

7 Tips for Better Posture and Neck and Shoulder Health

It's trivia time! What do bench pressing, sitting at a desk all day, carrying a purse over the same shoulder, and playing video games all have in common?

If you answered "slumped shoulders," you're correct! Also known as "kyphotic posture," "slumped shoulders" is a condition it would behoove all of us to improve if we want to prevent and reduce back pain, migraines, poor digestion, immobility and injuries ... not to mention the perpetuation of mothers' favorite piece of chiropractic advice, "*Don't slouch!*"

When looking at yourself or another person from the side, kyphotic posture is identifiable by an excessive, "C"-shape curvature of the thoracic (mid-region) of the spine. This curvature causes the lumbar (low back) to flex, negating its natural extension as the posterior muscles are lengthened and weakened. The shoulders round forward while the pelvis tilts backward, causing the abdominals and chest muscles to shorten and tighten.

Whether you are an older adult with muscle weakness—particularly in the spinal extensors that attach to the back of your spine—an otherwise healthy student, office worker who sits for long periods of time, an avid Xbox fan or a devoted gym rat, it's time to take a stand (literally!) for proper posture.

Below, I outline seven tips you can follow to help you work out the kinks of unhealthy habits, as well as introduce new, beneficial ones that will address and correct sloppy posture on the spot. We'll start off with a few easy-to-do exercises that will strengthen the critical muscles that facilitate non-

slouching shoulders of which your mother would be proud.

1. Do shoulder pulls. As part of a warm-up before your workout, or even during a computer break (it's best to stand up, walk around, and stretch every 20 minutes), do the following exercise, and practice its technique when performing movement such as the overhead press or front squat:

- a. Stand straight, but relaxed.
- b. Pull your bellybutton in toward your spine, and pull your shoulder blades down and back, trying to squeeze them together.
- c. Hold the contraction for three seconds, and repeat 10 times.

NOTE: If this is too challenging, try the exercise lying down on your back.

2. Do "the bird dog." I love this exercise because it challenges and strengthens the core (intrinsic muscles deep within the torso), which is key for treating and preventing back pain. Like shoulder pulls, this move is excellent to do before workouts or during desk breaks.

- Tuck your toes under your feet.
- Make sure your wrists and palms are lined up under your shoulders. Bellybutton is pulled in to ensure your abs are tight. Neck is neutral, eyes are on the floor.
- Raise your right arm and left leg simultaneously, but don't raise them above your hips. Keep your hips and shoulders square, and make sure your lower back doesn't arch. Hold for five seconds. Slowly return to the starting position and do the move on the opposite side. Complete 5 to 10 repetitions on each side.

3. Stretch your chest. Tight and weak back and chest muscles are common culprits of kyphotic posture. I love the following

chest stretch, as it's straightforward, convenient and, most of all, effective.

a. Stand at end of a wall or in doorway and face perpendicular to the wall. Bend your arm and place the inside of it on the wall's surface. Position your bent elbow at shoulder height.

b. Turn body *away* from the positioned arm. Hold this stretch for 30 seconds each side.

4. Stretch your back.

a. Hang from a pull-up bar with an overhand, shoulder-width grip.

b. Allow the muscles to relax and lengthen. Hold for 30 to 60 seconds.

5. Use a foam roller. If you don't have a foam roller, I highly recommend that you invest in one. They're one of my favorite fitness tools for your home or office because they allow you to practice what's called self-myofascial release (SMR), or "poor man's massage." SMR involves putting pressure on any adhesions formed in your muscles and connective tissue, which are caused by immobility, injury or inflammation—which often occurs post-workout.

To address your posture, lay a foam roller across your spine in the middle of your back, right below your shoulder blades.

a. Your knees should be bent, feet firmly planted on the floor, and hands comfortably behind your head.

b. Lift your hips off the ground, then roll forward so the foam roller travels down your back an inch. Drop your hips to the floor.

c. Next, roll until the foam roller is hovering a couple inches below your neck, then slowly roll back down following the same pattern. If you feel any areas of stiffness, roll

back and forth on top of the area for 10 to 15 seconds.

d. Continue this for two to three minutes. Feeling a bit of pain and discomfort the first few sessions is normal, but stick with it—over time, your upper back mobility will improve!

6. Switch up your sitting position. Apart from standing up and/or stretching during breaks, it's important to be cognizant of how you're sitting, as staying in one position for too long creates stiffness, tightness and fatigue, all of which encourage poor posture and perpetuate pain.

Every 10 minutes or so, change your position. For instance, if you're seated with your right leg crossed, switch and cross your left leg instead. Then try propping up an ankle onto your opposite knee, or place both feet on the floor. Additionally, you can alternate between shifting forward to the edge of the seat with a straight back and sitting back against the support of the office chair to ease the work of your back muscles.

7. Don't sleep on your stomach. Sleeping on your stomach is a no-no because the inability to maintain a neutral spine causes a strain on your lower back, as well as possible neck pain. Also, because you must turn your head to one side in order to breathe while on your stomach, your head and neck can get out of alignment. You may not notice any pain or discomfort right away, but over time, neck problems are likely to occur.

If you simply cannot sleep any other way, then try using a thinner pillow that will decrease the angle of your head and neck. Also, place a pillow under your hips; this will relieve pressure from your spine. And lastly, be diligent about performing the stretches and exercises mentioned above. Doing so will help get your body back into alignment and gently strengthen and lengthen the supporting muscles of your neck and back.

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Faith: A Christian Woman's Guide to Total Fitness *and her latest book*, Perfect Fit: Weekly Wisdom and Workouts for Women of Faith and Fitness. *Her popular website can be found at , and she is the owner and a coach at CrossFit 925. Diana can be reached on Twitter.*

For the original article, visit .

5 Creative and Unique Types of Valentine's Gifts

It's here again: Valentine's Day. And as the day approaches, you may want to learn "The Real Story Behind Valentine's Day." You'll also want to get ready to express your love to your spouse and do something memorable.

In the past, I've blogged about creative ideas for Valentine's Day. But today, I want to step back and take a look at some creative and unique *types* of Valentine's Day gift ideas, with some examples, that might spur you on to your own creative gift giving. And husbands, here's a hint: These can be gift ideas for any reason, or no reason at all, throughout the year.

Gifts of Memories

These gifts are meant to evoke great memories of wonderful times you've had with your spouse.

- Gather some photos (scan them digitally if they are pre-digital cameras) and use an online service to make a photo memory book of your life together for your spouse.
- Get a gift card for the three restaurants where you've had the most special dinner dates and say, "Let's relive

our favorite times together again this year.”

- Get flowers and tie a little message to each flower that tells of a special memory you have of your spouse.

Gifts of Experiences

Create an experience, something fun and unique, as a gift.

- Turn your home into a restaurant, complete with kids as the wait staff. Have dinner and a movie at home, but treat your living room like a theater (complete with tickets and popcorn, etc.). Pick a movie that you know your spouse loves or reminds you of when you were dating or first married.
- Pick a class or activity that you’ve talked about doing together: ballroom dancing, painting, guitar lessons, golf, etc. Present a gift certificate for that activity to your spouse.
- Plan a special Valentine’s getaway weekend for the two of you to a special place.

Gifts of Time

Look for some creative ways to offer time with your spouse as a gift this Valentine’s Day.

- Instead of just a gift card for a store where your spouse likes to shop, add an element of time together. Write a note that says you’d like to spend the evening with your spouse cashing it in. You might learn more about your spouse’s tastes this way, while enjoying time together too.
- Not sure about that spa/massage idea? How about offering to give your spouse a long back massage yourself? Time together where you’re focusing on your spouse can also be healthy.
- Give your spouse a “day together” certificate they can cash in during the year. Take a day or half-day off to have lunch, do some shopping, go for a hike or just hang out doing whatever your spouse chooses.

Gifts of Service

Serve your spouse by doing things for them that you normally might not do.

- Create cards that your spouse can cash in for your help on something around the house.
- Clean your spouse's car.
- Serve your spouse breakfast in bed on Valentine's Day.

Remember: It's not just what you give your spouse. What matters even more is how much thought and care you put into the Valentine's Day gift. [Tweet This]. The type of gift you choose can show how well you know someone, how much you understand someone, and how special and cared for you want that special someone to feel.

What other types of gifts have you given or received? How did that help your relationship? Share your comment below.

Freezing Time: Beating the Biological Clock for Motherhood

Women are waiting longer than ever to start a family. If they wait too long, however, it can be more difficult to get pregnant.

Now there's new hope. The technology of egg freezing can slow down the biological clock.

Ashley Skidmore is a 24-year-old writer living in Los Angeles. Biologically, right now is the best time for her to have a baby. But that doesn't exactly fit with her lifestyle plans.

She'd rather wait a while.

"I definitely want to have kids some day ... 10, 15 years, maybe," she said. "I mean, I've got a career to take care of first before I can take care of a human being."

She's not alone. Today, 20 percent of women are waiting to try to have their first child until after age 35. That is a 150 percent increase since the 1970s, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Reasons Women Postpone

A demanding career isn't the only reason women put off trying to get pregnant. The main reason is they just haven't found "Mr. Right."

In fact, according to the journal *Fertility and Sterility*, greater than 80 percent of the patients who did not have children earlier said it was because of the lack of a partner.

Sadly, when many of these women are finally ready to have a child, their eggs are no longer viable and they are unable to get pregnant.

"Women are most fertile from basically the time they get their first period up until about their early 30s," Dr. Jeffrey Steinberg, a Los Angeles fertility specialist, explained. "There's a definite decline in their fertility rates at age 35, and there's a drastic fall-off-the-cliff at age 40."

Steinberg adds that it is not only more difficult to conceive a child as a woman ages, the baby's health can also be affected.

The good news is a woman can now beat the biological clock by freezing her young, healthy eggs, a procedure called oocyte cryopreservation.

"It's a simple procedure," Steinberg said. "There [are] no

incisions; there [are] no cuts. It's all done with ultrasound guidance, takes about 30 to 45 minutes, does not hurt, and the woman is back to her normal activities the next day."

A woman's eggs are stored in liquid nitrogen, remaining in suspended animation until the woman is ready to use them to make a baby.

At that point, the egg is fertilized with sperm and inserted into the woman's uterus, which might be decades down the road.

Waiting for Motherhood

Steinberg said there's every reason to believe a woman's eggs can be successfully frozen indefinitely. So while the woman ages, her eggs remain at the same age at which they were frozen.

He explained that egg freezing used to be an experimental procedure, used mostly for women who were about to undergo cancer treatments that might render them infertile.

Often the procedure failed because of frost accumulation on the eggs. Now, however, eggs are "flash frozen" and frost is no longer the problem it once was.

"We've become very, very good at accurately predicting that the eggs will make it through the freeze and the thaw process and even on to a baby," he said.

An estimated 2,000 babies have been born from frozen eggs. Doctors can usually tell ahead of time whether a woman's eggs are viable.

"Before we do these procedures we do some basic blood work on women that gives us very important clues that the eggs are in good shape," Steinberg said.

Unfortunately, some are not in good shape because the woman waited too long to try to freeze them. Eighty percent of women

who attempt to freeze their eggs are over the age of 35.

Steinberg said the advantages of egg freezing don't dawn on most women until they're in their late 30s, which for some, is already too late.

"But the problem is, in their late 30s, they haven't got nearly the chance they have in their early twenties," he said. "So it's a terrible dilemma for us. We wish they would have come in sooner."

Prime Time

Some women are getting the message. Actress Elizabeth Higgins Clark froze her eggs while she was still in her 20s.

"Last year I was going to be turning 30 in May. You know birthdays that end in zero make you think about a lot of different things," she said. "And I started realizing, I knew I wanted to have children. I've always wanted to have children, but I knew I wasn't even close to being ready."

Her research led her to believe egg freezing is the best chance to have the life she wants, as long as she acted soon. Now she's trying to share what she learned.

"I think there's a great benefit. If you're going to do it, to do it young," she said. "But young women don't seem to be getting it in the ways that they should be. They're not being educated properly about this subject, and I think we're doing young women a great disservice by not sharing that information with them."

The actress said she's glad she did it because she's comforted with the knowledge that even though she ages, her eggs will remain 29.

"There's something about it that makes me feel like I'll never have to make a decision out of fear," she said. "And that's the best part of it."

The price of egg freezing runs between \$9,000 to \$15,000. Since most 20-somethings don't have access to that kind of money, many fertility clinics offer financing, with monthly installments about the same as a car payment.

Some companies, like Apple and Facebook offer insurance plans that cover egg freezing.

Then there are parents and grandparents who give the gift of egg freezing to their child or grandchild in lieu of that down payment on a home or graduation vacation.

So for a woman who's hoping to get pregnant later in life, freezing her eggs early on could improve her chance at motherhood.

For the original article, visit .

'I Am Michael' Looks Beyond the Cultural Battle to the Heart

When speaking of Michael Glatze's change of heart, many—including believers—will most likely point toward his miraculous deliverance from a homosexual lifestyle that included his adamant participation as a gay-rights activist. And certainly it is a cause for all of heaven to rejoice when someone not only turns his or her life around in such a manner, but also when that person becomes a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yes, Glatze's lifestyle transformation that took place in 2007—depicted in the recently released film *I Am Michael*

starring James Franco—is cause for celebration. Many Christian fundamentalists might go as far as to say that it was a victory in the ongoing battle against the gay agenda.

But most won't find Glatze seeing it that way. As a matter of fact, Glatze, who, according to Wikipedia is the pastor of a small church in LaGrange, Wyoming, is now apologizing for what he termed as some very "hateful" things he said and did immediately after his life transformation took place. In essence, he became what he beheld and took to bashing the very group of people he formerly embraced as his own.

In other words, after he was saved, you might say that his heart still wasn't right. It certainly didn't reflect the attitude of Jesus. In a Facebook posting, which Glatze later said was not written with compassion, he said, " ... proud of my church. Presbyterian Church (USA) wants to ordain homosexuals; so, we're leaving the denomination. Biblical Christians just take a stand against apostasy, at all costs. 'Do not fear,' Jesus says, in Revelation 2:10 ... please pray for God's Holy Power to blow through our town to finish this necessary job."

Glatze, who co-founded the organization Young Gay America, was quoted as saying before he left the homosexual lifestyle behind, "Homosexuality is death, and I choose life." He has also been quoted as saying, "Homosexuality came easy to me, because I was already weak."

That isn't exactly the best way to change hearts in the gay community, one would think. And Jesus, because of his forgiving nature and mercy, would certainly have made friends among those in the gay community. Remember, he ate with tax collectors and sinners (Matt. 9:10) and forgave the woman who was caught in adultery (John 8:3-11).

For Glatze, his real heart change came as he agreed to become a consultant for *I Am Michael*. He realized his attitude did not reflect the heart of Christ.

"I am sorry, and that's one of the things I would say to anyone who has been hurt by any of the words of either my mouth or that I've typed out on a computer screen," Glatze told Jake Reynolds of Openly Jake in a recent interview posted on YouTube after the 2015 Sundance Film Festival. "I'm sorry for any of the pain I've caused anyone. I've been dealing with that over the last three or four years especially.

"It's been a process of healing, and we (he and his wife) have been going through that together. I was told that I had a barrier to compassion, and you can see that in James Franco's eyes in some of those scenes. I've been letting that barrier down and so that we (he and his gay friends) could reconnect on a more heart-to-heart level. If there's amends to be made, you need to make those amends."

In other words, Glatze has discovered a way to reconnect with some friends and acquaintances in the gay community without either condoning their lifestyle or condemning them. After all, like us, they are children of God.

Like Glatze, some of us followers of Jesus have had to repent of our staunch judgmentalism and our condemning attitude. We never gave people like Glatze a chance; we simply wrote them off. Wouldn't you think Jesus might say to us, "You hypocrite!" (and perhaps, "Have you no compassion?")?

Some in the circle of believers might label this an attitude of "hyper-grace"—perverting the Word of God. But ask yourself an honest question: How would Jesus handle the situation?

Isn't it wonderful that Jesus forgives if we repent?

Certainly, I am not advocating that everyone should go out and watch this movie. From the still photos I have seen online, there are certain scenes that are simply not appropriate—scenes that the filmmakers apparently felt were necessary to portray the reality of Glatze's gay lifestyle earlier in his life.

In fact, following the YouTube interview with Glatze and his wife, Rebekah, Reynolds was quoted as saying, "The movie itself is politely ambiguous. It doesn't have a point of view, one way or the other. Half of it was really, really gay. It was so gay that I was like, 'Oh my (expletive).' Half of it, I think, the Christian fundamentalists would love."

That in itself should lead one to deduce that the particular scene Reynolds speaks of is inappropriate for not only Christian viewers but also those who are sitting on the fence on the issue.

And certainly, the film industry apparently took its liberties in *I Am Michael* to cater to certain audiences. While it isn't taking a famous Bible story and turning it into a farce by embellishment (aka *The Last Temptation of Christ*, *Noah* or *Exodus*), nonetheless liberties were apparently taken, judging from the still photos.

However, this is a story worth celebrating, and Michael Glatze's transformation should be celebrated. It's not only a major story of redemption in a culture gone mad with self-gratification and disobedience to God, but it is also the story of a change of heart—of which Jesus certainly would approve.

NOTE: For those who might tend to believe this is "secular humanism," as it has been referred to as on a Facebook post, I encourage EVERYONE to read this book by Adam T. Barr and Ron Citlau, both pastors and one a former homosexual himself, titled, *Compassion Without Compromise*. You just may see things in a different way. Some new sentences have been added to this story as well.

How to Approach Issues That Divide People

We love teaching our kids how to pitch, catch, hit and tackle, but what about teaching your children how to approach issues that divide?

Unfortunately, we have reached the middle of the second decade of this new millennium no closer to agreement—and possibly farther away—when it comes to public conversations about race, politics, religion and pretty much every issue where we draw ideological lines in the sand and, sometimes, point fingers to advance our own narrow views.

So how do we raise our kids—regardless of race—to truthfully evaluate the assumptions, the generalizations and the judgments that so many people seem to carry around? There are creative ways to approach the potential for conflict that can lead to greater mutual understanding and facilitate growth.

We can change the culture in the world we inhabit: our families, workplaces, schools, and communities. The best place to start is teaching your children how to approach issues that divide people:

Sign Them Up for Debate Club

Learning how to argue both sides of an issue gives respect and understanding for those with differing viewpoints. If there's not a handy debate club, make it a game at home. Assign issues where you find yourself tending to be divisive. Teach open, spirited dialogue by modeling it yourself. [Tweet This]

Reach Out to People You Dislike

One All Pro Dad required his children to invite home a classmate they had bullied. After walking home together with a

parent, enjoying supervised playtime, having dinner as a family and riding back to his home in the car, they realized they all had more in common than they suspected. The next play date was voluntary. A week later, they were friends.

Respect Individuality and Diversity

As parents, it's important that we model respect for people as individuals. America is the original safe haven for diversity. It's one of the values that makes this nation great. Home is a powerful classroom, and our children learn most of their assumptions, prejudices, and intolerance from us. Lead some dinner table conversations about people who are "different" and ideas that rub you the wrong way.

Active Listening

Teach your kids active listening skills. This involves—among other things—eye contact, nodding, refraining from organizing a rebuttal while the other person is talking, and paraphrasing what has been said to make sure you heard correctly. If our kids become known as active listeners, they will become natural leaders in bringing people together.

Look for the Good

Train your kids to note strengths in opposing points of view, to advocate what they are *for* rather than what they are *against*, and look for common areas of agreement. Rather than weakening their own convictions, looking for common ground serves to increase the likelihood of constructive dialogue and reduce the incidence of conflict.

Sound Off: What do you think it takes to have a constructive conversation with someone you disagree with strongly? Huddle up with your kids and ask, "How does it feel when you disagree with someone?"

Related Resource: "10 Things You Need to Teach Your Kids About

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These Man-Made Chemicals Can Keep You From Losing Weight

In 2006, a peer-reviewed study identified artificial chemicals that contributed to obesity. Those chemicals are known as obesogens. The Endocrine Society defines obesogens as foreign compounds that compromise the balance and development of lipid metabolism, often by disrupting endocrine function. In other words, these substances are affecting the body’s ability to naturally burn fat.

Moreover, the average American home contains a handful of these constituents. Most aren’t aware of the effects they could be causing. Since 2006, nearly 20 obesogens have been classified. The following three substances are well-known and commonly found in households.

Phthalates in Plastic

Have you ever wondered how plastics are made and what they are made of? The answer is Phthalates. In fact, a great deal of common household items contains Phthalates. Although these items aren’t completely composed of Phthalates, this group of chemicals is added to plastics and other products in order to increase their longevity, as well as add flexibility and durability.

Phthalates have been found to increase weight gain. The journal of *Molecular and Cellular Endocrinology* published a study that identified phthalates as a potential trigger in the discomposing of a hormone receptor that contributes to lipid and carbohydrate metabolism. Although these chemicals may not be something that you directly consume, the exposure to the chemicals is what causes the risk. There are many products that contain Phthalates. Food containers, adhesives, lubricants, detergents, pharmaceutical pill coating and cosmetic products all embody Phthalates.

Bisphenol A in Most Canned Foods

Another obesogen that is used to make food containers other than Phthalates is **Bisphenol A (BPA)**. BPA is considered an industrial chemical that is used to make certain plastics and resins.

BPA is used in polycarbonate plastics and epoxy resins. Polycarbonate plastics are used in containers that store food and beverages, such as water bottles and canned foods.

Epoxy resins are used to coat the inside of metal products, such as food cans, bottle tops and water supply lines. Some dental sealants and composites also may contain BPA.

The Journal of Steroid Biochemistry and Molecular Biology has found a discrepancy in the FDA's claim. In their study of BPA, it was discovered that this chemical has a vast impact on endocrine-related pathways. Their study also revealed that you might unwittingly expose yourself to more than a moderate amount of BPA. The chemical has potential to leak from containers and into edible substances such as food and drinks.

Perfluorooctanoic Acid in Nonstick Cookware

Nonstick cookware has become very popular in the kitchen. It makes the cooking and clean-up process easier, but there is an obesogen used to create the nonstick effect. Perfluorooctanoic

Acid (PFOA) is the obesogen used to produce Teflon, which creates the nonstick effect on cookware.

Studies have shown that high exposure to PFOA could be related to certain disorders that are found in American adults. The *Environmental Health Perspectives* found that people diagnosed with thyroid disease and various cancers have an elevated level of PFOA in their system.

Boundaries

BPA, Phthalates, PFOA and the other identified and unidentified obesogens are all substances that are difficult to avoid in today's society. So it's best to try and limit your amount of exposure to these toxins. Small things such as choosing glass containers, filtering your water, or choosing USDA organic foods are great steps in reducing your exposure to these toxins.

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For the original article, visit [.](#)

5 Things You Think Say ‘I

Love You, ' but Don't

Years ago, a friend of mine was trying to figure out what to get his wife for her birthday.

She had recently spent hours upon hours in the crawl space of their house trying to tidy up and her knees had taken a pounding. As he wrestled with what to get her for a present, he found himself at a hardware store for an unrelated reason ... and a bit of inspiration struck him.

When it came time for his wife to open his birthday gift, my friend thought, "She is gonna love this!" Inside the box was a package of kneepads. While she appreciated the practical nature of the gift, it did not say, "I love you!"

While it was not the end of the world, it was a learning opportunity. We too can learn from his experience and apply it to our own marriages. Here are 5 things that you may think say "I love you," but don't:

1. Buying a gift for your spouse without taking the time to find out their likes and dislikes. The first and most basic step in giving a gift to your spouse is to become familiar with their likes and dislikes. You can obtain that crucial information not only by asking questions, but also by being observant. Be on the lookout for what your spouse responds to—good and bad—and then ask why.

2. Buying a gift for your spouse that is more for you than for them. Getting golf clubs for your wife is a fantastic idea ... if she actually likes golf. However, if she has never been golfing or shown an interest in doing so, this gift is really for you, not her.

Marketing professionals have to remind themselves all the time that the ads they create should appeal to the audience they are trying to reach, not to themselves. The same is true for

gifts for your spouse.

3. Saying “I love you” to your spouse, but only on special occasions. There’s a joke about a wife who complains that her husband has failed to say, “I love you” for years. To which he replies, with exasperation, “I told you ‘I love you’ at the altar and if anything changes, I’ll let you know!”

Funny, but often too true. “I love you” is one of those phrases that cannot be said enough; so don’t save it for a special occasion. [Tweet This] Say it daily!

4. Showing interest in your spouse, but only sexually. It is important to let your spouse know that you find them physically desirable. However, if that is the only time or only reason you show an interest in them, you’re really communicating “I want something from you,” not “I love you.”

Let your spouse know that you are interested in their well-being, companionship, thoughts, ideas and sense of humor—the whole person.

5. Doing activities that your spouse enjoys, but complaining the whole time. You may think you’re being a supportive, loving spouse by “enduring” an activity that your spouse wants to do. However, if you spend the entire time with a negative attitude or speaking negative words, your support is just a facade. Only genuine participation will communicate love to your spouse.

In the past, what were some things you thought said, “I love you,” but didn’t?

Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit [.](#)

Are Too Many Vaccines Destroying Kids' Immune Systems?

Today's children should look like pincushions from the dozens of vaccines they get from birth to the age of 18. "According to the Centers for Disease Control, the onslaught begins within 12 hours of birth when many babies get a Hepatitis B vaccine," says Dr. David Brownstein.

"At two months, eight more vaccines follow, including polio, tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis, and throughout the next few months, they are subjected to boosters of the vaccines they've already have plus additional vaccines.

"The CDC recommends that children get 49 doses of 14 vaccines before they reach the age of 6, and the total reaches 69 doses by the age of 18," Dr. Brownstein tells *Newsmax Health*. In fact, today's average child is subjected to three times as many vaccinations as were recommended in 1953. In addition, children's small bodies are subjected to numerous vaccinations simultaneously.

In 1983, the CDC guidelines stated that doctors shouldn't give more than four vaccines at the same time. By 2013, CDC guidelines changed to approve giving children up to eight vaccines at once.

What's the result? According to the National Vaccine Information Center, chronic disease and disability in children has drastically increased in the past 50 years. For instance, in the 1990s, one child in 555 had autism, but by 2013, the figure had risen to one child in 50.

What good do vaccines accomplish? It's a mixed bag, says Dr. Brownstein. "The powers that claim that vaccines markedly

lowered the death rate of common childhood illnesses such as measles and whooping cough. However, the mortality rates of these illnesses were rapidly falling before the mass vaccination campaign began.

"I am not saying that all vaccines don't work," he says. "I know some of them do. For instance, the chicken pox vaccine has clearly lowered the incidence of chicken pox," Dr. Brownstein says. "However, is that a good thing? I am not sure it's so good, since shingles cases have skyrocketed since the mass vaccination of chicken pox was started. And it was known from the start of the chickenpox vaccine that chickenpox vaccinations resulted in an increased rate of shingles.

"In addition, vaccinations may not be good for a child's immune system, because perhaps it needs to be stimulated with these childhood infections to become strong.

"Last month, I was recognized by a reader in an airport. She asked me a question: 'Why are so many kids having all these allergies? We never saw peanut, milk and gluten allergies when we were kids—where is it all coming from?'

"I answered her question by stating, 'I believe that there are multiple reasons for this, but the main reason is that the younger generation's immune system is becoming weaker and weaker.'

"I feel that today's children, when compared to previous generations, suffer from more chronic illnesses because they are exposed to more toxins, and they are receiving too many vaccines at too young of an age. The vaccines contain toxic elements such as mercury, aluminum and formaldehyde. It is ludicrous to inject these toxic agents into our youth and expect good outcomes.

"In addition, human tissue is currently used in 23 vaccines. One prominent former scientist at a pharmaceutical firm, Dr. Helen Ratajczak, feels that the increased spike in autism may

be related to the introduction of human DNA into the MMR and chicken pox vaccines. She goes on to state that the foreign DNA from vaccines can be incorporated into the host DNA which causes the immune system to fight against the foreign cells.

"This could start an inflammatory process that never ends, and leads to chronic illnesses like autoimmune disease and allergies. Maybe this is why we are seeing so many children with severe, life-threatening allergies to common foods like peanuts," he says.

"Both of my older sisters had measles," says Dr. Brownstein. "Back then, it was a benign illness that everybody got, just like chicken pox. That generation did just fine with measles. They did not suffer the plethora of autoimmune, allergic and chronic illness that the younger generations suffer from.

"Perhaps we need to do research comparing vaccinated with non-vaccinated populations. Unbelievably, this work still has not been done. There has not been a single randomized, controlled study of a vaccinated versus a non-vaccinated population. Yet, we subject the most vulnerable of us, our children and the future of our country, to dozens of vaccines whose worth is often questionable," says Dr. Brownstein. "This is insane.

"I am not against all vaccines," he says. "However, just proclaiming that vaccination is safe does not make it so. There are inherent dangers of vaccinating as there are dangers of not vaccinating. Parents need to educate themselves about vaccines so that they can make appropriate decisions on whether to vaccinate."

For the original article, visit .

5 Ways to Win Battles as an Overwhelming Underdog

Mercer beating Duke. Frasier over Ali. Yang out-stroking Tiger. Jim Valvano's North Carolina State Wolfpack taking down Akeem The Dream's Houston Cougars in 1983. Namath's Jets shocking the Colts. Buster Douglas knocking out Mike Tyson. And perhaps the greatest sports upset of all time ... the 1980 "Miracle on Ice" U.S. Olympic Hockey Team beating the high-powered Soviet Union.

But there's another upset that tops 'em all. Imagine facing a perennial No. 1 warrior, 9-foot tall monster of a man with a menacing reputation and master of psychological and physical warfare, covered head to toe in armor and carrying weapons with physical power never before seen by a man on earth?

We all love the Cinderella story. But when you're facing a giant like this, courage alone can only get you to the battlefield. To win, you've got to have something extra.

Ask David. He was a shepherd boy, taking care of sheep and serving his brothers snacks while they were on the front lines of battle. He was hardly the makings of a warrior.

He wore loose and light clothes, sandals, maybe had a shepherd's staff and a slingshot. Although David was underestimated, his greatest assets were not external, visible or even quantifiable.

He had heart, passion, fearlessness, compassion—and God on his side.

When David heard Goliath defying the Israelite army and mocking God, it triggered a tsunami of emotions, energy and holy inertia that no one could have predicted. The stage was set: A physical giant would take on a spiritual giant, which

would be the most outlandish confrontation in history.

The fact is, we all face battles with insurmountable odds against us at times in our lives. Our faith, being one of them. We are designated by God to be strangers deployed in a foreign land that is at its roots openly hostile to our faith and seeks to tear it to pieces. That may not be the way we want it, but that is the way it is.

Jesus was up front about the reality of identity in Him and the reality of cultural hostility:

- “Since I chose you out of the world, the world therefore hates you. ... If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. ... But all these things they will do to you for My name’s sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me” (John 15:19-21).

How to Win Battles With Odds Stacked Against You

When you face a battle, whether it’s physical, emotional, relational, financial, mental or spiritual, here are ways to tips the scales in your favor and become a giant-killer.

1. Recruit a ringer. This may sound like cheating, but that’s not the intent. The first step to winning a major battle is to be on the right team, God’s team. If you believe in God, follow His ways, fully surrender to Him and trust His will, then you have a ringer. With God on your side, all things are possible.

- “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

2. Pick a giant. Now, what battle needs to be won? Pick one. Do you have an estranged relationship? Financial trouble? Secret sin? Major challenge? Be specific and decide to do battle. That’s what David did. He heard God being mocked and decided to do something about it.

3. Power up. Next, ask God for help. Like David, we have an

intangible and mighty Spirit serving as our advocate and who can intervene on our behalf. It's like a guarantee. Even if the result doesn't appear to be a "win," with God and the Spirit on your side, the plan will surely work out. The Bible says every knee will bow at the name of Jesus.

- "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord" (Is. 11:2).

4. Run to battle. With God on your side, the battle in front of you and the Spirit behind you, you can face your battle with confidence! Don't walk. Run. Run to the battle with faith that God's plan will prevail. And His plans are good ones—that's a promise.

- "When the Philistine arose and came near to meet David, David hurried and ran toward the battle line to meet the Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:48).

5. Shock the world. Now execute your plan. God has a way of making your weakness turn into strength. You may not know how or when the battle will be won, but it will be. And the world will be left to wonder, "How on earth did that happen?" And you can answer, "I am with God, and He is able."

If you find yourself a little weak in the knees, repeat the following truths out loud to yourself when you have a Goliath in your life:

- God has prepared me.
- The Holy Spirit is in me.
- Nothing can stop me.
- Nothing can hurt me.
- God is for me.
- He will redeem me."

Besides, everybody loves rooting for the underdog.

Kenny Luck is the president and founder of Every Man Ministries. As the former men's pastor at Saddleback Church in California and current leadership pastor at Crossline Community Church, Kenny has found the proven way to improve men's ministries around the world. *Sleeping Giant* is this blueprint, and gives men the tools they need to lead and understand their own men's ministry. Watch Kenny's teachings at [www.sleepinggiant.com](#) and start your men's group today!

David Vigil: The Decapitated Church

When studying church history, some of the most fascinating individuals we meet are the martyrs. These are the untold multitudes who, when given a simple opportunity to deny Christ, found it easier to stand for their faith and die rather than disavow the One who was sacrificed in their stead.

They faced agony and torture of a magnitude that so few of us can comprehend. They were flogged, impaled, crucified, eaten by lions, forced to fight to the death in coliseums and decapitated.

Were they not like us? Would they not have loved to live lives of peace and prosperity in the name of Christ instead? Would they not have loved to sit in our beautiful air-conditioned edifices with state-of-the-art sound, lights and videography?

Even today we hear of those across the globe who are killed in the name of the enemies of God. Churches are burned. They are raped and gunned down.

These are our brothers and sisters who lived in love, grace

and great courage.

All the while, our churches are filled with religious cowardice—namely, those who carry on a senseless, phariseeistic and legalistic argument. Their sole intention is to be religiously correct. They are mean, brash and judgmental. They sacrifice their victims upon religious altars. Meanwhile, wounded individuals vow never to darken the doors of the church again.

Their victims include the divorcee, the homosexual, the sexually immoral, the fallen minister and those who feel they are not good enough to meet the standards set forth by those who have hijacked the church. Many have witnessed this treatment of their loved ones. They too know that a God of love would never do such a thing.

It is as if the church itself has been decapitated. Its head (Jesus) is moving in diametric opposition to this branding of a vicious version of a “Christian Islam.”

We must follow Christ. How did He respond when the Pharisee attempted to manipulate Him? He faced pressure to do what was “religiously correct.” He chose to value the person, not the law.

He then fulfilled the law, and upon His resurrection left us with what is known as “the dispensation of grace.”

The direction Christ left us to walk in is that of love and mercy. The mission, if we choose to accept it, is to seek and proclaim salvation to the lost.

We must take a stand for Christ and once again courageously unite with Him. It is our duty to learn from our Savior and understand that the individual matters and not the law.

It is time to rebuke the spirit of religiosity and humiliate the Pharisee. There is no place for the legalistic heart in

the body of Christ.

Jesus is the one who died and rose for us. We no longer will be intimidated by those who only “say the right things.” They are whitewashed sepulchers. They are filled with dead men’s bones.

I will never forget when God called me to begin the ministry of Heal Your Servant. He asked me if I was willing to seek out the minister who is hiding sexual sin. He also asked me to go wherever I must to find the fallen ones whom He called, those who felt as if they have disappointed God. I was asked if I would go wherever I am needed to find the one who has distanced himself from the people and the things of God.

Religious-minded men attempted to intimidate me. They told me I would be working for the kingdom of darkness.

Our elders and my pastors, Max and Randy, soon approached me. When they heard of my vision, they encouraged me and said, “This is the vision of our church. We are called to be Jesus in every neighborhood, throughout our city and the world. What do you need from us?”

In obedience and with a spiritual covering, I began. As a result, to date we have helped more than 1,200 ministers across the globe.

I would greatly encourage every reader to listen to call of Christ. You are equipped with unique giftings and a wonderful commission. Take courage, be vigilant and be obedient. Shirk the discouraging words of the Pharisee. He presents himself as righteous but is deceived. He is an agent for the kingdom of darkness.

Express love, kindness and goodness. Follow the head, who is Christ, and we will see the miracles which those before us, who sacrificed so much, so deeply coveted.

David Vigil is CEO and founder of . His life focus is to serve those who have been called of God and see to it that they are free to be exactly what they have been designed to be. His ministry is based out of Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, Texas. Under the tender of Randy Frazee and Max Lucado, he serves to restore ministers across the globe.