

**your life:** solutions



**Let's go outside...**

Sure you could have your next family gathering at a restaurant or around the dinner table, but why not hit the park instead? A game of lawn bowls or frisbee is always fun and there are plenty of other activities for all family members, no matter their age or level of fitness. Even the pets can get in on the action. In fact, research from the University of Western Australia shows that pets help to strengthen social bonds. Don't forget the sunscreen, a basket of healthy snacks, plenty of water and a blanket to lie on, recommends Kerrie Hess, author of *Girls Only* (Random House, 2010).



**Great gear**

THE INNOVATIVE 'KIMOCHI' SOFT TOYS, \$49.95, HELP YOUNG ONES TO IDENTIFY AND EXPRESS EMOTIONS. EACH KIMOCHI HAS THREE MINI TOYS TUCKED INSIDE, SHOWING FEELINGS SUCH AS ANGER OR SADNESS. KIDS CAN CHOOSE WHICH REPRESENTS THE WAY THEY'RE FEELING AND, WITH ADULT HELP, LEARN TO MANAGE THAT EMOTION. [WWW.KIMOCHIS.COM](http://WWW.KIMOCHIS.COM).

hints & how-tos  
**FAMILY**

Discover ways to bond as a family, keep boredom at bay, pass on life lessons to little ones and nurture your child's wellbeing. Plus, some sanity savers for parents. **By Kelly Baker.**

**TIP.** Growing up can be tough, so parents might like to introduce their kids to the concept of 'this too shall pass'. No matter how awful a situation might feel, there will always be a solution.

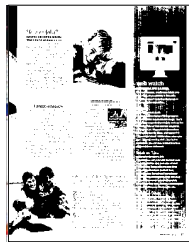
**MONEY SAVER**

Teen debt levels are growing, says Maggie Hamilton, social commentator and author of *What's Happening to our Boys?* (Penguin, 2010). It is vital for parents to teach kids how to handle money, budget, and balance spending with saving. To influence your teen's spending, Maggie suggests:

- \* Promote a savings culture at home.
- \* Encourage awareness of the environmental impact of endless shopping, and how many products are made through exploitation of the poor in third-world countries.
- \* Educate your kids about advertising and marketing so they know when and how it's happening.
- \* Spending often stems from boredom; focus your kids on other ways to spend their time.
- \* Encourage giving to those who are less fortunate.
- \* Be aware of your own spending.



PHOTOGRAPHY: GETTY IMAGES & SUPPLIERS



## True or false?

### HAVING CHILDREN MEANS THE END OF YOUR SEX LIFE

False, says Dr Martien Snellen, psychiatrist and author of *Rekindling Your Relationship After Childbirth* (Text Publishing, 2010). Many believe that soon after their baby is born, bedroom activity will return to normal. But it rarely works like that, says Dr Snellen. "The good news is, you can have a normal sex life again – it just won't be the same as before," he adds. To get back on track, spend quality time with your partner; be gentle and kind with yourself and relax, safe in the knowledge that you will get your mojo back – maybe stronger than ever.



### Latest research

A recent study in the journal *Pediatrics* shows that preschoolers are more likely to come in at a healthy weight if you regularly engage them in the following: eating dinner as a family; getting adequate sleep; and watching a limited amount of TV during the week. Each provides health benefits individually, but, according to the study, the biggest benefits occur when all three are combined and practised regularly.

### NUTRITION NEWS

Kids hooked on junk food? The solution, says Kim Terakes, author of *The Great Aussie Family Cookbook* (Viking, 2010), is to get kids involved. "Spend the afternoon making pasta or baking bread or creating pizza toppings," says Kim. "Whether they're four or 14, allow your kids to get their hands on real food rather than sticking something unspeakable in the microwave. You will pass on an appreciation of good food, so that they can, in turn, pass it on to their own kids."



## 5 ways to... take a great family snapshot

Photographer Peta di Palma of Portraitplus shares her tips:

- 1 Position your subjects with their backs to the sun. That way they're cloaked in beautiful, soft light and they're not forced to squint.
- 2 Keep clothing as simple as possible. You want your kids to be the stars of the shot, not their outfits.
- 3 Take your family to a place they'll have fun, such as the park or the beach. This will allow everyone to relax and your shots will be as natural as possible.
- 4 Keep the poses informal. Get your subjects to hug each other under a beach towel or splash in the water or build a sandcastle. Let them choose if it helps.
- 5 If your children are slightly older, they may find the whole event way too boring for words. If that's the case, insist they do not smile and ask them to put on the most serious face they can muster. Soon they'll be laughing so much they won't be able to stop and hey presto – great moments recorded on film.



## web watch

### MAKING LIFE EASIER

Plan your menus, create cute labels and keep track of your family's schedule with these great websites designed to help keep you organised.

#### kikki.∞

[www.kikki-kr.com](http://www.kikki-kr.com)

Hop onto the website of this gorgeous stationery line to browse the range. You'll find clever organisational tools such as the Monthly Planner Pad and the Magnetic Shopping List. My personal favourite is the Weekly Family Diary, without which I'd be a total mess. Hit the store when you can – it's well worth a visit – but in the meantime, you can buy products online and have them delivered.

#### Stuck on You

[www.stuckonyou.biz](http://www.stuckonyou.biz)

Parents know only too well that kids own a lot of stuff. Kids also lose a lot of stuff. That's taxing financially, but also time consuming thanks to the fact that, generally, lost items must be replaced – often with great urgency. Skip that step by plastering name tags on absolutely everything they own. Choose cute designer versions at this easy-to-navigate site.

#### Healthy Kids

[www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au](http://www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au)

If your family is hungry yet you have no idea what to feed them, take a quick look at this handy website. It's packed with nutrition tips and information, but more importantly, it contains healthy recipes aplenty. Better still, the majority require very few ingredients, take little time to prep and taste great.