



## Ear Infections May Lead to **WEIGHT GAIN**

It sounds crazy, and even a bit cruel, that those ear infections that made you miserable as a kid may have returned to haunt you in the form of fast-food cravings and persistent belly fat. But new research shows that people who suffered moderate to severe middle ear infections when they were young were 62 percent more likely to be obese at the time of the study. Researchers believe the taste-bud damage caused by frequent ear infections leads to a strong preference for sugary and fatty foods later in life—which, in turn, leads to weight gain. Previous studies have made the same connection between childhood tonsillectomies and obesity. —NS



### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Studies show that men who engage in more housework report more frequent sex. (Of course they do!)

Source: Textbook of Men's Mental Health (American Psychiatric Publishing, 2007)

## No Child Left Bananas

Just like adults, children can feel completely out of control when they get stressed. Teaching them, by example, to stay present, quiet their minds, and check in with their gut feelings will help them learn to contain their emotions safely so temper tantrums don't become their default mode of expression. With all the stimulation that bombards children, the new three Rs—rest, relaxation, and reflection—may prove to be as important as reading, writing, and 'rithmetic.

In response to the traumatic events of September 11, Linda Lantieri, author of *Building Emotional Intelligence* (Sounds True, 2008), developed a curriculum to help strengthen children's ability to cope with stress. The following exercises can be taught to children 5 and older.

### **CREATE A PEACE CORNER.**

Organize a special area where she can go to be quiet. You can include a photo of her favorite place, elements from nature, calming pictures, chimes, and quiet instrumental music.

### **MAKE ROOM FOR SILENCE.**

While silence and kids may be a contradiction in terms, you can still try to include silent breaks in your daily routine. For example, if you always listen to the radio or music when you drive, make it a family practice to have a few minutes of silence at the beginning and end of the car ride, and ask children to notice what they see, hear, and feel during that time.

### **HONOR NATURE.**

Being in nature almost automatically connects us to a sense of something larger than ourselves and lets us disengage from day-to-day preoccupations. Not only can you provide opportunities for your child to be in nature, you can help her focus on fully engaging her senses. For example, pick a place outdoors, and then observe, together, how that spot changes through the seasons.

### **CHECK IN.**

Young children are quite adept at tuning in to their bodies' signals, but as they get older, cultural conditioning often diminishes this innate ability. Help your child recognize the signs of stress—jumpiness, fast breathing, tight feelings in the chest, tense muscles, and upset stomach—as a first step in teaching him how to release it. —ELIZABETH MARGLIN

