

# WORK & FAMILY LIFE

BALANCING JOB AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

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Practical solutions  
for family, workplace  
and health issues

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Pre-teen friendships and social groups can change from day to day, often without warning.

## Getting through the middle school years, a time of change and opportunity

By Joe Bruzzese, M.A.

One of the big frustrations of pre-teens and young adolescents is the feeling of being misunderstood. So a good starting point for any discussion of the middle-school years is to think about what kids this age wish their parents knew and *really* understood about them.

Here's my list of pre-teens' main concerns, drawn from conversations with them and their parents over the last 20 years. It highlights priority issues that, if neglected, can easily lead to frustration between family members.

As you read the list, keep in mind that young people's perceptions of what they need and want are often different from what will actually move them forward in their development.

Be aware also that kids are not all the same and that your child's needs are unique and continually broadening. Learning to appreciate your child's changing perspectives while maintaining your own is an ongoing challenge but one worth pursuing.

### What young people want their parents to know

- "My friends are really important to me." Allow me to hang out with my friends and also help make our family time fun and enjoyable.
- "I like my privacy at home." Help me learn to gain your respect at home. I want to feel respected.
- "I like consistency but I won't admit it." Too much freedom with no consequences will lead me to trouble.
- "Teach me how to make choices." Don't bail me out if I would learn an important life lesson by accepting the consequences of my choices.
- "I appreciate having a list of things to do and a deadline for completing them." Constant nagging bugs me.
- "Please don't choose my extracurricular activities or push me to participate in an activity when it's obvious I'm not interested."

Continued on page 2...

## Middle school years...

Continued from page 1

■ *“Let’s not argue about school.”* If you expect me to get A’s and B’s, say so. Telling me to “do my best” doesn’t give me a clear picture of what you expect.

■ *“When I’m feeling down, give me some time and space to sort out my emotions.”* Just let me know that you’ll be ready to listen when I’m ready to talk.

■ *“I’m noticing my appearance more now than I did in the past.”* Please don’t comment on how I look, especially in public or around my friends. It’s embarrassing.

### Focus on friendship

Middle school kicks relationships between kids up to a whole new level. Children encounter a sea of new faces if they change schools. They also get a full complement of new teachers and an increased academic load. For many young adolescents, it becomes a challenge to make new friends and keep their old ones from elementary school. In addition, there are subtle changes in a child’s physical and emotional development.

The onset of puberty increases self-awareness that’s brought on by intense peer scrutiny and leaves many young adolescents feeling emotionally insecure.

### A fast-changing scene

It’s not uncommon for friendships and social groups to change from day to day in middle school, often without warning or explanation. With adolescence comes children’s need to rediscover their identity. They often approach this by trying out different social groups until they find one that gives them a sense of belonging. This cyclical pattern, however, can leave kids vulnerable to having their feelings hurt.

### Advice for parents

■ *Stand by for emotional support but allow normal adolescent ups and downs to play out.* It’s difficult to see a teary-eyed child, but don’t take on the role of problem-



*“What a great website. I can see why you like it!”*

solver or peer-mediator. Be supportive but also give children the freedom to find a peer group for themselves. Observe their circle of friends respectfully—without a lot of hovering or assuming the role of “friendship manager.”

### What about cliques?

Unpleasant as cliques may be, they are an inevitable part of the middle school environment. They are similar to ordinary social groups, except that cliques typically refuse to accept new members—even those who share the same interests.

### It is worth it?

Why do children try to fit in with groups that want to exclude them? Sometimes kids see the status and security that comes with group membership as worth the potential rejection. To a middle schooler, the prospect of walking the halls alone and being seen as a “loser” seems far worse than any

possible abuse from being on the fringes of a popular group.

And for the child who is eager to connect with a new group of friends, it’s not always easy to differentiate between potential friends and foes.

### Advice for parents

■ *Help your child learn how to identify cliques*, particularly those that bully or exclude based on a person’s appearance, interests or race.

■ *Encourage your child to stick with friends who offer positive support.* Explain that although it may take time to find the right niche, cliques will be easier to ignore once your child finds his or her own group of good friends.

### Keeping communication open

Young adolescents may need your help, but they don’t like to ask for it. When it comes to talking about the details of their friendships, for

example, many middle schoolers develop and are beginning to fine-tune their ability to use selective silence when parents ask questions.

Kids clam up about a lot of things at this point because they have a growing need to feel a unique sense of self. They want to stake a sole claim on certain parts of their lives and often view a parent’s questions as intrusive.

Here are some suggestions for opening up the lines of communication in your family:

■ *Be aware that young kids anticipate the inevitable blast of parents’ questions at the end of the school day or over dinner.* As often as you can, wait till a more relaxed time to talk. And, instead of starting each conversation with your own questions, try to say less and let your child do more of the talking. Most children like to talk if they’re given the opportunity. What they don’t like are a rapid-fire barrage of questions and continued probing by their parents.

■ *Try asking questions that begin with “how” rather than “why” or “what”.* Starting a question with the word “why?” puts kids on the defensive. Asking “Why did you do it?” or “Why didn’t you try it that way?” requires a child to justify his or her actions and is perceived by many children as an accusation of wrongdoing.

When you ask questions like “How did you do that?” or “How did you find out about that?” you set the stage for your child to take control of the conversation. When you ask “How did you do so well on your test?” or “How did it feel when you heard the news?” you acknowledge your child’s abilities as well as his or her emotions. ♦

—Adapted from the author’s new book *“A Parents’ Guide to the Middle School Years”* (Celestial Arts, [www.tenspeedpress.com](http://www.tenspeedpress.com)). See page 8.

## Raising children in a digital world

Media in all its forms is ever-present in our kids’ lives. And it’s our responsibility as parents to help teach children to use it safely and responsibly. There’s a lot of good advice and information out there to help families manage all this media. Our favorite is the free website [www.CommonSenseMedia.org](http://www.CommonSenseMedia.org).

It’s a nonprofit organization that’s not trying to sell you products. It reviews and recommends movies, games, websites, TV programs, books and music for different age levels. It also addresses emerging issues related to social networking sites, texting, cyberbullying, violence in the media, and many more.

## Beware of work-at-home offers on the Web

Q After my sister lost her job, she accepted one of those “work at home and make big money” offers that turned out to be an Internet scam. She paid for a “start-up kit” but didn’t realize that she would also be charged every month on her debit card. The offer seemed too good to be true, and it was.

—S.R., Atlanta

A Schemes promising big bucks for at-home jobs have proliferated on the Web, and they may seem legitimate. But you’re right to be wary. The Better Business Bureau has reported a sharp increase in the number of frauds targeting job hunters this year.

Social networking sites such as Facebook are often used as phony blogs by people who tell you how they’re making thousands a month—and conveniently link you to the “great offer.”

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) says the schemes fall typically into three categories:

**SETTING UP A MEDICAL BILLING BUSINESS.** But it’s very difficult to generate revenue, let alone cover your initial investment.

**ENVELOPE STUFFING.** The promoter has no employment opportunities, however. To make money, you’re advised to place ads in newspapers and try to get others to invest.

**ASSEMBLY OR CRAFT WORK.** After you invest in various equipment, the company may disappear or tell you that your finished products don’t meet its “quality standards.”

The FTC says the sponsors of legitimate work-at-home programs should tell you in writing what’s involved in the program they are selling, who will pay you, and if you will receive a paycheck or be paid on commission. For more information, go to [www.ftc.gov](http://www.ftc.gov).

You can also check in with the Better Business Bureau website at [www.bbb.com](http://www.bbb.com). Click where it says “Check out a business or a charity.” ♦



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This is your column. We invite you to send questions about work and family life or tell us how you solved a problem that you think a lot of people face. Write: Dr. Susan Ginsberg, Work & Family Life, 305 Madison Avenue, Suite 1143, NY, NY 10165. E-mail: [workfam@aol.com](mailto:workfam@aol.com).

## RESEARCH REVIEW

### Are you the eldest, youngest or in the middle?

B irth order is something we take personally. Every one of us is an eldest, youngest, somewhere in between, or an only child. But are we exaggerating the impact of where we fit in the family order? People say, for example: *I’m a typical competitive oldest child who got all the attention before my sister was born.* Or *I’m a typical competitive second child, always trying to catch up.*

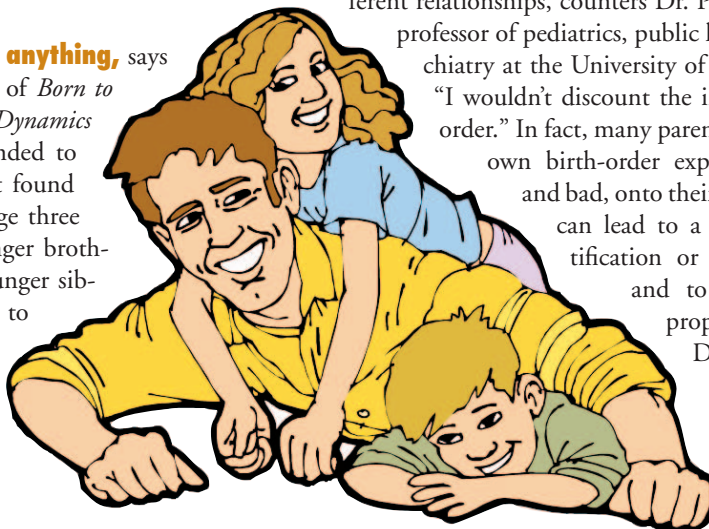
A large body of research suggests that no two children grow up in precisely the same family, because each sibling’s experience is different. But the effects of birth order are neither as clear or straightforward as we make them sound, and scholars who have studied the subject don’t always agree on the findings. New York Times health columnist Perri Klass, M.D., highlights some of the current thinking.

**Birth order doesn’t cause anything,** says

Dr. Frank J. Sulloway, author of *Born to Rebel: Birth Order, Family Dynamics and Creative Lives*. He responded to a 2007 Norwegian study that found eldest siblings’ I.Q.’s to average three points higher than their younger brothers’ by saying perhaps the younger siblings may have been exposed to less language. The “best environment to grow up in” is basically with two parents who are talking to you as you are doing things together, said Dr. Sulloway.

**We can all cite examples** (and opposite examples) from the experiences of our families, friends, literature and history. In many families the youngest child becomes the star, and there are lots of brilliant eldest siblings out there too. Dr. Sulloway says personality and temperament are much more important than I.Q. in any case: “Napoleon was a second-born and his older brother was a very shy guy. Napoleon usurped the older-sibling niche because his older sibling didn’t occupy it. And why didn’t he occupy it? Temperament.”

**Birth order does set up a structure** of our place in relation to others, however. It’s our earliest imprint as we learn how to react to people of different ages and different relationships, counters Dr. Peter A. Gorski, professor of pediatrics, public health and psychiatry at the University of South Florida. “I wouldn’t discount the impact of birth order.” In fact, many parents project their own birth-order experiences, good and bad, onto their children. This can lead to a sense of identification or even rejection and to “self-fulfilling prophecies,” says Dr. Gorski. ♦



### Longevity in U.S. continues to increase

L ife expectancy is rising. A baby born in the U.S. in 2007 can expect to live 77.9 years, compared with 77.7 for a baby born in 2006, according to new demographics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

As a group, white women still have the longest life expectancy, but the sharpest increase reported by the CDC was among black men.

Heart disease and cancer are the leading cause of death in the U.S. They each claim more than four times as many lives as stroke, the third leading cause. Here are the top causes of death in 2007.

1. Diseases of the heart
2. Cancer
3. Stroke
4. Chronic lung diseases.
5. Accidents
6. Alzheimer’s disease
7. Diabetes
8. Influenza and pneumonia
9. Kidney disease
10. Blood infection
11. Suicide
12. Chronic liver disease
13. High blood pressure
14. Parkinson’s disease
15. Homicide

# Keeping grandparents up to date on kids' safety

**W**ho knew 30 or 40 years ago how much safer children are on the road when they're sitting in car seats? Or the fact that more American children die each year from accidents and injuries than from all diseases combined? We've learned a lot in recent years about some of the newer dangers for kids—from garage door openers to microwave ovens to hot dogs.

If you are planning a visit with young children to their grandparents' house over the holidays, be aware that many older people do not live in child-proof homes. Grandparents may also be unfamiliar with the newer dangers for kids—and they may not have heard or read some of the research on the causes and frequency of childhood injuries. For example:

- Accidents are more likely to happen when children are in a new situation or under stress.
- Boys tend to take more risks and suffer more injuries than girls.
- Three out of four poisonings take place when adults are at home, and they involve kids under the age of five who have mistaken household cleaners for beverages or medicine for candy.

Most grandparents will appreciate your safety tips, although some might say, "I brought you up and you survived." In any case, here are some ideas to consider and suggestions of potential hazards to watch out for.

**Take into account your child's age and mobility.** Is she or he an infant? A curious, exploring toddler? A school-age child who can understand and will obey rules such as, "Grandpa's computer and exercise bike are off limits."

**If your child is an infant** who will be sleeping in a rented or borrowed crib, make sure the mattress fits firmly. If you see a gap, fill it up with rolled-up towels.

**Look around for heavy objects or furniture** that could be pulled down by a young child. Make sure that television sets, computers, monitors and printers are securely positioned. Put breakable items out of the reach of young children. Push table lamps away from furniture edges and make sure that all wall units are secured.



*These days we know more about what's dangerous to young kids.*

**Are cords from shades or blinds dangling?** These can be dangerous to a curious toddler. Try to put breakables, plastic bags, electrical cords, cleaning products and other chemicals out of reach as well.

**Check for window guards.** Grandparents who live in high-rise buildings may have window guards. If not, it's important for everyone to be aware that window screens will not keep a child from falling out of a window.

**Check the rails on a terrace or balcony.** Make sure they are spaced closely enough so a child can't fall through—and never leave kids alone on a terrace or balcony.

**Make sure kids can't get access to a parking area or swimming pool on their own.** At their grandparents or at a hotel or motel, be sure a child can't leave the house or apartment alone.

**Is the garage door opener safe?** Does the automatic garage door opener reverse itself when it lowers

on an object? Otherwise, it can be lethal.

**Don't trust safety caps on medicine.** It takes most toddlers about 10 minutes to get a container open. Remind grandparents to keep medicines, vitamins and aspirin out of the reach of children, to avoid taking pills while young kids are watching, and never refer to medicine as candy to make it seem more desirable. Young children are great imitators.

**If you zap food or an infant's formula in a microwave oven,** always test it first. The container may feel okay to the touch but its content may be scalding hot.

**Keep disposable lighters out of children's reach.** These colorful objects can be enticing and dangerous.

**Go over the car-seat rules with grandparents.** Buckle a child into the back seat only. Never hold an infant or toddler in your arms while you're traveling in a motor vehicle, even for one block.

**Remind older relatives of foods that can cause choking.** Don't give young kids hard candy, nuts or grapes. Always cut hot dogs into small pieces. Let grandparents know if it's okay to give your child peanut butter.

**Remind grandparents to never walk away from a young child in a bathtub, even for a minute.** You should also look in the yard, garage, or basement for any large containers. A toddler can fall head first into a bucket and drown even in a small amount of water or other liquid.

**Secure exercise equipment.** Don't allow children to play around with any exercise equipment that has gears. Stationary bikes cause many hand and finger injuries every year.

**Are there electrical appliances near water?** Even one that is turned off can cause electrocution if it's plugged in and falls into water.

**Be ready to act in case of an emergency.** Find and post telephone numbers for the local Poison Control Center and other emergency services in your grandparents' community. ♦

# When college students come home for the holidays

By Laura S. Kastner, Ph.D., and Jennifer Wyatt, Ph.D.

Off the bus came Alex, full of life, with his endearing, impish grin, home from college for a month's winter break. It was a happy reunion for his family until out of his backpack, Alex pulled a floppy-eared puppy, an adorable stray that he planned to "find a home for." But who was going to take care of a puppy in the meantime?

Returning children often revert to patterns that yank a parent's chain. Maybe it's a puppy or it might be a nose ring, a tattoo, a suitcase dumped in the hall or hearing those familiar words, "Bye, see ya later."

## What to expect during a holiday visit

What with cell phones, e-mail, and Skype, many parents feel like their college students never left home. But they did—and there are some classic re-entry patterns that you should be prepared for.

**CHECKING FOR SIGNS OF CHANGE.** If you altered your child's room or sold the old pool table, brace yourself for a reaction. In their transition to greater independence, college freshmen typically like their home base to stay unchanged.

**LIVING IN A BUBBLE.** Other returning students are oblivious to their surroundings. They wouldn't notice your new hair-do if it were dyed purple, not to mention the effort you put into making their homecoming celebratory.

**CHECKING INTO A HOTEL.** Many kids arrive at home as if they were checking into a hotel, coming and going at their leisure and leaving the "maid" to clean up after them while they're hanging out with their friends. After doing their own laundry and being responsible for themselves in ways



*"It feels great to be back home in my old bedroom!"*

they hadn't anticipated, college students may feel relieved to "under-function" at home—they're tired of being an adult. Many parents miss fussing over their children, but others resent having kids act as if they're a houseguest.

**FEELING SCATTERED.** Some students arrive home reeling from exams, the social scene and their living arrangements. They need to just "veg out" and put together the pieces of their experience. They may be too preoccupied to hang up the clothes they're tripping over.

## Setting limits is still important

As parents, we like to preserve the image of home as a cocoon, but if it starts to feel like too much take and not enough give, you'll need to negotiate some limits. Some parents (who

sleep well and trust their kids) extend "free agent" status to returning college students. But most, as a matter of courtesy and assurance of safety, ask for a level of accountability (easier now with mobile phones): *What are your plans? Call me when you get there.*

One thing you might say is, "I know you don't have a curfew at school, but I don't sleep as well knowing that you're out. So please be in by 1 am or call me if you change plans."

## A time of transition

Young people mature by leaps and bounds at this time in their lives, but their habits don't change overnight. Parents too can lapse into old responses such as nagging, intrusive questioning or trying to overcontrol.

What becomes clear during a holiday visit or winter break is how tricky parenting can be during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. We ask ourselves: *Am I treating him or her too much like a child? Too much like an adult? How can we best communicate?*

Another factor to consider is that, increasingly, as young people get older, they will have other options for school breaks. Parents who want their college students to continue to come home sometimes feel as if they're in the marketing business with their own child.

Having your college student back home can feel like a mixed blessing. Just remember that we are our kids' lifelong family, the known quantity they can count on always being there—and that feeling of security is what allows them to spread their wings. ♦

*—Adapted from the authors' book, "The Launching Years: Strategies for Parenting from Senior Year to College Life" (Three Rivers Press).*

## Sharing your student with an ex-spouse?

Divorced parents may have to share their returning college student with another set of moms, dads, grandparents and friends. For example, what if your daughter is scheduled to spend a week of winter break with Dad and one with Mom, and she wants to go on a ski trip for three days on your week? You could try to negotiate an extra day with the other parent, but an adversarial ex-spouse may not be willing to budge.

Just be aware that it's not in the best interest of the college student to become an intermediary between dueling parents during school break.

Try to move beyond wanting "my time" with "my" child because of "my" needs. Have empathy for what your child is experiencing. Difficult as it may be, try to show the same kind of generosity you would have wanted from your parents at their age. ♦

# Telling your boss about a personal problem

One Sunday afternoon Kate learned from her husband that he had met someone else and wanted out of their marriage of 27 years. The next morning, Kate approached Debby, her boss. “Let’s go outside for a walk,” she said. “I need to tell you something.”

Debby offered a sympathetic ear, urged Kate to take advantage of their employer’s counseling service and made the initial appointment herself. And although the circumstances are still painful, Kate is doing as well as can be expected.

“Sometimes I get the blues,” she said. “I get angry at myself for not picking up some of the signals. But actually having a busy work life helps me. I don’t have time to feel sorry for myself, and the people I work with have shown me they care.”

Says Debby: “Kate’s openness, humor and positive attitude have made it easier for her and for us. At least a couple of times a week, she stops working, gets up from her desk and says, ‘I’m going for a walk.’ It’s her 10-minute stressbreaker, and we all say, ‘Go Kate!’ The other day I did it myself and everyone laughed.”

## How and when to say something

From time to time we all have personal problems that affect our ability to make it through the work day. It may be a temporary crisis: a sick child, a teenager who got into trouble at school or agonizing over the decision to end the life of a beloved pet. Sometimes it’s a longer-term matter, like the breakup of a marriage or the illness of an elderly parent.

How and when we should tell our boss and coworkers about a personal problem? There’s no easy answer to that question. Your decision might depend on a number of factors such as:

- *How well do I really know the people I work for and with? Are we aware of the day-to-day happenings in each other’s lives?*
- *Is my work likely to be affected by this personal issue?*
- *Is my supervisor the kind of person who will be comfortable hearing about my problem?*
- *If I reveal something personal, will my in-*

*formation be treated confidentially? With disapproval?*

□ *Do I expect to resolve the problem within the near future?*



*“I’m glad you told me about what’s going on with your mother.”*

## Approaching your supervisor

Once you decide to say something to your supervisor, here are some ideas that should increase the likelihood that he or she will be receptive to helping you continue doing your job while you’re dealing with the problem.

**Pick an appropriate time and place.** Find the calmest time of day at your workplace—a time when you can discuss the situation you’re going through without interruptions.

**Be specific but brief.** State the problem concisely and accurately. Spare your boss the details—and don’t expect him or her to be a social worker. Do not exaggerate the seriousness of whatever you are experiencing. If you want your supervisor not to tell others, ask him or her to keep this confidential.

**Focus on the workplace impact of your problem.** Talk about how your work will be affected by what’s happening in your personal life. For example, Kate is unhappy about some aspects of her divorce proceedings, but her work life does not seem to have changed.

## Offer work-related solutions.

If a personal problem takes you away from your workplace, try to come up with some suggestions to make up for the time. For example, if you have to leave early to drive your spouse to the hospital for radiation treatments three times a week, you might offer to work late on the two days when you don’t have to do this.

## Share any inconvenience that you may be causing.

If your personal problem is putting a burden on your coworkers, try to come up with a plan to reciprocate for any extra work they will need to pick up while you’re not there. If you show your willingness to share any inconvenience, your boss and coworkers will be more likely to meet your needs.

## If your own health is the problem

If the personal problem is a major illness that you yourself are recuperating from, the situation is different but there are some parallels. Here are a few suggestions:

## Think of coming back to work as a transition.

It’s more of a process and not something that can be accomplished in one day. And if you can, come back in steps, not all at once.

## If you’ve been out for an extended period,

make your first trip back a short meeting or lunch with coworkers, if possible—to break the ice, especially if your appearance has changed.

## Once you’re back, be honest about your limits.

Tell your boss and coworkers what you can handle. Pace yourself. If you need to lie down for a few minutes from time to time to regain your strength, say that as well. And make sure to thank the people who’ve been helpful and thoughtful to you. ♦

## Ginger can be soothing remedy

Throughout history, people have used ginger as a natural remedy for stomach ailments. And now modern researchers agree that the active ingredient in ginger (the antioxidant polyphenol gingerol) may indeed have medicinal effects.

In a long-term clinical trial that compared it to a placebo, ginger was found to improve symptoms of nausea among pregnant women and to help manage motion sickness.

Other studies have found that ginger eases indigestion, has natural antibacterial properties and can be effective as an anti-inflammatory for people who suffer from arthritis.

It's important to know that fresh and ground ginger have distinctly different tastes, so they are not interchangeable in cooking.

When you buy fresh ginger, look for smooth, not wrinkled skin. Roots with more knots or branches will have more pungent taste.

Ginger root stays fresh wrapped in plastic in the refrigerator for up to a week. Or you can freeze it for up to three months.

For a cup of hot ginger tea, place a few slices of ginger root in a tea strainer and steep in boiled water for 10 minutes. ♦

—Adapted from the Environmental Nutrition newsletter

# Heart attack signs differ for women

Research by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) indicates that women often experience “new or different” physical symptoms as long as a month or more before having a heart attack or AMI (acute myocardial infarction). The symptoms most commonly reported were unusual fatigue, trouble sleeping, and shortness of breath.

Surprisingly, fewer than 30% of the 515 women in the study reported chest pain prior to their heart attacks, and 43% reported no chest pain during any phase of the attack. Yet most doctors continue to think of chest pain as the leading symptom for both men and women.

The NIH study is one of the first to investigate women's experience with heart attacks, and how this differs from men's. Recognizing symptoms as early as possible is critical to either forestalling or preventing a heart attack.

“Indigestion, sleep disturbances, or weakness in the arms, which many of us experience on a daily basis, were recognized by many women in the study as warning signals for AMI,” said principal investigator Jean McSweeney, Ph.D., R.N., of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences in



Little Rock.

But there's a high degree of variability in the frequency and severity of these symptoms, so we need to know at what point they can help

us predict a cardiac event, Dr. McSweeney added.

“Increasingly, it is evident that women's symptoms are not as predictable as men's,” said Patricia A. Grady, Ph.D., R.N., of the NIH. “This study offers hope that both women and clinicians will realize the wide range of symptoms that can indicate heart attack. It is important not

to miss the earliest possible opportunity to prevent or ease AMI, which is the number one cause of death in both women and men.” ♦

### Women's major symptoms PRIOR to a heart attack

Unusual fatigue (70%)  
Sleep disturbances (48%)  
Shortness of breath (42%)  
Indigestion (39%)  
Anxiety (35%)

### Women's major symptoms DURING a heart attack

Shortness of breath (58%)  
Weakness (55%)  
Unusual fatigue (43%)  
Cold sweat (39%)  
Dizziness (39%)

For more information: [www.ninr.nih.gov/womenheartdisease.htm](http://www.ninr.nih.gov/womenheartdisease.htm).

## Ginkgo biloba fails the dementia-prevention research test

The herb ginkgo biloba (from the leaves of ginkgo trees) has long been used in Chinese medicine for a variety of ailments, and it's one of the 10 most popular herbal supplements in the United States.

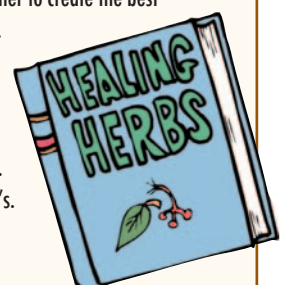
Ginkgo biloba has been widely promoted as a preventive to the memory loss associated with forms of dementia. But recent research has failed to show any benefit from the herbal supplement in reducing the risk of dementia or Alzheimer's disease.

For more than six years, the Ginkgo Evaluation of Memory Study tracked 3,069 volunteers age 75 or older with normal cognition or mild cognitive impairment. The participants were randomly assigned to two groups, receiving either a twice-daily dose of ginkgo biloba or a placebo.

The researchers found no difference in the rate of dementia between the groups or in the rate of Alzheimer's type dementia. Participants already suffering mild cognitive impairment saw no benefit from ginkgo in preventing the progression to greater dementia.

Steven T. DeKosky, M.D., who led the study, said: “If older patients are considering using ginkgo for preventing dementia, I urge them to speak with their health care providers about the results of this study and work together to create the best treatment plan.

To learn more about this research, go to [www.nia.nih.gov/Alzheimer's](http://www.nia.nih.gov/Alzheimer's).



# Help with navigating the pre-teens years

The critical years from sixth through eighth grades, when children gain independence and parents' role shifts from omnipresent manager to supportive coach, can be as rewarding as they are challenging. For the first time, kids are traveling from classroom to classroom and interacting with specific subject teachers. They are also confronting social issues that would have been unthinkable even a decade ago.

"Guiding your child's transition into adolescence takes time, patience and a significant step forward in personal parenting knowledge. While the road

through the middle school years can be smooth at times, it can also take you through turbulent waters," says Joe Bruzzese, a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

His exceptional new book, *A Parents' Guide to the Middle School Years*, helps families understand and cope with twenty-first century middle school reality. He provides advice on a wide range of topics such as establishing new friendships (see

*front page story*), problems with cliques and bullying, building solid relationships with teachers, helping kids stay organized, study strategies for tackling homework and managing extracurricular commitments in a sensible way.

Bruzzese discusses keeping kids safe online, cell phone do's and don'ts, and what kids and parents need to know about drugs and alcohol. He also explains what parents

need to learn about the world of social networking.

An unusual and particularly valuable section of the book is devoted to ideas for thriving as a family during these middle school years. The author makes a strong argument for the importance of creating a vision for your family's continued growth and uniting family members through a commitment to ongoing communication in the coming years.

*A Parents' Guide to the Middle School Years* (Celestial Arts, paperback, \$14.95) is available online and in bookstores. Visit [www.Thinking-ForwardTV.com](http://www.Thinking-ForwardTV.com). ♦



*Work & Family Life provides information and practical solutions to a wide range of family, job, and health issues. Our purpose is to help our readers reduce their stress and find pleasure and satisfaction in their many roles at work, at home, and in their communities.*

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