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Family December 2016



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Living in a 'blue' state

November has been a very upsetting month. The election outcome has made so many people feel down and confused, particularly here in our city which overwhelmingly supported Hillary Clinton. There has been an air of disbelief and shock has settled in. Teachers and parents throughout the city have had to deal with children reacting to the rancor and partisanship of this election cycle, and bitter words and sexual innuendo became a part of the discourse. All ugly stuff and certainly not the kind of example of grown-up behavior we want our children to emulate.



Blue state/red state, I'm getting sick and tired of the mass media dividing us up the way they do. Our votes seem disenfranchised when we are categorized this way. The electoral college is impossible to explain to adults, let alone to children, and why should people in three or four

states be the deciding factor as to who wins such important elections? Isn't it time for our nation to do away with this nonsense and to have a direct vote like other countries? Isn't it also time for us to be voting on Sundays instead of on a work day that almost no one has off? Isn't it also time for all this polling to stop — which I am absolutely certain sways the vote and actually does result in rigged elections.

Millions of new young voters participated in this election and most of them walked away disappointed and disenfranchised and seeing the process as disingenuous. We can only hope they won't be opting out moving forward, thinking that they can't make a difference. We already have enough of our citizens opting out of voting. We need to do everything we can to encourage their participation on every level. Bernie Sanders, thank goodness, is

still out there inspiring and communicating to this very important demographic. Our future depends on them.

Finally, I am blue because my daughter has had to deal with a few surgeries resulting from a recent fall. The fall was bad enough to shatter her ankle, and she will be spending a number of months healing and doing rehab. It certainly has put a crimp in her style and also in mine. Our children are still our children, even when they get taller than us and even when they move out and are on their own. We are parents forever.

I'm very grateful to all the people who help put together these magazines and who manage our website and all our other digital initiatives. I wish them and you, our readers, and all our many advertisers, a very Happy Holiday Season. Thanks for reading and Have a Happy New Year!

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Gifts for teacher

Fifteen fabulous ideas, all for \$10 and under

BY DENISE YEARIAN

Finding a gift your child's teacher will enjoy at a price you can afford can be a challenging task. But it doesn't have to be. Here's a list of 15 fabulous \$10-and-under gift suggestions:

You're an angel. Get a list from the teacher of practical things she can use in the classroom, and then create an angel tree. Children who want to give a gift can choose an angel item that will benefit the teacher and the classroom.

Contribute to charity. Teachers like it when families donate to a charitable organization in the student or classroom's name. Suggest names of charitable organizations that focus on helping children, then let your child choose one to give to. Follow up with a note to the teacher letting her know about your giving efforts.

Practical potpourri. Teachers don't often realize what they need to have on hand until it's too late, so an assortment of practical sundries makes a great gift. Ideas include Chapstick, a lint roller, safety pins, Tide-to-Go, Static Guard, and a small tool kit. Or consider a collection of health and wellness items to keep the classroom flu-free this winter: tissues, hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray, and Clorox wipes.

Conference day coupons. Conference times make it difficult for teachers to grab a hot meal or squeeze in a healthy snack. But parents can help by giving post-dated special delivery coupons. Send in a paid-for pizza one night during conference time. Or create a homemade fresh fruit basket and deliver it to the school when teachers are there for 13 hours straight.

Medley of rewards. Create an assortment of rewards and incentives the teacher can use in the classroom such as stickers, character pencils, and mini erasers. Websites such as www.OrientalTrading.com have a large variety of products and may offer free shipping.

Time-honored efforts. Most teachers welcome volunteer efforts. Create a coupon offering your services to make copies, grade papers, or prepare classroom sup-



plies after hours. Or offer to come in once a month to read to the class, help with science projects, or tutor students who need a little assistance.

Crazy about cocoa. Chocolate, either in candy or baked goods, is a top choice amongst teachers. If you make something yourself, include the recipe, so they can duplicate it when they are craving chocolate in the future.

Thumbs-up planter. Purchase a terracotta pot and have your child place random thumbprints on it using different colors of paint. Use a permanent marker to turn the thumbprints into different bugs and flowers. Fill the pot with a live plant and attach a note that says, "Thank you for helping children grow."

Best bet bookends. Every classroom needs bookends, but they can be costly. If

you can't find a set on sale, pick up a couple of bricks from the home improvement store and cover them with a layer of soft foam and school-themed material.

You've got talent! If you have a special skill, talent, or interest, gift it to your teacher. Are you a hair stylist? Offer a haircut. Manicurist? Offer a manicure. If you like to bake, treat your teacher to a baker's choice club membership. Whip up a batch of cinnamon rolls and include a coupon for one baked good every month between now and school year's end. In the future, deliver the baked item on the same day each month so your teacher knows when to expect it.

Take note! Writing supplies are a useful luxury. Purchase a pack of pretty stationery, blank thank you notes, or paper with matching envelopes so the teacher can write letters to her parents. Or personalize the gift by having your child paint a watercolor picture. Scan it on the computer, crop the image, print it on vellum paper and then mount it onto colored cardstock and give it with matching envelopes.

Bestow books. Purchase your child's favorite book and donate it to the school library. On the inside cover, have your child create a sticker that says, "Donated in honor of (teacher's name) by (child's name)," along with the date.

Group project

Need some collective classroom gifts suggestions? Consider these:

- Invite several families to join you in taking out a children's magazine subscription for the classroom. Websites such as www.Amazon.com and www.MagazinesUSA.com offer deeply discounted rates to such publications as Highlights, Ranger Rick, Your Big Backyard and more.

- Pick up a small, flip-style photo album and fill it with crowd-pleasing recipes submitted by other families in the classroom. Title it, "Class of 2017 Cookbook" and package it together with a couple of kitchen accessories: spatula,

mixing spoons, and measuring cups.

- Teachers love to help other students learn. Gather money from other families and purchase a gift certificate to a local cosmetology school for a manicure, pedicure, or haircut. Package it with a comb, brush, deep hair conditioning packet, and the school's brochure of services.

- Gift certificates are a popular present this time of year. Suggest students in the classroom all purchase \$5 gift cards to the same educational, book, or dollar store, or local eatery. Collectively, it will make enough to buy something useful or give the teacher a night out on the town.

Reel fine. Make a movie-themed package and include a \$5 gift card to Redbox movie rentals, a box of microwave popcorn, and Swedish Fish or Milk Duds candy. Stop by a local movie theater and purchase a clean popcorn bucket for a minimal cost to use for themed packaging.

Great games. Keep kids occupied indoors during inclement weather by purchasing classroom games. Find out what games and activities the teacher does

and doesn't have, then watch for sales in store flyers, look online, or find them at a garage sale.

Kid crafted. Teachers agree the best gifts come from the heart, not the pocket. Cards with sincere sentiments or pictures drawn by students are the most cherished presents of all.

Denise Morrison Yearian is a former educator and editor of two parenting magazines, and the mother of three children and four grandchildren.





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Rock your resolutions

How to improve your life in 2017

BY GOLDA SMITH

The new year is almost here. What excites you most about it? Maybe it's the idea of wiping the slate clean and starting over. Or perhaps it is the ritual of making those resolutions to achieve more and do better.

According to the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 45 percent of Americans make resolutions; however, many of those people had abandoned their resolutions after three months. While I am sure most people have great intentions, and want to achieve their resolutions, the stumbling block for most is that they have brought the habits, attitudes, and behaviors that haven't worked in the past year into the present.

If you want something new, you must do something new ... and yes, it can be scary and it is work.

If you are ready to confidently make 2017 YOUR year, then keep reading. What separates the people that achieve their

goals from the those that don't? These four habits, attitudes, and behaviors certainly are not an exhaustive list, but it is a great start. The first habit to leave in 2016 is:

The habit of procrastination

We have all had our moment or two with procrastination. Putting off balancing the check book, cleaning the closet, or getting up an hour early like we promised to go work out. I laugh as I write this paragraph, because it applies to me as well, so let's all have a good laugh.

There are several types of procrastinators, from the drama addict or the angry giver to the neurotic perfectionist, but the bottom line is that prolonged avoidance is an invitation to pain.

To leave procrastination behind, you have to identify the underlying cause of the procrastination. Is it to control a situation, to rebel, to avoid pain, or some other reason? When you can name it, then you can address it and finally put it behind

you, or at least learn how to navigate it.

Stop the comparison game

Social media is my adult playground. I have made some great relationships through Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. At the same time, it was also a source of great discomfort for me and maybe for you, too. Like most of you, I would spend way too much time mindlessly scrolling through Instagram photos and thus, I found myself comparing my body — which did the miraculous job of growing two humans — to the half-naked Photoshopped bodies of 20-something-year-old women. The comparison game is self-inflicted cruelty.

My suggestion? Scroll through your Instagram account and check your feed. If the images in the accounts you follow leave you feeling empty or wishing you had *that* body, un-follow that account now. Life is too short to not feel like you are enough just the way you are, which brings me to the third habit you can leave in 2016:

The daily weigh-in

I know people that weigh themselves several times a day. Did you know that the average person has a five-pound weight fluctuation in an average day? Functions like breathing, sweating, eating, and drinking all influence the number on the scale. I understand that you want to see progress (especially if your goal is to release weight) however, constantly weighing yourself and wishing for the scale to magically show your magic number is not going to make it happen any faster. Instead, focus on the inches you are loosing and how you feel in your clothes.

Negative inner (and outer) dialogue

This is probably the biggest behavior you can leave in 2016 that will have the biggest impact on your life. What you think about yourself or someone else eventually comes out of your mouth! Think about that for a moment. Women are so quick to think and make negative comments about themselves. Let's make a pledge to make a conscious decision to stop talking negatively about ourselves and others — yes, even the nosey neighbor we can't stand. The next time you catch yourself thinking a negative thought, stop and speak a word of gratitude.

I sincerely wish each of you a very happy and prosperous New Year, and while it can be a little scary (let's be honest, it can be downright scary) to let go of the familiar — even if it is dysfunctional — and embrace something new, I know you can do it. Let 2017 be your year of "Yes!"

Golda Smith, a mom of two, is a certified personal trainer and health coach living in Brooklyn. She blogs at FitMommyBlog.com

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‘Holiday’ wishes

Celebrating the season with freedom and love

BY CAROLYN WATERBURY-TIEMAN

We are in the midst of what is commonly known as the holiday season. From the end of October to the middle of January, there are numerous special occasions celebrated. Some of these have deeply religious roots, while others have cultural, historical, or national origins. Not everyone celebrates all of them and no two people celebrate or experience any one of them in exactly the same way. We are free to celebrate our religious, cultural, historical, and national heritage. While this freedom guarantees us the right to have and practice our personal beliefs, it does not give us the right to impose our views on others or penalize those who do not share them. That is the foundation upon which this country is built.

The word “holiday” can be traced back to Old English. Holiday is a modern version of the word “haligdaeg,” which historically was reserved for referring to special religious days or “holy days.” Currently, the word holiday is used to indicate any period of time, from one day to several, set aside as a special occasion where we are not expected to go to work, attend school, or follow our ordinary routine. The occasion may or may not be religious in nature and can range from dates of national significance, such as the Fourth of July, to dates of personal significance, such as family vacations.

The generic term, holiday, lends itself to composing an inclusive greeting that acknowledges the festive atmosphere characterizing this time of year, while recognizing and respecting the diversity of celebrations that take place. A simple,

“Happy Holidays,” allows the greeter to express his seasonal cheer without presuming the recipient is celebrating any specific occasion. Yet, this innocent salutation has been at the center of a divisive controversy for the past few years. As someone who associates this season with love, peace, hope, joy, and unity, I find this profoundly troubling.

The usual pleasure derived from preparing for seasonal festivities is marred by reports of ugly exchanges between adults over issues like coffee cup colors and designs. When adults start bickering over whose is the most important or the “real” holiday, I find myself wondering why they are so easily threatened? What difference does it make what or how other people celebrate? How does what others do or don’t do take away from their experience of the holidays?

Is their celebration diminished by others celebrating differently or not at all? Are their beliefs invalid because others don't share them?

The desperate need for others to profess the same beliefs and participate in the same practices in order to validate one's own beliefs and practices suggests an underlying insecurity. If that is the case, perhaps what is needed is a reevaluation of the strength of their convictions.

If we value our freedom to believe and our right to practice those beliefs through our holiday celebrations, then we must extend that freedom to others. We can accept their right to believe and practice as they choose without having to agree with them, approve of them, or adopt those choices for ourselves.

While I am no expert on religion, I have read enough to know that one of the basic tenets of every major religion can be summarized in these words, "Treat others the way you would like to be treated." It doesn't say, "treat others the way you have been treated." It says, treat others the way you would like to be treated. And there is no disclaimer in parentheses after this statement, in any of the holy texts, that says to do so only if others look like you, agree with you, or believe like you. Whatever

What difference does it make what or how other people celebrate? How does what others do or don't do take away from their experience of the holidays? Is their celebration diminished by others celebrating differently or not at all?

holiday we celebrate, and however we choose to celebrate it, we must respect the right of others to celebrate theirs in their own way.

My son and daughter-by-love will be celebrating the holidays for the first time as a married couple this year. They stopped here to visit for a few days following their honeymoon. Before leaving, they asked to take some decorations from our collection to begin their own. How lovely to think of those ornaments adding holiday cheer to their new home. What an honor to be included in this unique way in their celebration as they begin creating their own traditions. Will they be celebrating in exactly the same way we will be celebrating? No. Does that mean they are being disloyal to the traditions they were raised with? No. Does that mean they have the right to think

and choose for themselves? Yes!

As I mentioned before, we are in the midst of the holiday season. The season of giving. My gift to you is a song. One of my favorites from an album with John Denver and The Muppets called "A Christmas Together." The song is titled "A Christmas Wish." The basic message is this — if you believe in love, that is reason enough for us to celebrate together. If we truly believe in and practice love, that will be more than enough to make peace last throughout the coming year.

Carolyn Waterbury-Tieman is a resident of Lexington, Ky. She has been married for 29 years and has two sons. She spent 15 years in various agencies and clinics as a family therapist and parent educator and has written extensively on the topic of parenting. To contact her, please e-mail parent4life@yahoo.com.

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Ho, ho, Hanukkah

Tips on celebrating both Hanukkah and Christmas

BY CHRISTINA KATZ

You don't have to be an interfaith family to celebrate both Hanukkah and Christmas each year. Any family can choose to celebrate whichever holiday traditions they wish. Holiday joy can be doubled, rather than halved, when you choose to light the menorah and decorate the Christmas tree to honor the cultural and religious traditions of both parents.

So forget the "December Dilemma." When it comes to religion, families increasingly run the Judeo-Christian gamut. In our family, we have Orthodox Jews on one side of the family tree and born-again Christians on the other side. But my husband and I both share the same beliefs about diversity, tolerance, and spirituality. And that's what we intend to pass on to our daughter.

As a woman who was raised Catholic and has been happily married to a Jewish man for the past 13 years, I can attest that once you become a parent in an interfaith family, you quickly become accustomed to not being able to please everyone. But since the wisdom of your hearts brought you and your partner together in the first place, why not call on that same source of wisdom to guide you through creating your own version of happy holidays?

Here are a few tips based on what our family has learned from holding the middle ground over the years:

Talk to each other first and last

The bottom line on family celebrations, holiday or otherwise, is to always do whatever you and your spouse deem best for your family. The only way to come to an understanding about what this means is to discuss it with each other first and last.

Be prepared for this to be an ongoing conversation, and probably one that you revisit each year.

Protect your joint point of view

Never let bossy or opinionated family members horn in on conversations that



rightly belong between you and your partner. You only have one spouse, and that's the person whose opinion you should value most. Your kids come next, and the grandparents after them.

Don't treat your parents like children or allow them to treat you like a child. This behavior will only create conflicts between you and your spouse.

Ignore disapproving outsiders

Never apologize for being an interfaith

family, even if people in your extended family or circle of close friends do not approve of your union. You are not seeking their permission — as Perchick expressed so boldly in "Fiddler On The Roof" — you are asking for their blessing.

Creating harmonious and joyful dual holidays in your own home is your parental right and your familial duty, even if it means agreeing to disagree with certain members of your extended family.

Stick to separate but equal

Christmas may be more common and commercial than Hanukkah, but don't let that trump your holiday fun. The nice thing about Hanukkah is that it lasts for eight nights. Light the menorah candles and say the Hanukkah prayer every night, if you possibly can. You may be amazed at how moving and inspiring such simple rituals can be, even on busy school nights.

Look for the quieter, more awe-inspiring moments in Christmas as well, such as ending the day admiring the beauty of the decorated tree and window lights.

Keep both sets of traditions

At our house, we celebrate as much of both traditions as we can, without a worry about whether the holidays overlap or not. For me, this means the

Christmas tree, the presents, the cookies, the big dinner. For my husband this means lighting two menorahs for eight nights (one for him and one for my daughter), having our daughter's friends over for potato latkes, and some lively dreidel games.

Don't double your gift budget

We make an effort to celebrate the bounty of two holidays without going overboard. If you are an interfaith family, your kids' friends may consider them "lucky" because they assume that they get double the gifts every holiday season. However, that's not necessarily the case at our house.

Our daughter typically gets a little present on the first day of Hanukkah and a bigger present on the last day of Hanukkah. One set of grandparents send a couple of

little Hanukkah gifts and a check and the other sends a couple of stocking stuffers and a check. The amount of gifts she receives is essentially the same as it would be if we only celebrated one holiday.

Share the love

Another thing we enjoy about dual holidays is that our daughter can share traditions about both holidays with her friends, no matter what religion they follow, exposing them to a culture they may not have had the opportunity to learn about.

Participate wisely

When invited to join a new or old tradition on either side of the family, give the ritual a chance. We will try just about anything once. But we reserve the right to say “no” to pressure or anything that makes us uncomfortable.

Maintaining an atmosphere where you can say “yes” or “no” to your parents without stern chastisement may not come easily in your extended family system. But start trying it, or you’ll never get there.

Honor the choices of others

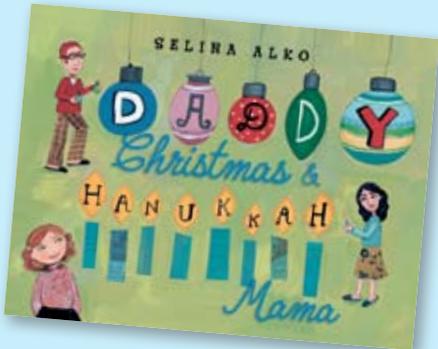
We don’t try to protect our family members from our choices. They need to be exposed to what we value, if we expect them

Fun holiday family reads

Hanukkah:
“Hanukkah!” by Roni Schotter and Marilyn Hafner
“Lots Of Latkes, A Hanukkah Story” by Sandy Lanton and Vicki Jo Redenbaugh
“When Mindy Saved Hanukkah” by Eric Kimmel
“It’s A Miracle! A Hanukkah Storybook” by Stephanie Spinner and Jill McElmurry

Christmas:
“The Christmas Story” by Jane Werner Watson and Eloise Wilkin
“’Twas The Night Before Christmas or Account Of A Visit From St. Nicholas” by Clement Clarke Moore
“How The Grinch Stole Christmas” by Dr. Seuss
“The Polar Express” by Chris Van Allsburg

Celebrating both:
“My Two Holidays, A Hanukkah and Christmas Story” by Danielle Novack and Phyllis Harris
“Light The Lights, A Story About Celebrating Hanukkah And Christmas” by Margaret Moorman
“Daddy Christmas and Hanukkah Mama” by Selina Alko



to understand and accept our choices. However, we also try to respect the choices that each of our family members make without imposing our life choices on them. The Jewish families get Happy Hanukkah cards and the Christian families get Christmas cards. When we cross over,

we go with “Happy Holidays.”
Author, journalist, and writing coach Christina Katz loves celebrating the winter holidays with her family and friends. Each year her family enjoys exchanging ornaments for the tree and inviting a new group of friends over to play the dreidel game and enjoy potato latkes.

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Got nutrition?

Tips for handling picky eaters

Along with 10,000 of my colleagues, I recently attended the Food and Nutrition Conference & Expo in Boston, the world's largest annual meeting of food and nutrition professionals.

The evidence-based educational sessions covered the entire life cycle from conception to end-of-life, and there were many presentations pertaining to children and adolescents.

Digestive health was a major theme at the meeting. Probiotics and fermented products were featured at the expo. And there were educational sessions on feeding your microbiome and influencing the gut-brain highway.

Other topics included reducing plate waste in schools; where kids fit into the new 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans; the management of life-threatening food allergies in early childcare and school settings; food insecurity; integrating cooking and tasting activities into nutrition education programs; and the health effects of natural foods high in saturated fat, such as coconut and butter.

Let's zero in on a fascinating presentation that may be of interest if your child is an extremely "picky eater."

The topic of avoidant or restrictive food intake disorder was presented by registered dietitian nutritionist Jill Castle, creator of The Kids Healthy Weight Project (an online nutrition and feeding course for parents)

and The Nourished Child Podcast.

Your child may have the disorder if she experiences the following: Refusal of foods with certain characteristics — such as wet or slippery foods — or entire food groups; poor feeding or eating skills; problems with chewing, swallowing, or choking; delayed fine motor skills; underweight; anxiety with new foods or a new eating environment; or avoids social eating situations.

Children with the disorder often suffer from constipation, iron-deficiency anemia, vitamin C and vitamin A deficiency, low bone density, delayed puberty, and slowed growth. Perhaps not surprisingly, about half of these cases co-exist with other medical conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, autism, anxiety, and depression.

What can you do if you are a parent or grandparent of a child you suspect has avoidant or restrictive food intake disorder? Diagnosis is made by a mental health provider and a team approach is used including a psychologist or psychiatrist, registered dietitian nutritionist, speech language pathologist, and occupational therapist.

Therapy often includes cognitive behavioral therapy, exposure and desensitization therapy, self-comfort techniques, and family-based treatment where the family takes complete ownership of the feeding process.

Nutrition therapy may include:

- Food challenges where the child is en-



GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

couraged to take one bite at a meal three nights in a row, then moving on to the next food challenge.

- Food chaining (e.g. rice cake to rice cracker to Rice Krispie Treat to rice).

- Three new foods every day after school for two weeks.

- A food log of trials and the encouragement of the child to evaluate her progress.

What does not work is pressure to eat, offering rewards, and unproven special diets, i.e. gluten-free, casein-free.

Ultimately, the goal is to provide the child with food courage, eating confidence, and a meaningful acceptance of food.

Christine M. Palumbo, a registered dietitian nutritionist and Fellow of the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, practices in Naperville, Ill. She has firsthand experience with avoidant or restrictive food intake disorder with a young family member who is still "working on" his feeding skills. Follow her on Twitter @PalumboRD, Facebook at Christine Palumbo Nutrition, or Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.

Giving back

Opportunities for kids to volunteer in New York City

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

The winter holiday season is the perfect time to involve the whole family in giving back to your local community. Make it known to your children that it's not only adults that can lend a hand, but rather, kids who can be just as involved in making a difference in someone's life. This is an empowering message to instill early in life, having children take ownership of their community and make a difference whether it is direct or indirect.

Many local organizations are looking for assistance year-round, such as nursing homes, nonprofit organizations, or animal shelters. Your location, child's age, and interests will be a factor in the decision-making for a family volunteer project during the winter holidays. If you are seeking ideas for what your family or group of friends can do, here are a few examples:

Feed a family

Many members of our local communities struggle to put food on their tables regularly. Collect non-perishable foods to donate to a local organization. Your donations can help to keep shelves stocked at area soup kitchens, food pantries, and other community food programs.

By running a food drive with your family or group of friends, you'll help provide many New Yorkers with good food that they normally would not have.

Give gifts

The winter months can be difficult for families and individuals living in New York City. Maybe the cold weather caused high heating bills or an illness such as a cold or flu resulted in missed work. Any number of things can affect income and cause holiday gifts to be cut from the budget.

By shopping for and delivering gifts to those in need, you and your family can bring more cheer to children and families who may not otherwise receive holiday gifts.

Start a coat drive

We all know what it's like to be cold for short periods of time, but imagine no chance of getting warm due to a lack of appropriate winter gear. Help ensure that every New Yorker stays warm, healthy, and safe over this winter by hosting a coat



drive. Your family, group of friends, colleagues, or even your child's school, can run a coat drive.

There are always so many opportunities to volunteer around the city. A number of community resources help make it easy to find a program or organization to support. Given your family make up, your volunteer project can range by location or interest, but big or small, you are making a difference.

More ideas

Don't know where to begin? Here are a few organizations that can give you a start:

City Harvest: City Harvest is the world's first food rescue organization, dedicated to feeding hungry New Yorkers. The organization has served New Yorkers for more than 30 years. Visit www.cityharvest.org to find out more on how to donate or volunteer.

Doing Good Together: This Minnesota-based organization aims to help parents raise compassionate and socially conscious children through family volunteerism. It was founded on the belief that when parents engage with their children in community service, they pass along the spirit of giving. For New Yorkers, www.doinggoodtogether.org/family-volunteering-nyc offers listings and information on family-friendly volunteer and service opportunities in the metro area.

New York Cares: New York Cares

runs vital programs for nonprofits, public schools, and city agencies to help people in need throughout the five boroughs. Since 1987, New York Cares has made it easy for all New Yorkers to work together to strengthen the city. Getting started is easy: just attend orientation, then you can search and sign up for any project. Visit www.newyorkcares.org.

No Kid Hungry: This organization works hard to make sure no kid in America grows up hungry by collaborating with community groups, activists, and food programs. The goal is to identify children facing hunger and surround them with nutritious food where they live, learn, and play. Visit www.nokidhungry.org.

Toys For Tots: This organization collects and distributes toys to families in need. You and your family can help in your community by collecting new, unwrapped toys to be distributed. Your donations will serve as Christmas gifts to less fortunate children in the community. The primary goal of Toys for Tots is to deliver, through a new toy at Christmas, a message of hope to less fortunate youngsters that will assist them in becoming responsible, productive, patriotic citizens. Visit <http://toysfortots.org>.

Shnieka Johnson is an education consultant and freelance writer. She is based in Manhattan where she resides with her husband and son. Contact her via her website: www.shnieka-johnson.com.

To nap or not to nap?

Variations in napping toddlers

My first daughter was a sleeper. She woke every four hours as a baby and then settled into a fairly regular routine, quickly sleeping throughout the night and taking two naps per day. Gradually, it slowed to one afternoon nap until she was about 4. My son had a similar schedule, and like his big sister, he also enjoyed sleeping. My second daughter, however, was a whole other matter.

She barely slept and scarcely ate. It was always a struggle to get her to eat enough at mealtime as a baby. Then she'd settle down for an afternoon nap only to wake up 15 minutes later. I tried to enforce nap time as long as possible, but by age 2, it just wasn't happening anymore.

Pediatrician Dr. Perry Klass has written quite a bit about the complexity of kids taking naps, and notes the process is entirely more multifaceted than most of us would ever think.

"Napping in children actually is a complex behavior, a mix of individual biology, including neurologic and hormonal development, cultural expectations and family dynamics," she says.

Infants sleep between feedings, and older babies generally take a morning and

afternoon nap, which slowly whittles down to one afternoon nap. While this is the general pattern, she points out "individual children's sleep needs and sleep patterns tended to be consistent through age 10. In other words, children who slept less than their peers as infants grew into older children [who] seemed to need less sleep."

A study done by Dr. Monique LeBourgeois, a sleep scientist at the University of Colorado at Boulder, questioned how napping affects the cortisol-awakening response, which is a burst of hormone secretion that occurs shortly before waking in the morning. It showed that children produce this response after short naps in the morning and afternoon, though not in the evening, and it may be adaptive in helping children respond to the stresses of the day.

By experimentally restricting sleep in young children, and then analyzing their behavior in putting puzzles together, Dr. LeBourgeois's group quantified how napping — or the lack of it — affects the ways that children respond to situations.

"Sleepy children are not able to cope with day-to-day challenges in their worlds," she said. When children skip even a single nap, "We get less positivity, more negativ-



JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

ity, and decreased cognitive engagement."

Yet through all the sleep research, there isn't anything that can show parents exactly when a child should stop napping. When should a parent let a toddler who refuses to sleep give up her nap? When should a parent discourage a child from napping if he is approaching full-time school age?

And let's not forget the social and family issues that play a part in nap time. Sometimes, I would finally get one of my toddlers into a long nap only to have to wake them to pick up an older sibling from school. Also, many moms need a break in the day, so an afternoon nap is a matter of great importance. It helps moms recharge.

Yet often, the more we want our baby to nap, the less he will, and for some children, naps are just too difficult to do on a regular basis. My second daughter never became accustomed to taking naps, and I couldn't figure out why, but I did try as much as I could to go with the flow. I'd still try to get her to nap each day, but after a half hour, when I knew it wasn't going to happen, I just let her play quietly or thumb through a book.

Perhaps Dr. LeBourgeois sums it up best: "I think there's a dire need for adults in general to be in tune with individual children's physiology. What are the capabilities, and what are the limits? If you know your child will be stressed, cranky, and miserable without a nap, set aside time every day for that nap, but if your child starts to resist napping, another method of relaxation might be better for them."

Danielle Sullivan, a mom of three, is a writer and editor living in New York City.



Forgiveness for the non-sporting soul

Supporting your kids' passions — whatever they are

BY KARA MARTINEZ BACHMAN

I don't care for sports. I never have. During childhood, I spent my time roller skating and riding bikes with kids from the neighborhood. I was active, but it wasn't the competitive, organized sports kind of active.

One summer my mother signed me up for soccer. I spent the practices — the *two* that I actually showed up for prior to dropping out — watching the other kids have fun. I participated slowly and grudgingly, wiping sweat from my brow and constantly checking my watch. I jogged along with lethargy, hoping I'd never actually contact the ball.

I vowed my own children would be more active. My husband and I moved to a semi-rural area when our son was young and our daughter was an infant. We were sure the piney woods and coastal landscapes of the area would inspire all sorts of outdoor activity. We were sure our kids would want to hike, run, play organized sports, swim, and take in all that the outdoors had to offer.

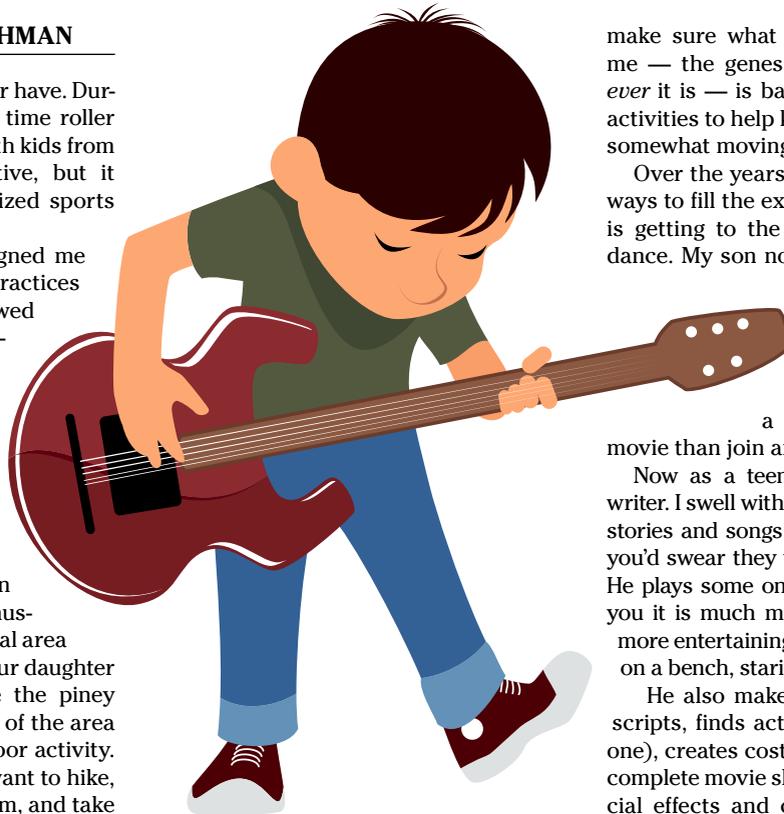
Nope.

Our son "played" basketball at his elementary school. He spent most games meekly planted on the bench. He watched the others, waiting for his two or three moments with the ball, which would always be brief and mostly fraught with disappointment.

After the basketball fiasco, we thought: surely, baseball is the way to go. What kid doesn't like standing at the mound, adjusting his cap just so while staring down the enemy? What kid doesn't like taking team pictures with big trophies, then eating delectable and unhealthy hot dogs?

Our kid, that's who.

Yeah, he'd play along, for sure. He'd say he liked it, no doubt to make his father proud. But the watery sadness in his eyes said something else, and his lack of



enthusiasm pre-game spoke the words he never could.

When younger, my husband had been the opposite: he was a star of the basketball team. He had his picture in the papers often. He still has a collection of old, yellowed newspaper clippings, showing his younger self sliding into home or crossing a finish line with a baton. So it wasn't my husband's genes or attitude that shaped my son's distaste for sport — it was mine.

It took some time to come to grips with this, and I've finally forgiven myself. I have. Although exercise is important to well-being, there's probably no blame to be placed for a child not wanting to hit balls, kick goals, or wrestle people to the ground. Sometimes it just is. Every child has his talents, his proclivities.

On the other hand, it's still my duty to

make sure what my kids inherited from me — the genes, the attitude, the *whatever* it is — is balanced by other healthy activities to help keep their bodies at least somewhat moving.

Over the years, we've found alternative ways to fill the exercise void. My daughter is getting to the age where she likes to dance. My son now takes long bike rides, sometimes trekking with his dad 15 or 20 miles at a time. He swims with friends. But he'd rather read a book or watch an old movie than join any sort of team.

Now as a teen, my son is a beautiful writer. I swell with pride when he shares his stories and songs that can be so touching, you'd swear they were written by an adult. He plays some on his guitar, and I can tell you it is much more joyful for me — and more entertaining — than watching him sit on a bench, staring at a gymnasium floor.

He also makes short films. He writes scripts, finds actors (his sister is a great one), creates costumes, and puts together complete movie shorts, including cool special effects and carefully selected music soundtracks. His father, the former athlete, beams with pride that his son has found his calling.

We don't gather on bleachers for his movie screenings, but when the final credits roll, the cheers are just as good as those delivered on a ball field. And the look of pride in his eyes — now that he's not just pretending to have fun — is 100 percent real.

Kara Martinez Bachman is author of the humorous essay collection for women, "Kissing the Crisis: Field Notes on Foul-mouthed Babies, Disenchanted Women, and Careening into Middle Age." She has read her work on NPR radio and it has appeared in dozens of magazines, newspapers, and literary journals, including The Writer, Funny Times, the New Orleans Times-Picayune, and many parenting magazines. Find out more at KaraMartinezBachman.com or follow her on Twitter, @80sMomKara.

Optimize your fertility

Seven dos and don'ts to help women conceive

There are countless bits of advice out there on ways to get pregnant. However, from family and friends to blogs and news pieces, many of these stories are not rooted in reliable medical advice. To separate fact from fiction, we spoke with Dr. Mary Jane Minkin, Clinical Professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences at Yale University School of Medicine, and asked her for specific dos and don'ts for women who want to optimize their health in order to get ready to conceive:

Alcohol: Studies focusing on alcohol's effect on conception have produced mixed results, with some indicating that pregnancy is more likely if women give up drinking entirely and others suggesting that those who drink moderately might increase their chances of conception — perhaps because an occasional glass of wine makes them more relaxed. But experts agree that women who give up alcohol will increase their chances of a healthy baby once conception does happen, and that alone is reason enough for most women to quit.

Tobacco: Unlike alcohol, the data on smoking's correlation to pregnancy is undisputed. Both primary and secondhand smoke are detrimental to a woman's chance of conceiving and to a developing fetus as well. Quitting is never easy, but you can take advantage of resources and support to help you find a plan and stick to it.

Caffeine: As the daily substance of choice for most Americans, dependency on those morning cups of coffee or afternoon soft drink is difficult to break. But even if caffeine's link to fertility isn't univer-

sally agreed upon, reputable studies exist that suggest caffeine — especially in excess — can stunt the maturation of an egg or increase the chances of a miscarriage. If giving up your morning cup of Joe can help you get pregnant, the sacrifice is worth it.

Your spot on the couch: In other words, get up and move around! Couch potatoes aren't helping any aspect of their health, but women who are trying to conceive have an extra compelling reason to kick it into high gear. Experts agree that women who stay within their ideal weight have a better chance of becoming pregnant, and a recent study by Obstetrics and Gynecology reported that women who exercise 30 minutes or more a day had a reduced risk of ovulation disorders, which often lead to infertility.

Junk food: Generally speaking, any change that moves you toward a healthier lifestyle will promote fertility. But when it comes to diet, advice seems to fall all over the map. Specific fertility diets advocate for eating foods like oysters, garlic, and yams, but an extensive 2009 study advised women to follow simpler guidelines — healthy fats,

selective proteins, whole grains, and plenty of iron and other vitamins. And, obviously, putting down the potato chips and the candy bars is an excellent first step toward helping you get pregnant this year. To ensure you are getting your daily dose of necessary vitamins and folic acid, take a multivitamin like First Response

PreNatal and PostNatal Gummies or First Response Reproductive Health Gummies.

Excessive stress: Granted, this



HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

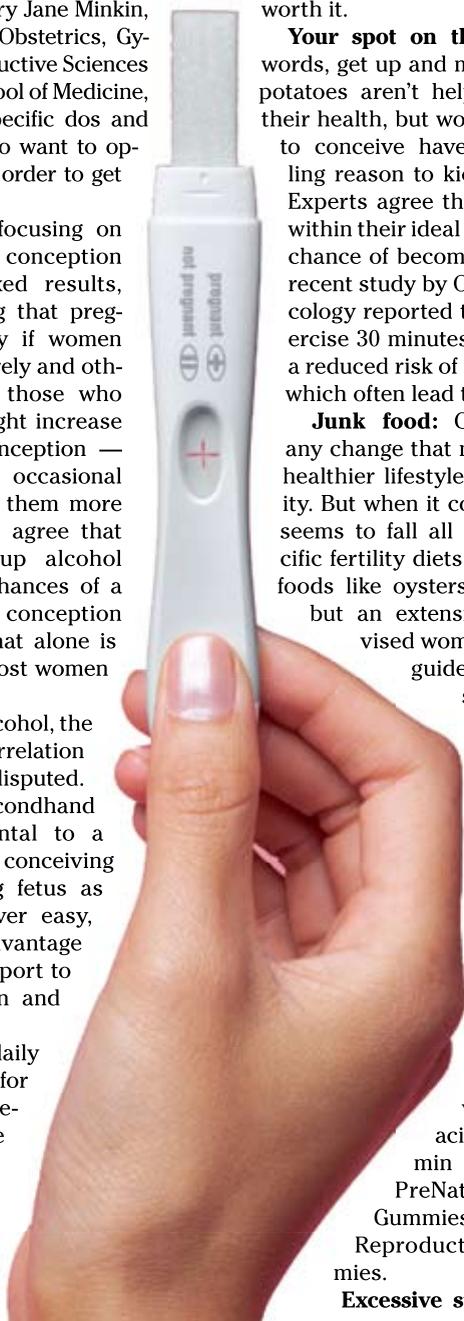
step is easier said than done, especially when the chief cause of the stress is the infertility itself. But if external factors are causing undue anxiety, a woman's chance at conception can decrease, and the stress of waiting for that positive pregnancy test month after month could be the last straw for her emotional health. Give up extra responsibilities whenever possible, talk to your boss about reducing your job stress, and work in regular "mental health" days to be refreshed by activities and people you enjoy.

Lubricants containing glycerin: According to the American Society of Reproductive Medicine's "Guidelines for Optimizing Natural Fertility," several leading vaginal lubricants (e.g. K-Y) may decrease fertility based on their observed effects on sperm survival. Another study showed that lubricants containing glycerin had an adverse effect on sperm motility.

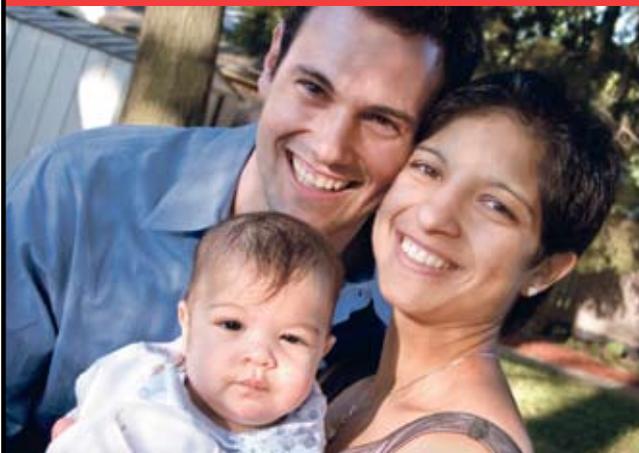
Fertility experts recommend using a fertility-friendly lubricant like Pre-Seed that is specially formulated without glycerin that will not harm sperm and will allow sperm to swim freely.

"While no checklist guarantees a healthy pregnancy, giving up these seven things can help you get pregnant. It's all about creating the ideal environment for the pregnancy to happen," says Dr. Minkin. "A healthy, happy, and active lifestyle is a solid base, and giving up the aforementioned things will get you there."

Danielle Sullivan, a mom of three, is a writer and editor living in New York City.



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CAPE MAY



Historic winter wonderland

BY THOMAS C. DAUS

Year after year, as the holiday season approaches, I find time to spend a weekend in the beautiful beach town of Cape May, New Jersey. Cape May in November and December has the charm of a spectacular winter wonderland!

The number of activities of this seaside town in December may surprise you! Cape May caters to revelers of all ages with a variety of family-based events.

Children will simply love the opportunity to meet Santa Claus at the annual Christmas parade on Dec. 3. Congress Hall, a hotel which dates back to 1816, has an adorable train ride for kids that circles around the perimeter of the property.

And you can stop by vendor stalls adjacent to that attraction and purchase charming gifts such as handmade scarves, porcelain items, and a variety of jams. The Cape May Arts and Humanities Center offers trolley tours. When dusk sets in, dazzling holiday lights transform the town.

The 43rd annual Christmas Candlelight House Tour will be in full swing on Saturdays, Dec. 3, 10, and 17. For a nominal fee, guests can tour about a dozen historical, Victorian homes. The Cape May homeowners generously allow visitors into their cozy and warmly decorated residences. Hospitality stops are also incorporated into this unique event; enjoy complimentary homemade cookies, apple cider, and hot chocolate!

If you plan to visit historic Cape May, make reservations in advance. The following is just a sampling of the heartwarming holiday offerings that await you:

“An Old-Fashioned Christmas Exhibit:” An exhibit of holiday traditions complete with model trains, toys, and much more! At the Carroll Gallery at the Emlen Physick Estate. The gallery is open daily (except Thanksgiving and Christmas).

Emlen Physick Estate [1048 Washington St. between Madison Avenue and St. James Place in Cape May, (609) 884-5404] Now through Jan. 1, 2017. Hours vary. Free admission.

Physick Family Christmas House Tours: Take a guided daytime, living-historical tour of the 1879 Emlen Physick Estate, decorated in Victorian style for Christmas, presented through the eyes of a Physick family member from the early 1900s. The tour includes a visit to the Carroll Gallery where you can see “An Old-Fashioned Christmas” exhibit.

Emlen Physick Estate [1048 Washington St. between Madison Avenue and St. James Place in Cape May, (609) 884-5404] Adults, \$12, children ages 3-12, \$8. Offered daily, hours vary. No tours Dec. 25.

Ghosts of Christmas Past Trolley Rides: Take this 30-minute evening trolley ride through the festively decorated Historic District as you listen to a Victorian ghost tale told by a member of the East Lynne Theatre Company. (Tours leave from Washington Street Mall, except for Nov. 19 tours, which leave from the Physick Estate.) Advance reservation strongly recommended.

Washington Street Mall (401 Washington St. between Jackson and Decatur streets in Cape May) Sundays, Now-Dec. 18; Fridays, Dec. 2-Dec. 23; and Monday, Dec. 26-Saturday, Dec. 31. Hours vary. Adults, \$12; children ages 3-12, \$8.

Emlen Physick Estate [1048 Washington St.

between Madison Avenue and St. James Place in Cape May, (609) 884-5404]

Holiday Lights Trolley Rides: Take a ride on the jolly red trolley through Cape May’s Historic District and delight in seeing festive Christmas decorations of inns and homes as guides touch on Victorian Christmas traditions, lead sing-alongs, and play Christmas music. (Tours leave from Washington Street Mall, except for Nov. 19 tours, which leave from the Physick Estate.)

Washington Street Mall (401 Washington St. between Jackson and Decatur streets in Cape May) Nightly, Now 25-Dec. 31. Hours vary. No tours Dec. 3, 10, 12, 17, 24, and 25. Adults, \$12; children ages 3-12, \$10.

Emlen Physick Estate [1048 Washington St. between Madison Avenue and St. James Place in Cape May, (609) 884-5404]

Santa’s Trolley Rides: Bring the kids to the Physick Estate on weekends for a trolley ride around Cape May with stories and songs led by Mrs. Claus. Then, Santa will greet children with a sweet in the Carriage House. Advance reservation strongly recommended.

Emlen Physick Estate [1048 Washington St. between Madison Avenue and St. James Place in Cape May, (609) 884-5404] Saturday, Nov. 19; Saturdays and Sundays, Now-Dec. 17. Hours vary. Adults, \$10; children ages 3-12, \$8.

Evening Yuletide Tour: Revel in the sparkling lights of Cape May’s beautiful Victorian homes decorated for Christmas on this 30-minute trolley ride followed by a guided tour of the first-floor rooms of the 1879 Emlen Physick Estate, decorated for a Victorian Christmas. Then visit the Carriage House for



The holidays are an exciting time in Cape May, New Jersey. (Clockwise from top left) The "Old-Fashioned Christmas" exhibit features plenty of lights, trains, and toys. The tree on the Physick estate is a must-see. The Candlelight House Tour is the main attraction of Cape May's holiday season — giving visitors a look back in time. See Cape May's Historic District lit up with festive decorations.

Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts & Humanities

holiday refreshments and a visit to "An Old-Fashioned Christmas" exhibit. Tour begins and ends at the Ocean Street trolley stop.

Now-Dec. 30, except Dec. 3, 10, 12, 17, 24, and 25. Hours vary. Adults, \$22; children, ages 3-12, \$14. Admission for house tour only, adults, \$12; children ages 3-12, \$8.

Lamplighter Christmas Tours: Take this self-guided evening tour of Cape May's inns or private homes, specially decorated for the holidays. Hear a holiday presentation by the owner at each location. The tour includes a visit to the Carriage House Gallery at the Emlen Physick Estate where you'll receive warm beverages and holiday treats and see "An Old-Fashioned Christmas" exhibit.

Fridays, Dec. 2-23; and Dec. 28 from 7 pm to 9 pm. Dec. 31 from 1 to 3 pm. Adults, \$20; children ages 3-12, \$15.

Holiday Inns Tours: Get into the Christmas spirit and visit three of Cape May's inns or private homes at your own pace on these self-guided tours. Enjoy the festive décor.

Mondays through Thursdays, Now-Dec. 15 from 1 to 3 pm. Adults, \$15; children ages 3-12, \$10.

Christmas Traditions Lecture: Learn how Prince Albert brought Christmas traditions to England from Germany when he married Queen Victoria, and how these traditions spread to America in this richly illustrated lecture at the Episcopal Church of the Advent. Much of what we associate with the celebration of Christmas comes from the Victorian era.

Episcopal Church of the Advent [612 Franklin St. at Washington Street in Cape May, (609) 884-3065] Dec. 3 at 2 pm. \$10.

The 43rd Annual Christmas Candlelight House Tour: This self-guided walking tour, the main attraction of Cape May's festive holiday season, features homes, inns, hotels, and churches decorated for the holidays, plus caroling, strolling musicians, and good old-fashioned cheer. Hospitality centers offer warm beverages and traditional treats. Includes admission to the Physick Estate and "An Old-fashioned Christmas Exhibit" in the Carroll Gallery.

Limited shuttle service.

Dec. 3, 10, and 17 from 5:30 to 8:30 pm. Adults, \$30, children ages 3-12, \$20.

Chocolate Lover's Feast: Enjoy seven plated courses of chocolate desserts and hear how each was created from the chef who prepared it at The Blue Rose Inn.

The Blue Rose Inn [653 Washington St. between Franklin and Ocean streets in Cape May, (609) 435-5458] Dec. 4 at 1 pm. \$40.

• • •

The holidays are a busy time for all of us, but why not add to lasting memories with a visit to the historic town of Cape May? It is indeed a town worth visiting during the most wonderful time of the year, and perhaps this will become your family's holiday tradition for many years to come!

For further tour information, and assistance in planning your holiday visit to Cape May, visit the Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts and Humanities at www.capemaymac.org or call (609) 884-5404.

Purchase tickets for these events at the Washington Street Mall Information Booth or at the Physick Estate.

Mediation and custody concerns

In my previous article, I introduced Bill and Angela, who had decided to get a divorce. Angela called and learned more about mediation, and shared the information with Bill. After further discussion, they decided (Bill, a little reluctantly) to schedule a consultation, at which they got a sense of who the mediator is, and had more of their questions answered. Here, I continue with their first working mediation session.

Note that while this first session deals with parenting matters, the session could focus on different issues. For instance, let's say that the mediator had learned during Angela's initial phone call or at the consultation (see previous article) that there is a pressing financial concern. For example, if one spouse said that he didn't have enough money to get through the next week or month, the first session would probably address that issue, rather than parenting.

Dec. 6 — Session 1

The mediator asks about the parties, their children, and the Thanksgiving holiday.

With the spouses' permission, the mediator then turns the discussion to parenting issues.

Angela says that she wants full custody. Bill becomes defensive. They argue for a few minutes. The mediator listens and considers whether the verbal exchange is constructive, and then raises a question.

The mediator asks Bill and Angela, "What do you mean when you say 'custody?'"

The mediator listens to each person and checks that he understands what each has said. The mediator then suggests that maybe the question isn't "Which of you will have custody?" but rather, "What agreements can you reach so that you can be the kind of parents you want to be to your children?"

There is further discussion, some of it angry. The mediator helps the spouses to fully express their concerns, and asks clarifying questions.

The mediator believes that, though Bill is having difficulty listening to Angela directly, he is hearing her indirectly, through the mediator's restatements of what she is saying.

The focus is forward looking. Each parent acknowledges that the other has an important role to play in the children's lives; neither wants to "take" the children from the other. With his fear of losing the children alleviated, Bill especially becomes less tense, and the conversation is less strained.

Bill and Angela agree to talk about parenting arrangements; at least for now, they are willing to leave the legal designations (custody) aside.

Angela and Bill talk about the children: where they attend school, what they enjoy doing, their usual routines, and so forth.

The mediator helps them to set out different possible parenting plans, which are discussed.

They talk about Christmas and New Year's, which are coming up, and which they have agreed on.

The parents reach a tentative agreement on a schedule for the children, as well as on how decisions involving medical, educational, and religious matters will



DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

be handled in the future. (The latter comes easily for them.)

The mediator gives each spouse a blank form for setting out financial information. Angela and Bill are both confident that they can fill in the information about their respective incomes and expenses within a week to two weeks. Both want to have another session before the Christmas holiday. If either needs more time to complete the income or expense parts of the form, they will let each other and the mediator know, so that the date of the next session can be rescheduled.

The session ends after two hours, and Bill and Angela each pay \$300 of the \$600 fee.

Next time: Income and expenses

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

Disclaimer: All material in this column is for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.





The art of saying 'no' to your child

As a parent, you want to give your children everything! But when is everything too much?

I would argue that you're giving too much — either leeway or physical objects — to your small being if he has an inability to hear “no.”

A common pitfall is when parents give their child everything he wants the moment he asks for it. This puts your kid on an express train to becoming a spoiled brat, akin to Veruca Salt of Willy Wonka fame. Remember her screeching around the room, demanding things from her father and ordering him around? Do not let this become your reality. This is not a pleasant scenario to consider, but these unfortunate transformations hap-

pen every day.

Accepting “no” is a critical skill for all children. You must teach them this so that they can be productive adults. Start saying “no” more often. The only way to learn to accept “no” is to experience it.

Proactively decide to satisfy your small being's needs, many of his wants, and some of his desires. This pattern creates a child who is balanced and embraces the world with all of its ups and downs.

Your small being accepting “no” is an art form, and it will take you some practice to be good at it, especially if your child is used to hearing “yes.” You have to stand through negotiations, ranting and raving, and possibly hitting. He may compare you to his friend's parents.



BEHAVIOR & BEYOND

DR. MARCIE BEIGEL

Stand firm. When you decide to say “no,” stick with it.

When you stand firm, you are teaching that yelling, screaming, or hitting will not change your “no” to a “yes,” and are not acceptable forms of protest. Your child must accept your decision.

True happiness comes from working hard, accomplishing goals, and celebrating each step it took to cross the finish line. It comes from anticipating future adventures. Having all you want handed to you leads to entitlement and dissatisfaction.

As you integrate “no” into your communication, consider the following:

- Have confidence when you say “no.”
- Say “no” when you have time in case problem behavior arises while refusing a small being's request.
- Integrate “no” into scenarios where the request is possible, like ice cream for dessert, but you know it is not best.
- Practice “no” when you have a preference to uphold. For example, your small being wants to paint at the kitchen table but you would rather she color with markers.
- When you say “no,” you have to mean it! Do not change your mind.
- Pick your battles.

It is hard to see your small one disappointed or angry, but ultimately, it will be worth it. Refusing to let your child paint now is easy, but in five years, it will be much more difficult when his fighting with his teachers about doing schoolwork.

Let's stop the aspiring Verucas in their tracks. You can do this!

Dr. Marcie is a behavior specialist based in Brooklyn. She has worked with thousands of families for over 20 years. Her book, “Love Your Classroom Again,” is a bestseller.

Calendar

DECEMBER



Sweet home

Be creative and make a gingerbread house of your own at the Gingerbread House Workshop at Bartow-Pell Mansion on Dec. 7.

Jon Lovitch — Bronx chef and creator of GingerBread Lane, the world's largest gingerbread village — is leading a workshop where participants will receive gingerbread pieces, icing, and candy to make a sweet confection of their own. All you need to bring is your

own imagination.

Recommended for ages 4 and older. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Limit of one house per family. Space is limited. Advance registration required.

Gingerbread House Workshop, Dec. 7 from 2:30 to 4 pm. \$20 members; \$25 non-members.

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

Never miss a great event!

Sign up for our FREE newsletter and get twice-a-week ideas for you and your family right in your mailbox. NYParenting.com

Calendar

Submit a listing

This calendar is dedicated to bringing our readers the most comprehensive list of events in your area. But to do so, we need your help!

Send your listing request to bronxriverdalecalendar@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!

FRI, DEC. 2

IN THE BRONX

First Friday Music & Trolley: Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm; \$12 (\$10 seniors & students; members free).

Experience the mansion decked out for the holidays and enjoy the mellifluous and merry sounds of the a cappella Metropoli-Tones — back by popular demand — from 6 to 8 pm. Holiday shopping and refreshments add to the fun. The free Bronx Trolley makes a continuous loop from the 6 train Pelham Bay Park subway station to the museum and City Island. Registration requested.

SAT, DEC. 3

IN THE BRONX

Breakfast with the Animals: Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd. at Boston Road; (718) 220-5103; www.bronxzoo.com; 9 am to 10:30 am; \$60 (\$65 non-members).

Participants will learn more about the zoo's penguins, meet their keepers, and watch the penguins eat their seafood breakfast. This program is for children of all ages. Ticket price includes one adult and one child.

Santa and Sing-Alongs: Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; 10 am to 1 pm; \$20 children 1 and under are free (\$15 for member children).

Celebrate the spirit of the holidays! Explore a 19th-century mansion decorated for the season, featuring festive sing-along of your favorite seasonal tunes led by folk singer Scott Test! Enjoy hot cocoa and crafts, shop for unique gifts, and meet Santa in a historic setting (professional photos with Santa available for an additional fee). Space is limited. Registration requested.

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



Julie Larsen Maher

Breakfast with penguins

Talk with the animals and have Breakfast with the Animals at the Bronx Zoo on Dec. 3.

Participants will learn more about the zoo's penguins, meet their keepers, and watch the penguins eat their seafood breakfast. This program is for children of all ages.

Breakfast with the Animals, Dec. 3 from 9 am to 10:30 am. Tickets are \$60 (\$65 for non-members), which includes the admission of one adult and one child.

Bronx Zoo [2300 Southern Blvd. at Boston Road, (718) 220-5103; www.bronxzoo.com].

Get into the spirit of drawing winter in the garden by drafting flip-open frames and pop-out nature images reflecting early signs of winter. At 11:30 am, join us for special live-action drawing/storytelling by guest artist Jeff Hopkins, and participate in his interactive story-mural about the season!

Seal exploring: Orchard Beach Nature Center, Orchard Beach; (718) 885-3466; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Brave the cold and take a tour with rangers for a chance to see the seals.

Kinobe and Jaja: Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.carnegiehall.org/Calendar/2016/12/3/0230/PM/Neighborhood-Concert-Kinobe-and-Jaja; 2:30 pm; Free.

Presented by the Carnegie Neighborhood Concert series. The acoustic duo of Uganda-born Kinobe and Democratic Republic of the Congo native Jaja makes music that celebrates community and family. With heartfelt vocals and a unique collection of African instruments, Kinobe and Jaja draw on the traditions of their homelands, and

offer musical meditations on peace, justice, the environment, family, and friendship.

SUN, DEC. 4

IN THE BRONX

Family Art project: 10 am to 1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Dec. 3.

FURTHER AFIELD

Open Studio: Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art, 898 St. Nicholas Ave., Manhattan; (212) 335-0004; www.sugarhillmuseum.org; Noon to 4 pm; Free.

Meet our newest artist-in-residence, Derek Fordjour! He will be facilitating an art-making workshop with families from noon to 1 pm, and immediately following, will offer a glimpse into his creative process and works in the studio.

WED, DEC. 7

IN THE BRONX

Gingerbread workshop: Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmu-



Light up the holidays!

What a great way to light up the holidays with a limited engagement of “iLuminate” at the New World Stages Theater now through Jan. 8.

Music, art, and the technological magic of “iLuminate” bring you a story of adventure and romance told through dance styles ranging from contemporary, hip-hop, Latin, and breaking, all using the power of light.

With a mash-up of dazzling wizardry, spectacular dance moves, fun

audience-interactive games and high-tech effects, “iLuminate” delivers this unique dance-in-the-dark event. Suitable for tweens and young adults.

“iLuminate,” now through Jan. 8, 2017. Mondays 7 pm; Wednesdays through Fridays 8 pm; Saturdays 2 pm and 8 pm; Sundays 3 pm and 7:30 pm. Tickets are \$77 to \$99.

New World Stages' Stage 1 [340 W. 50th St. between Eighth and Ninth avenues in Hell's Kitchen, (212) 239-6200; www.iluminate.com].

seum.org; 2:30 pm to 4 pm; \$20 members (\$25 non-members).

Make your own gingerbread house under the guidance of Jon Lovitch, Bronx-based chef and creator of GingerBread Lane, the world's largest gingerbread village. Workshop participants will receive gingerbread pieces, icing, and candy. Recommended for ages 4 and older. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Limit of one house per family. Space is limited. Advance registration required.

FRI, DEC. 9

IN THE BRONX

“The Nightmare Before Christmas”:

Morris-Jumel Mansion, 65 Jumel Terrace; (212) 923-8008; 7 pm; Free.

Continuing the popularity of the movie series in partnership with NYRP, come in for a free spooky evening of holiday cheer with a showing of Tim Burton's “The Nightmare Before Christmas.” Movie is rated PG.

SAT, DEC. 10

IN THE BRONX

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

Fire and ice don't usually go together, but as the winter days get shorter and colder, we'll celebrate both. Take a simple candlestick and, using colorful, clay-like wax, mix and mold an inventive image of nature onto a candle, or weave a string star or symmetrical button snowflake at this fun, seasonal bazaar.

Family Day: Morris-Jumel Mansion, 65 Jumel Terrace; (212) 923-8008; 11 am; Free with museum admission.

Join in the annual Colonial Holiday Pomanders event. A popular tradition from the Colonial period, pomanders are dried oranges studded with cloves. Make your own pomander to take home. For children 4 years and older.

Felted soaps and ornaments: Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 11 am to 3 pm; \$18 (\$10 members).

Stop by and create your own gifts and holiday decorations. Led by artist Anne Scully, you will learn the techniques for felting and creating holiday items. For teens and young adults.

Holiday Concert: Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; 1:30 pm and 3 pm; Free with museum admission.

The Bronx Arts Ensemble presents the Manhattan Brass Quintet performing holiday classics. Registration required.

Candlelight tour and Victorian car-olers: Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895

Our online calendar is updated daily at www.NYParenting.com/calendar

Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; www.bartowpellmansionmuseum.org; 6 pm to 8 pm; \$20 (\$10 seniors, students and members).

Experience the mansion by candlelight with costumed docents highlighting 19th-century holiday traditions. Victorian carolers add to the festive atmosphere while you enjoy wassail and holiday snacks in the Orangerie. Registration requested.

SUN, DEC. 11

IN THE BRONX

Family Art project: 10 am to 1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Dec. 10.

Felted soaps and ornaments: 11 am to 3 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Dec. 10.

Family nature walk: Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Ave.; (718) 549-3200; www.wavehill.org; 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm; Free with admission to the grounds.

Join naturalist and educator Gabriel Wilow on a family-friendly walk through the gardens or woodlands. No registration required. Ages 6 and older welcome with an adult. Severe weather cancels.

MON, DEC. 12

IN THE BRONX

Wellness fair: Bronx House, 990 Pelham Parkway South; 5:30 pm to 8:30 pm; Free.

Presented by Assemblyman Mark Gjonaj and Sen. Jeffrey Klein.

WED, DEC. 14

FURTHER AFIELD

Cory Henry and the Funk Apostles: Harlem Stage Gatehouse, 150 Convent Ave. at 135th Street, Manhattan; (212) 281-9240; 7:30 pm; Free.

Presented by the Carnegie hall Neighborhood Concert series, Cory Henry is a multi-instrumentalist, producer, and Hammond B-3 organ virtuoso who has worked with legendary artists including Aretha Franklin, Robert Glasper, and Nas, and has served as keyboardist for the Grammy Award-winning group Snarky Puppy. Henry digs into his gospel, jazz, and soul roots on his latest album *The Revival*.

THURS, DEC. 15

IN THE BRONX

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

Hands-on projects using a variety of skills. For ages 7 to 12 years old. Limited to 30 children. Pre-registration required.



Mizrahi meets the 'Wolf'

Sergei Prokofiev's classic "Peter and the Wolf" comes to life on stage at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, Peter B. Lewis Theater on Dec. 3, 4, 9, 10, and 11.

Works and Process presents Isaac Mizrahi as he narrates this charming classic while Brad Lubman conducts the Ensemble Signal.

This 30-minute holiday version is full of suspense, includes a happy ending, and allows the young and young-at-heart to hear and learn the various

instruments in the orchestra. The performance is recommended for children 5 years and older.

Peter and the Wolf, Dec. 3, 4, 10, and 11 at 2:30 pm and 4 pm; Dec. 9 at 5 pm and 6:30 pm. Tickets are \$40 and \$35 for Guggenheim members and Friends of Works and Process, and \$100-\$90 for front-row seating.

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Peter B. Lewis Theater [1071 Fifth Ave. at 89th Street on the Upper East Side, (212) 423-3500; www.guggenheim.org].

SAT, DEC. 17

IN THE BRONX

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

Walk among the majestic, wonderfully scented and textured conifers at Wave Hill. Then create a winter-wonderland display using live pine boughs we provide. Add inhabitants and decorate it with shiny foil, snow-like shapes and natural objects like cones, dried herbs and spices.

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

Ebenezer Scrooge is a nasty, mean, snarling old geezer with no care for anything other than his money. His one and only friend visits him as a ghost, and starts him on a journey that melts his icy heart and teaches him the joys of caring for and giving to others. Recommended for children ages 5 and older. Presented by Traveling

Lantern Theatre Company.

SUN, DEC. 18

IN THE BRONX

Family Art project: 10 am to 1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Dec. 17.

Winter Solstice: Van Cortlandt Nature Center, W. 246th Street at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers; 5 pm to 6:30 pm; Free.

This season, the Urban Park Rangers celebrate history, wildlife, the cosmos, and the holidays with a fun-filled, candlelight walk on the Putnam Trail.

TUES, DEC. 20

IN THE BRONX

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

Children will learn the science of oil and water. Limited to 16 children. For ages 7 to 12 years old. Pre-registration is required.

Calendar

Our online calendar is updated daily at www.NYParenting.com/calendar

THURS, DEC. 22

IN THE BRONX

Santa arts & Crafts: Bronx Library Center, 310 E. Kingsbridge Rd. at Briggs Avenue; (718) 579-4244; www.nypl.org; 4 pm; Free.

Hands-on projects using a variety of skills. For ages 7 to 12 years old. Limited to 30 children. Pre-registration required.

WED, DEC. 28

IN THE BRONX

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

Waiting too long for the next available computer? Feel free to come to the computer zone and use the computer without the wait. Limited to 12 children. For ages 7 to 12. Pre-registration required.

THURS, DEC. 29

IN THE BRONX

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

Hands-on projects using a variety of skills teaching children how to make a fingerprint book. For ages 7 to 12 years old. Limited to 30 children. Pre-registration required.

LONG-RUNNING

IN THE BRONX

Holiday Train Show: New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Blvd. at Fordham Road; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am to 5:30 pm, Now – Mon, Jan. 16, 2017; \$20 (\$10 children), weekends \$30 (\$18 children).

More than 150 New York City landmarks are recreated in miniature out of bark, nuts, leaves, and other plant parts. Large-scale model trains zip around such familiar sites as the Statue of Liberty and Rockefeller Center. A recent addition of 3,000-square-feet of exhibition has made room for new trains, bridges and tracks. See website for extended hour. Reservations strongly recommended.

Bronx Zoo: 2300 Southern Blvd. at Boston Road; (718) 220-5103; www.bronxzoo.com; Daily, 10 am to 4 pm; Now – Thurs, Dec. 8; \$19.95 (\$12.95 children).

Come see giraffes, lions, birds, penguins and more. As a special treat, there are now five toddler gorillas at the Congo Gorilla Exhibit — watch their playful interactions with their parents and each other. Open daily. Check website for fall schedule. All ages.

Creative 3D Arts: Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; www.nycgovparks.org; Thursdays,

2:30 to 4:30 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 29; Free.

Have fun creating 3D arts using various mediums. Create the illusion of a 3D hand on paper. This program is best for ages 6 to 12.

Youth program: St. Mary's Recreation Center, St. Ann's Avenue and 145th Street; (311); www.nycgovparks.org; Weekdays, 3 pm to 7 pm, Now – Fri, Dec. 30; Free.

Children ages 8 to 17 are welcome to participate in a variety of sports, crafts, and learning opportunities including: Computer Resources, Arts in Parks, Youth Swim, learn to play Flag Football, learn to play Basketball, Teen Fitness (supervised use of fitness and cardio rooms), Hula Aerobics, Go Girl Athletics, and Skills and Drills basketball development.

Crochet meet: Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; Saturdays, 10:30 am to 11:30 am, Now – Sat, Dec. 31; Free.

This is a friendly group of parents interested in learning crochet to teach their children, and is intended for parents with special-needs children. Materials needed: 1 skein light colored #4 yarn, 1 pair short knitting needles #8, tapestry needle for weaving, and measuring tape.

Le Petit Art: Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; www.nycgovparks.org; Tuesdays, 2 pm to 3:30 pm, Saturdays, 2-3:30 pm, Now – Sat, Dec. 31; Free.

Create miniature works of art using multiple mediums like acrylic paint, water color, pastel, pencil, ink, and surfaces like wood, canvas, paper, metal, and glass.

Paper Arts & Crafts: Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; www.nycgovparks.org; Saturdays, 2-3:30 pm, Now – Sat, Jan. 28, 2017; Free.

Children have fun creating collages using decoupage, origami, kirigami, and more.

Dance and Fitness: St. Mary's Recreation Center, St. Ann's Avenue and 145th Street; (311); www.nycgovparks.org; Tuesdays, 3:30 pm to 5:30 pm, Now – Mon, Dec. 12; Free.

Learn the newest dances, and dance routines popular in current music videos all while getting tone. This class is designed for children and youth ages 8 to 17. Membership is free and registration is required.

"All Aboard with Thomas and Friends": New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Blvd. at Fordham Road; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Daily, various times, Sat, Dec. 31 – Fri, Jan. 20, 2017; \$30 (\$28 seniors & students; \$18 children under 12).

Join Thomas and Driver Sam for "All Aboard with Thomas & Friends" at the New York Botanical Garden. Help Thomas

find his way from Knapford Station to Brendam Docks using teamwork, friendship, and discovery in this fun-filled sing-along, mini-performance adventure. Bring your camera to have your photo taken with Thomas after the performance.

FURTHER AFIELD

"Christmas Spectacular": Radio City Music Hall, 1260 Avenue of the Americas between 50th and 51st streets, Manhattan; (212) 247-4777; www.radiocity.com; Daily, various times; Now – Mon, Jan. 2, 2017; Starting at \$37.

The Rockettes are kicking up their heels for another fabulous season of ho, ho, ho. This holiday tradition begins when the curtain rises, the music swells, and the dancers kick their way onto the stage. Enjoyable for every age.

"The Three Bears Holiday Bash": Swedish Cottage Marionette Theater, W. 79th Street and West Drive, Manhattan; (212) 988-9093; Mondays, 10:30 am, noon, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, 10:30 am and noon, Wednesdays, 10:30 am, noon, and 2:30 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 1 pm, Now – Fri, Dec. 30; \$7 (children under 12) \$10 for all others.

Presented by the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre, this holiday show celebrates the holiday season with song, dance, and puppetry. See what happens when Baby Bear invites Santa to star in Mama and Papa's annual show. Interactive participation too! Reservations are strongly advised. Closed on Dec. 24 and 25. Special times for Dec. 26, 27, 28, 29, and 30.

Story Hour: Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art, 898 St. Nicholas Ave., Manhattan; (212) 335-0004; www.sugarhillmuseum.org; Fridays, Noon to 5 pm, Now – Fri, Jan. 13, 2017; Free.

A fun-filled family day will include art-making and face painting; storytelling through dance, music, theater, and the oral tradition; food trucks; and more.

Showtime Saturdays: Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art, 898 St. Nicholas Ave., Manhattan; (212) 335-0004; www.sugarhillmuseum.org; Saturdays, Noon to 5 pm, Now – Sat, Jan. 14, 2017; Free.

Move your body, make music, and be a part of the story every Saturday with dancer, actor, and in-house talent Alexander Elisa.

Holiday Handmade Cavalcade: Chelsea Market, 410 W. 16th St., Manhattan; www.handmadecavalcade.com; Daily, 10 am to 7:30 pm; Mon, Dec. 5 – Sun, Dec. 11; \$2 at the door.

The Etsy team is hosting its first week-long shopping event, offering greeting cards, art, beauty products, clothing, sweets, and so much more.

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New & Noteworthy

BY LISA J. CURTIS



Feet-uring friendship

During this time of post-presidential election anxiety, Hannah Lavon's line of mismatched socks that encourage kids to get to know others who are "different" seems like an especially timely holiday gift.

The Brooklyn entrepreneur's Pals Socks make unlikely pairings from their line of charming, vividly hued characters as a reminder to kids to see past the outside and get to know the person on the inside, because they just might find a friend. For instance, a red-and-black ladybug is matched with a bright green caterpillar with blue stripes.

Pals Socks are a blend of combed cotton, polyester, nylon, and spandex, and the bottoms have silicone skid-free grips. They range in size from infant to 4-8 for kids, and they offer adult versions, too, so the whole family can "defeat the norm" together.

Pair of Ladybug and Caterpillar Socks by Pals Socks, \$9, www.palsocks.com.

Delicious real estate



Cookies from Dancing Deer Baking Company make the holidays even sweeter.

Consider their Hanukkah Stars or their pre-baked Gingerbread Cookie House kit for delightful hostess gifts. Its responsible list of ingredients make a parent's heart sing: unbleached flour, cage-free eggs, food color derived from red cabbage extract, etc.

Dancing Deer's kosher "Hanukkah Star Cookies" package includes eight pretty, star-shaped buttery treats drizzled with slate-blue icing and sprinkled with sparkling sugar crystals. Oy vey, it's hard to nosh just one!

Dancing Deer's pre-Baked Gingerbread Cookie House Kit is a wonderful traditional craft, made much easier by using the cardboard container as the house, and adhering the pre-baked gingerbread cookies with the included royal icing mix and piping bag. The kit allows families to craft a charming "house" in a kid-friendly amount of time.

Hanukkah Star Cookies by Dancing Deer Baking Co., 4 oz., \$5.99, Gingerbread Cookie House by Dancing Deer Baking Co., 31.5 oz., \$19.99, Whole Foods Markets.

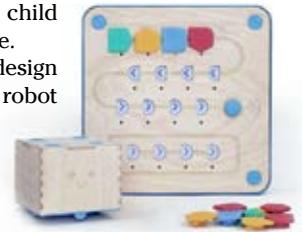


Baby's first robot

This blockhead will teach your child to be smart about coding in no time.

Primo Toys masterfully pairs design and function in Cubetto, a wood robot that takes direction from kids as young as 3 to 6 years old! Amazingly, children who are not yet able to read and write are able to learn the basic concepts of programming when they place wood coding blocks into the Bluetooth-enabled interface board. Children can create their own journey for Cubetto as he travels along the included fabric map, or an adult can read Cubetto's story, which prompts the child to direct the wood cube to specific locations on the map. Parents will love that this skill can be honed without screentime!

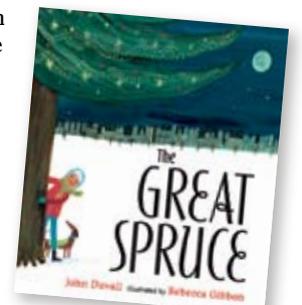
Cubetto by Primo Toys, \$225, www.primotoys.com.



Unique family tree

"The Great Spruce" is a new, charming children's picture book about a grandfather and his grandson who share a love for a tree that's wonderful for climbing. Author John Duvall and illustrator Rebecca Gibbon — with her Ludwig Bemelmans-esque illustrations — demonstrate that a tree's life doesn't have to end when it becomes a Christmas decoration. The story takes a surprising turn when the young boy courageously saves the majestic tree from a man wielding a chainsaw. Grandfather and grandson then accompany the enormous conifer — rootball intact — on a journey to the big city, where the spruce is decked out in holiday finery. After the celebration, the tree is replanted. Perhaps "The Great Spruce" will also sprout respect for nature in your young reader's heart.

The Great Spruce book by John Duvall, \$17.99, www.penguin.com/youngreaders.





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