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Contact me for all of your Auto
Accident and Personal Injury needs!

Planting Produce as a Family

As spring arrives, families are itching to spend some time together in the sun.

One great way to take advantage of the warmer weather (and a way that will reap rewards all year long) is to plant a family garden.

No matter where you live, there are ways to get your children excited about gardening. If you don't have much space in your yard for gardening, consider planting in containers. Assign each child a container, and they'll have their own plot of dirt for raising a few crops. After assigning pots, the next step is to select the foods and flowers your child will grow. Choose plants that flourish quickly, like carrots, and others that grow to large sizes, like sunflowers.

As the crops come in, you'll be shocked by how excited your kids are to eat what they've personally grown. Engaging in the process of planting and growing food makes children more eager to consume it. When your family has harvested a large bounty, host a family dinner featuring ingredients grown by everyone, celebrating each family member's hard work and diligence. These meals can be a meaningful family bonding experience and a means of discover new foods that everyone enjoys.

In addition to eating new and delicious food, your family will begin to eat more fruits and vegetables which are packed with countless nutritional benefits. According to Harvard's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, "A diet rich in vegetables and fruits can lower blood pressure, reduce the risk of heart disease and stroke, prevent certain types of cancer, lower the risk of eye and digestive problems, and have a positive effect upon blood sugar." I think we can all agree that we want this better health for our families.

By getting your family excited about gardening this spring, you will not only find meaningful ways to spend time in the sun with your children, but you'll find ways to encourage healthy eating habits that will stick with your children throughout their lives.



HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?



Texting and Driving? Might as Well Be Drunk!

Did you know that driving while distracted by your phone is just as bad as driving drunk?

I'm not making that up — researchers at the University of Utah found that "the impairments associated with using a cellphone while driving can be as profound as those associated with driving while drunk." I assume no one reading this would get behind the wheel after drinking, however, many of us reach for our phones while driving and don't think about the potential consequences. If you've ever been involved in a serious accident in the past, you know firsthand just how awful those consequences can be.

Laws regarding texting while driving vary from place to place. As with most other areas of law, the different jurisdictions within the D.C. Metropolitan area have different laws regarding phone use while driving. This month, I've compiled a brief summary of the laws of D.C., Maryland, and Virginia regarding texting and driving. Let's take a quick look.

Maryland

In Maryland, first-time offenders of texting behind the wheel may be fined \$70— even if the car is stopped. Maryland is a hands-free phone state, as such you could be fined \$83 for holding your phone while talking. You should keep in mind that it's also illegal to obstruct your ears while driving in Maryland, meaning that headsets are not allowed when you're in the car, even if they're hands-free. All fines increase after your first offense and can result in points being placed on your license. Maryland also has "Jesse's Law," which says that if texting while

driving causes death or serious bodily injury, you could be fined up to \$5,000, could spend three years in jail, and could lose 12 points on your license.

District of Columbia

D.C. also bans texting or phone use that isn't hands-free. Like Maryland, this applies even when the car is stopped at a red light. The *potential* fines for infractions of these hands-free laws in D.C. are steep — \$100 for the first texting offense, \$150 for the second, and \$200 for the third. Three offenses in an 18-month period could result in an automatic license suspension for 30 to 90 days.

Virginia

Unfortunately, Virginia is a little more lenient on distracted driving. While texting is still illegal, handheld phone use is not — meaning you'll see plenty of people with their hands to their ears on the roads, despite the dangers associated with that behavior. Fines for texting while driving are higher than anywhere else in the area — \$125 for the first offense and \$250 for the second — but the penalties are undercut by the fact that drivers can lie about texting and say they were using their phone for a legal purpose, like dialing a phone number or using a maps app.

Given the previously noted fines I strongly encourage all of you to get in the habit of leaving your phone in your pocket or purse while you drive. If the fines aren't a deterrent, then ask yourself "Would I drink and drive? If not, then why am I texting and driving?"

Wishing you a safe March,

- Melina Pérez Halpern

WHY YOU SHOULDN'T WALK IT OFF

What Parents NEED to Know About Concussions and Teen Sports

Spring is here again, and for millions of middle and high school students across the country, the nicer weather means it's time for spring sports! However, while sports are a fun experience for growth and personal development, they are also the main cause of concussions in teenagers.

Concussions are traumatic brain injuries, and the Brain Trauma Foundation estimates 3.8 million athletes suffer from a concussion every year. Contrary to popular thought, it's not just football players getting hit in the head. Safe Kids Worldwide studied emergency room data for kids aged 6-19 participating in over 14 sports, including basketball, football, cheerleading, and soccer. They found that 12 percent of all emergency room visits involved a concussion.

A concussion can negatively impact a teenager's ability to focus, alter their personality, and, if left untreated, lead

to long-term brain damage. If your teen athlete is hit in the head while on the field or court, it's never safe to assume they can just walk it off. As the parent of a teen athlete one should look for the various symptoms of a concussion, including but not limited to:

- Glassy eyes
- Disorientation
- Headaches
- Slurred speech
- Clumsiness
- Vomiting
- One pupil becoming larger than the other
- Loss of appetite
- Changes in mood or behavior

If you suspect your child may be suffering from a concussion, get them to the emergency room right away — even if that requires taking them out of the

game. This can be a hard call to make, but a parent's job is to make sure their child is safe. The sooner a concussion is diagnosed and treated, the better your child's chances are of making a full recovery.



INSEPARABLE

THE STORY OF TWO DOGS, TWO SOUL MATES



When animal shelter authorities found Isaac, a blind husky, meandering through the streets of Fontana, California, they immediately noticed something curious. It wasn't that the pup was

blind. It was that he had a faithful companion — Isabella, a Chihuahua-terrier mix. She was serving as Isaac's guide dog, or rather, his unofficial Seeing Eye dog.

How the two met and how they developed their unique and remarkable relationship is a complete mystery. That being said, one thing was clear: These two could never be separated - they were soul mates. When they walked together, Isabella always took the lead. Whenever Isaac fell behind, Isabella would patiently wait for her companion to catch up. If Isaac couldn't find his way, Isabella would go to Isaac and let him know he was not alone.

Not long after Isaac and Isabella were found, they were brought to a local shelter. Unfortunately, due to overcrowding and extremely limited resources, the two pups were scheduled to be euthanized. Knowing that Isabella and Isaac only had days to live,

the shelter put the story of the dynamic doggy duo on their Facebook page to attempt to find them a placement.

The shelter hoped a caring family would see their Facebook post before time ran out. Despite their hopes, no one with the right home conditions came forward. The shelter was unsure what to do until someone from the STAND Foundation reached out. The STAND Foundation is a nonprofit dedicated to animal rescue, and they were more than willing to provide a temporary home to the pair.

With Isaac and Isabella in the care of the STAND Foundation, the organization put their resources to work to find the pups a new owner. Eventually, a new home was found for the duo, and the two best friends went on to live a life full of love and continued companionship in their new home.

DO YOU REALLY NEED THAT?

Save Money by Minimizing on Your Next Move

How many times have you moved to a new house or apartment? It varies by person, but the U.S. Census Bureau estimates that you'll probably move 11-12 times in your lifetime. For those who have to move often, such as military families or traveling salesmen, decluttering and packing is an art. But even for them, it can be a daunting task.

Here's another figure for you: According to the American Moving and Storage Association, the average cost of moving for one person is \$1,170. That's in-state — move across state lines and you'll likely spend around \$5,500. Relocation is a pricey venture - but why? The high price tag for moving is likely because of all your stuff. But it's possible you don't need to bring as many things with you when you move as you think.

If you're moving into an unfurnished place, you're certainly entitled to the necessities. There should be somewhere to eat, something to sleep on, something to cook with, and somewhere to store food. But it's likely your moving truck is packed with boxes of things you never use or things you could live without.

Next time you move, try either packing everything two weeks early, or putting everything in storage in advance of your move. You might have to make a quick run to the store or open a box for an emergency item, like nail clippers



or shaving cream; however, by the end of the week you'll realize there are things you thought you needed but don't actually miss. It could be something small, like refrigerator magnets or two of your three spatulas. But it could be that clunky juicer you got for Christmas, a box of old books, or that heavy vanity you've lugged around for years.

Studies have shown that as you learn to live with less, you will spend less. Generally, to stay at your current level of happiness, you only need objects that will help you maintain your present lifestyle — not objects buried in a box somewhere for "just in case."

Moving is stressful, but if you look at it as an opportunity to minimize, your wallet will thank you — and whoever is responsible for loading the moving truck will thank you too.

PICADILLO



Ingredients

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 medium onion
- 1 tablespoon garlic
- 1 envelope sazón (without coriander)
- ¼ teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- ½ small can of tomato sauce
- ¼ cup cooking wine
- 12 olives
- 1 teaspoon capers
- Small box of raisins

Directions

1. Brown the ground beef using a little bit of olive oil. Drain the fat.
2. Caramelize the diced onion and garlic.
3. Mix the caramelized onion, garlic, and beef in the skillet over medium heat.
4. Add all the rest of the ingredients except for the olives, capers, and raisins. Let cook for about 5 minutes.
5. Add olives, capers, and raisins and let cook for another 5-10 minutes on low. Be careful not to let it dry out too much.

PUZZLE YOUR BRAIN

BREAK CORNER

Sudoku Rules:

- Use numbers 1-9 only.
- The full grid is 9x9 cells.
- The full grid is broken into 9 regions, 3x3 cells each.
- Each region can contain only one of each number 1-9.
- Each cell can contain only one number.
- Each row and column should contain only one of each number, 1-9.

7	3			5				
	4			6				
		1		9		5		
	5			1		9	2	
				4	7	5		8
3				7	2			
6	9					2		
				6	3	4		

