

WOW, THANKS FOR ALL THE REFERRALS!

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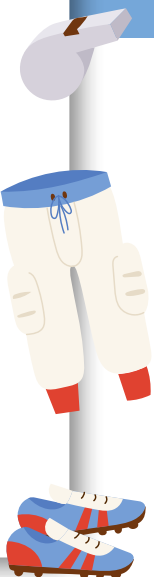
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COCA-COLA CHAOS

THE SOFT DRINK SHAKE-UP THAT CONSUMERS REFUSED TO ACCEPT

Coca-Cola did the unthinkable in the 1980s. It changed its secret formula. Executives were staring down rising competition from Pepsi and believed their classic cola flavor was losing its edge. Taste tests showed consumers preferred a sweeter version, so the company decided to act swiftly and swap out its legendary recipe. Their confidence came from data, but the gamble ignored something harder to measure: loyalty that runs deeper than flavor.

The Backlash

Outrage spread quickly across the U.S. once the new formula hit shelves. Loyal fans called Coca-Cola's headquarters in frustration, while others wrote letters demanding the return of the original drink. Grocery stores began to see unusual buying behavior as people stocked up on remaining bottles of the classic Coke.

Many consumers described the change as more than a taste adjustment and treated it like the loss of something familiar in everyday life. Media coverage amplified the controversy, even turning it into a national talking point about corporate decision-making and consumer identity. Pepsi gained

visibility amid the chaos, but most attention remained fixed on Coca-Cola's misstep.

A Quick Reversal

Coca-Cola responded within months by bringing back the original formula under the name Coca-Cola Classic. The move became one of the fastest and most famous reversals in marketing history. Store shelves were quickly restocked, and public reaction shifted from frustration to celebration.

Sales rebounded, and the company regained lost ground and rebuilt customer trust. The new Coke stayed available for a time but gradually faded as demand weakened. The episode became a defining lesson in branding and showed that emotion can drive consumer loyalty as much as taste tests or data models.



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CUSTOM TIMES

SEPTEMBER 2026

WHEN SCHOOL DOESN'T FEEL SAFE

EVERY CHILD DESERVES TO FEEL COMFORTABLE

As parents, we always want what's best for our kids, especially when they start a new school year. We hope they'll develop strong friendships with their classmates, nurture passions for specific topics, and maintain their confidence while being kind to everyone around them. While many will give it their best effort, they may encounter challenges unlike anything they have experienced before. They'll encounter a bully who harasses, puts down, and abuses them. While we've all had experiences with bullies throughout our lives, and when left unchecked, their words and actions can have lasting, detrimental effects on their targets.

Like everyone else, I had my fair share of experiences with bullies in my life, and we all know they don't really go away once we exit school. Bullies just refine their strategies to continue getting their way in the real world. However, it's interesting to see the attention around it shift. Nobody

talked about bullying when I was growing up. Sure, I had my moments when I stood up for my friends or other kids, but it wasn't like it was a topic of discussion at the dinner table. Now, it's front and center as we help our kids have the healthiest, most promising childhood possible. But even with the increased awareness, it can feel like the school system doesn't want to intervene until bullying crosses a line that can't be taken back.

One of the more interesting aspects of my parenting experience has been learning that if I really want to see a change in how a situation is being addressed or handled, I have to get involved myself. Bullying often gets swept under the rug, but as parents, we get to hear about our children's days firsthand. That's one reason why having family meals is so important. You can learn about your child, their interests, and what's going on in their lives. You'll quickly discover whether they're having trouble with a classmate or whether they're the one causing trouble for others. They may not be forthright, but with a little digging, you can learn all you need to know to come up with a strategy to help.

Another thing to keep in mind is that bullying has changed over the years. While it still happens in some places, I don't think kids are running around, throwing each other into lockers, giving swirlies, or being overly physical. Instead, bullying seems more verbal than anything else now, and it isn't even always carefully



A rare moment of peace between Lou and Ellis

targeted insults. Sometimes, harassment is a form of bullying that keeps other kids from wanting to attend school. It's not enjoyable for kids to be pestered or feel like they have to entertain someone else, all because they don't know how to manage their actions or emotions.

Ultimately, the best thing we can do when our kids dealing with a bully is to have open, honest communication with them. If it's something small, we can address it ourselves by giving them the tools or even reaching out to the other child's parents to see whether they're aware and willing to help. However, you may have to take it to the top in some instances, especially if the teacher or school is aware but failing to address it.

Our kids mean the world to us, and the last thing we want is for a bully to steal some of their light. By talking with your kids and helping them with their problems, you will make your relationship even stronger.

—Dr. Leanne Desch



Beckett, first day of 7th grade

MEMORY MAKERS AND MINI EXPLORERS

WHY CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES STICK

If you're an adult who somehow can't recall what you had for breakfast this morning but can clearly remember collecting seashells on the beach when you were 7, your seemingly strange memory has more to do with science and biology than you may realize.

With the summer travel season coming to a close, here are two fascinating reasons why the moments you (and especially any little ones who were with you) enjoyed over the past few months will likely stay in your mind longer than what you had for lunch last Tuesday.



Our minds crave uncommon encounters.

If you or your kids enjoy discovering new destinations, that adventurous streak may come with unexpected health and wellness benefits. Research shows that engaging in unique experiences away from the mundane boosts the dopamine-related pathways in our brains, which are associated with happiness and a sense of well-being. The more pleasant the experience, the more likely we are to remember it. Additionally, studies suggest this phenomenon is particularly strong among children ages 3-5, which is another reason family trips can be so memorable for your kids many years later.

We often forget the familiar.

Can you list every time you ate mashed potatoes in the past year? How about that time you ate an extravagant meal at a restaurant located in that faraway vacation spot you visited five years ago? If you better recall that unbelievable dish far away from home, that's your brain retaining what it considers important and distinctive information and discarding trivial moments it deems safe to ignore. Events and locations that stay far from everyday routines will form sharper memories than those we experience regularly.

As science shows, our most enduring memories are not shaped by the passage of time but by the novelty, emotion, and meaning of the moments we experience.

BACK-TO-SCHOOL

SMILES MADE SIMPLE

WITH SOME HELP FROM THE CUSTOM SMILES CLUB!



You likely put a lot of effort into your children's dental routine throughout the summer, but now that they're back in school, everything feels a little more chaotic. The mornings feel rushed, which can lead to missed brushing opportunities. Kids may not floss as regularly, and they may even eat more unhealthy snacks when outside the house. Over time, these behaviors can lead to cavities, toothaches, and more serious dental problems that require professional intervention.

Dental care can be expensive, even for kids, but we didn't want to see any member of our community go without the care they need to keep their smile bright and healthy. That's why we created the Custom Smiles Club! Now, you and your family can reap all the

benefits of our expert dental care for just \$29 per member per month after a one-time enrollment fee of \$199.

The Custom Smiles Club is one of the best programs out there because you really get everything you need to keep your smile healthy at an affordable price. Every member on your plan will receive two exams, one emergency exam, two cleanings, two oral cancer screenings, and any needed X-rays and CT scans at no additional cost. Any additional cleanings you need will also be 20% off.

If that's not enough to make your ears perk up, maybe our loyalty program will speak your language. You will receive 10% off any needed treatment during your first year, 15% during the second, and 20% for anything beyond that.

At first glance, you may think that the Custom Smiles Club is just another insurance alternative, but it's so much more. You never have to worry about annual limits, waiting periods, preexisting conditions, deductibles, downgrades, or claim forms. Just great dental care at an affordable price!

Whether you want to improve your own smile or your children's, the Custom Smiles Club is here to help! Call your Custom Dental dentist today for more information!

PINS AND PERSPECTIVE

INSIDE THE MODERN SEWING REVIVAL

Are you looking for new thrills and excitement? Do you want to engage in an activity that guarantees full self-expression? If so, start by asking yourself, "What would Grandma do?"

Although it's long been associated with older folks and suburban moms, sewing has become a notable trend among adults of all ages. To call its rise in prominence in American culture *meteoric* would not be hyperbole, as there are an estimated 30 million active sewing enthusiasts in the U.S. (nearly 10% of our country's population). Perhaps most interestingly, research suggests that a significant portion of these hobbyists are teens and tweens. What's driving the desire for needles and fabric over smartphones and Facebook? The answers may surprise you.

When Individuality Meets Sustainability

Let's be honest: Times are tough financially for many Americans right now. Making your own clothes with a few simple materials is often more cost-effective than buying high-priced apparel online or at a department store. Additionally, sewing can help preserve clothes you've already purchased, rather than tossing them away sooner than necessary. Best of all, sewists can create clothing that is uniquely *them*. Instead of rummaging through Amazon listings or store racks to find the right outfit, they can simply make it themselves (or modify an inexpensive thrift-store find)!



A Hobby for Better Mental Health

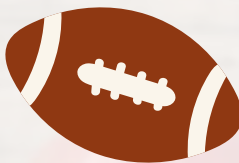
In an age of social media and other online pastimes that steal our hours while offering little reward, people crave activities that relieve stress and give a greater sense of accomplishment with their time. Enter sewing, which demands repetition, attention to detail, and a sense of achievement that uplifts your mood and mental clarity in ways that digital doomscrolling doesn't.

So, the next time the daily grind starts bringing you down, or your wallet starts feeling a bit lighter as payday nears, give yourself a fresh treat and give sewing a shot. You may discover a new way to spend time away from phones or financial strain.

FUN FACTS

- September's birthstone is the sapphire.
- September's birth flowers are the aster and the morning glory.
- September used to be the seventh month of the year and got its name from the ancient Roman word *septem*, which means "seven."
- This September, the fullest moon of the year occurs: the Harvest Moon. Coincidentally, September is also Harvest Month.
- The first American newspaper, "Publick Occurrences Both Foreign and Domestick," was published in Boston in September 1690. It shut down after releasing one issue.
- The fall equinox arrives on the first day of autumn this year, Sept. 22.
- The U.S. Constitution was adopted on Sept. 17, 1787.
- Larry Page and Sergey Brin launched Google in September 1998.
- The British tested the earliest known working submarine in September 1624.

DUTCH APPLE PUDDING CAKE



INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| • Nonstick cooking spray | • 1/2 cup milk |
| • 1 20-oz can apple pie filling | • 2 tbsp butter, melted |
| • 1/2 cup dried cherries, dried cranberries, or raisins | • 1/2 cup chopped walnuts, toasted |
| • 1 cup all-purpose flour | • 1 1/4 cups apple juice |
| • 1/4 cup granulated sugar | • 1/3 cup packed brown sugar |
| • 1 tsp baking powder | • 1 tbsp butter |
| • 1/4 tsp salt | |

DIRECTIONS

1. Lightly coat 4-quart slow cooker with cooking spray.
2. In small saucepan, bring apple pie filling to boil; stir in cherries.
3. Transfer apple mixture to cooker.
4. In medium bowl, stir together flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt.
5. Add milk and melted butter; stir until combined.
6. Stir in 1/2 cup walnuts. Pour and evenly spread batter over apple mixture in cooker.
7. In the same small saucepan, combine apple juice, brown sugar, and the 1 tbsp butter; boil gently, uncovered, for 2 minutes.
8. Pour apple juice mixture over batter in slow cooker.
9. Cover and cook on high-heat setting for 2-2 1/2 hours.
10. Turn off cooker and cool, uncovered, for 30-45 minutes.