



JERRY CAMMARATA FATHER'S DIARY

Beating the flu-- with lots of love

The flu. There are so many strains and variations on the theme that it certainly appears it will be around for a long time. But there is some good that can come from a miserable cold. For one thing, you can offer polite verbal gestures like, "God bless you" and "Gesundheit," to all those around you that have the sneezing syndrome. It really does make people feel good when you offer them a few kind words. People need to know that others care, particularly during a time when they are debilitated. Children, in particular, need lots of verbal and physical support when they are feeling blue.

No school

During the last four months, my daughters have had their fair share of illnesses that required them to stay in their warm beds for a day or two at a time. When they are allowed to stay home, they get the extra rest and relaxation they need. They even manage to take their books out and try to catch up on their school work. There was one thing, however, that seemed to disturb my wife and I. It seems our girls have also taken upon themselves to be helpful around the house. This helpfulness was not only appearing when they were healthy but when they were home sick as well. They would empty the wastepaper baskets in each room, be sure the tableware is in the dishwasher, and make the beds. This is a pretty good-sized job for a child

who should be home just caring for herself, would you not agree? Well, the girls also seemed to be inquiring an awful lot about how mommy feels and telling her that it is not necessary for her to take care of them when they are home. They will help themselves.

Putting all these situations together certainly didn't point to having a pair of girls who were staying home from school because they were really sick. What was up?

No doubt there were indications that some of these absences from school were directly caused by illness. When your child asks to go to the doctor you know stuffiness, headache and muscle pains are too much to bear. But, after methodically reviewing all the times the girls stayed home, we were able to put two and two together. It was right under our noses and we didn't realize it.

This past summer my wife became pregnant and our family is awaiting the birth of our next child (a boy). This has been a sensitive period of time in our home because last year the four of us had to experience the death of our third baby at birth. Well, Elizabeth and Michelle are super concerned that mommy is all right and obeying the doctor's orders. Anything they can do to insure mommy has an easy time of it and our next child (a boy) will be born healthy, is being done and then some. Even if it means sacrificing some days of academic stimulation. It's all worth it to them.



Children need lots of verbal and physical support when they're feeling blue.

Game of love

My wife and I were oblivious to their little game of love. We had to admit, however, it was a pretty healthy thing they were doing. It was

time, however, that the girls found out we know what's up and deeply appreciate their concern and efforts. What better way to do that than to choose a Sunday morning and give

them a taste of their own loving medicine.

Very typically, the girls will jump into bed with my wife and I every Sunday morning and spend a half an

hour or so discussing what we will do that day after church. On this special Sunday, the girls entered our room, kissed their mother and I good morning and got in bed. I immediately got out of bed and announced to all that I was making breakfast and the female trio of the house would be getting breakfast in bed. I decided to make 'eggs with a hat on' (food for thought in another column), juice and hot tea.

Minutes later I was back in the bedroom with the food and ready for conversation. I asked the girls if they were concerned about the coming of the new baby (a boy). They replied, yes. I asked them if they feel they have been helpful to their mother while she has been pregnant. They rang out with an enthusiastic yes. My wife said to them she was overwhelmed by their caring and unselfishness and particularly the staying home from school every now and then to make mommy's life a little easier.

At that moment, Michelle swallowed the hat of the egg in one gulp and the two girls looked at each other as if to say the game was over. I told them it took mommy and I a while to figure out why so many days were being taken off from school but we understood. For the next 20 minutes we had a good time explaining to the girls how we discovered their scheme.

My wife and I made it perfectly clear that when they are really sick, they should let us know and feel free to stay home from school. If mommy is not feeling well, however, we promised to tell them and one of them could stay home and help her out. The arrangement was acceptable to all concerned.

Our children have reasons for what they do. As parents, it's our job to find those reasons out, offer some guidance and leadership and be prepared to accept the good and the bad.