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January 2017  
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# Family

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Bronx/Riverdale Family  
January 2017

Where every child matters



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# Short days and long nights

I'm writing this on the shortest day of the year, Dec. 21, and I can only say how happy I am to know that every day from here on will grow longer. It's draining to get up when it's dark and to leave work when it's dark also. I miss the light and don't know anyone who doesn't. Kids especially have a really



difficult time in the winter, particularly now that most of them are engaged in after-school programs. By the time they too are finished, it's dark and also cold, not the best recipe for outdoor fun.

Light is very important to our psyche and we have to take advantage of the weekends in the winter in particular to make sure we get enough outdoor light time. Getting yourself and the kids up early enough on weekend days to get outside and frolic is of the utmost importance. One

of the glorious things about life in New York are all the wonderful parks that make our city so enjoyable in every season.

It won't be long before we have a snowfall that leaves accumulation on the ground, and what kid doesn't love finding a good hill in a park and sledding or snow tubing

down? And what about those ice rinks? There are many wonderful rinks in all the boroughs and I urge you to make sure that your family begins this fun practice really early on in your child's life.

The holidays were fun as they always are but now we're on to a New Year and new experiences. New York is exciting all year long and winter is no exception. This issue offers a variety of ideas of how to stay healthy, eat well, and prioritize and make the cold months internally warmer.

Rolling out soon will be the "new look" of our website, NYParenting.com, and we hope you will visit it often. It works well with any device and offers a great calendar, helpful guides and of course all of our editorial, both recent and archived. Our Online Camp Guide 2017 will be launching soon. Be sure to look for it.

Wishing all of you and our staff and contributors a very Happy New Year! We hope you have started out the year right and that good health and prosperity will be a part of your every day life in 2017. Take nothing for granted. Enjoy! Thanks for reading.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,  
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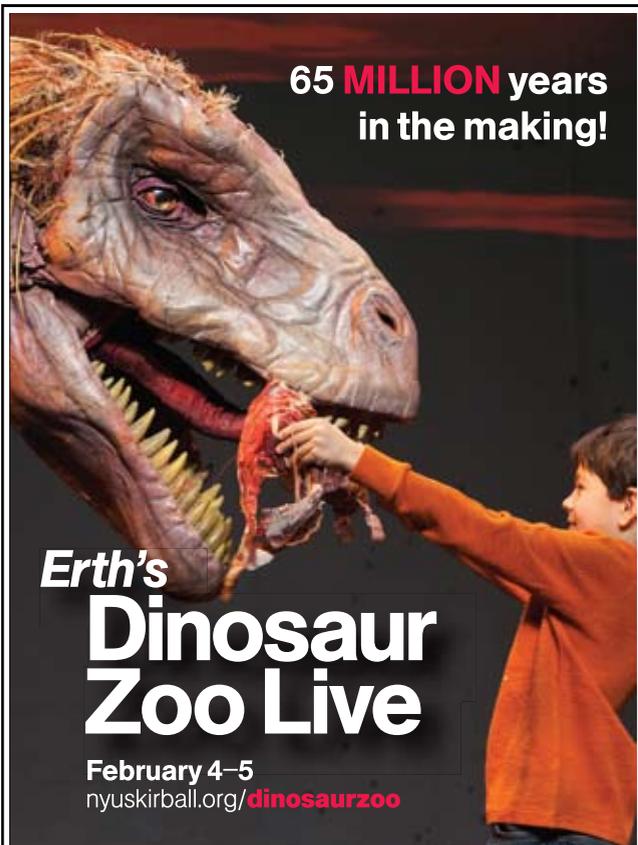
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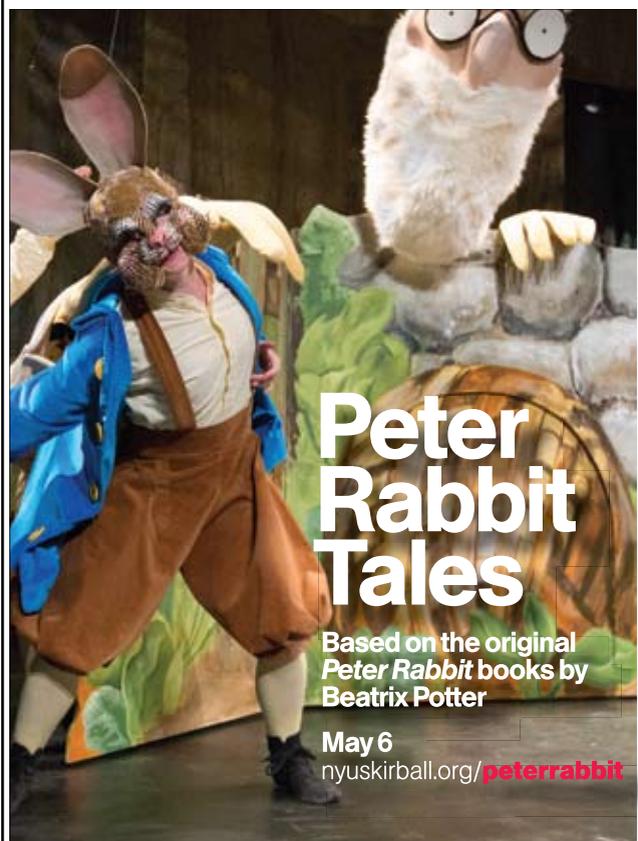




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# Don't have a will? Know the risks

**“J**ust” is not justice. People often think that if they die without a will, everything will just get taken care of.

“Oh, I don't need a will. Everything will just go to my spouse.” Or, “I don't need a power of attorney. Worst comes to worst, they'll just get a guardianship.”

Often, these statements are driven by the speaker's desire to avoid paying legal fees, making it easier to resort to his vision of focusing on what he thinks is the ultimate result — rather than the process required in order to get there.

When someone dies without a Last Will and Testament, the rules of descent and distribution of property under the laws of intestacy — that is, dying without a will — apply. These rules also apply when someone leaves a will that is invalid and does not comply with the formalities of the statute, for example,

when someone pulls something off the internet and just has it notarized, or has it witnessed by one of the beneficiaries named in the will.

There are rules about the order of priority about who stands to inherit from an intestate estate and who has “standing” — the right to petition to be the fiduciary of the person's estate. The fiduciary is called an “Administrator” and not an “Executor,” a term which applies to probate estates where a decedent died with a will. (By the way, in New York State, female fiduciaries are no longer called “Executrix” or “Administratrix” since the diminutive suffix was abolished by court rule in 1997, yet many people continue to incorrectly use these terms.)

The application of the laws of intestacy may have unintended consequences. For example, the spouse does not take all. Instead, the spouse takes the first \$50,000, and then half of the remainder, with the



## ASK AN ATTORNEY

ALISON ARDEN BESUNDER, ESQ.

other half going to any surviving children. And, there are many people who hold themselves out to be husband and wife (or spouses) but in fact are not legally married. New York State does not have common-law marriage.

Often people lose sight of what is involved to administrate an estate, and the fact that it can be less organized and require additional paperwork than in a probate estate. For example, for unmarried persons, you can try to go to court to have a judicial declaration of a marriage, but it is a high burden of proof and an uphill battle, one that encounters legal costs. Those costs are always considered in determining the cost-benefit analysis of whether to proceed in a certain direction. Estate taxes can also be higher in those cases, where a decedent was not actually married to his partner, who now will not receive the assets of the decedent because he or she has no legal standing as a non-spouse.

Also, if there are minor children, those minor children are not legally competent to own property. Therefore, the parent must seek appointment as a Guardian of the property in order to receive the assets, at which point those funds must be held jointly with the Clerk of the Court, and the Court's permission is required for a withdrawal of those assets.

This puts the Court in control of the assets, and not the child's parent. The parent is then required to seek the Surrogate's Court approval every time she

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or he wants to access some of the child's money for childcare expenses. In New York County, the Guardianship department has an unspecified rule (not codified anywhere) that there should be enough money left for the child to go to college. There are no guidelines for what this means. College tuition at a state school or a private university?

Although the child is legally entitled to whatever is left in the account once he or she reaches the age of 18, many would agree that no child should have access to large sums of money at 18, particularly when that child has experienced a tragedy like losing a parent.

In addition, there are certain factors that render a person ineligible to serve as a fiduciary, such as a felony conviction. Although a will does not necessarily overcome that statutory barrier, at least you would be able to state why you want that person to serve notwithstanding the defect or barrier to serving.

In other situations, the decedent might not have gotten along with his or her siblings, or parents, from whom he or she was estranged, or distant cousins whom he or she never met. Often, people in same-sex relationships, particularly those who hail from the South or "fly over" states, had a falling out with their

conservative family members and don't speak with them once arriving in the Big Apple. Nonetheless, in this case, blood really is thicker than water, and they will stand to inherit if there is no will to stand in the way of that situation.

Without a will, you lose the option of choosing the person who will administer an estate, or serve as trustee. Often in an intestacy situation, in cases where there is no one suitable to serve, or even where there is no family, the Public Administrator will serve as fiduciary. This is a person appointed by the Court to administer those estates that are without someone to serve.

In certain circumstances, even those people who are otherwise entitled to take under the statute can be barred from that entitlement. For example, a parent or spouse who abandoned the decedent cannot inherit, nor can a person who murdered the decedent or was culpable in their death (known as the "Son of Sam" rule).

A Surrogate Court recently took that logic one step further: A husband who murdered his wife's mother (his mother-in-law). The wife — the heir of the murdered woman's estate — post-deceased her mother, also intestate, leaving her husband as the sole heir of her estate.

Even though he was not culpable in his wife's death, the Court barred him from taking in intestacy.

Children who are "adopted out" may also not inherit from the biological parent. Stepchildren are not included in the intestacy list, no matter how emotionally close the relationship.

You need to look no further than estates of celebrities to visualize what happens. Prince died unexpectedly this year without a will. Now his estimated \$300-million estate will be distributed among six siblings. This is complicated because of the nature of his assets. Unsurprisingly, other potential heirs have surfaced claiming to be Prince's out-of-wedlock child, including a federal prison inmate.

There are serious consequences to not leaving a valid will, yet nearly two-thirds of American adults fail to do so. Don't be one of them. And remember that this is not a "do-it-yourself" project.

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



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- The New York Post, 2014

# First-date jitters

## Daughter's first dance brings out mom's teen nostalgia

BY KARA MARTINEZ BACHMAN

**T**his weekend, I had the first-date jitters. My heart raced a little. My hands shook. My nerves were on fire.

As the big day neared, I had made sure everything was perfect. Shoe heels: high enough to be attractive, but not high enough to attract the wrong glances. Dress: Just the right amount of sparkle — but not too much! (Remember: there's a fine, but very important, line between "Frozen" snow queen and over-the-top drag queen.) Makeup: just a touch, on the eyes only.

When the day of the winter dance came, the big event was the first thought I had when waking up and the last I had before going to sleep.

My daughter had a blast.

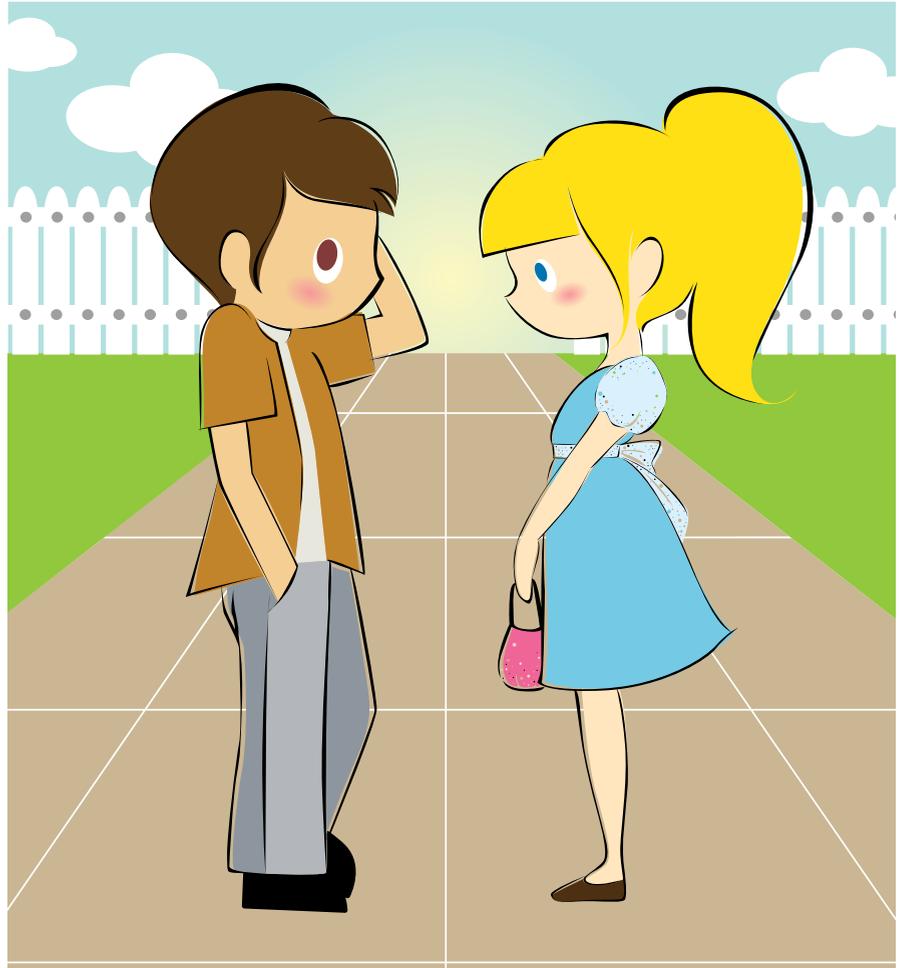
Yeah, the big date was, of course, hers. At age 46 and married for more than 20 years, I'm a little old for first dates. And believe me, if for some reason I had one, I'd spend less time worrying about how I looked and more concerned with whether I'd brought a Tylenol, two antacid tablets, and if I'd make it home before the news started.

When I was her age, there was no eighth-grade dance. Not the kind where anyone brought dates, at least. These days, though, things are different. Everything seems to happen at younger and younger ages.

I wonder why that is, why there's a mad rush on for childhood to start — and thus, end — sooner. Why? Does everyone want to just "get it over with," so our children can move on to more important things, such as making money and continuing the competitive climb?

It's sad to rush something so precious and brief. Rushing the years of first dates and terrible, but exciting, kisses is a mistake. I look back on those times, and I wish I could grab and hold them. I wish I could bottle up those sweet teen days and set the bottle (it would be pink) on my fireplace mantle. I wish, maybe every decade or so, I could open the bottle and release a tiny whiff of carnation corsages and punch bowl punch and let a bit of that genie out of the bottle. Just for a minute.

And that's kind of what happened this weekend. When my daughter stood ner-



ously with her date and posed for a few awkward photos; when I adjusted her wrist corsage — because it was too loose — and felt a misty hint of tears well up; when she left the house beaming, but returned saying, "Well, that was okay, I guess. Nobody danced much ... "; the genie of nostalgia was on the loose.

In the end, her first date at winter dance was more about the preparations than the thing itself, just as it was for me back in the 1980s.

It was more about what was to come, a reminder to me that I'd some day lose her, and a herald of all the dreams of most every girl: marriage, children, friends, job. And as every mom knows, our jitters may momentarily subside as dance night winds down, but still crop up when we open the

report card, or wait on medical test results, or when it's almost midnight and our oldest child is still not home

When the genie's popped out of the bottle, all we can do is watch, wait, and go ahead and take those two antacid tablets, hoping she uses her three wishes wisely.

*Kara Martinez Bachman is author of the humorous essay collection, "Kissing the Crisis: Field Notes on Foul-mouthed Babies, Disenchanted Women, and Careening into Middle Age." She's read her work on NPR, and it has appeared in dozens of magazines and newspapers, including The Writer, Funny Times, the New Orleans Times-Picayune, and many more. She is managing editor of Parents & Kids—Gulf Coast, Parents & Kids—Pine Belt, and Parents & Kids—MS Delta magazines in Mississippi. Find out more at KaraMartinezBachman.com.*

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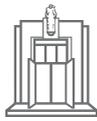
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## Catholic Schools Week

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*Continued on page 12*



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Aplicar ahora para Kinder en: [Applycatholicchoolsny.org](http://Applycatholicchoolsny.org), seleccione San Simón Stock escuela o por teléfono al 646-794-2885.

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# Catholic Schools Week

## DIRECTORY

*Continued from page 10*

and spiritual growth for boys and girls. St. Clare's also offers free Universal Pre-Kindergarten program for four-year-olds. The early childhood program starts at age 3. From one generation to the next, we have thrived as a community-driven school. Sports and clubs include basketball, volleyball, cheerleading and bowling, as well as an after-school program until 6 p.m.

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2050 Benedict Avenue  
718-892-3234  
[www.sthelenaschoolbronxny.org](http://www.sthelenaschoolbronxny.org)

#### Principal – Rich Maller

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[www.sttheresaschoolbronx.org](http://www.sttheresaschoolbronx.org)

Children who pass through our doors are eager to learn and are challenged by a stimulating academic, social and athletic curriculum infused with Catholic values. The program reflects an integrated learning experience for Pre-Kindergarten three-year-olds, Universal Pre-Kindergarten four-year-olds, Kindergarten and students in grades one through eight. Teachers, administrators, aides and other professionals impart their knowledge and extensive experience with enthusiasm and a truly caring respect for the children in their charge. Providing before and after school programs, breakfast and lunch, a children's choir, art, music, Italian language studies, computer classes, physical education and an accelerated mathematics program. We also offer a wide variety of after school activities.

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718-893-7600

#### Principal, Jessica Maldonado

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*Continued on page 14*



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St. Brendan School offers a quality education rooted in sound Catholic values and challenging academics for children from PreK through 8th grade. At St. Brendan's we aim to equip your child with the self confidence and wisdom to lead a fulfilling and productive life in which service to their community is key.



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Call 718-653-2292 to arrange a tour or visit our website at [www.stbrendanschoolbronx.org](http://www.stbrendanschoolbronx.org)



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**"St. Brendan School, where children shine!"**

## Private/Independent School Guide



Check it out on [NYParenting.com](http://NYParenting.com)

## Catholic Schools Week

### DIRECTORY

*Continued from page 12*

olds; Full day Kindergarten; Early drop off program starting at 7:15 am; Free breakfast for all students; Hot lunch program; After-school program until 6pm daily; Computers in every classroom; Computer lab with laptops and wireless internet; SmartBoards in all of the classrooms; Enrichment program includes: Physical Education, Art, and Music; After-school Fine Arts program, includes: Piano lessons; Educational Support Services for reading/writing, math, and English as a Second Language (ESL), Guidance Counselor available; Resource room program with Individual Education Program (IESP) accommodations.

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2195 Valentine Avenue  
718-367-0453  
[www.stsimonstockschool.org](http://www.stsimonstockschool.org)  
Principal - Kinsley Jabouin

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3335 Country Club Road  
718-824-3260  
[www.vma-ny.org](http://www.vma-ny.org)

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Kingsbridge  
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718-543-2250  
[visitationschoolbronx.org](http://visitationschoolbronx.org)

The school's purpose is to provide students with a strong foundation in the truths of the Catholic faith and an intense study of the academic standards of NYS. The educational program is focused on recognizing the dignity and uniqueness of each student as a whole person intellectually, socially and spiritually and in challenging that person to be the best that he/she can be as a vital member of the Church and of society. New this year, the school is proudly offering a Free Universal Pre-K program (2 half day sessions) for children turning 4 years old by 12/26/26. Visitation graduates gain acceptance into Catholic high schools, many with full and partial scholarships. Students have been accepted into Bronx High School of Science and have won honors placements and second year Spanish and Math placement in high school. Beyond this, every Visitation graduate takes with him/her the experience of learning in a caring, Christian and disciplined environment.

# This kid's got chops

## NYC cooking prodigy tells us about his prize-winning dish

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

**B**en's Beginners is an interactive program and contest that aims to make cooking an activity that bring families together. Offering a cash prize to kitchen-savvy kids, the contest is simple: submit a photo of you and your family making a rice-based dish together to the Uncle Ben's rice company. Manhattan seventh grader and cooking prodigy Jesse Gunn did just that.

His "Lop Chung Fried Rice" earned him \$15,000 and an additional \$30,000 for his school. Thanks to Gunn's creativity in the kitchen, the East Side Community School will now have a lunchroom makeover. Gunn shared his experience with us.

**Shnieka Johnson:** Who taught you to cook?

**Jesse Gunn:** My dad taught me how to cook. His favorite thing to tell me is nothing is hard, you just have to try and learn from your mistakes. He is not a chef, just a foodie. We spend a lot of time together in the kitchen with me cooking and him cutting onions and cleaning up after me, ha! We work as a team. We get to talk about the day, video games, our next projects, and things like that.

**SJ:** At what age did you start cooking?

**JG:** I started helping my dad in the kitchen when I was really young by stirring and mixing ingredients. Later on, my dad got me interested in tasting new things. When I was 8, I used to watch "Bizarre Foods with Andrew Zimmern" and began to start eating things like chicken feet, tripe, snails, and frogs. But I really got into cooking when I was 10. I had seen "MasterChef Junior," and I saw how good those kids were and was a little sad — I thought I could never be that good. But my dad asked me if I would be interested in trying out. I said "no," so he said, "ok, well, I can teach you if you really want to do it." So for the next six to seven months, I was cooking with him three times a week. Each week, it was always something different and harder, reinforcing the basics and learning new techniques. At the last minute, my dad entered me into "MasterChef." I lasted eight episodes and went out on team challenge. Since the show, I have learned and improved so much, and with cooking you never stop learning!

**SJ:** Have you always enjoyed it?

**JG:** Yes, I love trying new things and ex-



Matt Hurst, Corporate Affairs Manager at Mars Food North America, and Ben's Beginner's recipe winner Jesse Gunn celebrate Jesse's prize — \$30,000 for his school's lunchroom makeover.

perimenting, but the most fun is when I do molecular gastronomy. It's like doing science, which is one of my favorite subjects.

**SJ:** Who do you cook with now?

**JG:** I cook with my dad and sometimes my friends come over and they want to learn how to make something. I have cooking play dates, and I show them how to make French macaroons, profiteroles, Chinese food, and other things. Other times I cook with other chefs doing demos or teaching classes.

**SJ:** What inspired your dish?

**JG:** We came up with a lot of amazing dishes, like rice pudding, crème brûlée, mango sphere on top of coconut rice on a bed of Crème Anglaise, but the rice dish we posted, I think 15 minutes before the contest ended, was Lop Chung fried rice with transformation egg. What makes our fried rice different is that almost every fried rice dish uses a plain scrambled egg. We put umami in ours.

It is based on a Japanese dashimaki tamago-styled scramble egg, which is full of umami, which totally changes the egg to a different flavor — sweet, salty, savory, sour — and plays with your taste buds. The second reason is anyone can make fried rice super easy and every ingredient is interchangeable, so if you don't have Lop Chung — Chinese sausage — you can use chicken or sausage beef. We really wanted to win

to help our school with the cafeteria makeover and help promote healthier eating.

**SJ:** Do you want to go into culinary arts?

**JG:** At the moment, I have been asked to do a series of cooking videos called "Recipes from the Studio."

The guys Manny and Peter are great, I get to cook whatever I want. I am involved in a lot of cool things in addition to cooking. I love music and playing guitar. I am in two bands right now, and we play out in nightclubs like the Bitter End, where Bob Dylan and Janis Joplin used to play. I am also into building and designing drones. I have been building them since I was 8 years old and right now, I am the youngest professional drone training pilot in the world. I have trained more than 700 people how to fly a drone. I do this with the aerial sports league at the Maker Faires across the country.

If you're passionate about something and put the time and work into it, no matter what it is — sports, science, music, art, writing, school, or cooking — you will see results. Anyone can cook, you just have to get in the kitchen and start!

*Shnieka L. 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.shniekajohnson.com](http://www.shniekajohnson.com).*

# Kids & TV

## Ratings, recommendations, and guidelines for parents

BY MYRNA BETH HASKELL

I knew a mom several years ago who had a “no TV” policy. She was adamant about a television-free environment, so she didn’t own one. What she may not have known was that her son would visit his friends’ houses and make a beeline for the tube, instead of choosing to play soccer down at the park or go for a bike ride.

Television programming has changed immensely in the last 20 years. There are so many choices that it can make one dizzy at times. Part of the positive aspect of this change, however, is that there are plenty of quality choices available.

Perhaps the quandary for parents today is not if their children should watch TV but what they should watch and how often they should tune in. Parental controls as well as resource websites (i.e. [www.common sense media.org](http://www.common sense media.org)) provide parents with control and information that they didn’t have decades ago.

### How much is too much?

Have you ever tried to have a conversation with a child engrossed in his favorite TV show? It’s like trying to get your dog’s attention when he’s just gotten a hold of his new, stuffed bone. He knows you’re there, but he’s too busy chomping to acknowledge you.

Balance is the operative word. Sometimes we all — parents included — need a bit of a break from the “real” world. It’s not unhealthy if quality television programs are viewed in moderation and are not interfering with social activities,

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“In terms of negative programming, I always say that turning on any media is like opening the door to your living room. Would you let kids in who were being violent, mean to each other, or making fun of other kids?”

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school work, and family time.

“Television can be a source of learning and entertainment,” explains Dr. Sanam Hafeez, a licensed neuropsychologist and founder and director of Comprehensive Consultation Psychological Services, P.C. ([www.comprehendthemind.com](http://www.comprehendthemind.com)). “However, too much TV can take away from other activities, such as exercising, playing with friends, reading, and doing homework.”

Hafeez warns parents of additional concerns.

“Studies have shown that kids who watch too much TV are more likely to be overweight, and depending on the content of what they see, more aggressive. Excess TV viewing has also been linked to poor grades, sleep problems, and behavioral problems.”

Dr. Lisa Strohmman, a clinical psycholo-

gist, co-author of “Unplug: Raising Kids in a Technology Addicted World” and founder of Technology Wellness Center ([www.technologywellnesscenter.com](http://www.technologywellnesscenter.com)), reports, “The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends no television for children under the age of 2. For children older than 2, the recommendation is no more than one to two hours of quality programming a day. TV watching and technology use can impede valuable developmental activities like exploring, playing, and interacting with others. These functions are vital to learning and healthy physical and social development.”

Experts also remind parents that TV time includes watching programs on the computer and iPad.

Dr. Jephtha Tausig-Edwards, a New York City-based clinical psychologist and supervising psychologist for Family & Children’s Services of Nantucket, says, “Don’t have it playing in the background. Keep screens and other media out of children’s bedrooms and do not use right before bedtime. There really isn’t a substitute for reading to a child in terms of the boost this gives to early literacy and the opportunities for interaction between parents and children.”

If televisions are not in children’s bedrooms, the battle is half won, because it will be easier to monitor screen time if the television is in a central location used by all family members.

### Quality programming

What should parents look for in quality programming?



“Look for educational content, respectful language, take-home messages or lessons which are congruent with your values, and what you feel are important perspectives you would like your children to have towards their fellow human beings,” says Tausig-Edwards.

“I’ve always recommended a rich diet of good, quality educational media that kids are interested in, want to talk about, and want to learn more from,” explains Angela Santomero, a child development expert, TV executive producer, and co-

creator of the current hit, “Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood” (PBS Kids) as well as “Blue’s Clues” (Nick Jr.) and “Super WHY!” (PBS Kids). She advocates television viewing in moderation: a good balanced diet of healthy media!

When it comes to preschoolers, Santomero counsels, “Interacting and physical touch is the most important stimulation for babies and toddlers. When television is introduced, it should be at a slower pace so that it is not overstimulating.

‘Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood’ fits this bill because of its socio-emotional storylines, preschool musical strategies about sharing, going to the potty, dealing with disappointments, and trying new foods. These are life lessons that this young age group is able to grasp with musical strategies that help and guide both parents and kids together.”

“Go with calm, quiet programs. Slower-paced viewing gives small children time to think and absorb. Lots of random activating.

*Continued on following page*

ity, like the kind in action-adventure cartoons, confuses them.” Hafeez describes. “Instead, choose simple programs that emphasize interactivity. Ideal shows inspire your child to make sounds, say words, sing, and dance.”

Santomero suggests the following shows for various age groups:

**For preschoolers:**

“Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood” (PBS Kids: Socio-emotional)

“Creative Galaxy” (Amazon.com Inc.: Art)

“Super WHY!” (PBS Kids: Literacy)

“Blue’s Clues” (Nick Jr.: Kindergarten readiness show)

**For young kids:**

“Wild Kratts” (PBS & PBS Kids: Adventure learning)

“Wishenpoof!” (Amazon.com: Adventure learning)

“Word Girl” (PBS & PBS Kids: Literacy)

**For tweens:**

“Master Chef Jr.” (FOX: Cooking)

“Project Runway Jr.” (Lifetime: Fashion creation)

“The Amazing Race” (CBS and Travel Channel: Reality adventure)

“The Gilmore Girls” (Warner Bros. and Netflix: Family drama)

“Fuller House” (Sequel to “Full House.” Netflix Original Series: Family drama)

**For teens:**

“Downton Abbey” (PBS: Period drama series)

“Friends” (Reruns on TBS and NIK: Comedy drama)

Also recommended for teens:

“Scorpion” (CBS: Tech-driven drama series)

“Bunheads” (Freeform: Dance drama)

“The Fosters” (Freeform: Family about foster teens)

**What to avoid**

Santomero advises, “In terms of negative programming, I always say that turning on any media is like opening the door to your living room. Would you let kids in who were being violent, mean to each other, or making fun of other kids? Depending on the age of your child, the immersive experience of media creates an image that can hardly ever be erased, so be careful of what stories you decide to have your kids be part of and what characters you want your kids to be friends with. Also, be ready to talk about any and all issues that they see.”

Experts have studied the effects of violent and sexual content affecting young viewers’ behavior for decades.

## How to interpret TV ratings

Here are Dr. Strohmman’s explanations of Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ratings.

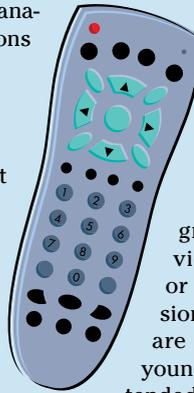
**Ratings directed towards children:**

**TV-Y:** These programs are not expected to frighten or upset young children as they are specifically designed for viewers between the ages of 2 and 6.

**TV-Y7:** These programs feature fantasy that young children may not have the developmental skills to understand and are typically not appropriate for children under 7. The make-believe plot lines are more likely to frighten young children.

**Ratings directed toward general audience:**

**TV-G:** These are not “specifically



geared toward children, but they are appropriate for all ages by most parents. They do not contain excessive violence, expletives, or sexual references.

**TV-PG:** These programs may contain some violence, some suggestive or sexual material, and occasional strong language. They are likely not appropriate for young children to watch unattended, but are acceptable for older children.

**TV-14:** Parents are cautioned to not allow children under 14 to view these programs without supervision. These programs might include overtly sexual situations, inappropriate dialogue, indecent language, or graphic violence.

Tausig-Edwards points to Albert Bandura’s seminal work in this area.

“The work showed that children are affected by instrumental violence. For example, if they see it, they are likely to try it subsequently. Content is crucial as children are not able to differentiate between real and cartoon violence until they are much older.”

Hafeez agrees.

“Younger children tend to model behavior they see and don’t always understand the difference between reality and entertainment. Therefore, exposure to sex and violence through the media’s influence can cause aggressive or anti-social behavior. Media can influence children to believe violence is a good solution to solve problems or desensitize and cause a lack of empathy for human suffering.”

In terms of the consequences of being exposed to sex and violence on television, Dr. Hafeez states, “Kids exposed to sex on TV are almost twice as likely to initiate sexual intercourse. Some research suggests that kids who watch violence on TV are more likely to display aggressive behavior.” For young children, she suggests that scary shows be avoided as well.

Santomero adds, “Watching violence on television is not only a modeling concern for kids, but might also motivate kids to be more violent in nature. Watching sexual content, before [one is] ready, could cause confusion or lack of understanding about what a positive relation-

ship can and should be.”

**Some general guidelines**

“Overall, I believe in watching age-appropriate content that is enriching and inspiring,” says Santomero. “I also believe that, as a parent, you are doing your best when you are interested, active, and involved in what your kids are doing. Get into the content that they are watching as deeply as possible. Read the books, play the app, do related activities, or just sit over a snack and have a good old-fashioned discussion about your child’s favorite show.”

Hafeez advocates critical viewing.

“Even young children can learn to watch without ‘tuning out.’ Encourage your child to ask questions and relate what’s happening in the show to her own life. For example, if you and your toddler have just finished watching a ‘Sesame Street’ segment that introduces a number, talk about it later and find other examples to show him. While setting the table you might say, ‘Hey, today’s number was 3, and there are 3 places to set!’”

All experts advise encouraging social activities that draw kids away from obsessing about what’s on the screen.

*Myrna Beth Haskell is an award-winning author, columnist, and feature writer. Her work has appeared in national and regional publications across the U.S. as well as internationally (www.myrnahaskell.com). She is also cofounder and senior editor of “Sanctuary” (www.sanctuary-magazine.com).*

# Kids Activities-Sign up now

## DIRECTORY

### MUSIC

**Belle School of Music**  
Scarsdale / White Plains / Yonkers  
914- 961-5511

[www.belleschool.com](http://www.belleschool.com)  
Voted the #1 music school in Westchester in 2015 by parents, the school has a unique, effective, and fun way of teaching music to children (2 years and up) and adults. Under the supervision of the highly qualified and dedicated staff, your child will not only learn to play but will develop an appreciation and love for music that will last a lifetime. Bring out the musical talent in your child!

### PERFORMING ARTS

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Pelham  
718-792-1800 ext. 235

[www.bronxhouse.org](http://www.bronxhouse.org)

Offering year-round private and group instrumental music, dance and theater classes for students of all ages, pre-school through adult, as well as an annual musical theater production program for children in grades 3 and up. Located in a state-of-the-art 7,000 square foot wing, the facility features sound proof and sound enhanced music rooms and three dance studios. The faculty of accomplished performers and educators have advanced degrees from music schools around the world. The School offers partial need-based scholarships to any student who qualifies for financial assistance as well as multi-session and sibling discounts. Through the generosity of the Tom Freston Instrument Lending Library, loaner instruments are available for use during lessons at Bronx House and for practice at home, free of charge.

### SPECIAL NEEDS

**Kouli's OT Sensory Gym**  
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[www.koulisotsensorygym.com](http://www.koulisotsensorygym.com)

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and caring environment where the needs of the child come first. At Kouli's your child will receive individualized attention from dedicated and professional therapists who will work with you to determine the best approach to your child's special needs. The Gym services children from 0-3, pre-school, school age and also offers private sessions




- Fun, energetic and caring environment where your child's needs come first
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- The gym services children from 0-3, preschool, school age and privately

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# Talking politics

## How to handle election discussion with your children

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

**A**s our country prepares to inaugurate its 45th president, Donald J. Trump, it would be an understatement to say that there are still mixed feelings amongst many Americans. The election is over, and we must accept the results, regardless of political designation. As parents, we focus on our kids — their questions, concerns, and opinions. Now more than ever, children (as young as elementary aged) are politically informed.

Due to social media and mass media coverage, children engaged with their parents more than they might have during previous presidential election cycles. In fact, children are quite aware of the significance of this most recent election according to KidsHealth.org poll, where 75 percent of kids and 79 percent of teens answered “yes” when asked whether they

thought that the outcome of the election would change their lives. Most teens who took the poll also ranked issues — like gas and food prices, education, health care, war, and the environment — as “very important” to them.

Regardless of personal politics, parents are still tasked with promoting certain ideals in their children in the face of divisiveness surrounding our political leaders. Although we are no longer inundated with election coverage and advertisements, we have not seen the end of negative talk on our screens, which will continue to raise questions and reactions for children. Adding to the challenge in discussing the current news coverage with children is that parents may still be struggling with their own feelings about this election.

For example, a task for parents who hoped Hillary Clinton would become the first female president, is how to cope with

disappointment in themselves, but also their children’s dismay. Clinton said during her concession speech, “To all the little girls who are watching this, never doubt that you are valuable and powerful and deserving of every chance and opportunity in the world to pursue and to achieve your own dreams.”

Parents can use this moment as an opportunity to show our kids how to voice their opinions, respect others’ opinions, and value differences. Start by sharing your own opinions on these subjects, and then ask your children their opinions. Encourage expression, questions, and feelings, to ensure children become comfortable voicing these difficult emotions.

Talking about the election result will add to their learning and critical-thinking skills. It will also allow for you to hear their thoughts and correct any misconceptions. Maybe your child has fears about the fu-

ture. Possibly something a candidate said or did while campaigning is still concerning to them. Actively listen to your child, her concerns, and reassure her, but also encourage her to think about the future. Let your children know that they can also make a difference in their greater community, and help them think of things that they can do for others, or identify a cause that they can more actively support.

Although it can be difficult at times to decipher the complications of this election, parents must model a positive example and provide support for their kids as the 45th president takes office.

### Strategies for helping children

Denise Daniels is a Peabody Award-winning broadcast journalist, author, and parenting and child development expert, who specializes in the social and emotional development of children. She offers the following strategies and discussion tips for helping children understand the election:

### Actions and values

We're guided by our values, but we're judged by our actions. And actions, especially in children, are almost always inspired by feelings. That's why one of our key jobs is to help our kids understand

Although we are no longer inundated with election coverage and advertisements, we have not seen the end of negative talk on our screens, which will continue to raise questions and reactions for children.

their emotions and learn to manage them appropriately.

### Managing emotions

Research has shown that children — and adults — who can't manage their emotions have more difficulties academically, professionally, socially, and psychologically.

It's never too early, or too late, to begin the process of helping children develop "emotional intelligence" — so that they learn to act with civility and respect, despite any bad examples they may have seen during the election season.

### Talking to kids

Help older children feel comfortable talking about their emotions by listening without judgement and emphasizing that all feelings are okay. Then teach your children strategies for managing their emotions, whether it's taking deep breaths

and counting to 10 to diffuse anger, or using positive self-talk to overcome fear or sadness.

### Talking to teens

When children understand their own feelings and those of others, they can act with self-control, compassion, and empathy. When teens have developed emotional intelligence, they are better able to resist peer pressure and stay true to themselves.

When young adults act responsibly, they will vote with care and conviction. Our world — and our endless election cycles — will be better for it.

Find this and other tips online at [www.denisedanielsparenting.com](http://www.denisedanielsparenting.com).

*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](http://www.shnieka-johnson.com).*

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# Ten easy nutrition resolutions for '17

**N**ew Year's resolutions tend to focus on a few themes: Lose weight, stop smoking, and so forth. How about declaring some nutrition resolutions that will benefit your family now and in the future? Here are a few resolutions to try in 2017:

**Plan meals more often.** While it may appear you simply don't have time to do this, once you get into the habit, you'll realize how much time and money this ultimately saves. Meal planning can impact your family's eating habits as much as anything else you do.

**Get out of your recipe rut.** Admit it: While you have an endless supply of recipes at your disposal, you cook less than 10 of them regularly. Set aside 30 minutes on the weekend to comb your trove of recipes. Prepare a shopping list with ingredients for one or two recipes you haven't made in the last year. Try a new, healthful entrée once a week.

**Keep an eye on your food-purchasing habits.** Believe it or not, you're likely buying more at this time of year than any other time. According to a study of more

than 200 households in New York over the course of seven months, we buy roughly twice as many calories per serving in food in the first three months of the New Year than during the holidays. Despite New Year's resolutions to eat better, consumers buy the healthy foods they promised themselves they would, along with the unhealthy foods they promised themselves they wouldn't. Whoops.

**Try a new vegetable each shopping trip.** People who eat a wider variety of vegetables tend to be thinner, probably because they're displacing higher-calorie foods. About half of all Americans' vegetables are iceberg lettuce, potatoes, onions, and canned tomatoes. Have the kids help you with choosing something new and look up creative ways to prepare it.

**Enjoy a familiar food in a new, unexpected way.** Pizza is the second most common entrée Americans consume. The number one type? Pepperoni and cheese pizza. There are ways you can shift to a healthier pizza. Substitute vegetable toppings for the pepperoni and use smaller amounts of cheese. Some places even offer



## GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

a whole-wheat crust.

**Try some new seasonings.** Explore the herb and spice aisle and bring home a few that sound interesting. While you're at it, clean out your spice cabinet by tossing any that have lost their fragrance.

**Clean out the refrigerator more often.** At least once a month, pull everything out of the fridge and toss foods that are "questionable." Wipe down the entire interior, then put things back with an eye on keeping more healthful foods front-and-center. Consider holding an end of week "buffet" in order to use up leftover foods before they go bad.

**Try some new whole grains.** Cook up a pot of barley, quinoa, buckwheat, brown rice, or wheat berries. Keep it in the fridge and warm up a bowl at a time for a rib-sticking breakfast once you add chopped fruit (frozen or fresh), nuts, and a teaspoon of sugar.

**Put legumes on the menu every week.** Enjoy legumes such as beans, peas, and lentils as a replacement for meat at least one day a week. They're near-perfect foods with loads of fiber, protein, folate, potassium, iron, and other vitamins and minerals. Replace that side of rice, potatoes, or noodles with beans or lentils. Cook up a pot of chili or bean soup in your slow cooker, and there's dinner for a few days. Or make a bean salad.

**Switch from tuna to salmon.** Canned salmon has more healthy omega-3 fats than canned tuna and the salmon is almost always wild.

*Christine M. Palumbo is a registered dietitian nutritionist in Naperville, Ill. Her nutrition resolutions are to use her slow cooker more often and to finally "nail" her homemade pizza recipe.*



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# Calendar

JANUARY



## Celebrate the Year of the Rooster

Celebrate the Year of the Rooster with arts and crafts at the Bronx Museum on Jan. 14.

Usher in the Lunar New Year with costumed folk dances, authentic music, and a Lion Dance, presented by the New York Chinese Cultural Center. Families can learn traditional techniques of paper

cutting and calligraphy and then enjoy performances.

Lunar New Year Celebration, Jan. 14 from 2 to 4 pm. Free with museum admission.

*Bronx Museum of the Arts [1040 Grand Concourse, (718) 681-6000; [www.bronx-museum.org](http://www.bronx-museum.org)].*

## Never miss a great event!

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# 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](mailto: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!

### WED, JAN. 4

#### IN THE BRONX

**Taino Tales:** El Museo del Barrio, 1230 Fifth Ave.; (212) 831-7272; [www.elmuseo.org](http://www.elmuseo.org); 9:30 to 10:30 am and 11 am to noon; Free with museum admission.

Learn, play, explore, and grow at El Museo's bilingual program for our tiniest visitors. Join us on the first Wednesday of each month as we embark on an adventure to discover new ways of interacting with art and each other. With time for play, storytelling, museum walks, and art making, Coquí Club provides a fun and active way to explore El Museo and enjoy creative themes together. Program length: 60 minutes. Recommended for children ages 1-4 and their caregivers. No reservations required, but first-come, first-served. Dress for a mess!

### FRI, JAN. 6

#### IN THE BRONX

**The Three Kings Day Parade:** El Museo del Barrio, 1230 Fifth Ave.; (212) 831-7272; [www.elmuseo.org](http://www.elmuseo.org); 11 am to 12:30 pm; Free.

For four decades El Museo del Barrio has celebrated and promoted the Three Kings Day tradition with an annual parade. This year's march begins at 106th Street and Lexington Avenue and travels to Third Avenue to end at 115th Street and Park Avenue. The procession features camels, colorful puppets, floats, and thousands of students and other community members as participants.

### SAT, JAN. 7

#### IN THE BRONX

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

Imagine who you will be by the end of 2017. What adventures will you have taken in nature? Whose lives will you have touched? Create your own, year-long vision for 2017 at this signature Wave Hill program and take home your very own hanging calendar.

**Winter Wonder Bottle:** Poe Park Visi-



## Dance, sing, and listen

Enjoy a Showtime Saturday on Jan. 14 at the Sugar Hill Children's Museum.

At Showtime Saturday, children move their bodies, make music, and become a part of the story with dancer, actor, and in-house talent Alexander Elisa. The museum invites children and their families to come and explore the limitless boundaries of imagination! Come to be inspired

by art, to create your own, and to be transported by stories to worlds where anything is possible.

Showtime Saturday, Jan. 14, from noon to 5 pm. Free.

*Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art and Storytelling* [898 St. Nicholas Ave. between W. 155th and W. 153rd streets in Sugar Hill, (212) 335-0004; [www.sugarhillmuseum.org](http://www.sugarhillmuseum.org)].

tor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); 1 pm to 3 pm; Free.

Create your own whimsical work of art on your personal bottle using our Whimsical Winter Wonder exhibition as inspiration. Please bring your own bottle. All labels and gummy residue must be removed. Bottles and caps must be clean and dry, inside and out. Please bring plastic bottles for children. Wear clothing that can get messy, as we will be painting.

### SUN, JAN. 8

#### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am to 1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Jan. 7.

**Nature walk:** Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org); 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm; Free with admission to the grounds.

Enjoy the brisk winter chill with Horticultural Interpreter Charles Day and share some

of his favorite trees and shrubs all a-twinkle in their white winter wonder.

### SAT, JAN. 14

#### IN THE BRONX

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

In honor of Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday, consider his powerful message of justice and freedom. Trace hands on fabric to cut out and then layer and paste on muslin. Use fabric markers and sprays to embed messages and quotes that speak out for kindness to all. Add to your design with bits of cloth, yarn, and felt and lots of freedom.

**Lunar New Year:** Bronx Museum of the Arts, 1040 Grand Concourse; (718) 681-6000; [www.bronxmuseum.org](http://www.bronxmuseum.org); 2 pm to 4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Celebrate the Lunar New Year with costumed folk dances, authentic music, and a

# Calendar

Our online calendar is updated daily at [www.NYParenting.com/calendar](http://www.NYParenting.com/calendar)

Lion Dance, presented by the New York Chinese Cultural Center. Learn traditional techniques of paper cutting and calligraphy and then enjoy a performances.

## SUN, JAN. 15

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am to 1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Jan. 14.

**Find your way:** Van Cortlandt Nature Center, W. 246th Street at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; [www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers](http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers); 11 am to 12:30 pm; Free.

If you lost your way, could you navigate to safety? Join the Urban Park Rangers and learn basic land navigation skills.

## SAT, JAN. 21

### IN THE BRONX

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

Get to know your local hibernators through sleepy tales of the season. Then make your own furry bear, bat, toad, or hedgehog mask, or fashion a dreamy, woody home. PJs welcome! Hibernators Weekend event.

**Edgar Allan Poe Birthday Bash:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Noon to 2 pm; Free.

Celebrate the birthday of great American writer Edgar Allan Poe with performances and readings of his works at this birthday bash, next door to his Bronx home. Suitable for older teens.

**Hibernators walk and talk:** Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org); 1 pm; Free with admission to the grounds.

Join naturalist and educator Gabriel Willow to discover survival techniques used by Wave Hill's plants and animals during the chilly winter months. Find out who's active and who's dormant and make some discoveries of your own as you embark on a woodlands trail adventure. Ages 10 and older welcome with an adult. Hibernators Weekend Event. Although this event is free with admission to the grounds, registration is recommended. Drop-ins welcome as space allows.

## SUN, JAN. 22

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am to 1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Jan. 21.

## SAT, JAN. 28

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** Wave Hill, W. 249th



## Blast off to outer space

Ground control is calling all space travelers to come and visit before the mission takes off on Jan. 22 at the Children's Museum of Art.

The exhibit Mission to Space covers the mysteries of outer space and how it continues to challenge our imaginations. As life on Earth faces a volatile future, outer space emerges as a destination of refuge, peace, and infinite possibility.

While there, come to the Pepperman Family Fine Arts Studio and enjoy two new interactive installations by designer

Ellen Van Dusen, and the Bridge Project Crazy Space Odyssey, by Tom Burnett, Edy Escamilla, and Yung Oh Le Page.

The Bridge is full of sights, sounds, and even a moving comet. As you continue to the space station you will board a spacecraft and blast off into outer space.

Mission to Space, daily until Jan. 22, from noon to 4 pm. Free with museum admission.

*Children's Museum of the Arts [103 Charloton St. at Hudson Street in Hudson Square, (212) 274-0986; [www.cmany.org](http://www.cmany.org)].*

Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org); 10 am to 1 pm; Free with admission to the grounds.

Bring your favorite winter or nature image, or make a small painting of the nature you love at Wave Hill. Then, using a variety of wooden and cardboard frames, we'll embed and decorate these images with palettes of warm and cool colors and an abundance of nature beads, wooden shapes, and your own collection of natural materials.

**Winter solar system:** Van Cortlandt Nature Center, W. 246th Street at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; [\[www.nyc.gov/parks/rang-\]\(http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rang-\)](http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rang-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

ers; 6 pm to 7:30 pm; Free.

The wonders of the universe are ready to be discovered and New York City parks are the perfect place to stargaze and explore the night sky. Our Urban Park Rangers will be your guides to the solar system, discussing the science, history, and folklore of the universe. Astronomy programs feature the use of telescopes and binoculars to observe specific astronomical events. Many programs feature astronomy experts and all equipment is provided. Programs are best enjoyed on clear nights, so please call ahead if weather conditions are not clear.

Our online calendar is updated daily at [www.NYParenting.com/calendar](http://www.NYParenting.com/calendar)

## SUN, JAN. 29

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am to 1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Jan. 28.

## LONG-RUNNING

### IN THE BRONX

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

Join Thomas and Driver Sam 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.

**Holiday Train Show:** New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Blvd. at Fordham Road; (718) 817-8700; [www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org); Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am to 5:30 pm, Now – Mon, Jan. 16; \$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. Reservations strongly recommended.

**Whimsical Winter Wonder:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Tuesdays – Saturdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Tues, Jan. 3 – Sat, Jan. 28; Free.

The fourth annual event delights and awakens the child within, especially during this most joyous season of the year. Local and national artists were selected for their interpretation of the theme "A Whimsical Winter Wonder." The works include photography, paintings, sculptures, textiles, and mixed media art.

**Recycle to art:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Wednesdays, 9 am to 5 pm, Wed, Jan. 4 – Wed, March 29; Free.

Have fun creating cute items out of recycled materials. Suitable for all ages.

**Seasonal arts and crafts:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Fridays, 2:30 pm to 4 pm, Fri, Jan. 6 – Fri, March 31; Free.

Create adorable arts and crafts items to take home. Each month will focus on a different project related to a special time of the season. This program is suitable for kids and their caregivers.

**Paper Arts & Crafts:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-



## All aboard for this show

Hop aboard and come see the Holiday Train Show at Grand Central Terminal now through Feb. 26.

The 15th annual display features iconic holiday images of a model train whirring by as it circles the base of a brightly-lit tree, evoking feelings of warmth and wonder in children and adults alike.

To the delight of all, Lionel trains will journey along a 34-foot long, two-level, "O" gauge model train layout, departing from a miniature replica of Grand Central Terminal on its way

to the North Pole. This year's exhibit showcases Lionel's Grand Central Express, Metro-North, Pennsylvania Flyer, Polar Express, and vintage subway train sets against a backdrop designed for the museum's 40th anniversary.

Holiday Train Show, weekdays now through Feb. 26, Monday to Friday, 8 am to 8 pm; Saturday and Sunday 10 am to 6 pm. Free with museum admission.

*Grand Central Terminal (89 E. 42nd St. and Park Avenue in Midtown East, [www.nytransitmuseum.org/exhibits](http://www.nytransitmuseum.org/exhibits)).*

5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Saturdays, 2-3:30 pm, Now – Sat, Jan. 28; Free.

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

### FURTHER AFIELD

**Train show at Grand Central:** Grand Central Terminal, 42nd St. and Park Avenue, Manhattan; [www.nytransitmuseum.org/exhibits](http://www.nytransitmuseum.org/exhibits); Weekdays, 8 am to 8 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am to 6 pm, Now – Sun, Feb. 26; Free with museum admission.

The Fifth Annual Holiday Train Show is an iconic holiday image of a model train, whirring by as it circles the base of a brightly-lit tree, evoking feelings of warmth and wonder in children and adults alike. To the delight of all, Lionel trains will journey along a 34-foot long, two-level, "O" gauge model train layout, departing from a miniature replica of Grand Central Terminal on its way to the North Pole. This year's exhibit showcases Lionel's Grand Central Express,

Metro-North, Pennsylvania Flyer, Polar Express, and vintage subway train sets against a backdrop designed for the museum's 40th anniversary.

**Story Hour:** Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art, 898 St. Nicholas Ave., Manhattan; (212) 335-0004; [www.sugarhillmuseum.org](http://www.sugarhillmuseum.org); Fridays, Noon to 5 pm, Now – Fri, Jan. 13; 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](http://www.sugarhillmuseum.org); Saturdays, Noon to 5 pm, Now – Sat, Jan. 14; Free.

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

BY FELICIA LEBEWOHL ROSEN

**A**s an attorney and school psychologist, I am frequently reminded that bullying is a serious problem in schools. According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, close to half of all children will experience school bullying — as a bully, victim, or bystander — at some point when they are in primary or secondary school. At least 10 percent of students are bullied regularly, and those with disabilities are at an increased risk. Every child's legal right to an education includes the right to a safe learning environment that is free from bullying. Here's what parents need to know about holding schools accountable for bullying and when parents can take legal action.

Bullying can be physical (spitting, hitting, making mean or rude hand gestures, taking or breaking someone's belongings); verbal (name calling, spreading rumors, teasing, offensive graffiti, threats to cause harm); emotional, social, relational (social exclusion, embarrassing someone in public, spreading rumors); or cyberbullying (sending insults or threats electronically).

To constitute bullying, the behavior must cause serious physical or emotional harm — such as depression, excessive absenteeism, deterioration of general physical health, and lower grades or withdrawal from school. In addition, generally, the behavior must have been repeated or have the potential to be repeated over time.

Bullying is basically a form of intimidation or domination towards someone who is perceived as being weaker. Students have described bullying as when "someone makes you feel less about who you are as a person." The occasional hurtful taunt, teenage drama, or bickering among peers with equal power — although upsetting — is not legally considered bullying.

A school district could be liable for bullying that occurs on school property or at a school-sponsored event such as a field trip or athletic event. School property includes school buses. The question as to whether a school must address bullying that takes place off school grounds and not at a school-sponsored event is not always clear and depends on the facts of the case.

There are a number of federal and New York State laws and school district policies that address bullying. School districts' policies are usually on the schools' websites and in student and parent handbooks. Schools must provide parents with a copy of the policy if requested.

The Dignity for all Students Act is a



# Holding schools accountable for bullying

New York State statute designed to provide all school-age children with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property and at school functions by a student or employee. It also applies to cyberbullying on or off school property that creates a risk of bullying on school property.

This statute is triggered when a school district employee witnesses or receives

a report of bullying. A designated school administrator must then conduct or supervise a thorough and prompt investigation to determine if material incidents of bullying occurred that creates a hostile environment. If the school's investigation finds that an incident occurred, the school must take prompt action, reasonably calculated to end the bullying, eliminate any hostile environment, create a more positive school culture, prevent recurrence

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The Dignity for all Students Act is designed to provide all school-age children with a safe and supportive environment free from discrimination, intimidation, taunting, harassment, and bullying on school property and at school functions by a student or employee.

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of the behavior, and ensure the safety of the victim.

In addition, if the bullying constitutes a crime, the act requires that the incident be reported to the police. The victim or parent may want to request a meeting to address any remaining concerns and that the situation be monitored carefully. They should send a letter or e-mail to the administrator after the meeting to confirm the concerns that were discussed and any actions that the administrator agreed to take.

New York State law does not require that parents be provided with a report of the findings of the investigation, although some schools' policies provide for such. Parents can always request in writing that they be provided with a copy. In addition, parents and students over the age of 17

can access the report under the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act. Under this act, the school must provide access to the requested document within 45 days of receipt of a written request.

There are also federal statutes that protect students who belong to certain protected classes from bullying — Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act protect students with disabilities; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin; and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.

A school district can only be liable for bullying if it had actual notice or, in some cases, should have known about the bullying. It is important for parents to put the

school on notice of any bullying occurring on premise or at school-sponsored activities by sending written, detailed notice of the bullying to the principal and superintendent as soon as possible. Parents should extensively document in writing incidents of bullying, the complaints about the incidents made to the school, and the school's responses.

There are a number of legal options that parents can take after they have notified the school that their child is being bullied and the school does not take sufficient action to stop the bullying. Parents can file a complaint against the school district and, in extreme cases, such as that involve assault with a weapon, pursue a criminal investigation. Before filing a lawsuit, it is important to consider that litigation could be highly stressful. For some children, a lawsuit may be too emotionally difficult, whereas for others it is emotionally positive and empowering. It is recommended to consult an attorney as to legal options.

For additional information about bullying in schools, see [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov) and consult an education lawyer.

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# Hurtful words

## What *not* to say to your daughters

**I**s there anything that matters more to a little girl than what her mother thinks of her?

Quite possibly, what her mother says to her.

To some, a mother is a little girl's whole world, so when she says something negative, her daughter takes it to heart (and often keeps it in her psyche for years to come). In teens, whose feelings are magnified times a thousand, one demoralizing comment can make her see herself in a terrible light, which can lead to low self-esteem.

Even as adults, we don't want to hear our mothers questioning our judgments in a condescending way. Yes, we do want their advice, but not their harsh criticism.

Luckily, it seems like many of us have surpassed the old-fashioned way of raising girls, even though that is exactly how many of us were raised. Yet, there are many moms who still let some things slip without even realizing the damage they are doing.

With that in mind, here are some things a mother should never say to her daughter:

**Be girlier:** A mom might be a feminine

flower, but if her little girl is a tomboy, let her embrace who she is. If a mother is obsessed with frilly dresses and shoes, she should wear them, and not force them on her unwilling daughter.

**Don't be rude:** Sometimes life calls for being rude. So many times, it calls for standing up for oneself. The old-fashioned (and disgusting) notion that girls need to be nice all the time creates people-pleasers — who please everyone else except themselves.

**You can't do that:** Whether it's become a scientist, win a contest, take that calculus course, or become the next president, any time you tell a girl she can't do something, it creates a negative thought pattern in her brain. Pretty soon she may internalize that she really can't do many things, and then of course, once she believes that, she will stop trying.

**You are running out of time to have kids:** Words hurt even when you're an adult. Remember the part in the movie "The Help," when Emma Stone's character's mother, Charlotte Phelan, told her daughter, "Your eggs are dying. Would it kill you to go on a date?" If you do, then you probably also remember how terrible she made her very smart daughter feel just



## JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

because she didn't have a man in her life. The pressure to have kids when you want them and can't have them is nothing short of huge. Any kind of negative comment from a mother is damaging. And let's not even go there about how plain horrifying it is to make a woman's life all about landing a man.

**Don't get dirty:** Girls should experience everything that boys can. One of my absolute favorite memories as a child was playing with the mud in my yard. Give me a spoon, and I could dig for hours. You deny a girl a lot when you expect her to stay clean all the time. Kids — boys and girls — were meant to explore, have adventures, and sometimes, get dirty!

**What will the family, neighbors, or other girls think?** So a girl doesn't want to go to a sleepover, join Girl Scouts, or dress the way her friends do. Mothers should never have a girl question any decision by asking what her family or friends would think. Not unless they want the girl to make every decision based on what others think rather than what she thinks.

**Put on some lipstick before you go:** Which snidely means that how you look sans makeup is not good enough. More moms need to encourage girls that they don't need to hide their faces under a mountain of cosmetics.

**Just smile:** Or "Don't look so angry, sad, or bored." Every time you tell a girl to mask her own feelings for the sake of looking good for the neighbors, friends, or family, you are telling a girl to hide how she really feels, which will only make her feel much, much worse. If a girl is angry, for God's sake, let her be angry!

Have something to add to this list? Let us know on Facebook!

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



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