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Letter from the publisher

Marvelous May stuff

Most parents have heard of Montessori Education, but we realized that very few of them knew why it was special and who exactly Maria Montessori was.

It was with that realization in mind that we began to focus in our

May issue on educating people as to what defined Montessori, and how it came about that early childhood education was established way back when in Italy.

Another interesting fact about Maria is that in addition to being the innovator of early childhood theories, she was also the first woman doctor in Italy. Maria was a force to be reckoned with and a role model for women who followed, as well as for educators.



Now there are other methods and approaches to the developing minds of little kids, and many other names have added to the theories and the possibilities, but Montessori was the first.

Also in our May issue we focus on ARTS FOR

KIDS. Why? Because there is little doubt that early exposure to the arts, or art classes of some kind such as dance, music, drawing, theater, etc., is a positive developmental experience in every way. It opens the mind, the spirit, and the intellect of every person/child who gets involved and participates. It has been proven that children who are in the arts in some capacity are better students and more confident people.

Knowing that, we as parents have

a responsibility to provide our youngsters with the opportunity to develop their interests and their talents. Music should be played in the home, and all kinds of music. Children should be introduced to a variety of artistic skills that may or may not strike their interest and their fancy. Without the exposure and encouragement from the home, they are at the mercy of the schools. As we all know, many of the struggling schools have been forced to eliminate the arts due to budgets.

Parents should never be totally reliant on the schools for the education of our youngsters, no matter how good the school and how enriched the curriculum. Most education, appreciation and opportunity begins in the home and parents have the duty to provide the intro for the love of anything to take root.

My family's house has always been alive with all the arts. Visiting muse-

ums and attending performances of all kinds were a paramount part of my child's education, and mine as well. Music is never absent and our house was not a house where the TV was always on, but the sound system was. My daughter studied an instrument, took dance, and acted in plays. It made a difference and she is an appreciative young adult with a fine intellect and loads of other creative friends. They are all enhanced by the vast possibilities that being New York City kids have offered.

I'm always proud to present this issue. Thanks for reading and enjoy!

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,
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New York Parenting Media can also be reached by calling (718) 250-4554, emailing family@cnglocal.com or by visiting our website, NYParenting.com.

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New York Parenting Media has been recognized for editorial and design excellence by PPA.

New York Parenting Media is published monthly by New York Parenting Media/CNG. Subscription rate is \$35 annually. Reproduction of New York Parenting Media in whole or part without written permission from the publisher is prohibited. All rights reserved. Copyright©2013 Readership: 220,000. 2012 circulation audits by CAC & CVC.



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Equal arts for all

The mission of Marquis Studios is to bring an arts education to *all* NYC kids

BY ALLISON PLITT

Renowned master puppeteer David Marquis created a non-profit organization named Marquis Studios in 1977.

Marquis's goal was for his company to teach visual and performing arts to children in New York City public schools. Above all, he believed that each student should have an equal right to an arts education. In its first year of operation, Marquis was the company's only artist, who taught puppetry at a handful of the city's public schools.

Throughout the last 36 years, Marquis Studios has grown to where the organization currently boasts a staff of seven full-time employees and 40 teaching artists. They provide arts education services to more than 100 city public schools, either in the form of classes, professional development seminars for teachers, or parent and child workshops. Although it has also provided their services to parochial schools and summer camps in the five boroughs, Marquis Studios estimates that 95 percent of its work is done in public schools.

When a school contacts Marquis Studios to request art classes be taught there, a member of the administrative staff visits the school to meet with the principal and learn about curriculums and lesson plans. Sometimes the school requests that

Marquis Studios teach certain classes that are featured on the organization's website. After visiting the school, the staff member returns to Marquis Studio's main office in Brooklyn.

Reviewing the teachers' lesson plans, the staff decides on classes for each grade that are not only age appropriate, but also enhance the curriculum. Marquis Studios refers to each class as a "residency," where the teaching artist draws up his own lesson plan to visit the school once a week for 10 weeks to teach his craft.

For example, when a second grade class was studying India, the school requested Marquis Studios come up with a residency for Bhangra dance, a type of folk dance from the Punjab region of northern India that has been featured in films such as "Slumdog Millionaire." Fortunately, Marquis Studios had dance instructors who were already familiar with this type of dance and were able to design a 10-week residency. Bhangra dance is now one of the most popular classes the studio offers.

The residencies are a reflection of the creativity and diversity of the studio's teaching artists. Some of the visual arts classes include drawing, origami, architectural design, bookmaking, collage, painting, mask-making, printmaking, scientific illustration, sculpture, textile design, and quilt-making.

As for the performing arts, the

names of the residencies are imaginative as well as culturally specific, which can supplement a budding mind's knowledge of a specific geographic area: African dance, Bhangra dance, Brazilian hip hop and blues drumming, circus arts, dance on Broadway, Latin American percussion, Islamic visual arts and culture, Japanese taiko drumming, yoga, song writing, and puppetry. At the end of the residency, the class puts on a final performance in which teachers and parents are invited to attend.

According to Marquis Studio education liaison Chris Forte, the organization receives "dozens and dozens of resumes" from people interested in being teaching artists. The studio is very selective in its hiring process, and requires teachers to be experienced, have a deep background knowledge of their craft and, in some cases, have certain certifications.

One of most admired and beloved teaching artists at Marquis Studios is Galina Shishkin, who teaches puppetry and book-and-mask-making. She holds two degrees in theater — one she earned in Russia and the other she received in the U.S.

"Galina, like all the teaching artists, is very passionate about what she does," Forte commented. "She loves teaching the children and I think that permeates all the way through the organization, and David is the one who sets the tone."

Shishkin says she learned about puppetry from her husband, Nikolai Shishkin, who was the artistic director of the Moscow Puppet Theater. He was also managing director of Marquis Studios for 10 years. Although he passed away in 2009, his family's involvement with the organization continues — their son Vassili is the studio's financial manager.

The Shishkin family is an example of the familial approach to how Marquis views himself and treats his staff.

"There have been times when a school requests a class and there are no teaching artists available to teach the class," Forte recounted. "We will not go out on the street to





find someone because we have no idea who that person is and they have no experience with us, so David will actually turn the school down. I've been instructed to simply say, 'Sorry, we can't help you.' We have lost business that way."

All of Marquis Studios's teaching artists have received training in New York City's Department of Education's Blueprint for Teaching and Learning in the Arts, which provides certain standards towards teaching the arts. They also attend training seminars at Marquis Studios, where they learn to create age-appropriate arts curriculum.

"Professional development workshops used to be a pretty decent size amount of work that we used to do. Unfortunately, it has really changed recently," explained Forte. "Very few schools do professional development with us anymore or with any outside organization, mainly because there are usually two or three or four days that are designated on the DOE's school calendar as professional development days."

Instead, there has been a surge in the number of parent and child workshops that Marquis Studios offers to schools.

"A lot of the schools want to get the parents more and more engaged and involved. The parent and child workshop is a great way to do that, so we're seeing a lot of growth with that," Forte observed. "We used to do maybe 10 or so workshops. Now we're doing over 100 workshops in a year."

Forte described one workshop he observed that was designed by a teaching artist called "Your Family Treasure Box." The class comprised of one teaching artist, 25 parents, and 25 students, who all showed up at the school at 9 am on a Saturday. The teaching artist, who brought all the art supplies and materials, taught the class for 90 minutes. The parents and children each created and decorated their own family treasure box where they could put information about their family and even stories about their family's immigration to the U.S.

The most remarkable aspect about Marquis Studios is its devoted commitment to its "beliefs and values" statement in which it states, "We believe ... that every child be taught equally ... and the values that guide us are (our) social responsibility to New York City and to each school

community in which we operate."

Seventy-five percent of the students who Marquis Studio teaches live below the poverty line, while 30 percent are in District 75, which, according to the DOE "is an organization within the DOE that provides citywide educational, vocational, and behavioral support programs for students who are on the autism spectrum, have significant cognitive delays, are severely emotionally challenged, sensory impaired, or multiply disabled."

Forte says the majority of the schools Marquis Studios works with are schools with free breakfast and lunch programs, as well as Title One schools, which receive federal funding, because of the economic conditions in the community where the school is situated. Many of these schools have District 75 students and the studio's teaching artists assigned to these schools have experience and are certified to work with children who have certain mental, physical, or emotional disabilities.

Marquis Studios also holds a professional development workshop called "Teaching Artist Training Institute." Developed in conjunction with PS 37 in Staten Island, the seminar

Founded 36 years ago, Marquis Studios now provide arts education services to more than 100 city public schools

shows teaching professionals how to work with students on the autism spectrum or are developmentally delayed. The program is now in its sixth year and nearly 100 participants have already completed the program.

In order to function, Marquis Studios charges a fee for its services. In the schools of wealthier communities, principals can allocate part of their budgets to pay for this fee, or the Parents Associations can raise the funds. Many of these schools already have an art teacher who teaches students on a weekly basis, so the residencies are considered supplemental to the students' arts education.

In lower-income neighborhoods, many of the schools don't have enough money in their budgets for an art teacher. These schools will often call Marquis Studios requesting a residency that will fulfill the arts education requirements their students need. These residencies are usually funded by foundations through grants. Some of Marquis Studio's funding partners include Bloomberg, JP Morgan Chase, the New York State Council on the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Forte describes his visits to observe these residencies where he needs to walk through three metal detectors to enter the school and four or five security guards are patrolling the hallways. What Forte finds most moving is observing the classrooms of District 75 students.

"It's sometimes sad to see, but, at other times, it was amazing to see how the children responded and what they were doing," he said. "It actually brought tears to my eyes to see how the teaching artists interacted with the students and how they were able to make things, and, in some cases, the artwork that some of these students created is just amazing."

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

Gifts *from* mom

A few of the intangible ways a mother can help her children

BY KIKI BOCHI

Mother's Day this month means mommies will hopefully get lots of kisses, cards, and maybe even breakfast in bed — which can be lovely. It's great for moms to get appreciation for all the things they contribute to keep the family functioning. But besides making lunches, helping with school projects, and doing their share of the laundry, there are many intangible gifts moms give their children. Here are just a few.

- **Confidence.** When you attend an end-of-year concert at school, cheer at a soccer game, or praise a picture your child drew, you are demonstrating that you appreciate your child's efforts. Your positive reinforcement gives him the confidence to take on the world.

- **The right to be wrong.** Children who feel pressure to please their parents with perfect performance and only the highest grades may shy away from challenges that could help them grow. Teach your children to try their best, but also to never to be afraid to stumble. No one is perfect. Be willing to acknowledge your own mistakes. This sends the powerful message that the key to reaching important goals is to accept that we sometimes need improvement and should keep trying.

- **Problem-solving skills.** Sometimes we are so busy telling our children what they need to do and how they should do it, we forget to listen to their ideas. When you ask your children for strategies to solve family issues, you teach them to think creatively. It could be something as simple as asking for their input on how to put the laundry away, how to carry in the groceries, or how to get organized in the morning. You might be surprised at how creative they can be. Be sure to seek their

opinion on how to solve bigger issues, as well.

- **Curiosity.** You don't have to have all the answers. Sometimes, having the questions is far more important. You demonstrate that when, as you go about your day, you ask aloud questions like, "I wonder how they do that?" or, "What would happen if...?" Observing the world and evaluating how things work are important life skills. Once your child starts to question things, take advantage of the library or internet to help your child discover answers.

- **Laughter.** The connection we create when we laugh with our children is beyond measure. Laughter also triggers healthy physical changes in the body, strengthening your immune system, boosting energy, and reducing stress. Allow yourself to be silly. Always be willing to find the lighter side of life. Create inside jokes you share with your child. Try to find the humor in even stressful situations. Whether it is a giggle or a guffaw, when you share laughter with your child, it creates intimacy and fun.

- **Patience.** Children have a way of getting on our last nerve. How we respond teaches them a lot about how to deal with stressful situations in their own lives — now and in the future. When you feel like you are ready to blow, walk away. Tell your child, "I need a minute." This models self-control, sets up healthy boundaries, and teaches your child that there's no payoff in pushing your buttons.

Now take some deep breaths. No one is perfect, but on this long road that is parenthood, we should seek moments of inner peace. Besides, our kids are watching.

Kiki Bochi is a freelance writer and editor who keeps all the Mother's Day cards she has received tucked in a drawer.



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Keeping the peace during PLAY DATES

BY MALIA JACOBSON

In theory, play dates are supposed to be fun, but visits from friends can spark squabbles between even the friendliest of tween siblings. From “She always wrecks everything!” to “It’s my room!” to “You always take his side!” scuffles abound as kids jockey for alone time with pals, stake their claim to bedrooms and playrooms,

and try to one-up siblings in an attempt to appear cool in front of their friends. And brokering household peace can leave parents exhausted.

Play dates were anything but playful for Piper Leslie’s two older children, 10-year-old Kaylee and 9-year-old Kyle.

“When we first started play dates, Kaylee was usually the one to have friends over,” she says. “Kyle has Asperger’s syndrome and has a harder time making friends, and I never wanted him to feel left out, so I always made Kaylee include him.”

But when fights started springing up between the normally close

pair, Leslie knew she needed a new play date plan of action.

Playdate pandemonium

Clinical psychologist Dr. Michelle P. Maidenberg, of Harrison, N.Y., is a mom of four who referees play date problems on a regular basis with her three older boys, 11-year-old Addison, 8-year-old Foster, and 6-year-old Wyatt.

“Sometimes, we’ll have several play dates in a week,” she says. “It’s a constant struggle to keep everyone happy.”

So why are play dates such a pain?

According to Maidenberg, there’s often more to the problem than meets the eye. Although kids may fight over fairness and alone time with their friends, the real issue at stake is sibling rivalry. Play dates can set the stage for siblings to feel excluded and hurt, and conflicts ignite when one sibling thinks that he’s been wronged, especially if he perceives that another child is being favored.

When tempers flare, kids often set parents up to take sides: “Make him leave us alone!” or “Tell her that it’s my room!”

Parents should tread carefully, says Maidenberg, because the time-honored tactic of forcing one child to include a left-out sibling in her play can strain sibling relationships. A child who is forced to include a sibling in a play date



Play date planning

Here are four tips for planning the perfect play date.

- Sit kids down one to two days in advance.

Ask everyone to come up with ways to make the play date fun for everyone — guests and siblings alike.

- Write down all ideas, even ones that sound impractical and ridiculous, like “Eat cotton candy at the Space Needle!” and “Bake 1,000 cookies!”

- Websites like familyfitness.

Top Tips

about.com and gameskidsplay.net have ideas for physical games for the entire family.

- Discuss why the ideas may or may not work for the play date. Together, come up with several ideas that enable everyone to have fun together.

Now, go play!

Source: Adele Faber, author of “Siblings Without Rivalry: How to Help Your Children Live Together So You Can Live Too.”

may feel resentful and angry, and direct those feelings at the play date-crashing brother or sister.

Playful peacekeeping

Happily, play dates don't have to be breeding grounds for sibling rivalry. Instead, they can be exercises in family problem solving, says Adele Faber, co-author of the New York Times best-seller “Siblings Without Rivalry: How to Help Your Children Live Together So You Can Live Too.” Since most play dates are planned in advance, Faber recommends that parents sit down with kids and draw up a pre-play date action plan.

“You know your own kids; you know if one child is going to want alone time with their friend and the other child is going to be moping around,” she says. “So sit down together and ask them, ‘How can we make this play date fun for everyone?’”

When kids are involved in creating a plan, they become invested in the solution, Faber says.

Creating a shared plan of action also sends an important message to each sibling: one child doesn't get to have fun at the expense of another. Every family member has valid needs and ideas. Rivalry diffuses when kids see that they are valued and that one sibling isn't being favored, she says.

Ideas for inclusion

Planning ahead is ideal, but even the best-laid play date plans aren't foolproof. Plans can fall through. (For example, when a surprise rain shower keeps everyone indoors.) And sometimes, planning is impossible (such

as when a neighbor knocks on the door for an impromptu play date). When hectic schedules or weather curveballs make planning impossible, parents can keep the peace by finding activities that everyone can enjoy.

Great examples are bowling, ice skating, jumping rope, and active electronic gaming systems like the Nintendo Wii that allow kids of different ages and skill levels to participate side by side.

Finding a special “job” for a younger child can help that sibling join in the fun; for board games, younger kids can be in charge of money or rolling the dice, and for an obstacle course, a younger child can be in charge of the stopwatch. After a round of group play, parents can give the child with the play date some alone time with her pal by asking siblings to help fix a snack for everyone.

Leslie found play date peace when she stopped micromanaging friends' visits. Instead, she talked with her kids about the importance of kindness and inclusion — and then she stepped back and trusted her kids' judgment.

“I realized it wasn't Kaylee's responsibility to keep Kyle entertained,” says Leslie. “I let them know that while I expect Kaylee and her friend to be kind to Kyle (and vice versa), it's up to her to decide if she wants to include her brother. Overall, they're both good about including the other. They know it's not fun to be left out.”

Malia Jacobson is a nationally published freelance journalist and mom. She blogs about parenting and family health at www.thewellrestedfamily.com.

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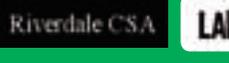


















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MOMMY 101

ANGELICA SEREDA

When family is too close for comfort

Not too long ago, I read an article on a woman complaining that she couldn't do anything alone anymore, because her kids were always there. When she wanted to read, they climbed onto her lap. When she drank her morning coffee, there they were. Even a trip to the bathroom was accompanied by her little ones. So, I had to laugh and sympathize, when recently, as I was taking a shower, I, too, was interrupted by some uninvited guests.

My shower has become my sacred, personal time of the day that I look forward to. For those 20 minutes, it's my spa, my "me" time, and it should be mine alone. My husband knows this, because every time he decides to say "hello," sneak a peek, or worse — shout questions to me from the kitchen about where something is — I get annoyed. And, yet, here they were — my husband, daughter, and pets — joining me in the bathroom while I took a shower and tried to get a little break.

First, my husband walked in, then my daughter. I looked at my husband, and said, "What, the animals are busy?" Then they came in, too; first the dog, then the cat. Everyone was in the bathroom while I was taking a shower. My daughter literally pulled up a chair and sat as if she were watching a show.

Jill Smokler's new book, "Motherhood Comes Naturally (And Other Vicious Lies)," has received criticism from parents stating that she is complaining about being a mother and that she should've just "gotten a potted plant." Harsh criticism for someone who is just telling it like it is? I think so. (However, I have not read the book.)

I remember a conversation I had with a fellow new mom a few months after I had Olivia. She was frustrated and felt guilty about being depressed with her new baby. I felt such relief hearing her say that. Fortunately, I didn't go through



postpartum depression, but I could certainly relate to feeling down at times. But most moms won't talk about that. A tip that I found helpful from another mom, who confessed to feeling overwhelmed and stressed, was taking a timeout for herself. She would go into her bathroom and sit there for five minutes while she cooled off. It didn't make

her a bad mom, it helped her deal better with parenthood.

But what if your bathroom, like mine, lacks the privacy you need? Well, children have to sleep sometime. That's usually when I pour myself a glass of wine (or apple juice, if we're out of wine), try to relax, and sneak into her room to admire a beautiful sleeping baby.



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Leaping into the limelight

Dancer leaps onto world stage with help from family, teachers

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

There are many smart young people in our communities with promising futures. But every now and then, a resilient, gifted artist comes along who rises above and beyond — despite numerous hurdles. What sets them apart from the rest?

In the case of a special, 22-year-old man from Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, it was a strong belief in his own abilities, a drive to succeed, a positive attitude, and encouragement from his family and mentors that enabled him to realize his life-long dream of becoming a great dancer. Jeroboam Bozeman was recently welcomed into the prestigious dance company Ailey II, and made his New York debut with that company in March.

“My first year with the company has been amazing; this experience has been a dream come true,” says Bozeman, who danced with Creative Outlet Dance Theatre of Brooklyn, Philadanco, and Spectrum Dance Theatre before joining Ailey II. “I’ve always dreamed of being a part of the Ailey organization, and I often pinch myself to see if it’s real.”

This season, he shows off his physical prowess and finesse in several lead roles demanding different personas. In “The External Knot” — a soulful, modern work by Troy Powell, Ailey II’s recently appointed artistic director — Bozeman describes his character as “a lonely guy, trying to find his way ... searching for love and yearning for attention, but often finding himself alone.”

Powell feels Bozeman is an asset to the company and brings depth



Brooklyn-born dancer Jeroboam Bozeman calls his mother his inspiration.

to its performances.

“It has been an honor to work with Jeroboam Bozeman over the past year,” says Powell. “When I hired him, he immediately embodied the spirit and energy of a young professional dancer. He has taken this experience and used it to help him grow as an artist. Not only does he have an incredible work ethic, he’s also very intelligent and grabs the attention of every audience he performs for. He’s a great asset to the Ailey II family.”

In everything he does, Bozeman never forgets his guiding lights.

“My mother is my inspiration. She raised seven children in Brooklyn and didn’t lose one of us to the streets...that’s commendable,” says Bozeman. “She never came to a performance until my last season with Philadanco, and it was a very

emotional experience for me. She gave me a hug and said, ‘I’m very proud of you. You are anointed with a gift from God. Continue to push, baby, this is only the beginning!’ Those words filled my heart and I hold onto them.”

Growing up

Bozeman’s childhood honed skills he needed to navigate the competitive dance world, and his mentor gave him the courage to try.

“My home was always busy. Whether there were arguments about video games, or who watched television first, or the bathroom ... it was intense and very competitive.”

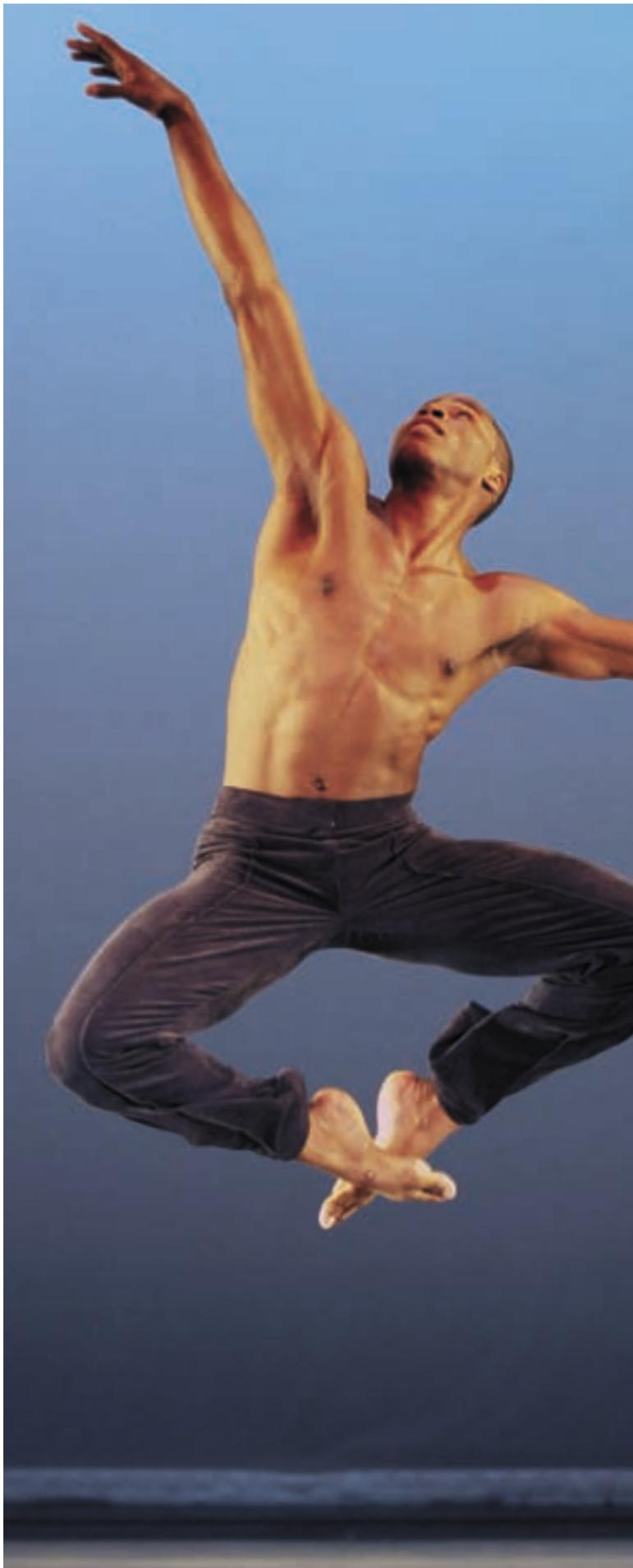
A quiet child who always had good grades, he says he was often teased at his elementary school, PS 44 in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Later, at JHS 113, he joined the cheerleading squad, “where I fell in love with dance under the instruction of Ruth Sistaire, an amazing teacher.”

Middle school is difficult for many children, and it wasn’t any easier for Bozeman. He recalls trying to fit in and find himself as a dancer, but says he always felt like an outcast, because he was awkward and didn’t talk much.

“I remember when I didn’t want to dance, because I was tired of being teased and picked on — the boys called me names and the girls made fun of me,” recalled Bozeman. “But Ms. Sistaire was like a mother to me. She was so embracing and understanding.”

And luckily, his sister was supportive, too.

“She would just talk to me. It was the best feeling ... I could be myself around her. She was an



Eduardo Patrino

amazing support system for me — always encouraged me to follow my dreams, regardless of what anyone said, and told me I was destined for greatness. She taught me to ignore what people had to say and remain focused on my goals — to achieve them.”

After attending the Joffrey Ballet and Dance Theatre of Harlem summer program on a full scholarship at age 15, Bozeman says he was intimidated by all the dancers and their beautiful bodies.

“I was caught up with all the things I didn’t have, so I stopped dancing, because I thought I would never be as good as they were.”

Getting out

Later, Bozeman did find the courage to dance again.

“I didn’t come from a privileged background, and people I

attended school with got involved with drugs, gangs, or became incarcerated. I knew I didn’t want to be like that, that I deserved better,” said Bozeman. “I knew that dance was my way out.”

And get out he did.

“I moved out of Brooklyn at 19 and thought I would never move back. It was sometimes scary growing up there. When it got dark out, we had to come inside and parents were afraid of losing their children to the streets.”

Bozeman says the gang violence and crime rate was probably at its highest then.

“There were a lot of killings and robberies, and there was a time when you could get into a fight or killed if you had on the wrong color; it was intense.

“People I knew and attended school with were vanishing — they were either in jail or passed away at a young age. There were a few that made it out of Brooklyn,” says Bozeman, adding, “Brooklyn is a lot cleaner and safer now, and looking back at how much the environment has changed, it’s impressive.”

Recently moving back to New York City from Philadelphia, Bozeman says he loves “what the neigh-

borhood has shifted to — it’s diverse and well-rounded. The energy of the community seems to be a lot calmer.”

On the road

Telling a story with ethereal movement and lush partnering, “Rusty,” a contemporary piece by Paris-born choreographer Benoit-Swan Pouffer, seems to echo Bozeman’s own life as a budding dancer, for it explores the experiences of young artists — the challenges they face and the relationships they build as performers.

“In this ballet, I think of my character as the too-cool-for-school kind of guy,” Bozeman explains. “He meets a girl he likes, and she makes him all gooey inside, but he doesn’t want anyone to know...so he can keep his image.”

Bozeman also performed in Judith Jamison’s “Divining.” A choreographer for the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, her striking, pulsating modern dance work builds on African dance idioms and is set to a score of North African, Central African, and Latin rhythms. Bozeman played a tribe leader guiding his people to a new destination.

He travels frequently with Ailey II — the company recently toured France for about four weeks.

“It was amazing, and this time I studied the language,” says Bozeman. “It’s always refreshing to realize how much dance is a universal language.

“Dancers are often perfectionists, we always want to execute everything correctly. Working with Mr. Powell has taught me that life isn’t about being perfect,” says Bozeman. “We don’t always have great performances, but if you go out there and you’re honest, that’s what the audience appreciates most.”

The up-and-coming dancer says he never had the opportunity to work with Alvin Ailey himself, but says Powell often shares stories from his time as a dancer with the company, and would describe the famous choreographer’s vision.

“It was all about giving back, and that speaks volumes to me,” says Bozeman. “As an artist, we have to remember that art is not all about ourselves, but the ability to share and give back.”

Now hear this

New guidelines on treating ear infections urge a conservative approach

BY KIKI BOCHI

It's a rare parent who doesn't end up at the pediatrician's office for an ear infection at some point. Ear infections are the most common childhood diagnosis, affecting three out of four children by the time they are 3 years old.

Ear infections are also the top reason children are prescribed antibiotics in the United States, according to the American Academy of Pediatrics. And therein lies the problem.

In recently released guidelines, the Academy is asking pediatricians to take a more conservative approach to ear infections before whipping out the prescription pad. In some mild cases, ear infections may clear up on their own, making it worthwhile to consider a wait-and-see approach, it says.

As a parent of two toddlers, Rebecca Batisto is skeptical.

"I've had a lot of each infections and second only to labor, I've never had a worse pain," says Batisto, whose youngest, 1-year-old Arabella, is already showing a propensity for multiple ear aches. "If my baby has that kind of pain, I want something done ... Any parent is going to go the distance to get their child out of pain."

Ear infections, or acute otitis media, occur when the tubes inside the ear — called the eustachian tubes — get clogged with fluid or mucous and are unable to drain. The buildup may be caused by allergies, colds and sinus infections, excess mucus and saliva produced during teething, tobacco smoke, or other irritants. The result can be significant pain and often a fever.

Like Batista, when a child is howling with pain, all parents want is a solution. But in cases where there is not a high fever or severe bulging of the eardrum, the smart answer may be pain relief with acetaminophen and time. The Academy cited several studies that showed that a majority of children who have a mild problem can fight off the infection on their own with no antibiotics, showing an improvement of symptoms within days.

At issue is the potential overuse of antibiotics and the danger of creating drug-resistant "superbugs" — bacteria that survive the medicine only to

evolve and become harder to defeat. But there is also the ever-present possibility of side effects to the child from the medication — problems such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, rashes, and more.

Antibiotics like amoxicillin should only be given to kids who are showing severe symptoms — such as significant bulging of the ear drum, infections in both ears, pain and swelling — or those who have a fever higher than 102.2 degrees Fahrenheit, according to the Academy. Of course, your family's history is also a consideration.

Parents should not be concerned that they'll be turned away with no medicine if it is needed, says Dr. Keith L. Hassan, medical director for After Hours Pediatrics Urgent Care.

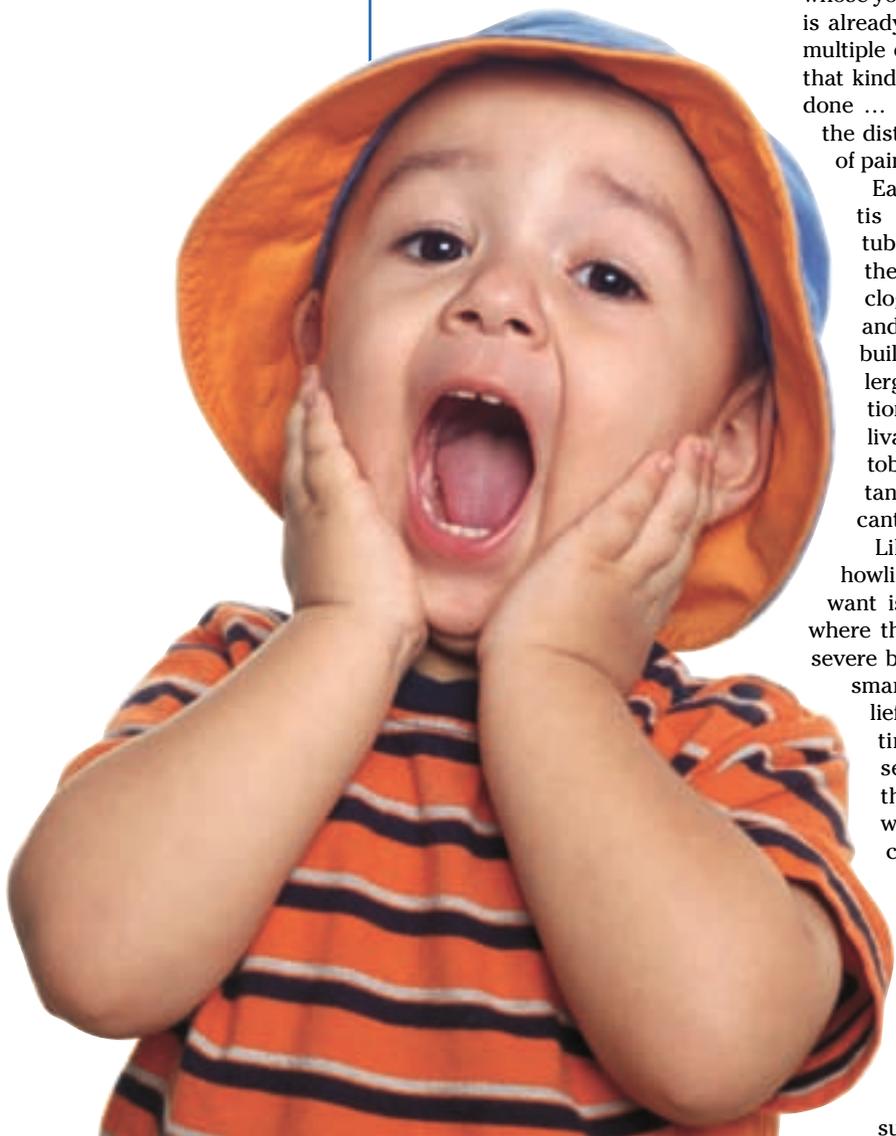
"The AAP does stress the importance of involving the parent in the decision to treat with antibiotics or to observe the child for improvement," Dr. Hassan says. "A parent can expect their child to be treated if the pain is severe, the child has a high temperature, or if the infection is in both ears and the child is under age 2. They can also expect the child to be treated for an otitis media if the child is under 6 months of age."

When a wait-and-see approach is taken, parent follow-up is important. If the child worsens or fails to improve in two to three days, antibiotics may be called for, after all, the Academy says.

"They feel this can be accomplished by requiring a second visit for recheck or providing the parents with a prescription for a 'rescue' medicine to start in the case of the child not improving or worsening," Dr. Hassan says.

The bottom line? Parents should always check with their pediatrician in case an ear infection is already advanced. But if it is not, they should be open to allowing a child to heal herself.

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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Art & soul

Helping kids express themselves through art

BY ALLISON PLITT

Valerie Plasmati's daughter enrolled in fourth grade at a Flushing elementary school in 2010. Her daughter participated in organized afterschool activities, but Plasmati was unable to find anything in her neighborhood

where her daughter could express herself more freely. As a result, Plasmati decided to create an art studio in the basement of her home where her daughter could explore a variety of art media.

"My daughter was doing all kinds of structured activities, such as swimming and piano lessons. I was looking for something where she was completely free to be herself and express herself," Plasmati recalls. "I didn't want to go into Manhattan, and locally, I couldn't find what I was looking for, so I started the studio myself with the types of classes that I was interested in for my daughter."

Teaching out of her basement with two other artists since 2010, Plasmati has created a children's art program called "The Art Studio for Kids."

Queens is full of adult artists, and the public support of them is apparent by the various exhibits throughout the borough. What is also apparent, however, is the pressure children feel to excel academically in schools and, consequently, put extracurricular courses aside such as art and music.

"Many parents are foregoing art and focusing only on academics," Plasmati observed. "Academics is and should be of primary importance, but a high grade point average does not guarantee success in life. Children need other skills to succeed later in life in a work environment. A lot of children today are in school programs after

school and on weekends — the programs are regimented, structured, and lack creativity."

Better students through art

Plasmati's observations are quite similar to research findings published this year by the National Endowment for the Arts. Using data gathered during the last 20 years from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor, researchers have repeatedly found that young adults and teenagers studying an art-intensive curriculum are generally better students than those with a course load lacking in the arts.

"Over the past four decades, budget pressures and an increasing focus on just reading and math have crowded the arts out of too many school days," says Rocco Landesman chairman of the organization. "What's lost? The chance for a child to express himself, the chance for the idiosyncratic child who has not yet succeeded elsewhere to shine. A sense of play, of fun, of discovery."

Landesman's comments reflect the research data that discovered, in comparison to the students who did not have an arts enriched education, that arts-oriented students had higher grade point averages, were more likely to enroll in and succeed at competitive colleges, and pursue graduate or professional degrees.

Better citizens through art

One of the authors of the research findings is James Catterall, who is a professor at the University of California Los Angeles's Center



for Culture, Brain, and Development. For more than two decades, Catterall has been researching children's cognitive development in the context of learning the arts, and last year, he founded the Centers for Research on Creativity, which he describes as "a new organization dedicated to inquiry into human creativity."

Catterall published a book titled "Doing Well and Doing Good by Doing Art: A 12-Year Study of Arts Education" in 2009. Employing similar statistics that the National Endowment for the Arts relied upon for its report, Catterall, moreover, found that arts-oriented students in the eighth through 12th grades later became more actively engaged and civic-minded citizens.

Unfortunately, the available research follows these students'

"These are not just classes but a playground of creativity. It's very pleasing to see him bring home new surprises every week — projects that are truly amazing and precious."

lives only up until they turned 26, but their behavioral tendencies show that they were more likely to vote, volunteer, and become involved in local politics than the students whose studies were not focused on the arts. The study also indicates that these students were more likely to read newspapers,

visit libraries, and pursue professions in teaching and healthcare. In addition, it was more probable that their career paths would ascend to the executive and managerial levels.

Coping skills developed

These research findings correlate to Plasmati's thinking that art students inevitably learn lifelong coping techniques as they progress in their classes.

"These kids unwittingly gain invaluable skills," she described. "They don't even realize that they're learning how to prob-

lem solve creatively. They're using critical thinking, decision making. They're learning to collaborate with other children and these are things they use throughout life."

During her three years teaching, Plasmati has also had parents approach her and tell her the positive effects her art classes have had upon their children.

For example, one parent told her that her child became more patient, while another parent admitted that her energetic child had finally found an outlet into which he could direct his energy positively.

"My son is a very active boy, and through art, he channels his energy in a positive way," the parent confessed. "These are not just classes but a playground of creativity. It's very pleasing to see him bring home new surprises every week — projects that are truly amazing and precious."

Another parent who spoke with Plasmati expressed her disappointment in her daughter's art program at school. Consequently, the family needed to search beyond the academic classroom and find an environment where she would be able to express herself more creatively.

"Our daughter has always enjoyed the creative arts, but her middle school does not offer a dedicated program," the mother explained. "Therefore, we feel very fortunate to have found a program providing access to talented instructors just around the corner. We are thrilled that she's learning a variety of techniques, has the opportunity to solve creative challenges, and is building an impressive and varied portfolio at the same time."

Like the parents of her students, Plasmati enjoys seeing her students benefit from their hard work.

"You really can't fail at art," she mused. "I see it all the time. Children derive immense gratification from their artwork and really take pleasure in feedback from adults and their peers."

Allison Plitt is a contributing writer for NY Parenting Media and lives in Queens with her husband and 6-year-old daughter.





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DEATH BY CHILDREN

CHRIS GARLINGTON

Babysitting duty — and the white couch

When I married my wife, I married her friends, too. In an instant, I became their mover, their lifter, and their Starbucks butler.

Shortly after my son was born, my wife's friend asked if "we" would watch her children and her house while she and her husband jetted to the Caribbean to create another baby. So "we" moved into her manse for a week with the plan that "we" would wrangle

her preschoolers while "we" went through her medicine cabinet, her closet, and her wine rack.

This house would make Martha Stewart roll her eyes. It was luxurious. It was ridiculous. Of course, I wasn't worried about being left in her house with her two children and mine because my wife would be with me. Wife? Wiiiife? Hello?

Yeah, it was just me.

I spent a week in mortal terror as the children slung frosted Cheerios and peed in their sheets. But I handled it. I locked them in the basement.

Well, us.

My wife's friend's basement was blanketed hip deep with hand-crafted Swedish gender-neutral toys. I grabbed a crate of juice boxes and Cheez-Its, and we watched cartoons and stayed away from the good china and all was well. Until I sat down on the sumptuous, snow-white couch and there, by my shoulder, was a hideous scrawling splatter of black ink.

&*^%\$#@!

"Who made this mark on the couch?"

"It was me!" said the little prince.

The lord of the manse. My wife's friend's 3-year-old son. He just beamed up at me like ruining a \$4,000 couch is no big deal.

High over our heads my wife's friend was arcing through the sky on her way back home. Her limo was due at sunrise. I called my wife.

We were up all night. We went to Walgreens twice. At 3 in the morning, the spot faded to a dark gray. Around 5, it vanished. I fluffed the pillows and prayed.

The limo screeched to a stop at sunrise. Her feet had barely graced the Berber in the basement when she squealed.

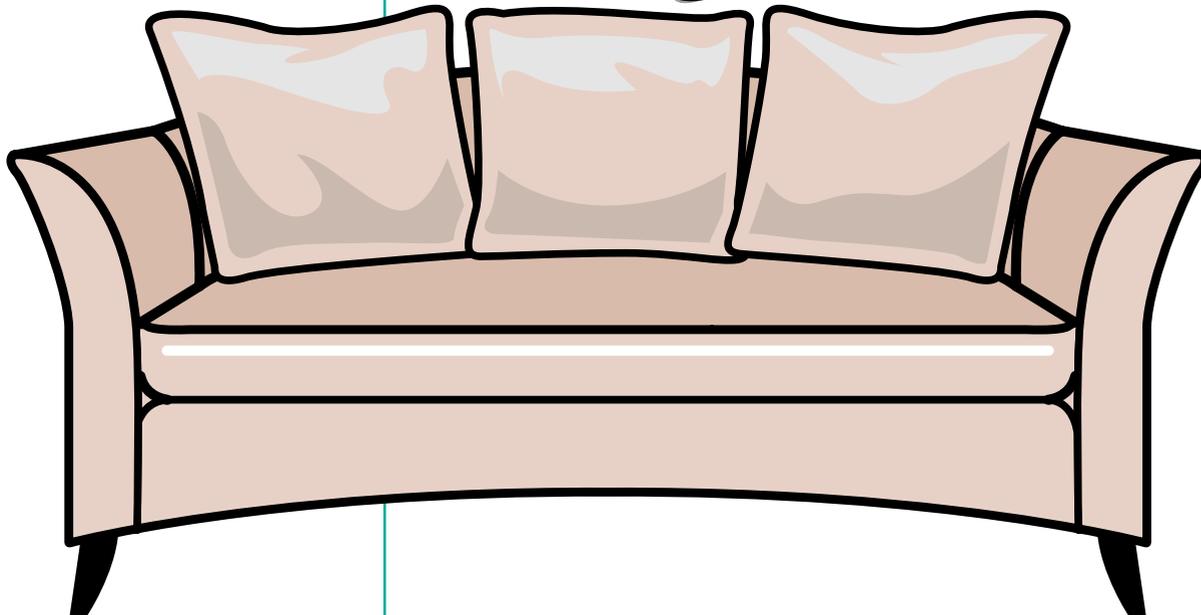
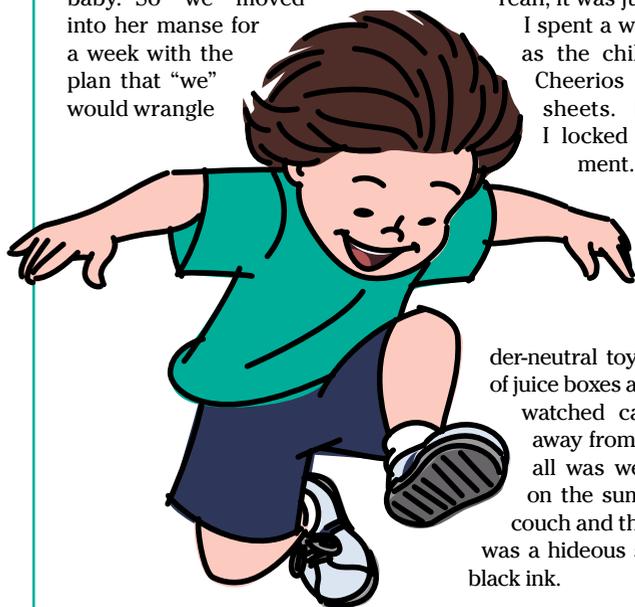
Well, that's it. We're buying a couch.

The friend came up, staring at us with a look very similar to what I imagine she would level at a guy who'd just pooped in her wine cellar. We were reaching for our checkbook when she said, "Oh my God, how did you get rid of that old stain?"

I leveled my best Bruce Willis at her kid and seethed: "You said you did it."

And he said, "Yeah, when I was 2."

Christopher Garlington lives in a standard two kids, wife, dog, corner-lot, two-car dream package. He drives a 2003 Camry, sports a considerable notebook fetish, and smokes Arturo Fuente Partaga Maduros at the Cigar King as often as possible. His stories have appeared in Florida, Orlando, Orlando Weekly, Catholic Digest, Retort, Another Realm, The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature, South Lit, and other magazines. His short story collection, "King of the Road," is available on Amazon. His column "My Funny Life," was nominated for a national humor award. He is the author of the infamous anti-parenting blog, Death By Children; the anti-writing blog, Creative Writer Pro; and co-author of "The Beat Cop's Guide to Chicago Eats," available on Amazon and in fine bookstores everywhere.



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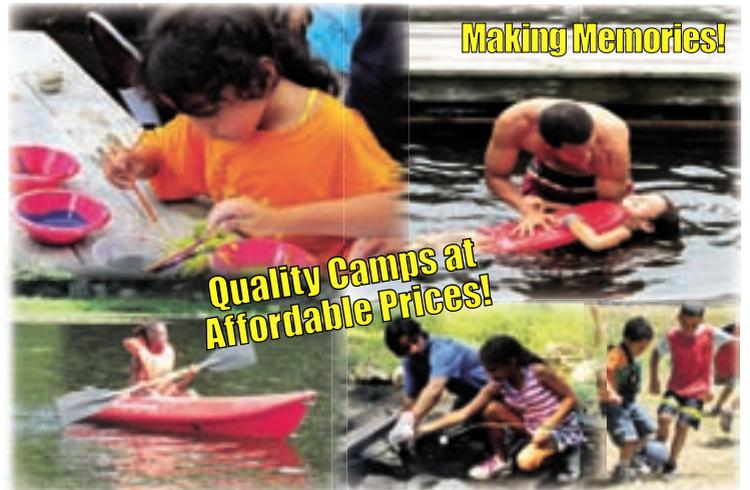
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When mom & dad are caught in the act

Answering questions after an awkward nighttime encounter

BY MALIA JACOBSON

Ah, sweet bedtime. The kiddos are tucked out and tucked in. You're (miraculously) still awake. Even better, you've finally stolen a moment alone with your spouse. Things get amorous, and you're too caught up in the moment to notice the sound of little feet padding down the hall.

"Mommy? Daddy?" You glimpse at your pajama-clad child standing in your bedroom doorway with a quizzical expression. Meanwhile, you're dying a thousand parental deaths as you frantically try to calculate just how big of an eyeful your little one got.

Yes, this cringe-inducing scenario is regrettable. But it may not be as bad as you think. Here's how to handle the aftermath of an accidental peep show.

Lock talk

Parents can ward off this purely preventable incident by simply installing a locking bedroom door-knob. Once children are old enough to get out of their bed at night, a bedroom doorknob that locks creates

safe boundaries for kids — and provides parents with welcome security and peace of mind during sex.

"Bedroom door locks are there for a reason. Parents should use them!" says Dr. Kevin Leman, author of dozens of marriage and parenting books including "A Chicken's Guide to Talking Turkey with Your Kids About Sex."

Dial down the details

But what about when your young child breezes through your lockless (or unlocked) bedroom door during lovemaking? Start by taking a moment to collect your thoughts (and possibly, your clothing). As with any embarrassing situation, your first instinct may not be your best response. When you're flustered, it's easy to say too much or say the wrong thing, says Melissa Shelton, a school psychologist in the Seattle area.

"I recommend taking a short break to regain some composure before plunging into an explanation."

Next, don't assume that your child saw everything — or much of anything. A preschool-age child is probably not aware of what's happening under those sheets, says Leman, so giving too much detail or long, clinical explanations will just confuse him.

"Most 3 and 4 year olds won't have a clue, even if they do see something," he adds. Thankfully, that means parents usually can let themselves off the hook with a simple "Mommy and daddy were hugging, because we love each other" response for tots and very young children.

Birds and bees

Don't try the gloss-it-over tactic once kids are out of preschool, though.

Dos and don'ts

Dos and don'ts: What to do — and not to do — when kids get an eyeful.

- DO invest in a lock for the bedroom door.
- DON'T feel overly guilty — your child may sense your embarrassment and conclude that sex is shameful.
- DO take a moment to collect your thoughts.
- DON'T fumble through a full-on explanation immediately.

Top Tips

- DO use simple, age-appropriate language.

- DON'T over-explain or give too many details, especially if the child is under 5.

- DO discuss the matter factually and comfortably with children five and older.

- DON'T avoid the topic or wait for children to bring it up.

- DO let the child know he did nothing wrong by walking in.



For children older than 5, an age-appropriate explanation is in order.

“Kids of this age probably know and think more about sex than parents realize,” says Leman. “So parents should approach the topic honestly.”

As with any parent-child dialogue about sex, a parent’s ultimate goals are to answer questions honestly without oversharing and leave the door open — so to speak — for future talks. Do this with a short, reassuring conversation that occurs soon after the walk-in (ideally, the following day).

Bring it up yourself; waiting for a child to raise the topic puts the responsibility on the child’s shoulders, instead of on yours. And though some forthright children may spit out questions rapid-fire, others may feel too ashamed or nervous to broach the topic, and wait for a parent to take the lead.

Now is not the time to introduce new terminology or confusing concepts.

“Put yourself in your child’s shoes,” advises Shelton. “Remember how differently (and simply) a child perceives any situation.” In-

stead, draw on the information you know your child already knows about sex, by saying something like, “Remember when we talked about how babies are made?”

Indeed, the entire situation is easier to handle if a child has already listened to the “birds and bees” talk — which should happen in early elementary school, says Leman.

“If your child is over 8, and you’ve never talked about sex with him or her, you’ve waited too long.”

The morning after

Ready to broach the big topic? The morning after the “incident,” steal a quiet moment with your child, away from siblings, friends, the television, and other distractions. Start with “Hey, you know when you walked into our room last night? I’m sorry. We have a lock on our bedroom door for that reason, and we should have used it.” Leading with an apology lets the child know that he did nothing wrong by walking in, says Leman.

Because a child might be frightened by what he saw, it can be helpful to portray sex as a completely normal, even universal, part of marriage and adulthood.

“Saying, ‘This is what mommies and daddies do — all mommies and daddies,’ makes it more universal and less threatening or scary,” says Leman. Use factual, plain language, and answer any questions a child asks, without supplying additional information or answering questions he isn’t asking.

The best post-walk-in talk is one in which the parent feels comfortable and relaxed, notes Leman.

“Speak to kids in comfortable language that’s comfortable for you. If you’re nervous, that lets kids know that this is a bad subject, something we don’t talk about.”

“It’s not a topic most of us want to embrace,” says Leman. “But it’s a teachable moment for kids and parents both.”

Malia Jacobson is a nationally published health and parenting journalist and author of “Sleep Tight, Every Night: Helping Toddlers and Preschoolers Sleep Well Without Tears, Tricks, or Tirades.”



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Getting a handle on non-probate assets

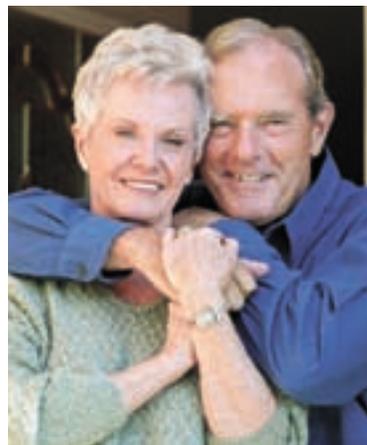
My parents have all of their assets in joint accounts. Both of their names are on the deed to their apartment. The rest of their assets are in retirement accounts. Do they need a will?

There are two basic types of assets when someone dies: probate and non-probate. Probate assets are those that are distributed in accordance with the terms of a will, if any, or under the laws of intestacy. Non-probate assets are those that pass by operation of law to a designated beneficiary or a surviving joint tenant, regardless of what is stated in a will.

Non-probate property include bank accounts held jointly with rights of survivorship; “in trust for” accounts; “payable on death” accounts; most IRA, 401(k), and 403(b) accounts; any asset held in a revocable or irrevocable trust; and any jointly held real property.

Structuring your assets as non-probate can sometimes allow money to be distributed to a beneficiary without waiting for the probate process, but such assets can cause conflict and litigation if not properly structured. Usually bank accounts are opened or modified following a routine exchange with a bank employee and not an attorney. Depositors are presented with a dense packet of materials that they “acknowledge” they read, but few do.

Contrary to popular opinion, joint accounts are not immune from challenge by someone who can show the account was not a “true” joint account, but rather a “convenience account.” A “convenience account” is one where deposits are made for the convenience of the depositor, which do not affect title, are not deemed a gift of one-half of the deposit or any additions or accruals, and do not confer a right of survivorship.



The establishment of joint accounts can transform otherwise straightforward estate administrations into complicated messes. So, for example, assume a mother has a joint account with her daughter, in which most of mom’s assets are deposited. Mom dies. A second child challenges the joint account, arguing that the sister was put on the account solely for convenience purposes to help mom with bill paying and other financial tasks. If proven, the presumption would be rebutted and the remaining funds in the joint account would pass to mom’s estate (to be distributed by her will) and not to the surviving joint tenant.

In trust for accounts

In contrast to a joint account, an in trust for account is essentially a revocable trust created by deposit. Deposits in an in trust for account are not completed gifts, and the depositor can modify, amend, or revoke the account, or change or delete the beneficiary, during his lifetime, or in a will.

The account may be revoked by the depositor’s withdrawal of the account proceeds, in an acknowledged writing naming the beneficiary and the banking institution delivered to the

bank during his lifetime, or in a will also identifying the account, banking institution, and change of beneficiary. Although in trust for account designations to a former spouse are automatically revoked by divorce or annulment, account holders should certainly take steps to re-title the account or change the beneficiary to avoid any potential disputes.

Another thing to consider when dealing with joint accounts are the tax consequences. The Internal Revenue Service presumes that 100 percent of a joint account between unmarried persons is includible in the estate of the first person to die.

In the example of the mother holding a joint account with her daughter, assume that the daughter dies first, but the account consists entirely of mom’s funds. The full amount of the account will be taxable in the daughter’s estate.

Another dilemma is presented when an asset passes outside of probate, but the estate owes estate tax as a result of the non-probate distribution. Sometimes, a non-probate beneficiary is unwilling to voluntarily contribute his fair share of the tax liability. This could require the executor to have to chase down the joint account holder to get a proportionate contribution of the estate tax liability, which would impose an additional cost on the estate. The executor or person acting as executor may be held liable for unpaid estate tax if he distributes assets to a beneficiary of the estate before payment of the New York State estate tax.

Non-probate assets are often created for convenience, but prove to be anything but convenient when disputes arise. Take care to ensure that the existence of non-probate assets is consistent with your intentions for how you want your estate to be distributed.

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JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

A mother's message

The month of May makes all of us think about how what it means to be a mother. I truly believe that there is no greater privilege, and through all the angst, frustration, work, and mess, I would not trade my three babies for anything in this world. Everything I know about being a mom I have learned from my own mother — who not always made me feel special, but always let me know I could do anything I put my mind to. It is only now as an adult that I realize what an uphill battle that must have been as a single mom.

From Monday through Friday, she schlepped from our Windsor Terrace home to Spanish Harlem, where she worked as a nurse at New York Metropolitan Hospital. She would turn off her alarm a few minutes before 5 am, always waking up on her own, and would be

out the door before my sister and I went to school. It was a five-train hustle each day to get there and a five-train bustle to get back home.

Before I was old enough to go to school, I'd often get up while it was still dark out and sit at the kitchen table while she ran around getting ready for work. I'd spring out of bed and drag my red terry cloth robe along the cold, linoleum floor, so I'd have some time with her before she left. It wasn't quality time, but even seeing her color on her Cover Girl eyebrows and bright pink lipstick made me happy. Once the bathroom became a cloud of VO5 hairspray, I knew she was ready to leave.

Sometimes, while she was getting ready, I'd make her a sloppy sandwich on thin bread. Two slices of bread, one slice of cheese (any more would be in excess of our budget) and a smidgen of mayonnaise or mustard, sometimes both. We had a square plastic sandwich container, so we didn't have to waste tin foil, and I'd place the messy bread in it and surprise mom with lunch.

When she'd get home from work, she'd always tell me that it was the absolute best thing she had eaten all day. She'd say that she could never make a sandwich like that, which made my 5-year-old self feel nothing but proud.

I had the best role model a girl can have: a mother who told me I could be anything, and one who was also strong enough to show me just how to do it. On any given day, my mother would work, take care of her mother, our dogs and cats, and us, and still help elderly neighbors who were sick or just needed a sympathetic ear. Working two jobs (sometimes seven days a week), she managed to

clean the house incessantly when "off" from work, and went above and beyond what was expected of her both at work and at home. Somehow, she was always grateful to have a job, no matter how much it drained her.

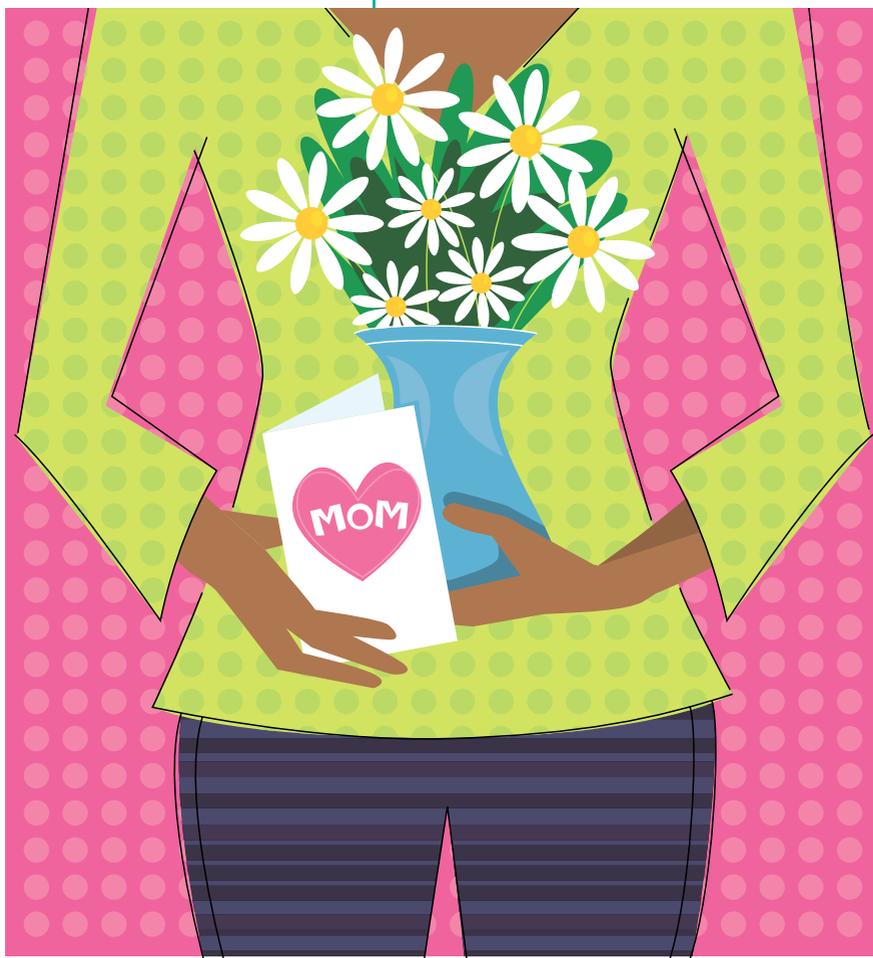
Today, I see women like my mom everywhere; those that are doing their best each and every day to raise their kids the finest way they know how given their circumstances, those who put their personal turmoil aside for the sake of their kids, and those who are insanely brave in the face of harrowing health conditions and financial constraints. I have friends and colleagues who, like me, and you, are struggling daily to make good, yet often, tough decisions for our families. Sometimes, we fail because we are human, but we keep getting up and trying, because we remember (like my mother still says), "children are only young once," and we want to give them a happy and loving childhood.

Yet, all of our efforts are certainly not in vain.

Many times, I have been driven mad by my kids, overwhelmed by various mothering situations, and have felt desperate with no answers in this parenting game. But I have then been lifted up by my family, friends, and fellow moms — just enough so I can take a breath and look at my kids and remember what an exceptional honor it is to not only be sharing my life with them, but also helping them grow in theirs. It's something that all of us mothers know deep within ourselves, that we have been graced with an incredible gift, and we know we will do what it takes to make it through.

I salute — and feel both pride and solidarity with — today's moms, and wish each and every one of you a very happy Mother's Day!

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 @DaniSullWriter, or on her blog, Just Write (Pet) Mom.



A Montessori mind

Understanding Montessori learning in the 21st century

BY MICHELE ELDON

Dr. Maria Montessori formulated her ideas for working with and teaching children more than 100 years ago. Can those ideas still be effective in working with children today? International Montessori teacher trainer M. Shannon Helfich references current brain research to demonstrate an analytical explanation of Montessori's philosophy in the book "Montessori Learning in the 21st Century."

Helfich says that in the mid 1990s, neuroscientists came to several conclusions that are scientific proof confirming Montessori's empirical findings on education:

- Brain development is a combination of genes and experiences.
- Early experiences have a decisive impact on the way the brain is "wired," and its adult capacities.
- There are prime times for the brain to acquire different types of knowledge.

Educational psychologists define intelligence as more than simply knowledge recorded and organized

in the brain. Intelligence is also the ability to learn from experience, to adapt to the surrounding environment, and make distinctions when interpreting data.

Montessori believed that while gathering data is one of the mind's tasks, the real work of intelligence is in making distinctions in the interpretation of the data.

The organization and progression of the sensorial materials and activities in the Montessori classroom leads to a systematic and in-depth exploration of the elements of the physical world. The richness of the Montessori environment supports and nurtures the student far beyond what he might experience randomly or spontaneously in the world. The clarity of the experience allows for a keenly refined abstraction.

Current child development research verifies the Montessori physical approach to mathematics. The abstract concepts built upon the physical sensory experiences are much stronger and more usable concepts.

Montessori believes the mathematical mind is not merely the capacity to remember math operations and formulas but the orderly mind that organizes data into usable patterns.

When a child can explore activities where the order is dismantled and then recreated, he learns strategies for creating order. Later, the student will call on these strategies to interpret numbers and math operations. These strategies eventually form the foundation for critical thinking, logic, and the understanding of cause and effect.

Based on observations of children throughout the world, Montessori developed her theory of the planes of development.

First plane: Infancy 0-6 – the absorbent mind

This is a time of dramatic growth that builds a foundation of skills and abilities. During these years, when provided with experiences that expose them to the richness of the world, children develop a love of learning, the capacity to make choices, and independence. Conducting the self-con-

structive process, practicing skills, and learning from their mistakes creates a solid foundation for the next plane of development.

Second plane: Childhood 6-12 – The powers of abstraction and imagination

Students in this plane enjoy working with peers and begin developing collaboration skills. They experiment with the roles of teamwork and division of labor, recognizing their strengths and building confidence in the ability to offer their skills to the problem-solving process. Sharing their insights with others gives them the opportunity to practice their logical thinking and judgment skills.

Third plane: Adolescence 12-18 – Human tendencies

Montessori views this plane of development as the birth of the social being. Adolescents are experiencing dramatic physical and emotional changes and need time and space for contemplation and reflection, as well as avenues for self-expression.

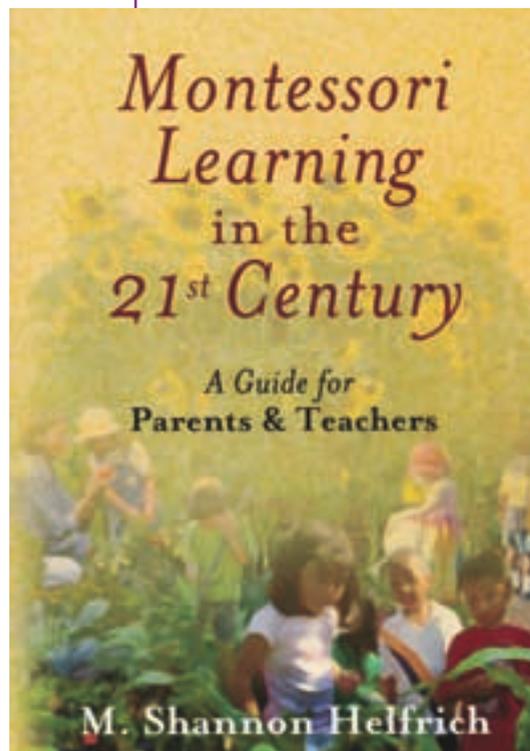
Adolescents seek to develop emotional and economic independence and a sense of self as a member of society. Participating in extended trips away from home, community service, and small business projects creates opportunities for adolescents to develop their independence in the larger world.

The future and its rewards

The student becomes a fully developed young adult at the completion of all planes of development. At this point he has learned life skills that allow for independence and is a self-motivated, competent, and confident young adult. He has compassion toward others and empathy for individual situations and capacities.

Children who are supported toward optimal fulfillment of their natural development acquire skills and attitudes that impact how they think about themselves and their responsibilities as a member of humanity.

Michele Eldon is the director of communications at Brooklyn Heights Montessori School.



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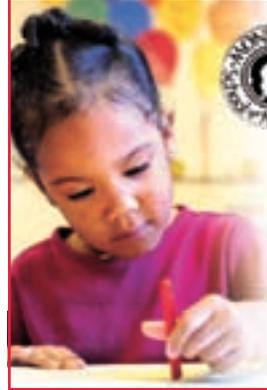
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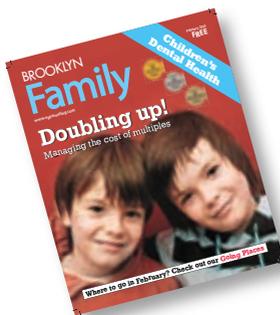
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HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Feeding baby solids

One of the exciting milestones of your baby's first year is when you feed him solids for the first time. Many parents look forward to giving their baby that first bite of food and sharing in the experience of watching their child enjoy it. But there is no need to rush it; pediatricians advise that babies who start solids before the age of 4 months have a higher risk of obesity later in life. In addition, each baby is individual, and physically ready to swallow the food at different times. Yet, not everyone in a family always agrees that waiting until 4 months (or later) is a must.

"When my first daughter was born, I waited until 5 months to start solids under the advisement of our pediatrician," says Marie Ramirez, a mother of two from Murray Hill. "My sister-in-law who had a baby the same age had been feeding her child solids since he was 2 months old."

Dr. Roshini Raj, a board-certified gastroenterologist and internist, and attending physician at New York University Langone Medical Center Tisch Hospital, also advises that parents should start feeding solids between 4 to 6 months of age, but says to "make sure your child can sit up well with good head control and shows interest in the food he sees you eating."

"In addition to head control, you will know when your child is ready when he stops pushing food out of his mouth with his tongue. As with all health and development issues, your pediatrician knows your child best and you should consult with him or her if you have any questions or concerns," she adds.

That is exactly what Ramirez did. When she faced pressure from her in-laws to feed her baby solids sooner, she assured them that her pediatrician was part of their planning team, and that her daughter was getting the best nutrition possible.

"After all, feeding a baby ice cream, only to have him throw it up the way members of my family did, was not at all practical or nutritional," she explains.

Dr. Raj (who you may know best from Fox 5's "Good Day New York") recently released her first book, "What the Yuck?! The Freaky & Fabulous Truth About Your Body," and offers these tips to parents about starting solids:

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends giving one new food at a time and waiting a couple of days before adding another to monitor allergic reactions. If there is a history of family allergies, wait a week in between. Keep a journal of which foods your child is eating, and the amount, so that if a problem arises, you can track it with your pediatrician.

- It is important to introduce new textures slowly — you won't be able to go from breast milk or formula straight to chunks of fruit. Mushy foods are a great place to start. I recommend mashed fruits and veggies like avocado or banana.

- Don't be surprised if most of the first few solid-food feedings wind up all over your baby's face, hands and bib. A good tip is to use vinyl bibs that are very easy to clean up! Also, use a plastic splat mat under the high chair.

- Make sure to use a soft, plastic spoon to prevent damaging your little one's gums.

- As an adult, pureed meats like chicken and roast beef may sound unappealing, but don't shy away from offering your child meat. The nutrients are important for a child's growth.

- Once your child develops the "pincer grasp" where he can pick up objects between his thumb and forefinger, you can try diced and pea-sized bites of food. Remember that little hands call for little pieces!

- If your child pushes away or winces after trying a new food, don't be so quick to banish it from the table. Little ones may need to try a food as many as 10 times before accepting it, so abide by the golden rule to "try, try again."

- Parents sometimes develop the habit of only serving plain fruits and veggies. But it's okay to add in a few mild spices. Think mild taco seasoning; not cayenne chili pepper.

- By offering a variety of foods, including various fruits, vegetables, and meats, you're helping your little one grow now, and also setting up healthy eating habits for the future.

- As a gastroenterologist, I should add that the color and smell of your child's bowel movements will change at this time. Before you cringe, know that this is totally normal.

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 @DaniSullWriter, or on her blog, Just Write (Pet) Mom.



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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

How to detox your whole family's diet

For some people, the urge to “spring clean” extends to their body. They embark on a juice cleanse — a diet composed of fruit and vegetable juice — to jump start weight loss or to purify their systems. Will a detox diet help you and your family?

Benefits

- **Awareness.** The term “detox” can be used to describe the elimination of rich, sugary, fatty, empty calorie, and-or highly processed foods. Nobody will argue that by replacing these with whole fruits and vegetables, plus whole grains, your family is better off.

- **Weight loss.** We expect quick results. Detox diets can provide rapid weight loss because the regimen is so low in calories.

Negatives

- **Extreme.** Detox diets tend to be extreme, depriving, and eliminate food



groups that provide important nutrients like protein and calories.

- **Safety questions.** It depends on how extreme the detox diet is, how long one stays on it, and the health status of the individual. Before putting oneself on a low-calorie detox diet with fewer than 1,200 calories,

first consult with a medical professional.

- **Typical low-calorie detox diets** are not safe for children. Their growing bodies need adequate nutrients and calories, especially at this critical stage. Naturally, expectant mothers should avoid low-calorie detox diets.

Clean eating

- **Rather than drastic detox,** consider a switch to cleaner eating.

“Clean eating is a long-term lifestyle of choosing whole foods in their most natural state from all food groups,” says registered dietitian Michelle Dudash, author of “Clean Eating for Busy Families” and a Cordon Bleu-certified chef. “Clean eating also means choosing foods from as close to home as possible and eating with the seasons when it comes to fresh foods like fruits and vegetables.”

Keep the switch simple and safe with these tips:

- **Get ruthless.** “Identify the snacks made of refined grains and sugars and either toss them, take them to the office, or donate unopened packages,” Dudash says.

- **Keep a stash of new favorites on hand.** Tempt your family with whole pieces of fruit in a bowl on the counter. Stock nuts, dried fruit, and a few types of raw veggies with hummus for munching.

- **Keep the junk out.** Dudash suggests you save the “unclean” foods for special occasions, if you must serve them at all — if it’s not in the house, your kids can’t torment you with incessant begging!

Keep in mind, there are no good studies proving the benefits of a juice fast. Rather than a drastic detox, make the switch to cleaner eating.

Christine M. Palumbo is a Naperville, Ill.-based nutritionist who is on the faculty of Benedictine University. Follow her on Twitter @PalumboRD, Facebook at Christine Palumbo Nutrition, or at Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.

Pistachio & Whole-Grain Tortilla Crusted Tilapia with Chili Lime Sauce

Makes four servings (one large or two small pieces of tilapia each, with 1 tablespoon of sauce)

INGREDIENTS:

1 large egg
 1/4 cup finely chopped cilantro
 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
 1/2 cup crushed whole-grain tortilla chips (from about 12 large whole chips)
 1/4 cup finely chopped pistachios
 1 teaspoon ground cumin
 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
 1/4 teaspoon chili powder
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
 1 pound tilapia fillets, cut into at least 4 portions (or cod, haddock)

FOR SAUCE:

1/4 cup light mayonnaise
 1 teaspoon lime juice



1 pinch chili powder
 1 pinch salt

DIRECTIONS: Preheat oven to 425°F. Line a large sheet pan with parch-

ment paper or a silicone baking mat.

Whisk egg, cilantro, mustard, and 1 teaspoon of water together in a shallow dish. In another dish, combine chips, pistachios, cumin, garlic powder, chili powder, salt, and pepper. Dip fish in egg mixture, coating on both sides, and then coat fish well in breading. Place fish on pan with rounded side up. Bake for 14 minutes until golden on the outside, and opaque and slightly firm in the center.

Blend all sauce ingredients. Serve the fish immediately with the sauce.

NUTRITION FACTS: 264 calories, 18 g total fat (2 g saturated fat), 25 g protein, 12 g carbohydrate, 2 g dietary fiber, 97 mg cholesterol.

Used with permission from “Clean Eating for Busy Families: Get Meals on the Table in Minutes with Simple and Satisfying Whole-Foods Recipes You and Your Kids Will Love,” by Michelle Dudash, RD (Fair Winds Press, 2013).



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Sweet baby, scary world

What does
the future
hold for my
daughter?

BY TIM PERRINS

The funny thing about your baby learning to walk is that, almost overnight, she becomes much better equipped to interact with the outside world.

If you set her down on the sidewalk, suddenly she can make good on her obsession with the Con Edison truck depot. And she'll stumble towards the open gate with impressive determination. In our case, my wife stopped her before she got too far, but frankly I was curious to see how they were going to handle her at the guard booth.

Now that she is beginning to set foot in the world, well, between the broken glass that I've started to notice everywhere on the sidewalk, and the things I hear on the news every day, I'm really wondering: what kind of world have we brought her into?

It's kind of a disaster, isn't it? We've made an awful mess of it in so many ways. Ours is a world that's been so severely polluted that the climate itself has turned against us. It's a place filled with so much unbridled rage and resentment that people are willing to set off bombs at a

marathon. A marathon — an event that brings together people from across the globe in celebration of positive achievement. What were we thinking, bringing a baby into this place?

I know, I shouldn't get hung up on just the bad things. There's so much more to the world. For one thing, in the face of mind-numbing atrocities there is an immediate and overwhelming response of caring, as people put themselves in the middle of harm's way to help others. And if we step further back,

we can see how much things have improved: our lives surely are better now than they would have been throughout most of human history, when violence, disease, and death were so thickly woven into the fabric of daily life that they weren't half as shocking as they are now.

How, then, can we comprehend the terrible things that still happen, and the awful state of this planet? Maybe the bottom line is that things are always becoming both better and worse.

While science and technology have brought great advances, they've also created entirely new ways to bring ruin upon ourselves. Something as mundane as plastic, for instance, has made our lives much easier. Nearly every item that I use to feed my baby, or to entertain her or keep her safe, is made of plastic. But at the same time, we're strangling the planet's wildlife with our thoughtless, disposable conveniences. We have even created an eighth continent in the middle of the Pacific Ocean composed entirely of floating plastic garbage.

It's a mess, and it leaves us confused and even angry. There are so many contradictions in this world that we spend a lot of our time looking for answers or trying to point fingers. We've even resorted to blaming babies for the ailments of the world. Yes, that's right, babies. You might think that babies are innocent, but you're wrong — babies are guilty! Isn't that why people baptize babies? To clean them of sin that they already carry as they enter this world?

At least that's what conventional wisdom tells us, although I can't quite get on board with it. Having been present at the birth of my daughter, I agree that when a baby is born, she definitely should be cleaned. But if a newborn has blood on her hands at birth, it's because being born is a brutal ordeal to suffer through — not because she's done anything wrong. Look, it's one thing to blame the baby for that ceramic salad bowl that you broke, but to pin all the sins of mankind on her? Well, there's just no excuse for

that. "Oh, these moral failings over here? That's the baby's fault. She's going to hear it from me — just wait 'til she's born!"

Indeed, it's a troubled world that sees us going to such desperate lengths to explain everything that's wrong. Focusing too much on feeling guilty or blaming others, however, won't solve anything. Neither will sitting around wondering if it was right to bring a baby into existence. Every generation inherits a world full of problems, and what matters is how we handle the problems that we're given.

At 15 months, my little baby is thrilled to be here. She stands up and bounces in her crib like a kangaroo. Right from under my nose she grabs my cellphone off the coffee table and runs towards the bathroom with it. When she's tired, she flops her head down onto my shoulder, and during all of these things she flashes a mischievous, gleeful grin that I didn't know could exist in this world before she was born. She will face difficulties in her life, but for now, at least, she seems more than happy with the world.

When I was a kid, my dad used to say, "Always leave a place better than you found it." Usually he was referring to a campsite or a hiking trail in the Adirondacks, but I've found those words to be an invaluable guide to living on this planet.

I wish I could solve all the problems I see before I hand the world off to her, but that's not a parent's job. My job is to teach her how to make good decisions; to navigate all of the ugliness that's interspersed with all the beauty; to not be infected by the anger and resentment that consumes some people. My job is not to worry about the world I'm giving her, but to provide her with the right tools, so that she can leave the place a little better than she found it.

Tim is a part-time stay-at-home dad, who lives with his wife and their generally content baby in Park Slope, Brooklyn. More of his thoughts about babies and other things that confuse him can be found at www.RevoltOfTheImbeciles.blogspot.com.





THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

An arresting story

Do you have a little one who dreams of being a police officer, loves horses, or can't get enough of the lights and sights of Times Square? Then "Finnegan and Fox: The Ten-Foot Cop" by Helen L. Wilbur is the perfect read.

You've got to be calm and cool to be a New York City cop. It takes nerves of steel and months of training, because anything can happen on a busy city street.

Nobody knows that more than 10-year-old, 1,256-pound Finnegan the horse. He and his human partner, Tyrone Jefferson Fox (or T.J., for short) work the Times Square beat, a place where visitors and tourists like to go. It's always crowded there.

Every morning, Finnegan and Fox start their day by checking the neighborhood. They say "hello" to Hussan with his fruit-and-vegetable cart. Officer Serafina Ruiz always gives T.J. a big smile. Food-Cart Tony gives T.J. his morning coffee and pats Finnegan on the nose, because really, who doesn't like a horse?

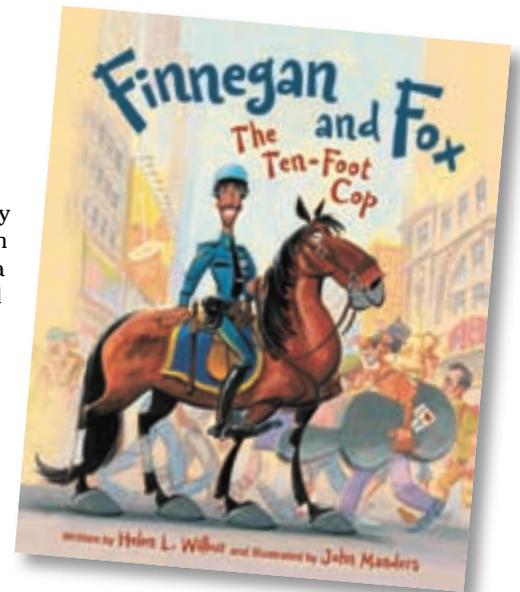
For sure, everybody in Times Square did every day, but one day, lots

of people stopped to say hello to Officers Finnegan and Fox. That included a group of kids on a school visit from Cheyenne, Wyo. One of them, a little girl named Maggie who loved horses, really fell in love with Finnegan. Finnegan liked her, too.

But much as he would have liked to be hugged all day, Finnegan had to get back to work with his partner. There were tourists to help, traffic to direct, and tickets to write. It was another busy day in Times Square with lots to do, including looking for a lost little girl.

Most kids might think that horses and big cities don't go together. They probably think that horses belong in grassy corrals, not crowded streets. Which is why most kids will be delighted with "Finnegan and Fox."

Wilbur's story will surely make future law officers want to join the mounted patrol. Heck, after reading this story, I wanted a horse like Finnegan — partly because Wilbur

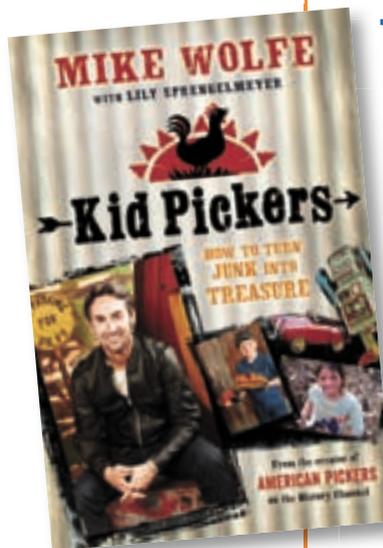


gave him a winning personality, and partly because artist John Manders made Finnegan almost human in his illustrations.

If your 3- to 6-year-old is an animal lover, dreams of becoming a police officer, or "hearts" New York, then this adorable book is one they'll ask you to read again and again.

For them, "Finnegan and Fox: The Ten-Foot Cop" will be quite arresting.

"Finnegan and Fox: The Ten-Foot Cop" by Helen L. Wilbur [32 pages, 2013, \$16.95].



Young treasure seekers

Most people might describe an old bottle as garbage. But to your young treasure seeker, it's a fantastic find. And in the new book "Kid Pickers," by Mike Wolfe (with Lily Sprenghelmeyer), he'll meet folks who would agree.

When Wolfe, from the History channel show "American Pickers," was young, he loved nothing more than "picking through junk." His room, he says, was filled with "rusty gold." He especially loved bikes and old comic books.

"I never thought of it as junk," he says. "To me, this was treasure."

Picking is fun, and becoming a Kid Picker is easy: having this book is a good start, and the tools children need are in their heads. Luckily for young treasure seekers, they shouldn't even need a lot of money, because some of the best finds are free or cheap. All they have to do is start looking for

things that interest them.

Neighborhood garage sales are great places to pick. They're also great places to practice using bargaining skills, so kids can learn how to negotiate. Don't be afraid to bargain down, because it never hurts to ask, right?

A Kid Picker will find a lot of great stuff at auctions, but that takes practice, lots of caution, and an adult's help. He'll need to keep his eyes open and know what he's bidding on, or he could end up with something he'd never want in a million years!

Thrift shops are a picker's paradise. Antique stores have tons of treasures. Flea markets don't have real fleas, but they do have lots of goodies. He might also have good luck picking within his own family's attic or barn. Then, no matter where he finds his prize, he should try to find out more about it. Who owned it? Where did it come from? Is it worth lots of money, or is it just cool?

And finally ... what are you going

to do with it?

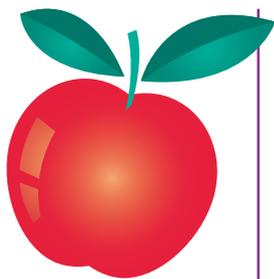
Remember thinking you might strike it rich with something you dug out of a barn, a box, or a bucket of dirt when you were your child's age? Give your kid those dreaming possibilities, too, by giving him "Kid Pickers" to read.

Wolfe speaks to the hearts of junkyard pups with a bit of biography and even more useful hints. I liked the encouragement that kids get here — including advice on picking their family history — and I loved the pictures. I also think the profiles of other young pickers are just plain fun.

Alas, the words "ask permission" are somewhat lacking here, so, before you send your kids out with this book, be sure to repeat them a few times. With that reminder fresh in their heads, 7-to-12-year-olds will find "Kid Pickers" to be a gold mine.

"Kid Pickers: How to Turn Junk into Treasure" by Mike Wolfe with Lily Sprenghelmeyer. [114 pages, 2013, \$12.99].

Terri Schlichenmeyer has been reading since she was 3 years old, and she never goes anywhere without a book. She lives on a hill with two dogs and 12,000 books.



DEAR TEACHER

PEGGY GISLER AND
MARGE EBERTS

Limiting media use

Dear teachers,

As parents, my husband and I feel we should limit the amount of time that our middle schoolers watch television, use a computer, iPad or iPod, play video games, and talk or text on their cellphones. How do we go about doing this without seeming like mean parents?

Dear parents,

It is very popular for parents to express concern about all the time their children spend using media. At the same time, not many are making a very serious effort to curb all this time.

A study by the Kaiser Family Foun-

their cellphones — either talking or texting. And it is not just teens on cellphones — many young children are also using them. Twenty percent of all third graders now have these phones. By the time children are in middle school 83 percent will have cellphones. Unfortunately, a considerable percentage of older children are using them during class time.

You as parents can definitely have an impact on how much time your children spend on media entertainment. About one in three parents have established rules. Setting rules can reduce heavy media use as much as three hours a day. Here are some popular rules:

- No media of any type at meal times or during family activities.
- No TVs in children's bedrooms.
- Parents keep their children's iPods, iPads, and cellphones during homework time.
- A limited amount of computer and video game time.

An excellent reason for making rules is that the less time your children spend using media, the better their grades are likely to be.

Worrying about child's skipping a grade

Dear teachers,

My daughter is just 9 and finishing fourth grade. She started in a private kindergarten. Then the public school had her skip first grade and go into second. We are ready to move again and wonder if we should hold her back in fourth grade. Is it too late to do this? Currently, she has no issues, but we are worried about middle and high school.

Dear parents,

This will be your daughter's third change of schools. Admittedly, the transition to both middle school and high school can be difficult for some students. Being able to survive and thrive in past changes is definitely to her credit. No one can predict the future and know if she will have trouble handling middle and high school. Most students who skip a grade con-

tinue to do well. Looking at research on this topic online could help to reassure you about your daughter's ability to handle more advanced schooling.

You say that your daughter has no issues. If this is really true, why are you concerned about her ability to cope well at school in the future? Three years ago, you relied on the public school's decision to have the child skip a grade, and it seems to have worked out well. Retention is rarely a good option, so why not ask the new school to evaluate her academically to see if this grade placement is correct. You have the whole summer if she needs to catch up on any skills.

The value of a good teacher

Dear teachers,

Nobody forgets the good teachers that they have had. Does having a good teacher give students a lasting benefit? Who do students think the good teachers in their schools are?

Dear parents,

The benefits of having a good teacher go far beyond the year or more that students spend with that teacher. In fact, having a truly excellent teacher actually leads, according to some research, to an increase in earnings later in life. Plus, good teachers have students who are more likely to attend college — even more highly ranked schools. Having a good teacher is also linked to learning more and receiving higher test scores in school.

When asked about the good teachers in their schools, students identified those with certain qualities. Believe it or not, the most mentioned quality was classroom-management skills. Apparently, students want teachers who can keep order. Other qualities the students listed were: enthusiasm for the subject, a good sense of humor, and an ability to explain clearly. Incidentally, most researchers believe that students do accurately identify the good teachers.

Parents should send questions and comments to dearteacher@dearteacher.com or ask them on the columnists' website at www.dearteacher.com.

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ation showed that 8- to 18-year-olds spent more than a quarter of each day using entertainment media. According to this study, the most time is spent on viewing television, closely followed by listening to music for older teens. Plus, there is now media multitasking, such as using the computer and listening to music and watching TV and texting, which adds to the total time that children are involved with media content. It makes you wonder when children have time for other activities.

The Kaiser study also points out that media use has really increased in the past five years. This can be explained by the easy access children now have to mobile devices such as cellphones, tablet computers, and MP3 players. Just walk down the street and look at the people on

Girls! Glamour! Gershwin!

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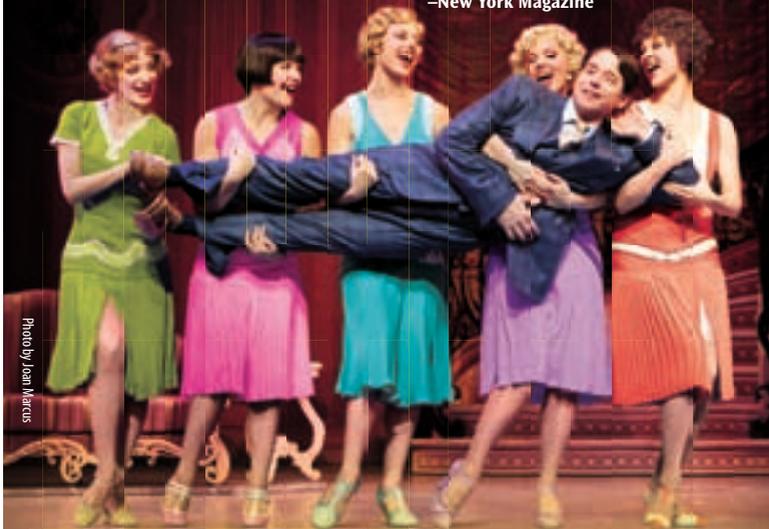


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Calendar

MAY



Photo courtesy of the Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum

Ranger hike about the Redcoats

Take a hike with the Urban Rangers at Bartow-Pell Mansion and Museum on May 26 and visit history.

Participants follow the rangers through the grounds of the mansion and visit the site where the Battle of Pell's Point took place. Also known as the Battle of Pelham, the skirmish pitted the British forces against the American troops during the New York and New Jersey campaign of the Revolutionary War. On October 12 British forces landed at Throgs

Neck and attempted to trap Gen. George Washington. They didn't succeed.

Although not suitable for younger children, tweens and teens will find this lesson in history fascinating. Wear comfortable shoes or boots, bring a water bottle, and a light snack.

Participants will meet in the parking lot of the mansion on May 26 at 11 am. Admission is free.

Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum [895 Shore Rd., (718) 885-1461, www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org]

Submit a listing

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Send your listing request to bronxcalendar@cnglocal.com — and we'll take care of the rest. Please e-mail requests more than three weeks prior to the event to ensure we have enough time to get it in. And best of all, it's FREE!

TUES, APRIL 30

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

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

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

Children view age-appropriate movies.

THURS, MAY 2

Mother's Day cards: Kingsbridge Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Ave.; (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.

FRI, MAY 3

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 music, and take a tour of the mansion and savor light refreshments.

SAT, MAY 4

It's My Park Day: Poe Park, Grand Concourse between E. Kingsbridge Road and E. 192nd Street; (718) 365-5516; www.nycgovparks.org; 9 am-4 pm; Free.

Help weed, join in activities, story time, games, and arts and crafts.

It's My Park Day: Starlight Park, E. 177th St. and Devoe Avenue; (347) 992-2860; www.nycgovparks.org; 9 am-2 pm; Free.

Help weed, join in activities, and a

On a roll with cycling workshops

Children learn to ride safely and easily in the Learn to Ride workshop hosted by New York City Parks and Recreation through May.

Park rangers teach children a safe, easy, and effective way to kick off those training wheels, put the sneaker to the pedal, and ride like the wind.

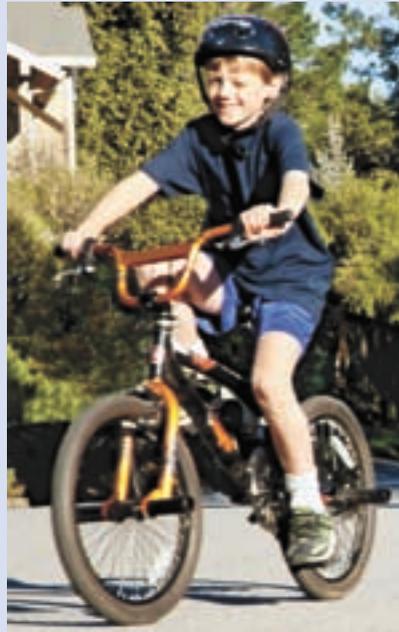
Using the balance first method, parents help their children get rolling, while the child does most of the work. Little ones learn how to start, stop, and steer the bike in a crash-free and low-stress way.

May 4

Ryan Stadium Parking Lot, Middletown Rd. and Watt Avenue.

May 11

Van Cortlandt Nature Center, (VCNC), W. 246th St. at Broadway, (718) 548-0912.



Learn to Ride is a free workshop that runs from 10 am to 1 pm. Participants must bring their own bikes and helmets.

www.nycgovparks.org

song and dance of BombaYo.

Learn to Ride: Ryan Stadium Parking Lot, Middletown Rd. and Watt Avenue; www.nycgovparks.org; 10 am-1 pm; Free.

Urban rangers teach children how to ride a bike in a safe and easy environment. Bring your own bike and helmet.

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

Time to hatch — learn about different baby critters.

StoryHour Special: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 West 112 St. at 112th Street and Broadway; (212) 687-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 10:30 am; Free.

A special story hour for children 2 to 5 years old with Randall de Seve as he reads his latest book "Peanut and Fifi Have a Ball". This lovable story is for every kid who has ever had trouble sharing a special toy. Then Randall

hosts a fun-filled Q&A with attending children and a book signing.

Puppet Theatre: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 West 112 St. at 112th Street and Broadway; (212) 687-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 1 pm; Free.

This improvisational audience participation puppet show for children 1 to 5 years old, features live music and classic tales retold with a twist of comedy.

"Ol' Mama Squirrel" Read-Aloud with David Ezra Stein: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 West 112 St. at 112th Street and Broadway; (212) 687-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 2:30 pm; Free.

Caldecott Honor winning illustrator David Ezra Stein reads from his fantastic read-aloud "Ol' Mama Squirrel", a feisty tale which will have kids and fierce mamas everywhere applauding.

SUN, MAY 5

Family Art project: 10 am-1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, May 4.

Save The Planet Brigade: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 West 112 St. at 112th Street and Broadway; (212) 687-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 2 pm; Free.

Endangered animals, climate change, recycling, the rain forest, environmental justice, and pollution are among the topics explored in this series of hands-on workshops.

FRI, MAY 10

National public gardens day: Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; Noon-4 pm; Free.

Take the opportunity to tour the grounds and view the "Age of Botanical Wonders" exhibit.

"La Boheme": Lehman Center for the Performing Arts, 250 Bedford Park Boulevard West; (718) 960-8833; www.brwnpapertickets.com/event/269794; 7:30 pm; \$15-\$30.

The Bronx Opera performs the tragic romance of Mimi and Rodolfo in Giacomo Puccini's opera.

SAT, MAY 11

Learn to Ride: Van Cortlandt Nature Center, (VCNC), W. 246th St. at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 10 am-1 pm; Free.

Urban rangers teach children how to ride a bike in a safe and easy environment. Bring your own bike and helmet.

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

Children honor moms in "Sachets and Floral Fantasy" and make fragrant packages to take home.

Kid Zone: New York Transit Museum, 87 E. 42nd St. at Park Avenue; (718) 694-1792; www.mta.info/mta-museum; 11 am-4 pm; Free with Museum admission.

Join in for fun and games at Vanderbilt Hall at Grand Central Station to say, "Happy Birthday."

The Amazing Flotilla: Starlight Park, Bronx River Ave. and E. 172nd St.; (718) 430-4614; 11 am-4 pm; Free.

A canoe race, paddling and guided trips of the estuary.

Butterfly project: La Finca del Sur, 138th St. and the Grand Concourse; www.butterflyprojectnyc.org; 11 am-1 pm; Free.

Learn about the connection between native plants and pollinators and how to encourage them in urban landscapes. RSVP required.

Continued on page 42

Calendar

Continued from page 41

Puppet Theatre: 1 pm. Bank Street Bookstore. See Saturday, May 4.

"Finnegan and Fox" reading with local author Helen Wilbur: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 West 112 St. at 112th Street and Broadway; (212) 687-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 2:30 pm; Free.

The author reads and signs copies of her book. This lighthearted story is a tribute to the NYPD's Mounted Unit told in the words of Finnegan, a horse who has "seen it all" as he patrols Times Square with his partner, Tyrone Jefferson Fox.

"La Boheme": 7:30 pm. Lehman Center for the Performing Arts. See Friday, May 10.

SUN, MAY 12

Family Art project: 10 am–1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, May 11.

Freshwater Fishing: Crotona Nature Center (CNC), Charlotte St. & Crotona Park East; (718) 378-2061; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; Noon; Free.

Urban rangers teach the ethics of fishing and the ecology of the waterways.

Save The Planet Brigade: 2 pm. Bank Street Bookstore. See Sunday, May 5.

FRI, MAY 17

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–9 am on 5/18; \$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.

SAT, MAY 18

Home School History Day: Van Cortlandt House Museum, Broadway at W. 246th Street; (718) 543-3344; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 10 am–4 pm; \$10 (\$35 for families).

Hands on activities, history presentation and meet with the staff dressed in 18th century style attire.

Family Art project: Wave Hill, West



Photo by Christopher Duggan

Egg-citing presentation

"Hatched" cracks its shell at the Ailey Studio Theater on May 9, 10, 16, 17, and 19.

A newly hatched chick is met by a feisty old rooster, a wobbly calf learning to walk, dancing chicks, a lamb, and a host of baby birds.

Written and directed by Mara McEwin and performed by the Treehouse Shakers, "Hatched" is the story of an infant critter emerging from the shell at sunrise to discover the strange and busy world of life on an American family farm.

Children from infant to six years old will enjoy this endear-

ing tale that is told through movement, handcrafted puppets, visuals, and music.

Staged in an intimate setting, young audience members are encouraged to interact with the newborn animals—toddlers imitate their favorite farm animal, babies enjoy the animal sounds and textures, and preschoolers and older children delight in learning about farm life, storytelling, lively music, and dance.

"Hatched" on May 9, 10, 16, 17 and 19 at 11 am. Tickets are \$20.

The Ailey Studio Theater [405 W. 55th St. at Ninth Avenue in Midtown, (212) 715-1914, www.treehouseshak-ers.com].

249th St. and Independence Ave.; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am–1 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children have fun learning about dyes and materials in "Woven Wonders," by experimenting with colorful fabrics.

Street Fair 2013: Tremont Avenue, between LaSalle Ave. and Miles Avenue; www.throggsneckmerchants.com; 11 am–5 pm; Free.

Have a day of community, fun and activities.

Puppet Theatre: 1 pm. Bank Street

Bookstore. See Saturday, May 4.

"In A Queer Voice" with author Michael Sadowski: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 West 112 St. at 112th Street and Broadway; (212) 687-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 2:30 pm; Free.

The author brings the voices of LGBTQ youth out in to the open in his poignant book, and signs copies.

Owls and falcons: Bartow–Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansion-museum.org; 3 pm; \$10 (\$8 members).

Bobby and Kathy Horvath of Wildlife in Need of Rescue and Rehabilitation bring an assortment of rescued owls and other birds of prey for visitors to meet.

SUN, MAY 19

Family Art project: 10 am–1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, May 18.

Spring Festival: Riverdale Avenue, Between 258th St. and 259th Street; (www.krvcdc.org; Noon–4 pm; Free.

Join in a day for community fun, support local businesses, and enjoy children's rides, demos and more.

Insect Inspection: Pelham Bay Ranger Station (PBRs), Pelham Bay Park, Bruckner Boulevard and Wilkinson Avenue; (718) 885-3467; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 1 pm; Free.

Children learn all about those creepy, crawly, flying bugs.

Save The Planet Brigade: 2 pm. Bank Street Bookstore. See Sunday, May 5.

Yoga in the Classroom with Gail Bentley Walsh: Bank Street Bookstore, 610 West 112 St. at 112th Street and Broadway; (212) 687-1654; bankstreetbooks.com; 2:30 pm; Free.

Enjoy some yoga fun with Gail Bentley Walsh, instructor and author of *Yoga in the Classroom*, a lively, step-by-step illustrated yoga manual for children K–12.

THURS, MAY 23

Little Red's Hood: St. James Recreation Center, 2530 Jerome Ave. at E. 193rd Street; www.cityparksfoundation.org; 10 am; Free.

Puppet Mobile presents the retelling of the classic Little Red Riding Hood with an updated twist. In this modern version, Little Red is smart, savvy and a city slicker who is too focused on her smart phone to worry about that mean old wolf Wulfric, who is just a misunderstood lupine with a sweet tooth.

SAT, MAY 25

Family Art project: Wave Hill, West

Calendar

249th St. and Independence Ave.; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 10 am-1 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children visit the garden's flower beds and get inspired to create a beautiful bouquet using buttons to embellish their designs.

Puppet Theatre: 1 pm. Bank Street Bookstore. See Saturday, May 4.

Live reptile presentation: Wave Hill, West 249th St. and Independence Ave.; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 2 pm; Free with admission to the grounds.

Children meet toads, snakes, turtles and more in this interesting workshop. Great for children 6 years old and up. Registration is recommended.

SUN, MAY 26

Family Art project: 10 am-1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, May 25.

Save The Planet Brigade: 2 pm. Bank Street Bookstore. See Sunday, May 5.

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

Urban rangers lead you on a tour and explore the site of Battle of Pel's Point. Wear comfortable shoes or boots, bring a water bottle and light snack. Meet in the parking lot. Not recommended for young children.

FRI, MAY 31

A Night at the Museum! Sleepover Program: 6 pm-9 am on 6/1. American Museum of Natural History. See Friday, May 17.



Kindie merry, musical journey

Kindie rocker Oren Etkin steps out and about, leading children on a merry musical journey in "Timbalooloo" on May 11 at the Tribeca Performing Arts Center.

Etkin presents a lively jazz concert created especially for the under 12 set, featuring Clara the Clarinet, Big Mama Tuba, and all

his other musical friends on a trip through Harlem, Cuba, France, New Orleans, and beyond.

Oren Etkin's Timbalooloo on May 11 performance at 1:30 pm. Tickets are \$25.

BMCC Tribeca Performing Arts Center [199 Chambers St. at West Street in Tribeca, (212) 220-1459, www.tribecapac.org].

SAT, JUNE 1

YAI's Central Park Challenge: Central Park, The Naumburg Bandshell, 72nd Street; (877) YAI-WALK; yai.org/

cpc; 9am-noon; Race is \$20 if register before May 5th; after May 5, \$30.

Join the movement —5K competitive run, 3K fundraising walk, chil-

dren's play area and races — and show your support for a world that embraces differences. Children can participate in the Jr. All-American 50 yard dash, and all are welcome to enjoy the Play Area, complete with face painting, sand art, dancing, live music, games and more. Registration takes place at the event and includes access to Play Area and 2013 Central Park Challenge t-shirt for \$10.

Family camping: Van Cortlandt Nature Center, (VCNC), W. 246th St. at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 6 pm; Free.

Urban rangers celebrate the great outdoors with an overnight camping party. Participants are chosen by lottery.

LONG-RUNNING

Everett Exploration: New York Botanical Garden, 200th St. and Kazimiroff Blvd.; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Tuesdays - Fridays, 1:30-5:30 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am-5:30 pm, Now - Sat, May 25; Free with regular admission.

Explore nature and plant science through seasonally changing programs, themed galleries, and hands-on activities.

Story time: Barnes & Noble Bay Plaza, 290 Baychester Ave.; (718) 862-3945; barnesandnoble.com; Wednesday, May 1, 6 pm; Wednesday, May 8, 6 pm; Saturday, May 11, 11 am; Wednesday, May 15, 6 pm; Wednesday, May 22, 6 pm; Wednesday, May 29, 6 pm; Thursday, May 30, 4 pm; Free.

Children enjoy a new story each week and do a craft.

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DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

Dads & divorce II

Kids still need a father's love and attention

This month, my column continues exploring the importance of having fathers involved in their children's lives and focuses on how to make this goal a reality with some additional insight from Melissa Kester, founder of Madison Marriage and Family Therapy.

Here are some dos and don'ts, especially for mothers and fathers:

Dads: Recognize that your kids need you, regardless of what anyone else says. Only you can play this vital role. Don't believe it? Take a parenting class. Find a support group for fathers. Read a book like Edward Teyber's "Helping Children Cope with Divorce." Stay away from people who tell you that fathers don't matter.

"Know the things you like to do with the children, and try to make the days you are with them special," says Kester. "Having this valuable time with them is important; children can carry that with them throughout the week. But don't avoid parenting responsibilities and discipline to have fun, even though time with the children may be limited."

Kester encourages parents to "use technology" to be in contact, and go low-tech as well. (For example, put a note in a lunch bag.) Kester says, "Find ways to be with your kids, even when not physically present." She notes that "living close to each other can allow children to see more of each parent, which can be nice for the entire family."

Moms: Let your ex know that despite anger you may have toward him, you welcome his involvement as the children's father. Maybe he failed as a husband; but that's over. Being a father is an entirely separate, lifelong job, and one that he can succeed at.

Acknowledge that your ex probably has some strengths and interests to offer that you don't. Maybe he loves sports, camping, and astronomy, all of which put you to sleep. Encourage him to share what he loves, and help your children get the best from both of you.

Remember that "different" doesn't always mean "bad." Does dad give the kids dinner and a bath at a different



time than you do? Or put them to bed later? If so, how much does it matter? Consistency is good for children, but don't underestimate their adaptability. Kids have different rules at school than at home, and still others when playing with friends. If the differences between you and your ex aren't really a problem, don't make them one.

See to it that dad gets his parenting time, and let your kids know that you, as their mother, support him as a parent.

Moms and dads: Work together to figure out how to be the best parents you can be. When you have a problem with your ex, deal directly with him or her and don't involve the children.

Is communication between you two very poor? Be open to outside assistance: a mediator or therapist can help you listen to and understand each other.

Grandparents, friends, and others: Play a constructive role, if you can, to foster a role for dad. Like mom, you don't have to like him to do so. If you can't be helpful, butt out.

For everyone to keep in mind: See it all from the kids' level. Young children operate on a purely primitive biological level, Kester says, and their responses are based on survival needs. Even as adults, part of us remains at this level. Kids feel

very threatened by divorce.

While very young children may not remember it, "kids in that moment of divorce do have an awareness of something shifting that later could develop emotional triggers that set in and stay," explains Kester. Having difficulty committing to an adult relationship, for instance, could be caused by a fear of abandonment stemming from a father's departure in early childhood.

Children need fathers as well as mothers. When both parents can keep their kids' best interests in mind, they can work together and make divorce as painless as possible for their children.

Contact Melissa Kester at (917) 488-6364, or on her website at www.madisonmft.com/contact.html. Read her blog, Towards Healing, at <http://towardshealing.net/tag/melissa-kester>.

New York City- and Long Island-based divorce mediator and collaborative divorce lawyer Lee Chabin, Esq., helps clients end their relationships respectfully and without going to court. Contact him at lee_chabin@lc-mediate.com or (718) 229-6149, or go to <http://lc-mediate.com/home>.

Disclaimer: All material is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Discuss your particular circumstances with a legal professional before making important decisions is strongly encouraged.

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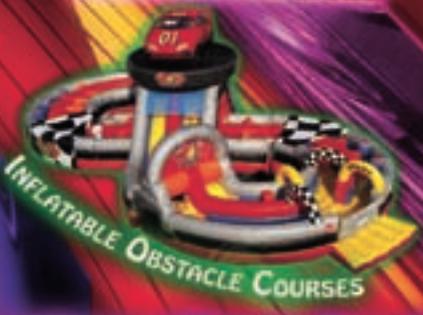
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New & Noteworthy

BY LISA J. CURTIS

Dreaming for two

You may not be able to treat her to a weekend in Paris, but at least she'll feel as cute as Audrey Hepburn in "Charade" when you give her BedHead's new Eiffel Tower pajamas for mom (and baby!) — the perfect gift for a first Mother's Day.

The pattern of these 95 percent cotton and five percent Spandex sleep sets feature purple flowers and towers against a dreamy field of aqua, evoking the sweetness of a sunny Spring day in the City of Lights. BedHead offers this print in traditional pajama for mom in a wide array of sizes and in other styles, such as chemise, robe, and camisole with pants. The baby tee and pant set is available in sizes 3–6 months, 6–12 months, 12–18 months, and 18–24 months. (And if baby has grown a bit, there are also short sleeve sets



for kids and teens.) Mom may not get much sleep, but at least she'll look tres chic.

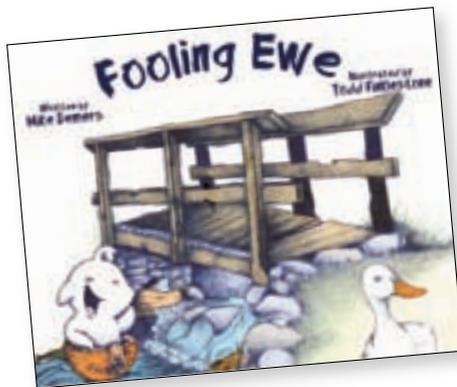
Eiffel Tower Stretch Baby Tee and Pant Set, \$42, and Eiffel Tower Classic Stretch Women's PJ Set, \$140, www.bedheadpjs.com.

Sheep thrills

Featuring clever word-play, sweet illustrations, and a delightful surprise ending, Mike Demers's debut children's book, "Fooling Ewe," is a refreshingly original story set in a classic barnyard.

The woolly protagonist, Ewe, is bored by the daily drudgery of grazing grass and longs to frolic. Ewe dons disguises to fool the farm's fellow tenants, like Chicken, Pig, and Horse, but Mother Ewe — holding a mug of coffee in one of many amusing drawings by Todd Finklestone — admonishes her for neglecting her grazing.

The story resonates with dutiful little readers who know the frustrations of having to follow or-



ders and adhere to schedules, and their parents, who sometimes forget that their responsible sheep do deserve time to enjoy a little independence and a lot of laughter and play.

"Fooling Ewe" by Mike Demers (Service Bar Books, \$16.95), www.amazon.com.

Beary tired

Recommended for children ages three months and up, Sleepy Bear by Jellycat London is a small, pajama-clad plush bear (made of polyester with polyester fill and plastic beads inside for weight), who comes in his own matchbox-style bed. His snugly bedding includes a pillow and blue blanket trimmed in the same transportation-themed fabric of his PJs. This compact toy — measuring just 9 inches — is the perfect choice for your little globetrotter's next flight. (Jellycat also makes a Sleepy Bunny, with a pink blanket.) Whether you choose the bear or



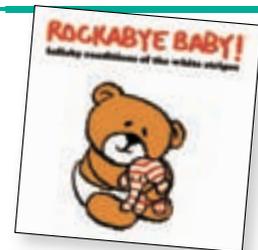
bunny, this small marvel is a dream come true.

Sleepy Bear by Jellycat London, \$29, www.yoyo.com.

White noise

Hits by Jack and Meg White, such as "Seven Nation Army" and "Icky Thump," have been translated into soothing instrumental tunes by performer and producer Steven Charles Boone in Rockabye Baby's latest CD, "Lullaby Renditions of the White Stripes."

The sounds of the duo's guitar and drums are born again as softer, gentler songs through xylophone, woodblocks, and bells. The CD's enclosed booklet is a hilarious riff



on a typical baby book, inviting a parent to write in their child's rock star stage name, instrument of choice, rock star move,

rock star demand, etc. This CD is a sweet baby shower gift, but we're keeping ours. We've already decided that this album and our family car "are going to be friends."

"Lullaby Renditions of The White Stripes," \$16.98, www.rockabyebaby-music.com.

Make some time for Mom

Moms are always watching the clock, and this Benbini watch has lots of features that make keeping the business of mothering on track from the time they're born until you send them to college. It has arrows on its bezels to help keep track of elapsed time as well as a left-right switch to help nursing moms remember where the next feeding is coming from. When the kids get older, it offers a stylish way to make sure you know how



long it has it been since the last nap, the last dose of medicine, or how much time the kids have spent watching TV or playing video games. It will even keep track of time-outs! The Benbini's comfortable design makes it easy to slide on, and it won't scratch baby. Available in white, gray-raspberry, and melon, this is a tool whose time has come.

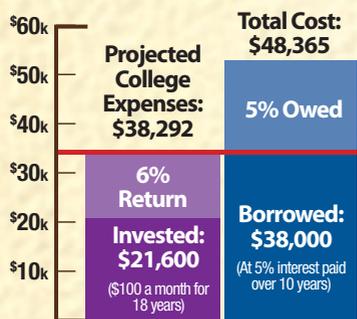
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** Up to \$10,000 is deductible from New York State taxable income for married couples filing jointly; single taxpayers can deduct up to \$5,000 annually. *May be subject to recapture in certain circumstances — rollovers to another state's plan or nonqualified withdrawals.*

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New York's 529 College Savings Program currently includes two separate 529 plans. The *Direct Plan* is sold directly by the Program. You may also participate in the *Advisor Plan*, which is sold exclusively through financial advisors and has different investment options and higher fees and expenses as well as financial advisor compensation.

For more information about New York's 529 College Savings Program *Direct Plan*, obtain a Program Brochure and Tuition Savings Agreement at www.ny529directplan.com or by calling 1-800-376-9166. This includes investment objectives, risks, charges, expenses, and other information. You should read and consider them carefully before investing.

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