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*Listening, learning,
and living together:
it's the science of life.*

Who's Watching the Kids?¹

Donna Davis²

When our children were young, dealing with childcare was one of the most difficult tasks we faced. Making the decision of who would watch our children when we were at work was extraordinarily difficult. Even today, a scene from the 1980s movie, "Baby Boom" strikes close to home, as when Diane Keaton interviewed potential nannies. Those interviews can be an exercise in patience, frustration, humor, and hope. Fortunately, we were lucky enough to end up finding some wonderful women to watch our children, and they remain our friends today.

According to the U.S. Census, almost 13 million of the 18 million children under five years of age in the U.S. (2002) are in some form of regular childcare during a typical week. In a study of childcare arrangements published in 2005, the Census Bureau reported that 40% of preschoolers are cared for by a relative, 23% of whom are cared for by their grandparents, and 14% of whom are cared for by their father (when dad is not considered the primary or secondary caregiver). Siblings cared for 3%, and less than 1% (or 39,000) were found in self-care situations (Overturf Johnson, J., 2005).

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2. Donna Davis, Senior Producer, Family Album Radio, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611. Reviewed by Suzanna Smith, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, University of Florida.

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Almost one-quarter of children 5 and under are in non-relative care, including day care centers, nursery or preschools, and family day care.

Working parents are choosing from a variety of child care options. As my children reach the age now where they begin families of their own, I'm beginning to wonder if I'll be watching the kids....

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