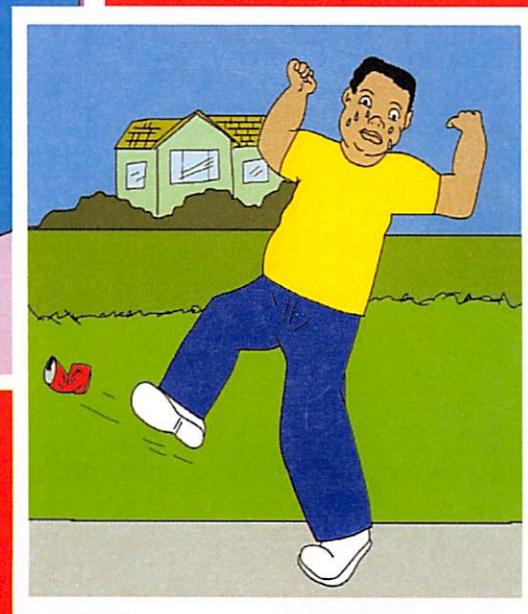
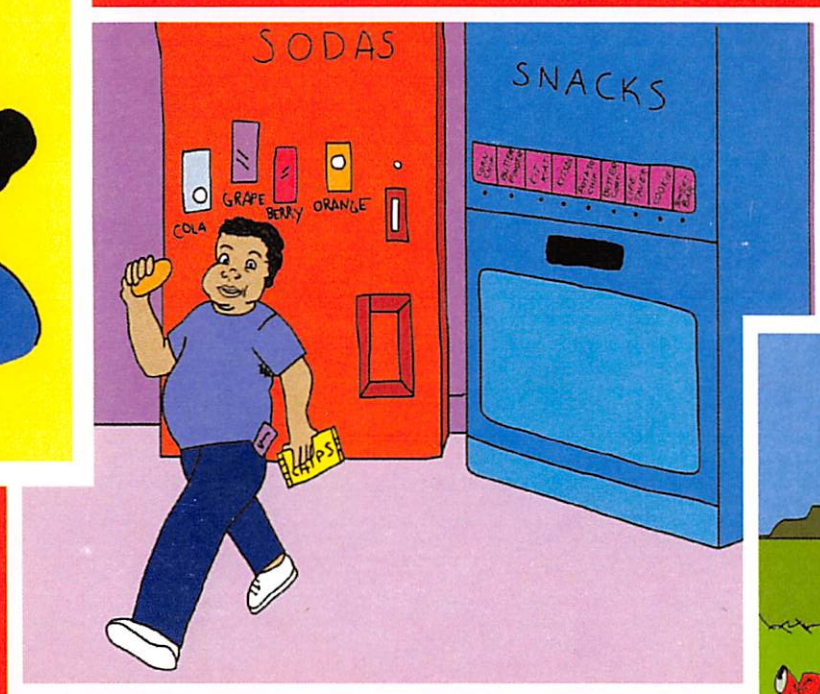


MOM, DAD, I DON'T WANT TO BE SICK!

By Lillian Caesar-Sutherland



FOREWORD by
Vice-Admiral Richard Carmona, M.D., M.P.H., F.A.C.S.
Surgeon General, United States Department of Health and Human Services



You are your child's most important teacher. Reading "Mom, Dad, I Don't Want to be Sick!" together can be an entertaining and educational way to teach your child to make healthy choices.

It may surprise you to learn that obesity-related illness is the *fastest-growing* killer of Americans. More than 400,000 people will die this year alone from heart disease, diabetes, and other illnesses related to overweight and obesity. The problem starts in childhood, and today one in seven children is already overweight or obese. And three in four overweight adolescents will become obese adults.

In America, we want the best for our kids. We want them to have the best there is – the best opportunities, the best education, the best health, the greatest happiness.

We want them to be better off than we are. But because of the increasing rates of obesity, unhealthy eating habits, and physical inactivity, our children may be the *first* generation of Americans to be less healthy and have a shorter life expectancy than their parents.

There is still time to reverse this trend, and make the future brighter and healthier. It starts with you.

The health habits you teach your children will last for a lifetime. So teach them to eat the right foods in the right amounts, and to participate in physical activities they enjoy every day. Better yet, eat right and exercise *with* them. "Mom, Dad, I Don't Want to be Sick!" can help you begin a discussion with your children that will lead to better health for the whole family.

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By Lillian Caesar-Sutherland

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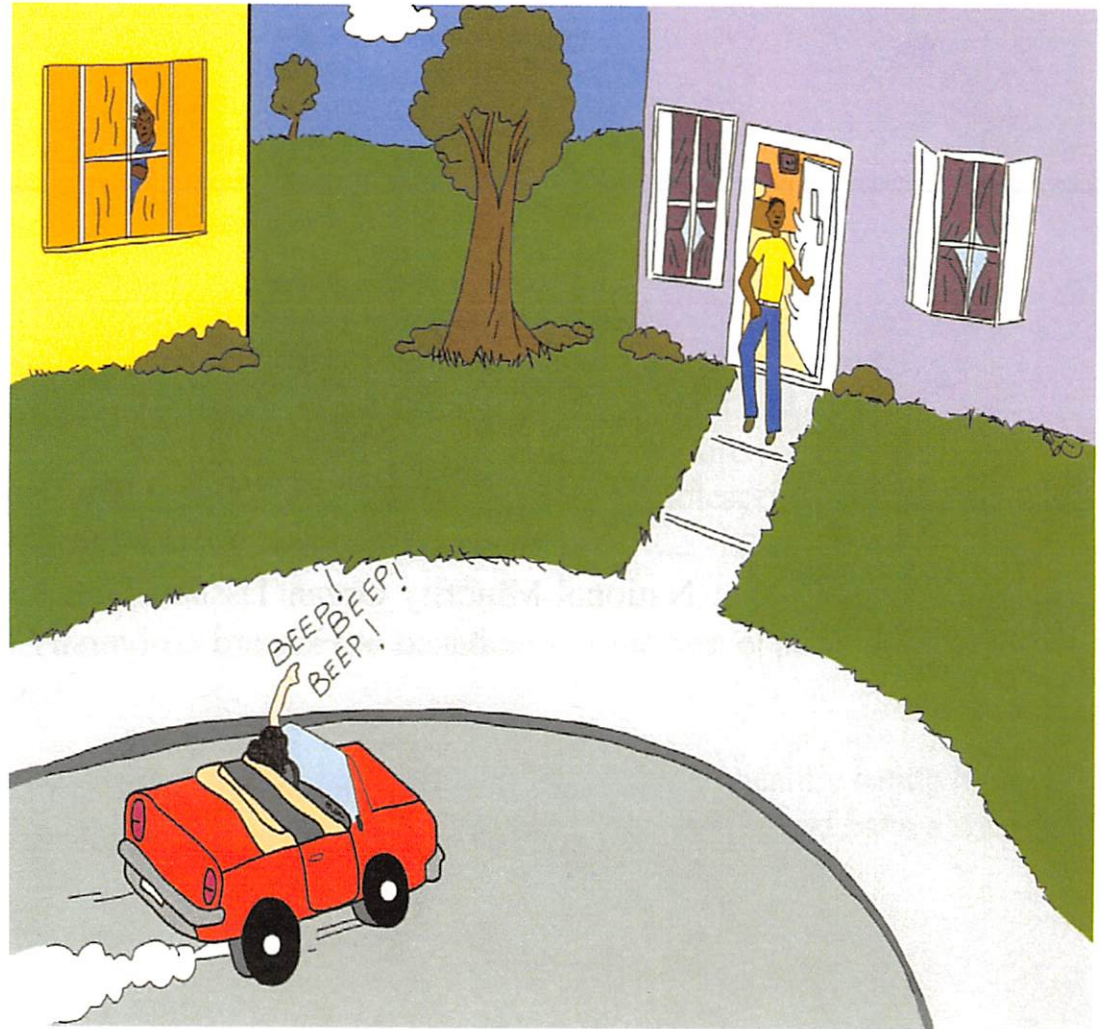
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MOM, DAD, I DON'T WANT TO BE SICK!

The neighbors could hear Mrs. Clark's car horn blasting as she dashed up the driveway. Mr. Clark dropped his newspaper and rushed to the door.

"Bert, we're having a baby! We're having a baby!" Mrs. Clark was screaming at the top of her voice. For ten years she and her husband hoped this would happen and now their dream was about to come true.

Mrs. Clark did exactly as her doctor said. She used Canola oil to cut down on saturated fats. She ate her vegetables and fruits; she drank her milk and lots of water and took her vitamins every day.



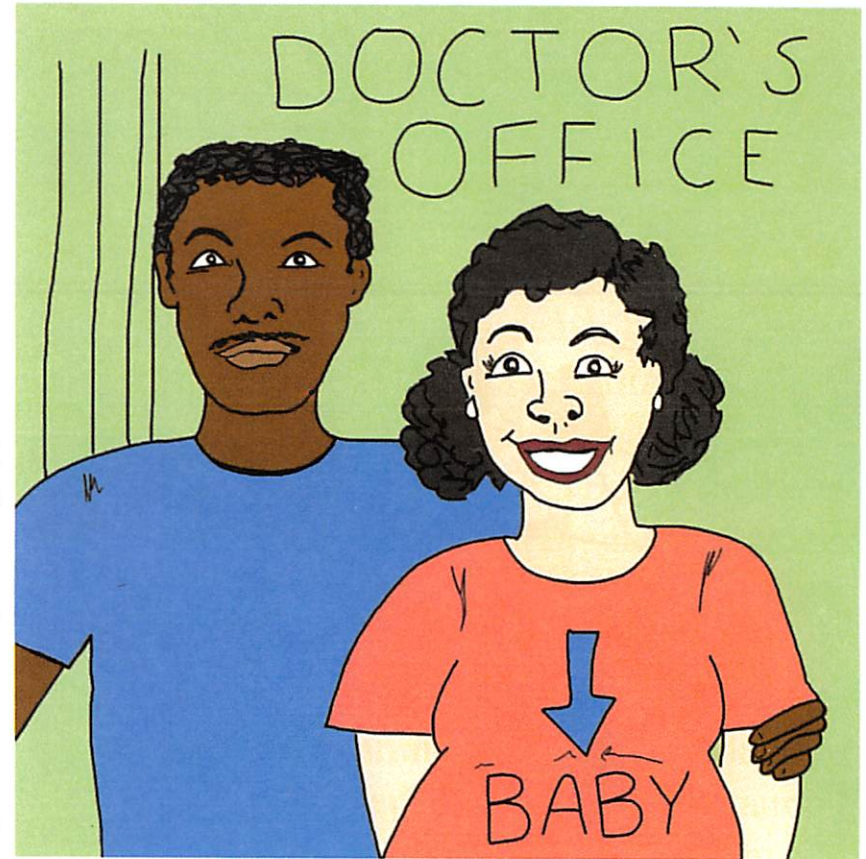
Hoping to get a smart baby, Mrs. Clark read even more than she did before she became pregnant. To get her exercise, she walked and swam. To get her rest, she slept.

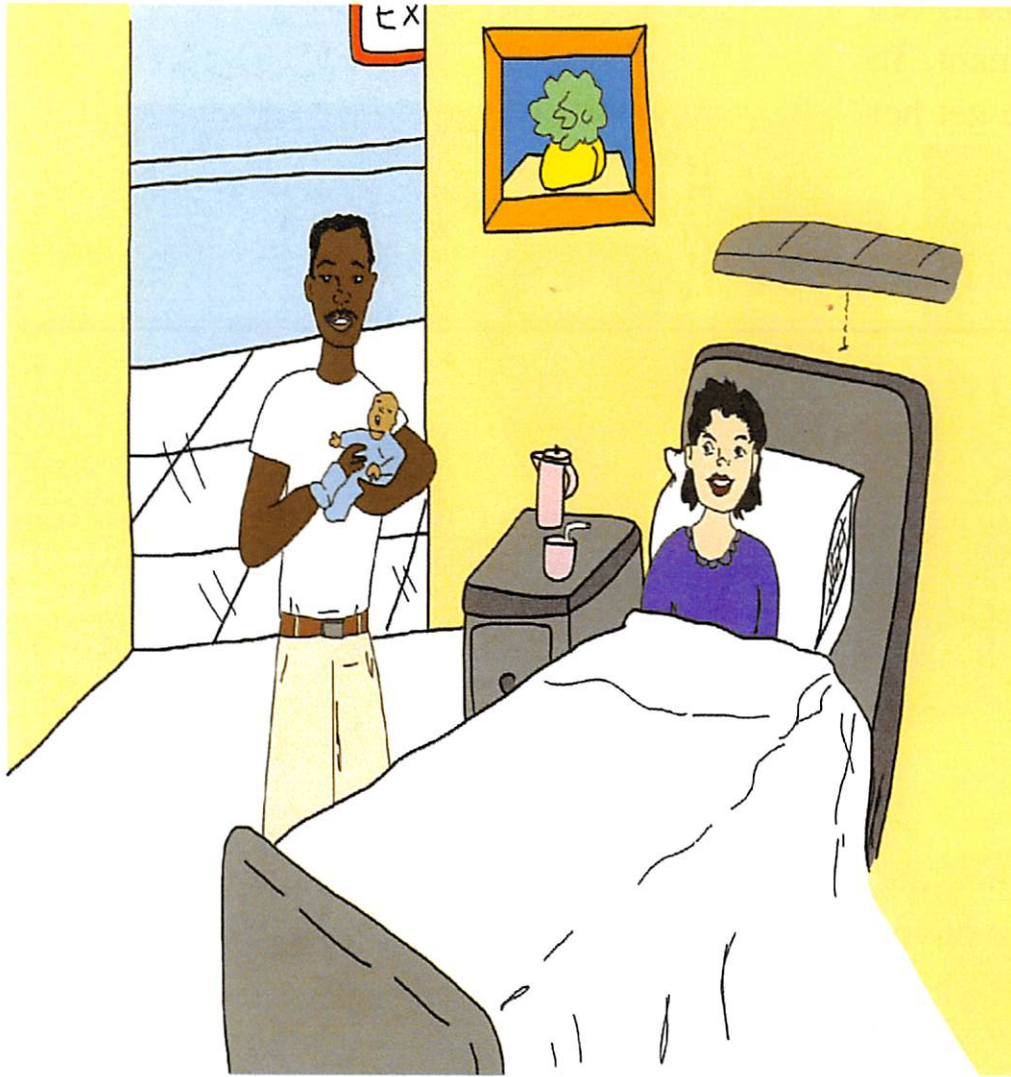
Every time the Clarks were asked whether they wanted a girl or a boy, they responded, “All we want is a healthy baby.” When their son was born, it was the happiest day of their lives.

“His name is Darrell. Master Darrell Yohance Clark and he is the loveliest baby that this world has ever seen,” said Mr. Clark, puffing up his chest. “Darrell, means *Beloved*, and Yohance, *Gift of God*. Aren’t those the two nicest names?”

Mr. Clark was surprised that Darrell weighed only seven pounds and two ounces. “From the size of your tummy, Honey, I thought he would weigh ten pounds!”

“His weight is just right,” said the doctor. “Don’t you know that new born babies who weigh nine pounds or more, are considered high risk babies? Lots of times they weigh that much because their mothers have diabetes. When that happens we often keep the newborns for a while to make sure that they are okay.”



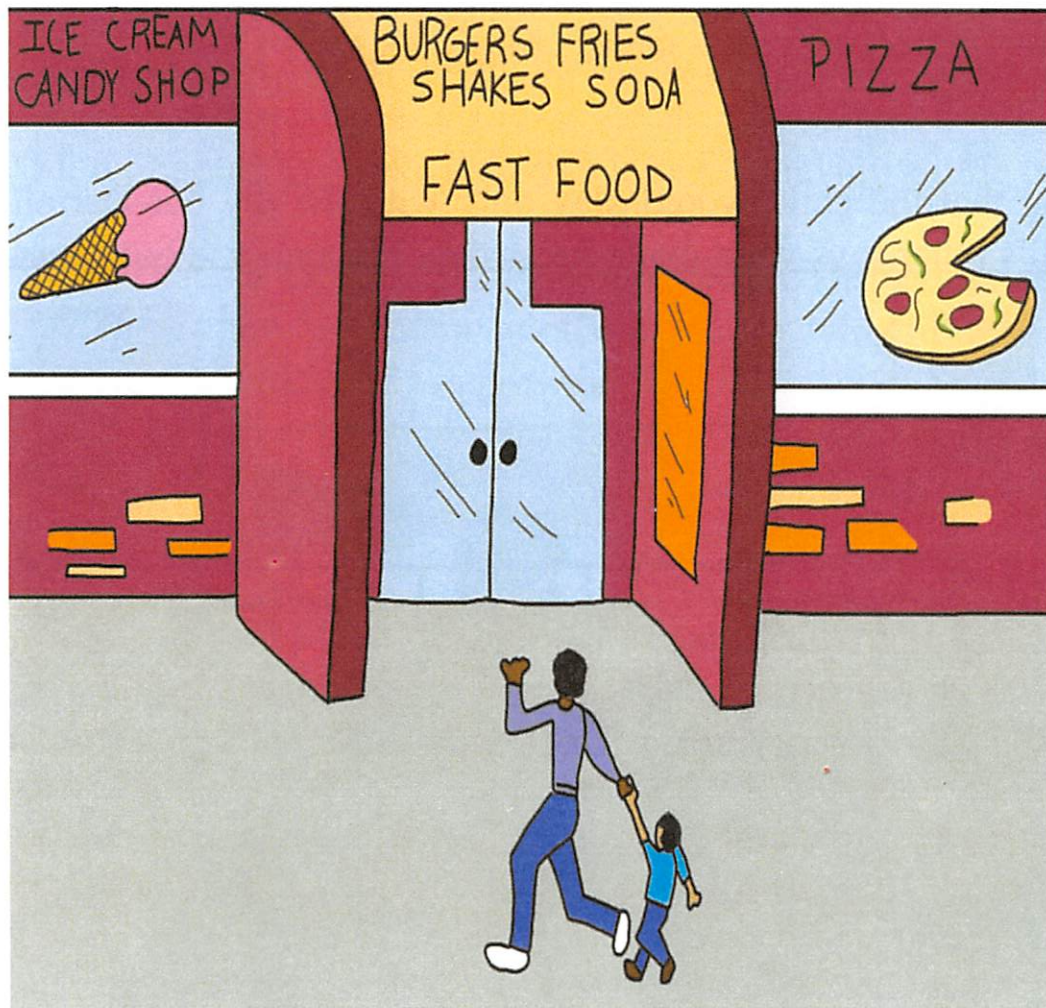


Mrs. Clark's most precious time with her son was feeding time. Darrell's parents decided early that he was going to be a breast-fed baby. "After all, the only reason breast milk is made is to feed babies," Mr. Clark liked to say, adding, "For Master Darrell Yohance Clark, only the best is good enough."

As Darrell grew, he went from his mom's milk only, to crushed fruits and vegetables. More than anything else, he liked the food off his mom's and dad's plates.

Darrell was progressing very nicely and when he was three years old and in day-care, his father went back to work. Mr. Clark had taken care of Darrell while Mrs. Clark returned to work after two months.

Now that the Clarks had a young child to take care of, they were finding it difficult to manage their house work. One Thursday afternoon, Mr. Clark did not realize how hungry he was until he saw a fast food restaurant's huge billboard with big, crispy, golden-brown, piping hot, juicy fries.



At first, the sign made his mouth water and as he drew closer, the smell of the food began to make his nose tingle. He knew that he would have to cook when he got home, unless . . . suddenly, cooking did not seem like such a good idea.

Mr. Clark could not leave Darrell alone in the car so he took him into the restaurant. Inside, there was a number of other signs such as, “Buy a big meal and get a free bag of Biggie fries and a large soda.” That’s what Mr. Clark, like so many others, did.

In the meantime, Darrell was taken-up with the different toys that the restaurant had on display and he wanted them all.

Although the toys are advertised in groups, only one toy is given with each meal. The fast food people know that the kids will want one of each toy and will ask the parents to go back to the restaurant for others.

Darrell was a good little boy and his father thought it would be nice to get him a toy, so Master Darrell Yohance Clark got his first little bag of junk food!

“Honey, we’re home! Come see our big son with his own kid’s meal,” Mr. Clark said to his wife, with pride.

They sat him down on the floor thinking that the child would play only with the toy but Darrell wanted both the toy and the food. Darrell’s other toys were much nicer than his new one but every child loves a new toy.

He was enjoying his fries so much that when Mr. Clark tried taking the food away from him, Darrell threw such a tantrum that he got ketchup smeared all over himself and his dad.

Mrs. Clark took pictures of the whole thing. She and her husband thought the photos were so cute, they sent copies to Mrs. Clark’s mother; they even printed a huge one to put on their wall at home for all their visitors to see.



The telephone rang. It was Darrell's Grandma, and she was not laughing.

"Sharon," she said sternly to Mrs. Clark, "Don't you know that fries are full of grease, salt and starch? One large bag of fries has 2100 calories, Sharon; that is more than an adult should be allowed in an entire day. Did I raise you on fries? Huh, Sharon?"

"Mom, lighten up! Take it easy! We're just having a little harmless fun with our child."

"Fun? That's what you call it? Sharon, you are Hispanic American; Darrell's father is African American. Don't you know how many of our people are dying from all kinds of illnesses brought on by bad eating habits? My grandchild is a growing boy. He needs calcium to build strong bones; he needs his fiber and iron to keep him healthy . . . not somebody's old grease to clog up his little arteries!" Her mom was shouting so loudly that Mrs. Clark put the telephone receiver on her bed and still she could hear what her mother was saying.

"Good parenting is not only about dressing him up to take pictures. It is about making the sacrifice to give him the right foods and not letting him develop a taste for junk food. Good parenting is about showing him the right thing to do!" said Darrell's Grandma.

Mrs. Clark had not heard her mother speak that harshly to her since she tried to drop out of college. The Clarks knew that Grandma was right and promised to do better.

Darrell had a good memory and whenever he passed a fast food restaurant he cried for a meal and a new toy. The more he got, the more he wanted and the restaurant always found a way to get the Clarks to return. Sometimes, Mr. Clark got a card offering him a discount on the next visit; the restaurant even offered a chance to win a free cruise! Now who could say, "No" to that? Only thing was, one had to buy to win.



Time seemed to fly by! Darrell was four years old and would soon be leaving day care. His parents could not believe all the bad habits he had picked up at so young an age. He did not want to eat breakfast. Many days he left his milk, muffin, or naturally sweetened cereal and fruit, on the table. Often Darrell's little lunch kit came back almost as full as when his mom and dad packed it.

Darrell's eating habits were really worrying his parents. When they spoke to his teacher, she said that Darrell was asking other kids for their cup-cakes, chips, candy bars, and foods with so much sugar they made him act a little hyper, sometimes.

His parents began to do all kinds of fancy things with his food. Darrell still had healthy foods like lean chicken, tuna fish, egg salad and celery sticks with peanut butter, but Mr. and Mrs. Clark made them really pretty.

They cut their son's food and fruits into animal shapes, hearts, and letters of the alphabet and soon Darrell's food was becoming a big hit. All the children wanted some. The problem was that when the children took some of Darrell's food, he took some of theirs and most times, they had junk for food. Often, Darrell left the 100% juice or milk that his parents packed and shared some of the sugar-packed drinks the other children had. When Darrell ate or drank, he ate and drank the wrong things.

Darrell never missed a trip to the store. He always wanted soda pop and candy bars, and he just had to have Cheetos and Chips . . . lots of Cheetos and Chips and popcorn with extra butter. He hated air-popped popcorn which was much better for him! Once, Darrell even tossed yogurt, soy milk, tofu, greens, carrots and other healthy foods he did not like, from his parents' shopping cart. That made all the other shoppers stop and stare.

"Okay young man," said Mr. Clark sheepishly, "You have crossed the line. When we go home, you are really going to get it!"

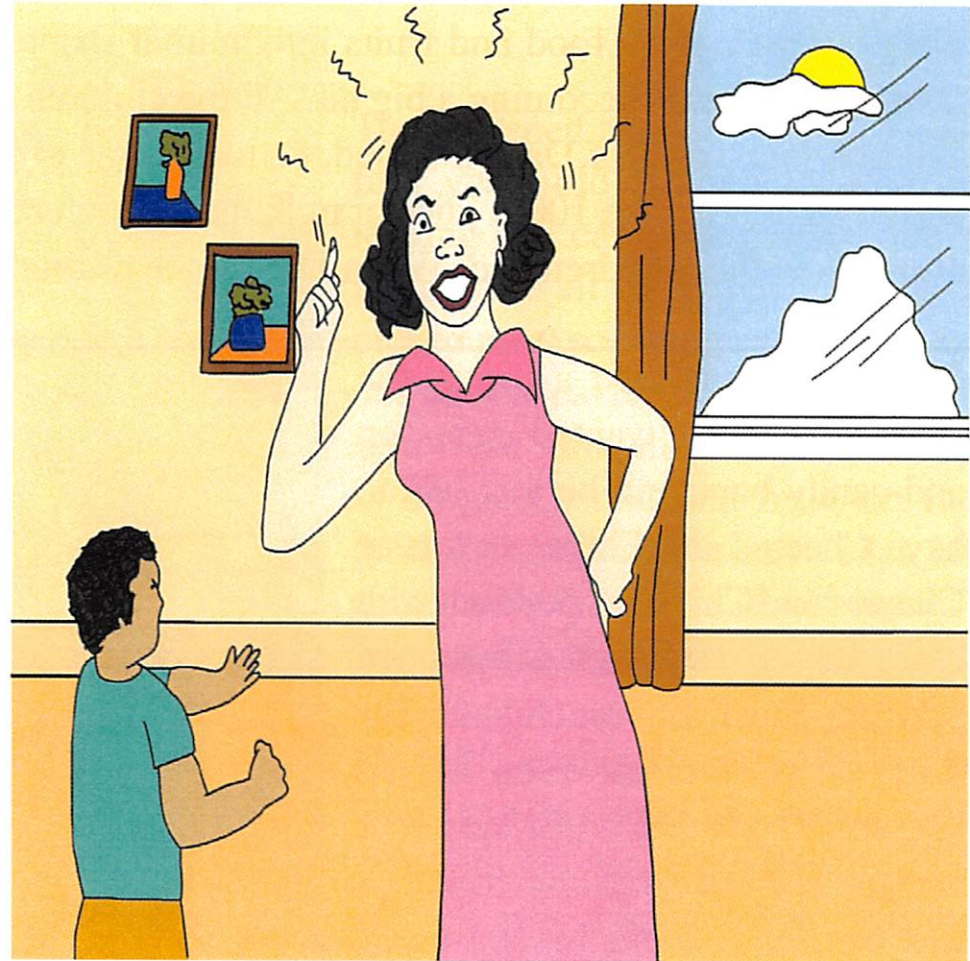


“Oh Dad, you know you are not going to do anything. You’re just showing off!” protested Darrell. His parents were often so embarrassed that they were willing to do anything to get him to behave.

Being a good parent was more trying than the Clarks had imagined. When they finally got home, tired after a hard day’s work, the last thing they wanted to do was deal with one of Darrell’s tantrums.

When Darrell’s behavior was good, they often gave him cake and ice cream, or cookies and ice cream, to encourage him. Instead of saying, “For Master Darrell Yohance Clark only the best will do,” like they used to, they would say, “Anything to keep him quiet!” Darrell loved the sound of that.

When Darrell’s behavior was bad, his mom would bend over, put one hand on her hip, shake the forefinger of the other hand in his face and say, “Until you learn to behave young man, you will sit there and eat all your vegetables. Be sure to eat your salad and drink your water. No soda for you! No cake, no cookies, no ice cream for you, until you learn to behave!” The more his mom used healthy foods as punishment, the more the boy hated them.



In their effort to keep him quiet, Darrell's parents allowed him to sit around for hours at a time, watching television or playing video games even when Darrell was sent to his room as punishment.

Before falling asleep, Darrell would stuff himself with food, and everyone knows that is not a wise thing to do. Darrell was most likely the laziest boy in the neighborhood and his body was beginning to show it.

It was time for another visit to his pediatrician, Dr. Stevens. A pediatrician is a doctor who takes care of children. For some time she had been warning the Clarks about their son's weight. This time she was truly upset. "I am really concerned about Darrell's body fat. The child is obese."

"Obese? Oh come on!" said Darrell's dad. "He is just a child. Surely he will burn off the baby fat. Frankly," he said smiling, "when I was growing up, some nights there just was not enough food to go around. At least he looks well fed," Mr. Clark joked.

"Mr. Clark, being fat does not mean that one is well fed. When one eats the correct kinds of foods in the right amounts, then and only then, is one well-fed. Now that we know better, we have to do better.



Often, fat children grow into fat adolescents, and fat adolescents grow into fat adults with all kinds of health problems,” said Darrell’s pediatrician. “You do not even sound like the same parents who used to bring that healthy baby to me just a few short years ago.”

“Doctor, you know that kids today have their own way. They are not like us in our day,” protested Mrs. Clark.

“Hold it right there! A survey has shown that nearly fifty percent of African American children are now overweight and that almost forty percent of Hispanic children are, too. We cannot blame our children for that. We have to blame ourselves; we are the adults!” Dr. Stevens snapped back.

The boy’s parents could not help feeling a little guilty about what the doctor said and agreed to do better.

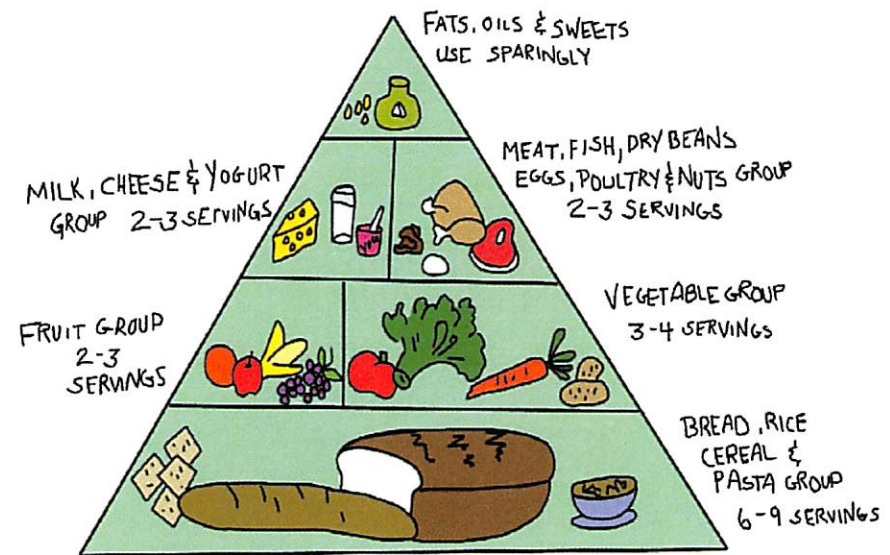
Dr. Stevens’ office was on the bottom floor of the hospital. When Mr. and Mrs. Clark noticed that Darrell had slipped out of the office they headed straight down the hall to the soda and snack machines. There he stood, trying to push more junk food into his already bulging pockets.

This was all very confusing! It seemed that wherever the Clarks went, they were surrounded by people who were saying one thing and allowing something else to happen. Why were all kinds of junk foods in hospitals, doctor’s offices and schools? The Clarks felt helpless.



Darrell was finding middle school very interesting. In the school's lunch room, he and his friends would watch, not only the food, but the girls as well although they were too shy to let the girls know.

Darrell loved hot dogs and hamburgers. Often, he rounded off his lunch with a 'haystack' which is a mountain of chips, smothered by tons of melted cheese and sour cream. He never had a salad, and chose pretzels or chips instead of nuts or seeds. Although he heard that nuts and seeds can help reduce the risk of heart disease, Darrell joked that nuts and seeds are foods for the birds.



There was a huge poster in the lunch room. It showed a big triangle, called a *Food Pyramid*. It showed certain foods and said how many times a day one should eat them to be healthy. Some doctors now say that the pyramid should be turned upside down. Darrell, found it very funny that even doctors cannot agree on what portions and what foods are best for us!

When the lunch room staff insisted that he take apples, oranges or other fruit, Darrell would pretend to shoot hoops, throwing the healthy food into the garbage. He never stopped to think of how many children in and around America would give anything for one good meal. He was not being smart.

The nutritionist continued to warn Darrell that the foods he was eating were bad for him.

“Darrell,” the nutritionist would tell him, “the foods you eat should be building blocks to help your body fight illnesses. Eat filling foods like beans, chickpeas and lentils; besides being yummy, they are low in calories and packed with fiber, protein and minerals.”

Seeing that Darrell still thought it funny, the nutritionist once said to him, “You are not too young to have high blood pressure, diabetes, a stroke or a heart attack; you won’t be laughing then!”

All the kids in class were becoming taller but Darrell seemed to be getting wider. His cheeks always looked like they were filled with water and he seemed to have two of everything; two hands, two feet, two chins, two bellies. Unlike some children who were born with health problems, Darrell was causing his.

The heavier he got, the lazier he became. The more lazy he became, the more time he spent on the sofa playing video games and eating. It seemed Darrell was in search of something that he was not finding; worst, his parents had simply given up.

Even in school, Darrell did not want to exercise. While the other kids were having fun playing basketball and volleyball, running, jumping rope, swimming and doing other fun stuff, Darrell made up excuses, saying that he was not feeling well.

He was not having fun and he was not fun to be around. He hated going to school. He seldom wanted to leave the house unless it was to rent a DVD or buy a new CD. Darrell's parents were so frustrated that sometimes they surprised themselves by calling him unkind names.

Darrell wobbled instead of walked and once when he had an itch that he could not reach and scratched himself against a door frame his father yelled, "You look like a pig rubbing against a tree trunk. Why can't you look and act like other kids?"



That really hurt Darrell. He felt the warm tears pouring down his face. Even before Mr. Clarke uttered the last word, he was sorry for what he had said but did not apologize. As usual, Darrell responded by stuffing himself with food until he became ill.

Something terrible began to happen. Darrell's parents started to blame each other for the way the boy looked and acted. Fussing only made matters worse. More than ever, the family members needed to come together to deal with the problem; instead, they grew further apart.

One night, Darrell's parents could hear him vomiting in his room. When they rushed to help, he was on the floor, wet with perspiration. Darrell looked a mess and they could see that this time he was not pretending.

He complained of feeling dizzy and weak and had such a bad headache, he begged to see a doctor. They rushed him to the Emergency Room.

The doctor checked Darrell's blood pressure hour after hour. He returned to talk to Darrell's parents. "I am sorry to tell you that this child's pressure is dangerously high. It should read 90 over 70, but instead, it is 130 over 100. What I am saying is that Darrell has high blood pressure!"

"High blood pressure?" questioned his dad. "The boy is only ten years old! You have got to be mistaken."

"Mr. Clark, don't you know that about 50 million Americans aged 6 and older have high blood pressure? Don't you know the seriousness of being overweight? There are now three times as many youngsters who are overweight as twenty years ago and this affects much more than their looks."

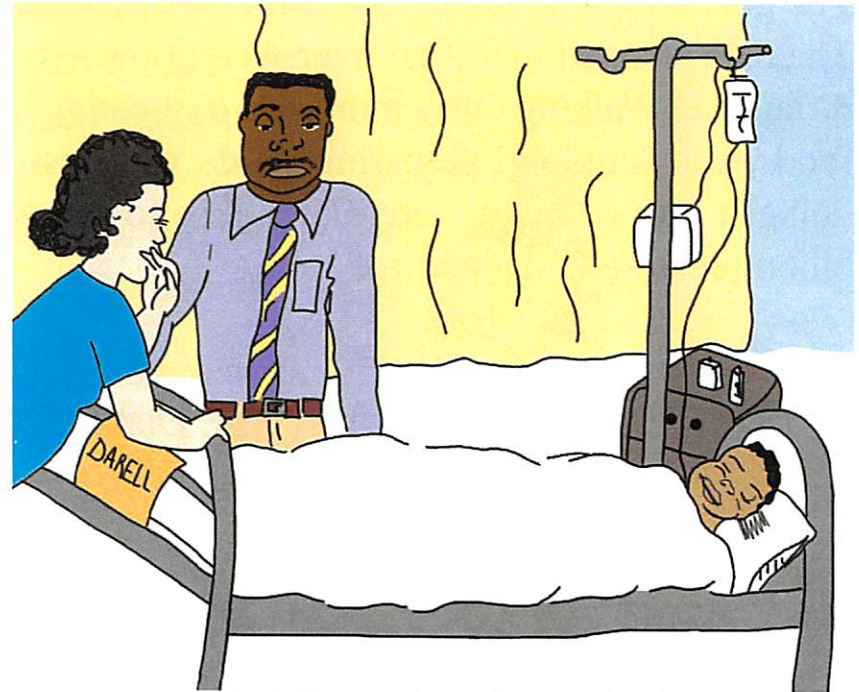
"I want a second opinion!" protested Mr. Clark.

"That is a great idea but didn't the child's pediatrician warn you that this could happen? Your son weighs close to two hundred pounds!"

"What can we do? What can we do? We will do anything. Just tell us," his parents pleaded.

“Well,” said the doctor, “at least you know that he has high blood pressure.” More than 3 out of 10 people who have high blood pressure do not even know that they have it, so they are not treated. Darrell is going to have to stay in the hospital for a while.”

Mr. Clark rushed to his computer and surfed the Internet for information on *childhood obesity*, *high blood pressure*, *heart disease* and other related illnesses. He wondered why he had not done it before.



There was so much information that nobody seems to talk about. It was too much to remember so Mr. Clark printed it, hoping to share it with others.

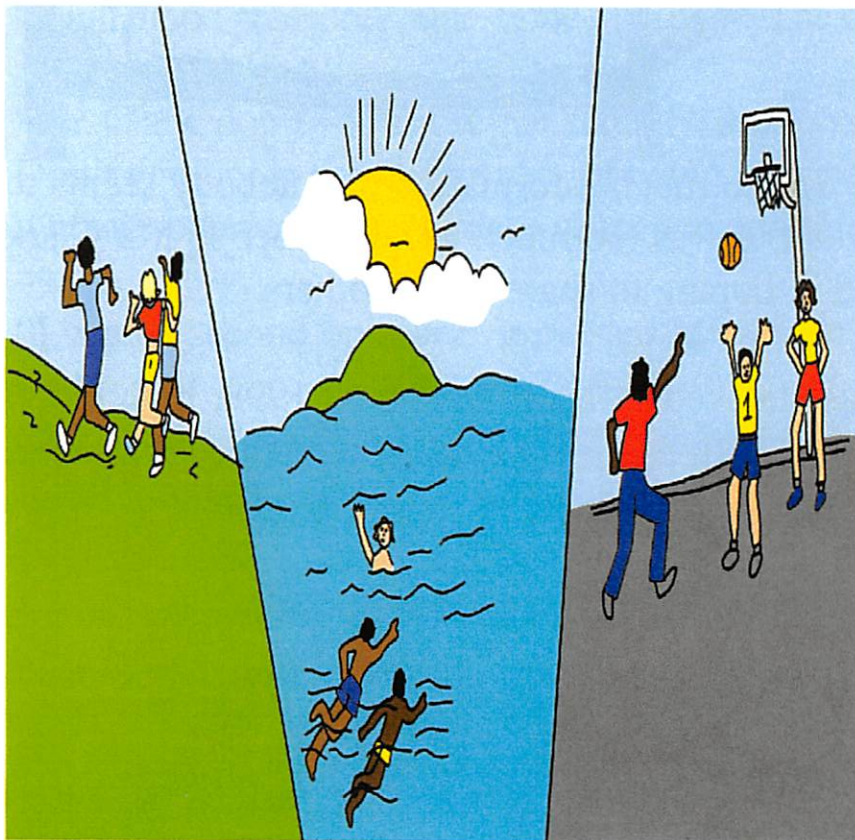
He was shocked to learn that since 1998, high blood pressure killed almost 44,500 Americans and contributed to the deaths of about 210,000.

He did not know that about 60% of all Americans age 60 and over suffer from high blood pressure and the number of blacks with the disease, is almost four times that of whites.



The good news, he learned, was that lifestyle changes and treatment can control high blood pressure. The data showed that if an over-weight person loses even ten pounds, those ten pounds can make a difference. Walking thirty minutes a day, eating healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy foods, choosing and preparing foods with less salt, and for those who drink alcoholic beverages, doing it in moderation, are good steps to follow. Still, some people need medication to keep their blood pressure under control.

As for diabetes, since 1999 there were nearly 11 million Americans diagnosed with the disease and close to 800,000 are added each year. Diabetes and high blood pressure are two of the big causes of kidney and heart failure. It seemed that one thing was simply leading to another. Very interesting!



Darrell hated being in the hospital. He would walk from room to room talking to other children about their illnesses. There were some really sick children there; some of the children were in need of lung, heart, liver or kidney transplants. It was horrible. Darrell could not help feeling responsible for making himself sick. If only he had been smarter and listened!

From his window, Darrell could see children running, jumping rope and doing fun things on the playground. Suddenly, he longed to swim or bike or play basketball. He longed to feel and smell the fresh air brush against his face. He could not wait to get outside again, but would he?

Darrell's parents stood hugging each other, staring down at him in his coffin and wondering why this was happening to them. Lots of children from his school were there and his parents hoped that some of them learned a lesson from Darrell and would do better. However, no matter how sorry everyone was, soon they would leave him all alone and go on with the rest of their lives. Soon, even his parents would leave him in the dark, cold ground and walk away.

As the preacher got ready to start the service and the undertaker began to close the lid of the casket, it became darker and darker and more and more scary, until, "Mom, Dad, Mom, Dad!" Darrell screamed. His parents jumped from their chairs and rushed to his hospital bed. The boy was shaking with fear and his eyes looked like they would pop at any minute.



"What is it, Son?" both parents asked.

"Mom, Dad, I don't want to be sick!" Darrell held on to both parents for the longest while, sobbing, although he was happy that it was only a nightmare.

On the day that Darrell left the hospital, he, his mom and dad attended a Parents/Teachers/Students Association (PTSA) meeting. They were going to stop accepting the way things were and make a change, instead of waiting for others to do it.

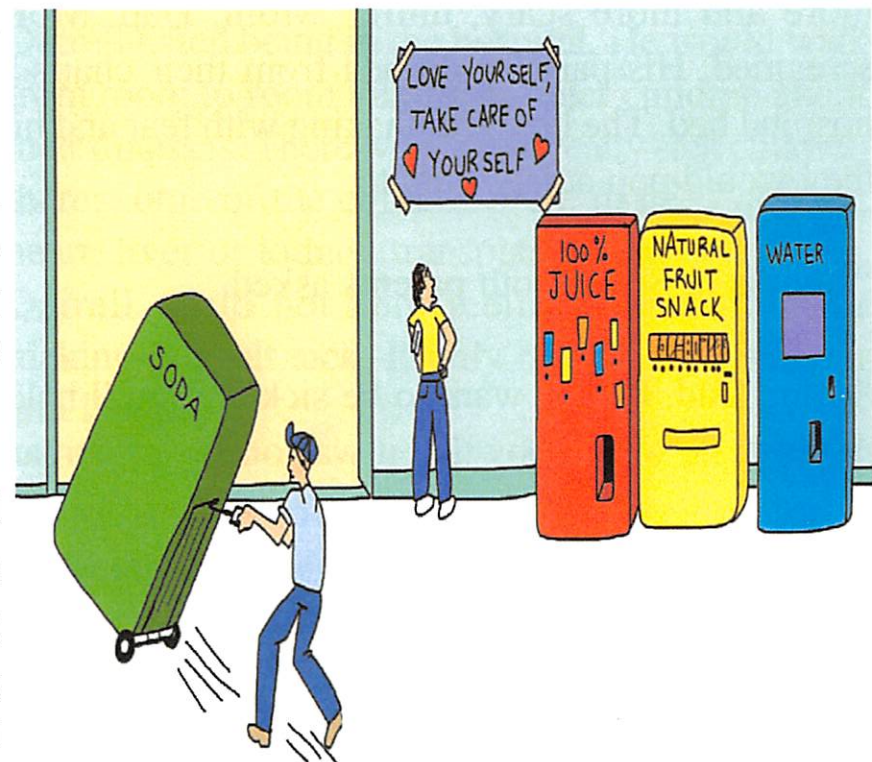
Darrell told the parents and teachers how difficult adults make it for children to do the right thing.

“You tell us that some foods are bad for us, but you surround us with those same foods. Look at the soda and candy machines in our schools . . . in our hospitals of all places. Why are you doing this to us? I dare any one to show me a milk machine in our schools! If I had a choice of only water, fruit juices, and milk, it would be easier for me to drink them. If you keep putting soda machines in schools, sodas are what children will drink. There are six soda machines at my school and as many candy machines. I realize that this is not about what is good for me; this is about money . . . making money. Is it really worth allowing companies to feed us this junk in exchange for a few computers or something? Which child does not like the taste of soda or candy? You are our parents, you have to help us.”

The adults sat quietly listening to every word because he was making sense. However, they knew that making this change was not going to be easy.

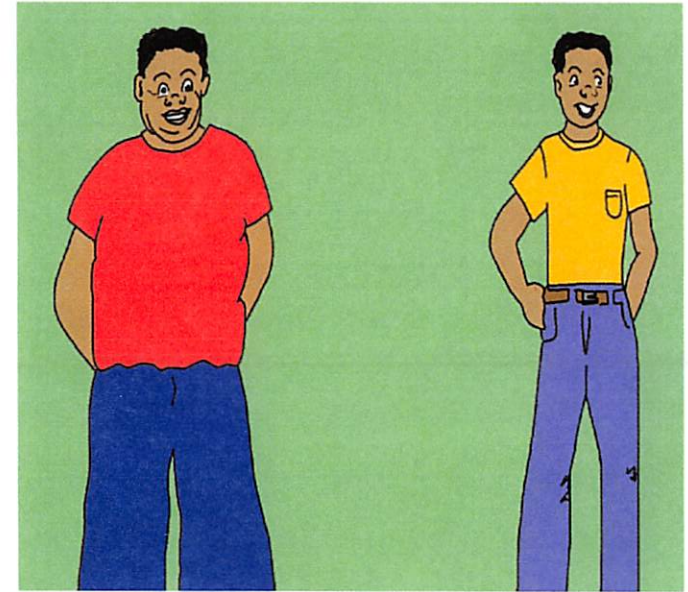
“I will be your poster child. I will hang before and after pictures of myself because I will lose this weight. I will go from school to school warning the kids that these machines are not here because their owners love us,” Darrell said.

“Instead of fighting now to lose weight, I should not have been allowed to put on all this weight in the first place. I want to be a healthy teenager doing fun things like I should be, instead of worrying about my high blood pressure and my heart, and things like that!”



Mrs. Richards, the President of the PTSA spoke softly, “You know, I have always heard it said that a little child shall lead them. I get so busy that, as much as I love my children, even I am guilty of taking the easy way out. I never thought of it as hurting them but, I must say that I am guilty. Making these changes will not be easy for either the children or for us.”

Principal Brown’s response was, “The children are smarter than we think. We cannot change the world overnight but it is time for us to begin trying to make a difference. All the money in the world is not as important as good health!”



To this, Mrs. Triss replied, “Surgeon General Richard Carmona is very concerned about the health of the nation. One good thing is that, with the eye of the public on them, some fast food restaurants are cutting out their super-sized meals. Obesity kills in so many ways!”

“I know that all too well,” said Mr. Harrison. “My boy was so overweight that the children teased him at school. I did not understand how badly it affected him,” he began to cry uncontrollably, “until he killed himself. Now it is too late for us. It will always be too late for us but his story can help to save others.”

Another sad parent said, “We have got to get it right from the beginning because on the other hand, there are so many children who want to look like models that they binge and purge. They eat the food and then *throw up*! And then there are the anorexic ones starving themselves to death because no matter how skinny they are, they think that they are fat. Lots of parents mistakenly think that eating disorders only affect white kids.” They couldn’t be more wrong!

The Principal paced back and forth. “We must not lose another kid. We must be helpful; we must be understanding; we must be patient; we must be steadfast. We must feed our children, not only healthy foods but healthy thoughts so they can grow into mentally and physically healthy adults. We protect the birds; the whales and all endangered species. It is time to protect the children ... our children!

It is taking a lot of work but Darrell’s parents are now giving him their full support. The entire family takes walks together, swims, plays ball and has found its way back to happy times. When one person cheats and eats the wrong foods, it means extra exercises for all. They work with meal plans they can stay on instead of making a series of harsh changes that they cannot live up to.

Believe it or not, other families are doing the same thing! One young man who is strong enough to stand up for what he believes in is helping to create a healthier nation through his ‘LOVE YOURSELF, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF’ campaign. Wouldn’t you like to become a part of it?

If your school does not have a ‘LOVE YOURSELF, TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF’ banner, share Darrell’s story with your teacher and class and ask for his or her help in putting up a banner in your school’s lunch room and other places.

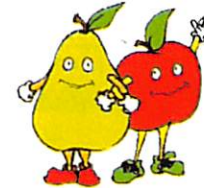
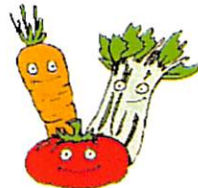
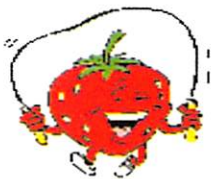
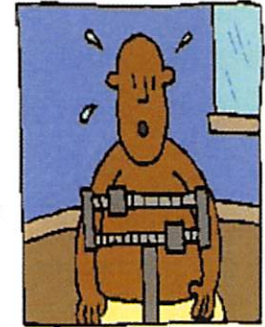
We all need to take care of ourselves; after all, there is only one of each of us in the whole world. That makes us all very, very special!

THE END!

Hope you have read the entire series. If you have not yet read the other books, they are, *The Children Who Wanted to Know*, *Jane’s Class Makes Big News* and *Yes, Together We Can*. Send me an email at sutherlandlillian@yahoo.com or call (340)692-1837 to tell me how you are helping to make a difference.

Did You Know That...

1. 50% of African American children and 40% of Hispanic children are overweight?
2. Regardless of race or ethnicity, boys aged 6 to 11 are more likely to be overweight than girls of the same age?
3. There are now three times as many youngsters overweight as twenty years ago?
4. 50 million Americans aged 6 years and older have high blood pressure?
5. More than 3 out of ten people with high blood pressure do not know that they have it and do not get treated?
6. 60% of all Americans over 60 years of age suffer from high blood pressure?
7. As early as 1999, there were nearly 11 million people diagnosed with diabetes?
8. Eating the proper amounts of the correct foods, drinking lots of water and exercising will do a lot of good for your health?



9. Losing even ten pounds can make a lot of difference in your health?
10. Diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity often lead to organ failure?

From the Author's Desk

Writing this four-book series of children's books is one of the most rewarding things I have done. The simplified information is proving to be very enlightening and reader-friendly to children and adults, near and far.

Book 1, *The Children Who Wanted to Know*, serves as an introduction to the subject of *organ failure*. Book 2, *Jane's Class Makes Big News*, goes a step further to deal with *organ donation and transplantation*. Book 3, *Yes, Together We Can*, delves even further into organ donation by moving beyond a deceased donor, (one who donates after death) and introducing the *living donor*. Book 4, *Mom, Dad, I Don't Want to be Sick*, the final in this series, addresses the issue of *disease prevention*.

According to the National Minority Organ/Tissue Transplant Education Program (MOTTEP), these books on transplantation are the first to be specifically written for *children of color*. The books have been endorsed by some of the leaders in the field of transplantation, and health in general.

My husband is one of the thousands of persons in need of transplantation and so my family knows first hand, the hurt that comes with organ failure. My family's hope is that, in some way, these books will lessen the pain.

Thank you for affording me this opportunity to share!



About the Illustrator

Abigail C. Harrigan was born on the island of St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. She comes from a family of artists and is now trying to help develop, in her children, a love for art.

Abigail, a stay-at-home Mom, feels that art is essential to life. She was overwhelmed by the opportunity to illustrate this book and says it has elevated her level of appreciation for her ability to reach others through her talent. Abigail says, "*Each of us has a gift. It is up to us, to use it!*"

SPECIAL HEALTH OBSERVANCES

January

Healthy Weight Week

February

American Heart Month
Wise Health Consumer Month

March

National Kidney Month
National Nutrition Month

April

Alcohol Awareness Month
National Donate Life Month

May

National High Blood Pressure Education Month
National Stroke Awareness Month

August 1

National Minority Donor Awareness Day

September

National Cholesterol Education Month
Family Health and Fitness Days USA

October

Family Health Month
Healthy Lung Month
National Liver Awareness Month

November

American Diabetes Month
National Marrow Awareness Month

December

National Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month



NOTE TO PARENTS



As a parent, you have the power to change the health of this country - starting with your child. Beyond supplying love, nurturing and safety, you are providing your child with a valuable education that will impact his or her entire life. In fact, what you do today will influence your child's future learning ability, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, career, and most importantly, his or her health.

You see, your child is watching you for guidance and instruction. While this often comes through direct lessons, most often you will be teaching your child indirectly. Your attitudes and behaviors will all be taken in by the impressionable mind of your child. This includes the way you look at food, whether or not you are physically active, and the way you talk about and react to life's experiences. All of these will influence the decisions your child makes throughout his or her life.

Most adults dealing with chronic diseases, such as obesity, do not consider that the behaviors that led to their condition started in childhood. Often, they wish that they had 'known better' so as to avoid the pain and suffering of illness. You truly have the chance to set your child on the path to a long, healthy life.

The days of family mealtime have fallen away in favor of fast food, TV dinners, and meals on the run. Though these conveniences allow you to manage a busy schedule, you may be creating habits that will set your child up for trouble in the future.

Resist teaching your children that food can express love, provide comfort, or represent a symbol for celebration. Food is really meant to provide our bodies with nourishment to energize us for productive and active lives. Your child should learn from you that his or her body also needs regular physical activity to stay in top condition.

By staying active and eating nutritiously we can prevent many of the most deadly diseases facing our country today. This means we can even prevent needless organ transplants – just by taking the time to prepare meals wisely and GET MOVING!

Yours in health and empowerment,
Andrea Pennington, M.D., C.Ac.
President, Pennington Institute for Health and Wellness
Former Medical Director, Discovery Health Channel

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