Briefings on Family Matters

For Individuals and families living in Southeast Missouri

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University of Missouri, Lincoln University, U.S. Department of Agriculture & Local University Extension Councils Cooperating
Life can be hectic. Most of us would agree with that. Sometimes it feels like we do not have time for ourselves or our partners. But couples with strong relationships tend to work on their relationship every day through shared rituals.

A ritual is a repeated and intentional activity. Rituals shared by couples can go a long way in helping maintain a positive, strong and connected relationship.

Here are a few ideas for connecting:

**Admire and appreciate:** Find some way every day to give or show genuine affection and appreciation. Call, text, or email to touch base when you are away from each other. Think about how it makes you feel simply to be remembered by someone.

**Before leaving:** Do not leave without knowing one interesting thing that will happen in your partner’s day. Likewise, share a quick rundown of how your day will be spent.

**When returning:** Have a 20 minute stress-free conversation. Give full attention. Show support and understanding before giving advice. Reconnecting at the end of the day gives comfort to each person.

**Affection:** Cuddle, kiss and hold hands. Go to bed at the same time even if you do not go to sleep at the same time. Remember to kiss each other before going to sleep.

**Alone Time:** Devote at least 2 hours a week to uninterrupted time alone together. Avoid talking about who will do what chores or tasks. Spend time catching up, reminisce, talk about your hopes and dreams, and just enjoy your time together.

Committing to these rituals takes just minutes each day and can provide a big return on this investment in your relationship.


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*The Marriage Garden*

Mary Engram

Have you ever thought that a strong marriage can be like two people growing a healthy garden?

To have a healthy marriage garden we must nurture the best parts of our relationship while guarding against pests. If we neglect our garden, we get a tangle of weeds and bugs.

“The Marriage Garden” is a six lesson, self-study packet available from the University of Missouri Extension Mississippi County office. To request a packet call 573 683-6129 or send me an e-mail me at engramm@missouri.edu

Packets cost $5 plus postage.
Using Herbs during the Holidays

Donna Aufdenberg

The holiday season brings back memories of wonderful aromas and amazing flavor for many of us. To keep your holiday dishes pretty and flavorful, it is always wise to renew your stock of herbs and spices.

Here are some tips:

- Sprinkle some finely chopped herbs over dips or spreads to give them eye-appeal and fresh flavor.
- Mix butters and dried herbs - use as rubs to chicken, turkey and in other dishes.
- Use whole sprigs to garnish dishes. Rosemary, oregano, parsley or thyme are great additions.
- Use whole stems of herbs in flower arrangements and holiday décor.
- To get the full flavor of fresh herbs, don’t add them until the end of the cooking process. Some dried herbs need to cook longer.

Plant Hellebores for Winter Bloom

Donna Aufdenberg, Field Specialist in Horticulture

In the gloomy months of winter, the sight of something blooming is a kind reminder that spring is around the corner. One of these winter bloomers is the Hellebore. In many years, its blooms can be found peeking out of the snow on a cold winter’s day.

Hellebores bloom early in the year. Here in the southern part of Missouri, they can be blooming in January during our milder winters. Typically, they can stay in bloom from February through June with a single bloom lasting 4-6 weeks in many cases. Traditional varieties have blooms that droop downward. This is a survival mechanism to the snow, sleet and rain.

Hellebores are an evergreen perennial with shiny dark leaves which grows USDA zones 5-9. They put on their best show in partial shade in areas with well-drained soils and plenty of organic matter. They are long-lived and are typically trouble-free once established.

Those people who have planted Hellebores in their gardens know that they are slower starters. They will sit for a couple of years after being planted before starting to bloom. They are a little more expensive than the average perennial and don’t always look good in the nursery pot but once these guys are established and start blooming for you, they are definitely worth it.

Once planted, they can be heavy feeders especially in areas where limited organic matter exists. They need most of their nutrients in the spring and summer right after blooms have died.

Take caution - Hellebores do not divide well or transplant well. Also, during severe winters and periods of severe drought, the foliage may scorch or turn brown. Gardeners can prune damaged leaves by removing the whole leaf and stem from the base of the plant.

Several varieties can be found in catalogs and at nurseries.
Mobile Apps for Guiding Nutrition and Health
Bethany Bachmann, County Engagement Specialist
in Nutrition and Health Education

In the world of smart phones and tablets, there are a lot of great health and fitness apps that can make your health and fitness journey much easier. There are apps to help you track food and water intake, track your physical activity, remind you to get your steps in, provide information on food safety, where to find the nearest farmers market, and much more. Here are some favorites that I have come across in my line of work:

**MyFitnessPal** - This FREE app provides calorie and nutrient tracking, along with step/activity tracking. The main “page” of this app also acts like a newsfeed similar to Facebook. All of the articles displayed are nutrition and health related. Two particular articles on this day include “How to Fix Nighttime Leg Cramping and Pain” and “6 Healthy-ish Substitutes for Traditional Fall/Winter Indulgences”.

**Seasonal and Simple** - This is a FREE app developed by University of Missouri Extension. Through the app you can view recipes and produce information, as well as find a comprehensive list of Missouri Farmers Markets. Be sure to check out the easy to read chart showing when produce is in season in Missouri.

**FoodKeeper** - This FREE app, brought to you by the USDA, is designed with the intention of decreasing food waste. In the app, consumers can browse a large variety of food items and view suggested storage options and time frames. Consumers are also able to add notifications to their device’s calendar for pantry items that may be expiring soon. The app also includes information on the latest recalls and provides a variety of videos for consumers.

Many fitness trackers (FitBIt, Apple Watch) also work really well when synced with the corresponding app on your smart phone or tablet. Fitness trackers not only track your daily steps, but many can now track your heart rate and sleep, send you reminders to get up and move, and guide you in deep breathing exercises to relieve stress and help you refocus.

Perry County Extension Council Candidates Wanted!

Are you interested in all things related to MU Extension? Do you have a desire to further the mission of MU Extension in your community?

The Perry County Extension Council is currently looking for Perry County residents interested in running for a 2-year term on the council. Elections will be held in January and the 2-year term will begin in February.

The Perry County Extension Council works closely with University of Missouri Extension Specialists to identify and market research-based programs to the community, manage council and office finances, and promote University of Missouri Extension in the community. Council meetings are held once per month.

If you or someone you know is interested in running for a position on the council or would like more information, please call the University of Missouri Extension office in Perryville at 573-547-4504.

**Candidates must be 18 years or older and a resident of Perry County.**