

# 5 Unfair Expectations Of Your Wife

Problems in marriage often start with unreal expectations that husbands and wives have of one another. Unreal expectations become unmet expectations that become unsettling issues in a marriage.

So, here are five expectations that husbands need to realize could be hurting their wives and their marriages:

**1. Expect That She Always Needs Your Help.** Many of us have known the pain and frustration of a micro-managing boss. This is the boss that assumes you don't know what you're doing or that you're probably doing it wrong. Husbands can do the very same thing to their wives, and it hurts. What you may assume is being helpful, she might see as a lack of trust or an assumption of weakness.

**2. Expect That She Never Needs Your Help.** It's amazing how often the words "Always" and "Never" are associated with unreal expectations. Yes, I just said that a husband shouldn't expect that his wife always needs help, but it's also unfair to expect that she never needs help. Whatever the issue or task, it's best to ask your wife first whether or not she needs your help, and, if so, how you can best help her.

**3. Expect That She's Always Ready for Sex.** Generally, women don't think about sex as often as men do, but husbands are apt to forget this. A man compounds the problem when he views his wife like a video game ... expecting that with a few pushes of the right buttons, she'll be turned on by him instantaneously. Men, we all need to be reminded, sexual intimacy is not just mechanical; it is emotional and even spiritual.

**4. Expect That She Will Agree with You on Financial Matters.** Financial issues are one of the biggest sources of marital

conflict. Husbands may assume that it is their responsibility and that they'll make all the financial decisions. I grew up in a home like that. My dad handled the finances and generally handled them well, but my mom really wasn't involved in those decisions. But a better way is for a husband to sit down with his wife and discuss things like how much debt, if any, they are willing to incur, what their spending priorities are, and how much they want to save and give to others. In our marriage, Susan and I work closely together on financial matters and neither one of us moves forward on any major purchase or gift without consulting with the other.

**5. Expect That She Should Always Know You Love Her.** As the joke goes, "I told you I loved you when we got married ... if anything changes, I'll let you know!" It's not fair for you to assume she knows you love her. Wives need to hear it from their husbands, see it in their actions, and feel it in their interactions with them. And through those married years, a wife wants to know that her husband still finds her attractive.

Wives, your turn comes on Friday with "5 Unfair Expectations of Your Husband."

What are some of the unreal expectations you've had with your spouse, or they've had with you, that have created struggles? How have you dealt with them? Please share your comments.

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

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# What Is Your Definition of Fitness?

What comes to mind when you hear the word “fitness?” Endless rows of treadmills, an outdoor track covered with hurdles, a Pilates classroom filled with mats, towels and foam rollers? Or perhaps you envision a basketball team, tennis player, or strong shoulders and burly biceps.

Each of the above associations undeniably exemplifies an aspect of fitness. Treadmills and other pieces of cardio equipment, including the street you live on, help develop stamina and cardio-respiratory endurance. Pilates is excellent for improving flexibility and balance.

Hurdlers must have exceptional speed and power. Basketball and tennis players work hard to be not only fast but also agile, accurate and coordinated every second they’re on the court. And as for those big biceps, you can bet the men and women who have them are lifting some heavy weights; strength is yet another marker of fitness.

As you can see, fitness is difficult to define succinctly. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* defines it as “the quality or state of being fit.” That then begs the question, “Well, what is ‘fit’?” “Fit,” according to Merriam-Webster, means “in good physical condition; in good health.” An example sentence the dictionary offers is, “He’s fit for the race.”

But is “he”—we’ll call him Phil—fit for activities and recreational sports that require good hand-eye coordination? Is Phil fit for picking up heavy sacks of groceries in a safe manner and carrying them up three flights of stairs to his apartment? Is Phil fit for squatting down comfortably to play with his baby daughter or new grandchild? Phil may be a top-notch endurance athlete or sprinter, but he may be *unfit* in

several other areas outside of his athletic specialty.

It's probably safe to assume that most of you reading this are not professional athletes whose job it is to eat, sleep and train to be the best at a specific sport. Your livelihood likely does not depend on how fast or coordinated or strong you are. However, as followers of Christ and temples of His Holy Spirit, we are encouraged, indeed *commanded*, to honor our bodies; keeping physically fit is one primary way we can do this.

Now to revisit the question, "What *is* fitness?"...

After years of weightlifting, I began to grow weary of my favorite machines and go-to exercises. What had once been fun and challenging had become predictable and dull. I knew I needed to branch out before boredom turned working out into a burden, something it had never been to me before. It was at about that time that I was introduced to CrossFit.

Before I go any further, I want to emphasize that the remainder of this article is not intended to be a plug for CrossFit, but rather for overall fitness. (I realize and respect that CrossFit may not be everyone's cup of tea!) Having said that, I would like to share one of the first things that greatly impacted me when I was introduced to CrossFit—something I think you will find quite valuable as well, and that is a clear and applicable definition of fitness.

For the purposes of this article, I wish to focus on the first section of CrossFit's fitness definition, what is referred to as "CrossFit's First Fitness Standard." This standard identifies 10 domains of physical fitness:

- Cardiovascular/respiratory endurance
- Stamina
- Strength
- Flexibility

- Power
- Speed
- Coordination
- Agility
- Balance
- Accuracy

Greg Glassman, one of the founders of CrossFit, writes, “You are as fit as you are competent in each of these 10 skills.”

Just before switching up my routine and giving CrossFit a try, I remember moving into a new apartment that was on the third floor. I huffed and I puffed from beginning to end. My legs shook. My arms hurt. I went to bed early and woke up the following morning feeling stiff, sore, and still completely exhausted. *I'm fit*, I thought. *I lift weights four days a week and walk for an hour or more twice a week. How is it I feel so out of shape?*

When I began CrossFit, it became even more apparent that my fitness level was severely lacking. I had strength thanks to weightlifting and balance and flexibility due to Yoga stretches and occasional Pilates classes, but when it came to running hard and fast or being coordinated enough to perform more complicated movements, I was unpleasantly surprised. I had never felt more *unfit* in all my life.

But I persevered. Slowly but surely, my endurance improved, taking a 10-minute mile down to a 7-minute one. My stamina improved, allowing me to do 27 push-ups without taking a break instead of 10 or 12. My accuracy and coordination improved, showing me that I could in fact throw a 14-pound medicine ball to a 10-foot-high target, then squat while catching the ball, and repeat that sequence 150 times without falling down or getting smacked in the face once.

One of my CrossFit goals was met recently: being able to do a strict muscle-up!

I haven't tried moving into a third-floor apartment again, but I feel confident that it would be a breeze in comparison to the last time. I feel as though I am ready for just about any physical task life throws at me. My back is strong for lifting groceries, children or pieces of furniture. My heart and lungs are up for the task of running or walking long distances. My joints are flexible and ligaments elastic, helping protect me from injury, and I enjoy complete range of motion in daily activities.

The next question is: How fit are *you*?

If you are in a rut, as I was, in which you do nearly identical routines week after week, it's probable that your fitness level is unbalanced.

A balanced approach to fitness enables you to be physically prepared for the unforeseen challenges life presents, from handling unexpected tasks at home to enjoying God's creation and the body He's given you via long, luxurious hikes or intense outdoor sports. Becoming fit in each of the 10 fitness domains benefits us *mentally* as well for the simple reason that having achieved tough tasks in the gym, on the track, or wherever you choose to train provides us the confidence to conquer myriad other things that pop up on any given day. Plus, it has been proven that learning new skills and exercises that require concentration can make you smarter!

I challenge you to test yourself this week. Warm up well and then try running quickly for half a mile or cycling for 30 minutes at a moderate pace and see how you feel. Try squatting a few times until your hip crease is below your knees and see if you can maintain an upright torso and keep your weight in your heels. See how many push-ups you can do in one minute. Sit on the floor, reach out and try to touch your toes. Try to do one pull-up. See how many times you can jump onto a plyometric box in 30 seconds. These are just a few things you can do to help detect any holes in your fitness.

After your weak points have been determined, put a plan in place to work on them a few days each week, be it through a kickboxing or strength-training class, a running group, a fitness DVD, or yes, even CrossFit! Have fun trying new things, and don't let your comfort zone or frustration during the transition phase discourage you from continuing. Starting new things is never without its initial hesitations and hiccups, but more often than not, sticking it out and staying the course is richly rewarding.

All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize.

Stay fit, stay faithful.

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

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## Are You Feeding Your Kids Your Attention Leftovers?

Dad, what are you focused on today? An important project at work? Some weekend activity that's planned? A "honey-do" list you need to work through during the next few days? Maybe a vacation that's a few months away?

As men, we're pretty good at compartmentalizing our lives—we can give ourselves completely to something now and then put it to the side later on. But for whatever reason, it's tough to shift our focus back to our families when we walk through the door at home.

We need to give our children our *best* time and attention—not the leftovers.

The testimonies of children—young and old—tell it all. One young woman remembers coming home from school eager to tell her father about her day. Her father didn't even acknowledge her presence. She writes, "I will never forget the pain of being invisible. I wouldn't have minded if he had just looked up and said, 'I'm busy; I'll talk to you later.' But to be invisible!"

A 10-year-old boy, reflecting on how tuned in his parents were, wrote, "They're really involved in what they're saying to me. They're not just saying the normal things like, 'Uh-huh ... huh-uhn.' They seem to be very intent on what I'm saying; they're not just looking away."

What about you, dad? Would you describe yourself as "focused" or just "hanging around" the house? Being available is important, but we must also engage our children more directly, more often.

This is a challenge for me. When I come home after being on a trip or just a long day at the office, often it takes real effort to *focus* on my family members, but that's exactly what I and each of us need to do. Our kids deserve our very best. When we're with them, we need to *really be there*.

What do I mean by "focus"?

I think about times in everyday life when I'm meeting new people, seeing old friends or speaking to groups. I'm very conscientious about how I act and what I say. I look people in

the eye, give them my full attention, and try to ask thoughtful questions.

I'm definitely not sitting back, folding my arms, acting like I want to be left alone. And for sure I'm not looking for reasons to be critical or point out things that need to be changed. No, in those situations I'm on my best behavior, trying to engage and connect.

If I can put that focus and energy into those interactions out in public, don't my family members deserve at least that much effort from me?

Have you ever been talking to someone and they seem to be thinking about something else—or they take a phone call or answer a text in the middle of the conversation? How did you feel? Probably the same way our children feel when we allow some passing fancy or distraction to take us away from being engaged with them.

Dads, our children yearn for our focused, interested attention. Whenever we're with our kids, let's really be *with them*.

***What habits or thoughts help you stay focused on your kids when you're with them?*** Please give us your feedback below.

### **Action Points for Dads on the Journey**

- When talking with your child, give him or her your full attention. Look at him in the eyes. Make a point of turning off the TV, sliding away from the computer, or putting down your phone or tablet.
- Ask thoughtful follow-up questions to show that you were listening to your child and to draw her out more.
- Consider your body language. What do your position and posture, your arm positions, and your facial expressions communicate about how interested you are in what your child is saying?

- Ask your kids what they think gets your undivided attention. If you're like me, their answers may reveal that you have some work to do in this area.
- Even if your child is preoccupied or doesn't appear to want to talk, at least try a question or two about his or her day.

**Carey Casey** is the CEO of the National Center for Fathering, a nonprofit organization seeking to improve the lives of children and establish a positive fathering and family legacy that will impact future generations by inspiring and equipping fathers and father figures to be actively engaged in the life of every child.

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

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## Are You Part of the Sandwich Generation?

These days, it's not uncommon for a person to find themselves in the role of caregiver for two different age groups. Does that describe you? Are you one of the millions of people taking care of another adult? But do you also have kids who are not yet independent?

Right now, about one in eight Americans is raising children *and* caring for an elderly person, usually their parent. If that describes you, then consider yourself "sandwiched."

Are you part of the "Sandwich Generation?"

"The Sandwich Generation" is not determined by birth year. You belong when you take care of children and older adults at the same time. There's also the "Club Sandwich." These are people

who are helping three generations: aging parents, adult children and their own grandchildren.

We're living longer than ever before. But illness, disability and dementia are common with age. Consequently, the added years don't always mean independent living. Many seniors need assistance; some require 24-hour care. So who bears the burden? Usually it's family, most often their children.

And though it's a labor of love, the stress can be overwhelming, especially for those who are "sandwiched." It helps to keep these tips in mind:

- Don't neglect your own health. Just as you take care of others, make sure you take care of yourself.
- Tap into available resources. Take advantage of benefits from Medicare, Medicaid or other insurance plans. Call your local Department of Aging for advice. Join a community support group, or form one of your own.
- Insist that other family members pitch in. Responsibilities ought to be shared.

Caregiving is draining—emotionally, mentally and physically. If you are in that role, be encouraged!

In the verse from John 19, notice Jesus looked upon John, "the disciple whom He loved," the one who would look after Mary. What a responsibility! To be the primary caregiver for the woman who gave birth to the Messiah!

The lesson for caregivers is this: Jesus gave this duty to His friend. Yes, He tenderly eyed Mary, but He also looked down on John, a man He loved dearly. If you are a caregiver, rest in the knowledge that Jesus is your Friend. He sees you, and He cares.

#### Helpful Caregiver Resources

- U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention –

- AARP Caregiving Resource Center –
- The Caregiver Action Network –
- Family Caregiver Alliance –

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

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## Here's How to Make Your Dates Unforgettable

In the “dating” universe, predictable is synonymous with forgettable. But research shows that unpredictable and risky brings great rewards for the relationship—mainly memory muscles!

Any man who wants a serious win with his woman (the bragging-to-friends kind) must understand this one thing: She loves thoughtfulness and imagination. They are the two main ingredients of unforgettable memories.

New girlfriend? Wife of many years? This reality with you never goes bad, spoils, or fails to elevate her relational adrenaline and connection with you. Now, add God.

After unconditional acceptance and emotional intimacy, women rank spiritual intimacy at the top of what they want and desire from a man. That's right, they like to see and sense a man of faith for sharing what's most valuable with them interpersonally. So for your next date do the math before that

nice(ish) dinner and movie.

Thoughtfulness + imagination + God's purposes = unforgettable

The "anything-but-typical date" might look something like this:

- Decide your next date will have a purpose, beyond the usual dinner and entertainment. Establish your intention to do good as a higher priority than doing the typical.
- Pray together before you go. Thank God for "this night, this girl, and this opportunity to be together."
- Then, go somewhere. Eat something. Do something. But, this time go with God as your chauffeur. Open your eyes and hearts to people, situations or issues that come up where your presence may be a pleasant surprise. Think modern-day "Good Samaritan" on a mission to do random acts of kindness.
- Afterward, reflect on the date.

Be prepared to exercise your faith muscle. Don't be afraid. Just do good. Let God lead your time, and be available to help with one, or any combination, of these ideas:

**1. Pray for someone.** You may decide to take a walk. You may come across someone struggling with a major life issue. You can see it on their faces sometimes. You may offer to pray for that person at that moment, asking "is there any way I can pray for you tonight?" Or you could just pray with your partner for that person, and let them know you did. Another idea is to do a prayer walk, and just walk through your neighborhood or downtown area in prayer. You will be amazed at what happens.

- *"...pray for each other ... The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective" (James 5:16).*

**2. Bless someone.** God may lead you to an individual with whom you feel some sort of kinship. Say you come across a musician

playing on the street, and God gives you a nudge to do something. Maybe you could throw in a few bucks, but how about something different. Ask God to bless that talent for his good. Pray to yourselves, asking God to use you somehow. Then, simply lean over to tell that person, you have prayed a prayer of blessing on their lives and talent. That's all. It's a form of encouragement that has legs. Then, see what happens.

- *"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing" (1 Thess. 5:11).*

**3. Help someone.** With your eyes wide open, you never know what or who may come into your path. Be on the lookout for ways to help. Maybe it's stopping to help a roadside tire change, or carrying grocery bags for someone at the store, or paying for someone's coffee behind you, give your parking spot away, let someone cut in front of you ... Let God guide you and be willing to pitch in.

- *"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ... A man reaps what he sows... whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing , as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Gal. 6: 2-10).*

**4. Feed someone.** Buy someone a meal, and bless it with them. Bring food to a shelter or a friend in need. Serve food at a rescue mission. Food is a blessing, and for some people, food is luxury. See someone hungry? Feed the hungry, and you will be blessed.

- *"...and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday" (Is. 58:10).*

**5. Tell someone God loves them.** This one can take some guts,

but you will be surprised that God is working in people's lives before you ever mention God's love. Many people are yearning to hear about God's love and hope. Don't be afraid to love someone enough to share God's love. It's powerful, paradigm-shifting and an awesome work. You will be blessed, and pleasantly shocked at the welcome reception.

- *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).*

**6. Invite someone.** So often, all it takes to bring someone to the Lord is a simple invitation. On your Adventure Date, bring some fliers from church, or make up some business card-sized invitation cards, and just hand them to as many or as few people as you like during the date. Or invite someone to your next small group gathering. Don't be surprised if someone says, “I've been looking for a good church.”

- *“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in ...” (Matt. 25:35).*

**7. Meet someone.** What ever happened to the tradition of going to a new neighbor's front door, bringing a plate of goodies, just to meet them? Revive that tradition on your date, and introduce yourselves to your neighbors. Or, strike up a conversation with random people on your date. You never know who it is you are meeting, or what circumstances brought them into your path. If you frequent the same establishment, soon you will know others and be known. And, opportunities will arise from there.

- *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me” (Rev. 3:20).*

We are more than pew warmers. So try an Adventure Date and see where God leads you, and who He leads to you. Then, do something different, something simple for God's sake. You may

or may not feel like you've done much, but you may have also done everything for someone.

- *"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35).*
- *"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:12).*

**Kenny Luck**, founder of Every Man Ministries, men's pastor at Saddleback Church, and ChristianMingle advisory board member, provides biblically oriented teaching and leadership for men and pastors seeking relevant, timely material that battle cultural, worldly concepts threatening men and God's men. Follow Kenny and Every Man Ministries now on Facebook, Twitter (@everyMM) and YouTube.

*For the original article, visit .*

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## **How to Train Your Brain to Crave Healthy Food**

It's possible to train your brain so that it not only likes, but actually craves healthy food, according to a new study published in the journal *Nutrition & Diabetes*.

The basic idea is that over time people acquire the habit, sometimes even addiction, to unhealthy and junk foods.

"We don't start out in life loving french fries and hating, for example, whole-wheat pasta," senior author Susan Roberts, director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Energy

Metabolism Laboratory, said in a statement.

“This conditioning happens over time in response to eating, repeatedly, what is out there in the toxic food environment.”

Researchers tested a group of overweight and obese men and women, and after six months of eating healthy, lower-calorie foods, their brains began to respond positively to those healthy foods.

The researchers say they're encouraged that weight-loss programs can change what foods are tempting to people.

### **Crave Healthy Foods**

Here are three steps to switch your cravings from high-calorie foods to healthy foods:

- **Clean out your cupboards.** Remove every bit of chocolate, every last spoon of ice cream, every single cookie, can of soda, sweet and bad treat from your home and, if possible, your workplace. If you need to buy chocolate for a special occasion, get rid of it immediately after.
- **Carry around healthy foods.** Bring an apple with you. Keep a box of high-fiber muesli in your car so you can scoop up a handful whenever a chocolate craving hits. If you're going out for a while, and particularly if you expect that food temptations will be offered, bring your own healthy snacks with you. Perhaps a boiled egg, a banana or whatever's in the fruit bowl.
- **Bury craved foods in the middle of a meal.** If you eat chocolate at the start of a meal, your brain will associate chocolate with the relief of hunger as you “find” food. If you have chocolate at the end of a meal, your brain will come to expect a delicious sweet ritual at the end of every meal.

For the first two weeks, try to avoid all unhealthy craved foods. But after two weeks, allow yourself just a small

portion of the craved food in the middle of the meal.

*For the original article, visit .*

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# 10 Essentials for the Successful Dad

Have you ever had a job that didn't have clear responsibilities and expectations spelled out for you? It's frustrating when you can't seem to get a handle on what you need to do to be successful in the job at hand.

Whether you're new at being a dad or a seasoned veteran, you know it's a job, a really big job that's not for the faint of heart. I've often said that *being a dad is actually our most important job*. But I've yet to hear of a hospital that hands out a job description to dads when their child is born.

So, to help you in your most important job, here's your job description with 10 essentials that will help you succeed:

**1. Love your wife.** Actively loving your wife is incredibly beneficial to your children. The number one source of security for kids is when they know that their dad loves their mom and is committed to her for life.

And remember that your spouse is not the enemy. You are on the same team. When my wife, Susan, and I have disagreements over things like disciplining our children or finances, she'll often say to me, "Remember, I'm on your team." Marriage is the ultimate team sport. You and your spouse were designed to complete each other, not compete with each other.

If you are not married to your child's mother, your patience

and kindness toward her are still crucial to your kids.

**2. Spend time with your kids.** How you spend your time is a reflection of what's important to you. You value your kids by being with them and making memories that will last a lifetime. As my five kids were growing up, I tried to be intentional about spending one-on-one time with each of them doing things that they enjoyed. I often put those times on my calendar as very important appointments. Remember, it's not just about quality time; it's about quantity time.

**3. Be a role model.** I cannot overstate the importance of a father modeling the type of behavior he desires in his children. Role models don't just talk the talk; they walk the walk of honor. Want to be your children's hero? Then be what you want your children to be. [Click to Tweet] These 5 Ways Parents Can Be a Role Model for Kids will help you be a good model for your kids to follow.

**4. Understand and enjoy your children.** Like you, every child has unique DNA, unique fingerprints, and a unique personality. In order to be the best father you can be, you'll need to understand your children as individuals and learn to show them you appreciate what makes them unique. Take note of what each of your children needs from you the most. One may need encouragement. Another may respond better with affection. Kids grow up quickly, so just enjoy being with them.

**5. Show affection.** Children long for a secure place in this fast-paced world. They find it most often in the warm embrace of a parent. As children grow, so does their need for acceptance and a sense of belonging. Dads meet that need in a way no one else can when he offers a hug or a kind word, and expresses his appreciation and love for his children. If nothing else, make sure to say, "I love you" every day.

**6. Secure your family's financial future.** Financial stress is one of the leading factors that tears families apart. In order

to put your family in a position of strength, you have to shore up your finances. First, hate debt. Do everything you can to get out of it as quickly as possible. Then, make sure you establish a budget that not only trims expenses but also allows you to save and share with those in need. Have proper insurance. Finally, make sure you live and teach these frugal principles to your children as well.

**7. Eat together as a family.** Most children today don't know the meaning of a family dinnertime. Yet the communication and unity built during this time is integral to a healthy family life. Sharing a meal together—breakfast, lunch or dinner—provides structure to an often hectic schedule. It also gives kids the opportunity to talk about their lives. This is a time for fathers to listen as well as give advice and encouragement.

**8. Discipline with a gentle spirit.** True discipline is a function of a father's love for his children, which is why it should never be hard-nosed or harsh. The goal of discipline is not to intimidate or tear down, but to mold and correct. Correcting your kids should be done in private, and you and your wife should be unified in how you discipline. Strive to be consistent.

**9. Pray and worship together.** Families that have a healthy prayer life and take worshiping God seriously help their children understand that there is an ultimate authority in their lives—an authority who loves them and who provides moral absolutes for them to live by. Every child needs to know that there is right and wrong, good and evil. Living under the authority of God will give them that knowledge.

**10. Realize you're a father forever.** Someday every father must let go. As he allows his children their freedom to direct their own lives, a good father realizes that he doesn't abandon them at a dorm room, a wedding altar, or the door of their first job. He continues to love, encourage, coach and

convey his wisdom to his children forever.

These 10 essentials were taken from my book, *All Pro Dad*. For more on how to be a successful dad, I encourage you to get your copy today.

What else would you offer as essentials for a father's job description? We welcome your comments below.

*Mark Merrill is the president of Family First. For the original article, visit .*

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## **8 Ways to Make the Most of Your Doctor Visit**

Doctors are more pressed for time than ever, with health-care reform adding to it to the crunch doctors are facing today. Millions more insured Americans are entering the health-care system, just as a growing number of doctors are nearing retirement age.

That's one reason doctor errors cause as many as 500,000 U.S. deaths annually, many of them due to inaccurate diagnoses, as well as surgical mistakes, errors in prescriptions, plain incompetence, according to the newly published book, *Top Screwups Doctors Make—and How to Avoid Them* by Joe and Terry Graedon.

That's why it's critically important to make the most of your doctor visit, says Leana Wen, M.D., an emergency physician and director of Patient-Centered Care at the Department of Emergency Medicine at George Washington University. Dr. Wen, author of "When Doctors Don't Listen: How to Avoid

Misdiagnoses and Unnecessary Tests,” tells *Newsmax Health* patients must become better advocates for their own care—a tough task at a time when the typical appointment runs 10 to 15 minutes.

“We have a problem in our country with our healthcare system,” says Dr. Wenn, in an interview on *Newsmax TV’s Meet the Doctors* program. “We know that doctors are under more pressure to see as many patients as possible in very little time and also doctors are not reimbursed for time with patients; we’re reimbursed for things that we do to patients and, as a result, we just don’t have the time to listen.”

Dr. Wen notes that studies show that 80 percent of all diagnosis can be made just based on listening to a patient talk about his or her symptoms and medical history.

“There are ways that patients can tell a better story to help their doctors better help them,” she explains. “Know your own medical history. Help me help you.”

Dr. Wen’s book was inspired by her own experiences as a physician, but also by her mother’s battle with metastatic breast cancer.

“When I was a medical student, my mother was misdiagnosed for over a year before she was finally diagnosed with what turned out to be stage 4 breast cancer,” she notes. “She kept telling her doctors that she was feeling tired and short of breath and they kept on diagnosing her with depression and anxiety. But as it turned out she had cancer. And I learned so much in that process of why it’s so important for patients to be their own best advocate.”

Dr. Wen’ recommends the following “Eight Pillars to Better Diagnosis” that can help you make the most of the short time you spend with your doctor:

**1. Tell your whole story.** Studies have shown that the vast

majority of diagnoses can be made by listening to a patient discuss his or her medical history. Unfortunately, doctors sometimes steer patients toward a cookbook “chief complaint” or a series of “yes/no” answers. Learn to tell a succinct, effective story. Prepare and rehearse it.

**2. Assert yourself in the doctor’s thought process.** Find out what your doctor is thinking as you tell your story, and let your doctor know what’s on your mind. Starting out on the same page makes it easier to develop a productive partnership.

**3. Participate in your physical exam.** If you’re being examined, make sure you know what the doctor is looking for. Don’t be afraid to ask about any findings.

**4. Make a ‘differential diagnosis’ together.** This simply means you should make a list of all the possible diagnoses that could explain your symptoms. Make sure you and your doctor jointly devise a thorough list, handicapping the likelihood of each possible diagnosis. Keep asking what else could be going on.

**5. Participate in the decision-making process.** Work with your doctor to narrow down the list of potential diagnoses. By partnering with your doctor, you can often come up with diagnosis without a lot of tests.

**6. Apply tests rationally.** If you do need to further testing, make sure you understand how a particular test will help, as well as and what the risks and alternatives are. Look out for “cookbook medicine,” and make sure your doctor is tailoring an approach that works for you.

**7. Use common sense.** Don’t just leave the doctor’s office without a working diagnosis that makes sense to you. Don’t just assume the doctor must be right.

**8. Integrate any diagnosis into the healing process.** Talk through your diagnosis with your doctor and make sure you

understand how it will have an impact on your life and health. What are your treatment options, and what risks and benefits do they carry? What warning signs should you be on the lookout for?

Dr. Wen's book has been published in the wake of a new report from the Institute of Medicine that found the U.S. healthcare system squanders about \$750 billion a year on wasteful spending—up to 30 cents of every dollar spent—much of it on unnecessary tests and procedures that do little to improve patients' health and well-being.

There's even a new initiative involving some 60 medical groups and patient-advocacy organizations, called the Choosing Wisely Campaign, that has identified 90 common tests and procedures that are often unnecessary, costly, and may in some cases do more harm than good.

Among those questionable tests and procedures are CT and MRI scans—for instance, for low-back pain and minor head injuries—that are just not necessary. Others involve medication, such as prescribing antibiotics for sinus and respiratory infections, which usually caused by viruses and not bacteria, so the drugs have no effect. And even heart-stress test, such as echocardiograms, are often recommended for people at very low risk for heart disease, even though they are usually worthless.

Organizers of the campaign say it's important to question your doctor if he or she prescribes any test or procedure that makes you wonder: *Do I really need that?* You can and should work with your doctor by being an active participant in your own health. Ask questions, provide background on yourself, give details—engage in a conversation. You're not a math problem for your doctor to solve; you're a human being with a full, and probably complicated, life.

*For the original article, visit .*

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# 13 Characteristics of Men of Dysfunctional Homes

Families, churches and employers increasingly have to cope with the downstream impact of angry young men who grew up in dysfunctional homes.

And some of these men are not so young anymore. A first step to disciple a man who grew up in a dysfunctional home is to understand what such a home can do to a person.

In the groundbreaking book, *Adult Children of Alcoholics*, author Janet Woititz found a common set of 13 characteristics among adults who grew up in alcoholic homes. But these characteristics have also been found to have a much broader application, like other compulsive behaviors (gambling and overeating), extreme religious attitudes, toxic homes, abusive homes, and dysfunctional foster homes. According to Woititz, adults who grew up in such homes:

1. Have to guess at what is normal behavior.
2. Have difficulty following a project through from beginning to end.
3. Lie when it would be just as easy to tell the truth.
4. Judge themselves without mercy.
5. Find it difficult to have fun.
6. Take themselves very seriously.
7. Have difficulty with intimate relationships.
8. Over-react to changes they don't control.

9. Constantly seek approval and affirmation.
10. Feel like they're different from other people.
11. Are super responsible or super irresponsible.
12. Are extremely loyal, even if it's obvious the loyalty is undeserved.
13. Are impulsive.

If you truly have a man who grew up in a dysfunctional home, or if you are that man, normal discipleship may not be enough. Sometimes a professional Christian counselor or recovery group can help a man toward self-understanding and healing in a way that an untrained layman just can't provide. The only way to find out is to give it a try. I went to a counselor and found five sessions turned my world around.

*Patrick Morley is the chairman and co-CEO of Man in the Mirror Ministries. For the original article, visit .*

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## **These 3 Food Ingredients Aren't so Harmless**

Most of you know that refined foods—., “junk food”—are missing from the food pyramid for good reason: There's nothing healthy about them. Cookies, chips, white rice, white bread, pastries and table sugar are obvious examples.

Most of us try our best to avoid these and similar products because they contribute to conditions and illnesses such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease, but what about food pyramid-friendly foods? Are all dairy, grain and fruit

products safe (I'm sure you already know the answer)?

If you read my article on the common carcinogen, carrageenan, then you know that, unfortunately, unhealthy ingredients are hidden everywhere, even in organic products. In this article, I'm going to discuss three ingredients that can be found even in seemingly harmless, "healthy" foods, such as yogurt, wheat bread, cereal, fruit juice, protein powders and energy bars.

Next time you're grocery shopping, remember to scan the label of each and every packaged food you want to drop into your cart. You simply cannot, as they say, judge a book by its cover.

### **High-Fructose Corn Syrup**

High-fructose corn syrup, or HFCS, is a notoriously disreputable additive; so much so, that I don't feel its harmful effects can be overemphasized, or over-written about. So without further ado:

As its name suggests, HFCS contains fructose, which, when consumed in large quantities, is the most damaging sugar one can eat. Fructose drives up uric acid, which leads to high blood pressure, resistance, as well as kidney and liver disease. It's popular among food manufacturers for the simple reason that it is cheap to produce and avidly supported by well-funded organizations such as the Corn Refiners Association.

Here are a few of the well-documented dangers of high-fructose corn syrup:

- Contributes to fat deposits in your liver, increasing buildup of lipoproteins
- Leads to plaque buildup and narrowing of blood vessels

HFCS may also set the stage for problems like:

- Diabetes

- Metabolic syndrome
- Asthma and allergies
- Multiple sclerosis
- A rapid aging process
- Mercury poisoning

Added to many foods to enhance flavor, reduce spoilage, and keep foods moist and soft, HFCS lurks in a variety of products that one might not expect, such as:

- Soups
- Lunch meats
- Condiments
- Packaged nuts
- Yogurts
- Cereal

## **Sodium Benzoate**

Sodium benzoate is a common preservative used even in “all natural” products to prevent spoilage and inhibit the growth of mold. But it does much, much more than that...

While benzoic acid is, in fact, naturally occurring in low levels within many fruits, the “sodium benzoate” that you see listed on labels is synthesized in labs; sodium benzoate is the sodium salt of benzoic acid. According to , this additive has been shown to deprive cells of oxygen, break down the immune system, cause hyperactive behavior, and even perhaps lead to cancer.

“Sodium benzoate chokes out your body’s nutrients at the DNA cellular level by depriving mitochondria cells of oxygen, sometimes completely shutting them down. Just as humans need oxygen to breathe, cells need oxygen to function properly and to fight off infection, including cancer.”

The FDA claims sodium benzoate is safe because the amount included in our foods is very low. They do advise, however,

that it shouldn't be combined with vitamins C or E, as this leads to the formation of benzene, which is a known carcinogen. The problem is that vitamins C and E are in a plethora of foods, from almonds to zucchini. Not to mention, sodium benzoate and ascorbic acid (a form of vitamin C) are listed together on the back of many soft-drink containers.

Look out for sodium benzoate in:

- Jellies
- Jams
- Soft drinks
- Relishes
- Sauerkraut
- Fruit juice
- Salad dressing

I think it's worth noting that while many may claim a person would have to consume an inordinate amount of sodium benzoate for any problems to occur, "cancer is all about the cumulative effect." When our bodies are constantly presented with toxic products such as sodium benzoate, the immune system eventually will take a beating. When it does, it won't have enough essential nutrients to detoxify, leaving us susceptible to cancer and other diseases. I believe it is our responsibility to do what we can, when we can, to keep our exposure to cancer-causing agents to a minimum.

## **Splenda**

Splenda is just one of many artificial sweeteners found in countless "health" and diet products today, such as protein and energy bars, flavored water, even vitamin and mineral supplements. I've chosen to highlight Splenda, or sucralose, because it is an especially deceiving product because it claims to be "made from sugar," which understandably leads consumers to think it's a natural, perfectly safe product. This couldn't be further from the truth.

Splenda is a chlorocarbon, which is simply a fancy name for chlorinated sugar. To chlorinate sugar, you have to chemically alter the structure of the sugar molecule by substituting three chlorine atoms for three hydroxyl groups in the overall sucrose (sugar) molecule. Chlorine, as it turns out, is quite an excitable element. It's used as a biocide in bleach, insecticide, disinfectants even World War I poison gas!

Chlorocarbons are neither nutritionally nor metabolically compatible in our bodies. Because we're not made to excrete the poison, the body shunts it into our *livers*, which is our detoxification organ. There, the chlorocarbons damage and destroy the liver's metabolic cells. Not so sweet-sounding, is it?

Splenda claims its product has been thoroughly researched, yet not one long-term human study has been conducted to determine any potential health risks. The FDA (Food and Drug Administration) gave Splenda the green light after reviewing only a handful of short-term tests, and each of those was conducted on animals, not humans. Oh, and they were done by a Splenda manufacturer. Maybe they were unbiased?

In test animals, Splenda produced:

- Swollen livers and kidneys (my formerly "fatty" liver fits into this category!)
- Shrunken thymus glands
- Reduced growth rates
- Decreased red blood cell count
- Hyperplasia of the pelvis
- Extension of the pregnancy period
- Aborted pregnancy
- Decreased fetal body weights and placental weights
- Diarrhea

James Turner, chairman of the national consumer education group Citizens for Health issued the following statement:

*“... the artificial sweetener Splenda and its key component sucralose pose a threat to the people who consume the product. Hundreds of consumers have complained to us about side effects from using Splenda and this study ... confirms that the chemicals in the little yellow package should carry a big red warning label.”*

The web site lists a variety of consumer complaints from Splenda consumption, such as:

- Blurred vision
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Migraines
- Seizures
- Dizziness
- Allergic reactions
- Blood sugar increases
- Weight gain

It is best to eliminate all artificial sweeteners completely; so bid farewell to those pretty pink, blue, and yellow packets! Try to stick to natural sweeteners, such as raw honey, agave extract, maple syrup, or, if you're looking for a low-calorie sugar substitute, stevia or xylitol.

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