

## Family Living Focus

Beaver Co.  
Extension Agent

Mary Alice Gettings



### ARE YOU A GRAZER?

According to Webster's Dictionary, "to graze" is to feed on grass and pasture. While we don't graze in the literal sense, we humans have adopted our own style of grazing. So, what type of grazer are you?

• **Sheepish Grazer** — You do most of your grazing at home on nuts, fruit, and cheese.

• **Convenient Grazer** — You make unplanned stops at convenience stores and drive-through restaurants whenever you feel the urge.

• **Lone Grazer** — You consider food secondary and pair it with other activities.

• **Freudian Grazer** — You nibble to provide comfort or relief from stress.

• **World Class Grazer** — You like variety and sophistication in your food and order several appetizers instead of a main meal.

Some of these ways of grazing definitely lead to poor eating habits, which can eventually lead to health problems. Some of them can be okay, if you select healthier foods.

In fact, some research says that grazing (or snacking) can actually be beneficial in promoting better eating habits. For example, a healthy snack an hour or two before arriving home from work can help you avoid eating anything you can get your hands on while waiting for dinner.

Deprivation is one of the main reasons why people stop "dieti-

ng." A healthy snack can help to relieve that miserable hunger feeling that causes you to run to the vending machine between meals for a high-calorie, low-nutrient snack.

When it comes to weight loss, some research points to the fact that snacking throughout the day may actually help to keep your metabolism up and running.

You may be convinced it's a good idea to adopt the "grazing" way. It's simple — just eat mini-meals or snacks throughout the day. You can eat whenever or wherever you want - at home, in the car, and on the job. It can fit into everyone's schedule.

While there are many benefits to grazing, you can imagine there are pitfalls. You have permission to eat whenever or wherever, but not whatever. One of the biggest pitfalls to grazing is "eating amnesia," or mindless eating. Not only do you forget what, but how much, you've eaten. Most people forget about the bite of this and the spoonful of that, which can cause your calorie intake to creep up throughout the day. At the end of the day, you realize the bag of cookies or chips are all gone, and you were the only one eating them.

The best way to avoid eating

amnesia is to pre-plan your snacks. It's not as hard as it sounds. Taking healthy snacks to work, in the car, or to your home office is the first step. Some ideas are bagels, small bran muffin, bread sticks, low-fat crackers, raisin bread, tuna, snack-size dried fruit, raw vegetables, pretzels, baked snacks, fresh fruit, rice cakes, applesauce, unsweetened cereal, fat-free pudding, yogurt (if you have a refrigerator).

To avoid overeating, the second step is to portion out a serving of the snack. When it's done, you should be done. Many times when you eat while working on other things, you lose track of how much you're eating. Before you know it, the entire bag of pretzels is gone by the end of the afternoon. Even though pretzels are a healthy snack, too much of a good thing can add too many calories to your day.

Another pitfall of grazing is that people feel they need to eat when they take a break. Many of us feel guilty if we take a break just to relax or pleasure read. Since eating looks productive, we turn to food, even if we're not hungry. Don't eat for the sake of eating — eat only when you are hungry.

To be a successful grazer, the following guidelines will help keep you on the right track:

• Go no longer than five hours without foods. Waiting longer than five hours to eat will likely result in overeating or stopping for fast foods, which can sometimes not be healthy.

• Select nutrient-dense foods for your snack. Nutrient-dense foods are those which provide many nutrients for the calories. For example, pretzels and fruit are much more nutrient dense than potato chips and fruit roll-ups.

• Shop for portable and ready-to-go foods. Grocery stores carry a variety of easy-to-pack and smaller portion sizes of foods. For example, you can now purchase baby carrots and place them into a small plastic bag in the morning. Small pudding and yogurt containers (if you have a refrigerator) and single-serving breakfast bars can easily be placed in your briefcase as you head out the door.

Grazing isn't so bad, if you do it the right way. A small amount of time thinking ahead can help you to be a successful grazer.

Mary Alice Gettings is a registered dietitian and certified diabetes educator with Penn State Cooperative Extension of Beaver County. For more information, call (724) 774-3003.

# What Does My Child Need To Know?

MONTOURSVILLE (Lycoming Co.) — Many of you have seen a recent article in "Good Housekeeping" (May) which addresses the topic of essential life skills that all children should know before they leave home.

Do your children know the following:

1. How to do laundry. This includes sorting and may include sewing on buttons.

2. How to cook. Simple meals for younger children, who will need supervision. Older children can even help plan menus!

3. How to budget expenses.

Begin with easy concepts at an early age and advance with the child's age.

4. How to clean a room. This begins early with picking up after playtime. By age 7, a child can vacuum and change sheets. Scrubbing the tub and dusting

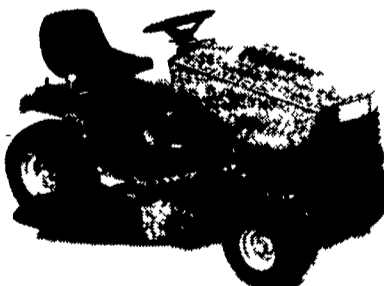
are chores to teach, among others.

5. How to shop for groceries. Ask a 9-year-old to go and get an item on another aisle; and this can lead to price comparisons. A teen should be able to come up with a list and shop alone.

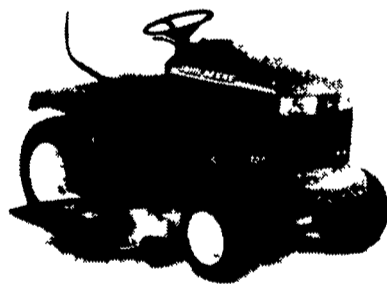
6. How to help themselves. Self-sufficiency skills like looking up numbers in the phone book (not cheating and calling directory assistance), making his own doctor's appointments, scheduling oil changes at the appropriate time, are all important things for kids to know.

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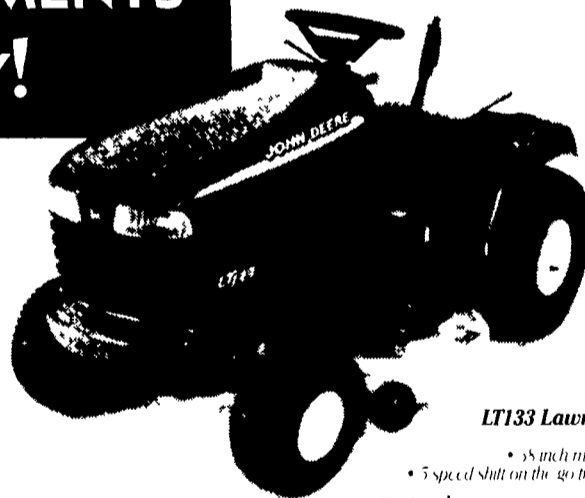
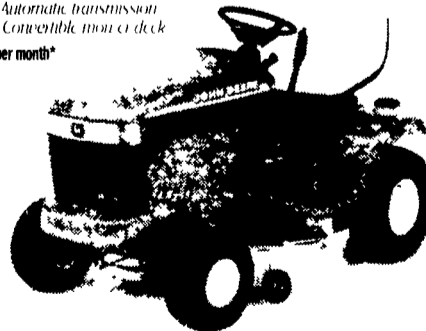


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