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Letter from the publisher

Volunteering in life

Every year in March our Sales Manager, Sharon Noble, and I attend the Annual Convention of *The Parenting Media Association* and the Editorial & Design Awards Dinner. Every year since we started entering we have come back



with some awards and this year was no exception. Congratulations to our wonderful team of writers who are individually mentioned in the article inside this issue and on our website, www.NYParenting.com.

Truthfully, I absolutely love meeting with my colleagues from around the country and the English-speaking world. Being a member of *The Parenting Media Association* is so satisfying and I have learned a great deal over

the years from the consistent interaction with other professionals in our niche.

When I first started going 14 years ago, I had no idea that I would someday become the President of this wonderful association. But just a few weeks ago I

did. After years of volunteering in a variety of ways, I had worked my way up the ladder, onto the Board of Directors and had become an Officer. Now I am the President.

Similarly, when I attended my first PTA meeting, I had no idea that by the following year I would also be the President. I guess I'm one of those people, a volunteer, someone who always gets involved. Being a joiner expands your horizons and

introduces into your world a whole network of new faces and personalities. Not everyone is a joiner type but if you're not, you should try a bit harder to become one.

As one of my colleagues has said, "from the moment I signed on and/or raised my hand, my information increased and my education was in full swing." Keep in mind also what a good role model it is for your children, to see you participating and active. They will also be inclined to participate, to get involved and be vital as they progress through school and life.

Since we all know that most people learn by example, setting this kind of example early in your children's lives can only facilitate the possibility of them become leaders in their own lives. The various rewards derived from belonging to reputable clubs, societies, or orga-

nizations grow more valuable all the time. In such a complex and competitive world the benefits one can establish expand in importance.

Taking the time to join the parent association or to coach a team or teach a class in something you do with gusto is a marvelous way to show your children that you care about them, who they are and who they might become. They will profit in every way from your involvement and in addition you will be enhanced with the pleasure of new friends and new ideas.

Thanks for reading. Happy Spring! Celebrate the Earth!

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,
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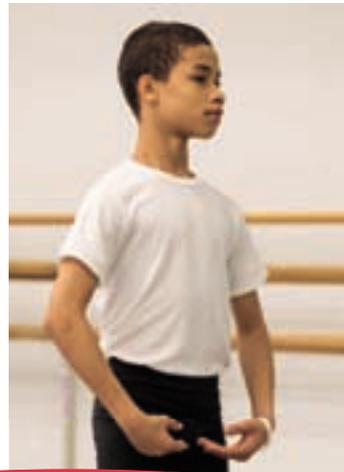
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We are just back from the annual *Parenting Media Association* convention in Atlanta, Georgia, and wanted to share our good news. It was a very eventful and exciting trip.

Our Publisher/Executive Editor, Susan Weiss, was proudly installed as the new President of PMA. Both she and Sharon Noble, our Sales Manager and Susan's right arm, enjoyed the program and interaction with colleagues as always.

The 2013 *Editorial and Design Awards* brought us initial honors last month by being named finalists in **eight different categories**. At the Awards Dinner held Saturday night following the conference, the judges' winners were announced and we were thrilled to take home two GOLD awards and one SILVER.

Here is a breakdown of our top awards:

In the Personal Essay category, Tim Perrins' piece in *Brooklyn Family*, "It Can't Be Easy, Being a Baby," won a **GOLD** award. Judges said, "Mr. Perrins employs a playful voice as he offers a delightfully intriguing and amusing psychoanalysis of the reasons behind a baby's resistance to change. Good pacing, nice description, and fun to read."

Our interview with Rain Pryor in *Bronx/Riverdale Family* brought home another **GOLD**. The judges commented that in "A Conversation With Rain Pryor," written by Tammy Scileppi, "The reporter directs questions that are effective in bringing out joy (the birth of her daughter) as well as heartbreak (her complicated father's death), and also gives the subject



Sharon Noble and Susan Weiss celebrate.

a chance to share her wisdom."

Our monthly *Healthy Living* column written by Danielle Sullivan took home the **SILVER** award in the Family Matters category for *Staten Island Family*. Judges had this to say: "Writer Danielle Sullivan sets herself apart as a writer by choosing topics with real reader interest. A piece on why young girls are reaching puberty early makes you think about the role of hormones in foods. Another piece looks at how melatonin might be a non-prescription alternative for child sleeping programs."

Publisher/Executive Editor Susan Weiss is proud of the work she and her excellent staff have done over the years they have been publishing. She is particularly excited about the launch of their latest magazine, *Manhattan Family*, which took place in August, and is thrilled at its growth and acceptance in the Manhattan

parent market, and proud to be uniquely printing parenting information in all five boroughs.

After years of volunteering in a variety of roles, she is also eager to embark on her new role as the President of the Parenting Media Association.

"I have made so many marvelous friendships since I became involved in PMA and I have been mentored by extraordinary publishers in the parenting niche from all over the country, Canada and Australia. One of my closest friends in the association is the Publisher of all the parenting magazines in Australia and our immediate Past President. How else would I have met and befriended a talented colleague living in Sydney without having been involved and engaged in our Association?"

Thank you for sharing in our good news, and of course, for reading!
— *NY Parenting*

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Green classroom

Seven ways
make your
school more
eco-friendly

BY MARY HELEN BERG

Perhaps “reduce, reuse, recycle” is already a mantra on your school campus. If yours is among the greenest schools, it also weaves sustainability topics into the curriculum and involves students in a school-wide quest to reduce their impact on the environment. But there is always more to do.

On Earth Day, or any day, you can raise green awareness among

students, parents, and teachers with fun projects that also build community.

Trash-free lunch

Propose trash-free lunch at your school. Juice boxes, straws, chip bags, and other individual serving packages make packing lunch a breeze. Who would want to give that up? Unfortunately, when families pack children’s lunches this way, they contribute mounds of unnecessary trash to the landfill.

Create a contest to see which class collects the least trash at lunch. It can be hard to break the habit of buying products in individual serving packages, but using re-usable plastic containers and a thermos at lunch will instantly decrease your school’s trash.

Movie night

Nothing gets a message across like a good movie. Celebrate the earth and raise environmental awareness with a family movie

You can raise green awareness among students, parents, and teachers with fun projects that also build community.

night at your school, or host an evening screening at your home. Films like "Fern Gully," "WALL-E," and "Whale Rider" are poignant and impactful choices for kids. For a parents-only screening that is certain to spark discussion, choose thought-provoking documentaries such as "Food, Inc.," "An Inconvenient Truth," or the mesmerizing "Koyaanisqatsi."

For more recommendations, check out MotherNatureNetwork.com for its list of the best environmental movies of all time.

Plant a garden

If your school doesn't have a garden yet, volunteer to dig up a corner of dirt and plant one. The plot doesn't have to be vast, just big enough for kids to take care of. A school garden is the perfect place for them to learn where healthy food comes from.

Check out EdibleSchoolYard.org for resources, tips, and plenty of inspiration about "edible education."

Swap it out

Kids outgrow their bikes, skates, shoes, and clothes faster than you can say, "landfill." Don't toss anything out. Chances are, there is a kid at your school who could use the cleats your daughter outgrew last season. Host a swap meet in the gym or parking lot and ask parents to bring in old clothes or sports equipment their kids aren't using any more. Anyone who brings in a donation can "swap" his old stuff for an item he needs.

A swap meet helps teach kids that there is still value in used goods and provides a tangible example of the benefits of recycling.

Take a trip

Organize a school or class outing to a wetland, beach, forest, or wildlife sanctuary. Your group

can conduct a cleanup and provide care for these environments.

For example, at a wetland, you can pluck plants that are not indigenous, while at the beach you can collect trash. Or, you can simply use the trip to drink in natural beauty. Exposing kids to the wonders of nature is a sure way to encourage them to respect and protect it.

Host a fair

Earth Day is the perfect opportunity for an all-school festival to celebrate the environment, but you can host an environmental fair anytime.

The event can be simple and still be fun and educational. Set up booths where parents host activities for the kids. Feature a craft using recyclable materials to create jewelry or sculpture. Display a solar cooker and teach kids how to make one of their own. Create a game where children guess how many pounds of grain, or how many gallons of water, it takes to create one pound of beef. Host a "crop swap" booth, where people can bring produce that is overabundant in their own garden and trade it for items they need.

The social change group Do-Something.org is hosting the "Green Your School Challenge" again this year to mark Earth Day on April 22 and encourage young people to take the lead on going green. Last year more than 141,000 students from 5,400 schools all over the country worked on projects to save energy, recycle and promote green living, agriculture and education. The challenge is open to anyone 25 and younger, so if kids at your school want to sign up, go to dosomething.org for more information.

Make it official

Form a "green committee" or a green team to help organize events and projects and educate your school community on new green topics. Create a mission statement and a list of objectives that will guide the committee's work from year to year.

For more ideas about how to green your school, visit websites such as www.greeneducationfoundation.org and www.greenschools.net.

Mary Helen Berg lives in Los Angeles where her elementary school has an enthusiastic, fun-loving green committee.



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Confessions of a 'green' convert

One woman's
aversion — and
conversion
— to a green
lifestyle

BY MARY HELEN BERG

My husband is known as the green one in our family. He rides his bike to work and petitions the city council for cleaner energy. He wants to compost our dog's poop, but that's another story.

To be honest, he has had to drag me along into greener living. Despite the fact that I believe that global warming is a real threat, it took me a long time to stop sighing and rolling my eyes, and begin cooperating with his green schemes.

But, slowly, I have gotten on board. Now, when he turns down the heat, I put on a sweater. I bring cloth bags into the grocery store. I water the plants with what's left in my water glass. We never order takeout because it produces too much trash.

Plastic trash makes my husband particularly crazy because it is virtually indestructible and can take up to 1,000 years to decompose. You will not find disposable plastic forks or straw in our garbage. You won't even find plastic garbage bags in our garbage cans.

I thought it was painful to adjust to life without garbage bags. Then, my husband insisted that we stop buying sandwich bags. I thought he was trying to kill me. You can take away my paper plates and plastic forks, but this is a form of plastic I need. How do we make lunches without sandwich bags or keep leftovers without storage bags?

It turns out reusable Tupperware works perfectly well for these tasks. I stopped buying plastic baggies.

As he was taking out the trash cans one day, my husband proudly noted that our family of five had produced only enough garbage to fill a quarter of the trash can. The rest had been diverted to recycling, compost, or reuse.

I also realized recently just how

far I have come. My oldest daughter and I met another mother and daughter for a hike in a nearby park. The other mother emerged from her car clutching trash in her hand and she headed for a garbage container.

I meant to say "Hello" but what came out was: "Wait! Where are you going with that?"

Amid the trash in her hand was a plastic sandwich plate, a beige-green color found only in institutional cafeterias. It was not a color you would want in your kitchen on purpose, but it was otherwise a fine, sturdy plate.

"I am going to throw this in the trash," she said, marching purposefully toward a garbage can. I sensed she was feuding with her college-age daughter who had been treating the car like a rolling landfill.

"It's just a plattashe from the college cafeteria," her daughter assured me, as if I was concerned she was trashing heirloom china by mistake. "It's been in the car for three weeks."

The plate was old, reliable cafeteria melamine; perfectly shaped without a scratch or chip.

"You are going to throw that out? There's nothing wrong with it? You should give it to Goodwill. You should recycle it!" Spit was flying from my mouth as I tried to stop her before she hit the trash can.

It worked. My friend turned on her heel, back to her car with the crusty service ware.

"No, you're right, you're right, I should recycle it," she muttered. Her jaw was set. I knew that look because I had given it to my husband dozens of times. She didn't roll her eyes, but she might as well have.

Actually, I hope she didn't try to recycle that plate. Turns out, melamine is such an offending toxic plastic you can't even recycle it in your recycling bin. It contaminates other plastics. I looked it up.

Later, my daughter and I talked about the plate incident.

"Mom, you've joined the crazies," she said.

"Yes," I said. "We should all be so crazy."

Mary Helen Berg is a freelance writer living in Los Angeles who wishes her favorite Thai place would package take-out in compostable containers so she could order food without guilt!



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Photo by June Russell

City & country

How farmer's markets forge link between farms and hungry city consumers

BY JENNY TORGERSON

Greenmarket farmer's markets have been fixtures in New York City since 1976. With 54 different locations spread throughout the five boroughs, they bring farm-to-table options to city dwellers whose choices for farm-fresh, organic foodstuffs might otherwise be limited.

"The large, fresh zucchini I recently bought was big enough for two meals and tasted like it was just picked out of my garden," says market shopper Tricia Ostermann of Brooklyn. "You can't get flavorful vegetables like that at the supermarket."

For many farmers, bringing fresh options to city consumers has been a family passion. Greg Lebak of Lebak Farms owns and operates the fresh flower farm that his grandfather originally purchased. For three

generations, the Lebak family has been growing and harvesting flowers at their farm in Chesterfield, NJ. Currently, Lebak runs the business with help from his daughter. Together, they regularly supply freshly cut flowers to both the Grand Army Plaza market in Brooklyn, as well as the Tribeca market.

Lebak thinks that Greenmarkets are an enormous boon for city residents, since they provide consumers with a chance to interact with the farmer directly.

"Many people believe that the supermarket is all there is and they don't have a connection to their food," says Lebak. Greenmarkets offer shoppers the chance to see where their produce is really coming from, and meet the people who actually grew it. "[If] you buy a head of lettuce in the grocery store, it might have been picked in California six or seven days before you even see it,

but you buy it from the Greenmarket, it was picked yesterday."

Additionally, the farmer's markets feature more than just fresh produce. Buyers are tempted with a wide selection of meats, fish, eggs, wine, fresh-baked breads, jams, preserves, and other delights. Although the vendors stock mostly food items, the discerning eye will occasionally spot naturally made products such as hand-milled soap and freshly sheered lamb's wool. Four new Greenmarkets opened in 2012, extending freshness to three new sites in the Bronx and one in Queens. Greenmarket sources say 90 percent of their sites accept Electronic Benefit Transfer and all sites accept Health Bucks.

Juice vendor Lily Robbins of Red Jacket Orchards emphasizes the symbiotic nature of the market.

"Locally produced food benefits the farmers and their families and



Greenmarkets are an enormous boon for city residents, since they provide consumers with a chance to interact with the farmer directly.

also provides nutrition for New York City families.” This relationship is the crux of Greenmarket’s original mission. It was founded to promote regional agriculture and ensure that all New Yorkers have access to fresh, nutritious food. More than 230 family farms and fishermen participate in what has grown into the largest outdoor urban farmer’s market in the country.

Beyond the traditional buy and sell of the market, an education division of Greenmarket promotes special programs with city schools. School tours at the farmer’s markets, as well as “Meet Your Farmer” classroom visits provide children with the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the origins of the food that they are eating, as well as to hopefully take a keener interest in their own health and nutrition.

Sangeeta Singh, associate director of a private Manhattan preschool, sees the Greenmarket as a treasure trove of classroom extension activities. She and a fellow faculty member recently took a field trip to the market with group of young students to select different varieties of locally grown apples for a culinary lesson. The sights, sounds, and smells of the market provided a meaningful experience that culminated in a delicious, and hopefully memorable, bowl of applesauce.

Beyond its education initiatives, Greenmarket runs multiple other community service initiatives. Notable among them are the composting collection program that is run out of 11 markets, and the clothing and textile-recycling project that is run out of nine different markets. Greenmarket also

provides advice for shoppers who are interested in starting composting or textile recycling programs in their homes and offices. Also, Greenmarket annually hosts several one-day “Stop ‘N’ Swap” meets at various locations throughout all five boroughs. These events provide participants with the chance to exchange their unwanted clothing and household items for someone else’s items, leaving both parties with newfound treasures.

Additionally, the Fresh Pantry Project collects unsold produce from 35 of the markets and donates garden-fresh vegetables to feed the hungry at homeless shelters, food pantries, rehab facilities, and New York City’s City Harvest program.

Recently, the organizers, GrowNYC, introduced Greenmarket Co. to channel locally grown farm products via wholesalers to grocery stores and institutional kitchens by providing delivery and brokering services. Corner groceries and GrowNYC’s food access programs benefit from Greenmarket Co. deliveries.

The Wholesale Greenmarket, located since 2009 at the New Fulton Fish Market in Hunts Point, Bronx, offers local and regional farmers the opportunity to sell directly to wholesalers. The market is open to the public and serves smaller scale wholesale buyers such as grocery stores and restaurants.

Visit www.grownyc.org to find out more about Greenmarket’s programs, or to find the farmer’s market location nearest you.

Jenny Torgerson is a head teacher at a private Manhattan preschool, and she is completing her Master’s degree in Early Childhood at Bank Street.

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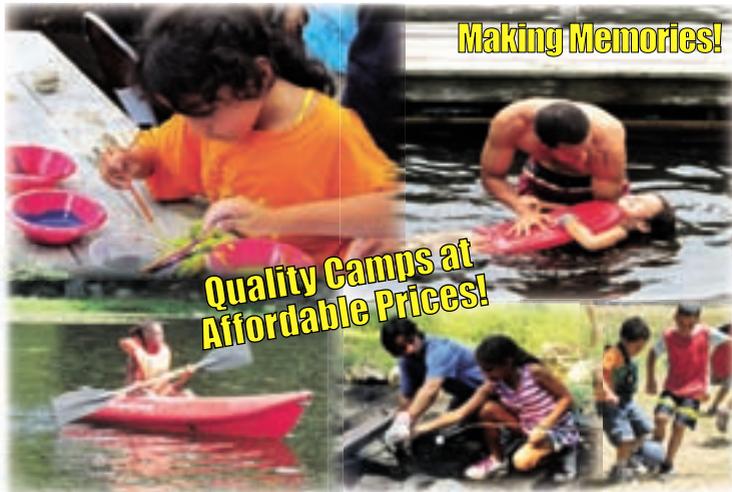


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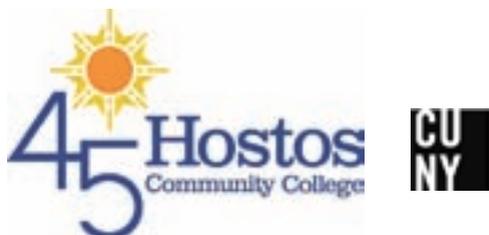
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Summer Camp

PROGRAMS

Continued from page 14

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Continued on page 18



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Continued from page 16
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“When young people help plant a garden it helps to reconnect them to nature,” says David Mizejewski, National Wildlife Federation’s naturalist, writer, host, and TV personality. “Gardening helps kids and teens learn about animals and their habitats, and gardens act as outdoor classrooms where kids hone their academic skills and nurture their curiosity.”

Here are some tips for making gardening with kids an educational, safe, and enjoyable experience for the entire family:

- Visit places where plants thrive, such as nurseries, arboretums, or your neighbor’s flower patch. As children explore, talk with them about the different sun, soil, and water requirements of healthy vegetation.

- Survey the natural treasures in your own backyard — birds, bees, blossoms. Children are notably wide-eyed and open to new discoveries. Cultivate their curiosity.

- Identify a spot on your property for a children’s garden, inviting kids to take part in its selection. National Wildlife Federation recommends a small plot of land — no wider than a yardstick — that can be easily managed. Other good options include window boxes or containers.

- Have your soil tested for lead, as children are highly susceptible to poisoning. If its presence is confirmed, focus on container gardening or consider building a raised bed and filling it with loam you purchase.

- Sow fast-germinating seeds or introduce transplants that are quick to flower or fruit. (Children are typically eager to see the results of their labor.) Be sure to include kids in the plant selection process.

- Choose plants that will excite the senses. Examples include eye-catching sunflowers, fragrant herbs, and ornamental grasses such as big and little bluestem.

- Woo wildlife, which will wow your



kids, by focusing on perennials that are native to your region. Native plants provide the best overall food sources for backyard birds and other animals, and because they are adapted to your area’s weather, soils and pests, they generally require less maintenance. For information about plants native to your area, contact your local native plant society or check out the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center’s native plant database.

- Add other wildlife-attracting elements to your habitat: water, shelter and places to raise young. The Federation suggests building toad homes, brush piles, a pond, and a bat house.

- Provide kid-sized tools and teach

young gardeners how to use them safely. Equipment can be found in most garden stores, but don’t overlook at-home options such as spoons and measuring cups.

- Eliminate the use of toxic chemical fertilizers, weed killers, and pesticides. When necessary, use natural alternatives instead.

- Practice good hygiene. When it comes to gardening, getting dirty is half the fun for children. Make sure they wash up well after working in the soil, as it can contain a variety of contaminants, including chemicals and harmful bacteria.

- Encourage children to do a share of all the garden chores, but be mindful of their limits.

- Visit the garden with your kids every day to make sure you don’t miss its rewards: flowers opening, butterflies sipping nectar, or ladybugs eating aphids.

- Take advantage of teaching moments. If you uncover a pill bug on the ground, for instance, explain that its roly-poly posture is a means of defense. If your children pose questions you can’t address, seek out the answers together. A visit to the library or searching the internet might be part of the journey to discovery.

- Encourage children to share their garden with friends and family. Giving tours reinforces their ownership of it and helps instill a sense of pride.

- Invite reflections of each day’s gardening experiences. Talk about what went on, what was seen, and so on. If time permits, have kids draft notes in a journal, draw a picture, or take photographs. All of these actions serve to reinforce what was learned — and enjoyed.

For additional gardening tips and information about turning your garden into a Certified Wildlife Habitat, please go to www.nwf.org/gardenforwildlife. For other ideas about how to work outdoor time into your family’s routine, visit: www.beoutthere.org.

National Wildlife Federation is America’s largest conservation organization inspiring Americans to protect wildlife for our children’s future. www.nwf.org

Gifts of giving

A charity birthday party can be fun — and do good

BY DENISE MORRISON
YEARIAN

At a time when parents are pulling out all the stops for their children's birthday parties, some families are hosting hooplas to give gifts away. Children's charity birthday parties is an emerging concept that encourages youngsters to think and act altruistically. And for some families, the idea is being embraced with open arms.

When Tracy Crowley and Ingrid Yerger's two 10-year-old sons and fellow schoolmates Cayden and Bo wanted to share their shindig, their mothers suggested they have a Hawaiian-themed party with a focus on presence, not presents.

"We both knew what the boys really wanted was to have fun with their friends, and they didn't need any more toys. So we suggested they have a party and donate their gifts to the children's hospital," says Cayden's mother, Tracy. "It went with the whole party theme — kids giving kids presents — and would involve sharing with those less fortunate. We threw the idea out to the boys but said, 'It's up to you.' They thought it was a great idea."

For the Morris family, benevolent birthdays are becoming a beloved tradition. When their oldest son Jake turned 7 last year, he had a baseball-themed blow out and asked attendees to donate children's essentials to a local nonprofit organization. His younger brother Cole latched onto the idea.

"During that time Jake explained to Cole why he chose to do this, and Cole said he wanted to have a charitable party, too. So when his birthday rolled around we rehashed the idea to make sure he was still up for it then decided on a tie-dye T-shirt

party," says Elisa of her now 8- and 4-year olds.

In keeping with the T-shirt theme, Morris contacted a charitable organization Cole was familiar with to okay the idea of donating shirts, and then sent out invitations asking that instead of gift, guests bring a T-shirt for a needy child.

Cole's celebration was a full-blown festivity, with 30 pint-sized partakers and a variety of art and

craft stations, including tie-dying T-shirts, clay sculpting, and wooden toy painting. Cayden and Bo's bash was bountiful, too, with swimming, an inflatable moon bounce, a water ice truck, and 50 children who donated a deluge of dolls, art activities, building blocks, and books.

"After the party the boys sorted the presents by gender, then they each chose one gift they wanted. The rest were bagged and taken to



Hosting a charitable birthday party

Thinking of hosting a charitable birthday party? Consider this:

• Proceed with permission. Before your child's birthday, ask if he would like to have a charitable party. Move ahead with party plans only if he is in total agreement, then keep him central to all aspects of the planning and celebration.

• Explore the options. There are several ways to host a charitable party. Ask guests to participate in the charitable giving process, either by monetary means or by donating a specific type of gift; create a charitable project at the party to be donated, such as stuffing teddy bears; or opt out of party frills and make a personal contribution.

• Choose a charity. Talk with your child about the kind of non-profit organization he would like to work with. Find an institution that taps into his interests — animals, art, literature, etc. Or adopt an underprivileged family with children the same age as your child.

• Contact and confirm. Contact the organization and ask what type of donation (monetary or other) is needed.

• Invite and inform. If you choose to have guests participate in the gift-giving process, include a note with the invitation explaining your effort. If specific items are needed, make suggestions.

• Go the extra mile. Create a party theme with activities your child will enjoy. Focus on friendships and having fun.

• Deliver the goods. Once the party is over, include your child in the final gift-giving transaction. Take his picture with the donated items and have him go along to deliver them. If you are giving to a specific family, encourage your child to write a note letting the recipient know he was glad to help.

• Offer accolades. Give your child praise for sharing his birthday.

• Live it out. Set an ongoing example by integrating giving into your family's lifestyle throughout the year.

Top Tips

the hospital," says Crowley. "That's when it really hit home. A hospital representative met us at the front door, shook Cayden and Bo's hands, and thanked them profusely. Although we couldn't give the presents directly to the patients, she talked with the boys about how their giving would help and took them on a tour of the facility."

Cole experienced an outpouring of offerings, too.

"We got tons of shirts — stacks! People brought outfits, too!" says Morris. "After the party we went to the agency and together handed the shirts over. The representative thanked him, took his picture to include in an upcoming newsletter and said, 'Maybe when other people see your photo they'll want to have parties like yours.' I looked at Cole and his face was beaming. That's when I knew he got it. He really got it!"

Both parents agree the no-gift notion didn't detract from the cel-

ebrations. It broadened their children's community awareness and stirred up a sense of gratitude.

"I think the whole event benefited Cole in that he enjoyed being with the people he loves, doing what he loves — which is arts and crafts — and that's what's really important," says Morris. "He also learned an important lesson about giving, and developed a greater appreciation for others' needs. And he had a great time in the process."

The event left an indelible impression on Cayden, too.

"He learned that he's fortunate to have family and friends who love him, good health, and a comfortable lifestyle," says Crowley. "And that helping others is our responsibility, and with a little creativity it can be a fun and rewarding experience."

Denise Morrison Yearian is the former editor of two parenting magazines, is the mother of three children, and has one grandchild.

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Red flags in child development

BY DANA J. CONNELLY

Children develop at different rates, with skills emerging at advanced rates, normal rates, or below age expectation. Often, parents gage a child's progress by comparing him to other children his age or reflecting on how older siblings developed. De-

velopmental delays can go unrecognized and untreated until a child experiences initial exposure to a structured group play environment, such as mommy and me classes, day care centers, baby gym centers, and pre-school programs.

During a routine check-up, your child's pediatrician will do a general developmental overview, asking you about what milestones your child is achieving, but this is usually a brief question-and-answer between parent and physician. Typically, your doctor has an overflowing schedule that hinders her ability to thoroughly address your child's progress through each of the five developmental domains (Cognition, Communication, Socialization, Motor Skills, Adaptive Behavior skills). As the parent, you are the constant observer and the best advocate for your child.

From the moment your child is born, his progression through each of the five developmental domains begins. One might ask, but how can an infant communicate? What motor skills would one expect for a child who can't even walk yet? Assessment tools, such as the Developmental Assessment of Young Children, are used for children from birth to age 5, with other versions addressing the milestones of older children. Developmental milestones focus on what a child can do by a certain age. Red flags can warn parents and caregivers of potential delays and disabilities. So, let's test your knowledge on

what is typical or atypical in child development.

•At what age do children typically put two words together?

Answer: 18 to 24 months

•What is the average attention span for a 3 year old?

Answer: About five minutes

•At what age should children be able to pronounce most speech sounds correctly?

Answer: 5 years old

•What is the average age that a child walks?

Answer: 12 to 18 months

•At what age does a child typically identify primary colors (red, blue, yellow)?

Answer: About 3 years old

What are some red flags we should be aware of during infancy, toddlerhood, and childhood?

By 7 months of age

•Seems physically stiff or floppy like a rag doll.

•Does not roll over in either direction.

•Has difficulty sitting up when assisted or holding head up while sitting.

•Does not bear weight on legs when helped to a standing position.

•When reaching, only uses one hand, or doesn't reach at all, or has trouble bringing objects to mouth.

•Does not respond to sounds or his name.

•Does not make laughing, babbling, or squealing sounds.

By 12 months of age

•Does not crawl, or drags one side of the body while crawling.

•Cannot stand while supported.

•Does not point to objects or pictures.

•Says no single words.



As the parent, you are the constant observer and the best advocate for your child.

- Does not use other gestures, such as waving or shaking head “no.”

Eighteen to 24 months

- Does not walk by 18 months, or walks only on his toes.
- Does not speak at least 15 words, and begins to use two word phrases (“Want cookie,” “Give me,” “Mommy up!”)
- Does not use common objects as designed (telephone, hairbrush, utensils, etc.)
- Does not imitate actions or words, or does not follow simple instructions.
- Cannot push a wheeled toy or carry a mid-sized toy while walking.

Three years

- Losses his balance frequently.
- Has difficulty running or stopping when running, needing to crash into furniture, a person, a wall, a door, or falling to the floor.
- Has a hard time going up and down the stairs while alternating feet.
- Cannot build a block tower with four blocks, doesn’t scribble or manipulate a small object.
- Unable to communicate in short phrases or understand instructions.
- Not interested in pretend play.
- Has extreme difficulty separating from parent.

Four years

- Cannot throw a ball, jump in place, jump down from a step, ride a tricycle with feet on the pedals, hold a crayon appropriately, or stack more than four blocks.
- Does not interact with children outside of the family, and tends to play on his own.
- Does not use more than three-word sentences to communicate wants and needs, and does not ask what, where, why, when, who, or how questions.
- Resists dressing tasks, toileting tasks, feeding himself, or sleeping well through the night in his own bed.

- Lashes out (hitting, kicking, screaming, spitting, damaging items) when upset, gets easily frustrated, and takes longer than three minutes to calm.

Five years

- Extremely fearful, timid, or aggressive.
- Continued difficulty in separating from parent.
- Shows little interest in the activities of other children and doesn’t engage in imaginary play.
- Does not respond to other people when they attempt to interact with him.
- Cannot follow a two-part command, such as “Please pick it up and put it in the garbage.”
- Unable to concentrate on a single activity for more than five minutes.
- Often seems sad or passive with a limited range of emotions.
- Doesn’t use plurals, unable to respond to questions about first and last name, or is unable to talk about experiences.
- Cannot build an eight-block tower, hold a crayon and draw a circle, undress (unfastening zippers and snaps), brush teeth, or wash and dry hands independently.

Keep in mind that these red flags are guidelines and are not intended to diagnose any disorder or disability, but should serve to cue parents and caregivers to have their child evaluated. Numerous research studies have concluded that developmental issues addressed as early as possible yield the most benefits.

According to the results of The Abecedarian Program headed by Dr. Craig Ramey, the earlier a problem is addressed, the more likely the child will make great improvement. As a child ages, the rate of improvement tends to slow down. Be aware of any loss of skills. Note any recent changes to your child’s life (new sibling, divorce, moving, etc.) and share that information with the professionals involved in your child’s care. The evaluation process can only be authorized by a primary care giver with the process costing you nothing but your time, and patience.

Dana J. Connelly holds dual master’s degrees in education and special education, and works as an educational evaluator for a New York-based agency. She specializes in applied behavior analysis, and is the proud single mother of a 5-year-old boy.

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Educating the public about bipolar disorder

There are organizations that offer guidance about the diagnosis of the disorder

BY ALLISON PLITT

Doctors began diagnosing children and adolescents with bipolar disorder in the mid-1990s. This stemmed from controversial studies done by doctors at Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School's primary teaching hospital. At the hospital were psychiatric clinics in which doctors were observing children diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, whose conditions were not improving by taking stimulants, psychoactive drugs that improve concentration and focus for sufferers of the disorder. Support and information for parents of children diagnosed with bipolar disorder was limited at that time. Today, there are several organizations working with medical professionals to help families understand the diagnosis.

According to "The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders," a book professional psychiatrists use to diagnose and treat mental illnesses, bipolar disorder is a psychiatric condition in which people experience intense mood swings. When adults are diagnosed with bipolar disorder, also known as "manic depression," they experience energetic, excitable moods followed by lethargic, depressive episodes. The length of time for each mood period should last at least a week.

One of the doctors at Massachusetts General Hospital, Dr. Janet Wozniak, said that these children were bipolar because they experienced mood episodes many times in one day, and that their uncontrollable outbursts of anger, such as violent hitting and kicking, were even more severe than a kid having a temper tantrum. In her book, "Is Your Child Bipolar?," she describes a bipolar child as having a "five pointed star" of mood changes — irritability, rage, depression, euphoria, and then

behaving as a "typical" kid.

"Mania is characterized by dramatic moods of irritability and euphoria. The children (and many adults) are often 'labile' in their mood and can change minute to minute. Most parents I see describe (their children as having) what they call 'rapid cycles' of changes throughout the day; flipping from rage, to lower

PART TWO of a series

level irritability, to sadness and to euphoria (goofy, giddy, silly, high, energized). Parents see all points of the star for varying degrees, cycling in complicated ways from day to day, week to week, month to month, season to season," she wrote.

Wozniak is a member of the Scientific Advisory Council at The Balanced Mind Foundation, an organization that was formed in 1999 by a group of parents who had found each other on the internet because so few resources existed at the time for parents of these children. Based in a suburb of Chicago, the organization's services are available to anyone with internet access at www.thebalancedmind.org.

The website contains a wealth of information concerning bipolar disorder: a library, research studies, a bookstore, and an education corner. Since the people on the organization's Scientific Advisory Council represent leading researchers in the field for childhood mood disorders, the information provided on the website is constantly being updated as soon as new findings about bipolar disorder are published.

The Balanced Mind Foundation also has online forums, blogs, and support groups. It has a feature called "Find a Professional Resource," where anyone can look for

a physician, psychologist, legal service, or other facility within a five-mile radius of the city in which they live within the United States.

"We originally started out our mission to address bipolar disorder and then a year ago we expanded our mission to include all mood disorders. Mood disorders are the grouping of either bipolar disorder or depression," said Susan Resko, executive director at the Balanced Mind Foundation.

Since its formation in 1999, the organization has experienced a drastic growth in its membership.

"We do not treat children here, so we are not aware of diagnosis rates, but I can tell you that the number of families who have come to our organization has just exploded. We have over 500,000 unique visitors who come to our website every year," Resko recounted. "There are 40,000 families on our mailing list and over 5,000 families that participate in one of our support programs. From that perspective, it's been a tremendous increase."

Another organization with a more global slant to its mission is the International Bipolar Foundation, which is based in San Diego and can be found at www.internationalbipolarfoundation.org.

"We are present in 25 countries at this point, and all of our services and programs are free and all of them are globally accessible, so if we hold an event or lecture here in San Diego, we videotape the lecture and then we upload it to the website," Muffy Walker, president of the International Bipolar Foundation, explained.

It has a global outreach and referral service for anyone looking for a doctor, advocate, or lawyer to help with Social Security disability. The Foundation also has a buddy program in which the organization will take someone new to the diagnosis of bipolar disorder and connect him with



someone who is more experienced with the illness. Besides holding programs for sufferers of the disorder, the organization also has resources for families and caregivers.

Its Scientific Advisory Board consists of the country's leading scientists and psychiatrists. It also has a Consumer Advisory Board made up of people diagnosed with bipolar disorder who make recommendations to the Foundation about what programs are in need and worthy of the its funding. The Foundation has given more than \$250,000 to support mood disorder research

The Foundation just published a book called "Healthy Living with

Bipolar Disorder," which is free to anyone in the world. An interesting aspect about the book is that it discusses how the illness is treated in other countries such as Peru, Kenya, Canada, the U.K. and Australia. The book is organized into a three-ring binder, so when data becomes outdated, the consumer takes the pages out of the binder and adds new pages with the updated information.

Currently, there is controversy in the U.S. about over-diagnosing children as being bipolar. Ever since Wozniak's initial diagnosis in 1995, there has been a 4,000 percent increase in the number of children and adolescents diagnosed with bi-

polar disorder, according to a study published in the Archives of General Psychiatry, which measured national trends in outpatient visits that resulted in a diagnosis of bipolar disorder.

There is no denying, however, that there are children who suffer from severe psychiatric illnesses and are in need of professional treatment. As parents recount their own experiences of caring daily for their children who have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, their stories are harrowing.

One mother from Kentucky recounted raising her son who as a child "would not sleep for days, and

then suddenly he would sleep all the time. He would be happy one minute, and in tears or tearing up things and biting me the next minute." She says he also got into a lot of trouble at school by arguing and fighting with other people.

The family took the boy to see different doctors until finally one psychiatrist labeled the boy as having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, bipolar disorder, and oppositional defiant disorder.

"You never feel comfortable with your child being diagnosed with (bipolar disorder), but you do feel relieved, because once diagnosed, then maybe he will get the appropriate medications," the mother remarked.

From the age of 4 until his present age of 16, her son "has been placed on many medication cocktails," says his mother. Although he does suffer some side effects, the medications have been able to alleviate some of his symptoms.

"On certain medications, he has shown much improvement in controlling the mood swings," the mother recounted. "I am very thankful that at least he can get some relief and live a better quality of life through use of the medications."

Another mother from Chicago talked about her 8-year-old son with a very high IQ, who also suffers from sensory processing disorder, a neurological disorder in which a person has difficulties absorbing and processing sensory information from his environment. He has been on at least 10 different psychotropic medications and was also identified as having severe mood dysregulation. His family ultimately traveled to another state to see a well-known psychiatrist who diagnosed the boy as being bipolar, which the family felt relieved to hear.

With numerous resources at her disposal for caring for her son, the boy's mother feels hopeful about his future.

"He has a ton of family support and thankfully we've had the ability to get him the help that he needs," she reflected. "And he is very smart himself, so I think he has a good a chance as anyone, given the hand he was dealt with."

Allison Plitt is a freelance writer who lives in Queens with her husband and daughter. She is a frequent contributor to NY Parenting Media.



Periods

Normal vs. not

Helping your daughter cope with her transition into adulthood

BY JAMIE LOBER

When it comes to periods, it is important to talk to your daughter about what to expect. You never know what information is floating around the hallways at school, or what peers may be sharing that may or may not be true.

When your daughter knows what is normal and feels prepared, she is likely to feel more comfortable with

her own body as she goes through these inevitable changes.

Be aware that every girl's experience is unique.

"Girls typically get their period around age 12 or 13, but it can be completely normal for them to get it earlier, depending on their pubertal stage, or can even be perfectly normal to get at 14 or 15," said Dr. Gabrielle Gold-von Simson, assistant professor of pediatrics at New York University

Langone Medical Center.

Your daughter's cycle may start out unpredictable, but, over time, it will become more predictable.

"Physiologically, the menstrual cycle is usually about 28 days, but can be as short as 14 and be normal, and as long as six weeks and also be normal," said Gold-von Simson.

When girls get their period, they need to understand what is happening.

"The body is undergoing changes, the voice is changing, attitudes are changing, complexion is changing, and it is a time for parents to talk to their kid honestly about her body, how babies are made, and about safe sex."

"They should know that it is a completely normal process and that they are likely to achieve or be going through their growth spurt at that time," said Gold-von Simson. It can be a nerve-racking time for some. "The body is undergoing changes, the voice is changing, attitudes are changing, complexion is changing, and it is a time for parents to talk to their kid honestly about her body, how babies are made, and about safe sex."

Some girls are more accepting of the transition into adulthood than others.

"It is interesting that girls perceive their first menstrual period differently, such that it can cause some to be proud, others to be scared, others to be confused, and others to be basically unfazed," she said. Most come into the situation with some knowledge under their belt. "They should have some sort of understanding, because there is health education in the schools starting prior to fourth grade, where they learn about the body."

The conversation should be a chance for your daughter to sort out any misinformation she has gotten before, and to ask any questions she may have.

"It is important for girls to understand that they can get pregnant and come down with venereal diseases, if they do not take proper precautions," said Gold-von Simson.

Explain that girls should be accountable for their bodies.

"They should understand how many days the period lasts and be keeping track in terms of whether they get it at the beginning, middle, or end of the month," said Gold-von Simson.

When a girl gets her period it means that the body has matured to the point where she can ovulate and become pregnant. There is no reason to fear the period, even if it means dealing with terrible cramps.

"If you are feeling pain, it is

good to take ibuprofen with food every six hours or as needed, and it is a safe medication when taken properly," said Gold-von Simson.

Help your daughter find products that work for her, whether it is a pad or tampon, and let her know that both are equally acceptable.

"Some girls, who have not yet become sexually active, have trouble inserting the tampon, which can cause some anxiety, whereas others do not and feel more comfortable with tampons, because it enables them to be active," she explained. Girls should be sure to change tampons in accordance with their doctor's advice.

Consult with your daughter's doctor if she has any concerns.

"If you have a heavy flow, or it lasts for more than five to seven days, you should see a practitioner because it can start affecting your health in other ways," said Gold-von Simson. If pain is so severe that she needs large doses of medication, there are other modes of treatment. "If the period is coming only 10 days or mid-cycle, you have to worry about other things happening. And if there is a missed period of irregular bleeding in a sexually active girl, you need to worry about other things."

Explain that knowing your body is the key to recognizing a problem.

"If there is painful discharge or pain in urination you have to think about sexually transmitted diseases," said Gold-von Simson.

When a girl is in tune with her body and has an open relationship with her doctor, she will be able to face periods with comfort and confidence, knowing that it is just part of the experience of being female.

Jamie Lober, author of "Pink Power," writes about women's and pediatric health topics. Her website is www.getpinkpower.com, and she can be reached at jamie@getpinkpower.com.

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A composite image featuring a woman on the left holding several US dollar bills, and a family photo on the right showing a man, a woman, and two children smiling. The background is a gradient of blue and green.

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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

The insatiable child

Some children seem to be born hungrier than their siblings. These tykes have a larger appetite and take longer to be satisfied. But it's not easy to know if they're born that way, or have learned to eat more from their environmental cues and upbringing.

"We do know that children are hungrier when they are in a growth spurt," explains child nutrition expert Jill Castle, co-author of the upcoming book "Fearless Feeding: How to Raise Healthy Eaters from High Chair to High School."

"Some children seem to naturally have larger appetites, due to a bigger frame or stature, which requires more calories, or their simple love of food and eating," she says.

A big appetite can be seen early on in babies and young toddlers. This does not mean these children are destined to struggle with their weight.

Eating in the absence of hunger peaks between the ages of 5 to 9.

"If children ask for more food shortly after a meal or a snack, they may be demonstrating boredom or habit-eating, rather than true hunger," says Castle, adding eating in the absence of hunger is associated with excess weight gain.

On the other hand, if meals or snacks are not nutritious and satisfying, or are erratic, little ones may seek additional food.

"Parents can dig a little deeper



and discuss why their child wants more to eat — maybe the child skipped lunch and is truly hungry, attempting to make up the shortages of the day. Or, maybe the meal was the child's favorite and they just want to enjoy more," says Castle.

But Mom, I'm hungry!

- Don't restrict the amount your child eats. This can ultimately backfire and result in a child who overeats at parties, school, or friends' homes. Weight and body image issues may emerge down the line.

- Brush up on age-related portion sizes and model those at mealtimes.

"These normal portions can serve

as a starting point at meals, with seconds allowed if the child is still hungry," says Castle.

- Work on recognizing hunger and fullness signs with the child, and make sure eating is for hunger most of the time.

- Ensure nutritious food is offered on a regular schedule. Set boundaries around when eating happens.

- Serve plenty of fruits and vegetables to round out any meal. Regulate sweets, but don't eliminate them.

Christine Palumbo, RD, is based in Naperville, Ill. and is on the faculty of Benedictine University. Contact her at Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com, Facebook at [Christine Palumbo Nutrition](#) or on Twitter @PalumboRD.



Fudgy black-bean brownies

These flourless, fudgy brownies are gluten-free.

Makes 16 servings

INGREDIENTS:

One 15-ounce can black beans, drained and rinsed very well
 3 large eggs
 3 tablespoons canola oil
 3/4 cup granulated sugar
 1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 1/2 teaspoon peppermint extract, optional

1/2 teaspoon baking powder
 Pinch salt

1/2 cup mini semi-sweet chocolate chips, divided

DIRECTIONS: Preheat the oven to 350°F. Lightly oil or coat an 8 x 8-inch baking pan or dish with nonstick cooking spray and set aside. Place the black beans in the bowl of a food processor and process until smooth and creamy. Add the eggs, oil, sugar, cocoa powder, vanilla extract, peppermint extract as desired, baking powder, and salt and process until smooth. Add 1/4 cup of the chips and pulse a few times until the chips are

incorporated. Pour the batter into the prepared pan, smooth the top with a rubber spatula, and sprinkle with the remaining 1/4 cup chocolate chips. Bake 30 to 35 minutes, or until the edges start to pull away from the sides of the pan and a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Cool in the pan before slicing into two-inch squares.

NUTRITION FACTS: 120 calories, 5g fat (1.5g saturated, 0.3g omega-3), 95mg sodium, 18g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 3g protein

Used with permission from "No Whine with Dinner: 150 Healthy, Kid-Tested Recipes from The Meal Makeover Moms" by Liz Weiss, MS, RD and Janice Newell Bissex, MS, RD.



HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Connection between migraines and food

Thirty-five-year-old mom-of-two, Sandra Mulcahey, remembers her first migraine well. She was a 19-year-old college freshman.

“I woke up with this mild throbbing over my left eye, but figured it would go away. So, I got up and went to class, but by lunchtime, I just couldn’t take the pain anymore,” explains Mulcahey. Since college, she has had regular migraine headaches.

In “The Woman’s Guide to Managing Migraine,” Dr. Susan Hutchinson, a headache specialist who suffers from migraines herself, estimates that nearly 30 million Americans suffer from regular migraine headaches, and of those, 22 million are women. Furthermore, these “often debilitating attacks that can leave the sufferer bedridden and that, in many cases, can undermine both one’s career and even one’s marriage.”

Like many women, Mulcahey’s migraines are sometimes triggered by the surge of hormones during her menstrual period or a particularly stressful situation. However, over the years, Mulcahey learned that, often, it can be something as simple as food or sleep that bring on a migraine.

“Over the years, I began to notice that if I skipped a meal, I would get that nagging feeling that a migraine is coming on. It would start with that dull feeling on one side of my temple, and I knew it would get

worse,” says Mulcahey. “If I can eat something quickly, I might be able to fend it off, but not always. Sometimes, even a coffee on an empty stomach will bring them on.”

Dr. Michael Wald of Integrated Medicine of Mount Kisco says that while not every migraine sufferer will have food triggers, many do.

“Food triggers vary among migraine sufferers. Many people with migraines do not seem to have food triggers, while in others, it is very clear that various foods trigger this neuro-vascular, inflammatory condition.”

What foods trigger migraines?

Foods that trigger migraines vary among individuals, but some types of food are thought to be typical triggers, like chocolate.

“Common food [triggers] are thought to be various cheeses including Brie, Stilton, Ementaler, cheddar, and Camembert. Sour cream and peanut butter, citrus fruits (including oranges and lemons), and coca are commonly reported to trigger the onset of migraines.”

Surprisingly, one widely consumed food that proves a trigger for many is gluten. But, as Dr. Wald points out, “virtually any food may precipitate a migraine. Commonly eaten foods often trigger migraines. (That’s right — not foods eaten occasionally.) Repeat exposure to sensitizing foods seem to trigger the autonomic and gastro-neuro-hormonal migraine response.”

How does food cause migraines?

It might seem strange that eating a food you enjoy and eat sometimes — or often — can bring on debilitating pain. Dr. Wald explains how this physically occurs.

“Migraines involve a hypersensitive autonomic nervous system response; this means that the nervous system is hypersensitive to insults like foods and various other potential stressors, causing the blood vessels in the brain and those that go directly to cranial nerves, to dilate. The nerves envelop the blood vessels, so that when the blood vessels dilate (get larger), they stretch the nerves and this causes many of the various symptoms associated with migraines including the prodrome (feeling ‘off’); dizziness; nausea; feeling cold; dry mouth; shaky; light-headed; head, neck and eye pain.”

Migraine prevention

The first step in preventing the dreaded migraine is to identify your own personal triggers, food or otherwise. Dr. Wald says they include poor sleep habits, stress, dehydration, poor diet, flickering lights, extremes in temperatures, and strong perfumes. Refined sugar and processed sugars are thought to trigger and worsen headaches, as does magnesium deficiency and hormonal imbalance, so seeing your doctor is vital in helping stave off regular migraine headaches.

Danielle Sullivan, a mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for more than 10 years. Sullivan also writes about pets and parenting for Disney’s Babble.com. Find her on Facebook and Twitter @DanniSull-Writer, or on her blog, Just Write Mom.



Sibling wars!

Fallout from sibling fights can be depressing

BY KIKI BOCHI

There's more at stake when siblings bicker than your own sanity.

As it turns out, fights about even simple things, like whose turn it is to empty the dishwasher, aren't harmless. Such squabbling can affect your child's long-term mental health.

A longitudinal study recently published in the journal *Child Development* revealed that siblings who fight are more likely to suffer

from depression, poor self-esteem, and anxiety.

The study found that not all sibling fights are alike. Although brothers and sisters argue about a lot of different things, many of their fights can be categorized as being about equality and fairness, such as whose turn it is to clear the table, walk the dog, or take out the trash.

The study, which followed participants for a year, found that teens who fought with their siblings over issues of fairness

were more likely to be depressed a year later.

A second category of fights often involves the invasion of personal space — for example, privacy or borrowing clothes without asking.

Kids who fought about personal space issues were more anxious and had lower self-esteem a year later, the study found.

"Our findings may help parents, psychologists, and others who work with and support teens to understand that all sibling conflicts are not created equally,"

Nicole Campione-Barr, assistant professor of psychology at the University of Missouri, said in a statement when the study was released.

A certain amount of bickering is normal.

"As much as arguments between siblings can be frustrating and concerning to their parents, they aren't always a bad thing. In fact, these arguments can oftentimes be the way children learn about relationship building, the resolution of conflict, and the power of empathy and love," says Roni Leiderman, PhD, the dean of the Mailman Segal Institute for Human Development at Nova Southeastern University.



How to reduce those sibling squabbles

There are some things you can do to reduce everyday fighting. Here are some ideas from KidsHealth.org and other experts:

- Set ground rules for acceptable behavior, such as no cursing, no name-calling, no hitting, no yelling, or no door slamming. This teaches kids that

- they're responsible for their own actions, regardless of the situation or how provoked they felt. It also discourages any attempts to negotiate regarding who was "right" or "wrong."

- Be proactive in giving your kids one-on-one attention directed to their interests and needs. Don't let kids make you think that everything always has to be "fair" and "equal" — sometimes one kid needs more than the other.

- Make sure kids have their own space and time to do their own thing, including the chance to play with friends without a sibling tagging along, or to enjoy activi-

ties without having to share 50-50.

- Have fun together as a family. Since parental attention is something many kids fight over, fun family activities can help reduce conflict.

- Recognize when kids just need time apart from each other and the family dynamics. Try arranging separate play dates or activities for each kid occasionally.

- Refrain from stepping in as much as possible. Instead, guide your children to resolve their own issues.

"Letting your children know you have faith in their decision-making skills empowers them to handle challenging situations," Leiderman says.

- Take a look at how you resolve your own issues with your spouse, friends, and siblings, Leiderman says.

"Modeling good relationship skills and examining family dynamics are important steps towards creating a harmonious home environment."



Often, kids also fight to get a parent's attention. It is smartest not to get involved in those arguments, forcing children to work things out on their own.

"It is tempting to play referee, yet unless there are intense or physical aggressive acts occurring, it is most helpful to allow your children to work out their differences without constant interference," Leiderman says. "When we step in, we often look for the 'aggressor' — the infamous question being, 'Who started it?' In reality, it is typically not a black-and-white situation."

Most brothers and sisters experience some degree of jealousy or competition, which can lead to squabbling.

But there may be other factors at work in how well your children get along, including your child's evolving developmental needs, his individual temperaments, and

your unwitting contributions to the situation.

In some cases, the fighting is so frequent and intense that it disrupts the family's functioning or affects kids emotionally or psychologically. In those cases, it's wise to get help from a mental health professional.

Although parents may wish to tune all that arguing out, it might behoove them to pay at least a bit of attention to assess what is at the root of the problem. Reducing the strife may be accomplished by taking simple steps — such as giving kids more privacy or establishing structure about things like chores and the use of television, computer, and video games.

KiKi Bochi, an award-winning journalist, reads hundreds of reports monthly to bring readers the latest insights on family health and child development.



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Calendar

APRIL



Photo by J. Larsen

Exercise to save the elephants

Make a pachyderm proud when you take part in this year's Run for the Wild, at the Bronx Zoo on April 27.

The fifth annual run is dedicated to saving elephants, their habitat, and other wildlife. The illegal wildlife trade is now a multi-billion dollar industry that threatens thousands of species around the world. Elephants have been especially hard hit with 2011 considered the worst year since 1989 for the poaching of elephants for their ivory.

Registration for the zoo's run on April 27 is open and is \$35 for adults; \$25 for children, ages 3 to 15; and \$25 for seniors, ages 65

years and older. Participants are encouraged to seek sponsorship for their run, and each adult is required to raise a minimum of \$30 in order to participate. Registration includes general admission to the zoo on that day, and a free T-shirt for participating children.

There are two ways to participate: the 5K for individual runners begins at 8 am and casual runners or walkers can take part in the Family Fun Run/Walk at 8:45 am.

Run for the Wild takes place on April 27 at 8 am.

The Bronx Zoo [Bronx River Parkway, Exit 6; (718) 367-1010; www.wcs-runforthewild.org].

Calendar

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Paper sculpting: Wave Hill, W. 249th St. and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 1:30-3 pm; \$15 (\$23 non-members).

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Join with Mrs. Irish and learn how to create.

Game day: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 4-5 pm; Free.

Children 5 to 12 years old play a variety of board games.

SAT, MARCH 30

Family Art project: Wave Hill, W. 249th St. and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am-1 pm; Free with museum admission.

Make a nature-inspired craft from a variety of recycled materials.

Film making workshop: Poe Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse at E. 192nd Street; (718) 365-5516; 10:30 am-2:30 pm; Free.

Filmmaker Eddie Olmo teaches students 16 and older how to write a script, basic editing and an opportunity to create their own three-minute film.

"The Frog Prince": Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 2 pm; Free.

This enchanted fairy tale comes to life. Wanda the witch casts a spell on the handsome prince and turns him into a frog. The only thing that can turn him back is the kiss of a beautiful princess. For children 4 years old and up.



Associated Press / Dan Lasfiter

Ready, aim, shoot

Take aim at the archery workshop offered at Crotona Nature Center on April 20.

The ancient sport is great for improving concentration, mental discipline, and building upper body strength. It's also a great way to enjoy the outdoors.

Urban Rangers demonstrate the safe and proper way to draw the bow, shoot an arrow, and focus on the target. All materi-

als are provided; no personal archery equipment is allowed.

Archery workshop at Crotona Nature Center, on April 20 at 1 pm. The event is free and open to families with children ages 8 and older. There is a mandatory safety review led by a Ranger required before the workshop begins.

Crotona Nature Center [Charlotte Street and Crotona Park East, (718) 378-2061, www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers].

SUN, MARCH 31

Family Art project: 10 am-1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, March 30.

MON, APRIL 1

Wii Bowling: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

For teens 13 to 18 years old. Strike it rich.

Game day: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 4-5 pm; Free.

Children 7 to 12 play Xbox, PS3 and Wii games. Pre-registration required.

TUES, APRIL 2

Teen Advisory Group: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 3 pm; Free.

For teens 13 to 18 years old. Find out what's going in the library and share your ideas with the staff.

Film day: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 4-6 pm; Free.

Children view age-appropriate movies.

WED, APRIL 3

Global partners: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

The program focuses on theater in cities around the world. Pre-registration required.

THURS, APRIL 4

Story Time: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 11-11:30 am; Free.

Preschoolers 3 to 5 years old enjoy picture books.

Flower making: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 4-5 pm; Free.

Hands on projects using different materials and skills. For children 5 to 12 years old.

Fashion 2.0: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Designer Arduino provides mentoring to children 12 to 18 years old in the field of fashion and making wearable art.

FRI, APRIL 5

Artistic teens: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 3:30 pm; Free.

Join with Mrs. Irish and learn how to create.

First Fridays: Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansion-museum.org; 5:30-8:30 pm; \$10 (\$8 seniors and students; Free members).

It's back for another season. Take the trolley to the mansion, enjoy a concert by violinist Kenneth Edwards, a tour of the mansion and savor light refreshments.

SAT, APRIL 6

Family Art project: Wave Hill, W. 249th St. and Independence Ave.; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am-1 pm and Noon-2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Families explore the park and then draw from nature.

Film making workshop: 10:30 am-2:30 pm. Poe Visitor Center. See Saturday, March 30.

Cat in the Hat: Barnes & Noble Bay Plaza, 290 Baychester Ave.; (718) 862-3945; barnesandnoble.com; 11 am; Free.

Poetry event for children.

"The Hobbit": Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 2 pm; Free.

Continued on page 34

Calendar

Continued from page 33

The JRR Tolkien classic presented by the Traveling Lantern Theater Company. Suitable for children 4 years and older.

Children's Reading: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 W. 112 St. and Broadway; (212) 687-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 2 pm; Free.

Get a little more blast out of the past with Lori Campbell at her book signing and reading of "Cartboy and The Time Capsule". Lori will be bringing a time capsule for everyone to add their own bit of history to!

A Night at the Museum! Sleeper Program: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street; (212) 769-5200; www.amnh.org; 6 pm-6 am; \$129 per person.

In this popular program, guests explore the halls of the Museum, including the Spitzer Hall of Human Origins, Cullman Hall of the Universe, and the Hall of Saurischian Dinosaurs, where they will find the 65-million-year-old T. rex. Then they settle down beneath the 94-foot-long blue whale in the Milstein Hall of Ocean Life, around the African elephants in the Akeley Hall of African Mammals, or at the base of a volcano in the Gottesman Hall of Planet Earth.

SUN, APRIL 7

Family Art project: 10 am-1 pm and noon-2 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, April 6.

Nature hike: Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; 11 am; Free.

The rangers lead a hike through the grounds. Comfortable shoes, water and a light snack are recommended. Meet in the parking lot.

Dance Brazil: Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard West; (718) 960-8833; www.LehmanCenter.org; 6 pm; \$25, \$35, \$40 (\$10 for children under 12).

Rhythms and dazzling artistry.

MON, APRIL 8

Wii Bowling: 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Monday, April 1.

Game day: 4-5 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Monday, April 1.

TUES, APRIL 9

Teen Advisory Group: 3 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Tuesday, April 2.

Film day: 4-6 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Tuesday, April 2.

WED, APRIL 10

Global partners -: 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Wednesday, April 3.

THURS, APRIL 11

Story Time: 11-11:30 am. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Thursday, April 4.

Introduction to technology: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 4-5 pm; Free.

Children 7 to 12 years old learn about computers. Pre-registration required.

Fashion 2.0: 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Thursday, April 4.

FRI, APRIL 12

Artistic teens: 3:30 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Friday, April 5.

A Night at the Museum! Sleeper Program: 6 pm-6 am. American Museum of Natural History. See Saturday, April 6.

SAT, APRIL 13

Family Art project: Wave Hill, W. 249th St. and Independence Ave.; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am-1 pm and Noon-2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Celebrate the flowering world by becoming a daffodil for the day. Make a hat or costume and join in the parade.

Film making workshop: 10:30 am-2:30 pm. Poe Visitor Center. See Saturday, March 30.

Family time: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 11 am-noon; Free.

Children 3 to 6 years old with a parent or caregiver have an opportunity to read aloud and do crafts. Pre-registration required.

Mighty Action Theatre workshop: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 2 pm; Free.

Children 6 to 11 years old practice their acting skills.

Yawning Rabbit River Chronicles Returns!: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 W. 112 St. and Broadway; (212) 687-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 2 pm; Free.

So much can happen when "Yawning Rabbit River Chronicles" author J.L. Kimmel and illustrator David Ceccarelli delight the audience with a book read-

ing and poems, while David plays his flute and does a fun quick-draw demo with attending children.

"Fiddler on the Roof": Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard West; (718) 960-8833; www.LehmanCenter.org; 8 pm; \$25, \$40, \$45.

Music, dance, and "Tradition!"

SUN, APRIL 14

Bad Girls with Jane Yolen & Heidi Stemple: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 W. 112 St. and Broadway; (212) 687-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 1 pm; Free.

Say hello to history's 26 most notorious women in "Bad Girls — Sirens, Jezebels, Murderesses, and Other Female Villains" by Jane Yolen and Heidi Stemple. Jane and Heidi will read and sign copies of their historical, but never boring, account of these incredible women which intrigues pre-teen and teen readers alike.

Shine and the Moonbeams: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 2:45 pm; Free.

Bring your little ones to this 45-minute interactive concert.

MON, APRIL 15

Wii Bowling: 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Monday, April 1.

Game day: 4-5 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Monday, April 1.

TUES, APRIL 16

Teen Advisory Group: 3 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Tuesday, April 2.

Film day: 4-6 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Tuesday, April 2.

WED, APRIL 17

10th Annual Young Child Expo and Conference 2013: Hotel Pennsylvania, 401 Seventh Ave. at 33rd Street; www.youngchildexpo.com; See website for complete schedule.

Sponsored by New York Parenting, this expo brings more than 1,000 people together across all kinds of programs, disciplines, and interest areas from speech pathologists to parents, to those working in children's museums, day care centers, preschools, and those working with children who have autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or other special needs. In one unique event, this conference integrates learning about typically developing children as well as those with special needs, including autism.

Global partners: 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Wednesday, April 3.

THURS, APRIL 18

10th Annual Young Child Expo and Conference 2013: See website for complete schedule. Hotel Pennsylvania. See Wednesday, April 17.

Story Time: 11-11:30 am. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Thursday, April 4.

Chicken book making: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 4-5 pm; Free.

For children 5 to 12 years old. Use a variety of materials and skills.

Fashion 2.0: 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Thursday, April 4.

FRI, APRIL 19

10th Annual Young Child Expo and Conference 2013: See website for complete schedule. Hotel Pennsylvania. See Wednesday, April 17.

Artistic teens: 3:30 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Friday, April 5.

SAT, APRIL 20

Paper flowers: Morris Jumel Mansion, 65 Jumel Terrace; (212) 923-8008; www.morrisjumel.org; 10 am-noon; Free with museum admission.

Celebrate spring and create your own bouquet masterpiece with tissue paper. Pre-registration required. Suggested for children 5 years and older with an adult learning partner.

Family Art project: Wave Hill, W. 249th St. and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am-1 pm and Noon-2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Flags and kites for Earth.

Archery: Crotona Nature Center, Charlotte Street and Crotona Park East; (718) 378-2061; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 1 pm; Free.

For families with children 8 years and older. Learn about the ancient sport of bow and arrow.

Creative Writing Workshop with Cathy Altman Nocquet: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 W. 112 St. and Broadway; (212) 687-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 3 pm; Free.

Get your pencils out and get your creative juices flowing! Cathy Altman Nocquet returns for another FREE creative workshop, open to children, parents, teachers and any one who wants to gear up the fertile factory of their mind. Ages 8 and up.

Calendar



Courtesy of Children's Museum of Manhattan

Chess for budding Kasparovs

It's game on — plus set and checkmate! — at the Children's Museum of Manhattan on April 13.

Children 3 to 6 years old can learn the fundamentals of the

game from NYChess Kids founder Saudin Robovic. Explore the chess board, learn how the pieces get their names, and discover all the right moves to have fun and win.

Chess for Children on April 13 at

2 and 3 pm. Admission is \$11.

Children's Museum of Manhattan
[212 W. 83rd St. and between Amsterdam and Broadway on the Upper West Side, (212) 721-1223, www.cmom.org].

children can make a dove-tree sculpture.

College conference: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 11 am; Free.

Teens 13 to 18 years old meet with college representatives.

Voces Theater: Morris Jumel Mansion, 65 Jumel Terrace; (212) 923-8008; www.morrisjumel.org; 3-5 pm; Free.

The participants explore the role of youth throughout history. Pre-registration required.

SUN, APRIL 28

Family Art project: 10 am-1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, April 27.

MON, APRIL 29

Wii Bowling: 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Monday, April 1.

Game day: 4-5 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Monday, April 1.

TUES, APRIL 30

Teen Advisory Group: 3 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Tuesday, April 2.

Film day: 4-6 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Tuesday, April 2.

THURS, MAY 2

Mother's day cards: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 4-5 pm; Free.

Children 5 to 12 years old use a variety of materials to make a card for mom.

SUN, APRIL 21

Family Art project: 10 am-1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, April 20.

Beach exploration: Orchard Beach Nature Center, Orchard Beach; (718) 885-3466; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 4 pm; Free.

Urban rangers lead children on a walk through the dunes to discover nature.

Stars of the Russian Ballet: Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard West; (718) 960-8833; www.LehmanCenter.org; 4 pm; \$25, \$35, \$40 (\$10 children under 12 any seat).

Outstanding dancers perform movements from "The Sleeping Beauty," "Cinderella," "Giselle," and "The Dying Swan."

MON, APRIL 22

Wii Bowling: 4 pm. Kingsbridge Li-

brary Center. See Monday, April 1.

Game day: 4-5 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Monday, April 1.

TUES, APRIL 23

Teen Advisory Group: 3 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Tuesday, April 2.

Film day: 4-6 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Tuesday, April 2.

WED, APRIL 24

Global partners: 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Wednesday, April 3.

THURS, APRIL 25

Story Time: 11-11:30 am. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Thursday, April 4.

Fashion 2.0: 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Thursday, April 4.

FRI, APRIL 26

Artistic teens: 3:30 pm. Kingsbridge Library Center. See Friday, April 5.

SAT, APRIL 27

Run for the wild: Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd. at Boston Road; (718) 220-5103; www.bronxzo.com; 8 am; Call for admission.

The annual 5K race. This year it benefits the elephants.

Family Art project: Wave Hill, W. 249th St. and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am-1 pm and Noon-2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Using natural materials and paper,

Preventing kids' sports injuries

Beware the growing trend of repetitive-use injuries in children

BY KIKI BOCHI

Baseball shoulder, tennis elbow, gymnast wrist, runner's knee. These are just a few of the labels sports medicine specialists use to describe the increasing number of repetitive-use injuries they see in budding athletes.

The growing trend of children being injured in sports at a younger and younger age has doctors worried.

With National Youth Sports Safety Month falling in April, sports medicine experts would like to remind parents that fractures, sprains, and concussions are not the only traumas they need to

watch out for.

Unlike acute injuries, overuse injuries can be prevented.

"Young athletes want to be the best they can be, and they believe intense training and competition can help them achieve their goals. Sometimes, however, this approach can have the opposite effect," Dr. Frederick Azar said in a statement by the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons. "Frequent and repeated duplication of the same movement — whether in swimming, pitching, tumbling, jumping, or serving — can produce an overuse injury that may jeopardize a child or teenager's sports career."

The trend is fueled by a combination of factors, including more

children specializing in one sport at a younger age, growing competitive pressures, rigorous training regimens, resuming practice before an injury has healed completely, and improper injury prevention.

Dr. Amy Valasek, a pediatric sports medicine expert at Johns Hopkins Children's Center in Baltimore, Md., said she sees an average of 100 children per month with sports injuries and at least half of them are caused by repetitive use.

While prevention is the best treatment, once an injury occurs, rest is critical. Convincing kids of that is tough, however, because of the pressure to forge ahead and play through the pain.

"It's important to remember that the main reason to engage children in sports is not to turn them into professional athletes, but to condition the whole body in a healthy way and instill a sense of discipline, responsibility, and teamwork," Valasek said in a statement. "If the current trend continues, in 30 years, we'll have a crop of adults with serious chronic injuries that require surgery and aggressive treatment."

The STOP Sports Injuries campaign and other experts offers these tips to parents, coaches and young athletes to help prevent injuries:

- Schedule a pre-participation physical to determine any pre-existing conditions or injuries.
- Encourage your child to properly warm up and cool down before and after an activity.
- Obtain instruction on proper training and technique.
- Develop skills that are age-appropriate and increase training gradually.
- Vary activities. Research has shown that specializing in one sport at an early age can actually be detrimental to skill development.
- Encourage your child to rest and take a break, and to speak up if he is in pain or thinks he is hurt.

KiKi Bochi, an award-winning journalist, reads hundreds of reports monthly to bring readers the latest insights on family health and child development.



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ALISON ARDEN BESUNDER,
ESQ.

Providing for a pet

Domesticated animals and pets have gained increasing prominence in our lives. Often, they assume as much importance as children — even more so in the case of clients without children. Many clients ask how they can ensure that their beloved pets are properly cared for after death. This is far from an unusual or uncommon question.

For many people, the care and well being of the pet is a very important consideration in their estate planning. A pet owner should not only consider what should occur in the event of the owner's death, but also what arrangement should be made during the interim period between the owner's death and the admission of the Will to probate, and what arrangements should be made in the event that the pet owner does not die, but is incapacitated or hospitalized. Arrangements should be made to allow access to one's home to care for and feed the pet during such periods.

In considering this issue, it is important to recognize that pets are not people, and they are considered "chattel," or tangible property under the law.

A Will can make provisions for the care of the pet, but the executor cannot officially take action to carry out these provisions until the Will has been admitted to probate and the executor has received the authority to proceed by the issuance of letters testamentary. Since there can be a period of weeks, if not months, between death and the issuance of letters testamentary, plans should be made to ensure care for the pet during this interim period.

A pet owner can designate a suitable caretaker for his pet in the Will. This matter should be discussed in advance with the potential caretaker to make sure the animal will



be cared for appropriately. It should be noted that the person who receives an animal as the result of a bequest in a Will becomes the owner and, as such, has all the rights and responsibilities of ownership (including the right to euthanize the animal if and when necessary, or on the recommendation of a veterinarian). It is prudent to name alternate caretakers in the Will in case the first-named person is unable or unwilling to take the animal when the time comes. Alternatively, the Will can provide the executor with the discretion to select an appropriate caretaker.

Since a pet owner cannot leave any part of his estate outright to an animal, the owner may leave a sum of money to the person designated to care for the pet. The pet owner should leave a reasonable amount of money for the care of any pet, since a large sum of money could prompt relatives to challenge the Will. If the bequest is conditioned upon the beneficiary's proper care for the pet, the executor will be obligated to ensure that the person

receiving the bequest fulfills his commitment.

If there is no appropriate individual to take the pet, the pet owner should consider naming a charitable organization (such as a humane society or shelter) to care for or place the pet.

New York law also provides for the creation of a trust for animals (sometimes called a "pet trust"). A pet trust cannot exceed 21 years, even if the life span of a particular animal is longer. The trustee appointed in the trust will be directed to use the funds in the trust to care for the animals.

It may also be advisable to include a provision in a Will permitting the executor to use estate funds to care for the animal for the period before the animal goes to the new home designated by the pet owner. The Will should state that the costs of food, veterinary care, transportation and other expenses incurred by the executor in caring for the decedent's pet is to be paid from the estate as an estate administration expense, whether or not the expenses are deductible for estate tax purposes.

A concerned pet owner might consider keeping a short written note in his wallet or purse containing emergency instructions in the event that the owner is injured or hospitalized and unable to return home to care for the pet.

In short, the best way to assure proper care for a pet is to make both testamentary and short-term arrangements for the pet now, and to have a Will that addresses the appropriate provisions for any current and future pets that you may own.

Alison Arden Besunder is the founding attorney of Arden Besunder P.C., where she assists new and not-so-new parents with their estate planning needs. Her firm assists clients in New York City, Nassau, and Suffolk Counties. You can find Besunder on Twitter @estatetrust-plan and on her website at www.besunderlaw.com.

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