Every New Year brings to each of us an amazing opportunity for fresh starts and new beginnings.
The New Year is a time for reflections of our achievements as well as our disappointments. New Year’s resolutions help us to focus on things we value most. For many, family may be at the top of that list.
This New Year, find a way to reach your child with a message that can be heard. Resolve to teach rather than punish. Refuse to yell, and quietly explain the behavior you are looking for. Decide to say less and do more by modeling whatever it is that you want your child to learn. Resolve to speak with empathy, rather than anger. Remember to get up and go, rather than call out from the couch. Make the decision to begin each day as a new day, with opportunities to bring out the very best in your child with the love, support, structure and routine they need to grow well. Look for every wonderful quality in your child, and let them know whenever you see one.
In 2013, make the decision to follow through with thoughtful, healthy decisions. Walk away from negotiations. Remain consistent. Live with joy so your child can learn to be joyful. Watch with two eyes, listen with two ears and speak with great thought. Remember to look at the world through the eyes of your child. Show them the beauty in each day. Teach with consistency, patience and kindness. Love them with all your heart.

Sugary Drinks Can be Bad News for Women
By: Roxie Price, Tift County

A study lead by researchers at the University of Oklahoma found that women who drink sugar sweetened drinks at least twice a day are at more risk for heart disease and Type 2 diabetes. Even if the women do not gain weight, they seem to develop larger waist lines and have higher levels of triglycerides which can increase risk for heart attack and stroke. Over time their blood glucose (sugar) levels tend to rise.
This study followed over 4,000 women who were from all ethnic backgrounds and were between the ages of 45 and 84. Over five years, the women provided information about what they ate and drank three times. They were free of any cardiovascular disease when the study began.
Unfortunately the researchers do not exactly know why the sweet drinks have such a negative effect. This will need more study. What can you do in the mean time?
• Drink as few drinks sweetened with sugar as you can. Also be careful about flavored water that may have sugar.
• Drink plain water most of the time. Low fat and non-fat milk also seem to be healthy beverages.
• If you must have a sweet drink, sweetened with a sugar substitute. There are many different kinds available and all are considered safe by the Food and Drug Administration. If you are concerned about over exposure to a single one, switch around.
• When you do have a sugary drink, use a small glass or cup and fill it with lots of ice before you pour the drink in. Try to share a canned or bottled beverage with someone else.
There may be insect fragments, lead dust, pesticides, pollen, dust mites, animal dander, hair, human skin flakes, fungal spores or cigarette ash. A recent study indicates that cockroach exoskeletons and droppings found in household dust can trigger asthma. Around 30 to 40 percent of the contaminants inside your home are brought in from outdoors. They can enter your home on your shoes, clothing, or your pets can track them in on their paws and fur. Not surprisingly, the greatest concentration of house-hold dust is found in carpeting near the entryway. Children are at greatest risk of exposure to the contaminants found in household dust. They are more likely to be sitting and crawling on floors, and placing their hands in their mouths. Numerous studies confirm that the greatest number of environmental exposures and risks, especially for young children, occur inside the home. Children are not the only ones at risk. Anyone with asthma or other respiratory problems, or a weakened immune system should make every effort to reduce household dust.

To reduce these contaminants from entering your home, it is suggested that you use a series of three door mats/rugs at your main entrance. A raised type with holes mat first to get larger particles, mud, etc., followed by a carpet type to remove finer particles. A rug or mat should also be located just inside the threshold for a final measure. It is also a good idea to remove shoes at the door and switch to inside the house use only shoes. These measures will help ensure fewer contaminants enter your home.

Have you ever discussed money and budgeting with your children? From preschool ages on, children are learning attitudes about money. Why not sit down with your child and talk about money? Some items you may want to consider discussing are budgeting, saving for the future, giving, planning for the unexpected, and paying bills.

Iowa State University shared the following age appropriate financial skills and concepts for younger children. Some of them are so basic you may take them for granted, but no child is born knowing these things. Your children need many chances to observe and talk about transactions and events in real life.

Money Skills for Ages 3-5
- Identify coins by correct names
- Identify dollar bills
- Keep money in a safe place
- We trade money for things
- We can’t buy everything, so we make choices
When we spend money, it is gone

Money Skills for Ages 6-8
- Learn coin values and equivalents
- Count coins
- Banks keep money safe until we need it

- Writing checks takes money out of the bank
- Deposit money in savings account
Manage a small allowance

Money Skills for Ages 9-11
- Make change
- Divide allowance between spending, sharing and saving
- Make simple spending plan for one to two weeks
- Keep simple spending records
- Compare prices when shopping
- Realize we can earn money by doing extra jobs
- Save small amounts each week for larger expenses in the future
Understand and use correct terms for banking transactions

Children begin as toddlers to learn about money, why it is important, and how it should be used. Efforts to help children build financial skills will be most effective if they begin early. It’s never too early and it’s never too late to help your children build the money skills they’ll need throughout their lives. Money skills are some of the most important skills young adults need when they head out on their own. And they can’t be learned in a 2-week crash course right after graduation, either! January is Financial Wellness Month. Start today to create opportunities for your children to see money concepts and skills in action.
Leftovers are often a “lifesaver” in our fast paced, busy lives. Many of us depend on the microwave for a quick solution to heating up a plate of yummy leftovers. BUT it’s important to reheat cooked food safely when using a microwave. Follow these important guidelines provided by the USDA:

- Cover foods with a lid or a microwave-safe plastic wrap to hold in moisture and provide safe, even heating. Turn back a corner for the steam to vent.
- Heat ready-to-eat foods such as hot dogs, luncheon meats, fully cooked ham, and leftovers until steaming hot.

After reheating foods in the microwave oven, allow standing time. Then, use a clean food thermometer to check that food has reached 165 °F.

Not only do we need to reheat foods to the proper temperature in the microwave, but also, be careful of the containers that we use. Only use cookware that is specially manufactured for use in the microwave oven. The USDA website provides the following list:

SAFE:
- Heatproof glass (such as Pyrex, Anchor Hocking, etc.).
- Glass-ceramic (such as Corning Ware).
- Oven cooking bags.
- Baskets (straw and wood) for quick warm-ups of rolls or bread. Line the basket with napkins to absorb moisture from food.
- Most paper plates, towels, napkins and bags. For optimal safety use white, unprinted materials.
- Wax paper, parchment paper, heavy plastic wrap. Do not allow plastic wrap to touch food; vent it to allow a steam escape.
- Heat-subsector packaging.

NOT SAFE:
- Cold storage containers: margarine tubs, cottage cheese and yogurt cartons, etc. These materials are not approved for cooking and chemicals can migrate into food.
- Brown paper bags and newspapers.
- Metal pans.
- Foam-insulated cups, bowls, plates or trays.
- China with metallic paint or trim.
- Chinese “take-out” containers with metal handles.
- Metal “twist ties” on package wrapping.
- Food completely wrapped in aluminum foil.

Food cooked in any container or packaging that has warped or melted during heating.

For more information on food safety, visit [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

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**Basic Microwave Sweet Potato**

Wash sweet potatoes. Puncture a few times with a fork. Place on paper towel on microwave safe dish. Cook on high for 4-5 minutes for the first potato, plus 2-3 minutes for each additional potato. Turn over potatoes halfway through cooking.

Per serving: calories 190, fat 0.5g, 3% calories from fat, cholesterol 0mg, protein 3.0g, carbohydrates 44.0g, fiber 4.9g, sugar 10.3g, sodium 24mg, diet points 3.4.

Dietary Exchanges: Milk: 0.0, Vegetable: 0.0, Fruit: 0.0, Bread: 2.4, Lean meat: 0.0, Fat: 0.0, Sugar: 0.0, Very lean meat protein: 0.0
Dear Friends,

The Balancing Act is a quarterly publication sent to you by Family and Consumer Sciences Agents serving all Southwest Georgia. All information in this newsletter is written by Specialists at the University of Georgia and FACS agents, and is backed by research from the University of Georgia and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This newsletter brings you the latest information, please contact the agent in your county.

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