



Let's Hear It for the Teachers

As School Nears, the Impact of Educators Is Hard to Ignore

Outside of the family, it is hard to think of a group of people who have a larger impact on a child's life than the staff and faculty at their school. The value of teachers, in particular, was never felt more strongly than it was as the 2019–20 school year ended, with almost all schools meeting only virtually. Many of us, myself included, came away with a stronger appreciation for how the school systems help our children. Then, there was so much uncertainty about what last year's school schedule would look like. We all agonized throughout the summer over whether schools could be taught traditionally, in person, with a teacher, or if we would need to make systematic changes in our lives in order to support our children through a virtual learning environment. During the 2020–21 school year, many families went back and forth between virtual and in-person school. For 2021–22, I think most Texans are hoping for nothing more than a return to traditional teaching with our children going to school and participating in extra-curricular activities again.

I want to take this time to acknowledge the lengths that teachers and school district personnel went to throughout the pandemic to adjust and to continue to educate and care for our children. I have several teachers in my extended family, and I have just a small idea of the technical challenges they faced, the stress and trauma of constantly changing expectations, and of never knowing who would be in their classroom, or if even they would be allowed in their own classrooms the next week. I would like to thank all the educators and their support staff for the amazing job they have done these last 18 months in adapting and prioritizing the care and education of the precious lives in their charge.

I cannot think of anyone whose job changed more during the pandemic. Even before COVID-19 hit, teachers were often asked to fill roles that had not been part of the job description. As a mother who has had children in school for most of the past two decades, I've long seen how much the average teacher takes on. And as an attorney specializing in divorce, I have also often seen teachers pick up slack when one or both parents are not doing everything they should for their child. Teachers may be educators first, but they can also play the role of counselor, coach, role model, sounding board, responsible adult, babysitter, and more, depending on what their students need.

Even if we only look at their role as educators, we will see teachers who go above and beyond the call of duty: using their own money for school supplies, lesson planning on the weekends, grading at



night, finding resources for students who are visual or auditory learners — the list goes on. I have not even mentioned the number of teachers who, due to budget cuts and funding shortages, are required to teach subjects far outside of their specialty.

And they had to do all of this remotely! How do you keep kids on track when you cannot be in the same room as them? How do you keep them focused when they could easily be goofing around on the laptop? If a child does not have their webcam turned on, is it really broken? Are they just trying to avoid work? Or is there something bad going on at home that they do not want the teacher to see?

We all discovered our strengths and weaknesses last year. If you were someone who already home-schooled your kids, you had a definite advantage over the rest of us because, in many ways, learning at home was like that for us! But no amount of experience could change the fact that my youngest son and I were not the kind of people for whom doing school work at home worked out well. I am thrilled to see kids going back to high school and college. My son will be wrestling for College Park High School this fall, and he and I are very excited for it.

But I am most excited to see teachers given the chance to do what they do best, in person. We showed that it was possible to do things online, but nobody is fooling themselves about the ideal educational situation. From noticing warning signs to helping kids (and parents) learn a new thing in a different way, there's no replacement for a good teacher — and they do their best work in person.

Thank you to all teachers out there, and I wish you the best of luck as we start the coming school year.

-Ruby Bolton

Have Celebrity Divorces Always Been Crazy?

What is it about celebrity marriages — and their subsequent endings — that fascinates society? Depending on how you measure, telling the stories of makeups and breakups is a multibillion-dollar industry for media organizations online, in print, and on TV. Are we really that hungry for nasty headlines? Or is something deeper going on in the human psyche?

In the last 12 months, we've seen some of the worst marriage breakups in Hollywood history, but Amber Heard and Johnny Depp's libel suit took center stage. As usual, "Whom do you believe?" was the question of the day, but it became obvious that both parties needed a therapist to work through serious emotional problems but tried unsuccessfully to do it on their own, instead.

Perhaps the most disturbing element in the Heard/Depp trial was the violence that seemed to pervade their daily lives. But that's nothing new; in fact, the violent behavior of both partners is likely what drew so much attention in the first place.



That was certainly the case with O.J. Simpson's breakup with his wife, which didn't get half the headlines her murder would (and the "trial of the century" that followed) two years later.

You could argue, though, that we're getting better. When we look at the roots of the "celebrity divorce" phenomenon, it goes back in time to the realm of myth. The gods of Greece and Rome were always leaving each other and getting back together, a clear indication of the drama that interested our ancestors. But the most famous celebrity divorce of the pre-19th century (and perhaps of all time) was Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn. It had all the hallmarks of modern public breakups: People took one side or the other, with other parties still "shipping" Henry and his first wife, Catherine of Aragon. Henry and Catherine's divorce led to the trauma of war across England and Europe.

Like today's celebrity cases, it didn't last long. Anne was executed a few short years later when someone new caught the king's eye. Henry VIII was the archetype of the modern Hollywood actor with the wandering gaze, and Catherine and Anne typified the women willing to give him "one more chance."

Seeing how *that* ended, perhaps we should be grateful that things today are aired out in the media — instead of on the battlefield!

5 Tips for Your Next Affordable Getaway

Are you excited to explore the world again? Or maybe you've just gotten back from your latest vacation! In either case, the economic challenges of the pandemic might require travelers to plan their trips a little smarter. Here are five tricks to do just that.

1. Consider your budget while choosing your destination.

Any destination heavily impacted by tourists is going to be more expensive to visit. So, consider taking a tour through various French countryside towns instead of Paris! Not only could it be more culturally immersing, but it may even be more relaxing and less stressful than visiting a dense area.

2. Sign up for Scott's Cheap Flights.

One of the most important parts of booking an affordable vacation is booking it at the right time. Scott's Cheap Flights will track all the cheapest flights at an airport of your choice — you'll get over 50%–75% savings on highly rated airlines. This will get you stress-free travel for a much lower price!

3. Travel in a group.

If you travel with friends, your expenses become a lot more manageable. Let's say you and a partner travel with two other couples — renting a swanky cabin at \$200 a night will only cost around \$33 per person. Plus, you will create some amazing memories together!



4. Plan your meal budget ahead of time.

Looking forward to eating certain dishes? Find local menus and prices to ensure you don't spend more than you planned. If you want an authentic and homestyle culinary experience, consider signing up for a peer-to-peer dining experience through Traveling Spoon or Bon Appetour, which is tax-free as well!

5. Consider volunteering for vacation.

Want to go on a self-discovery trip? Why not cut your expenses in half by volunteering? For example, Habitat for Humanity offers a nine-day Mexico trip for \$1,200 with lodging, food, and activities included. You'll get to build structures and create something permanent for the local community.

Traveling on a dime is no sweat with the right tools. Best of luck, traveler!

TAKE A ***BREAK***



Earlier this year, Russia announced it would abandon its missions to the International Space Station in favor of a new, Russia-only station orbiting Earth. At the same time, China has begun working in earnest on its own permanent space installation, raining construction debris down on coastal Africa and other places. With private American interests gaining traction in orbit (and the confidence of our government), things are getting awfully crowded up there — and not by actors that typically play well together.

All of which begs the question: Will the 21st century see the first violent conflict in space?

We have to delve into “space law” (yes, it’s really called that) to understand this question. It started in the 1940s and ‘50s, when the USSR launch of Sputnik signaled a new ground for scientific competition in the Cold War, as well as fears of more direct, armed conflict. The landmark “Outer Space Treaty” of 1967 was the response, and nations continued to deal with space concerns until the end of the century.

The general principles were those of cooperation and goodwill, and that made sense in the 20th century, when it was unlikely any power would be able to seriously colonize stations in orbit or the moon itself, never mind other planets. But in the past 20 years, many countries have been unwilling to *seriously* commit to more specific agreements or laws. When you see the rapidly increasing presence many countries are seeking in orbit, you start to understand why. Nobody wants to hamstring themselves and compromise their interests when the resources of our solar system are made available through technology.

Even though this may be a new arena, the problem is an old one. International Law — of which “space law” is a subset — is not typically enforceable and never has been. Private ventures, like those of Elon Musk, may face crackdown by their governments or the international community. But nations themselves will take what they want, when they want it — and right now, that could make peace on the final frontier a long shot in the 21st century.



TOMATO AND WATERMELON SALAD (YES, REALLY!)

Inspired by BonAppetit.com

Bon Appétit magazine calls tomato and watermelon “soul mates,” and they’re right! This surprising gourmet salad will be a hit at your next barbecue.

Ingredients

- 1 tsp peppercorns, coarsely crushed
- 1 tsp coriander seeds, coarsely crushed
- 1/2 tsp cumin seeds
- 1/2 tsp turmeric
- 1/4 cup coconut oil
- 4 cups seedless watermelon, rind removed and cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 2 heirloom tomatoes, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- 8 oz feta cheese, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
- Sea salt, to taste

Directions

1. In a small saucepan, sauté spices and herbs in the coconut oil for 3 minutes over medium heat to create turmeric oil. Take the pan off of the heat, then let it cool.
2. Combine the watermelon, tomatoes, and feta on a large platter or in a bowl. Drizzle with cooled turmeric oil. Now, simply sprinkle with sea salt and enjoy!

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Fight SAD Early! Start Taking Vitamin D Now, Before the Sun Goes Away

Do you get SAD? We're talking about seasonal affective disorder, which affects 1%–10% of the population depending on the state you live in. Symptoms of SAD are similar to symptoms of depression, but unlike chronic depression, which can occur at any time, people with SAD only experience symptoms during a certain time of year, usually winter.

SAD has been strongly linked with shorter days and less sun — although summertime SAD can result from long days that make sleep difficult, resulting in irritability and mood swings. In most cases, however, winter is the problem season, likely due to a link between less sun and a vitamin D deficiency.

Depression is one common symptom of vitamin D deficiency, especially in patients who aren't prone to depression due to other circumstances. Unfortunately, very few foods are good sources of vitamin D. The best source is sunlight itself.

There are a few ways to combat wintertime SAD. Establishing a regular sleep schedule is important, as is an exercise routine and healthy diet. As mentioned, it's hard to find vitamin D in foods, but milk and other food products are often intentionally enriched with it during processing.

The most common solution, however, is taking a vitamin D supplement, which can be purchased over the counter at drugstores and grocery stores. It is commonly recommended for people living in places with harsher winters, and although there are negative side effects if taken in excess, a regular daily dose of vitamin D is a healthy way to ensure you have the right levels in your system.

This month is the perfect time to begin that process. Vitamin D can take several months to build up to effective levels in our bodies. It may be the hottest time of the year in many places, but it's also the ideal time to start fighting SAD early!

