



# FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES



## Use Your Senses

By Jenny Lobb, Family and Consumer Sciences Educator, Ohio State University Extension, Franklin County

Have you ever been having a conversation with a friend or family member, yet unable to focus on what they were saying? Sometimes our minds work on overdrive, and it can be hard to silence thoughts about the past or worries about the future and simply focus on the present. In such instances, using a simple mindfulness practice such as the three senses mindfulness activity might help you to focus. This activity is one you can practice anytime, anywhere. All you need to do is use your senses!

When you find yourself feeling stressed, anxious, impatient or otherwise unable to focus, pause and take a few deep breaths. Then, take a few seconds to notice three things you can hear, three things you can see, and three things you can feel.

I often use this mindfulness exercise when out walking in the neighborhood with my dogs, especially if it has been a stressful day at work and I find myself having trouble letting go of thoughts related to work or items on my to-do list. When my mind is too cluttered to notice—much less enjoy—the sights and sounds of being outdoors, I use the three senses mindfulness activity to bring myself back to the moment. Depending on the day or the season, I may feel the sun on my skin, the wind in my hair, or even just the sensation of my feet in my shoes. Sometimes I feel the tension of my dog pulling on his leash! I may see flowers blooming, leaves changing color, clouds in the sky, neighbors working in their yards, or squirrels darting across the street. I may hear cars driving by, birds chirping, or someone using a lawn mower.

How might you use the three senses mindfulness activity in your own life? Do you have children or other family members who might benefit from using this practice? Give it a try! You might just notice something new.

## Routines for a New School Year

By Alisha Barton, Extension Educator, Ohio State University Extension, Miami County

As the first day of school approaches parents often start to think about routines for the new school year. Routines can change or need to be adjusted with a new school and sometimes reestablished after the lazy days of summer.

Routines are an important part of a child's development. Routines do more than just keep us organized, they help our youth learn life skills, build their self-confidence, and teach team work and much more. According to Healthy Children, children do best when their routine are regular, predictable and consistent.

Here are a few routines to consider as you head back into a new school year:

**Morning Routine:** Having a routine in the morning can help families get to work and school on time, remember homework, lunches and other important items and be ready to face the day. If your children struggle to get going in the morning allow them enough time to wake up before starting their morning routine. A morning routine should include time for breakfast.

**After School:** Routines after school can organize extracurricular and evening activities and still work in other necessary activities like home-

work and chores. Children that old enough to be home alone after school benefit from a routine and knowing what is expected of them. Posting routines for all to see and follow may be helpful. This also encourages autonomy as our children and teens start to move through the routines on their own.

**Bedtime:** An evening routine can help our children get their recommended amount of sleep. Bedtimes may be different for our children based upon their needs and ages. A routine before bed can help children be ready. Build quiet time in and avoid screen time, close to bed to help your child be ready for restful sleep. A night time routine could include reading time, singing together or just some time with each individual child to talk about their day.

Other routines that are important and beneficial to children include meal, weekend and clean up or chore routines. Routines look different in every family. It's important to be flexible when building a new routine for your family. It make time for family members to adjust and the new routine may need a few changes, be patient and willing to adapt as needed and soon you will be seeing all the benefits of routines in your home.

## Why Laugh? It's good for you

By Lorrissa Dunfee, M.S., Extension Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences, Ohio State University Extension, Belmont County

I recently got back from vacation and started to reflect on the wonderful opportunity to share time with family and friends. One thing that stood out for me was the amount of laughter experienced. According to Merriam-Webster, laughter is a sound of laughing, a cause of merriment. From the very beginning to the very end of the road trip there were giggles, snorts, and belly laughs. Does that mean our vacation went off without a hitch? No, not at all. We had several bumps along the way, but we made the choice to be joyful.

At one point, my daughter's friend started choking at lunch. She had food stuck in her esophagus and couldn't breathe. It was a scary experience but one made easier by staying positive. After it was all said and done, the friend stated "if I don't laugh I will cry". A good sense of humor can't cure everything but it can help put things in perspective and provide a quick pick-me-up.

According to the Mayo Clinic, laughter produces short-term and long-term benefits. It stimulates your heart, lungs, and muscles increasing circulation and aiding in muscle relaxation. Endorphins are released by your brain when you laugh therefore improving your mood, relieving pain, and improving your immune system.

I love to laugh and often times find my self hysterical. If you are looking to add laughter and humor into your life try these strategies suggested by Nancy Recker, Ohio State University Extension Educator and Associate Professor Emerita:

- Recognize the value of humor.
- Don't worry or analyze why people laugh—just participate.
- Think funny—look for the humor in every situation.
- Learn to laugh at the incongruities in life.
- Keep a notebook and jot down the funny things you hear. Do it daily.
- Adapt material. Use humor from any source. If you think nothing funny happens to you, personalize it and change it to fit you.
- Laugh at yourself. We all do stupid things. If you laugh at your mistakes, it gives others permission to do the same.

If you ask yourself "when was the last time I laughed" and you can't remember, then it is time to get busy laughing. Dr. Michael Miller, M.D., of the University of Maryland recommends 15 minutes of laughter on a daily basis. Typically, laughter is contagious so if you are struggling to find humor in your life get out and share a laugh with a friend or family member.



## Happy Birthday! Enjoy your day

By Candace J. Heer, Family and Consumer Sciences Educator, Ohio State University Extension, Morrow County

When it comes to birthdays, people seem to have mixed emotions. Kids look forward to turning a year older, counting down the days until their next birthday and often saying their age with the "and a half" added to it. Children also look forward to their milestones—becoming a teenager, turning 16, then 18, then 21—for various reasons. Eventually, though, the years begin to pass more quickly and the birthdays seem to just keep coming. As adults, some of us are happy to have our birthday come around again while many would prefer not to think about it.

When a birthday arrives, it may seem like any other day; you have to keep stopping to remember that the day is extra special. Sometimes you might forget, remembering only when someone walks by you and says "Happy Birthday!" Because I personally am prone to this tendency, years ago I started observing the week of my birthday and celebrating all week long. By doing so, I am not forcing myself to cram all my excitement, thoughts, and feelings into a 24-hour period in which eight hours are spent sleeping.

I like my birthday and look forward to it every year. I always have! How about you? How do you feel about your birthday? If you're in the camp that doesn't like having a birthday and turning a year older, it may be helpful to focus on your birthday as a celebration of another year of life. The American Cancer Society once had a campaign called "More Birthdays" in which they observed and celebrated years lived well and to see a world with more birthdays.

Taking a positive approach to birthdays in which you express gratitude for your health and life may actually improve your overall attitude and outlook in the days to come! My close and oldest friend (not oldest in age, but the one I have known since first grade!) and I celebrated our 40th birthdays at a "getaway spa" in another state. Since the "big ones" get fewer as we get older, we decided to celebrate the decade ones in style, or at least in our own style. This year my friend and I have planned another "birthday trip" to celebrate turning "50".

A study from the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology states highlighting time-based landmarks—such as birthdays—may help to motivate positive behavior change and promote success in future-oriented goals. I started planning my "turning 50 years old" celebration when I was 47 "and a half". My plan was to be physically the strongest I have ever been come age 50, even stronger than when I played sports in high school. I got myself a personal Pilate's instructor who provided me with a mix of cardio and strength training, and thus I began my journey toward my 50th birthday. When the day arrived, I had met my goal and made turning 50 years "old" feel like 50 years "young".

Isn't that the take away from birthdays—giving thanks and looking forward to celebrating our birth no matter how old we are or where we are in our life journey? Be grateful today for the chance to think about or plan another year. When your next birthday comes around, take advantage of the opportunity to hit the reset button and/or celebrate another year well lived.



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### Not so fast!

By Joseph Maiorano, PHD, Family and Consumer Sciences, Harrison County

So, you want to develop a committed, long term, intimate relationship with a special someone. Even though he or she might be quite the hottie, have a great sense of humor, and a love for others, you shouldn't rush into things. Here are a couple activities that might help you decide if this is the person for you.

#### The Sock Drawer Test

One activity to get to know your potential partner better, look in his or her sock drawer. This might help you to better understand your love's neatness, tidiness, and/or general orientation to detail. Ask him or her to open that drawer. What do you see? Are socks folded in pairs or organized with plastic sock sorters. Perhaps, what meets your gaze is less organized. For example, it may appear that your dearest took a handful of socks from the laundry basket and tossed it into the drawer? Maybe, you see socks that should have been thrown away months, even years, ago. Again, whatever the condition of the sock drawer, a conversation might help you analyze what you saw. After that conversation, you could invite them for a peek into your sock drawer. Another activity that might help you decide on the level of commitment you want to make: The money talk.

#### The Money Talk

Yes, I realize the sock drawer test has its limitations, but it might be enlightening and entertaining. Another activity to help you decide just how right Mr. or Miss Right truly is: have a conversation about each other's values and attitudes toward spending and saving money (Bralich, 2017; Fletcher, 2008).

Meetings about money should be held regularly, if not frequently - don't wait for a problem to have a conversation. It is best for couples to have their first discussion about money and finances while they are dating. During an initial meeting about money, each person should talk about his or her values and attitudes toward spending and saving. Of course, your significant other's values and attitudes will differ from yours. Your job is to decide to what degree those



differences might affect a long term relationship. (If your instinct is a bit hesitant, then you need to trust it - maybe have additional meetings. If you ignore your instinct, or believe that you can change the other person, you might be setting yourself up for a disaster). If you decide that those differences are not too extreme, and that the other person has traits of a competent problem solver, it might be a good idea to develop money management strategies, so those differences don't become points of contention, later.

What follows are some rules that a couple might use to help guide a conversation about money and finances (Fletcher, 2008):

- The person who earns the most money doesn't govern the finances. Couples need to make team decisions about money.
- Both parties actively engage in the conversation. Listen carefully to the other person. If you think you do not understand something, then you must ask questions until you do understand.

- Each person must articulate his or her wants, needs, and/or personal feelings about finances. The other person's job is to withhold judgment and criticism.

- Negotiate to settle differences. Make verbal or written agreements about money and financial management. The goal is to help prevent misunderstandings.

It is best to discover as much as you can about another person prior to making a long term commitment to him or her. Whatever activities you choose, communication is key! Good communication can help people get to know each other, and to decide if they want to pursue a long term relationship with each other.

### Chow Line: Back-to-School? Food Safety Tips for Packed Lunches

By Tracy Turner

**My kids are starting back to school next week, and this year they are packing their lunch for the first time. Any tips on what I need to do to make sure their packed lunch is safe and healthy?**

Wow - is it that time of year already?

If your child wants to bring a packed lunch to school, there are several ways to make sure their lunch is both healthy and safe from pathogens that could cause a foodborne illness.

This is an important distinction to make, as children are among the most vulnerable to food poisoning. That's partly due to the fact that their immune systems are not as effective at fighting off bacteria and viruses compared to those of adults, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

When packing a lunch for your child to take to school, it's important to remember that cold foods need to stay cold and hot foods need to stay hot, to avoid the development of harmful bacteria that could cause a foodborne illness.

In order to make sure your child's perishable foods stay cold until lunchtime, the U.S. Department of Agriculture advises that you pack two cold sources that will keep the contents out of the Danger Zone, which is when a food's temperature reaches between 40 to 140 degrees Fahrenheit, at which bacteria grows most rapidly.

Frozen water bottles or frozen juice boxes can count as a cold source, as well as a freezer pack that you stick in their lunch box. Lunches that contain perishable food items like luncheon meats, eggs, cheese, or yogurt should be kept cold in this manner.

If you plan to send soup, stew or chili for your child's lunch, you will need to use an insulated container. Before adding in the hot item, you can fill the container with boiling water, let it stand for a few minutes, empty it and then add the hot food, advises the USDA. Also, tell your child to keep the lid on the container closed until lunchtime to help prevent bacterial contamination and growth.

Other safe lunch-packing tips from USDA

and FDA include:

- If you pack your child's lunch the night before, leave it in the refrigerator overnight. The meal will stay cold longer because everything will be refrigerator temperature when it is placed in the lunchbox.

- Clean the insulated box or bag with hot soapy water after each use, and don't re-use paper bags.

- If possible, your child's lunch should be stored in a refrigerator or cooler with ice upon arrival at school. Leave the lid of the lunchbox or bag open in the fridge so that cold air can better circulate and keep the food cold.

- While it's best if your children wash their hands before eating lunch, that doesn't always happen at school right before lunchtime. So make sure you pack disposable wipes for your children to wipe their hands before and after eating lunch.

- After lunch, make sure your children discard any leftover food, used food packaging, and paper bags. Don't reuse the packaging because it could contaminate other food and cause foodborne illness.

Remember, healthy lunches include whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean proteins and low-fat dairy products. If preparing sandwiches, opt for whole grain bread and add veggies for toppings. Additionally, you can make sandwiches fun for your children by cutting them into shapes using a cookie cutter.

As far as sides are concerned, prepare snack-sized bags of fruits and veggies in advance and let your children choose which ones they want in their lunch that day. Whole fruit such as apples, peaches, pears, bananas and tangerines are also good choices.

*Chow Line is a service of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, OSU Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Tracy Turner, 364 W. Lane Ave., Suite B120, Columbus, OH 43201, or turner.490@osu.edu.*

## "Dine In" With Us! OSU Extension Family Meal to be Dec. 3

Ohio State University Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Dine In Day, December 3, is a day to set aside and share a nutritious meal with family, friends, and colleagues and have good conversation. Dining In at home together really does make a difference in the lives of our families - biological or otherwise. Sharing a meal is so fundamental to the human experience that sometimes we take this simple task for granted. Dining In at home together decreases our families' chance of being overweight or obese. It improves our families' relationships. We save money and eat healthier when Dining In.

Not enough time, busy schedules, and too

much stress, however, might make this seemingly impossible for many families. So, here are some tips that might make Dining In a little easier for you and your family from AAFCS (American Association of Family & Consumer Sciences).

1. Make family meals a priority and agree upon a schedule.
2. Try to have regular family meals two to three times per week.
3. If dinnertime doesn't work, have family breakfasts or snacks.
4. Keep meals simple. Slow cookers save

time in the evening!

5. Double recipes and freeze food for a second meal.
6. Set aside 30 minutes on the weekend for meal planning.
7. Make family meals fun and include children in food preparation. How about having breakfast for dinner?
8. Discuss neutral or positive topics at the table. Stumped for what to talk about? Try this conversation starter: "What fun thing did you do today?"
9. Eliminate distractions like TV and cell

phones.

10. Eat slowly and enjoy your time as a family!

To make the pledge to Dine In with your family December 3, go to [aafcs.org/fcsday/commit-to-dining-in/fcs-day-sign-up](http://aafcs.org/fcsday/commit-to-dining-in/fcs-day-sign-up) and make your commitment today. The home website has great "Dining In" promotional resources, logo merchandise, and articles available. Visit: [aafcs.org/fcsday/home](http://aafcs.org/fcsday/home).

To learn more about the Benefits of Family Meals, stay tuned for OSU Extension Fact Sheets that will be available soon or contact Candace Heer at [heer.7@osu.edu](mailto:heer.7@osu.edu).