

EXTENSION CONNECTION

a newsletter to support your
health, home, and family life

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Winter 2024

SERVING ADAMS, GREEN LAKE,
MARQUETTE & WAUSHARA COUNTIES



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Educational Articles

Understanding Your Child's Love Language

Understanding the love languages of children can strengthen the bond between parents and their kids. The concept of love languages, introduced by Dr. Gary Chapman, identifies five primary ways people express and receive love: words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, and physical touch. Each child has a unique way of feeling loved, and recognizing their primary love language can help parents meet their emotional needs more effectively.



Words of Affirmation: Some children feel most loved when they hear positive and encouraging words. Compliments, praise, and verbal acknowledgments can boost their self-esteem and make them feel valued. Simple phrases like "I love you," or "I'm proud of you" can have a profound impact.

Acts of Service: For some children, actions speak louder than words. They feel loved when parents do things for them, such as helping with homework, preparing their favorite meal, or fixing a broken toy. These acts show that their parents care about their needs and are willing to invest time and effort into making their lives easier.

Receiving Gifts: Some children feel special and appreciated when they receive gifts. It's not about the material value but the thoughtfulness behind the gift. A small item, their favorite treat, or a handmade card can make them feel cherished and remembered.

Quality Time: Spending undivided attention with a child can make them feel loved and important. Engaging in activities together, having meaningful conversations, or simply being present can strengthen the parent-child relationship. This love language emphasizes the importance of connection and shared experiences.

Physical Touch: For some children, physical affection is the key to feeling loved. Hugs, kisses, cuddles, and even wrestling and physical play can provide comfort and security. Physical touch can be a powerful way to convey love and reassurance.

Knowing your child's love language allows you to communicate love in a way that makes them feel seen and understood. It is a powerful tool for fostering a loving, supportive, and emotionally healthy family environment.

By: Hannah Zellmer, Human Development & Relationships Educator, Marquette County

Connected

As I walk into the family room, I almost don't see my 10-year-old kneeling silently by the window, back to me, hunched over, head down, oblivious to everything around her. She's in her own little world – almost literally. It's a fictional world of cartoonish wonder that never ends, a world where she controls everything.

When I tap her shoulder gently and ask her to pause it, she does. On a good day, she even looks up at me. "It's time for dinner. Shut it down," I say.

Reluctantly, she says, "OK, just a minute..." and returns to her screen to wrap up what she was doing. But it draws her in so deeply again that time slips away and hunger pangs fade.



Have you ever found yourself or your child drawn into a screen like that? Whether playing video games, using social media, watching movies or videos, or even reading the news, blogs, or other interesting articles, it captures our attention. The thing is, the creators of all that goodness (and garbage, too) *designed it* that way: to draw us in and keep us in. Our brains even reward us for engaging with it by pouring feel-good dopamine into our systems.

It can be a very tempting trap. Not only is entertainment and information – more than we could ever consume – right at our fingertips, 24/7. But also, the same human nature that motivates us to form relationships can seem to be satisfied through technology. Social media, interactive gaming, messaging apps – they help us feel connected, important, heard. But they can also lead to social comparison, anxiety, depression, and isolation.

That's because online connection doesn't have the same lasting, positive effects as authentic, in-person connection – with all the nuances of body language, tone, eye contact, scent, and touch. Just like a finger tap on an electronic bowling ball is nothing at all like the sensations of holding a real, weighted ball in your hands and sending it down the lane. Real relationships and real experiences in the real world cannot be replicated on a screen, no matter how interactive it is.

Now, there is no denying that tech devices are wonderful, helpful tools. They bring a lot of good into our lives. The key is to seek *balance*, so screen time doesn't overtake play, sleep, physical activity, chores, relationships, and so on. How do we keep our screen use in check? Here are a few tips you can try:



1. **Start by examining your use.** Look in settings for “digital wellbeing” (Android) or “screen time” (iOS). Or try logging usage time on paper - be sure to log actual use, without guessing. Add up time for all your devices. (It’s ok to consider work/homework time separate from personal use.)

2. **Set limits and goals.** Choose device-free times (like meal time) and spaces (such as the bedroom and/or car). Decide, based on what matters most to you, which situations will call for putting your device down or away.

3. **Use your tools.** Timers, setting up app limits, using focus or silent mode, and adjusting notification settings can remove distractions and help you meet your goals.

4. **Include others.** When friends and loved ones are around, let them in. Watch videos together. Show them what you’re doing online. Have a conversation about it. And when you need one-on-one time with your phone, clue them in: “I have to catch up on emails.” “I want to share these pictures before I forget.”

Even in spaces where you are among strangers, putting your phone away opens up opportunities to connect. You never know, that simple exchange with a stranger could be just what you (or they) need.



Recent Programming

Spreading Kindness

On their day-off from school, a group of 6th graders in the Teen Outreach Program spent the morning visiting Villa Pines Living Center in Friendship. Together, students and nursing home residents painted uplifting pictures and messages onto small rocks.

Rock painting is a fun, simple activity that soothes stress, clears the mind, aids in focus, and tends to bring joy to the creator. Later, after they are dry and weather-sealed, the rocks are placed in the community, where they can be a pleasant, uplifting surprise for someone who discovers them. It's an activity that spreads kindness and joy all around!



If that was the whole experience, it would have been a wonderful success. And here's the icing on the cake: when asked about their favorite part, many students said they had *thought it would be painting rocks, but actually, they found that the best part was when they got the chance to help someone else.*

Teen Outreach Program (TOP) is a nationally recognized program that promotes the positive development of young people through adult support, interactive lessons, and community service learning. TOP is grant-funded and administered by Healthfirst Network, in collaboration with Adams-Friendship Area School District, with support from Extension Adams County. Local facilitators are Katie Schude of Healthfirst and Sheila Michels of Extension.



We're AMP'ed up!

This fall, a group in Adams spent 5 weeks mastering the art of aging well through the Aging Mastery Program (AMP). Covering ten topics for older adults, most sessions featured engaging local guest speakers who shared tips for making the most of the “gift of longevity.”

Participants set small, impactful goals to improve their quality of life. An anonymous survey at the end of the program rated AMP as “excellent,” with one participant sharing that he or she “set up a complete, healthy lifestyle, which includes healthy eating, an exercise routine...and sleeping plan.”

AMP, an evidence-informed program by the National Council on Aging, is coordinated locally by Sheila Michels of Extension and Donna Richards of the ADRC. They offer a series every 15 months or so. Interested individuals aged 55+ can contact Sheila at 608-339-4237 or sgmichels@wisc.edu to join the next series.



Back: Robert, William, Sherry. Front: Mary, Kris. Not pictured: Sandra.

Navigating longer lives

Financial fitness

Medication management

Advance planning

Falls prevention

Healthy eating and hydration

Exercise and you

Sleep

Healthy relationships

Community engagement

We're Grateful for our guest presenters!

- Deena Kendrowski, Gundersen Moundview Pharmacy
- Angela DeSmith, Extension Adams County
- Jackie Carattini, Extension Wood County *
- Amanda Kutcher, ADRC
- Jess Kaehny, Hope House of South Central Wisconsin

*We were fortunate to spend time with Jackie and absorb a portion of her wisdom during this series. As was her nature, she was warm, authentic, and engaging. Jackie passed away in October. She will be missed.



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Upcoming Events

Triple P Teen: Positive Parenting Program

For parents of children 12-16 years

Small changes. Big differences.

Triple P provides parents with a toolbox of strategies to raise confident and healthy children, build strong family relationships and manage misbehavior.

Tuesdays in February!

9:00- 10:30am or 6:00-7:30 pm over zoom



Feb. 11 - Getting Teenagers to Cooperate

Feb 18 - Coping with Teenagers' Emotions

Feb. 25 - Reducing Family Conflict

Join us for
one or all!

To Register

Scan QR Code

or go to

go.wisc.edu/p54k9u



Questions or need help registering? 608 297 3141 or hannah.zellmer@wisc.edu

An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title VI, Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act requirements.

RESILIENT CO-PARENTING

A series of topic-specific classes for parents or caregivers raising children together while living apart.

Join us for any or all of the following sessions!

January 2 – Families Fighting Fair

Learn how to manage conflicts with your co-parent in a way that benefits your children. This session covers positive conflict management, compromise, reframing, and active listening.

February 6 – Successful Stepfamilies

Blended families have unique parenting challenges. Discover ways to ease the transition for your children and address these challenges effectively.

March 6 – Co-Parenting Teens

Teenagers need ongoing support to grow into happy, healthy adults. Learn cooperative co-parenting techniques to help your teen build positive family relationships, a healthy lifestyle, and community connections.

April 3 – Help Children with Strong Emotions

Children feel a range of emotions during separation or divorce. Find out how to support them through these strong emotions, reduce their stress, and build their emotional intelligence.

May 1 – Parenting from a Distance

Parenting from a distance can be tough. Learn how to stay connected with your children when you live apart and make the most of your time together.

June 5 – Healthy Coping during times of Transition

Co-parenting stress can be overwhelming. Discover strategies from the WeCOPE curriculum to reduce stress, increase positive feelings, and improve health behaviors.

7:00-8:00 pm over Zoom
1st Thursday of each month
in 2025!

Scan code or
use link to
register!



go.wisc.edu/21t6cz



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FAMILY ENGAGEMENT & RELATIONSHIPS

An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title VI, Title IX, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act requirements.

Online Professional Development Workshops for Early Childhood Professionals and Caregivers

2024-2025

Complimentary continuing education hours? Don't want to travel? Pull up a comfortable chair and join us on the web! Attend the live session or watch a recording up to one week later.

Oct 7
2024

7:00 - 8:00 PM CST



Early Childhood Screenings for Health

Early childhood screenings for vision, hearing, and developmental milestones are essential for ensuring optimal growth, development, and long-term health.

Instructors: Greta Mills, Oral Health Professional and Jennie Treadway, Program Coordinator-Developmental/Sensory Screening, Univ. of Arizona Cooperative Extension

Naturally Learning: Finding Curriculum in Outdoor and Nature Play

Increased outdoor and nature play in early childhood education programs have benefits for children, teachers, and the environment. Join us as we explore learning opportunities hiding in plain sight!

Instructor: Jodi L. Nerren, Asst. Professor & Extension Specialist, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service - Family & Community Health



Nov 4
2024

7:00 - 8:00 PM CST

Dec 2
2024

7:00 - 8:00 PM CST



Laying the Foundation:

Tools for Building Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health in the Classroom

Explore the foundation of infant and early childhood mental health. We will share practical strategies teachers can use in their classrooms and family engagement practices that support mental health in the family system.

Instructors: Lindsay Weymouth Olson, Outreach Program Manager, Patricia Carroll, Associate Professor, Human Development & Relationships Extension Educator and Anne Clarkson, Parenting and Child Development Specialist, University of Wisconsin - Madison -Extension

The Importance of Sensory Play

Explore how to add play activities that encourage a child to explore materials which stimulate these senses. Sensory exploration enhances cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioral development.

Instructors: LaDonna Werth and Lisa Poppe, University of Nebraska Extension Educators - Early Childhood



Jan 13
2025

7:00 - 8:00 PM CST

Feb 3
2025

7:00 - 8:00 PM CST



Growing Up Healthy with Fruits and Vegetables

Exploring all things related to fruits and vegetables – from boosting consumption with child-friendly tips and tricks to ensuring their safety.

Instructors: Audrey Rider, South Dakota State Univ. Early Childhood Field Specialist and Cami Wells, Univ. of Nebraska Extension Educator - Food Nutrition and Health

RELAX - Alternatives to Anger for Parents and Caregivers

RELAX for parents and caregivers explores the anger and strong emotions experienced by infants, toddlers and preschoolers. This workshop will help participants learn about the developmental stages in children's self-control and how parents and caregivers can assist children at each stage.

Instructor: Courtney Aldrich, Program Instructor - Child and Family Development, Univ. of Michigan Extension



March 3
2025

7:00 - 8:00 PM CST

To register go to: <https://go.unl.edu/fhkonehour>

There is an option to watch the "live" or "recorded" version of each session. You will have one week after the recorded session is available to watch the webinar and receive continuing education credits.

Questions? Email fhk@unl.edu or call 402-336-2760



Nebraska Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture. Nebraska Extension's educational programs abide with the nondiscrimination policies of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the United States Department of Agriculture.

Parenting & Family Relationship Classes

December, January & February 2025



EVERYDAY PARENTING



Raising Wisconsin's Children Classes

These classes offer practical, research-based ideas to support your parenting and help children grow.

December 19 & February 20 | 1 PM



Focus on Fathers

Join us for discussions on parenting, family life and how to handle modern challenges.

December 10, January 14, February 11 | 6 PM



Triple P: Positive Parenting Program

For parents and caregivers of kids 0 to 12 years

Tuesdays 1/14/2025 to 2/4/2025 | 9 AM or 6 PM

For parents and caregivers of teens

Tuesdays 2/11/2025 to 2/25/2025 | 9 AM or 6 PM



Strong Couples

Six self-paced online modules and five coaching calls that teach you skills to improve your romantic relationship.

Visit parenting.extension.wisc.edu/strong-couples

FAMILY TRANSITIONS



Triple P: Family Transitions

Get support for handling conflicts and managing stress while connecting with other parents.

Thursdays 1/23/2025 to 2/20/2025 | 5:30 PM



Parents Forever

Learn how to lessen the impact of divorce on children, co-parent without conflict, and improve self-care to foster resilience.

Monthly | Times Vary



Resilient Co-Parenting

Join us for ongoing support for your co-parenting journey.

December 5, January 2, February 6 | 7:00 PM

Raising Wisconsin's Children Conference

January 28, 2025

8:15 AM to 4:30 PM

Free and Virtual

The Raising Wisconsin's Children Conference is a free, online learning event for parents, teachers, and caregivers of children. Join to learn supportive, practical parenting and child development information from leading experts. Join us in 2025 to unlock the power of social and emotional skills in children and teens!

VISIT OUR CLASS CALENDAR TO SIGN UP

USE THE QR CODE OR THE LINK BELOW TO SIGN UP!



<https://parenting.extension.wisc.edu/class-calendar>

To make sure everyone has a great experience, we limit the number of spots in our classes. Registration is required.



Human Development & Relationships Institute
DIVISION OF EXTENSION
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



Adams County Kids Day

A fun-filled day of activities for children and their families

SAVE THE DATE
Saturday, April 26, 2025

Held rain or shine

This free event features:

- Interactive entertainment
- Hands-on activities
- Indoor and outdoor fun
- Prize drawings

PRESENTING SPONSORS



Save the Date! April 12th, 2025

**FREE hands-on
fun for the
whole family!**



10am-1pm

@ Montello High School

Want to be part of this event?

Use this link

<https://go.wisc.edu/nu5knj>

or scan the QR Code.



Organized By:



Community Resource Highlights



211 is a **free** and **confidential** service that connects you with thousands of **local** programs and services. Friendly, trained community resource specialists are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in 180 languages.

Whether you're looking for a food pantry, help paying your utility bills, housing assistance, substance use services, mental health supports, a safe haven from interpersonal violence, or other local services and supports, connect with 211. A trained specialist will listen to you, offering a friendly ear and easy access to information and local referrals, so you can get answers and get help.

Four easy ways to reach 211 Wisconsin



Dial 211
(or 877-947-2211)



Text your ZIP
code to 898211



Chat now



Search services

211wisconsin.communityos.org



Harbor Recovery Center

Provides support in Columbia County, WI & surrounding areas
A **free of charge** 501 (c)(3) non-profit recovery center for individuals and their family members who are struggling with alcohol, substance use and/or mental health.

Services include:

- Family & Individual Peer Support
- Confidential Meeting Space
- Community Education Events
- Activities for Those In Recovery & Their Allies

PO Box 803
Portage, WI 53901
608-697-7163 (call or text)

info@theharborrecoverycenter.com



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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Our Farewell Newsletter

We started Extension Connection three years ago as a joint effort of four Extension educators serving Adams, Green Lake, Marquette, and Waushara Counties. Our goal was to support health, homes and families in the four-county region with informational articles, community resource highlights, and news of past and upcoming events. Each of the four founding members had a different area of expertise: financial security, healthy eating and active living, human relationships, and mental wellbeing. Together, we were able to provide our readers with a variety of tools, tips, resources, and information.

We appreciate your readership and any insights you've shared in the past few years. Now, it is time to move in another direction. After the retirement of one founding member, job transitions of two other educators, and a change to some of the county educator roles, we have decided to make this our final newsletter. We hope you have enjoyed reading it as much as we have enjoyed bringing it to you.

And even though *Extension Connection* as a newsletter is ending, **the great programming in your local Extension office continues**. We encourage you to keep in touch in one or more of the following ways:

- Visit our websites
- Follow us on Facebook
- Request to be added to an email list
- Attend Extension classes and programs
- Call or visit our offices

Until we meet again, we wish you the best,
Sheila & Hannah