Editor’s Letter - Real Health Fall 2005

God Bless the Child

September 2, 2005 By Hilary Beard

In May, I was babysitting my 5-year-old nephew, Alex (my sister was away on business), when a ladybug-size insect flew into his eye. When eyewash and tears didn’t remove it, I took him to the emergency room. (I didn’t want to go down in family lore as the auntie responsible for his eyeball dangling out of its socket, haunted-house style.)

Four hours later, Alex and I were still in the ER waiting room, coloring superheroes as the TV blared, when he suddenly blinked the bug out. We had to wait an additional 90 minutes before the doctors finally examined Alex and gave his eye the “all clear.” By then, I was certain there must be ways for parents and loved ones (and those who visit the ER for primary care) to circumvent delays. Read about them in “The Ins and Outs of Emergency Care.”

Speaking of childhood emergencies, between images of bootie-baring video vixens and six-pack-toting thugs, the self-esteem of black children is under assault as never before. But it’s not just the media that can undermine a child’s confidence—sometimes a well-meaning comment about skin color or hair texture can leave a permanent psychic scar. So Denene Millner, who has two kids of her own to raise, interviewed some of the nation’s foremost child-development experts to find techniques busy parents can use to build kids’ self-image, whether at home, in class or on the playground (“The Gift of Self-Esteem”).

However, the need for a healthy self-concept is not limited to our children. Our gay and bisexual brothers and sons are stereotyped as promiscuous. Many who have unsafe sex do so because they lack the self-love to put their foot down about protection. As Kai Wright shows (“When a Son Is Gay”), the heterosexual community can play a role in reducing skyrocketing HIV rates. If we talk about sexuality, and give our same-sex-loving loved ones respect and acceptance, they’re less likely to seek from strangers the unconditional love they should be getting at home.

Let’s build each other up,

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