

Children are the best form of birth control invented

There's a piece of contemporary conventional wisdom which contends that the arrival of a second child presents a six-fold increase in the overall workload and stress level of parents of two income families.

Don't believe it for a minute. It's an understatement.

It's only been a month and a half since my wife returned to the work force following her maternity sabbatical, but we're already about to raise the white flag. It makes no difference that Susan had made a life's work of squeezing 36 hours of

non-stop, some times frenetic activity into a 24-hour day. We're still losing the battle. From food and formula preparation, bottle sterilization, feeding, bathing and changing an eight month old, through monitoring, disciplining, playing with and attempting to rid an emerging four year old of such socially unacceptable habits as picking his nose, the daily routine is without end.

And that's not counting the continual doctors' appointments for infant maladies such as roseola and ear infections, as



From where I live

Bruce Stapley

well as all the other viruses cutting down young and old alike this winter.

Our early morning, night time and weekend schedule is like that of a TSE stock broker in a bull market. We oftentimes

find ourselves walking into a room to defuse a sudden eruption with our arms full of a variety of items accumulated along the way, without the foggiest notion of just what we intended to do with any one of them. Telephone calls go unanswered as we simply can't afford the luxury of stopping to chat with family, friends, or carpet cleaning salespeople, all of whom insist upon calling just when we've finally managed to sit down for a quick bite to eat. Lingered even briefly over a family meal is, of course,

impossible. Spilled milk, spit ups and yucky hands in need of wiping before they get smashed on the underside of the table find us up and down like a toilet seat throughout the entire sorry production.

For Susan, a teacher, there is also the matter of finding time each night to tend to such chores as marking, lesson preparations and the tabulating of report cards. She recently set up a mini-office in the bathroom in the interests of seizing every possible opportunity to knock off an assignment or two. A recent gift of a portable phone has enabled her to make some of her own essential calls while she responds to the call of nature.

Meanwhile, such a workload makes absolutely no allowance for illnesses which parents occasionally succumb to. Even as I wrote this column, I had to stop to field a call from Susan's doctor saying she flunked her throat swab test and must now deal with the business of getting rid of a well entrenched case of strep throat. This on top of occasional allergies which see her up some nights at three in the morning emptying the kleenex box in an attempt to contain a sneezing fit.

Luckily, my wife and I are both possessed of a sense of humor akin to that which enabled the beleaguered Brits to survive the endless pounding they took in the Second World War. For instance, during a recent phone call Susan was having with my 18-year-old daughter Marissa, both of our little monsters were competing in the background to see who could cause the decibel meter to go the furthest. "Well," Susan began with a huge smile on her face upon hanging up, "that's probably about the best form of birth control a girl her age could possibly get!"

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