

## **Ask Nurse Rona: Economics Are Not Child's Play**

*Rona Renner, RN for the Bay Area Discovery Museum*

**Q:** *I'm not sure if I should tell my 5- and 7-year-old children that we may need to move and find a less expensive house cause I lost my job.*

**A:** Kids listen to parents talking on the phone, through the bedroom door, and in the car, when you think they're not listening. So it's important to "zip it" and not talk with friends and relatives about your fears and money issues when children can hear you. Yet it is essential to have an honest conversation with your children about the changes your family is dealing with.

Talk with your children in a way that is age appropriate and without the intensity that you're feeling. For instance you can tell them that because of changes in your work and other adult issues, your family will have less money. Let them know that this is also happening to other people and that the adults are doing their best to work things out. Don't tell them you are moving until you are sure and have started looking for a new house. Reassure them that you will work hard to find a good new home, and that they will still be able to see their friends. Being honest and hopeful will help reduce your children's fears.

Talk about ways the family can work together:

- You can cook more at home and eat out less. Have your kids plan meals and help you cook. Plant a garden or some pots on the patio with veggies.
- Suggest they go through their books and toys so that someone with less money can have the ones they don't need anymore. Or have a garage sale and see if the kids can help you raise some money. They will feel good about helping.
- Let them know that they'll be fine and that the adults will take care of things and get through it.
- Don't promise them a new house that's as good, since you really don't know yet what will happen.
- Tell them they can help, but it's not up to them to fix things.
- Keep your fear away from the kids as much as possible and make sure you stay connected, keep to a routine, and play with them.
- Get support from other adults so you have a place to express your feelings.
- Answer their questions but don't give them more information than they need to know. They will follow your lead, and by telling them the truth (without all of the details) they will trust you and feel secure.

What children crave is time with their parents, and some undivided attention. Keep breathing and continue to enjoy your kids.

Best of luck to all!