

# KidNews Today

The Catholic School Edition

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## Being Like St. Francis: It's More Than Loving Animals

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Everyone loves St. Francis of Assisi. In early October, people everywhere will be bringing their dogs, cats, birds, bunnies and rodents to be blessed in honor of St. Francis. Do your kids cite St. Francis as a role model? If so—challenge them to be like this intense personality. It's more than loving animals.

**Caring for the outcasts:** St. Francis kissed and cared for lepers and other people rejected by society. Challenge your kids to be kind to those who are left out in their world of school, sports, dance or scouting. The absence of mean behavior isn't the same as being loving and generous with your time and friendship. Do they treat newcomers or the less popular people just as politely as they would people they know? Are they willing to sit with a new person, or less popular person, at lunch or snack and try to get to know that student?

**Being willing to be a "fool" for what's right:** St. Francis didn't sit around worrying that people might think he was silly; he just did



what he thought was the right thing to do. A famous example: he took off his fancy clothes and handed them back to his father (in front of the town cathedral) so that he would be free to follow what he believed was God's will in his life. Running around church naked isn't a good idea in our century, either; but are your children ready to look foolish for what's right by speaking up when someone's been put down or voicing an opinion that's not popular when with friends? Being like Francis means being willing to let others think you're foolish because being right is more important than being popular.

**Encouraging others to be good.** St. Francis was able to convince others to do the right thing—he was even able to talk Clare, who was nearly a princess, into leaving her wealthy family and becoming a beggar, serving the poor

in God's name. That's a lot of convincing! Are your children encouraging others to do good things, or are they embarrassed to offer positive alternatives to friends who are choosing mean, selfish or harmful acts?

**Not caring so much about material stuff.** It isn't practical, or safe, for young people to be giving everything away and living as a beggar. How do your kids practice being "not greedy" in a world that encourages us to be as greedy as possible? Do they complain about interrupting a game or show for a family meal, or hesitate to share even out-grown items with others?

It's easy to pick a role model and just pay attention to the easy, convenient parts—like loving our pets. Whether the role model is an athlete, author, soldier or saint, encourage young people to look at the harder parts of what make that person a role model and put those practices to work in their lives. - Dr. Lori Puterbaugh, LMHC, LMFT

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### October Holidays

St. Francis of Assisi 10/4

Columbus Day 10/8

Halloween 10/31

## Resources for parents & professionals



Every month, we'll provide a review of books, magazines, films or other resources that may be useful to you or the children in your life. If you have suggestions for Resources, please email me!

### OCTOBER RESOURCES: Self Help Books For Grown-Ups

Some help for stress-filled lives!

**The Worry Trap: How to Free Yourself from Worry & Anxiety Using Acceptance & Commitment Therapy**, by Chad LeJeune, PhD. This book provides step-by-step guidance and exercises to help you understand the source of worry, how many of our efforts to stop worrying make the problem worse, and how the research into "Acceptance & Commitment Therapy" (ACT) can help you move into the present and out of the fearful future of worry.

**It's So Hard to Love You: Staying Sane When Your Loved One is Manipulative, Needy, Dishonest or Addicted**, by Bill Klatte, MSW, LCSW, and Kate Thompson. If you've got friends or family members whose behavior and demands are draining you of energy, money, time and hope, this brother-sister team may be able to help. Learn how to set firm limits, refuse to be managed by someone else's bad behavior, and how to fight your unnecessary guilt (good people often feel unnecessarily guilty when they set healthy limits with users and abusers).

**The Mindful Way Through Depression: Freeing Yourself from Chronic Unhappiness**, by M. Williams, J. Teasdale, Z. Segal and J. Kabat-Zinn. This paperback combines thoughtful steps of self help and a CD of guided meditation exercises to help understand and overcome painful emotions and challenging life experiences.

**HEALTH TIPS OF THE MONTH: Co-Rumination.** Ruminating is when, like a cow chewing cud, we work a problem over and over in our mind. Researchers are calling the tendency to endlessly rehash things that upset them with their friends "Co-rumination." It seems to occur most among young females. There's some preliminary evidence that co-ruminating contributes to symptoms of depression, and it's no surprise to psychotherapists. Repetitive negative thoughts, whether spoken, kept silent, text-messaged, emailed or instant-messaged, are rehearsals that create more negative feelings. These feelings, reinforced by friends' feedback and commiseration, can become even more entrenched. Adults should be alert to girls' conversational habits and be willing to interrupt or limit opportunities to be mired in commiseration. Encourage problem-solving when appropriate; avoid being pulled into the co-rumination. It can be tempting to join in and ally yourself with your child, but resist. Also resist the near-useless effort of throwing out possible solutions; you are most likely to garner criticism or rejection.

**Eating Disorders:** concerned about a young woman or young man in your life? Look for these signs, among others, and consult their pediatrician: a change, cessation or failure to begin menstruation in girls; increase in body hair; leaving the table quickly after meals; sour breath; increased tooth decay; sores, redness or swelling on the first two fingers (often used to induce vomiting); a preoccupation with food and/or weight; expressed fear of being 'fat'; increased sensitivity to cold; weight loss. Be prepared: people in the grip of an eating disorder usually deny there's a problem and may even accuse you of being "jealous" (of their slimness) or trying to undermine their efforts to be "perfect."

—L Puterbaugh, PhD, LMHC, LMFT

## Relationship Corner: Parent-Child Boundaries

Some people complain that parents often try too hard to be their kids' friends. Naturally parents want a friendly relationship with their children. But grownups and kids—and even grownups and teens—are not the same. Sometimes busy, stressed parents may accidentally burden their children by treating them as if they were a friend or confidante. For example:

**Complaining about a spouse.** It may be tempting to commiserate with your same-sex offspring about the puzzling or annoying ways of the other parent, but you're feeding a tendency towards disrespect that

rearranges the family hierarchy, setting that parent below the two of you.

**Telling too much in an effort to "be honest."**

The cult of honesty demands a lot of human sacrifices. For example, kids don't need to hear about your insights in therapy. You might decide to share that you realize you've been behaving thus-and-thus, and that it has been unfair/selfish, and what specific changes they can expect to see (e.g., you'll be having dinner with the family more often or, you'll be going to AA) without lots of details.

**Your love life.** Married parents should not

apologize for having private time or keeping children out of their bedroom in general. Single parents shouldn't introduce dates to the children until they are sure the relationship is going somewhere serious. On no account should single parents dish about casual dates with children.

**Your body issues.**

Keep your "fat days," displeasure with having inherited a certain feature or your trauma at aging to yourself. You're teaching what matters (appearance) and what's wrong with your child (your shared traits). - D Puterbaugh, PhD, LMHC, LMFT



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### Especially for Kids: Something to Talk About: My Friend is Too Skinny!

Do you have a friend who worries a lot about being fat, even though she's skinny? It can happen to girls or boys, but most of the time this happens to girls. Talk to a grownup if your friend: is losing weight on purpose even if she's already slim, throwing away her lunch, making herself throw up after meals, giving away food instead of eating it; complains about being cold all the time; is tired

and weak; tells you she is not getting her period anymore; gets angry if you let her know you're worried about her weight loss. Your friend might be very angry when caring adults approach her about not eating right and losing weight. You are still doing the right thing if you get her help. Eating disorders can cause serious physical problems, even if the person recovers and begins to gain weight. Sometimes the

person's skeleton, heart or other body parts are irreparably damaged. So even if the person looks healthy again on the outside, she may have weakened bones, be unable to have children, or have other permanent damage. Let someone know if your friend might have an eating disorder - it's something to talk about! - Dr. Lori Puterbaugh



## SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a syndrome in which a person's body, mood and thinking suffer in response to the lack of natural light that occurs during the winter months. A person with SAD may be very tired, lose interest in activities s/he usually enjoys, suffer a lack of energy, seem depressed, irritable or as if s/he just doesn't care about much. Someone with SAD may be misdiagnosed as being depressed. At times, people may feel so down that they choose unhealthy ways to try to cheer

themselves up, such as abusing alcohol or over-indulging in comfort foods.

In October, there is already less daylight than darkness. People with tendencies for Seasonal-Affective Disorder (SAD) should start, or reinforce, the habits that can minimize the effect of shortened daylight on mood and energy. Get 15-20 minutes of daylight every day (good for your bones, too); keep regular hours for rising and

sleeping, even on weekends; use brighter lights indoors until about 1 hour before bedtime; consider cognitive-behavioral therapy if the problem persists or interferes with your daily activities. Specialists can provide further information about full-spectrum indoor lights, nutrition and other strategies to minimize the effects of SAD on your life.

- L Puterbaugh, PhD,  
LMHC, LMFT

### Grownup Tip of the Month: Just Give Me 15 Minutes!



Need fifteen minutes, just for yourself? Haven't read the funnies, sipped a cup of coffee in silence, or heard a bird sing in ages because your mornings are crazy? Try one of these tips and see how it changes your day:

*Set the alarm fifteen minutes earlier and don't schedule any tasks for that time.* Sounds obvious but a lot of people let the snooze alarm eat their quiet time.

*Iron your clothes for the week on Sunday.* It will take about ten minutes longer than just doing Monday's, and you will

reclaim those ten minutes (plus the time you may be spending picking out clothes) every day.

*Hide.* Not literally, but take the cup of coffee into your room, or stand on the deck, balcony or front step. Step out of the maelstrom of morning for a few minutes.

*Stop taking responsibility for things your kids should be doing.* That means you won't be scrambling for PE clothes, homework, lost socks or books. Let them be responsible, including learning about consequences of carelessness.

*Have simple, healthy breakfast*

*items* like whole grain cereals and fresh fruit at home so you can skip the drive-thru at the coffee shop or fast food chain. Fast food doesn't save you time and it definitely costs more money to get breakfast on the hoof every day.

All of these, together, could get you much more than 15 minutes a day, but for most parents, a few moments of quiet alone, or just enjoying a cup of coffee with your spouse, will be a real treat, an important life-lesson for the children, and a gift to your marriage.

Enjoy! - Dr Lori Puterbaugh,