

raising healthy kids

by felicia m. tomasko, rn

JUDI AND SHARI ZUCKER HAVE A BUBBLY, infectious enthusiasm for health, fitness and family that's multiplied by two. They're identical twins who coauthor cookbooks, share speaking engagements and finish each other's sentences.

The twins are advocates for a plant-based diet to support good health and vibrant energy. They emphasize the importance of incorporating this approach when children are young, beginning with carefully selecting an infant's first foods.

When they were only seventeen years old, the active twins coauthored their first book, *How to Survive Snack Attacks...Naturally*. *The Double Energy Diet* is their latest. It includes the fun and easy-to-make recipes they've used to raise their own kids, who have grown up without eating meat to excel in collegiate athletics and even enjoy cooking. The twins keep the following ideals in mind (which are expanded on in their book).

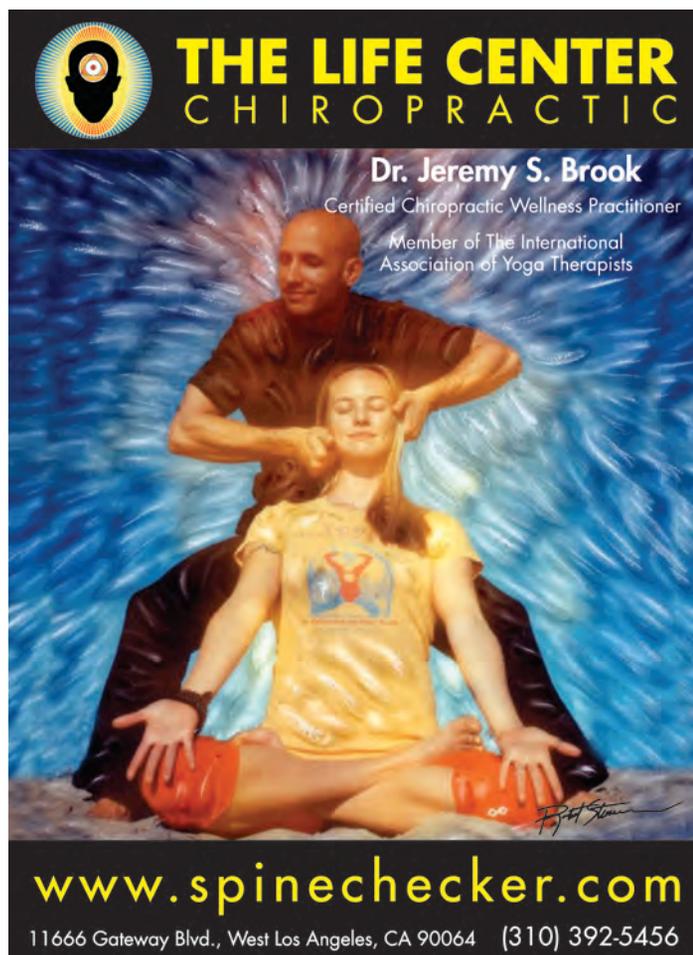
- > Find out what your family likes and choose the healthy version.
- > Flavor rules; if you sacrifice flavor, you'll get less buy-in from your child. Children are programmed to love sweets, so encourage fruits or whole grains. Without super-sweet junk foods, their taste buds won't be desensitized to the healthier options.
- > Find fun recipes and schedule family time to pick out ingredients and prepare meals together. Kids love to eat what they make.
- > Communicate often since older children may feel peer pressure to follow along and consume what other kids are eating to fit in. Young people who are confident about making proper food choices

are actually the ones others admire the most.

- > Upper and downer foods are a reality, so notice how your child feels after eating different foods (such as sugars, artificial sweeteners and additives). Help build your child's awareness of how they feel by discussing it then and there: if they feel "icky" after eating candy or energized after a salad or whole grain sandwich. Encourage them to make choices that help them feel good.
- > Breakfast provides nourishment and energy for an active day and help kids do better in school. Be creative: warm grains, soup or even salads can be a good breakfast if your child enjoys them.
- > Survive snack attacks with nutritious options. Kids will eat whatever's on hand, so provide smart food choices such as vegetables cut into cool shapes, nuts, popcorn, crackers or puffed cereals.
- > Supplements can be helpful for children and come in a wide variety of fun options, such as drink packets or gummy shapes.
- > Drinking enough water is important advice for all ages. Add a water bottle to a lunch bag or backpack. Have water ready for after-school or during sporting activities. Even mild dehydration can lead to hunger, cravings or a fuzzy head.
- > Move, exercise and play as a family. Go on family bike rides, hikes and play sports with your children. Not only will you have fun while exercising, but your child will feel proud to have you there.

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For more about Judi and Shari Zucker's energy-filled approach to life, food and raising kids, visit: doubleenergytwins.com.



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