



## Guide (don't guilt) sister-in-law about choices

Adapted from a recent online discussion:

**Dear Carolyn:**  
My wonderful sister-in-law, "Kate," is graduating from college this May. She's completely unsure of what she wants to do with her life and is leaning toward going home (small town) to "work and save money" while she figures it out. This is — trust me — a dead end. Because of family pressures and geography, she won't have an opportunity there to interact with anyone stimulating, explore options, become fired up by anything. Family is not connected professionally, so she's likely to wind up working retail. Perfectly fine — but not a recipe for saving significant money, or for getting inspired.

My husband and I are in a position to offer Kate a place to live temporarily, and to help her get a job. We're both well connected in different professional spheres, and can help leapfrog her to the top of some résumés piles. Our interest is both selfless (we love her) and selfish (we want her to become a person we can identify with as the years go on — not the case with all of the family). We would also love to hang out with her as we all age.

Question is, how do we urge her to accept our offer without unduly pressuring her? Her mother won't play fair — she will guilt Kate about family health issues and will generally encourage her to come home, knowing she'll likely never leave. We want to support her, but we don't feel comfortable supporting a decision that we truly feel is stunting her emotional and professional growth.

D.C.

You can certainly make the offer, and make it tempting. And you can say, "If returning home is what you really want, then we support you, and our offer will remain open should you change your mind at any point."

"However, if returning home is what you feel pressured to do, then please consider our offer carefully, because it's your life and no one else's."

Naming the pressure problem for Kate, without pointing fingers at anyone specific, is the emotional equivalent of pointing out the ocean, and throwing her a rope. Her choices will be clear.

Having made those choices clear to her, though, you need to shut up and let her make her decision. Otherwise you just become part of — actually, a somewhat smug new branch of — the family-guilt-and-pressure problem. And I'm saying this as someone who sympathizes with what you're trying to do.

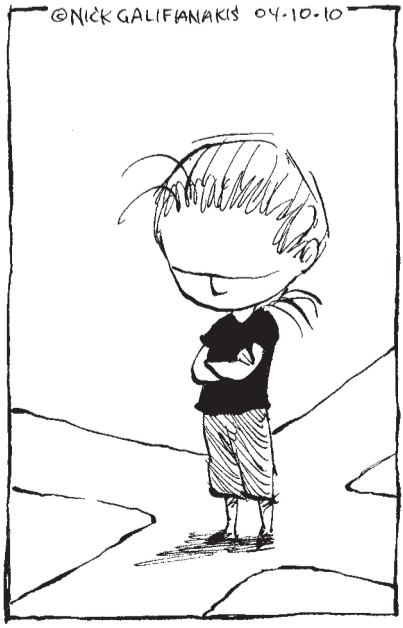
**Dear Carolyn:**  
Any tips for surviving driving my sister from one parent's house to the other this weekend? It's a three-hour trip and she commandeers my radio, criticizes my driving, and generally drives me nuts every time we're in the car. Plus, she'll be really late, and want to stop at every Starbucks we pass, which will make her have to pee. I'm anticipating the three-hour drive will take roughly 4.5 with her in the car. How do I do it so we arrive at parent No. 2's house with me still in the visiting spirit?

Anonymous

Read this, appreciate how funny it is, and treat yourself to a foofy somethingorther-uccino at one (if not all) of the stops.

Read the whole transcript or join the discussion live at noon Fridays on [www.washingtonpost.com/discussions](http://www.washingtonpost.com/discussions).

Write to Tell Me About It, Style, 1150 15th St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20071, or [tellme@washpost.com](mailto:tellme@washpost.com).



# THE STYLE INVITATIONAL

**REPORT FROM WEEK 860**  
in which we asked for wry "Devil's Dictionary"-type entries — of exactly 10 words — that might be added to the new site [www.tenwordwiki.com](http://www.tenwordwiki.com): Hyphenated compounds count as single words.

THE  
WINNER  
OF THE  
INKER

**Historical revisionism:**  
Now the past has been torched by a new generation.  
(Phil Frankenfled, Washington)

- 2 **the winner of the DVD documentary about Mike the Headless Chicken:**  
**La Leche League:** Front organization dedicated to promoting the kindness of human milk. (Kevin Dopart, Washington)
- 3 **Elin Nordegren:** Had Tiger by the tail. Now has a different grip. (Cy Gardner, Arlington)
- 4 **Thesaurus:** Language reference to help people find exactly the wrong word. (Ron Averyt, Severn)

### WORTH 1% OF A PICTURE: HONORABLE MENTIONS

- Advice: Opinions sought to confirm the correctness of our bad ideas.** (Russell Beland, Fairfax)
- Amnesia: A mental condition that, for all you know, you've experienced.** (Russell Beland)
- Gilbert Arenas: Unable to handle LeBron James, he equipped himself for Jesse.** (William Bradford, Washington)
- The Argument Sketch: Funniest Monty Python skit ever. It isn't. Yes it is.** (Kevin Dopart)
- Marion Barry: Ever since "Bitch set me up," he's been falling down.** (Marty McCullen, Gettysburg, Pa.)
- Jack Bauer: Complete verbal repertoire: "Chloe!" "Dammit!" and "We have no choice!"** (Craig Dykstra, Centerville)
- Glenn Beck: He's a walking aneurysm looking for a brain to attack.** (Cy Gardner)
- "The Cat in the Hat": Creepy intruder whips out Thing when kids' mother is away.** (Kevin Dopart)
- China: Mean country that won't let America keep adorable Chinese pandas.** (Mae Scanlan, Washington)
- Credit card: Loans for people who find subprime mortgages much too conservative.** (Sam Bruce, New York)
- Cupidity: Refusing to buy one's significant other a Valentine's Day gift.** (Bryan Crain, Modesto, Calif.)
- Charles Darwin: Victorian scientific genius whose radical theory inspired Republican health-care policy.** (Stephen Gold, Glasgow, Scotland)
- Facebook: For stalking people who had previously managed to elude you.** (Craig Dykstra)
- Mark Foley: Former Realtor, congressman eyeballed enough pages to be editor, too.** (Dion Black, Washington)
- Global warming: A leftist plot to destroy Americans' God-given right to destroy.** (Marc Naimark, Paris)
- Al Gore: An inconvenient truth: The globe didn't all warm to him.** (John Glenn, Tyler, Tex.)
- Rudy Giuliani: "Everybody's Mayor" — that is, until he became nobody's presidential candidate.** (Edmund Conti, Raleigh, N.C.)
- Sean Hannity: So far to the right, there's nothing left of him.** (Darren Chamblee, Frederick, a First Offender)
- "In closing": Oratorical flourish meaning "I will now speak 15 more minutes."** (Peter Metrinko, Gainesville)
- Karaoke: The spectacle of people standing up and defacing the music.** (Chris Doyle, Ponder, Tex.)
- Monogamy: The custom of having a single spouse at a time.** (Chris Doyle)
- Muffin top: Flesh brimming over pants' waistband: Aptly named for its source.** (Dion Black)
- Barack Obama: Candidate of Hope and Change, president of Bait and Switch.** (Cy Gardner)
- Barack Obama: He wasn't born in Kenya — or in a manger, either.** (Peter Metrinko)
- Opportunity cost: The price of paving materials for the road not taken.** (Phil Frankenfled)
- Pantyhose: Stockings that are fine for walking, but better at running.** (LuAnn Bishop, West Haven, Conn.)
- Passover: The week when cardboard with cream cheese is a delicacy.** (Ed Gordon, Austin)
- Patient: Able to sit stoically for hours in doctors' waiting rooms.** (Chris Doyle)
- Political career: Period between first election victory and revelation of sordid affair.** (Harry Farkas, Columbus, Ohio)
- Rubenesque: Polite word for someone 10 pounds heavier than you are.** (Kevin Dopart)
- Secret: Something you must share, but you don't expect others to.** (Russell Beland)
- Tequila: Leading cause of "Hey, y'all — watch this!" in 11 states.** (Craig Dykstra)
- The White House: Impressive residence: Spacious rooms, rose garden (security system needs work).** (Beverley Sharp, Washington)
- And Last: The Empress: Grandiose, snooty, enormous, ancient and daunting hotel in British Columbia.** (Martin Bancroft, Rochester, N.Y.)

**Online discussion** Have a question for the Empress or want to talk to some real Losers? Join the Style Conversational at [washingtonpost.com/styleconversational](http://washingtonpost.com/styleconversational).

### THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



## Week 864: Oonerspisms

**Bootlicker > Lootlicker:** To argue in Congress over who gets the earmarks.  
**Whappersnipper:** Someone who assaults a mohel.  
**Lucaguch:** To carry a cooler full of beer.

There's a lot of fun to be had with spoonerisms, those sometimes accidental, sometimes intentional transposing of parts of two words in a phrase — an old Invitational contest for them produced such classics as a Buddha figurine described as "a placid face about a flaccid place." Loser Peter Metrinko suggests a twist on the form:

This week: "Spoonerize" a single word or a name by transposing different parts of the word (more than two adjacent letters), and define the resultant new term, as in Peter's examples above. Winner gets the Inker, the official Style Invitational trophy. Second place gets a tube of genuine Splat brand chili-flavor Russian toothpaste, brought directly from Moscow by Very Sporadic Loser Dean Meservy.

Other runners-up win their choice of a coveted Style Invitational Loser T-shirt or yearned-for Loser Mug. Honorable Mentions get one of the lusted-after Style Invitational Loser Magnets. First Offenders get a smelly tree-shaped air "freshener" (fir stink for their first Inkr). One prize per entrant per week. Send your entries by e-mail to [losers@washpost.com](mailto:losers@washpost.com) or by fax to 202-334-4312. Deadline is Monday, April 19. Put "Week 864" in the subject line of your e-mail, or it risks being ignored as spam. Include your name, postal address and phone number with your entry. Contests are judged on the basis of humor and originality. All entries become the property of The Washington Post. Entries may be edited for taste or content. Results to be published May 8. No purchase required for entry. Employees of The Washington Post, and their immediate relatives, are not eligible for prizes. Pseudonymous entries will be disqualified. The revised title for next week's results is by Tom Witte; this week's honorable-mentions subhead is by Russell Beland. The spoonerism from Week 124 was by Matt Westbrook of Baltimore.

# Obama cuts to the nitty-gritty on kids' obesity

## At task force gathering, first lady delves for details in youth campaign

BY ROBIN GIVHAN

The fresh-faced elementary-school children were nowhere to be seen. There were no bright spring vegetables being harvested, no celebrated athletes or actors for added sizzle. First lady Michelle Obama's campaign against childhood obesity got down, dirty and wonkish Friday afternoon with a gathering of administration officials reeling off statistics and academics quoting from research papers.

Obama's opening remarks, low-key and without exclamation points, set the tone for the afternoon. She sounded more like an executive preparing to dive into the minutiae of an immense project than a first lady speaking in sweeping statements that are designed to inspire.

"We've started an important national conversation. But we need your help to propel that conversation into a national response," she said. "The information that we collect here today will be essential to construct the final report that's going to come from the task force — a report that will serve as a very important road map, with goals, benchmarks, measurable outcomes that will help us collectively tackle this challenge."

Obama gathered about 100 suits, profs, politicians and activists in the South Court Auditorium in the Old Executive Office Building where the air was artificially chilled, the lights were flickering and four American flags adorned the stage. Peter Orszag — Office of Management and Budget — was in the house detailing the financial costs of obesity-related health care: about \$150 billion a year. Arne Duncan — Department of Education — was on stage talking about the importance of eradicating "recreation deserts," those neighborhoods where kids simply have no place to play. And Ken Salazar — Department of the Interior — was making a pitch for building more parks in the vicinity of schools.

Back in February, when the first lady launched "Let's Move," her childhood obesity initiative, the president signed a memorandum creating a task force charged with developing workable ideas to help end childhood obesity within a generation. This summit brought together members of the task force, as well as folks who have, for years, been in the trenches doing research and trying to come up with ways to change the unhealthy eating habits of a nation.

The opening session did not get fizzy, but during the question-and-answer portion, with hands flying up left and right, many of the task force members in at-



EVAN VUCCI/ASSOCIATED PRESS

tendance proved themselves to be eager and well-read students on obesity. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture Kathleen Merrigan highlighted the connection between hunger and obesity, a paradox stemming from the lack of access to healthy food. Duncan reminded everyone about his department's \$1 billion budget. Then he talked about the importance of taking a holistic approach to education: "If we want students to be much more successful academically, they *have* to be active."

"I'm a big fan of recess," he said. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin noted that large corporations should provide female employees with a clean and private place to breast-feed because, she

said, research has shown that children who are breast-fed for the first six months of their lives are less likely to become obese.

And Orszag proclaimed himself a star pupil, noting that he hadn't met all the researchers sitting in the front row but he'd read all their work. Then he showed off his knowledge of behavioral economics while discussing how proximity to running trails, bike lanes and gyms makes people more likely to exercise; even four blocks can make a difference. He went on to note that the relationship between obesity and chronic disease is more profound than the connection between smoking and illness. Obese employees are less productive at work, he

said. And then for extra credit: Obesity causes premature aging, he posited. "Forty may be the new 30; but if you're obese, 40 is the new 60."

After about an hour, the audience divided into smaller groups to brainstorm. Melody Barnes, the director of the Domestic Policy Council and chair of the task force, gave them their assignment. "Come up with three to five of the best ideas, the important actions, the task force should recommend to the president," she said. Don't come back with 10 to 15, she warned. Focus. Edit. "Think critically."

Class dismissed. [givhan@washpost.com](mailto:givhan@washpost.com)

## DOONESBURY BY GARRY TRUDEAU

