



Pro Kinship for Kids

Kinship Link

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Pro Kinship for Kids
 Lower level Our Saviors
 Lutheran Church
 1400 S. State Street
 P.O. Box 666
 New Ulm, MN 56073
 Phone 359-2445 or
 1-800-642-5779
 Website:
www.prokinship.org

Newsletter by
 Kari Beran, Director



The Best Gift Children Can Receive

When it comes to children, the best gift we can ever give them doesn't cost money. "Children need our PRESENCE - more than our PRESENTS," says Jesse Jackson. This tells us the best gift we can give our children is us. We need to share ourselves with children. We need to listen to them, share ideas with them, and give them our time.

Today our rushing and running often makes us feel we don't have time for anything. We tear off to the next event with little thought of how it is affecting us or our family. This even seems to get worse when we are close to the holidays with Christmas and New Year parties for work and friends. It is important to remember through to keep your family first. A key, to helping your children stay your focus, is to decide now as parents to stick to the ideas of no more than two engagements a week that take you away from your children after work. This can then become a

part of the new year plan you keep up for the family.

You may decide you want to be in more activities then one or two, then decide to make them family activities so you are together. There are many things starting that you can go to as a family. You may want to join a fitness group, or a youth group with adult leaders to do service projects in the community. You can also spend time together with your children by doing household chores that must get done like laundry and cooking with them there as a help. This gives you time to talk and also teaches them life skills they will need later as they move on into adulthood. What a better way to role model to children then to do it with them?

As adults we need even to limit our children's individual activities to give more family time. It is important for us to have the time to connect and chat. If your child is

off every night this can't happen either. How we can make sure this time of connecting gets done is to have evening meals together on a regular basis, a bedtime routine of reading a book or sharing our day, or better yet both to give our attention to our children. We can even give children our presence by a kiss goodnight, a hug as they leave for school in the morning, or a smile and a pat on the back for a job well done. It doesn't have to take planning or hours of time at one point in the day. It is more important to give our gift of our presence with each other over and over again throughout the day and weeks.

It is best said this way: Give children a gift of time - today, tomorrow, and always. The impact you make on yourself and the children's lives you touch will last a lifetime.



Healthy Holiday Baking

Holidays are times to have fun and indulge in favorite foods for many people. Americans associate social events and celebrations with food. At the same time, people want to eat healthy foods and snack on nutritious foods in between meals to avoid the holiday overload. The challenge is to find healthful snacks that fit into an active and happy holiday schedule.

This is also a time of special holiday traditions in many homes for doing holiday baking. If not it might be the holiday tradition you want to start this year with your family. One favorite idea could be making grandma's famous recipe sugar cookies each year. Yet, many of these old family favorites can be rich with fat and sugar making for a huge number of calories. If you are looking to help your family eat healthier this holiday season one thing you can do is update those old family recipes or find some new ones to try that are lower in fat and sugar. We will discuss some ways to change your recipes to make for a healthier holiday baking season this year.

You can look for recipes that make delicious and special lower fat baked goods. Or choose ones that is packed in vitamins and minerals with whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. These might be fruit pies, fruit tarts, oatmeal raisin cookies, blueberry muffins, pumpkin custard, banana bread, and raisin carrot cake to name a few. One time saving secret you should plan for along the way with this holiday baking season is to freezer bake. Many cookies, cakes, pies, and even some candies can be made in a larger amount on a day you set aside and then frozen for later use.

Now, how do you do a simple makeover of a recipe to lighten it and keep the taste good? Here are a few of the tips to holiday baking to lower that calorie punch.

Low Sugar Changes You Can Make:

- Reduce the sweetener. 1/4 cup of sweetener (sugar, honey, molasses) is all that is needed in baked goods for each 1 cup of flour used.
- Use 1/2 the original amount of sugar called for in your recipe without affecting quality.



Low Fat Changes You Can Make:

Ingredient

1 whole egg
1 ounce unsweetened baking chocolate
1 cup butter
1 ounce baking chocolate

Substitution to make

2 egg whites
3 tablespoons cocoa
7/8 cup oil
3 tablespoons powdered cocoa plus 1 tablespoon oil

Celebrating on a Shoestring with Lots of Memories

We are now coming into the full swing of the holiday season. We have all probably been given the full list of holiday presents by children and other family members. Can you see the rising cost of these gifts and even imagine the bills that will need to be paid off later? The thing to remember in all of this is, that holidays are a family time. They are a time to share memories and just talk about dreams and plans. They are the time to have fun making Christmas cookies with your children and not pushing to have ten different kinds in your freezer. They are the time to let your children or family decorate your home together and not worry about the decorations looking like the pictures in magazines. There are many ways to celebrate the holidays and not spend so much on the gifts. It takes just a little creativity and ends with many wonderful memories for years to come.

Here are a few ideas for thoughtful, lower cost gifts:

- Give homemade gifts like breads, jams, fudge, or cookies wrapped in colorful cellophane.
- Make theme baskets like a breakfast basket of hot chocolate mix, muffin mix, and honey. A lunch basket of crackers, cheese, and a special coffee. A snack basket of pretzels, nuts, and popcorn for a special time together.
- If you are a gardener, share plants decorated for the holidays.
- Give a gift not of money, but of time. Babysitting for a friend, running errands for grandparents, go to a movie with your child, or call a distant relative instead of sending the package.
- Give a coloring book and colors for helping develop creativity in your child.
- Let your child be an artist with just a variety of paper, colored pencils, markers, chalk, crayons, and paint.
- You can even go together with others to buy the special gift someone close really wants.
- Partners can save money and decide what bigger purchase will need to be made now or later and give this to each other like a washer, dryer, hot water heater, lawn mower, or painting the house.

If you are going to shop for those Christmas gifts, then remember to comparison shop, watch for sales, and when you have something for everyone STOP shopping. Enjoy the gift of giving this season and be creative. Memories you make will be worth more than any gift.