sometimes I have said to people, "I'd love to stay and chat to you longer but I have to do something else very soon so I must go." Most people are happy to go on their way knowing you value their friendship.

Socialising

In some countries a mother gives birth and goes back to working in or out of the home very soon afterwards, but some cultures expect a newly delivered mother to stay at home for the first month, and not go out at all. Often a relative comes to stay to do the housework, cooking, and care for any other children. This is helpful in allowing the mother to rest and bond with the baby, but after 2 weeks or so, cabin fever may set in and the mother longs to go out for a short time. You must sort out what is best for yourself and your family. If visiting your previous place of work, church, or some other place where there are several people who want to hold the baby, wait 2 or 3 months before you pass the baby to other people to hold so the baby's neck is stronger by that time.

Dummies

Some babies will take a dummy and others spit it out, especially breastfed babies. Many babies find their thumb and suck that for several years, which can mis-shape the teeth coming through, leading to expensive orthodontic work ten years later. If a baby gets into the habit of going to sleep sucking a dummy that may continue for several years, with

you getting up at night to replace the dummy that has dropped out. This is the same principle as a baby going to sleep in your arms and being placed gently in the cot without waking up, then not being able to go to sleep except in your arms. In general it is easier to use a dummy than stop the habit of thumbsucking but may be better to put the baby to bed without a dummy if you can. Dummies are more acceptable now than they used to be a generation or two ago but some people still make a negative comment if they see a dummy being used. Like everything else, they are entitled to their own opinion but it does not have to be yours. You need to do what is right for your child and you. It is easier to remove the dummy habit when the baby is only a few months old rather than leaving it until the toddler stage, but life is not perfect and you have to do what works best for your own family. As the baby grows to toddler stage keep the dummy for bedtime only. Some parents give the dummy to the Dummy Fairy after a few years, replacing it with a gift the child really wants. Some children suck their fingers or thumb regardless of what you do to stop them, and a very few even do this into adulthood.

Wrapping

Most newborn babies like the security of being wrapped in a small sheet before being put to bed. This is often called swaddling. Newborn babies have a Moro reflex where they fling their arms out to the side when startled and feel insecure when they cannot touch anything. This disappears around 3 months of age. However, you need to look ahead a few months and realise that you do not want an older baby that will go to sleep only when wrapped up. So usually around 3 or 4 months is a good time to loosen the ties of the wrapper, or wrap only one arm and leave the other free. Soon after that dispense with the wrapper altogether. When babies learn to roll over they should not be swaddled as they could roll on to their face, but have no arms free to lift up with, to stop them suffocating. In summer use a single layer of

muslin so the wrapping is not too stifling. If very hot weather, leave the baby in only a nappy but swaddled.

The baby joggle

For some reason it seems to help if a crying baby is held upright near your shoulder while you step from one foot to the other, making a low noise that can only be described as a dirge! But wait, there's more! As you step from one foot to the other, give a slight jog. At the same time, slowly rub your hand round the baby's back in a slight circular movement. The noise you make is low and monotonous. It is not so much a song as a boring noise that changes from one note to the other with each slow step. Do not be tempted to compete with the loudness of the crying, but keep the dirge low. Maybe it is the sheer monotony that eventually sends the baby to sleep! Making a Shhhh sound over and over again also soothes some babies as it is similar to the swishing sounds they heard before being born. Newborn babies also like to be swayed from side to side as it is the same movement as their mother walking, from before they were born. Swaddle the baby then put the baby in a towel, gather up the ends and hold on to them very tightly, then sway the baby, preferably over a bed in case you lose your grip on the towel.

Noise

Do not tiptoe around or have the house quiet as babies have heard muffled sounds all the time before birth and feel comforted by hearing those same sounds after birth again. Some crying babies seem to like the monotonous sound of the vacuum cleaner, and if all else fails take the baby out for a drive in the car as the sound of the engine often sends them to sleep. Get out lots of DVD's so you have interesting things to watch if you have to sit up late with an unsettled baby, but as soon as the baby is settled, switch off the DVD and get your rest, then catch up on the DVD another time.

Music

Babies are soothed most by the human voice singing to them. They are too young to know if you have a good voice or not, so do not worry at all about how you sound. Babies also like low, slow music, with a soft beat about the same speed as their mother's heartbeat, that was the most constant sound to them before birth. Even if you do not like slow classical music, you may want to play it if it gives you peace and quiet. This slow music is often called Alpha music and is thought to be helpful for school children to listen to when doing homework as it calms the brain and helps study.

Night lights

Most adults find it difficult to sleep with a light on in the bedroom. Even the light from a digital clock or an outside street lamp may be enough to cause sleep problems. Children are similar, so it is best for babies to sleep in a room with no light, not even a night light. If you need a soft light to feed the baby, turn on the hall light for the time it is needed. However, around the age of 3 years children may voice concerns about sleeping in the dark, and a night light may ease the situation until they are a little older.

Photos

You will want to take an incredible number of photos and videos of your baby, especially your first baby, then not so many of subsequent children. This is natural and do not feel guilty later when you realise you have less photos as each child comes along. Be ruthless in culling out photos you do not want to keep as you will not look at all of them as time goes on. Again do not feel guilty at deleting photos as if you are taking away something from your baby. They are only photos and there will be many more of them. Also do not show hundreds of photos to other people, apart from

grandparents who are often as besotted with your baby as you are. Choose only a few and you will find people are happy to look at them. I never realised until I became a grandmother that I would love my grandchildren as much as I had loved my children, and I love to look at their photos, but do not expect this of other people as well.

Bathing

At Charing Cross Hospital in London, where I trained as a nurse, I watched midwives bath newborn babies in deep water up to their chins. They held the babies under their arms while supporting their head front and back with their fingers. Babies stopped crying as soon as they went into the warm water and floated their arms and legs reminiscent of before they were born. With this in mind I gave a big bucket to my new grandchildren so they could be bathed in the same way and it always calmed them. It is important to get the front of the neck under water as it often collects milk spills there and can become sore if not washed gently with water. Babies do not need anything in their bath water, no soap, or commercial products. Before undressing them, wash your hands, then wipe each eye, once only, with clean damp gauze, going from the inner eye to the outer side. Then swab the head with warm water on a face cloth, using a fresh one each bath time. Then undress the baby, clean up a dirty nappy, and put the baby into the warm water. Before bathing CHECK EVERYTHING is ready so that the baby can be dressed quickly afterwards as they hate getting out of the warm water. Test the warmth of the water by plunging your whole forearm into the water as your forearm has tender skin like the baby's.

Baby massage

After the bath pat the baby dry and massage olive oil into the skin all over the body. Use only food oil, not baby oil. If an oil is safe enough for your inside it is good enough for your

outside too. Babies often relax and sleep well after a light massage which really only entails smoothing the oil gently in to the skin all over the body, particularly under the arms, neck, and leg creases. Decant some oil from the kitchen bottle into a small dish in case the bottle gets knocked over while massaging. Dip your fingers into the oil before starting the massage. This is a good time for fathers to have some time with the baby, either doing the whole bath and massage, or helping to hold the baby's hands while getting dressed again. When babies get upset they often fling their arms out and it helps to calm them if someone holds their hands.

Adoption

After I had a severe lung illness which doctors thought may cause sterility we adopted our first baby. In the 8 years after that we gave birth to 3 more babies, one of whom died the day after birth. We were fortunate to go to a course of discussions and information about adoption, and, as it happened, several of our friends adopted babies around the same time as ourselves. At our son's first birthday all 6 of the little children of our close friends invited, had been adopted. This was not planned at all, it just happened that way. So adoption was not an unusual circumstance for us, but we discovered other people did not accept it so easily. One man asked me if my husband was not able to do the job, and would I like him to do it for him. A woman told me that adopting a baby was 'doing it the easy way'. Other people referred to the baby we later gave birth to as our 'real' baby or our 'own' child. These comments distressed me but my husband pointed out that they were made by people who had no experience of adoption and could not understand the situation, so there was no point in listening to them.

Open adoption is so much better than the closed legal procedures we had to live with. When Owen was 7 I asked our lawyer if we could trace his birth mother but was told the papers had been locked in a vault and could not be looked at. Later the law was changed so people could trace each other

through the proper channels. About 20 years after that Owen was contacted by his birth mother by letter through Social Welfare. He later drove the long journey to visit her for a day. He was glad to meet her, but felt she was not really part of his life as he had grown up never knowing anything about her. A few years after that I was able to travel to visit her and we talked, mother to mother, about Owen as a baby. I told her I had absolutely loved him from the first time I saw him, and had loved him ever since. She looked at me with sadness and said, "That's all I ever wanted to know." I thought of the pain she had felt for over 30 years simply wanting to know what an open adoption could have told her all through those years.

As time went on I could understand other people wondering if we would feel the same about a child born to us as we did about our adopted son. Would we love the first child more because we had specially chosen to have him, or would we love the next child more because he was born to us with our own heredity ties? As we gave birth to each subsequent baby we learned what most parents know, that you love each child for who that person is, no matter how they arrive in the world. In fact, it does not matter how they come to your family - as long as they do.

A friend's daughter had her baby adopted by another family but with very different results from ours. She and her family are in contact as much as they like with the new parents. In fact, it seems more like an extended family that has suddenly grown to twice its original size. All the people involved will never wonder who they are related to because they will know each other as the child grows up.

People should know that adoption is never easy, on one side or the other. When our third baby died I experienced how terrible it had been for our son's birth mother to give him up. An unwanted pregnancy does not have to result in a termination, and neither does a mother have to give up her education or career prospects due to an unexpected pregnancy. The Maori culture has accepted adoptions for

centuries. My opinion, formed from my own experience, is that we should educate people to know that adoption is another option.

Raynaud's condition

This usually presents with cold hands which turn white and hurt when they later turn pink again. It is a condition which is usually managed rather than cured. It affects up to 20% of women and may be hereditary. The word vaso means to do with the arteries and blood supply. Because this condition caused so much pain to the mother of one of my grandchildren I researched it carefully and give plenty of information here because I found there was so little known about it. I have so much admiration for my daughter-in-law for persevering in breast-feeding her baby. Some of the suggestions given here may be used to treat soreness from other breast-feeding problems.

Raynaud's of the nipple is the name given when women are affected by nipple vasospasms. Vasospasm means the tightening of blood vessels, cutting off the blood supply which turns the nipple white, then purple with blood low in oxygen, and then pink as blood high in oxygen re-enters the nipple. When blood re-enters the nipple it causes pain lasting several minutes. Damage to the nipple can occur if a baby latches on to a constricted nipple during a vasospasm event. The constricted nipple does not stretch well, and the damage can cause high levels of pain during latching-on stopping the milk let-down. Nipple damage may take 2 weeks to heal. Pain may be felt in either the nipple or the whole breast. This creates a vicious cycle of fear of pain, lack of milk let-down, hungry crying baby, depressed mother, upset family.

It may be misdiagnosed as Thrush as the symptoms are similar, or as Poor Latch-on due to the pain when really it is Raynaud's. Women who have fingers and toes that go white with cold in winter, will often develop Raynaud's of the

nipple when they start to breastfeed. It may also be caused by conditions such as Fibromyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis, hypothyroid, and made worse by air-drying sore nipples in a cold room.

Treatment is to keep WARM, WARM, WARM, especially the breast area. Even if it is summer time the room may not be warm enough to warm the nipples so keep wheat-packs inside the bra, being careful they are not heated too hot in the microwave oven. Remove pads as soon as they become damp as this causes cooling. In winter keep all rooms as warm as possible. At night, having baby in the same room, and keeping this room heated can help. Dress warmly and zip up the jacket before going out in winter. Pumping your milk may help reduce pain, or give you a break to help get Raynaud's under control. Pumping doesn't stretch the nipple as much as breast-feeding, and so reduces any latching pain. There is no sharp change in temperature after feeding, making vasospasm after pumping less likely. Pumping for a few days or even a few weeks may give your body time to heal. Then try breast feeding once or twice a day in the warmer part of the day, and pumping the rest of the time until you decide if you can breastfeed more often. Warming the breast before latching on and gently squeezing the nipple just before latching may help avoid the pain of vasoconstriction. You could even try blowing warm air from a hair dryer, or having a hot shower or hot drink before breast-feeding, and exercise helps some women. Forgive other people, including your doctor, for not knowing the pain you feel, because so little is known about this condition, and forgive yourself for swearing at your much loved baby for causing you so much pain.

Remedies

Vitamin B6 may help, but preferably take a Vitamin B complex tablet. In some women their milk supply is decreased a little while taking Vitamin B6. The recommended dosage of Vitamin B6 is 150-200 mg/day for

four days, reducing to 25 mg/day for 2 weeks.

Nifedipine: If vitamin B6 does not help then Nifedipine tablets, a prescription drug, may be considered. Nifedipine is a calcium channel blocker. It is typically used to treat raised blood pressure, and prevents vasospasm occurring by reducing smooth muscle tone in arteries. Treatment is usually a two-week dose of 15 to 30 mg per day, either taken over the day or using slow release tablets once a day. Some women who suffer from regular repeat attacks may wish to take a continuous low dose treatment. Doctors may be unaware of Raynaud's affecting the nipples, and the treatment, and may be reluctant to prescribe Nifedipine to breastfeeding mothers so go online to the National Center for Biotechnology Information. Search for NCBI Raynauds in breastfeeding, and print out the information for your doctor. This is the research that supports the use of Nifedipine. It would also be worth considering a blood test to check your iron and thyroid levels. Nifedipine may be unsuitable for women with low blood pressure, and side effects can include headaches. Women may need to reduce the dosage to avoid headaches, or increase it to treat the Raynaud's. Nifedipine does cross into breastmilk, however no harmful effects to the infant are known. Mothers should watch for side effects in their baby such as fussiness from a headache, or being more sleepy or less alert from low blood pressure.

Minerals: Calcium (2000 mg per day) and magnesium (1000mg per day) supplements can help some women if they are deficient in these minerals. Unfortunately, calcium can cause an overbalance of minerals but magnesium is needed in greater quantities by most people. Some herbs help stimulate circulation; these include ginger, cayenne pepper, and cinnamon.

Older Babies and Children

Breath holding

When Owen was around a year old he started doing breath-holding. This usually occurred when he did not want to eat something he was being spoon-fed. He would shut his mouth, turn his head away, and gradually go blue in the face until he slumped semi-conscious in his highchair. It is difficult to describe how panic stricken and helpless parents feel when they see this happen to their child. We were advised to 'play it down' and not let our child see how terrified we were. Much easier said than done, but we became quite good actors and would smile and chat as if nothing unusual had happened and blow on his face to get him to take a breath. Because we acted as normally as possible Owen did not learn to use it as a tool against us to get his own way, and the phase passed within a few months, but it can go on for a few years in early childhood. It is always advisable to consult your doctor about the first episode to make sure there is no other cause for the child suddenly not breathing.

Disabilities particularly Down's Syndrome

Life comes with no guarantees and although we all long for a baby with no disabilities it does not always turn out like that. In fact, even if we have a normal baby there is no guarantee there will not be disabilities later in childhood due to accidents or illness. Helen Keller was perfectly normal until the age of 19 months when she contracted a severe illness which may have been scarlet fever or meningitis, and was left blind and deaf. Through a miracle-worker of a teacher, Annie Sullivan, Helen learned to understand words and to speak. She went on to graduate from college and travelled the world

speaking on behalf of people with disabilities. When one of my grandchildren, Beth, was born with Down's syndrome we joined the vast group of parents and grandparents of children who will never be able to reach all the physical or mental achievements of other children around them. Instead we must encourage them in every way to achieve the potential that is uniquely their own.

In speaking with other parents of children with disabilities, I have found it to be extremely common to have feeding problems at the newborn baby stage. Feeding Beth took twice as long as for other babies because she could not stay awake for more than 3 or 4 sucks of the feeding bottle, then was sound asleep again with milk dripping down her neck because she had not swallowed it. Her mother expressed milk using a machine then Beth was fed that milk by bottle. Unwrapping her clothing or patting her feet and ears did little to wake her enough for her to feed better. Often it is difficult to find the right people to give expert advice to the new parents about feeding a new baby. Parents should request an urgent paediatric assessment at their nearest hospital. This can be obtained quite quickly through their midwife or family doctor, but most people do not ask for it because they simply do not know it is available. Beth's mother particularly wanted to breastfeed her as babies with Down's syndrome have a tendency to bowel problems later in childhood and introducing formula may have caused more difficulties.

Beth had moderately severe jaundice as a newborn which took 2 or 3 weeks to disappear. She had small holes in her heart which were checked by scans to ensure they were closing, otherwise these would have contributed to her tiredness. Although firmly wrapped and swaddled, Beth liked to have her hands free and would wriggle until she achieved that even when only a few weeks old. Then her hands would get cold and she would be restless.

Friends and family who have children with disabilities like Down's syndrome, Prader Willi syndrome, global retardation

or cerebral palsy, mentioned characteristics common to them all such as sleepy baby, feeding difficulties, cold hands and feet, breathing difficulties, slow weight gain as babies but tending to overweight in later childhood.

Beth's parents were encouraged to write down the questions they wanted answered at each paediatric assessment, and these included checks of her hips, eyes, ears, heart and thyroid. They were also aware of asking, especially at the toddler stage, for a referral to other specialists such as nutritionists, physiotherapists, or special education advisors. If a blood test is required ask the paediatrician whether the blood will be taken from the arm or elsewhere, then ask for local anaesthetic cream to be applied to that site for an hour so the needle will not hurt.

As there is a tendency towards obesity in childhood it is important to give a moderately high level of fibre foods such as vegetables, salads and fruits. This is because the bowel is slower than in other children, leading to constipation. For the same reason it is important that the child does not sit in front of TV or a computer instead of being active. This, of course, is the same for all children, regardless of disabilities.

Initial dental evaluation should be carried out at two years of age, with follow-ups every six months, encouraging twice-daily teeth brushing. Optometrist care should be sought annually from the age of 2 years also. Sleep-related upper airway obstruction may present with daytime tiredness or poor growth and development. It may be caused by narrowing of the nasal passages and enlarged tonsils and adenoids. These should not be removed except on the definite recommendation of an Ear Nose and Throat surgeon specialising in paediatric assessments.

Dry skin occurs in many children with Down's syndrome, sometimes associated with itching, eczema, or infection, so it's good to massage vegetable oil or other good moisturisers into the child's skin to keep it supple. Protective clothing and wide-brimmed hats, avoidance of over-exposure to sunlight

are all recommended. If the child cannot avoid being in the sun occasionally use a sunscreen of level 30 SPF.

Apart from financial problems there is a constant stress factor for the family, especially the mother, when a child has any disability – so it is important to set up date nights for the parents even if it is only a meal at the local pub or a takeaway at the town park. Also there is stress for the brothers and sisters as there are frequent health appointments to get to, or you can't go out much in the winter because one child has difficulty breathing in cold weather. It can often seem to brothers and sisters that the child with the illness or disability gets preferential treatment and they feel left out. It is invaluable to have grandparents or aunts and uncles to help them feel special too.

We have tried to emphasise to other people that the baby girl who has come to our family is Beth, and she has Down's syndrome, not that she is a 'Down's baby'. People mean well but tend to say things like, "Down's babies are so lovely," and so they are but so are all other children too. It's a bit like saying some breeds of dogs are placid and some are vicious, simply because of the breed. Maybe babies with disabilities come to this earth with a little more 'heavenly sunshine' still on them than others but they need to be treated the same as other children. We hope Beth will be encouraged to succeed at school and held to be responsible, and not allowed to 'get away with it' because she has Down's syndrome. People will recognise that Beth has a disability and will understand that she may need extra help. However, there are many children with no outwardly recognisable symptoms. Because they look normal they are expected to behave normally. Parents of children who suddenly scream in the supermarket or appear to be badly behaved, feel judged as being bad parents. Eventually they may go out in public less and less and end up feeling socially isolated.

A book that I read in the late 1970's helped me in many practical ways in bringing up my own children. It was written by Dorothy Butler who gained her Diploma of Education

with a written study of her granddaughter, Cushla, who had been born with several severe disabilities. At the time of writing the thesis, Cushla was almost 4 years old and had made an amazing recovery from many of these disabilities. She baffled doctors who, in her early months, had thought the disabilities so severe they could not be overcome. At one time it was suggested to her mother, Patricia, that Cushla would be better 'put in a home'. Cushla was brought up in a family where she was almost constantly read to from the age of 4 months, because there were several relatives available to do this, and she could not do much else. Dorothy Butler's thesis became a book entitled 'Cushla and her books'. Even though written many years ago it is relevant for all children with or without disabilities. It demonstrates that reading aloud to children can form bonds between family members, increase the child's vocabulary and establish a love of books in general and of acquiring knowledge in particular, whether from books or online.

Discovering that your baby or young child has a disability is like taking a plane journey to a distant country. For a long time you look forward to it but on landing you discover it is completely different from where you thought you would be. You have to learn a whole different language and way of doing things that you never anticipated. So it is with bringing up a child who is different from all your hopes and dreams. Experienced people are happy to help you, but first you have to find them. There are many information sites and support groups for parents of children with disabilities and these can all be found online or by asking the paediatrician, family doctor or health visitor.

Tantrums

When toddlers throw tantrums it is because they are not old enough to know the words to express how utterly frustrated they feel. They have no control over their world and are at the mercy of the adults around them. They have to go out and come in, sleep, wake, eat and even go to the toilet when

adults tell them to. How would you like to live like that? It is no wonder things get beyond them sometimes and they let off steam, usually when the adults are feeling frustrated too. It is best to put them in a safe place until everyone has calmed down, then have a cuddle, a warm drink and a story.

Sometimes we can be one step ahead of a difficult situation and nip it in the bud before it develops. I heard a dog trainer say that when a dog was just about to do something you did not want it to, say in a loud, firm voice, "Uh-uh!" and that would stop the dog in its tracks. The dog trainer said it is a universal language and works for animals and young children all around the world. I have tried this with several young children and it really does stop them immediately. The only thing is that once you have stopped them you have to quickly provide them with something else to do. Discretion may be the better part of valour, as the saying goes, but distraction is the better part of parenting.

Often the 'situation' is what makes a child have a tantrum - hungry or tired, and the parents feel like that too. In these situations distraction is the better part of parenting and you may be able to excitedly tell the child, "Oh, look at the monkeys outside the window." Or if in a supermarket, the child could help get some of the shopping which is not breakable and put it in the trolley. Sometimes it is OK to ignore bad behaviour and deal with the immediate situation. Sometimes you need to take both the child and yourself away from the situation. You may even have to leave the supermarket trolley and drive home, then come back another time. As a parent be as consistent as you can. Children prefer set boundaries.

If you have a safe place where the child can not get hurt, like their cot or bed, you can have Time Out. This is usually for 1 minute of every year of the child's age. It is a good idea during that time to make yourself a warm drink to help yourself feel better, and more able to give the child a cuddle after the Time Out is finished. It helps to let children know that we all feel irritable sometimes, and we all say and do

things we regret afterwards, and we want to try again. Children often respond very positively if given the chance to "Try again". Sometimes older children have so many toys in their room they do not mind Time Out at all. In this case you might want to take their toys from the room in a big cardboard box to produce a very boring place they do not want to be in. Definitely do not have video games, TV or other delights in the Time Out room.

My grandchildren love to come and stay with me for a few days of being a bit indulged by Grandma. One night I got them to bed after a busy, interesting day, and was washing the dinner dishes when I heard a lot of laughing and banging around coming from their bedroom. I found them rolling around with laughter and told them that I had sent them to bed to have a quiet read before going to sleep, not to be rolling around the room. The noise continued for another half an hour interrupted several times by my visits from the kitchen. Eventually I decided I was getting nowhere by being nice, so I flew back into the bedroom horizontally, on my broomstick, and told my grandsons that if I heard one more sound I would take away all their books, toys, bedside lights, and anything else that made life comfortable for them. I said, "I will strip this room bare! You will have nothing but a mattress, a pillow and a blanket!" They were completely stunned to hear their loving Grandma speak to them in such a stern way, and they knew I meant every word I said. They stared at me in shocked silence for a few seconds, then two small voices said, "Sorry Grandma," and I never heard another sound until morning. If children are to be reprimanded, first get their attention, then make it dramatic enough to carry the message across effectively. If you are going to make a threat, be sure you are willing to carry it out.

Sometimes you feel like throwing a tantrum yourself! This is usually when you cannot get your child to come when called or to do what you ask. As with so many situations, we understand other people better when we see how life is from their point of view. If you were engrossed in an exciting TV programme but someone called you to do something just at

the crucial moment, you would feel annoyed and frustrated. However, if you were given 5 minutes warning that you were going out, you could prepare for it better. So it is with children. We need to give them a warning and explanation of what we want them to do, and ask if they have heard and understood what we have said. If they are engrossed in what they are doing they may not have taken it all in, so we need an answer from them that lets us know they understand. Then when the time comes for the action we warned them about, we can expect them to comply. Of course, that is not going to happen all the time, and we need to be prepared for that. It is better to explain a reason for what we are asking the child to do, and a good outcome if they do it. For instance, "In 5 minutes time you need to stop playing with your toys, because it is time to take your sister to school, and on the way home we can stop at the road works and watch the diggers and tractors working." Or, "In 5 minutes time we are going to put on our coats to go to the shops and you can choose your blue socks or your yellow socks." You make the original choice of the items to choose between, but your child feels a part of the procedure.

If there is a tantrum or disagreement of any kind, you have to be stronger than the disagreement. If you have to go somewhere, or do something, then that is what you have to do and there can be no argument about it. It simply has to be done. Therefore, you have to over-ride your child's displeasure and just go, even if you have to pick the child up under your arm, kicking and screaming. Of course, if you do not need to go, then the tantrum can simply be ignored and you go and do something else and the child is left with no audience which is a bit of a let down for any actor. That's easier said than done, and it is often more difficult for mothers than for fathers. I remember being in the maternity home with my 4th baby and my husband visited for a few minutes to bring me some clothes, leaving our 2 sons in the car. They were 6 and 8 years old. A few minutes later a midwife hurried into the room to let my husband know that our sons had got the handbrake off and the car was rolling

very slowly down the driveway. It was a flat driveway and they were hardly moving, but my husband rushed out and our sons got a real telling off. The next day I asked my husband what he had done about it and he replied he had sent them to bed with no dinner. I was horrified that they would have been hungry all night, but he said they deserved to be punished and that was that.

Another time when we were in the car, our sons were squabbling in the back seat. My husband told them several times to stop quarreling. Finally, he stopped the car, opened their door and told them to walk home. We were only 400 metres from home, and they were about 7 and 9 years old, so they were not toddlers, but they were very annoyed at having to walk. After that, they found it much easier to keep quiet in the car!

They used to love telling people what a dangerous driver their mother was. This happened after I became frustrated about having to tell them time and time again to put on their seat belts as soon as we got in the car, and the ensuing complaints about such a simple request. One day after we all got in the car I did not give the reminder to click the seat belts, but simply took off down the driveway and slammed to a sudden halt. Of course, they all shot forward and banged their heads on the seats in front. They were furious that I had given them all a headache, but I never had to remind them to put on their seat belts again.

A Treasure Box

Children often seem to pick up on some sort of wavelength that you are in a hurry, or not able to spend any time with them while you get on with something else and that is when they become fractious. On days when you need to get on with something but your young children are irritable and quarrelsome, that is the time you need to get out a treasure box. The box could be as simple as an empty shoebox or ice cream container but it needs to be kept out of sight until

needed so it is always a novelty when a distraction is required. Into the treasure box can go all kinds of small items such as; old keys, pegs, popsicle sticks, pipecleaners, fluffy pompoms, craft birds, stickers, jingle bells, feathers, ribbons, bottle tops with a hole cut in them to thread on to narrow elastic with pasta between each top, foam shapes, small pieces of different types of fabric to mix and match, sparkly buttons sewn on to fabric to prevent swallowing them, old birthday cards, unwanted Christmas tree decorations. As children grow older the items will change but the principle is still the same. It is the novelty of the box that calms children because it is not an everyday item.

Sibling Rivalry

Every child is different and every child is born into a different family. The first child is born to new parents who have to learn what to do. The second child brings sibling rivalry to the family. The third child has to fit in with a family, and so on with later babies.

The eldest child has more privileges, but also more responsibility when growing up. The youngest child 'gets away with everything' according to others in the family. The middle child has neither the privileges of the eldest, nor the 'babying' of the youngest.

Often a second child will be completely different from the first child. As they grow up these differences may become more marked as though the second child is purposely trying to be as different as possible to make a stand and put their own stamp on the world. Often a child who is outgoing and energetic will be confident enough to dominate brothers or sisters even though they may be older. This can happen from an early age and parents may have to separate the children into different rooms. Children who are of a quieter nature may seem as if they cause no trouble, but on careful observation they may make sly comments, or provoke the other child in underhand ways. Also, the quiet child must be

taught not to accept being pushed around otherwise they will go on through life still being bullied.

Parents must work out what is acceptable behaviour in their family, and what is not, and communicate this to their children. When family boundaries are overstepped there must be consequences that have been explained previously to the children. These may start with sitting on the time-out chair, and progress to going to bed half an hour early or not having TV or game players for a while. Time out may be used from the age of about 3 years onwards and should be for 1 minute for each year of the child's age. At the end of this time there should be a real apology for the bad behaviour. The child must have all these consequences or punishments explained, usually several times, before they are put into use.

It would be difficult to find a family where there is no conflict among siblings, and the family is the best place to learn how to deal with differences of opinions. Some ground rules need to be set up especially around school age, when sibling rivalry seems to strengthen. Make it clear that hitting, punching, pinching, biting and hair pulling are not acceptable, and neither is name calling and mocking of each other. Of course, this behaviour is not acceptable from parent to child either, or between other adults in the household.

We all want our children to get on with others and the complex social skills involved take years to learn. Often we expect too much from children and treat them like little adults instead of accepting and even expecting the mistakes they will inevitably make. Children under the age of about 4 years usually have no idea about sharing their toys with anyone else. When friends or relatives visit with their children we ask ours to share with them and they resist strongly. How can they know that these precious items they have been given will still be there when the invading children have gone home. When we play Peek-a-boo with a baby, the baby is concerned when our face disappears behind a cloth and overjoyed when we reappear. To a baby, when you're

gone, you're gone. So when we ask them to share their toys, in their minds they are being asked to give them up, never to be seen again. We need to think how we would feel if we were asked to give up our TV, car or other special belongings, because to a little child that is how big the sacrifice of sharing seems.

Some games, like playing hospitals or shop, involve all the children at the same time, being a patient, nurse, doctor, customer, checkout operator, or delivery person, so the stress is taken off individual toys. A dressing up box full of hats, scarves, handbags, capes, and beads can provide the tools for igniting the imagination of several children at once. Making puppets is another creative outlet, not only in making the puppets, but in letting them speak to each other. Often we hear emotions from children through the puppets that we did not know about.

Children have to learn, as do adults, that you do not get everything you want in life and sometimes someone else does not agree with you. In family life children learn how to cope with having a toy or something else taken away, and what they can do about it. Children must be taught what they can do when they are upset about an unfair situation - do they go and tell their parent, or back down and walk away, or stand up for themselves, or what?

Similarly, some children learn to whine to get what they want. We must teach them that we will listen to them, but only when they can speak without whining. When they do this they deserve instant praise. When the whining starts again they must have a reminder that you are waiting for their proper voice before you will be able to listen to them.

When I was a child I remember that sometimes there was total war between my brothers and sister and myself, yet we became the best of friends when we grew up. In the same way, sometimes I had to put my own children in separate rooms otherwise I was sure they would kill each other, but they became good friends once they were grown up. Perhaps

we need to keep the end result in mind when we are going through these childhood disagreements, and teach our children what they can do about them.

Often the problem lessens when children feel they are listened to. I tell children that I have a rule that they must keep to. It is "If it is not yours don't touch it". We all need our own special belongings and opinions and we need them to be respected. When children have their toys or special belongings taken by another child they feel just the same as an adult who has had their house burgled. This needs to be explained to the child who has been the taker. It takes a lot of a parent's time to sort out the situation, but is well worth it because it lessens conflict in the future. I use the method where each child has a turn to say what happened and how they felt about it. They are listened to without the other child being allowed to interrupt and say anything. Then the other child has their turn, without the first child being allowed to interrupt. Then back to the first child for a second statement, and so on, until they both feel they have been listened to. By this time they can both see they will be listened to politely, but that it has taken a lot of their playtime, and may not have been worth quarreling in the first place. For older children, they may be given a pen or similar object to hold, and while they hold the object they are allowed to speak without interruption. Then the object is passed to the opponent who then has 'the floor'. Children need to learn to state what they are upset about so that in adult life they can express themselves without becoming a 'doormat' and the family is the best place to learn this skill.

Eldest Children

Care must be taken, whenever possible, to let the eldest child have a childhood without being pushed, even unknowingly, into growing up too soon. With modern clothing styles and brand names children can easily get dragged into the world of fashion and behave like little adults. With other children coming along afterwards it is a temptation to use the eldest

child as a babysitter. Also the eldest child is often expected to behave in a more mature way than is expected of the younger children when they get to that age. We may become so used to the baby ways of the younger children that we assume the eldest child knows a lot more, and we therefore expect more help or better behaviour from them. However, if we watch our child we expect so much from, with older cousins or friends, we can see them as they really are, just a little child. Sometimes children do something we get really annoyed about and shout at them, and that's the warning signal we should listen to, that we are expecting too much. Perhaps expecting too much of ourselves as well as the child. Let children be children while they can. The adult world will claim them all too soon and you will wish you could call the years back.

We may have more time to spend with the eldest child before other children arrive, and perhaps read more to them than later on. Then when they can read for themselves we assume they do not need us to read out loud to them any more. Most people enjoy a story at any age and sometimes older children can be seen sidling unobtrusively into the room to listen to a story that is being read to the younger children. It is not just the story they want but the closeness of being together in the warmth of family life. It is memories of those times that is the glue that holds families together later on.

Bullying

When Fraser was about seven years old his school lunches got bigger and bigger, but he still came home hungry. From a chance remark we discovered he was taking food for another boy in his class. If he did not, he was bullied. We went and talked to the bully and told him we knew someone in Fraser's class was being unkind to him and we wanted him to be a special friend to Fraser so they would be able to work together on the problem. We told him that as a family we would not tolerate bullying, and that if it continued we would all arrive at the school to sort out the bully. At no time did we

mention that we knew who the bully was. We invited him to our home after school and at weekends and the bullying soon stopped.

Try and make a friend of the bully and you may eliminate the problem. It is not often as clear-cut as that, and it may be best to involve teachers and other parents. Perhaps a school meeting could be held to bring the problem out in the open. The method we used for Fraser's problem works better with young children. Bullying gets more difficult to sort out as children get older, especially when Internet chat rooms and cellphones are introduced. The computer should be in the living room with automatic safeguards built in. A family rule should have cellphones left in the living room when the child goes to bed. Your children need to know you are on their side and they can tell you anything they are worried about and you will take it seriously.

Bullies are usually people who are afraid their family and friends do not like them. Behind bullying is fear. Behind fear is anger. Behind anger is pain. The pain must be attended to or it will continue to erupt as anger and bullying.

Quarrels

Children often quarrel because they are in a conflict situation they do not know how to handle and hope the noise of the argument will bring an adult to sort it out for them. If the situation is sorted out in their favour, they will be pleased they quarrelled and got help. If things did not go their way they can at least feel sorry for themselves, and can use this injustice to fuel arguments in the future.

Any conflict situation takes time to resolve, and often occurs when there is the least amount of time or energy to sort it out. This may be the cause of some of the quarrels. Before looking at your children's emotional state, look at your own. If there is illness, death, pregnancy, a new baby, unemployment, overtime, house moving, or many other

situations that happen in life, the parents will be under stress themselves.

Any conflict that involves one person in the family, involves the whole family.

You can not teach what you do not know, so parents must talk together about their own problems before they can hope to sort out their children's quarrels successfully. Otherwise it is like a weed that spreads out its roots underground. You may pull out the weed you can see, but there is a whole lot more hidden away underneath, ready to spring up again when the conditions are right.

Two of my children seemed to quarrel quite often around the age of ten or eleven, which was probably their way of sorting out who they were in their own personalities. However, it needed to be dealt with, and I told them that if they had time to quarrel they had time to do a bit more work. So I set them to work. We had an old coal range in the living room and they were given the job of putting black polish on it. This punishment was greeted with the same complaints as if I had banished them to Siberia but they knew they had to get on with it or they would be given another job after that. As time went on the coal range started to shine and they became proud of their achievements. So much so that when I told them after twenty minutes that they could stop polishing they preferred to continue, to make it shine even more. They had an outlet for their energy, and could see a good result, giving them pride in their achievement. The punishment became a pleasure and they no longer felt the need to quarrel. Often, if we can think of a way to use up excess energy we can get rid of the aggression as well, but the main factor was not just using up energy but giving a feeling of achievement. When quarrels abound we must look at the background and see if the people involved feel valued, not only to others but to themselves as well.

While on the subject of punishments, another time after my sons quarrelled I set them to wash the laundry floor. When

the floor was covered in soapy water they found it very slippery and slipped themselves around on it on their knees. They went and changed into their swimming togs and had a great time sliding around from one wall to the other, having so much fun they did not want to stop. Again the punishment became a pleasure and they had great fun. We need to ask how much fun our children have, and how much fun we have with them. Fun does not have to cost a lot of money, but must involve being together. Having fun makes memories that hold a family together when times get difficult.

Dealing with Conflict

Hold a family council meeting. See the letter D in the Alphabet for Parents and Children. People feel threatened and under-valued when they are not consulted. When they feel equal and 'heard' there is not so much conflict. This takes time, which is why a lot of people do not do it, but brings much more lasting and positive results. Give children responsibility and show your appreciation to them for a job well done. Children need fences, even though they complain about having rules to follow. They will often take their behaviour right up to the limit to see what you will tolerate and where you will draw the line. That is how they learn what is acceptable. Include children in the decision-making process and you will not only gain their different perspectives but may be surprised at the maturity of their opinions.

Teach by example that losing your temper is a matter of choice when faced with conflict. Shouting will bring results, but are they the results you want? Can you trust a decision you made when you were upset? One form of maturity is stopping yourself hitting someone, even when you think it is justified. If it is all right for you to hit a child because they are smaller than you, will it later on be all right for them to hit you when they are bigger than you?

A valuable question to ask in many situations is, 'Why am I

doing this?' This is an important question to ask about our jobs and relationships as well as about bringing up children. If we do not ask 'why' we are not likely to find the cause of the problem, and will search for a solution having missed out a step. A quick-fix solution will not put right the cause and the conflict will re-appear in the future. Sometimes, though, a quick-fix is all you have the time or energy for, and that is all right, as long as you are not misled into thinking the problem is solved.

'Walk in the other person's shoes' with role-playing to find out how it is from their point of view. Sit on the floor and see how it feels to be constantly looking up at adults, and threatened by their sheer size. Listen to adults shouting and quarrelling to hear how upsetting it is to be powerless to stop it. Role-play how difficult it is to go to school where people swear, call you names and threaten you, or want you to get into drugs or other things you do not want to do. Let the children role-play having lots of bills to pay with not much money, or getting up at night and being tired the next day, or working all day in a job they do not like.

When the conflict is at its most dangerous, go out for a walk, or at least out of the room. Then come back later to sort it out. When my children were little I often felt isolated because all my relatives lived thousands of miles away on the other side of the world. We had a good friend who became like a grandmother to our children and I remember her phoning me one day and hearing the strain in my voice. I talked about the problems I was having with my children and marriage and lack of money, and that I felt like walking out and leaving the whole situation. She was very understanding and asked if I could wait until the next day when things might look a bit better. I told her I could not wait long. She asked if I could just wait one more hour and I told her even that was too difficult as I had reached the end of my ability. She then asked me to try and wait just a few more minutes and she would pray for me to have help given to me. I promised I would do that, and knew I would be all right. After that, when life with my children became too stressful, I

would go to my bedroom and pray or think quietly for a few minutes and that gave me time to gather my mental reserves to cope with the difficulties.

It is essential, though, not to sidestep the problem when you return. If you do not come back and sort it out, it will be like an iceberg lurking underwater to submerge your life. Each person must have their say, and feel their opinion is valuable to the others. When everyone feels they are an important part of the group, they will be more likely to 'give and take' on family issues, even when the decisions do not always go their own way.

Punishment is to control a child through fear.

Discipline is to teach a child self control.

A lawyer friend and I were discussing my problems with some noisy neighbours. I told her I had tried to be friendly and helpful when they first moved in. When they were noisy I tried to put up with it and not complain but it just got worse and worse. In the end I did not know how to go on living there with the noisy stereo and shouting and swearing. She made an astute comment that applies to many areas of life. She said, "They moved in like puppies and you allowed them to become wolves."

REACH Therapy advised by a paediatrician

Remove yourself from the situation

Express your thoughts and how you feel - 'he did this' 'she said that'

Alternatives - meditate, aromatherapy, prayer, even read a magazine.

Call for help - straight away phone friends or family

Help - from a doctor or teacher or ask for counselling.

Clowns and Butterfly Children

Some children are able to concentrate on reading a book, doing a puzzle, or other activity while others flit from one thing to the other like butterflies. This may simply be their personality in enjoying change, and seeing what is going on around them, but a certain amount of stability needs to be taught. Check what they are eating. Some children react more quickly to sugar, colouring and preservatives than others do. Read the labels on packets of food so you learn the amounts of sugar and chemicals in processed foods. Give as much fruit and vegetables in their natural state as possible. Give water to drink instead of cordials.

Some children become the 'clown'. This again may simply be their personality and it is good to encourage their sense of humour. However, it may be a way to cover up the hurt they feel when with other people and they feel inferior. Maybe they are being bullied, or maybe they actually are the bully. We do not like to think of our own children doing this, but if it can be faced as a family, the child will gain strength from that support. After all, bullies usually feel inferior themselves and sometimes they genuinely do not realise the hurt they cause to others with their remarks or actions.

When you stop and view the world from the child's point of view, they are in an extremely vulnerable position. Changes happen in their world which they have no control over, and are not even consulted about. Parents change jobs, do shift work, move house and even split up or have another partner move in, without much or any consultation with the children. Imagine if your spouse brought in another partner to live in your house and told you that you would all be one big happy family now. You would feel shock, horror and incredible resentment of that person. Yet children have a new baby brother or sister arrive who they are supposed to treat with love and affection. If the parents remarry there is a new partner, and often other children they are expected to share their parent, their home and their possessions with.

Butterfly or clown children can be diabolical to live with. They are impulsive and may be prone to rages and tantrums. They break things, especially other people's possessions. They constantly lose their own possessions, or other people's. They cannot seem to remember what they are told no matter how many times they are reminded of something. They can be one child at school and a completely different child at home. They are often very untidy, not only in their bedroom, but in such things as their writing, and in fact reading and writing are a great trial to them. They may have dyslexia, or need their eyes tested, not just because they cannot see well, but because different coloured lenses may help them see words more clearly. Children with dyslexia often 'think outside the box' and often get bored easily. They have interesting ideas they want to explore but are not yet mature enough to know how to do this, so tend to disrupt others around them.

Butterfly or clown children often fidget and are in perpetual motion, and seem to have an excess of energy to use up. Find ways to use this energy to your advantage. When they are little take them outside to parks and playgrounds to run off their energy. Then bring them home and into a warm bath and later read a story to them. If there is one thing that could change family life in a major way it is to turn off the TV and read to your children, at whatever age they are. Make simple crafts with them. Cover the furniture with an old sheet and let the children get their fingers in the glue, glitter, playdough, paste and paper. Older children can be encouraged into sports, athletics and swimming, and to walk or ride a bike to school instead of being taken in the car. Go with your child to sports activities so you can talk about what happened, and the people involved. Often these butterfly children will only talk about what is on their mind when they are moving. It is as though when the legs are moving the mouth gets into gear as well. Walking home from sports is an ideal time to form bonds that will enable your child to trust you enough to talk about problems and feelings they feel too vulnerable to discuss at home or school.

Work out what kind of pay-off a child gets for behaviour that you object to. It might be whining for lollies at the supermarket check-out, or screaming at you, or getting up many times after being put to bed. What is the child really complaining about? Often, even as adults, we nag or argue about something, when really it is something different that we are upset about. Think back to when the trouble first started. Was there a change of schools, moving house, marriage breakup, illness or unemployment around that time? People often think children are resilient, but the truth is they are scared by things they do not understand and start shouting for attention without being experienced enough to know that is the worst way to try and get it.

Let the child learn what happens as a result of bad behaviour. If the child likes to watch TV then that is stopped as a result of bad behaviour. If it is playing with his toys that he likes, then he is taken away from them for a certain length of time in time-out, or the toys are taken away. If she likes talking to her friends, then that is stopped for a time. Explain first that this will happen, then when the trouble recurs carry out what you said, and do not make it an empty threat. Make sure the child understands the explanation, and is not like the little boy who lived near a busy crossroads. His mother warned him many times not to go near the corner. She was horrified one day to look out of the window and see him toddling down the footpath near the crossroads. She ran and grabbed her little boy and shouted at him that she had told him so many times not to go near the corner. The little boy went home in tears and only later asked, "Mummy, what's the corner?" Teach the child that 'When I do A then I get B. I can control the consequences of my own actions'. Of course, you cannot take away what you have not given in the first place so if you do not read stories or play with the child and he is desperate for attention then taking away toys and TV will only add fuel to the flames.

Set up your child for success. Find at least one thing that the child is able to do and build on it to make it a real success. You may have to start off with something really small and

insignificant like, he shut the door quietly. Comment favourably on it immediately, then search straight away for one more thing to praise. Keep it going. Do not give up. It may be a lifeline not only for your child but for yourself. It may, in years to come, lessen the emotional havoc caused by a troubled teenager in your family. Often parents do not know who to turn to or what to do. Start by looking at your child's life through their own eyes. You might be surprised at what you see. Does the child need something that money cannot buy? Maybe make up a short story about a child with problems similar to your own child's and ask how that person could solve some of the difficulties. Sometimes a simple change in the timetable in getting up half an hour earlier can reduce the stress in the home.

Vital information about strangers to tell your children

1. If you lose each other in a big store, different town, or in a crowd, tell the child to go to a woman to ask for help. Women are less likely to be a kidnapper or attacker.
2. Promise the child you will never send someone else to collect them from kindy or school without telling them first. Then keep to it.

Wakeful Children

Some children simply do not need as much sleep as others - or as much sleep as their parents wish they had! Often this is a sign of a child who has a very active brain and wants to know everything that is happening in the world around. If this is the case, there is no way to switch this off, and neither would you want to as you will be proud of that child's intelligent ability later on.

We have to walk a fine dividing line between arranging

interesting things for babies and children to do, but not over-stimulate their minds to the point where they cannot relax and sleep. Try to take the child out in the late afternoon for a walk to use up some energy and move some muscles. Do not expect a child to sleep in the evening after a long sleep during the afternoon. There will need to be several hours between waking from the daytime sleep and going to bed at night. Ensure children are warm enough, even after climbing out of the blankets. When moving children from a cot into a single bed it is better to wait until they are well over 2 years and nearer 3 and more settled in their sleep routines. Often, though, the move has to coincide with the arrival of the next baby who needs to go into the cot.

Sleep occurs in cycles usually lasting 90 but can be up to 110 minutes and this is a sorting out time for the brain. In the early part of the cycle we usually sink into deep sleep and this is the time our brain sorts out information like facts and figures. In the latter part of the cycle we sleep more lightly, with our eyes following our dreams, and the brain sorts out skills and more practical events. We are more likely to wake up to go to the toilet during the latter half of the cycle. Adults need to be asleep at least 6 hours before the body reaches its lowest temperature, which is usually around 4am. My mother used to say that an hour of sleep before midnight is worth 2 after that time, but that is an 'old wives tale' probably used to encourage children to go to bed early. Newborn babies need about 18 hours sleep a day so it is helpful to set the clock when the baby wakes, feed, wind, change nappy and back to bed again in that 90 minutes if possible. During their first year babies gradually reduce their sleeping hours to about 14 including daytime sleeps. Ages 1 to 3 years need 12 to 15 hours. Ages 3 to 5 need 11 to 13 hours. Ages 5 to 12 need 9 to 11 hours while teenagers need 9 or 10 hours and adults 7 or 8 hours. Babies and toddlers who have daytime naps are more likely to sleep more soundly at night. It is a false idea that if children do not sleep during the day they will be more tired and sleep better at night. They seem to get more wound up and then cannot unwind to get

off to sleep.

Children usually prefer an organised routine with a definite time for bed. They may not go to sleep straight away, but can lie looking at mobiles and pictures on the wall or in books. After the usual bedtime routine of toothbrushes, stories, songs and cuddles, do not fall into the trap of lying on their bed or sitting with the child till sleep takes over, or making frequent visits to the bedroom. Children must get used to being awake when they go to bed and then drifting off to sleep, otherwise they will not learn how to wake up in the night and go off to sleep again. If they have always gone to sleep with you beside them, they will come looking for you when they wake up in the night as that is what they think is the right thing to do.

If a child has got in to the habit of getting up again after being put to bed, or calling the parent back for drinks of water, the parent can put the child back to bed and then sit on a chair near the door, not talking or looking at the child, in fact ignoring the child completely until the child goes to sleep. It helps to have a torch to read a book while doing this because it may take several nights until the child learns once again to go off to sleep without distractions.

One of the things I learned while working as the staff nurse in charge of the Children's Clinic of a major hospital for many years, was that there are some things you simply cannot 'make' a child do. I needed to get a urine sample from a 4 year old girl so gave her a big drink and after waiting a while took her and her mother to the toilet. I explained everything and prepared her skin for the sample, then sat her on the toilet with a sterile tray under her. She said, "I'm not going to do it." I reassured her that her mummy wanted her to do it and would stay with her all the time. She still refused. I promised her some stickers and a balloon if she would pass urine. She said, "No. I'm not going to do it." I told her the doctor needed to know how to help her get better from her tummy aches. The little girl still adamantly refused. Time was moving along and the mother was upset with her little

daughter and the doctor was wondering where we had all got to. I realised that there was absolutely nothing more I could do, and she held complete power over the situation. So I backed off and told her it did not matter and she could do it later on. Suddenly she decided she could do it after all, and she did!

You cannot force children to pass urine, or a bowel motion, or go to sleep, or hold down food that you put in their mouths. This is very frustrating when you know it is for their own good. Some children take a long time to fall asleep. I have never known a child like my grandson Isaac when he was 2 and 3 years old for staying awake for ages after being put to bed. He had all the usual routine of bath, teeth cleaning, stories, prayers, cuddles then into bed, but he just did not go to sleep for an hour or more after that. Isaac has kind and loving parents, and his mother is a pre-school teacher so understands little children. His equally wonderful Grandma (!) often put him to bed but he still did not go to sleep for ages. Isaac's father tried the firm approach by taking all the toys out of the room hoping Isaac would drop off to sleep out of boredom, but instead he simply sang and talked to the wallpaper! We tried everything; long walks at 4pm to tire him; staying in the room but sitting by the door and ignoring him; being nice; being not nice; but nothing changed. Isaac simply did not want to go to sleep. I remembered that his father had been similar at the same age and would sometimes get up at about 4am and play quietly with his toys. So maybe some things are hereditary.

The interesting sequel to this story is that when Isaac's baby brother arrived his parents were even more deprived of sleep. They persevered with Isaac's slowness to go to sleep until my son Fraser decided more definite action should be taken. Here is part of an email to me from Fraser. "Just thought you'd be interested to know that Isaac is currently sitting on the floor behind my chair at 10:30pm, because after he went to bed he ended up waking up baby Nathan, and then decided it would be more fun to play with Nathan than to go to sleep. He has a couple of cars that go to bed

with him, which got taken away, then his favourite doll Michael got taken away, but he still didn't want to sleep. So now the consequence is that if he isn't going to be quiet in bed he sits and is quiet here by the computer with me, and is tired, and can go to bed when I do, and get up when we do, and be tired tomorrow. It's the same principle as when you take children out of church because they were noisy but don't let them play, so they become so bored they want to go back in to church again. Every now and then Isaac thinks he's found a loophole, or something he can try that will be more interesting than sitting quietly, and he discovers that life actually can become less pleasant for a while, so he decides to sit quietly ... until he forgets again!"

After my children were grown up I worked as a nanny for a few years. A little girl I looked after also rebelled against going to sleep in the middle of the day when she would rather have played. I followed her usual bedtime routine, reading and singing, but as soon as I left the room she had no intention of going to sleep. I left the door ajar so I could see in the mirror what she was doing, and she had a great gymnastic time in her cot. I went in to the room 2 or 3 times, each time tucking her back into bed but not talking to her at all. One day she took off all her clothes, and threw them and her toys out of the cot, then proceeded to throw out all the sheets and blankets. Then somehow she managed to crawl underneath the mattress and eventually went to sleep on the bare boards of the cot base. Although only 18 months old she sensed I was getting annoyed but that did not stop her leaping around the cot as soon as I left the room. This went on for several days, then one day I told her I had had enough, her behaviour was ridiculous and she had to stop it right now and go to sleep. She could not understand the words, but she certainly was in no doubt that I had reached my limit of tolerance. She was asleep within minutes! I was reminded of the old saying, When the mother decides, the child will follow. Maybe we just need to stop being so tolerant and be a lot firmer.

Firmness is fine when you are feeling strong but is so

difficult when you are tired or unwell or pregnant. One child can disrupt the entire household with crying in the night and often it seems easier for parents to give in for the sake of peace and quiet. Also, we often make allowances for clinging when the child is ill and this can continue and eventually become demanding behaviour. Certainly we need to be firm if a child is crying and screaming at us, wanting us to stay, or lie on the bed, or to come into Mummy's bed. That is the signal to let the child know you will not stay if there is crying or screaming at you, then leave the room. If the child will be quiet then you will stay, but even then you will sit on a chair near the door and not talk. It is so difficult to carry out this procedure, which may well go on for several days before it gets better, and you really need someone else to back you up. This is a time to look a little ahead and see what kind of future you are likely to have if you give in.

Look at the bedroom from the child's point of view. Lie on the bed. Is there a tree outside the window, casting scary shadows on the bedroom wall. Is the room too light? There may be a bright street light that makes it difficult to believe it is night time. Put up really thick, dark curtains to make the room as dark after sunrise as it is during the night. Any TV or other electronic items should be taken out of the bedroom, in fact, it is better if children do not watch TV in the hour before bed time.

For children past the toddler stage we can use plain old bribery. If children know they are going to get stickers or some other little treat if they go to sleep or stay in their own bed all night, they have some incentive to change their behaviour. The reward must be given as soon as it is morning though. Little children can't wait long because they do not understand how time works.

Just as children have to learn to go to sleep at night, they also need to learn when it is time to wake up in the morning. Put a clock in the bedroom with all the hours blocked out except the hour of getting up time. Put a sticker on that number, say, 7 am. Let the child know there is to be no

getting up before the clock hands get to where the sticker is. The same method can be used for Christmas morning when children are renowned for getting up in the early hours.

When we see life from the child's point of view we realise that children are lonely when they go to bed. In many parts of the world parents and children sleep in the same room, because they have no other rooms. It might help the child to have some article of clothing from the parents to cuddle at night as a comforter. If you often use a particular perfume, put a drop of that on it too, so it has the familiar smell. When I was a young girl we had a dog called Rex who adored my mother. Whenever she went out without the dog, Rex felt neglected. He would grab the dress she had been wearing and drag it in to his bed and guard it fiercely until she returned. That was bad enough but worse was to follow. My mother bought a hat to wear at a wedding, and Rex dragged that in to his bed too, and sat on it. When my mother returned she did not know whether to be angry with the dog or pleased that he loved her so much.

Nightmares

Nightmares happen at any age, for very little children or grown adults. For all ages the recipe is the same: comfort for the immediate situation, and knowledge of how to deal with nightmares in the future.

Owen had nightmares at age 3 years. We always took his fears seriously and showed him he had the right to have his feelings respected. We put a cardboard box next to his bed so all the bad dreams and other things that worried him, could fall into the box in the night. In the morning we taped the box shut so the bad dreams could not get out, then took the box out to the rubbish collection. We used this same treatment for the nightmares our other children had in later years and it worked just as well for them.

Craig had nightmares several times around 11 years of age,

which turned out to be caused by worrying about a maths teacher whose expectations were too high. Even though Craig was excellent at maths, his work was never given much appreciation, and he was told he could always do better. We would sit on the settee with Craig wrapped in blankets, while we talked about what happened in the nightmare, which usually involved an angry man with a big, vicious dog. We talked about the scary things that might have happened in the end. Then we worked out a happy ending for the nightmare in which Craig was more powerful than the scary situations. We encouraged him to shout at whoever was scaring him and chase them away. He usually ended up smiling about it, and could see that he was in charge of his dreams. We gave him the power to act for himself, even when asleep. Therefore he no longer had to fear falling asleep.

Unmentionables

Nits

No-one likes to talk about nits, much less have them, but they are a common problem to be dealt with. They are passed from child to child so easily it is difficult for most children at pre-school and school to avoid them. Head lice are not a sign of a dirty head as they prefer clean hair, indicating a healthy child who is therefore a better meal-ticket.

Once you have adjusted to the horror of finding little insects crawling around on your child's head, and have stopped scratching your own at the thought of it, get to work with special shampoo bought at the local pharmacy. They also have non-chemical shampoos to try. This must be accompanied by washing the child's sheets, pillowcase, hairbrush, comb, towels, in HOT water. The blankets are best taken outside, shaken well and hung on the washing line for a few hours, if possible. Teddy bears and other bedtime toys need to be washed. Some people recommend smothering the hair in Vaseline, hair conditioner, olive oil or even mayonnaise then wrap it in a towel for several hours before shampooing out, but this is not for everyone. The shorter the child's hair the easier it is to examine it in future, but do not cut it so short the child feels vulnerable. It is better to give the same treatment to everyone in the family all at one go, otherwise the nits can be passed from one to the other. Repeat the treatment as indicated on the shampoo bottle, usually in about a week or two, when previously laid eggs are able to hatch out. Nits can be kept at bay with a few drops of Tea Tree oil added to one final cup of warm rinse water after shampooing and rinsing. You can try smothering the hair in conditioner which stuns the lice and makes it easier to comb them out. You will need a steel nit-comb from the shops. Head lice occur much more frequently in spring and summer when the weather is warmer. The treatment of head lice in children is similar to that of fleas on cats and

dogs. They also come out in spring and summer and need a second treatment 3 weeks after the first dose when the next lot of eggs hatch. Your local vet can recommend a good spray for your house and the cat or dog if they have fleas, and their bedding.

Threadworms

Another problem no-one likes to think they have is threadworms. If a child is irritable, not sleeping well, and scratching their bottom, they may have worms. These are so minute they can hardly be seen at all, and are just like a tiny piece of cotton thread. Get some medicine from the pharmacy and give it to all the family because if one child has this problem, the others probably have as well as it is passed on from hand to hand so easily. Repeat the medication as directed on the bottle, usually in about 2 weeks. Nightclothes and sheets on the bed need to be washed at the same time.

Sores

These are often called School Sores as they are so infectious they are very easily picked up from other children at school. Cold sores usually occur around the mouth and are also very infectious. We meet infections all the time every day but do not become ill with them as our body's defences swing into action and fight them off. When children are tired, emotionally stressed or fighting off a cold or some other infection already, they are less able to deal with infections from sores. Any small cut, graze or eczema can then be infected and spread to any other place the child scratches.

You need to ask for advice from either your doctor, nurse or pharmacist, depending on how many sores there are. It is better to deal with only one or two, but when there are many a doctor needs to treat them. An antibiotic may be given either by mouth or as a cream on the skin. If an antibiotic is prescribed, increase the amount of water that is drunk, and

give Vitamin B complex tablets from the supermarket. Hands must be washed after touching the sores or the infection will be passed on to wherever the child scratches next. Cut children's fingernails and smooth them with an emery board so they do not scratch the skin so much. Some people swab the sores with Hydrogen Peroxide which can be bought from the pharmacy, asking for advice at the same time. Sores can be covered during the daytime, to prevent spreading to other children, and to prevent dirt getting in the sores. Use small squares of dry gauze held on with paper tape, which does not damage a child's tender skin when removed. Take the gauze off at night, give a bath or wash, dry the sores with a paper towel and leave uncovered during the night to help them dry up. Children with sores should each have their own towel, and use paper towels on the actual sores, to prevent the spread of infection.

Look at what your child is eating. Does this include plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, or are there quite a lot of convenience foods being eaten. Until you write down absolutely everything your children put into their mouths during the course of the day, you may not realise how many processed foods and drinks are being taken in. Lollies, cakes, biscuits, ice cream, flavoured yoghurt, several breakfast cereals and many drinks are mostly sugar, and sugar will feed any infection so should be stopped, despite the grizzles when this happens. The human body needs a lot of water each day to flush out impurities and infections. Many people stopped drinking water when flavoured drinks became available, but usually they do more harm than good.

A child may be under stress at home from a rushed timetable for everyone to get to work and school, or to after-school activities. Stress may be occurring at school with bullying, inability to keep up with school work, not being good at sports, or not being part of the 'popular' group. Simply getting through the dark, damp days of winter can cause stress to everyone, including children. Look for ways to simplify the day-to-day routine and fix earlier bedtimes for everyone. Perhaps go to the library and get several picture

books for children to look at in bed before going to sleep. Read aloud to them. People of all ages enjoy being read to.

Vomiting and Diarrhoea

After a child has vomited give only tiny amounts to drink. Boil water even if it is from the tap and give only a few teaspoons at a time of cooled boiled water. Try a few teaspoons every 10 to 15 minutes. When that is kept down it can be increased a little at a time. Too much might make the child vomit all over again. However, even if they vomit, it is better to have the fluid because some of it will get through the body.

If children are coughing a lot they may scratch the back of the throat causing them to swallow tiny amounts of blood which may then be vomited up. This gives the parents anxiety and it is a good idea to phone the doctor's office for advice. Babies who vomit can lose a lot of their body fluid very quickly and may need to go to hospital and be put on an IV drip to build up their fluids again. Watch that the nappies are wet, and if becoming too dry, advice must be sought fairly quickly. If going to a doctor keep a sample of the vomit in a jar to take with you, especially if there has been blood in it.

Diarrhoea can be very serious in babies and young children and it is best to phone for advice from the Plunket nurse or doctor's nurse. Babies and toddlers need a lot of fluids to make up for what they vomit or have lost in diarrhoea. You can buy Gastrolyte from the pharmacy but if living in an area where that is not available you could make up a similar solution with 1 litre cooled, boiled water and add to it a teaspoon of salt and 4 teaspoons of sugar. Years ago, for children older than toddlers, people used dry ginger ale mixed with soda water and cold boiled water, in 3 equal parts. Or fizzy lemonade mixed half and half with cold boiled water. Cut back on sugar though as that overloads the kidneys which are struggling to cope with flushing out the

germs. Where possible do not use diet drinks as they contain chemicals that are best avoided.

Much as we want children to stop vomiting and having diarrhoea, it is the body's most efficient way of getting rid of the germs that will cause illness if they are not eliminated. The main thing is to keep fluids going back in to the body as fast as they are coming out of it. It is also important to use disinfectant wipes on door handles, light switches and any areas touched by other people to stop the infection spreading. A thermometer will also tell if the temperature is going up, which it will usually do when the body is fighting infection or does not have enough fluids going through it.

When a child can keep down 2 tablespoons of water at a time, you can give some dry toast or cream crackers to eat with a scrape of Marmite. It is best to avoid all fatty or fried foods for several days.

Constipation

At any age constipation is a distressing condition and best avoided with fibre foods and plenty of watery drinks. Going to the toilet should happen so easily nobody ever needs to think how to do it. Many people with obesity are chronically constipated and their whole inside slows down so much their body just holds on to the food and they are 'bunged up'. Vegetables, fruit and water are the key to good health. Modern fast foods do not help as they are often full of empty calories that make you feel full without giving any nutrition and fibre. Some foods that seem to cause constipation in many children are too much cheese, chocolate and milk.

Your doctor can prescribe medication for a child with constipation and the old fashioned boiled prunes or syrup of figs are great remedies. Once children have felt pain when going to the toilet it makes them afraid to try again. You could wrap plastic clingfilm around your finger and dab some oil on the child's bottom, where the poos come out, just

before he or she goes to the toilet to ease the pain.

Some children are so constipated they seem to have diarrhoea as there is a leaking of brown fluid from around the build up of faeces blocking their lower intestine. This can only be cleared with treatment from a doctor, who may even refer you to a hospital paediatrician. Usually a high dose of special laxatives for children will be given. This should jump-start the bowel into working again and the laxatives can be reduced gradually over a few weeks, although treatment may need to continue for several months. Following this, constant watchful care needs to be given to making sure it does not build up again over the next year or two. It is no use asking young children if they have 'been' to the toilet. Their bottom end is actually numb from the build-up of faeces, and they cannot feel that they need to go to the toilet. That is the reason they may walk around with soiled underwear, smelling bad, but not knowing it is there. You need to stop them flushing the toilet before you have had a look to see how much they have actually done.

The foods to concentrate on are foods containing fluid, such as oranges, celery, apples and pears unpeeled, kiwifruit, stewed prunes mashed, porridge, water to drink instead of cordial, whole grain bread instead of white bread.

Urine Infection

This is usually accompanied by pain and tears on passing urine and a rising temperature. The child will want to pass urine but hold back because it hurts. There may be a nasty smell in the urine, and it can be cloudy, or even have blood in it. There is often pain in the tummy, or in the lower back, possibly even vomiting.

There will probably be redness when you look at the girl's bottom end. This area is called the vulva. Leading from the vulva, up inside, is a tube called the urethra which goes in to the bladder where urine is stored. In girls the urethra is only

very short and infections from outside can get up inside more easily than in boys who have a longer urethra inside the penis. This is why little girls and women get urine infections more often than boys and men do. From the top of the bladder there are 2 tubes, called ureters, that go up to the kidneys. There are 2 kidneys one on each side of the backbone, and inside the hip bones which protect them. The job of the kidneys is to filter all the fluid in the body and send any impurities out of the body in the urine.

Urine infections are more common in little girls who are just coming out of nappies and wiping their own bottom after using the toilet. Girls need to be carefully taught to wipe themselves from front to back. Tell them they do not want to be a 'back to front girl'. Unfortunately, when a little girl wipes herself from the back to the front she can bring forward germs from the anus, where she does poos, and these can get in to the urethra. These germs are usually bacteria, rather than viruses, so can be treated by antibiotics, but the bad news is that the antibiotics can destroy the 'good guys' in the body as well as the bacteria.

Some common causes of urine infections, apart from physical abnormalities in the kidneys or bladder, are -

Not wiping from front to back

Not drinking enough watery drinks during the day

Wearing tight, especially nylon, undies or trousers

Bubble baths and other chemicals used on the vulva

A lot of sugar in the diet often at birthdays and Christmas

It is strongly recommended that the little girl be taken to a doctor or pharmacist for advice. A urine test will probably be required to be sent to a laboratory. In an older child this is relatively easy to catch with a sterile container held under her when she passes urine while sitting on the toilet. With a baby or toddler it is more difficult. A sterile bag may be fitted

to the baby's vulva after swabbing with sterile saline, but there will be some bacteria from the skin that often get in to the urine while it is being passed and can contaminate the specimen.

If you can spare the time it is greatly preferable to catch the urine in a sterile container as it is being passed. This will take 40 to 60 minutes. Give the baby a big drink, then swab the vulva with sterile saline and lie the baby on a small sterile sheet. After about 30 minutes you can expect the baby to pass urine at any time during the next 10 to 20 minutes. It is time consuming watching for this to happen while you hold the sterile container, with fingers on the outside of the jar, ready to catch 'the gold'. However, it is much the best way to get a clear specimen which will give a good indication of which antibiotic is best to prescribe. Often the child will pass a little bit of urine and you miss it with the sterile jar, and feel discouraged, but they will often pass some more very soon afterwards so be ready. Antibiotics should not be given until the results are back in case the urine specimen has to be repeated and will by then be altered by the antibiotic.

Bed Wetting

Here are some facts about this uncomfortable and distressing subject that rightly causes so much concern to parents and children alike.

The medical term for bed wetting is enuresis, pronounced en-you-reesis.

If a child has never been able to be dry at night, this is called primary enuresis.

If a child has been dry for 6 months or so, and then starts wetting the bed again, this is called secondary enuresis.

When a child over the age of 5 wets the bed it is called nocturnal enuresis.

If bed wetting starts after being dry for a while it may be caused by a urine infection which needs a doctor's investigation.

There may be emotional reasons for bed wetting to start after being dry for some time, like the arrival of a new baby, divorce, moving house, going to hospital, being bullied at school, worrying about school lessons.

Sexual abuse is rarely a cause, but does have to be taken into consideration if a child suddenly starts wetting the bed.

There are many reasons for bedwetting and no one particular cause.

Just as some children walk at nine months and others at 18 months, some children take longer to control their bladder than others.

Most children do not stop wetting the bed until they are about 5 years old so usually doctors will not treat it until the child is about 7.

One in five children still wet the bed by the age of 5 years.

One in twenty children still wet the bed by the age of 10 years.

One in a hundred people may still wet the bed even when they are adults.

It is often hereditary and you may hear a parent remark that they remember wetting the bed as a child.

Some children have a small bladder which cannot hold all the urine that collects during the night.

The hormone that concentrates our urine at night so we do not have to keep getting up, does not work properly in some children.

The message to our brain that wakes us up to go to the toilet

at night has not yet developed in some children.

Constipation can cause the lower part of the child's body to be 'full' irritating the bladder, particularly at night when it is filling up.

Some children have an irritable bladder and when they've got to go, they've got to go in a hurry.

Children cannot control their bladder when they are asleep so should not be punished for wetting the bed.

Some children are very heavy sleepers and could sleep through a brass band marching through their room.

Sometimes a child will think he is in the toilet, only to wake up in a wet bed and find it was only a dream.

If you get your child up to the toilet before you go to bed you need to walk the child around to wake up properly.

Sometimes children stay overnight at a friend's house and do not wet the bed because they sleep more lightly in someone else's house and get up to the toilet.

Chocolate, cola or caffeine drinks may cause bladder irritation at night.

Children who wet the bed are not lazy, nobody really wants to lie in a wet bed.

Children should not be shamed, bullied, or teased because they wet the bed.

Children as well as parents feel very embarrassed about bed wetting.

There are adverts on TV about adults wetting themselves.

If we were more open about wetting there would be less embarrassment.

Parents are understandably tired of all the washing involved.

What can you DO about bed wetting?

If still bed wetting after the age of 7 years your child needs to be examined by your family doctor and a urine test may be sent to the laboratory to see if there is a urine infection, although this is not usually the case. You could ask about being referred to a paediatrician at your nearest hospital. If your child is having emotional difficulties you can ask to be referred to a psychologist who is used to talking to children and helping them sort things out. Never, never feel embarrassed or ashamed about going to a doctor or psychologist for help. If your child had a broken arm you would expect to go for treatment, then why not go about bed wetting?

If your child is wetting during the day or suddenly starts bed wetting after being dry for several months a doctor's examination is needed. Treatment of constipation may stop the child wetting.

Children need to be given lots to drink during the earlier part of the day so their bladder learns to hold a fair amount of urine. Do not refuse to give a child anything to drink after 5pm but also do not give extra drinks in the evening. Especially do not give sweet, fizzy drinks, or colas after late afternoon.

Have a routine at bed time that includes making sure to go to the toilet. You may need to check this has actually happened by looking in the toilet.

Cover the whole mattress in a strong plastic cover. Ask your pharmacy or District Nurse where to buy this. Then put the bottom sheet on the bed. Place a rubber sheet crossways over the bed with a thick towel then a narrow sheet over that. Have them long enough for a good tuck in. In hospitals this is called a draw sheet. Put thick knickers and pyjamas on the child so some of the flooding is absorbed. This helps to cut down on the amount of washing involved. Show your child how to put wet clothes and sheets in to the washing machine

so he can feel he is helping with the load. You could fill the machine with cold water before going to bed so it is ready to soak. Then put it on the normal wash cycle.

Make sure your child has a shower and clean clothes straight after getting up in the morning so there is no lingering smell of urine.

If your child has a school camp to go to, tell your doctor about this because there is medication that can be given but only for a very short time. It does not work for more than a few days.

If your child is over 7 or 8 years old and is eager to try it, you may be able to use a bed wetting alarm, available from your doctor. Sometimes there is a very small charge to hire the alarm. A small thin mattress about 50cm square is placed under the child, under the bottom sheet. As soon as the child starts to wet and the moisture hits the thin mattress an alarm sounds waking the child who can then get out of bed and go to the toilet. Other alarm systems have a pad fitted inside the pyjamas so the alarm sounds as soon as moisture hits it. At first the child may not wake up, so parents need to get the child out of bed, but as the habit forms the child wakes and gets up to the toilet each time. Alarms have been found to be very useful and have a 70% success rate, but only when children are old enough and keen enough to use them.

Having an alarm sound in the middle of the night may wake not only the child and the parent, but other children sleeping nearby. Every family must work out if the broken sleep while learning to use the alarm is worth the success of having a dry bed.

If a method, such as an alarm, has been tried and not been successful, it is good to try it again a year later as the child gets old enough to manage it better. Most methods have greater success when the child, parents and doctor are all working together with positive encouragement for each other. Star charts and rewards are fine as long as they are

only used for congratulating progress made. It must always be remembered that a child does not have control over his bladder when he is asleep any more than an adult could be expected to perform a difficult task while sound asleep.

Coughs, Colds, Flu and Sore Throats

A paediatrician I used to work with often said to patients, "There's no such thing as 'just a normal cough'. It is never normal to have a cough." A cough is the body's way of getting up 'stuff' from the tubes in the lungs and into the outside world. At first it will be white, changing to yellow the longer it stays in the lungs or sinuses. If it stays there it will collect like a stagnant pool and become infected. This is when there is greenish mucus coughed up, or sneezed out of the nose. If the tubes of the lungs are damaged with the effort of so much coughing they may bleed slightly and bloodstained mucus will be seen.

People who are ill and lying in bed, or well and slumped in front of a computer or TV are all prone to having little movement in their lungs. This means mucous will build up in the breathing tubes and become more and more infected. People who have a lung disease need to be treated by a doctor. The remedy for those who are not already ill is to get out in the fresh air and do some deep breathing several times a day, have a good cough, blow their nose, and then come in and have a warm drink to recover from all that activity.

Common cold germs are spread by breathing in the germ droplets in the air or by getting them on our hands and then rubbing our eyes. A single sneeze can infect all the people nearby for over 20 metres, even up to 40 metres. It is important to sneeze into a tissue or at least downwards into our sleeve, instead of into the air in front of us. Children need to be taught this from an early age.

Most people get colds in winter. Statistics inform us that most people have about 6 colds a year but it is difficult to

know if this means a runny nose, or more than that. A cold that involves aching all over the body and a fever is more likely to be flu and the person needs to be resting in bed for 2 or 3 days, drinking lots of fluids to get the temperature down in a natural way, not with cold medication. Use disinfectant wipes on door handles and wash hands before eating food to help cut down the spread of cold and flu germs, although once it is going around the neighbourhood it is difficult to avoid. Positive thinking and laughter really do help to build up your immunity, along with avoiding tiredness and eating fresh vegetables and fruit.

Most flu germs originate in Asia where farming methods allow pigs and geese to be raised together, with cross contamination of their individual germs sometimes being transferred to people. The word flu originated about 8 centuries ago when Europeans started to travel to Asia, taking home with them many new germs. Spanish doctors called it the Influence of the Devil, or Influenza de Diablo. It used to take a year for new germs to arrive across the world, but now jet travel can achieve that in 24 hours.

A flu germ usually enters the body through the nose or eyes transferred from the person's hands. Often when we are tired we rub our eyes with our hands and the germ gets in and travels down inside to the nose. That germ attaches itself to a nose cell and immediately starts to make copies of itself. The copies hide under a covering of your nose cells, so the body does not recognise the invaders. However, as the invaders multiply and burst out the body throws itself into the attack. White cells are sent to fight off the invaders and the body diverts blood from the arms and legs to gather in the central part of the body to raise the temperature. That is why when a cold or flu starts we wrap our arms around ourselves, feel cold and shivery and say we have caught a cold.

The flu virus cannot multiply if the body temperature is above 38.5°C or 101°F degrees as the ends of the virus cannot attach to the body's cells, so the virus cannot reproduce itself. Then the white cells in the blood quickly destroy the

invading virus. A cold attacks the nose but flu enters the lungs. If you are sneezing with a runny nose it is a cold. If you are coughing and have aching and a fever it is flu.

When a cold or flu first strikes it is best to go to bed, stay warm and drink lots of watery drinks to counteract the sweating your body will be doing. All the well tried remedies help, such as oranges, chicken soup, herb teas, as most of these are watery and warm. People with aching and fever often take aspirin or paracetamol so they will feel better, but this lowers the temperature to below 38 or 100 degrees and the invading virus is allowed to reproduce and spread massively throughout the body. This ability to feel better allows people to continue going to work or school where they spread the germs to many people. The germs are not killed off though, and continue to multiply in the lungs giving the person viral pneumonia, for which there is no antibiotic cure.

A child with flu needs to have their temperature taken every hour, or even half hour, at first to see if it is changing. The main thing to know is not so much what the temperature is, but if it is going up fast. If it is going past 39°C or 102°F you need to phone your doctor's nurse for advice. At 40°C or 104°F you should phone the ambulance service for advice. Use either a special ear thermometer, or an ordinary one placed under the armpit. The way to bring down the temperature is to give lots of watery drinks, remove blankets and clothing and then slop wet cloths over the child's chest and neck. These cloths should be lukewarm not cold, and put a plastic sheet and towel under the child first to stop the bed becoming wet. You could carry the child to a lukewarm bath but they do not like to be lifted as they are aching.

For people more used to Fahrenheit thermometers than Celsius and vice versa, this is how to change the numbers to those you are more familiar with.

Take Celsius number multiply by 9 then divide by 5 and add 32 to get Fahrenheit

e.g. $38 \times 9 = 342$ divide by 5 = 68.4 add 32 = 100.4

36.5 = 97.7

37 = 98.6

38.5 = 101.3

39 = 102.2

39.5 = 103.1

40 = 104

Take Farenheit number minus 32 then multiply by 5 and divide by 9 for Celsius

e.g. $68 - 32 = 36$ multiply by 5 = 180 divide by 9 = 20

Normal temperature is just below 37°C . To kill off flu germs keep the temperature around 38.5°C or slightly above it, but only slightly. With a child it is better to put the thermometer under their arm and hold it for 3 minutes, then add half a degree because the temperature was not taken inside the mouth. If the temperature goes above 38.5°C after the half degree is added, that is the time to take the child's pyjamas off, give lots of small drinks of water every 10 minutes, and swab the child with lukewarm water cloths, and retake the temperature in half an hour.

Paracetamol can be given to lower the child's temperature if it goes above 39 or 39.5°C

For sore throats it is soothing to suck a chewable vitamin C tablet. Also pieces of orange several times an hour will soothe the pain and promote healing. Another old remedy is a teaspoon of honey warmed in a cup until runny, then squeeze over it the juice of a lemon and stir well. Sip this frequently off a teaspoon and it is soothing both to the throat and to an irritating cough.

Blocked Nose

Anything inside your head hurts more than most other places in the body because there is not much room in there, and nowhere for the swelling to spread out. When a baby has a cold it will sound very snuffly because the nasal passages are so tiny it takes only a small amount of mucous to block them. It is very difficult for a baby to feed when the nose is slightly blocked. If you try eating while holding your breath and you will understand. Dissolve a large pinch of salt in half a cup of boiling water and cover it with a tissue while it cools down to lukewarm. Wrap the baby in a cloth so the arms are not waving around. Then lie the baby across your lap with the head slightly down. You can buy a tiny dropper from the pharmacy very cheaply, but if you do not have this then dip a small, clean cloth or tissue in the water and squeeze it up the baby's nostrils. You may have to do this several times as the water often runs the other way, or the baby moves at the wrong moment. Wait a few minutes for the liquid to work its way up the nose. Babies do not like this to be done as they feel they are being suffocated and will usually cry, but this is actually better because in doing so their tears help to unblock the nasal passages. The baby will not be suffocated or drowned because the water will simply flow up the nose and down the back of the throat. After about 5 minutes the baby's breathing will be clearer and more able to feed comfortably. This procedure is upsetting for both the baby and parent, but is worth persevering with as it does improve the breathing and comfort of the baby. Sometimes we have to do something uncomfortable to gain a long term benefit.

Teething

Teeth hurt when they come in and hurt when they come out as well, but it is difficult to do without them. All sorts of rashes and irritability are blamed on teething. A few babies cut their teeth with very little pain, but others have red, swollen cheeks and lots of tears for days - and nights. Your

pharmacist can advise about helpful products, so make use of what is available.

Accidents

Most accidents involving young children happen in and around their home. We are never going to be able to stop all injuries, but can minimise many of them by looking at the world from the child's eye level. A bored toddler standing in a cot and seeing the cord on a nearby window blind, can loop it round their head and neck, unable to untangle it and strangulation occurs. They can also become caught up in bumper pads or mosquito netting around the cot. Toys in the paddling pool are a joy to play with but a toddlers do not know they must not play in the water when adults have gone indoors for something.

Summer is a lovely time for children after being cooped up indoors during winter, but brings with it the challenges of hot barbecues that do not look hot to little children. There is no way they can know they will get burned from touching something that was not hot earlier in the day. Trampolines should be set low into a huge hole in the ground, or safety nets used, and only one child at a time allowed on them. Swimming pool gates must be kept shut and children accounted for. A gate should also be fitted at the top and bottom of stairs, and across doors that lead out into the street.

Make a habit of looking under the car immediately before you get in to drive it, and know where your children are. One of the saddest conversations I had as a nurse was when a mother told me that she was depressed all the time because she had killed her child. Apparently, she had come home from the supermarket, taken her toddler out of the car seat and walked into the house with a load of shopping, thinking the toddler was walking behind her. The toddler had found something of interest on the driveway behind the car and was sitting playing with it. The handbrake was not fully on

and the car slid back down the sloping driveway, killing the toddler.

It is a constant amazement how children find things you had not realised they could see. In the garden, berries on bushes look like lollies, and so does coloured snail bait. In the house, medicines also look like lollies, and grandparents need to put their medicines out of reach of children all the time, not just when grandchildren visit, when it might get forgotten about. Children may see something on TV and want to copy it. One little patient had seen Santa Claus with his fluffy white beard and wanted to copy it. He did not realise that spraying oven cleaner on his face would cause burns that would last a lifetime.

Stoves need to be secured to the wall as they can tip forward if the oven door is opened and a child stands on it to climb up higher. Ideally children should be kept out of the kitchen, but this may not be practicable in open plan living, so you can use the Yellow Line Principle, mentioned earlier, to keep children away from dangerous areas such as when cooking on the stove.

When parents are out at work, with their child in daycare, they may not realise their child has learned a new skill that takes them into a danger zone. Toys that are acceptable for a 5 year old to play with, might be dangerous for a 3 year old in the same room. Toys left all over the floor can be a danger to anyone walking across the room, perhaps in a hurry to answer the phone. Children need to have a place to keep their toys in, and a tidy up time before meals. We used to play 'Twenty pick up' where we each picked up twenty items. This taught counting as well as tidiness, and older children are always keen to pick up the highest number of items and beat the record. Unfortunately, that tidiness did not last into the teenage years and I often reminded my sons when I went into their bedrooms in the morning to wake them up for school, that I needed life insurance to walk across the floor to open the curtains.

Children need our attention all the time. If you need to go to the bathroom, or to answer the phone, put the child in a safe place, like a cot or playpen. When children are in the pool, paddling pool or bath they must not be left alone, at all, ever. No excuses. I used to take my sewing and letter writing into the bathroom when my children had a bath and was pleased with the amount I got done while my children were happily playing. In winter I just kept topping up the hot water, after moving them to the other end of the bath, and we were all in a nice warm room for an hour or so. Their crinkly fingers and toes soon recovered and the children were happy to move on to another activity.

If the bath plug is kept out of children's reach they cannot fill the bath with hot water and fall in it causing scalding or drowning. Just as you can buy safety covers to fit over electrical outlets, you can also buy plastic covers to fit over door handles to stop children opening them. A cheaper option in the bathroom is to make a cross cut in a cut down plastic milk container and push it over the hot tap to prevent little fingers turning it on. Establish the habit of running cold water into the bath first before turning on the hot tap, so there is never any very hot water in it. Enthusiastic children can reach over the edge of the bath and fall in, even when you are standing right next to them.

Furniture must be kept away from windows or it will be used as a ladder to the outside world, and a possibly fatal fall. Outside tables and chairs must be kept away from fences for the same reason. My own mother told of the time I appeared at an open second floor window while she was talking to a neighbour in the street below. I was standing on the window ledge and unconcerned about the danger because I was only 3 years old. The neighbour kept me talking while my mother raced up the stairs to grab me away from the window. I am sure her heart was racing with fear all that time. You can get safety catches fitted to stop windows opening very far, but they were not available in those days.

Resuscitation

This is such an important skill to learn that all parents should ask for help from a Plunket nurse or ambulance officer to learn it. It is much easier to learn in a practical situation rather than reading a book, and a St John's first aid course is much the best way to be prepared for a disaster you hope you will never have to deal with.

Choking

One of the most frightening times is when a child chokes on food. This is something parents really need to know about before it happens. When someone is choking there is no time to read a first-aid book. When you take your baby to the doctor or nurse for a baby-check, ask for advice and a demonstration with a doll, as to what to do, so you are prepared.

Head Injuries

When children have a bad fall, such as from the climbing frame at school, and you are not sure if they have a head injury, it is best to have them checked by a doctor. After this check their eyes every hour for about 8 hours even if they are asleep. Shine a torch in each eye separately, lifting up the eyelid, and watch that the black pupil shrinks smaller. Check that the pupils of both eyes are the same size as each other. This checking is the reason people sometimes do not let a child go to sleep after a bad fall, but it is all right to sleep as long as you check the eyes. If there is vomiting, prolonged drowsiness, or bleeding from the ears, contact your doctor straight away.

Fractures

If a child falls and cannot get up, or if the limb looks out of

shape or badly swollen, and especially if you can see a bone coming out of the skin, you need an ambulance called as you must get specialised treatment straight away. Do not try to get the child to walk to the car or into the house. While waiting for the ambulance talk reassuringly to the child. After a fracture, children tend to become very quiet because moving is so painful, but if the child is struggling and screaming in pain do your best to keep him still.

Of course, not all falls result in fractures, and the difficulty is in deciding when it is just a bruise and not a fracture. If the child can get up readily, the limb is not lying at an unusual angle and is not immediately swollen, then it is probably not a fracture. If there is any doubt it is always wise to seek medical advice, especially if the child is upset for a day or two and will not use the injured limb.

Grazes and Wounds

Grazes are most commonly on the knees and are a painful way of learning most of the activities of childhood. The same can be said about scratches from the family cat when a child has not yet learned not to tease it. After a quick hug, put the child in a warm bath as soon as possible and put the grazes or scratches under water. You will probably have to put the child's leg or arm underwater yourself, and hold it there amid the screaming, as they will tearfully resist. Keep the grazes under water about 20 minutes until all the dirt has soaked out as the wound will heal more quickly when clean. If after that time there is still dirt in the graze, you may have to hold the leg under water and gently scrub the graze with a clean face cloth. Just grit your teeth and do it. This will be very difficult for both you and the child, and afterwards everyone deserves a hug, a warm drink and a story!

When the wound is dry it needs to be covered with a non-stick dressing while the child is playing or at school, but this should be removed at bedtime as long as the wound is no longer oozing. When removing sticking plaster from a child's

skin, rub cooking oil on the skin around the plaster and it will peel off easier. Sticking plaster may also be removed after soaking in the bath, but sometimes you do not want to get the wound wet.

A puncture wound can occur after stepping on a nail, or slamming a garden fork down into the foot. It can also be caused by a bite, whether the family cat or an unknown dog. In all cases the wound should be cleaned and seen by your doctor. A tetanus injection and antibiotic may be given. If the child seems pale and unusually quiet, or if there is a lot of serious bleeding from the wound call an ambulance.

Fingers Slammed in Doors

Hold the injured hand under cold running water for at least 5 to 10 minutes then check to see if the fingers can be moved. There will be swelling and bruising, and possible bleeding so it is difficult to tell if the fingers are broken. If you think they are, then you must seek medical advice. Put the hand up in a sling to drain as much of the swelling as possible down the arm. It will also help to have a small cold compress gently bandaged around the fingers. Always be sure when using an ice pack to have some cloth between the skin and the ice pack or it will cause a burn on the skin.

Burns and Scalds

Speed and cold are the main things needed when dealing with burns and scalds and the treatment for both is the same. Burns are caused by dry heat and scalds are caused by wet heat as with boiling water or hot drinks being tipped over. Whatever cold water you've got, get it on the burn immediately. If the burn happens on a picnic, use whatever cold water is available in drink bottles. If the burn happens in a home, run to the bathroom and flood the burn with cold water from the bath or shower. If a child is burned it means that you pick up the child and both of you get in the bath

with the plug in and cold tap running while getting the child's clothes off. Then hold the burned area under cold running water for 10 to 20 minutes. It doesn't matter that you get cold and wet, you will dry, but a burn goes on for a long time, so must be cooled down as quickly as possible. During this time the child will be frightened not only by the pain of the burn, but by all the upheaval and cold water, so speak as reassuringly as possible.

Unless a burn is superficial and only the size of a postage stamp, it must be seen straight away by a doctor. Anything larger than a postage stamp needs immediate medical care. Any burn that is deep, not superficial, must be seen by a doctor. Absolutely do not put cream or anything on the skin after a burn, but wait until medical advice is given. While taking the child to the doctor or hospital, cover the burned area with plastic wrap, cling film, to keep air and germs out. If you have no cling film, cover the burn with a clean pillowcase. Burns to the face and neck may cause breathing difficulties which require an ambulance to be called.

Sunburn is often seen as superficial, but still needs careful treatment. Obviously it is better avoided in the first place, but once it has happened a pharmacist can advise on creams and other treatments. Plenty of watery drinks will also help put important fluid back into the body. Vitamin C tablets, available in chewable form, will help healing, as with any burn or injury.

Bleeding Nose

A little blood can go a long way, so children are often frightened by a bleeding nose, not because it hurts but because they think they will lose all their blood and die. Sit the child down with head slightly forward, and you talking calmly. Explain that the blood is coming from a very tiny hole inside the top of their nose so they need to hold on to it to make it stop bleeding. Wet a paper towel or a few tissues with cold water and ask the child to hold this over the bridge

of the nose while breathing through the open mouth, and not talking. Giving them something to do takes their mind off the bleeding, especially if you wet some more towels and mop up as much of the blood as possible to remove the evidence. Hold wet tissues under the child's nose to absorb blood still coming out, so again the child is not staring at his life's blood dripping away. Do this for 20 minutes then check if the bleeding has lessened. If not stopped then apply more wet tissues to the bridge of the nose.

Once bleeding has stopped the child should sit quietly for about 4 hours and not blow the nose as this will disturb the blood clot. If the bleeding has not stopped after 30 minutes or the child looks very pale and faint, phone the doctor or ambulance service for advice.

Ears

Ear infections occur often during early childhood. The drainage tubes from the ear into the back of the throat are very tiny and easily blocked. Children are dealing with many new germs from other people they meet at Daycare and preschool, and may have ear infections quite often. The child has difficulty hearing at this time and everything sounds as if it is under water. This calls for patience as you speak more clearly so the child can understand what is said. Do not rush to ask for antibiotics unless your doctor advises it. Use only the type of Panadol specifically made for little children. Give lots of drinks and breastfeeding to bring the temperature down. If your child has frequent ear infections ask your doctor for a referral to a hospital specialist and for a hearing check. Hearing problems may be caused by a physical abnormality in the bone structure of the inner ear but this is rare. Some children are better when dairy products are removed from the diet. Ear infections can flare up very quickly, so a child may be fine during the day but that night be crying with painful earache.

Children stick the most amazing assortment of small objects

in their ears and up their noses. It is tempting to try and get them out, but usually this only results in pushing them further in. Then parents get frustrated at not getting the objects out and the ear or nose can be injured. It is much better to consult a doctor who will use special instruments to safely guide the object out. Sometimes a persistent runny nose is caused by an object stuck up there and causing blockage and infection.

Eyes

In the extreme case of getting glass in the eye, after a window is broken, you must call an ambulance and seek medical attention straight away. In the more common case of grit in the eye, fill an eyebath or egg cup with warm water, hold it over the eye with the head bent forward, then flip the head backwards so the water is over the eye which will help to rinse the grit out.

A useful trick is to peel an onion in front of the person with grit in the eye which usually makes their eyes water, just watch they do not rub their eyes though. If you feel confident you can roll up the upper eyelid over a matchstick while grasping the eyelashes and gently wipe out the grit with a clean, damp tissue. Practise this a few times first on someone who does not have any grit in their eye. Don't wait until you have someone hopping up and down with a painful eye while you try and learn to grab their eyelashes.

Bee Stings and Insect Bites

Remove the bee sting by brushing it sideways with a fingernail or knife blade. Be careful not to squeeze the poison sac while doing this.

Most bee stings occur on the feet or legs due to children running barefoot on the grass. Some children get over it by the next day but for others the foot will be painful and

swollen for several days and needs to be kept up on a chair higher than the hips to help the swelling and infection drain along the leg to the bigger veins in the groin. An antihistamine cream from the pharmacy will help reduce the swelling and pain. Baking soda dissolved in cool water and swabbed on the skin with cotton wool may also be soothing. Of course, none of the first aid books tell you how to cope with a perfectly healthy child who cannot run around for a few days. Books, puzzles, games and TV are all that stand between you and insanity!

A very few people are allergic to bee stings and swell up in an alarming way, and may choke to death. They must be treated immediately by a doctor, or have an ambulance called. After this they will be given medication to carry with them always.

Wasp stings hurt but not usually for as long as bee stings as they do not leave their sting in the skin. Swab them with vinegar, which is acid, to neutralise the alkaline sting. It is useful to have antihistamine cream or lavender oil to smooth on insect bites before they become scratched and infected.

Hiccups

Hiccups are caused by the diaphragm, which is a muscle just under the ribs and above the stomach, going into spasm. When you stretch the muscle it stops the spasm, especially if sugar is given to soothe the muscle. Having hiccups is a small inconvenience unless it goes on for hours or even days, as in the case of a patient I once looked after. He was terrified when he got hiccups, as he often did, as it went on for 3 days at a time. As he was elderly and ill it completely wore him out. I told him I could cure it in a few minutes, but he did not believe me. I went and got about 6 pillows to put behind his back and leaned his head backwards over them so his back was arched. I checked he was not diabetic, then gave him a small teaspoonful of sugar to hold in his mouth, and asked him to let it dissolve while he breathed slowly and as deeply as he could. As I had promised, his hiccups stopped in a few

minutes and I shall never forget the absolute gratitude in his eyes as he thanked me.

An easier way to deal with hiccups is to stand against a wall as straight as possible with half a teaspoon of sugar in your mouth letting it dissolve while you breathe as slowly and deeply as possible. Babies with hiccups can be helped by giving a little more feed, or the same principle with a little sugar dissolved in boiling water then cooled and given off a small teaspoon or in an egg cup, before sitting the baby upright. There are also other methods used to stop hiccups, such as putting your fingers in both ears, or cupping your hands over nose and mouth and breathing deeply, but none of them is as nice as the sugar method!

Thoughts of a Grandmother Looking Back at Motherhood

We often have conflicting feelings about parenthood, usually when we are tired or rushed, which seems to be most of the time. We shout at our children for being noisy, or quarrelsome, then feel guilty. We tell them they can't have something they want because it costs too much money, or it will soon be dinner time, or we have to go out somewhere soon, then we feel guilty for disappointing them. They fall over and graze their legs and we wish we had seen it coming, and we feel guilty. We are great at feeling guilty. We even find ourselves saying what our own mothers said, which we vowed we would never say, "I'll be glad when the holidays are over and you children are back at school again."

It is important to 'listen' to ourselves just as kindly as we would to a friend. In fact, I was listening to a friend recently who was in tears because she had shouted at her children several times during the past week and thought she was a bad mother. She has 3 young children, all doing well, and is well respected at playcentre for the way she teaches them. However, she was in tears because she had not lived up to some standard she thought she should have.

It reminded me of how I always used to dread Mother's Day because poems were read at church about marvellous mothers, and people spoke of their memories of their own wonderful mothers. I used to sit there holding back the tears as I remembered how I had shouted at our children in the past few days, and thought that if people knew what I was really like they wouldn't even let me in the door! As the years went on and financial difficulties necessitated my return to work, it meant my husband, who was working from home, shared some of the housework and looking after our children

after school and in school holidays. He thought it would be easy because they were nearly all teenagers and that if you explained things to them and gave them reasons, you would never need to raise your voice. He could not understand why I got so frustrated. I was overjoyed when I came home unexpectedly early, to find my husband shouting at our sons, which he rarely ever did. He had washed the kitchen floor, only to have it walked on by our boys, home from school in their muddy shoes. He did not know I was home, and was shouting, "Get off that floor. Can't you see I've just washed it?" I thought, "At last, he understands!"

There were so many years when my children were little and I longed to have time to spend on one of my own interests such as scrapbooking photo albums, or have an hour to lie in the garden and read a book, or to go shopping on my own. In fact, I would have been glad just to be able to go to the toilet without someone asking where I was and how long I was going to be in there. As all our relatives lived overseas there were no family babysitters and not enough money to pay for other people to do it. Looking back I don't know what I could have done about the situation but certainly hope for better for the next generation of mothers.

As a grandmother I have now seen the family circle revolve right round and 'wish I had known then what I know now'. I am full of admiration for my daughters-in-law in the kind and patient way they speak to their children, but constantly wish they would take more time for themselves. I am happy to look after their children as much as possible, as many dotting grandparents are, but as they all live hundreds and thousands of miles away, this is not a frequent occurrence. The world has changed in the last 100 years and grandparents no longer live in the same village as their grandchildren.

Something that concerns me is that parents, especially mothers, want everything to be just right for their children, and this can never be. They rush from school to lessons and activities and into the supermarket to grab something quick

for dinner. I used to do the same thing myself rushing to catch the bus home from work to get children to swimming and self-defence lessons. Sometimes I ran so fast I was scared I'd have a heart attack right there in the street. I used to think that if I just worked harder, or read the right self-help books then I would get it right. Now I am older and my eyes are not so good I see things more clearly because I see with my heart and not with my head. Children want simple things in life, and if we are able to give them safety, a home, medical help, education, food, clothing and warmth, then we are not doing too badly. Add on books, some toys and the loving consideration most children are given, and we are doing all that is necessary. If holidays, TV, computers and cellphones are added in to the mix then our children are very fortunate indeed.

I heard of a teenage girl who went on holiday to visit relatives and after shopping for clothes for herself had used up all the money her parents had given her. She phoned home asking for more money and was given it. A few days later she ran out of money again and phoned home for more and was given it, and the same again a few days later. When the mother told a friend about her daughter being given money several times the friend asked why she did not refuse. The mother said that when she denied her daughter, she was called so many awful names it was easier to give her the money to keep the peace. One day in the near future someone is going to say No to that girl. It may well be a college teacher, or an employer, but it should have been her parents long ago.

My generation of women fought for the right for girls to follow any career they chose. Instead of the choices we had on leaving school of being a nurse, teacher, office, shop or factory worker, girls now can train for anything they wish. It never occurs to them not to. Motherhood is not often seen as a full time career. My opinion has changed a little over the years. I used to think it best to stay at home solely to bring up our children. I now wish I had gone back to work occasionally, not full time, or even for several days a week,

but enough for me to talk to other adults a few times a day, and 'use my brain'. Often, in the winter, with children unwell and weeks of rain, and no car, I would not see adults to talk to for up to 3 weeks at a time, except for my husband and at church. If mothers do not need extra finances and can do voluntary work there are many opportunities to do so, in fact, more opportunities than when my children were little. Also, mothers are better able to set up their own business and work from home using the computer and internet. Unfortunately, with the expectation of women being able to have a career, when motherhood enters the equation it puts a heavy load on the woman.

There used to be a song many years ago, in the days when you could still hear the words of a song, that said, "Make it easy on yourself." It was really about boyfriend/girlfriend splitting up but applies to parenting too. If asked about the number of people in their family, mothers can readily tell you that. When asked to put them in order of priority they will usually put the baby first, then the older children, then the father, then the mother. They almost always put themselves last. It's the old story of being on a plane and putting on your own oxygen mask first before you can attend to anyone else. I had to learn through sad experience that if I did not value myself very highly, nobody else would. That is a message I would like to relay to all mothers everywhere.

One of the best things I ever did was to go to a psychologist to help me sort myself out. I was extremely nervous before the first appointment and walked up and down the corridor plucking up courage to walk in the door. If I could have known the confidence I would gain in having professional help I would have run in the door as fast as I could. It was not easy as I was made to face fears I had pushed down all my life, but as time went on I could see myself blossom into the person I was meant to be. One thing I was told, and never forgot was, When you value yourself and know your own worth, you can do what you believe to be right, no matter what others may say or think.

Most parents want the very best for their children. As a nurse working in paediatrics I have looked after children whose parents have treated them very badly, yet those same parents still want the best for their children. They just don't know how to give it to them, usually because of the way they were brought up. Before people have a baby they see others bringing up children and think it looks fairly easy. One of the questions most frequently asked by women about to have their first baby is what they will do with all that time they have on their hands when the baby is asleep, and won't they become bored? Then the baby arrives and the question answers itself. It does not get easier as the baby becomes a child then a teenager, just different. You still feel concern no matter how old they become, even when they are adults.

Experts tell us that newborn babies have only a fifth of their brain developed at birth. We may feel overwhelmed with responsibility when informed that the experiences we give our babies and children are what will help their brains develop further. Research also tells us that a young person's brain is not fully developed until the age of 25 years. As parents we may often wonder if we will have the strength to hold on until that age, but if we can, we find it has all been worthwhile.

Becoming a parent is like driving somewhere without a map. You have to keep stopping to ask the way. Someone told me that Moses wandered in the wilderness for 40 years - because he would not ask for directions. If you can be open enough to let others know you need help, people will respond with a generosity that will surprise you. You just have to allow yourself to ask.

Man to Man about Babies and Children

In researching men's viewpoints about bringing up children I asked several men who have many years of experience with the subject, for some basic advice to give to new fathers. Here are some of their ideas.

When a baby arrives new parents are bombarded with advice. Listen to it all but work out what suits you and is best for your situation. Graham Read

In a hospital birth, if the baby has to be taken away immediately after the birth, then the father should go with the baby, leaving the mother in the care of hospital staff. Fraser Redmond

Never, ever, shake a baby, even in play. You might think the baby is enjoying it but it can do great harm that can never be put right. Bill Chadderton

When changing the nappy of a baby boy, place a face cloth or something similar over the baby's front or you run the risk of being firehosed - yes it did happen to me! Howard Irvine

Respect and support the mother and talk to her at all times. Eric Wilcox

Remember that your wife is your number one person, not the baby, and help her remember that you, too, are her number one person, not the baby. Your family is more important than anyone else, but within that your spouse comes first. Fraser Redmond

Teach children from their earliest months how to pray. It is so much easier to teach children when they are little. Let them see you pray. At 18 months all they will say is Amen, but a year later they will gabble something, and a year after that may surprise you with the sweet little prayers that come

naturally to them. Len Fish

Look at things from the child's point of view, low down near the floor, such as electric plugs and cupboard door handles to pull open. Don't have things around on the floor that a toddler can trip over and hurt themselves. Frank Paton

Learn what babies' cries mean. Sometimes when they cry at night it is not because they are wet or hungry but because they want a cuddle. That would be fine if it did not make the parents exhausted the next day. Difficult as it is at the time it may be better to let babies cry at night for a little while to see if they will settle, and learn how to go off to sleep without the parents. Graham Read

Wait until you see the baby's face after birth before choosing a name, and do not be in a rush to choose a name or middle name. Craig Redmond

Don't be afraid to show love to your children and tell them you love them. Some men think it is unmanly to show love but people need to hear the words and see love in action. David Swanson

In the first few days, look after the baby as much as possible to allow the mother to rest. You won't be able to pass the baby off to someone else later, so get used to that idea now. Your wife will bond through feeding, and you need time to bond as well. Also get as much help and advice, yourself, as you can from the nurses, midwives and Plunket nurse. Fraser Redmond

One of the greatest moments for any dad is coming home from work in the evening and being greeted with the biggest smiles just for coming home! Enjoy your new baby - there are lots of great times to look forward to, just enjoy each stage to its fullest! Jeff Van Boerum

The most important thing a father can give his baby is his time. Murray Downs

Have plenty of noise around babies, they like to know they are not on their own and it helps them learn to sleep anywhere. If you always rush to babies as soon as they cry, or to toddlers who fall over, they never learn to fend for themselves. Craig Redmond

Develop patience. Children will suddenly do something it would never have occurred to you to do when you were their age. Have patience with them even when you don't feel like it. David Swanson

Time. Spend time with your children. Go to the local park and take them on the slides and swings. Run on the beach and teach them to swim. Play cards and other games. Have a sense of humour. Talk to them. Laugh and have fun together. Tom Vennik

Watch out if you have a little boy - no matter how tightly those nappies are put on they have a little fire hydrant which once loaded goes every which way and inevitably finds a way to leak out of the nappy - so take lots of changes of clothes with you if you go out because they always end up drenching themselves. Oh and as far as pooing goes be aware that they always save a little bit for you while you are changing them and it fires absolutely everywhere - over you, carpet and walls, especially when you are just about to go out. Karl Hamon

Babies are often restless and noisy in their sleep and the mother hears this even though she is asleep. If the baby sleeps in another room the mother will be better rested, and have more energy the next day. Graham Read

Don't leave the bathroom or toilet door open, otherwise babies crawl in there and get things they shouldn't, and toddlers love to drop things down the toilet. Jack Rifle

Teach children that they are not the centre of the universe, and that other people's feelings matter, especially yours! No matter how impossible it seems to them, one day they will be as old and tired as you are. Allan Holden

Time is the big thing. Often you are tired and it is difficult to give children the time they need. They don't need expensive toys, they just want to be with you. Owen Redmond

Never leave your children in any doubt at all that you love them. You might not like what they have done, and have to reprimand them, but difficult as it is, you have to leave them with a lasting impression that you will always be there for them because you love them. Danny Leonard

Start as you mean to go on. Don't do things one way with a baby thinking you will change later, because you probably won't. Fraser Redmond

Try and spend some time with the young children of friends and relatives and watch how they play. Joining in with their play will help you know how to play with your own little one. Charles Moimoi

I consider gospel teaching to be an important part of any child's upbringing, but they have to find their own way in life and do not always do what we want them to. Garry Howard

Make sure babies have full tummies before going to sleep for the night. Breast milk is best but by evening mothers are tired and babies might not be getting much even though feeding for a long time. Sometimes it is more realistic to give a bottle of formula at night even if they are breast fed. Graham Read

Relax and have fun with your children. There are enough serious times in life so make the most of the good times. Enjoy being with each other and make great memories together. Brian Connelly

Decide now, with your newborn baby, that you will never hit your children. You won't regret it. Sometimes it won't be easy. Our Dad never hit us. It is our legacy to pass on to our own children. Craig Redmond

Teach your children about traditional ways of cooking food

in your family so they can be self-reliant instead of eating fast food. Go back to the old fashioned way of sitting around the table, eating dinner and talking together. Tom Hemara

When you establish rules as parents make sure they are fair for everyone with clear boundaries. Children must learn that they have choices to make but there are consequences that they may not like. If the family rules are not kept then you must be consistent in carrying out the consequences and not let them off. Arty Dimitrov

Give children a variety of experiences as they grow up. Let them try out different sports and musical instruments, drama classes and martial arts, and read about other cultures so they can explore many different ideas. Owen Redmond

Remember that children are watching and listening to you all the time, sometimes when you do not realise it. Try to spend less time telling them what to do and more time living the way you would like them to do. James Davidson

As someone said recently, Parents today are so busy being their children's best friend they haven't got the guts to be proper parents. Sometimes you have to dish out the discipline and they are not going to like that. You are not there to be their best friend, you are there to guide them and help them stay safe. Paul Francis

When children fall over don't rush to pick them up, even if they are crying. If they can get up and walk to you for a cuddle, it tells you they are not too badly hurt. Craig Redmond

Give lots of encouragement and be consistent with discipline, even with babies. Right from the beginning they need routines and boundaries as that is what makes them feel secure. Kevin Oldfield

Nothing anyone says will prepare you for the 90 degree change in direction your life will take. There are days when

I'm not sure what year, let alone what time, it is. The best advice is to go with the flow and realize that your pre-child freedom has gone bye-bye and the next time you'll be childless, you'll be an old geezer complaining about the young whippersnappers. So take it day by day and enjoy yourself. Howard Irvine

A Job Description for Parenting

There will be many times when we shall be tired, unwell and worried, and wonder if we will get through the difficult stages, or why we had children in the first place. Here is a light hearted look at the job we have taken on for life.

POSITION APPLIED FOR:

Mother, Mum, Mummy, Mama, Ma

Father, Dad, Daddy, Dada, Pa

JOB DESCRIPTION :

Long term, team players needed, for challenging, permanent work in an often chaotic environment. Candidates must possess excellent communication and organizational skills and be willing to work variable hours, which will include evenings and weekends, and frequent 24 hour shifts on call. Some overnight travel required, including trips to primitive camping sites on rainy weekends and endless sports tournaments in far away cities. Travel expenses will not be reimbursed. Extensive courier duties also required.

RESPONSIBILITIES :

The rest of your life.

Must be willing to bite tongue repeatedly.

Be willing to be hated at times, at least temporarily, until someone needs \$10.

Also, must possess the physical stamina of a pack mule and be able to go from zero to 60 mph in three seconds flat in case, this time, the screams from the backyard are not someone just crying wolf.

Must be willing to face stimulating technical challenges, such as small gadget repairs, mysteriously sluggish toilets and stuck zippers.

Responsibilities also include floor maintenance and cleaning work throughout the building.

Must screen phone calls, maintain calendars and co-ordinate production of multiple homework projects.

Must have ability to plan and organize social gatherings for clients of all ages and mental outlooks.

Must be willing to be indispensable one minute, and an embarrassment the next.

Must handle assembly and product safety testing of a half million cheap, plastic toys, and battery operated devices.

Must always hope for the best but be prepared for the worst.

Must assume final, complete accountability for the quality of the end product.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE :

None required unfortunately.

On-the-job training offered on a continually exhausting basis.

WAGES AND COMPENSATION :

Although there is no pay for this position the amazing thing is that you are prepared to pay those in your care to do things you could do better in half the time yourself.

A huge extra payment is due when they turn 18 because of the assumption that college will help them become financially independent.

When you die, you give them whatever you have left.

The strange thing about this reverse-salary scheme is that you actually enjoy it and only wish you could do more.

POSSIBILITY FOR ADVANCEMENT & PROMOTION :

None.

Your job is to remain without complaining, in the same position for several years, constantly retraining and updating your skills, so that those in your charge can ultimately do better than you.

After years of exhaustive research and development there is the possibility of promotion to Nana/Grandma and Grandad/Grandpa but this is light-years into the future and may never eventuate. Even if it does, your clients may have decided to live in another country so you will spend your life savings travelling across the world visiting them. At such times you will be advised to keep quiet about your experience because "it was different in your day". However you will be invaluable in babysitting the young ones to give their parents a well-earned break. Your credentials for this service are that you can deal with any crisis because you have had teenagers.

BENEFITS:

While no health or dental insurance, no pension, no tuition reimbursement, no paid holidays and no stock options are offered; this job supplies limitless opportunities for personal growth, unconditional love, and free hugs and kisses for life, if you play your cards right.

The 3 M's of a Woman's Life

Menstruation

Motherhood

Menopause

Olive Redmond

March, 1999 and revised September, 1999

This was written when I was asked to give a talk to a women's conference in March 1999 followed by other talks around the district.

Menstruation

Menstruation is the physical change that makes a little girl progress towards becoming a young woman. The uterus, or womb, which has been there all along, but so far has done nothing, now begins to learn "how to grow a baby". Just like a bird building a nest and lining it carefully with feathers to make it soft and warm for the baby birds, so the uterus produces a thick lining for the baby to grow in. When the uterus realises there is no baby coming to live in it, it gets rid of this lining, which is made from blood, and the blood drains away out of the body and we call it having a period.

The word "period" has come to be used because it happens periodically, at fairly regular intervals, and lasts for a period of time, about 5 to 7 days. This is usually about once every 4 weeks, with a few days either side, so it can be 5 weeks, or even 3 weeks between the periods. If it is regularly only 3 weeks the girl could become anaemic from the frequency of bleeding, and a doctor would usually give some low-dose hormone tablets to get the periods on a more regular basis.

Fifty years ago most girls started having their periods at about 14 years of age, but today it is usually 11. The age is getting younger all the time, probably due to better nutrition and living conditions, but also it may well be affected by our modern way of living, with the mother's use of hormone medication, giving growth hormone to animals that are later eaten as meat, and using plastic to store our food in.

It is not unusual though for a girl to start her periods at age 10 or 11, and some girls of only 8 or 9 have to cope with what is really a woman's life while still only a little girl. So we need to explain to young girls about periods well before they are likely to happen, so that there is no confusion. Generally, if a child is old enough to ask the question, then she is old enough for the answer. A generation or two ago this was "hushed up" and not discussed, and our own mothers found it very difficult to talk about, and were relieved when schools

brought in lessons on sex education given by the P.E. teacher.

In some countries the start of a girl's periods is cause for a family celebration, and it would be a good idea to have this in our own families - not necessarily a family celebration, but a time for mother and daughter perhaps to go out for a small meal on their own or with the aunties, where the girl could feel "special".

This idea could also be used at the age of 9 when the mother and aunties could take the girl out and talk about how it will be for her in a few years as she begins to grow up into a woman. The girl needs to know not only what periods are like, and why they happen, but how to deal with them, perhaps being shown pads and tampons, although this may not be such a good idea if the meal is in a public restaurant!

Of course, we all know many negative aspects of that part of our lives, and we would need to be sure to emphasise the wonder of being a woman, after all, we were not God's first creation, we were the last. In other words, our Creator may well have practised on everything else until He reached perfection - and then ... God created woman!

It is at this time of great change in the girl's body that Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia can surface. These are diseases that have not occurred in history before our time. They are thought, by many people, to be caused by food. They are not. Just as rape has nothing to do with a person wanting sex, but demanding power over another person, so anorexia and bulimia are not caused by the person wanting or not wanting food. Food is just the vehicle the emotions are travelling in.

There are many reasons for Anorexia and Bulimia but they may affect people with a sensitive personality, who are unable to cope with the cruelties of the world and want to leave it. The world is a negative place, saying and doing negative things, and she picks up on all of these things and

feels overwhelmed by it and cannot cope. She doesn't know how to "stand up for herself" so she goes under.

Although a few boys suffer from anorexia, the vast majority are girls, so I will use the word her instead of him. There is a constant inner voice telling her that she is no good, a failure. The only way she can cope is to become "extra good" so people will like her, and she might then learn how to like herself. She will try her hardest at school, work and home. She will pay attention to detail and others' needs, resulting in herself looking like a perfectionist. She clutches at every little comment from others that she has done something right, and treasures it like gold, while at the same time time distrusting what was said, knowing she does not deserve anything nice to be said about her. She thinks that if people knew what she was "really" like they would not have praised her.

There is a constant war going on in her mind between the positive and the negative - and the negative always wins, because that is who she has come to trust. She does not want to die, but she does not know how to want to live, so she sees the only way out is for her to die. She knows that not only does she deserve to die, because she is not worth enough to live, but also that she wants to be out of this cruel world. So she gravitates towards death, seeing it as inevitable. The more weight she loses, the less strength she has to fight it, and the stronger becomes her resolve that if she cannot do anything else right, then at least she can do this last thing right - to die.

Anorexia is just like a baby crying. The baby does not have the resources to help itself. The anorexic person does not either. She does not know what to do. She desperately needs someone "older and wiser" to put right the negative balance in her mind. She does not know how to do it because she does not see what other people see.

A person of a particular personality which is geared towards caring for the needs of others will sometimes accept being

abused, sexually or otherwise, if it means her siblings escape being abused. Later it all catches up with her and she may fall victim to an eating disorder of either anorexia, bulimia or obesity. It is the negative build-up in the mind that organises it to happen.

When actors have to act an emotional scene in which they have to cry, the way they do that is to think of some time of great sadness in their life, and let those feelings come to the surface. Think, now, of some very sad time in your life. Remember how it felt. Then imagine there is someone sitting next to you. How could that person best comfort you? What do you want them to do? How would you feel then?

The needs to be comforted and to feel safe, are basic from birth onwards. A baby cries. It needs to be picked up. It does not always need to be fed. Sometimes it just needs to be cuddled. This need continues throughout life, as it is a way of transferring energy from the stronger person to the one needing it. It is not that the one needing it is necessarily weaker, but has used up more energy reserves that need to be replenished.

When dealing with a young person with anorexia, she will often have seen herself in the role of "parenting the family". She needs to be relieved of the heavy responsibility of carrying the emotional needs of siblings or parents. A child needs to be allowed to be a child, and if she has missed out on much of this it needs to be restored to her. She needs to be cuddled, read to, played board games with, and made crafts with, no matter what her actual age is.

Anorexia is not just Low self-esteem, it is often No self-esteem. The spirit of the person can be fading away right before your very eyes, and it is a desperate situation to catch it before it goes. It is like watching a candle burn down to almost the end. Candles come in all shapes and sizes, but the thing that is common to all, is the wick that produces the flame. The most important part of a person is their spirit and this is what must be concentrated on in re-habilitation. The

first inclination is to get her to eat, but it must be remembered, this is not about food. It is about the continual war in her mind, and unless it is challenged and overcome, the negative will always win.

Anorexia and bulimia can be managed, and to a great extent, overcome but may surface again at stressful times in the woman's life. Her basic personality will not change, so she must be taught how to manage the stark realities of life, and how to strengthen herself to deal with the negative influences in her mind. What is easy for someone else to accept in the world, will seem an enormous problem to her, and she must be shown ways of coping, while being surrounded with positive influences that acknowledge her value as a person. The words that will help in this situation are Encouragement, Value, Acknowledgement, Affection, Approval, Attention and Appreciation. (Large wordstrips)

Motherhood

The next M of a woman's life is Motherhood - and this is usually where all the trouble starts! Some people have babies arrive before they are ready for them, and this can be devastating, and some people do not have the babies they long for, and this can be even more devastating. There are a great many things that can be done nowadays to help a woman conceive or adopt, but this does not take away the feeling of failure she has in the beginning, of not being able to do what other women seem to be achieve so easily.

It helps to understand just how much we have in our tummy so we can see that it is already pretty full, and if we put a baby on top of it all life becomes very uncomfortable.

We have 2 kidneys at waist level, at the back, protected by our hips. They filter all the fluid that comes in at the mouth, into the stomach and then enters the bloodstream. The kidneys each have a tube, the ureters, that carry this fluid, which is now called urine, down to the bladder where it is stored until it is passed out of the body. Urine should be a very pale yellow in colour, the colour of lemon juice. If it is darker than that, more like orange juice, it is an indication that we are not drinking enough water. The body is made up of over 80% water and needs about 3 litres of fluid each day, about 2 litres of that fluid should be water. The bladder can easily hold about 2 cups of fluid, but after about an hour it sends signals to the brain that it has had enough of this and needs to get rid of it, so we have trained ourselves to go to the toilet.

This toilet training starts in the toddler years and takes a year or two to achieve in the daytime. Night-time is a very different matter, and most children's tummies are not mature enough to go through the night without wetting the bed, until they are about 5 or 6 years old. Certainly there are children who are dry at night by the age of 3 or 4, but then there are a lot of children who are still wetting the bed at age

8, 9, 10, but nobody talks about that. Most paediatricians will not investigate a child's bed-wetting until the age of 7, and then it is really not so much for the sake of the child, but to relieve stress on the mother.

One of the best things you can do about bed-wetting is to give the child plenty of water to drink during the morning and afternoon, to teach the body how to work properly in the daytime. Cordial and other sugary drinks upset the delicate balance of the body fluids and it is better to drink water. The child's brain needs to learn how to cope with the feeling of a full bladder, so a big cup of water can be drunk, then when the child feels the need to rush to the toilet about 45 minutes later, try to get him to hold on for a few seconds, then a few minutes. Boys tend to have more difficulty with bed-wetting than girls, and there are factors that affect it, like personality and whether the child is a deep-sleeper. It helps if the child can take the wet sheets off the bed and put them in the washing machine, then put clean sheets on the bed. This makes him feel a responsible person, and not blamed, which is a different reaction. There are large-size disposable nappies and pads that ladies wear that can be used by an older child. Constipation and a sluggish bowel can also affect bed-wetting. Many children seem to re-act to milk, cheese, chocolate and chocolate drinks, and they have a constipating effect on some people.

Adults, who have mostly got past the problem of bed-wetting, have different problems. Cystitis is caused by germs that travel up the channel from the outside world to the bladder. This channel is called the urethra and is only about 5 cm. (2 inches) long so it is easy for unwanted germs to get in from the outside. Girls should be taught at an early age that after passing urine they wipe themselves from front to back so no germs from the bowel are brought forward into the bladder. Teach them that they don't want to be back-to-front. Cystitis can also be caused by sexual intercourse, especially in women who are newly experiencing sex. The first episode of cystitis should be dealt with by a doctor, and a urine specimen sent off to the laboratory before antibiotics

are started, but pharmacists are very helpful too. As with any infection there is a need to drink plenty of water, but because it hurts so much to go to the toilet and pass urine, people try to put this off by drinking less water without realising this is the very worst thing they can do.

Candida is another type of organism that can invade the urethra or vagina from the bowel. Many people only become aware of it when it causes a vaginal discharge, or pain and itching, called Thrush. A doctor can prescribe cream or pessaries to be put in the vagina, but this is usually only treating the symptoms. Homeopathic remedies will be more effective in treating the cause, but will take longer to achieve this. During this time anything you eat containing sugar or yeast will continue to feed the organism causing the Thrush, so great care must be paid to what is eaten. Candida may invade the mouth and stomach, vagina, or urinary system, and may travel further along the bowel. Thrush can affect anyone, male or female, at any age, including babies and the elderly. It often occurs when the person is under stress and "run down", and can be passed sexually from one partner to the other causing re-infection of each other.

The next opening to the urethra is the vagina, and further towards the back is the anal opening to the bowel. The bowel consists of a very long tube, over 30 feet long in adults, which processes food from the stomach, taking out of it all the nutrients it needs to be put into the bloodstream, and passing the waste products out of the body into the toilet. Food is pushed along the bowel by muscle action, and like any other muscle it can become weaker if not used very much. Processed foods have had a lot of the fibre stripped off them so there is not much left for the bowel to work on. When we see the leaves, skins and stalks on such foods as cabbage, celery, apples, oranges and sweetcorn we understand what the bowel longs for us to eat.

We also need to drink plenty of water otherwise the bowel gets panicky at the bottom end of it and extracts some of the water content to put into its own water-storage system,

causing the body waste to be hard and constipated. This constipation can cause haemorrhoids, or piles, to appear at the bowel opening. They are little loops of skin that are filled with blood that has got stuck in one place, just like the varicose veins we may get in our legs. You can put cream from your doctor or pharmacist on the piles, which will make life a lot more comfortable, but, just like varicose veins in your legs, once they are there they are not going to go away, you just have to stop them getting worse.

Constipation causes a lot more trouble than people realise as, if the body's waste products are not passed out of the body, they release toxic substances that build up and poison the whole system. You can imagine what your house would smell like if all the rubbish had to be collected in a bucket in the kitchen but was only emptied every few days. When this happens in people they become very lethargic, lack energy, lose interest in life and just want to lie around all day watching TV. Gradually the rest of their body loses muscle tone and they gain weight, don't feel like eating properly, or eat sugary foods to comfort themselves because they feel so miserable. The bowel then has even less fibre to work on and shuts down even further, and so the whole process spirals downwards and the body begins literally to decay.

When this happens to children we usually have to give medication, or the child can be taken into hospital to be put on an Intravenous drip for 3 days, containing medication that will force the body to push out the faecal matter that has accumulated in the bowel and become dehydrated and hard. Just like unblocking the kitchen sink, once this blockage is removed everything will start flowing freely once again. However, 4 things must be kept in mind

1. Good eating habits must be learned - lots of vegetables and fruit.
2. The poisons must be flushed out of the body with plenty of water.

3. The lower end of the bowel has lost its muscle tone and may become blocked again, so the bowel motions must be checked every day, by a parent, to see that enough is being passed. Cream from a pharmacy can be applied to the anal opening before a bowel motion is passed, to ease it through.

4. Walking and other exercise will help to strengthen the muscles again.

Some children appear to have diarrhoea but in reality this is just fluid leaking past the constipated blockage, and a doctor will find this on feeling the child's tummy. It can take a whole year to re-establish good bowel tone so it is obviously better to keep it good in the first place. An easy way to remember what foods are best for the body is to eat foods that would "go off" or spoil in a few days. Vegetables and fruit are the first choice of course - if it was good enough for Adam and Eve it must be good for us too. Also remember that "brown" foods are better than "white", for instance, brown rice, brown bread, brown flour and brown macaroni are all better than their white, processed partners. If food has been processed to store better on the supermarket shelves, that might be very good for the shop, but it is not good for the human body.

We feed our bodies on food that has been processed, preserved with chemicals, irradiated, genetically altered, and artificially coloured, flavoured and sweetened. It is now common-place for a drink to be advertised as special because it contains real orange juice, because most orange drinks are not real.

We are counselled in the Word of Wisdom to eat the fruit of the vine. A lot of people think that refers to grapes and do not think any further about other plants that grow on a vine. These include tomatoes, cucumbers, melons, squash, pumpkins, beans and peanuts.

Having dealt with matters of the bowel, we return to the uterus, or womb. The uterus is about the size and shape of a

pear - maybe that's why most of us are pear-shaped! It is situated low down in the tummy above the vagina, which is about 10 cm. (4 inches) long. At the top of the uterus are the Fallopian tubes that branch out, one on each side, towards the ovaries. The ovaries produce the hormones that trigger off the periods. The ovaries also release an egg each month.

During the first 2 weeks of the monthly cycle the ovaries produce more and more oestrogen which builds up the lining of the uterus ready to receive the egg if it is fertilised. The ovaries also produce very tiny amounts of testosterone which is a male hormone, but only a fraction of the amount produced by a man. This increases at the time of ovulation and gives women a greater desire for sex - which is a good time to have it if you are hoping to have a baby!

An interesting fact given to us through statistics is that more babies are born in Springtime than any other time of year. The pineal gland in the brain produces melatonin, which affects our feeling of energy and well-being. It does this at night in direct response to the amount of sunlight experienced in the preceding few hours.

For example, if it has been a sunny day - that night, lots of melatonin - next day an energetic, positive person.

A dull winter day - that night, very little melatonin - next day a tired, depressed, lethargic person.

It helps to go out for a walk in winter, when there is not much sun around, as not only will it help the body absorb whatever sunlight there is, but the blood circulation will be revved up making the body warmer. Also, as for any depressed person, whatever the cause, going for a walk and having a change of scenery will help to give a slightly more positive outlook.

A deficiency of melatonin shows up as tiredness and depression, and before the period it causes a craving to eat. It produces S.A.D. which is Seasonal Affective Disorder, and also the tiredness of jet lag. Vitamin B foods can help to

reduce this tiredness.

Melatonin also affects the production of oestrogen and helps to stabilise it around the time of ovulation. Hence, in mid-summer when there is plenty of sunshine to increase the production of melatonin, the woman has a greater sense of well-being and a stronger desire for sex. Therefore, 9 months later, in Springtime, there are more babies born, which is the best time, to have the summer months to establish life and growth before the cold months of winter come around again.

Around the time of ovulation another hormone from the ovaries increases. This is progesterone which keeps the lining of the uterus thick, ready to accept the egg if it is fertilised. Progesterone is completely different from progestogen, and even some doctors have difficulty recognising this. When a woman is treated with synthetic progestogens, as when taking oral contraceptives or hormone replacement therapy, her body becomes confused and produces less natural progesterone. This can cause salt build-up, fluid retention with a bloated feeling and irritability, and other symptoms of P.M.S.

Oral contraceptives contain low doses of synthetic oestrogen and progestogen, and they work by giving a false message to the body to convince it that ovulation has already happened so the egg is flushed out of the body and does not get a chance to grow.

Petrochemical products can mimic oestrogens in our bodies. These include petrol, plastics, pesticides, fertilisers, paints and adhesives. Xeno-oestrogens are oestrogen-like substances absorbed in the body from many plastics. A doctor doing laboratory research discovered that the oestrogen substances she was cultivating grew quicker on plastic dishes than on the glass dishes she had previously used. We use plastic jars to store foods in the fridge, and foods at home and in the supermarket are wrapped in plastic to keep it fresh.

The vitamin B group help the body to process the excess oestrogens out of the body. Coffee, alcohol and tobacco smoke quickly use up Vitamin B in the body, and unfortunately, even if we stay away from these substances, air pollution will still take its toll, so we need to eat more foods containing the Vitamin B group. It is important to remember that the B vitamins are a group and we should not take extra of one of them, and not the others, otherwise they get out of balance.

When oestrogen is not balanced by progesterone it can produce weight gain, bloating, headaches, fatigue, irritability and loss of interest in sex, all of which are recognised as P.M.S. Natural progesterone is slowly becoming more available in our health shops, so keep asking for it, and it will be ordered for you.

As just mentioned, there are many causes for P.M.S. which is PreMenstrual Syndrome. Some ways to ease it are getting out in the daylight for a half hour each day, avoiding plastics where possible, increasing the intake of fresh unprocessed foods, especially the Vitamin B group, and using natural progesterone cream. Things to avoid are coffee, alcohol and tobacco smoke, and it is important to take a clear look at your way of life, and work out where you can take time for yourself, to replenish your energy reserves, instead of draining yourself by continually giving to others. On an airplane, in an emergency, the oxygen masks are released automatically and the crew are trained to put them on and look after themselves first, before they attempt to help anyone else. The human heart has blood sent to it from the lungs full of oxygen, ready to be sent around the body. However, before it sends that fresh blood anywhere else, it sends it to its own heart muscles first. You must look after yourself first, and build up your own spirit, before you can look after other people. Love thy neighbour - as thyself!

About a third of women in their twenties in New Zealand who use contraceptives take The Pill, but by the time they reach their late thirties only one in 20 take it. Many women

in their late thirties or early forties who have not had babies decide they want them, but this does not happen as easily as they hoped. After a year of lack of success in becoming pregnant a fertility specialist might prescribe synthetic pituitary hormones, similar to those produced by the pituitary gland in the base of the brain. It is hoped this will stimulate egg growth and ovulation, however it can cause several eggs to be released at once which is why we now hear of women giving birth to 5, 6, and even 7 babies.

In each ovary there are about 40,000 eggs, each one about the size of a full-stop on a written page. Usually only one is released each month from alternate ovaries. Identical twins come from one fertilised egg that splits in half as it implants in the uterus, and non-identical twins come from two different eggs, usually one from each ovary. Triplets and more happen in the same way.

As soon as the egg is released from the ovary a sticky substance is emitted from the fallopian tube to envelope it and draw it down into the fallopian tube. The whole journey from the ovary to the uterus takes about 3 days, but the length of time the egg is in the right place to be fertilised and implanted in the uterus is only about 24 hours. As there are only about 30 days in the whole year when an egg can be fertilised, and 5 out of 6 embryos do not survive the first 8 weeks in the uterus, we begin to realise that every baby is a miracle.

The instant a sperm reaches the egg and penetrates the outer layer to fertilise it, its chemical structure changes and it can no longer be fertilised by any other sperm. Once the egg has been fertilised it begins to divide into first 2 cells, then 4 cells, then 8 and so on, each with its own D.N.A. and it is called an embryo. Within a week the sex can be determined. D.N.A. (Deoxy-ribonucleic acid) is a blue-print copy of what the entire body will be like including its sex, colour of eyes, whether the hair is straight or curly, or the person will be tall or short. Around the time the woman misses her first period, the heart is forming in the embryo and a week later the heart

is beating. Only 6 weeks after conception the spine is visible and the buds of arms are formed, and the brain is co-ordinating the movement of muscles and organs. At 9 weeks the head looks like a head instead of part of the spine, and the beginnings of eyes are clearly visible. The stomach has started producing gastric juices, the hands have fingers, the liver is making blood cells and the kidneys are functioning. Even more amazing is that all the eggs a woman has in her ovaries as an adult are laid down at this stage of the embryo. All this is only 6 weeks after the woman has missed her 1st period.

A quarter of a million nerve cells a minute are formed in the embryo's first 12 weeks of life. There are 100 thousand million cells in the brain. The body makes too many cells rather than too little, then the surplus are killed off later. All the cells know where they are meant to be situated, so there are not eye cells growing on the arms. For us to visualise what a miracle this is, it would be like someone who has never been to America before, and never driven before, driving from one side of America to the other, without a map - and finding the right house.

At 12 weeks it is not called an embryo any longer, but a foetus, and looks just like a miniature baby, about 12cm. long, but curled up. It has finished the creation of every major part of its body and weighs about 14g. which is about the weight of a 50 cent piece. The foetus is attached at its umbilicus by a cord, about a metre long, to the placenta which is truly the most efficient life-support system in that it is a kidney dialysis, a heart-lung machine and an artificial liver, all rolled into one.

During pregnancy the uterus grows to 20 times its normal size and its blood supply increases to 3 times its usual amount, which is why the mother feels much hotter than usual. The mother's spine curves backwards, and the major organs of the body, like the stomach, liver, lungs and intestines, all get pushed upwards to make room for the uterus and baby. The ligaments holding the bones of the hips

and lower back together soften so that the whole pelvic bone structure is much more pliable for the birth passage of the baby.

At birth the baby's brain is not yet fully developed, and will not be for another year, but by then the baby would be much too big to be born. A million babies are born in the world every day, and to their parents theirs is the most beautiful baby.

About 2 months after birth the baby's body has its full number of cells, somewhere around 70 trillion (70,000,000,000,000) with each cell containing its own blue-print of the entire body. From this time on the body has no need to create extra cells, only to replace them as they are worn out and as the child grows. Every 4 weeks or so, throughout life, the entire outer layer of the skin is replaced with new cells, and we shed about 450gm of dead skin cells every year. About every 2 months almost every cell in the heart muscle is rebuilt, and within a one-year period the cells of our bone structure are replaced. In fact one year from now almost every cell in your body will have been replaced with a new cell, and you can truly say you are a new person.

Most mothers know they should do exercises to strengthen muscles that have been stretched during the pregnancy, but it is difficult to find the time and energy to do this when your work-load has suddenly doubled, and you automatically have to do night-duty as well. So here are a few exercises that can be done even while sitting in a chair - now that's my kind of exercise!

Practise pelvic floor exercises. The pelvic floor is the part of you that the baby came out of. When you go to the toilet try stopping and starting so you get the feel of the different sets of muscles underneath you, and whether they affect the urethra, the vagina or the anal opening of the bowel. You can practise "holding" these muscles at any time and no-one will ever know you are doing it! When these pelvic-floor muscles have become stretched and loose, especially as the years go

by, they allow urine to be passed when sneezing, coughing or laughing. But don't give up laughing because of this. It is a proven fact that laughing a lot can make you look about 5 years younger! Exercises to strengthen these muscles must be done several times a day, every day, for about 3 weeks before you will notice a difference. There is no quick-fix!

Link your hands behind your back and pull your shoulders back, straightening your head and neck.

Pull in your tummy as if trying to get it to touch the back of the chair.

After the birth of the baby the mother's body has an incredible adjustment to make to "going solo" again and all the changes that took up to 9 months now have to change back again. It will take a further 9 months for her body to lose its stores of fat and return to its pre-pregnancy state. If the mother breast-feeds for at least 9 months to a year those stores of fat will be used up more effectively, and one of the reasons for weight gain after having babies is that many mothers have stopped breast-feeding before that 9 months.

Breast-feeding is an art, a craft to be learned, not something every mother necessarily knows how to do the minute she picks up her new-born baby. Great emotional support is needed for the new mother as she copes with the changes in her hormones, the exhaustion of the birth, and the weight of responsibility for a new little person.

Breast milk contains all the nutrients needed by a baby until the age of about 9 months when it will have used up the store of iron held in its body. At that time the baby is able to suck and chew iron-containing foods and physically does not need so much breast-milk. However there is a strong emotional need in both mother and baby to continue breast-feeding for as long as it is comfortable for both of them.

Milk is made in glands in the top part of the breast and chest, and carried to the nipple along channels called ducts. As soon as the baby takes milk from the breast a signal is sent to

the brain to stimulate the glands to produce more milk. The more the baby drinks, the more milk is produced next time. When the mother becomes over-tired, discouraged, or has a sleepy baby who does not feed very often, the milk production is reduced. For the mother to produce more milk she needs rest, help in the home, and encouragement from those around her.

The percentage of protein in breast milk is only 5% which is an interesting indication that at the time of the fastest growth in life a person does not need more than 5% protein. It used to be thought we needed 100g protein each day, but it is now thought we need only about 20g protein a day.

Many people think they have to eat high levels of protein to give them strength or stamina. While it is true that we need protein to rebuild blood cells, replace enzymes, produce antibodies, and fulfill certain other specific tasks, many studies have found that protein use is no higher during exercise than under resting conditions. The strongest animal on earth, for its size, is the silverback gorilla, which is 3 times the size of man, but has 30 times our strength. Yet these gorillas eat nothing but fruit and bamboo leaves.

To give an indication of the protein levels of some foods:

- 100g lean beef would give about 20g protein
- 1 egg has about 6g protein
- 100g (1\2 cup) cooked soya beans - about 20g protein
- 30g cheese has about 7g protein
- 30g (3\4 cup) brown rice has about 4g protein
- 1 medium potato about 3g protein
- 100g of most vegetables would give about 2g protein
- 180g can of tuna gives 30g protein
- 1 cup milk gives 8g protein

So we can see that it is not difficult to obtain our 20g protein every day, in fact the difficulty in our way of life is that we can easily become overloaded with protein. For so many years New Zealand has been the land flowing with milk and

roast mutton that we have come to think of our life-style as right.

Menopause

For women approaching the third M of a woman's life - Menopause - it is particularly important to find out about how much protein is enough, and how much is an over-load, because the over-load has to be dealt with somewhere in the body, it doesn't just politely disappear.

Advertisements for milk and calcium products tell us that around the menopause years we need more calcium to prevent us having brittle and broken bones. However, eating high amounts of animal protein can cause us to lose more calcium than usual in the urine. Also sodium, in salt, needs potassium to balance it, and calcium needs magnesium. When these minerals are out of balance, such as when a lot of salt or protein is eaten, then the body flushes calcium out in the urine while trying to re-establish a balance. We may think we do not eat a lot of salt but it is in most processed foods and difficult to avoid.

When dealing with the Menopause the most well-known problems include osteoporosis, weight gain and hot flushes with loss of sleep and irritability. Other problems that are less often discussed are loss of confidence, dry, itchy skin and sexual discomfort. With the ovaries making less oestrogen the vaginal walls become thinner, drier, and more fragile making sex very painful. It's a shame that at a time when a woman is free of the fear that many women have of another pregnancy, that she is not able to enjoy her sex life. It is difficult to imagine how menopausal women coped with sex before the invention of KY jelly. Now you can buy it in the supermarket along with the vegetables and bread, and nobody even notices any more. Women can be given so much help by their doctors, homeopaths, pharmacists and other health advisers, to make life during the menopause more comfortable that it is sad that some women feel too embarrassed to ask about it.

About half of all women have a loss of interest in sex, and

this does not affect women only at menopause, but at any age. There are many reasons for this loss of desire.

Tiredness. It is difficult to cope all day with children and housework, and maybe an outside job, and then get up at night to a sick child, and at the same time expect to feel romantic.

Emotional. Depression, stress and anxiety may be able to be dealt with during the day, but they surface at night, and can switch off sexual feeling.

Abuse. Whether past or present, sexual abuse will change the woman's idea of her body image and make her feel less than desirable.

Relationship. If the woman does not feel she has a friendship with the man in her life, she will have difficulty in feeling emotionally attached to him, or to their romantic life.

Medications. Various prescription drugs, such as the birth control pill, can lower sexual feeling. Obviously, diseases such as cancer and diabetes, and impending operations, such as hysterectomy and breast surgery, will have a major effect on how a woman feels.

Pain. If sex has been painful in the past, the thought will still be there.

Men. If the man has difficulty in having an erection the woman may at first be frustrated, but may actually welcome it as it means she does not have to try and have sex any more.

Some women find difficulty in discussing their physical symptoms with their doctor because "he is a man and won't understand." That is not so. You don't have to put your hand on a hot stove to experience it before you can know that it hurts. Doctors are sympathetic and knowledgeable about the menopause whether they are men or women, and most male doctors have a wife or mother who has gone through the

menopause.

Homeopathy can give a whole new outlook on the management of many of the distressing symptoms of menopause through the use of herbal and other types of natural medication. It is well worth finding a homeopath that you feel comfortable with as herbal medication needs to be specifically tailored to the individual needs of each person.

Many women put up with painful and distressing symptoms for years, and one of those is heavy periods. At the time of menopause the periods are often very irregular, and can be light, or very heavy. Heavy periods, meaning you have to wear double pads, may be caused by fibroids. These are lumps which are usually not cancerous, but benign. However, they cause the lining of the uterus to become a lot thicker in an effort to try and shake them off, and then at the next period all that extra lining comes away as heavy blood loss, causing pain and anaemia. Sometimes these fibroids block the passage of the blood flow and the blood forms into clots while it is waiting to get out. Help from a health professional is always needed as the situation is not going to get any better all by itself.

All women need to go to their family doctor for a cervical smear every 3 years from age 30 to 70 years. An instrument is inserted into the vagina, to hold it open, enabling the doctor to wipe a special type of spatula across the cervix, at the top of the vagina, collecting a few skin cells. These are then smeared on to a glass slide which is examined under a microscope in the laboratory, to check if there are any cancer cells. There is about a 10% margin of error in checking these smear cells, no matter who checks them, but by having a smear taken every 3 years, unusual cells will be noticed before they change to cancer.

No-one likes to think of unpleasant words like cancer, fibroids and osteoporosis, and it would be unfair and unwise for us to paint a picture of menopause as a terrible time. It is rightly called The Change of Life, and is the time when a

woman no longer has the ability to have babies. Along with that comes the fact that she will no longer have periods, and after 30 years of that, it's a relief in anybody's language. A woman said recently that if a man were to go on bleeding for one week out of every four, for 30 years, he'd spend most of his life at the nearest hospital in the Emergency Department!

At menopause the hormone testosterone increases very slightly, and women become more outspoken about injustices they see, and they get on and do more about life. Try and imagine that at menopause your body is being re-wired and see your hot flushes as "power surges". You can feed all your negative thoughts and actions into these "power surges" and burn them up and get rid of them, leaving you to get on with your life as you want to. Some of the most important things done in the world by women, have been done after they went through the menopause.

Here are some more M's for us to look forward to -

Motivated Mothers Move Mountains after Menopause!

Three main factors influencing a woman's health at any stage of her life, but particularly around menopause, are - high self-esteem, good social support from family and friends, and how healthy she thinks she is.

Menopause brings back the problems we didn't deal with in the teenage years. We must learn to turn our wounds of the past into wisdom for the future, and ask ourselves how we can learn to forgive and use the bad experiences of our lives to help ourselves and other people. Caring for yourself is not selfishness but self-preservation. You must nurture yourself. Pay attention to the things that bring you joy. That might be having a bubble bath, reading a magazine, watching a funny video, or eating lunch outdoors. It does not cost a lot of money to nurture yourself or someone else, it just needs thinking about, and putting that thought into action. Find things to laugh about. Teach your children as they grow up that it is important to laugh, and to look for a marriage

partner that they can laugh with. Life is difficult enough without a sense of humour. One of the best gifts you can give your family is a happy life.

At the Menopause, the same as just before the period, we have a strong need to be appreciated. We also have a strong need to be creative. Be gentle with yourself. Ask for what you need, and say "no" to what you don't want. Life may have been rushing along for years, like the waves surging on to the beach. You are caught in the surf with hardly time to catch your breath before the next wave comes rushing in upon you. There was no time in the past to stop and think, and sort things out. Now it is mid-life. The tide has gone out and you can see all sorts of things it has left behind, and you can no longer pretend they are not there. Talk to other people and tell them your worries. If you don't feel valued you will keep working hard to prove you are of worth, and that can take years off your life. If you only stay in a job you don't like because you're hanging on for retirement - you'll die before you get to it.

We can't do anything about the effects of gravity. The skin on our faces will sag. Other parts of our body will sag too, in fact the top half of our body seems intent on trying to drop down around our waist, and our waist wants to disappear altogether. Choose underwear that supports and lifts your body back where you want it to be. Make or buy clothes that although comfortable, are smart and in colours that make you happy to wear them. Put a hair colour through your hair. Take a lesson from Kiri Te Kanawa who said, "So I'm over 50. So my hair's going grey. So I use a hair colour. So what!"

Skin care is important at all ages. New Zealand has a higher death rate from skin cancer than any other country in the world. We need to stay out of the sun as much as possible, cover up when we have to be out of doors, and use sunscreen when it's not practical to cover up.

Moisturisers need to be used all over the body - don't use hand cream only on your hands, your whole body needs

replenishing. Your skin is the largest organ of your body. See how your feet love it when you put hand cream on them! Use a moisturiser on your face and neck from your mid twenties, night and morning without fail, every day. Drink plenty of water each day to put the vitality back into your skin.

Something else that women need to become knowledgeable about is breast cancer. Mammograms are X-rays of the breasts, which are done about every 2 years for women over the age of 50. Some hospitals have a special programme for women and once you are registered on this you are sent an appointment automatically every 2 years, otherwise your family doctor can refer you for one. Breast cancer can strike at any age, even in your twenties. However, cancer experts maintain that the most reliable way of detecting cancer of the breast in the very early stages is by the woman examining her own breasts every month. The best time is several days after the period has finished, as many women have uncomfortable breasts before the period.

Find some private place where you can take off your clothes and look in the mirror without being self-conscious. Look at your breasts, do they look different, apart from the fact that most people usually have one breast slightly larger than the other.

Lean forward a little - again do the breasts look different from each other, or different from the last time you examined them?

Put your hands behind your head and push your elbows forward, and look at your breasts. Do they look different - e.g. any dimpling or shadows?

Put one hand behind your head. With 3 fingers knead the breast around the nipple, working your way out towards the under-arm. Don't leave out the under-arm area as that is where the lymph ducts are and cancer can grow there. Then change over and do the other side.

Press the nipple to see if there is a blood-stained or brownish

discharge. Then do the other side.

The lump you are feeling for may be like feeling a frozen pea, or it may be a flatter lump. If you find any kind of lump, go to your doctor who will then examine it and either send you to the hospital, or have you back in a month to check it and compare any change.

Our body is made up of 70,000,000,000,000 cells, and most of the time they know where to go and what to do. Cancer is a group of cells that are multiplying out of control. Breast cancer is one of the major killers of women in this country. Experts have discovered overwhelming evidence that what we eat is crucial in helping to reduce the risk of cancer. No one particular food will stop or resist cancer, but eating the right foods is like putting on your armour to protect yourself. We hear advertisements advising us to eat 5 fruits and vegetables a day, but in actual fact we should really try to eat double that number of different vegetables and fruits a day, many of them raw, especially apples, pears, bananas, oranges, onions, garlic, kumara, beans, broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage. The reason for this is that vegetables and fruit have an alkaline effect on the blood, whereas meat produces an acid effect. Research has now found that cancer cells cannot survive in an alkaline environment. Eat lentils, just like Daniel in the Bible whose good health was noticed by those around him. Linseed can be ground and put into many foods, pumpkin seeds supply good sources of zinc, and sunflower seed are important in our daily food too. Bean sprouts are excellent because there is a massive release of enzymes, vitamins and minerals at the time the seed starts to sprout.

A simple rule that applies to many foods is - If it's white, don't eat it. That means, no white rice, white flour or white bread. Also remember that sugar, salt, and the fat on meat are all white. Even with potatoes, kumara are preferred rather than ordinary potatoes. At last the world is recognising what many people knew all along - Brown is Beautiful! Many Asian and Mediterranean women have less

cancer and less menopausal problems and this seems to be strongly related to the food they eat. Olive oil is used in cooking instead of butter and margarine, and in Asia soya foods are eaten a great deal more than here. It has now been found that soya foods have nutrients that block receptors in the breast that allow cancer to grow in the ducts of the breast. We are informed that most soya beans imported into this country have been genetically modified and we must each make up our own minds about the foods we choose to eat. We must also recognise that for many years most of the food we eat has been treated with chemicals, the air we breathe is full of chemicals and the water we drink is full of chemicals, so it is difficult to get away from it all.

It is not difficult to add soya products such as soya milk, soyabeans and T.V.P. which is textured vegetable protein, to our way of eating if we do it gradually, and if we want to be more healthy. We can gain more information from reading books and attending cooking classes where we will be shown the best way of doing this. For instance, when soaking soya beans it is important to throw away the soaking water as it contains poisons that have built up while the beans have been soaking. Cover the beans with a fresh lot of water and after bringing it to the boil, discard that too as it contains elements that can give some people wind. Use a third lot of water to boil the beans, cooking them until they are soft enough to squash in the mouth with the tongue. A lovely desert can be made by mixing soft tofu with mashed banana and serving it over fresh fruit salad.

Rolled oats, beans, pasta, potatoes and brown rice are some of the slow-release carbohydrate foods. They slow down the release of Insulin from the pancreas. When the body has to keep producing sudden amounts of Insulin to deal with sugary foods that are eaten, it puts a strain on the pancreas and can lead to Diabetes. Diabetes is rapidly increasing in this country and a high Insulin level increases the risk of cancer.

About 1 in 10 women develop an under-active thyroid after

menopause. The symptoms include weight gain, tiredness, feeling depressed, no energy, feeling cold. A blood test will look for high levels of the thyroid-stimulating hormone and low levels of thyroid. The treatment is very simple - a small white tablet of thyroxine each morning before breakfast and then you live your life normally. Always ask advice from your pharmacist about any foods to avoid with any medication. Thyroxine should be taken 1/2 hour before breakfast and not with dairy products like milk because they stop it being so effective.

You are not more likely to have diabetes after the menopause but if you already have diabetes then its management may be more difficult after the menopause due to weight gain and less oestrogen being produced. This simply means you need to be in closer contact with your Diabetes clinic nurse.

Heart disease is the number 1 killer in women. Heart attacks are usually different in women than in men because men usually have a huge pain in their chest, radiating down their left arm. Women may also have this huge pain in their chest, but often their symptoms are more subtle. They may feel nauseated, sweating, light headed, pain in the jaw, neck or arm. There may have been a feeling of tiredness for several days before this, which is difficult to diagnose because there are so many reasons why we may feel tired. If you feel ill, phone 111 and ask for the ambulance service and tell them your symptoms. Then unlock your door so they can get in. They will usually come and do an ECG and other tests to assess whether or not you need to go to hospital. Risk factors for heart disease are high blood pressure, diabetes, hereditary causes, smoking, high cholesterol level.

Most of us have heard of cholesterol, and think of it as something bad, but in fact our body needs it, so it makes it. We do not need to add to it. Cholesterol is produced in the liver and is found in man and all animals, but not in any plants, so we can eat as much plant food as we like and not take in any cholesterol. When we eat any animal products such as meat, milk and other dairy foods, we cannot avoid

cholesterol. Cholesterol moves around the body attached to lipoproteins. High density lipoproteins, called HDL, collect cholesterol and take it to the liver to be removed from the body - as long as the liver is working all right and not already over-loaded, such as when diseased, as with cirrhosis. Low density lipoproteins, called LDL, also collect cholesterol but then deposit it on the walls of the arteries. They lurk there, clogging up the arteries so blood cannot flow freely through the blood system. This is what is called atherosclerosis, or furring of the arteries. It is a bit like the furring in a kettle. Eventually it causes people a lot of pain in their legs, and can lead to a small piece of that blockage breaking off and traveling to the heart or brain, causing a heart attack or a stroke. The liver produces more cholesterol in overweight people, and after fatty food has been eaten. For every 1 kg. of extra weight, the body has to make an extra 3 kms of blood vessels for the blood to be pumped through. About 1 in 3 people in New Zealand die from coronary heart disease, mostly by heart attack. Soluble fibre binds with cholesterol in the lower bowel and passes it out of the body. So good foods to eat are barley, oats, brown rice, which still has the outer layer of fibre on it, fruits and legumes, such as peas, beans and lentils.

We hear a lot about Free Radicals and wonder what they are all about. They are not a political party or a new religion! Free radicals are chemicals formed in the body from oxygen, as part of its metabolism and defence against bacteria. We can see the effects of this when an apple is cut in half and goes brown. The effect of oxygen in the air causes some of the apple cells to die and go brown. This is a natural occurrence in the cycle of life. Problems arise when the body produces too many free radicals and these chemicals then attack and even kill cells. Free radicals in the body can get out of control especially as they are increased by excessive sunlight, tobacco smoke, Fast foods and air pollution. Antioxidants can destroy free radicals and they are found in fruits and vegetables, especially those that are orange and red, for example, oranges, tomatoes, apricots, peaches,

carrots, sweetcorn, pumpkin and berries. The benefits of increasing our intake of antioxidants from these type of foods are enormous. They include, improved circulation, reduction of varicose veins and the inflammation of arthritis, and Diabetic eye diseases, and they also help our skin look younger! They are also thought to improve a slowed-down memory, and may help people with Alzheimer's and Attention Deficit Disorder.

Sometimes we think, "I'd like to be healthier," or "I'd like to lose weight," but we don't know how to go about it. The first thing to do is to look at what is going in your mouth. Food comes from 3 main sources -

- God made it,
- You made it,
- A factory made it.

If God made it, its fine. If you made it, look at what you put in it. If a factory made it, read the label. You are looking for 3 things in particular -

- How much fat is in it?
- How much sugar is in it?
- How much salt is in it?

Look at the order of the list of ingredients, as they have to be written in order of what is the most in it.

Be aware that some foods we think of as healthy often have a lot of sugar in them. A small tub of yoghurt usually has 3 heaped teaspoons of sugar in it. A milkshake may well have 9 teaspoons of sugar in it. A can of fizzy drink has about 7 teaspoons of sugar in it, so when you drink it your body craves water to dilute all that sugar, so you feel thirsty and drink more fizzy drink. So the drink manufacturers are happy - but your body isn't! A lot of food producers have reduced the amount of salt used, and we can buy Light cottage cheese or Light cream cheese, with greatly reduced amounts of fat, but nothing much has been done to reduce

the sugar level. Too much sugar will reduce the effectiveness of the white blood cells that deal with infection, which means you are more likely to go down with an illness. Sugar is made up of glucose which the body uses for energy, and fructose which the body cannot use so is stored as fat.

The reason why diets do not work, and people end up fatter than before is that first of all you lose water, then you lose muscle, and the body holds on to the fat as a reserve, in case of times of famine and starvation. You think at first you are losing weight, but you are really losing water and muscle, so you gradually become weaker and weaker. Your internal machinery slows down and the body uses up the food very slowly. You feel low in energy and get discouraged. You give up dieting and comfort yourself with fatty foods, which the body naturally craves in times of stress, but can only process very slowly as it is now working only slowly - so you put on weight and end up heavier than when you started. Multiply this scenario by each time you have a baby and you will see why many women are so depressed.

So we can learn some very important things from all this -

- Don't go on a diet.
- Don't try and lose weight.

Instead of concentrating on losing weight, try instead to become fit.

I can change "F A T" to "F I T"

and it is not just the letter "I" but the person "I" that must make the changes.

To do this effectively you need a team to work with you, especially to keep you encouraged when you feel like giving up. You could include on your team your Creator - after all, He made you, so He can mend you! Also seek advice from your family doctor and ask to be referred to a dietician at your local hospital. If this means travelling a long way, then ask if a nurse at the doctor's surgery can over-see your

progress, as you need someone outside your everyday circle of people to check on you. Then, of course, you need the encouragement of your family and friends, but remember they have got used to you the way you are and may not see why you want to change. Recognise that you might sabotage your own weight loss as you are nervous in case you can't keep it up, or cope with the change, or cope with people's reaction to the "new" you. Some people are critical or jealous, and some people stare at your new body shape, and you may be insecure about this as it new to you.

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When things go wrong in our lives, or when we look at the trouble the world is in, we say, "Someone should do something about this." We must remember, "Someone can't do everything, but everyone can do something." It's up to us to do what we can. We might think we can't do much, but we can each do something. Snowflakes are one of the smallest things you can think of, but look what they can become when they all stick together.

We all have different types of personality and some people prefer to exercise in a group, while others work better on their own or with a personal trainer. Some people like charts to tick their progress, and like stickers to reward themselves, while others will not exercise unless they know exactly why they are doing it, and can see a result or benefit from it, such as after a heart attack.

There is an old saying about eating food, which says, "First on the lips, and then on the hips." In reality fat does not start on your hips - it starts in your head. It starts with all the thoughts that go round and round inside our heads, thoughts of fear, anger, sadness, loneliness, disappointment,

insecurity, discouragement, and not feeling valued. Depression slows down the body's machinery that uses food and causes us to put on weight.

We turn to food, especially fat-containing food, for comfort and to blot out those thoughts and feelings. Emotionally we crawl away into our own dark little world and cover ourselves with a blanket of depression. We hide behind a blanket of loneliness. We hide behind a blanket of fat. We hide behind so many blankets we lose sight of who we really are. Many people hide - we are not very different from anyone else, but we need courage to admit it.

Discouragement will come to us in many forms - in whatever way is applicable to us individually. Do not claim negative behaviour as being your own. For instance do not say - my anger, my overweight, my sugar addiction, my alcoholism, my drug addiction, my depression, my blaming behaviour. These are all methods the Adversary uses to discourage people. Recognise who is behind it and do something positive about it.

I trained as a nurse in a London hospital in the 1960's, and in all the years since I have looked after people with all kinds of problems. What I have learned is that we all have difficulties of one kind or another. Your trial is different from the next person's. You don't want it - but would you want theirs?

Would you prefer to be the mother who lost 2 of her children and her home in a fire?

Or the mother who had to leave the family home with her 2 young sons because her husband preferred a homosexual way of life?

The mother whose intellectually disabled son screamed almost all day and often at night? One day I massaged her shoulders and she went off to sleep sitting upright in the chair while I did it as she was so exhausted.

The mother whose 2 children have an incurable disease? She

watched the first one die aged 5 years and then watched the next one get worse, knowing he would probably die soon, and she could not have more children without them probably inheriting the same disease. At the same time she had to cope with the knowledge of her husband having an affair with another woman.

The mother of a little girl who could not be in daylight as it made her scream with pain in her head? So they lived with all the curtains drawn and could not go out together. The husband gave up his job to relieve his wife, but they could only ever go out separately as someone had to be at home with the little girl in the darkened room. The whole family lived in semi-darkness day after day for 7 years.

The mother of 2 little girls, one of whom had cerebral palsy and needed everything done for her, including special exercises several times a day? The mother needed a lot of help, but couldn't get it from her husband because, although he loved his family he gave way to temptation in his job in a Bank. An old lady asked him to invest her life savings for her, and he gambled away nearly \$100,000 and went to prison. So that mother had to visit and support her husband, who she loved, as well as care for the children.

These are all people I have known in my time as a nurse, but there are also the people we see on the T.V. screen - real-life people, not films. The mother in Africa holding her child who is skin and bone as it starves to death in her arms - the endless lines of refugees fleeing from war.

If we all sat round in a circle and threw our troubles into the middle, when we saw what some other people are coping with - we might want to grab ours back before we got something worse.

As a nurse, it is my job to check that x-rays and blood results and other necessary information are all in the patient's notes when they are examined by their doctor. If that information is not there it is up to me to find it because a proper

diagnosis cannot be made without it, and the patient will not be given the right treatment. However it is not my fault that the x-ray people did not send the x-rays to us, or the blood report is still at the other side of the hospital. I am not to blame but I am responsible for putting it right as much as I can.

You are not to blame for what you did not know in the past - about your health, child abuse, upbringing, education, and choices you made. However, as an adult you are responsible for making a change for the better. You must continually search until you find the answers, and when you know what to do, then do it, and extend your knowledge to others. You have to heal yourself before you can be happy with someone else. You don't have to know what to do - you have to do what you know. Then as you take that step forward, you will see what comes next.

So often, when we feel depressed, we sit hunched over, staring into space, going over and over in our minds all the things that are making us unhappy. If you want to feel better, it is important to get up and do something instead of sitting around feeling depressed. By all means go to a doctor for treatment, but there are some other simple things that you can do that will help. Go for a walk and have a change of scenery. Take up evening classes. Give some help to someone who needs it. Do something that involves other people and keeps you busy. Remember, "Time on your hands means flab on the hips!"

We tend to think that men and women are complete opposites in so many things, but in actual fact men and women both want the same thing in that they want to feel valued, respected and loved. It is amazing how often the real cause of so many problems among people in all walks of life is due to one person not showing value for another, and the other person not feeling valued.

You cannot feel loved if you do not feel valued. If a person's actions do not show that they value you, but their words say

they love you, you will not believe them. As little children we knew this but did not understand why we felt so confused, or what to do about it. As adults we are responsible to ourselves to learn how to make the changes.

If you do not value yourself you will put up with the way other people treat you. There is a saying, "When the mother makes up her mind, the children will do what she says." It is to do with the upbringing of children, but applies to all relationships. People will continue to treat you the way you allow them to, until you make up your mind that you have had enough, and will not put up with it any longer. So if people treat you like a doormat, it is because you allow them to. If your children, or others in the family, or people at work, speak to you with no respect, it is because they know they can get away with it.

Until you make this stand, people will go on saying and doing things that hurt you, and you will go on hiding under the blanketing layers of fat, depression, fear, and rejection. It will be like you are hidden under a thick quilt, with only your eyes showing. The real you is hidden, deep down, where you feel safe. This will go on all your life until you decide you will not put up with it any more. Until this happens, and you are determined - really determined - to make changes, nothing else will change. It will not be easy to change the habits of a lifetime, and you will need people to help you, but most of all, you will need to work hard yourself. There are many ways to succeed, but nothing works unless you do.

If you squash your finger in the door hinge, the pain won't get any less until you open the door and get your finger out of the hinge. It doesn't make any difference if you cry, shout, get angry, or whatever, nothing is going to change until you get that door off your finger. You have to do something about it to make the pain get less.

Start with one positive action. Then build on that. Have someone - a doctor, nurse, or some other kind of "authority figure" - hold you accountable to do what you say you will do.

Talk with that person about what you want to achieve. Be specific. Discuss what might happen to prevent your success. How might other people re-act? How might you back-slide? Make sure it is a realistic goal that you really can manage, and not something so difficult that you set yourself up to fail before you have even started. Set a date for when it will be achieved. Work out what "rewards" you will give yourself along the way to keep yourself going.

Sometimes you will have to do what you don't want to do - but do it anyway. Do it even when it hurts to change. Do it every day - every day - every! Visualise how you will look when you succeed, and reach towards that goal. It will take a long time, but the outcome is worth whatever you need to do to achieve it, because what we are really talking about here, is your spirit. It is being suffocated by all the layers you have built up around it over the years. Don't take a stifled spirit into the eternities. Sort it out now while you are physically able to.

You feel angry about the way other people have treated you, but you are still reacting to that anger as you did when you were a little child. At that time you may have been told it was wrong to be angry. It is possible to stop someone, especially a child, from acting angry, but not from feeling angry. So as the years went by you stopped expressing those angry feelings and shut them away. But they did not really go away - they were just stored away, ready to explode out at any time. That created another difficulty - you were scared in case they came exploding out at some time, and you did something violent. So, instead, you found it safer to keep quiet and hide.

When dealing with your feelings of anger it is important to focus on what you are angry and hurt about, not who did it, and get the facts straight in your mind about what really happened. Over time our memories become blurred. There will be bad things that happen to all of us because other people have the right to make their own choices, just as we do, and sometimes they will make bad choices, some of

which can hurt us terribly.

We cannot change what happens in life, but we can be in charge of the way we face it. If we continue to feel the victim we will go down the drain with everyone else. If we continue to feel miserable about events that happened long ago, then we drag ourselves down, and other people want to keep away from us. Emotional prisons are made of anger, resentment, pain and guilt, but they are locked from the inside - our side.

We might think we can't forgive someone else unless they are sorry. This is not so. Forgiveness is not really for the sake of the other person - it is for us. If we do not forgive, then we are blocked from moving on in life. It's just like a river that has a dam built across it and cannot flow on - we are dammed, and we are the one who built the dam. If we want to get rid of the dam, but don't know how to do it, then maybe we need to talk to someone older or wiser who will listen constructively while we work it out. Often, we can work it out for ourselves if take it step by step. Sometimes we think about doing something, but never get around to it. We none of us know how long we have, or how long other people have in this life.

A year ago I had been unwell for several months, and then found a lump in my breast. I went straight to the doctor and he was concerned about it and wrote to the hospital for me to have an appointment. Because of the number of people already on the Waiting List it was 6 months before I got that appointment, and that was a long time to have to wait and wonder, and try not to worry. During that time I decided that as a nurse I knew the kind of treatment I would be asked to undergo, and as I had been unwell for so long I felt I just did not have the energy left to go through with it. Because I did not know if I would be there for my sons when they married and faced the difficulties of adult life, I decided to write down many of the things I wanted them to know. That writing turned into a book, which I revised and re-wrote again and again to keep it short, and I continually prayed about it every step of the way, so I would write exactly what I was meant to

write.

One day when I felt a lot of pain all over my body, and the pain seemed to have gone on for such a long time, I knelt by my bed, in tears, praying. I asked if I would ever be well, and able to walk down the road without any pain, like other people? I asked why I had to go through all this? I asked what it was all for? Then the quiet thoughts of inspiration came into my mind. "How can you write about it if you haven't experienced it? How can you help other people if you haven't gone through it yourself?" Then came the peaceful feeling that there was a reason for it, and I could learn from it, just as I had been able to learn from all the negative, hurtful experiences of my childhood and growing up years, then the years of coming as a young bride to a country half a world away from my family and knowing no-one, managing on little money, coping with illness and accidents, and worst of all, standing at the cemetery beside the grave of our longed-for baby son. Then I knew the truthfulness of the statement, "All these things shall give thee experience, and shall be for thy good."

Eventually it was found that the lump in my breast was not cancer, but I was glad I had written the little book and wondered if other people might like to read it too. At first I was not going to ask for any money for it, but then realised it was a way to raise money for many people overseas in such terrible difficulties, especially children in disaster areas of the world. I had 300 copies of the book printed and sold all of them. The book produced over \$1,000 and it made me very happy to be able to give it all away to people who needed it. I would like to close with the words I used at the end of the book.

Most of life is rather like the weather, very ordinary with patches of sunshine and occasional showers. We remember the beautiful, sunny days best, leaving us with wonderful memories that live on through the years, but there are also storms that wreak havoc and at the time are so frightening and difficult to live through. Family and friends may gather

round us to help, but in the end there is no way to go around these terrible times - only through them. Much as we would rather avoid these experiences, their purpose is to make ourselves stronger and give us understanding of others' troubles, so that together we can find solutions to our problems, and help the world to progress.

In ancient times, a man was condemned to push forever against a huge rock. After many years he pleaded to be released because no matter how much he pushed, it would not move. He was released and told to look at how strong his muscles had become. The real aim was not to move the rock, but to become stronger himself. If we see our challenges as being too difficult to cope with, and give up, we become like cardboard that has been left out in the rain, and instead of being firm and dependable, we become soggy and useless.

We must listen to the wisdom that is in each one of us. That still, small voice that is so easily lost in the hustle and bustle of our everyday lives. We must take the time to be quiet so we can listen to it, value it and act on it. We have been given all the raw materials we need in our lives to achieve our full potential as a successful human being, but the choices are left up to us. We must continually look for the good in ourselves and others, and in our daily lives. When we do this the good will show in our faces and we really will be good-looking people. This is what we were created for - to be successful, to progress as good people, and to have joy in our lives. Only we can take the steps to make this happen in our own lives, and we must do it for ourselves, because, in the words of the advertisement - "I'm worth it!"

Adoption A Special Baby

This story was written in 1982 for Owen as he was having such a lot of emotional difficulties aged 11 years. He was saying, "If you were my real mother you wouldn't make me make my bed, feed the chickens, do my homework", or whatever else he was angry about. So I sat for hours, one night, and wrote a story about him. The next day I gave it to Owen to read. He went off to his bedroom and read it but never said a word about it to me. When I asked if he wanted to talk about it he said he didn't need to, because he already knew most of the story, but he became more calm after that. So here is the story.

Several years ago a man and a woman were very disappointed because their doctor had told them they might never be able to have any children. They had a nice home and a garden, but they were very unhappy because they had no children to share it all with. Their doctor told them that he would write a letter to some people, in a nearby city who were Social Workers. He would explain that the man and woman were very kind people, who were longing to have children, but were not able to have them, and they wanted to adopt a baby.

When the letter arrived the social workers read it and asked the man and the woman to come and talk to them in an interview at their office. Later on the social workers went to visit the man and the woman in their home to see if it was a warm, comfortable place for a child to grow up in. They wanted to know what kind of bedroom the child would sleep in, and if there was room in the garden for a child to play in. They told the man and the woman they would have to wait until just the right baby was available for adoption, but that they should start getting the baby clothes ready and buy a baby bath and cot so they would be all ready whenever the baby arrived.

The social workers telephoned the hospitals in other cities to see if there was a baby ready to be adopted. Sometimes mothers in these hospitals asked for their baby to be adopted because they were not married and had not got a home ready for the baby. They did not have a husband and felt that the baby needed a father as well as a mother, so they asked for their baby to go to a family who wanted a baby. The baby would then belong to the new family just exactly as if he had been born into the family, in fact, he would be even more special because he had been specially chosen.

One afternoon the exciting phone call came that the man and woman had been waiting for. The social worker told them, "Your baby has arrived. He is a little dark haired boy with blue eyes, and you can go and see him tomorrow." They were so excited they could hardly sleep that night.

The next morning they went to the hospital and the midwife took them into a waiting room, and then brought their new baby to them. The midwife put the baby into his new mother's arms, and they could hardly believe they could be so lucky to have such a beautiful baby as this. The baby had to stay at the maternity hospital until the legal papers were signed by the birth mother to say the new mother and father could take the baby and have him as their own child. This took several days as it was a very important and serious thing to do.

The birth mother talked about it with her boyfriend who had started the baby with her. He said he liked her very much but he didn't know if he would like her for the rest of his life so he didn't want to get married to her. He said they must do the best thing for the baby who was so tiny and needed so much looking after. The first mother knew this was true. She knew they had no home for the baby and that they were both very young, and they didn't know how to bring up a child. She felt they must ask the hospital workers to find a new mother and father for the baby. So they did. And that was how the baby came into his new family.

The new mother and father were very excited the day they were allowed to bring their baby home from the hospital. All their friends came to visit and see the new baby, and they sent lots of cards and presents, to show how happy they were about the new baby.

The months passed and after almost a year the final adoption papers were signed. This was a worrying time for the mother and father. They knew that up till this time, the first mother could ask to have her baby back and they would have to let him go. They didn't want him to let him go. They were very worried in case that should happen. They didn't feel like an extra mother and father, they felt exactly the same as if the baby had been born to them. They were his real mother and father.

At last, the day came when the father and mother took the

baby to the courthouse in the city, to sign the final papers. The judge told them what a lovely baby they had, and that now he was completely theirs, and could never be taken away by anyone. How happy they felt.

The years passed and the baby grew up into a happy little boy. He had lots of energy and loved to run and jump, and climb and swing. He got into all kinds of adventures and loved playing with his dog, riding his bike and helping his father in the garden. When he was 2 years old he had a new baby brother who wasn't adopted but was born into the family. He loved his new baby brother right from the beginning and looked after him and played with him all the time.

His mother and father had wondered how they would feel when the new baby was born because they hadn't adopted him. They wondered if they wouldn't love the new baby as much as their first baby because they hadn't specially chosen him. Or perhaps they would love him even more because he had been born to them and was not adopted. Then they discovered something very interesting. It doesn't make any difference whether a baby is born into a family or adopted into a family. His father and mother feel just the same about him whichever way he arrives. The most important thing is that he comes into their family.

After a few more years another baby brother was born into the family but he died when he was one day old. His father and mother were very unhappy as they wanted children so much, and hated losing their new baby. They understood then how awful it must have been for their son's birth mother to have given up her baby for adoption. They knew she only did this because she loved her baby so much and wanted him to have a family of his own. Later on another baby boy was born into the family and everyone was very happy.

As the years passed the boys grew up and they all liked each other and got on well together - most of the time. But as he

grew older the oldest boy found he had lots of questions in his mind that he didn't know the answers to. He wondered about his birth mother. He wondered what she looked like, what she sounded like, where she lived, if she still thought of him. He talked to his parents about it but they didn't know what his birth mother had been like as they had never seen her.

Often when he was tired and irritable, or when his parents were annoyed with him, he told them his first mother wouldn't speak to him like that. He didn't realise that his first mother would have been just as cross with his muddy shoes and untidy bedroom as his own parents were. Mothers are the same whether it's your first mother or your second mother or even your friend's mother. They all like boys to be tidy and polite and helpful - and sometimes boys are untidy and rude and noisy and they get into trouble.

As the boy got older, he sometimes felt worried about all sorts of things. He was doing well at school, he enjoyed Scouts and was good at sports. He was kind-hearted and had several friends, but sometimes he didn't think he had enough friends in his school class. He worried in case people didn't like him. He thought his family didn't like him because they often told him off. All he ever seemed to hear was, "Tidy your bedroom, take off your muddy shoes, wash your hands, make your bed, mind your table manners, wash the dishes, go to bed". It sounded like his parents didn't really like him.

He didn't realise that his parents had worries too. Sometimes they didn't have enough money to buy all the things they would like for their family. Sometimes they couldn't pay all the bills and they were worried. Sometimes they were not well. Sometimes one of the children was not well and they didn't get much sleep at night. Often they were tired. But the boy didn't know any of this because his parents didn't want to bother him with their worries.

He often wished he was not the oldest boy in the family. He was expected to know more and behave better just because

he was older than his brothers. But he didn't realise that it was just as difficult for his parents. They had never been a father and mother before he came to their family, so he had to be the first one for them to learn how to be parents. They knew that as he came nearer to becoming a teenager he would have more things to worry about. He would change to new schools. He would make new friends. His body would gradually change from being a boy into a young man. He would wonder if people liked him. He would wonder if he was good enough at school work and sports. He would wonder if girls liked him, but he would never let anyone know he was thinking about them.

His parents wondered if they would be able to help him through this difficult time so that he would be able to stop worrying and really enjoy his life. Sometimes they wished they hadn't done things wrong in bringing him up. They wished they could go back and start all over again with him. They wished that he could have been born to them and not adopted, so that he would never have to wonder about his first mother and father. They wondered if he would like them as he grew up, or if he would like his first mother better if ever he met her when he was grown up. Often when the boy shouted at his parents they felt unhappy because they felt he didn't like them. He was telling them that they didn't like him, but they also felt he didn't like them.

The father and mother loved their son and didn't like to see him so unhappy. They wanted so much to find some way to stop his worries and show him how very much they cared about him. They told him that over the years, every single cell in his body had been replaced at least once and now he was not only in a new family but also in a new body. He was completely their son. They told him they were proud of the things he had learned and how well he was doing at school.

All this was very important, but the most important thing his parents wanted him to know was that they loved him from the very first time they had ever seen him, and they would go on loving him forever. Sometimes the boy would do things

they would disagree with. Sometimes they would do things he wouldn't like. But they wanted him to know they had loved him as a baby; they loved him now, and they would go on loving him wherever he was and whatever he did - no matter what. He would always be their son and they would always love him.

A Real Mother

Olive Redmond, 2000

People used to ask if I were your real mother,
And I always answered,
"Yes I am his real mother
When he's happy I feel real joy,
And when he's hurting I cry real tears."

We wanted a child and waited through four lonely years of
disappointment
We asked for a baby,
And knew we would happily adopt whichever one we were
offered,
Because we knew the baby was chosen for us by God
Like a portrait that comes signed by the artist,
You came to us with God's signature.

When we very first saw you we knew we loved you
It was a love stronger than any I had ever felt before
I would willingly have gone through the pains of giving birth,
And the struggle of learning to breastfeed,
If I could have done so,
But God did not ask me to do that.

Instead, I was asked to endure the comments of others,
Who thought I was a second-best woman,
And not a real mother
They were happy for us, but thought it was different from
having "your own child"
And when I gave birth to your brother two years later,
They waited to be proved right.

Then I discovered what I knew all along,
That the difference was in other people's minds, not ours
A child is tied to a family with the cords of love,
Not through the strands of DNA.

I loved you then
I love you now
I will go on loving you throughout all Eternity

I have found that the more people you have in your life to
give love to,

The more love you have
You never run out of love
Just like the song you learned when you first started school
"Love will stay, if you give it away,
You will keep on having more."

The Mean Mother

Olive Redmond 2002

Now that my children are old enough to understand the logic that motivates a parent, I want them to know:

I loved you enough ... to ask where you were going, with whom, and what time you would be home.

I loved you enough ... to insist that you save your money and buy a bike for yourself, whether we could afford to buy one for you or not.

I loved you enough ... to be silent and let you discover that your new best friend was not so wonderful as you thought.

I loved you enough ... to make you go and pay for the pencil erasers you had taken as a dare, and tell the shopkeeper, "I stole these yesterday. I am sorry and I want to pay for them."

I loved you enough ... to stand over you for two hours while you cleaned your room - a job that should have taken 15 minutes. I loved you enough to phone the school for you to be sent home in the lunch hour, because you had not made your bed as agreed.

I loved you enough ... to make myself sick eating a whole bar of chocolate in front of you and sharing it around with others, but not giving you any to show you how left-out it feels when you don't share.

I loved you enough ... to let the dirty dishes pile up in the kitchen for 3 days at a time till you realised no-one else was going to take your turn, and do your responsibilities for you.

I loved you enough ... to let you see anger, disappointment, and tears in my eyes. Children must learn that their parents are not perfect.

I loved you enough ... to let you assume the responsibility for your actions even when the penalties were so harsh they almost broke my heart.

But most of all, I loved you enough to say No when I knew you would really dislike me for it. Those were the most

difficult battles of all. I am glad I won them, because in the end you won too, and now that you have children you will understand the logic that motivates parents ... but it's not logic, it's love.

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