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## LESSONS FROM THE LAUNDRY PILE

### Surviving Housework and Raising Responsible Kids

A lot of the time, after a day of chores, it looks a little like a raccoon on caffeine made its way inside and attempted to fold our laundry. I'm picky about how I like stuff folded so it will fit neatly in the drawers. But things can get a little wild when my youngest is on laundry duty. The clothes are mostly together with socks expertly paired, but I always end up redoing it when it's got that "raccoon-on-a-caffeine-high" style.

No one in our family has a "favorite" chore — it's a game of hot potato when it comes to the cat's litterbox — but that's how you do it when you live with other people. April 7 is National No Housework Day, and while we all would probably love just to let the laundry fold itself, no one wants to live in a messy house, and we'd miss out on the fun of watching the kids solve the puzzle of loading the dishwasher.

With five people in our house, chores are a constant balancing act. We do our best to give everyone an equal division of work — something our middle child will quickly speak up on if he did more than his fair share — but let's face it, it's rarely perfect. Between school, sports, and debate practice, schedules shift, and sometimes, one of us has to pick up the slack. Our daughter typically takes on the most responsibility, and she's had a lot of practice. She recently babysat for us and did a great job cleaning up the kitchen. We've been encouraging her to recognize how much that extra effort means for families she may babysit for in the future, setting her apart from the competition.

We always try to emphasize that the work isn't always going to be equal, and it's not about keeping score. If someone's busy, like when I'm driving everyone to their various activities, someone else steps in. In life, you have to help out when you notice someone else has their hands full. You can grab that laundry basket and fold it while watching TV. Growing up, my parents never went to bed with a dirty kitchen and always taught us to spend that extra 30 seconds to pick up something if we saw it out of place.

There's a good lesson in those dirty dishes and the dreaded litterbox. Eventually, our children will grow up and probably have a roommate. You never want to be the roomie who never cleans and expects others to do all the hard work. You'll be looking for a new



apartment every year if you're that person. It's especially important for my daughter as she prepares for more babysitting. Going the extra mile will help her earn more gigs, but it's also kind to do that for busy parents. To return after a well-deserved date night to a clean house will endear her to their hearts.

Even when we find ourselves reorganizing a drawer for the third time or squeezing one more dish into the dishwasher (because, yes, I'm one of seven people on the planet who actually watched a YouTube video on how to load it properly), it's all part of the rhythm of family life. It's not about perfection or being the best; it's about working together and being courteous to each other.

While no one is particularly excited about housework, it really does bring us together. It's the kind of teamwork that carries over into life. We're not just teaching our kids to scrub a dish or match socks but also how to pitch in and make things run a little smoother for everyone.

- Andrew M. Ayers

# GOING DANGEROUSLY ROGUE

## SCIENTISTS' SURPRISE: STUDENTS SERVED RADIOACTIVE OATMEAL

Students at a state special-needs school in Massachusetts decades ago flocked to join the school's Science Club, lured by gifts, promises of field trips, and hopes of emotional support from the scientists in charge.

What they received instead was a daily dose of radioactive oatmeal.

As part of a secret experiment by the Quaker Oats Company and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), dozens of boys at Fernald State School during the late 1940s and early 1950s were fed oatmeal laced with radioactive tracers. The goal was to study their bodies' absorption of iron and calcium and prove the cereal's nutritional benefits. Some boys also were injected with radioactive calcium.

A student named Fred Boyce and about 70 other boys ages

10–17 were eager to join the Science Club mainly for the perks enjoyed by members. Boyce, who was sent to the school after his parents abandoned him, also hoped the scientists might intervene on the students' behalf and report dismal conditions at Fernald, where students, many of whom were mentally disabled, were abused and treated brutally. Boyce and others received no help from the scientists, however, and weren't even informed they were subjects of a scientific experiment until more than 40 years later.

"We didn't know anything at the time," Boyce told Smithsonian magazine.

"We just thought we were special."

The study at Fernald, originally named the Massachusetts State School for the Feeble-Minded, was led by an MIT professor of nutrition. No one raised

objections at the time. At the dawn of the Atomic Age, most Americans saw science as a powerful force for progress — the Atomic Energy Commission approved dozens of human experiments with radioactivity. The importance of ethics review boards and informed consent of research subjects was nowhere on scientists' radar at the time.

Not until 1972, when the Associated Press reported on a Tuskegee Institute study in which Black men with syphilis were promised treatment they never received, did Congress finally pass legislation protecting people from unethical research.

Scientists later determined the boys at Fernald didn't suffer serious health effects; one said the exposure was about the same as 30 chest X-rays. For students like Boyce, however, the injuries ran deep. Thirty former Fernald students later sued Quaker Oats and MIT and were awarded \$1.85 million in a 1998 settlement.



## Dear Diary, \_\_\_\_\_

### Please Don't Be Used Against Me in Court

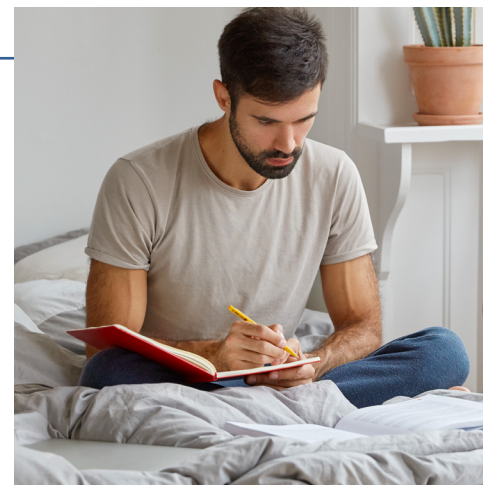
Many of us have fond memories of writing in diaries or journals throughout our youth. We would share our thoughts and feelings in a book we would keep hidden from friends, family members, and others. It was our sanctuary where we could be ourselves without worrying about judgment or embarrassment. You may even remember the feeling of rage or hopelessness when you spotted your brother or sister holding your diary. Thankfully, there usually wasn't anything too incriminating in our teenage diaries, and some of us have continued the practice well into adulthood. However, a recent news story proves we should be cautious about the information we share in our private journals.

Last year, a Minnesota woman was arrested for auto theft. While investigating the

incident and looking into Vanessa Guerra, a suspect in the case, a law enforcement officer allegedly found her diary. He flipped through the pages, looking for any information that would catch his eye, when he stumbled upon an entry from Aug. 12, the same day a 2004 Ford Freestar van was stolen and resold at an auto salvage business.

"Totally stole a car today! Something I never thought of doing," Guerra allegedly wrote in her diary.

Guerra was charged with receiving stolen property and theft, although she claims she didn't know the vehicle was stolen. However, workers at the auto salvage business informed law enforcement they recognized Guerra as the seller of the stolen vehicle.



Most people will probably not blab to others about crimes they have committed, especially if they are currently unsolved. This case reminds us to be just as cautious about what we write in private journals. While your diary may be your safe place to share your innermost thoughts and feelings, your entries could come back to haunt you if you're involved in a criminal case, especially if you blatantly admit to the crime.



# TAKE A **BREAK**



## Ingredients

- Vegetable oil
- 2 lbs fresh cod
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 1/2 cup all-purpose unbleached flour
- 2 large eggs
- 2 tbsp water
- 2 cups plain bread crumbs
- 1/2 tsp mustard powder
- 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
- Lemon wedges

## Directions

1. Pour 2 inches of vegetable oil into a large skillet over medium-high heat.
2. Cut cod into 4 servings and season with salt and pepper.
3. Place flour into a pie tin. Whisk egg and water in a second pie tin. Combine bread crumbs, mustard powder, and cayenne in a third pie tin.
4. Coat your fish in the flour tin, then the egg tin, then the bread crumb tin.
5. Set coated fish in hot oil and fry for 5 minutes on each side.
6. Serve with lemon wedges and enjoy!

# Unpack Parenting's 'Mental Load'

## Finding Peace in Modern Parenting

Parenting is a labor of love, but let's face it — sometimes, it just feels like labor. The mental load of raising kids and running a household creates a constant to-do list in your head: planning parent-teacher conferences, organizing meals, managing schedules, and worrying about everything in between. **With nearly half of parents saying their stress is overwhelming, it's clear we're carrying more than we can handle.** But the good news is that you don't have to carry it alone.

### Forget the Instagram Fantasy

We've all been there — scrolling through picture-perfect family photos on social media and wondering how everyone else makes parenting look so effortless. *But let's get real.* No one's life is as polished as their posts. Instead of measuring yourself against unrealistic standards, focus on what makes your family happy and healthy. Spoiler alert: It's not homemade Pinterest lunches or spotless playrooms.

### Find Your Village (and Use It!)

Parenting wasn't meant to be a solo sport. Whether it's friends, family, or other parents, building a strong support system can make all the difference. And if you have a partner, open conversations about sharing the workload can lighten the load for everyone. Remember that asking for help isn't a sign of weakness; it's a superpower.



### Perfect Is Boring — Be Real Instead

Let go of the idea that you need to be the perfect parent. Perfection is overrated and impossible. Life throws curveballs, and part of raising resilient kids is showing them how to handle challenges without losing your cool. Be kind to yourself, and embrace the "good enough" mindset. You don't need to do it all, and your kids don't need you to be flawless — they need you to be present.

### Go From Overwhelmed to Empowered

The mental load of parenting will never disappear entirely, but it doesn't have to weigh you down. When you ditch unrealistic expectations, lean on your village, and embrace imperfection, you can find more balance and joy in the chaos. Parenting is messy, exhausting, and sometimes downright hard — but it's also beautiful, rewarding, and full of unforgettable moments. So, take a deep breath, give yourself some grace, and remember: You're doing a great job. You've got this.

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## When Delivery Disputes Go Too Far

### A \$2 TIP TURNS VIOLENT

What started as a birthday celebration for a 5-year-old girl quickly took a dark turn when a Florida delivery driver stabbed a woman multiple times over a bad tip. According to court documents, the December 2024 incident occurred at a Central Florida motel where the victim, her boyfriend, and daughter were staying.

#### The Incident

After placing a \$33 delivery order from Marco's Pizza, the victim, Melinda Irizarry, tipped the delivery driver \$2. Dissatisfied with the tip, the driver, 22-year-old Brianna Alvelo, reportedly returned to the motel with an unidentified male. Alvelo and her accomplice allegedly forced themselves into Irizarry's motel room, brandishing a revolver.

The attackers forced Irizarry's boyfriend into the bathroom, and Alvelo produced a pocketknife before rummaging through the group's belongings. Irizarry turned

to shield her daughter and reached for the motel phone when Alvelo allegedly began attacking her with a knife, inflicting multiple stab wounds to her legs, arms, chest, and abdomen.

The attackers fled the scene, and Irizarry was taken to a local hospital. In addition to 14 stab wounds, Irizarry suffered a ruptured lung during the attack. While receiving treatment, she also discovered she was pregnant. Alvelo was later arrested and charged with multiple counts, including attempted murder, kidnapping, and home invasion with a firearm. Her accomplice remains at large.

#### Unusual Nature of the Case

This case stands out not only for its brutality but also because it flips the typical narrative involving delivery drivers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, delivery drivers are more at risk of assaults



than other professions. While disputes over tips are not unheard of, they rarely lead to violence. However, reports of assaults among delivery workers, particularly in the gig economy, are surprisingly common. Studies show that 1 in 5 food app workers are assaulted on the job, and over one-third of delivery drivers feel unsafe.

Regardless of who is on the receiving end, cases like these underscore how everyday activities can lead to life-altering events with serious consequences for all involved. Always be vigilant.