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# NEW YORK Parenting

Bronx/Riverdale Family  
February 2017

Where every child matters



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# Health coverage

**W**hat is health? The word gets thrown around so much that everyone is confused about it. People say health coverage when they really mean "illness care." Grocery items called health foods are just real foods rather than processed, manufactured pretenders. Health is not only physical, but mental and spiritual, too. To have good health is to be largely without stress, depression, inactivity, and, of course, to have freedom and mobility.



We write a lot about health in these magazines. Every month we have at least two columns from experts in our communities talking about health, and that's not mentioning the columns we have that give diet, food, and recipe ideas. To me, it all starts with food, and who hasn't heard the expression "you are what you eat"? As parents, it's really important that we start

our children off eating right and that we show them that "nutritious is delicious."

In this issue, our writer Golda Smith talks about achieving health goals for the new year and Tammy Scileppi has contributed an important piece about the dangers of mercury poisoning and how it's affecting our children. Her

interview with Albert Wilking is compelling and informative and a must read.

February is Children's Dental Health month and we acknowledge this every year. Our writer Jamie Lober tells us how important it is to develop early oral health habits and for children to visit a pediatric dentist earlier than most people might imagine. The baby teeth are just as important as the permanent ones, and care and diet can determine the long range health and appearance of both. Setting an example for your children by taking care

of your own dental needs and decay prevention will go a long way to helping them with their own.

And then there is our intellectual and artistic health, and there is no finer food for that than family visits to our wonderful museums. Family programming tailored to kids is in abundance throughout NYC. We are so lucky! Contributing writer Shnieka Johnson highlights 15 of our finest museums that do just that.

It's Valentine's Day month and I'm certain we should love each other as much as possible. We should hug and kiss and hold hands and identify with our neighbors. We should think positive thoughts and stand firm in our commitment to equality and inclusiveness. We should make sure everyone has access to a decent way of life. That would be great for our health in every way.

Thanks for reading!

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,  
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# Estate planning guide

## Minors as beneficiaries to retirement, insurance accounts

*How should I name the beneficiary of my retirement accounts? My children are 9 and 5 years old. Should I name them? What happens if I have another child?*

**E**state-planning clients frequently ask about the proper designation of a beneficiary on their non-probate assets, such as life insurance and retirement accounts. Often, they want their heirs to inherit the non-probate asset. When those individuals are minors, certain issues need to be considered in weighing not only the tax consequences, but other issues such as the ability of the child or guardian to have access to the funds.

### Understanding age

The first question is what constitutes the age of “majority” in New York State. The answer: it depends. For the purpose of a Uniform Gift to Minor’s Act or Uniform Transfers to Minors Act, the account terminates, and the minor takes control of the account, at the age of 18 and 21, respectively. The age of termination of the account is not necessarily the same as the age of majority, which refers to the age at which a person is legally competent to sign contracts. Although the age of majority for contracts is 18, for Uniform Transfers Act and also child support purposes, the age of majority is 21.

Insurance contracts are treated somewhat differently. New York Insurance Law deems a minor above the age of 14 years and six months competent to be the owner or donee of a life insurance policy. This means that not only can a parent, grandparent, or anyone else name the over-14 ½ minor directly as a beneficiary, but that the same child is deemed competent to contract for, own, and exercise all rights relating to a life insurance policy. A child below that age lacks the capacity to purchase, own, or be the designated beneficiary of a life insurance policy. Nevertheless, a child under 14 ½ years may be a donee of a life insurance policy pursuant to Uniform Gift Act or Uniform Transfers Act. In order to

effectuate such a designation, the adult may make a gift of the policy indirectly to a child by designating a custodian to receive, hold, and manage the gift on behalf of the child until he reaches the age of majority. A living trust can also be the owner or beneficiary of a life insurance policy and hold that policy for the benefit of any person, including a child under 14 ½ years. Alternatively, the life insurance policy can name a testamentary trust or living trust as a beneficiary, with that trust in turn being for the benefit of any individual, including a minor younger or older than 14 ½.

Using an Uniform Transfers Act means, however, that the child will technically have access to the account when he is 18, which may still not allow a level of maturity necessary to manage a large sum of money.

### Retirement accounts

Additional considerations come into play when addressing the disposition of a retirement account (referred to generally herein as an “IRA” although also applicable to ROTH IRAs and 401(k) plans). Certain options would allow the IRA to grow tax-free and avoid a lump-sum payment of income tax. As with life insurance, one option is to name a custodian under an existing or not-yet-created Uniform Transfers to Minors Act account as the beneficiary of the IRA. The named custodian can establish a new inherited IRA in her the name of the custodian for the benefit of the minor, into which the primary IRA is “rolled over.” The IRA owner may also name a living trust or a testamentary trust as the designated beneficiary. However, the trust must have specific language to qualify as a “conduit” or “accumulation” trust in order to be a recognized repository for the IRA that would allow the proceeds to “stretch out” and grow tax-free until withdrawn. If the custodian makes a timely election (on or before Dec. 31 of the year following the account owner’s death), the inherited IRA will stretch over the minor’s lifetime and required minimum distributions (the



## ASK AN ATTORNEY

ALISON ARDEN BESUNDER, ESQ.

minimum amount you must withdraw from your account each year) will be calculated on the minor beneficiary’s lifetime.

With a Uniform Transfers to Minors Act account, the custodian will receive the annual minimum distributions as custodian (ideally, to be deposited into a separate Act bank account). Once that minor reaches the age of majority, he will have full access to the IRA and the bank account, allowing him to continue holding the inherited IRA (the smarter option) or withdraw all remaining funds. This type of unfettered access at the young age of 21 may not be desirable. Accordingly, naming a trust as beneficiary may be the better option.

### Terms of the trust

The U.S. Treasury imposes four requirements which must be satisfied for a trust to qualify as a beneficiary of the IRA for tax purposes: (1) the trust must be valid under state law; (2) it must be irrevocable or become irrevocable upon the death of the account holder under the terms of the trust; (3) the beneficiaries must be identifiable from the trust instrument; and (4) the beneficiaries or their representatives must provide to the plan administrator or custo-

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dian either a copy of the trust instrument or provide a certification that the trust complies with these regulations.

The terms of the trust must comply to establish what is known as a “see-through” or “conduit trust” in order to permit the “stretch-out,” meaning, calculating minimum distributions based on the minor beneficiary’s presumably younger age. The designated beneficiary must be an individual and not an entity because an entity (such as the estate, a charitable organization, or a trust) does not have an actuarial lifespan to determine minimum distributions. If the trust is drafted as a conduit trust, it allows the plan to “see through” the trust to its beneficiaries. If a trust is for the benefit of one beneficiary, his age is used to determine the minimum distributions. If there are multiple beneficiaries, such as in a “sprinkle” or “spray” trust, the minimum distributions are determined by the age of the eldest beneficiary.

If the trust does not meet the requirements, then it is deemed to have no designated beneficiary for the purpose of the “stretch out” and the IRA must be withdrawn within five years (if the participant has not yet reached the age of taking minimum distributions) or based on the owner’s calculation if the owner had been taking the distributions at the time of his or her death.

## Distributions

Many trusts for minors are drafted to allow discretionary distributions, with mandatory or forced distributions only at certain ages. This can present problems for the purpose of calculating the minimum distributions. In determining the minimum distributions through a trust, the designated beneficiaries are reviewed as a snapshot upon the death of the original owner. For example, if the trust states that distributions may only be made at age 25, and the minor is currently age 12, the plan administrator must also look at the contingent beneficiaries. In the case of a minor at the age of 12, who has no siblings, although the trust terms may say the contingent beneficiary is to the child’s issue, since the child has no issue at that snapshot of time, the contingent beneficiaries will be that child’s parents and therefore the eldest beneficiary for the purpose of determining the minimum distributions will be one of the child’s parents, thereby losing the intended stretch-out of the IRA. In order to cure this defect, the draftsman might consider naming another younger family member as the contingent beneficiary of the trust; however, in doing so, it may lead to an unintended beneficiary receiving the corpus of the trust.

The better option may be to use a conduit trust. By definition, a conduit trust requires

that all minimum distributions received in the trust must be distributed to the beneficiary or beneficiaries. In the case of a legal minor, they may be distributed to the child’s guardian if the trust instrument allows the trust to distribute funds on behalf of a minor to the guardian. If the child has siblings, particularly if those siblings are older, the draftsman might include terms that allow the minimum distributions to be distributed to and among the minor beneficiary and his or her siblings. In such case the minimum distributions will be calculated by the eldest beneficiary as mentioned above. The key to a conduit trust is that the instrument must require all minimum distributions to be distributed out of the trust to designated beneficiaries, even if the trust accumulates income from other sources.

Some plan administrators will not permit the designation of a trust as beneficiary. They may also require certain terms to be included in the trust instrument, or may prohibit an inherited IRA stretch-out. As always, you should consult an attorney before making any decisions that impact your estate plan or the legal consequences of naming a beneficiary.

*Alison Arden Besunder is the founding attorney of the law firm of Arden Besunder P.C., Find her on Twitter @estatetrustplan and on her website at [www.besunderlaw.com](http://www.besunderlaw.com).*

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# Settling into parenthood

**A**nyone who has ever been a parent knows that one tiny baby can instantly change your life forever. The arrival of your newborn will foster countless wonderful memories, yet, along the way, you will naturally encounter some roadblocks. Part of this is inevitable because babies cry, get sick, and sometimes don't eat. However, distress can build from new parents putting too much pressure (and resulting stress) on themselves.

It's important to remember that learning to become anything takes an adjustment period. You can read everything there is to know about parenting during the pregnancy period, but nothing will ever fully prepare you for the first few nights, weeks, and months at home with your child. Becoming a parent is a trial by fire, but gradually, you will get to know everything you need to know about that delightful little baby.

"Understanding that the transition to parenthood can be challenging and allowing yourself some emotional space to face those challenges is important," says Dr. Deena Blanchard, a mom of three and pediatrician at Premier Pediatrics. Here are Dr. Blanchard's tips to create a positive experience as you transition to parenthood:

## You can't control everything

Wouldn't it be amazing if babies came with recipes, and you knew if you just put in the right ingredients and time it would all work out? Being a type-A person myself, coming to terms with the lack of control that parenting brings was really hard for me.

Newborns are often unpredictable. You may do the same thing you did the day before but get a different result. The more you can wrap your head around and accept the randomness of infants, the easier this transition will be.

## Plan ahead

While you can't control everything about parenting, there are some things you can plan for that will make your life easier. For example, you can choose your pediatrician before you have your baby. Knowing that you've met with and selected the doctor who will play a key role in helping you transition to parenthood can be very soothing.

Choose a pediatrician who you feel will partner with you and who you feel genuinely cares. Never feel like you are being



rushed or unable to ask all your questions.

## Create your village

Previously, when women had babies, they were often near their mothers, aunts, and siblings who would help them. In this global world, we now often need to create our own villages. Join a mom group, whether online or in person. Having friends who are going through the same stages of parenting that you are and that are supportive is priceless. Your village may also include your pediatrician, doula, lactation consultant, and family.

It's your personal village, there is no "right" way to create it. The most important thing is to surround yourself with empathic, supportive, and helpful people. You will be thankful you can transition to parenthood with help from the experts and those who have been through it. This will also allow you to scream for support (to get sleep or even a shower!), or rest easy just knowing it is there for you!

## Ask for help

Your family, partner, and best friends may be the most amazing people on earth, but they cannot read your mind. You don't need to "do it all." There is no shame in asking for help. In fact, you will likely be a better and more emotionally available parent for doing so.

Be direct when asking for help. For example, you can ask someone to please bring dinner or do the laundry or hold the baby, so you can shower. You get to decide what



## HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

kind of help you need and ask for it. Taking care of yourself both emotionally and physically is a great gift to your little one.

## Best-laid plans can change

It's great to have a plan for how you want to give birth or feed your baby. By preparing with classes and talking to your healthcare providers ahead of time, you will increase the likelihood that these plans will happen. Understand though, that sometimes, no matter how much you want and prepared for something, when dealing with the human body, it may not turn out exactly the way you imagined.

Try to be flexible. Reframe your thinking. If your birth plan didn't turn out exactly as planned, it's okay to feel disappointed but understand it's not your fault. Avoiding self-blame when hiccups or bumps occur on the road of parenting is extremely important.

## Baby blues are normal

There is this pressure to always be happy; after all, you just had this adorable baby. The reality is, more than 80 percent of women will have baby blues in the first two weeks after giving birth. Another 30 percent will have a postpartum mood disorders.

Feeling down, sad, anxious, or any other feeling that isn't sheer glee is normal, and there is no shame in it. If you do feel great, that's awesome, but if you don't, please speak up to whomever you feel most comfortable with.

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# Childcare bliss

## How to select the right caregiver for your family

BY KRISTEN J. DUCA

**S**electing a caregiver for your child is one of the most important decisions many families will make. Whether you need childcare because you are returning to work, craving some time to yourself, or spending some time with your significant other, you will want to find the ideal caretaker for your child. Below are a few tips to help you navigate the nanny search:

### **One size does not fit all**

A multitude of childcare possibilities exist for you to consider, and of course

there are pluses and minuses to each of them. Just remember that you are in the driver's seat and can choose the path that best fits your family's needs. Hiring a caregiver to look after your child is a very personal decision. Every family has its own dynamics and unique views on

parenting. Feel secure and confident in your child-rearing decisions.

### **Be patient**

Do not rush the childcare search. Finding the ideal person to take care of your little one will take time and patience. It is important to be prepared and detailed in your search. Finding the ideal caretaker for your child requires a lot of time and hard work. However, if you put the effort into the search up front, you will be rewarded with the result.

### **Lay groundwork**

Laying the foundation toward building the ideal childcare situation is critical.

Formulating a clear description of your childcare needs now will save you loads of future frustration. You can zero in on exactly what type of situation you need to make sure your household runs smoothly and happily.

The ideal or "perfect" childcare situation depends on you and how specific you are in recognizing and expressing your needs, as well as on how your family spends its time. It is important that before you start your childcare search you set aside time to sit down and ponder what it is that you are hiring for and develop interview questions based on your needs.

### **Interview candidates thoroughly**

Always remember to conduct a thorough interview and check references. You will want to conduct interviews (by phone, in person, or via webcam) with potential candidates in order to screen them through a series of questions. You need to ask prospective candidates the right questions in order to narrow down your list and eventually pick a suitable nanny for your family.

If possible, try to interview candidates



in person so you can see their immediate reactions, facial expressions, and overall poise. These interviews do not have to be conducted in your home. You can always meet up at a local diner or coffee shop or get together at another mutually convenient location such as a library or bookstore.

### Be reasonable

Be aware of what assistance you are asking for, and make sure it is reasonable. To put it bluntly, if you are not willing or able to do it all, then your childcare provider should not be expected to either.

Childcare providers are not superheroes. They are humans who have strengths, weaknesses, and feelings, just like you. As a rule of thumb, it is generally never a good idea to ask your childcare provider to do tasks that you cannot handle yourself.

### Understand that your childcare situation will evolve

As your child changes or your family dynamics change, your childcare needs will change. These childcare needs will constantly evolve as your child blossoms

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Finding the ideal caretaker for your child requires a lot of time and hard work. However, if you put the effort into the search up front, you will be rewarded with the result.

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through the stages of life. It is important to realize that you are not pigeonholed into the first childcare situation you created at a specific point in time.

A situation that works for your newborn child will likely need to be scrapped, tweaked, or revised as your child starts school. You may have to realize that expecting the unexpected and having the ability to be nimble is crucial to formulating the right childcare situation at any given point in time.

### Go with your gut

You may luck out and hire the first nanny you meet, or you might have to interview several candidates. Everyone

has a different experience, but if you are dedicated to the childcare search, you will find the best candidate for your family.

Always go with your gut, and trust your instincts.

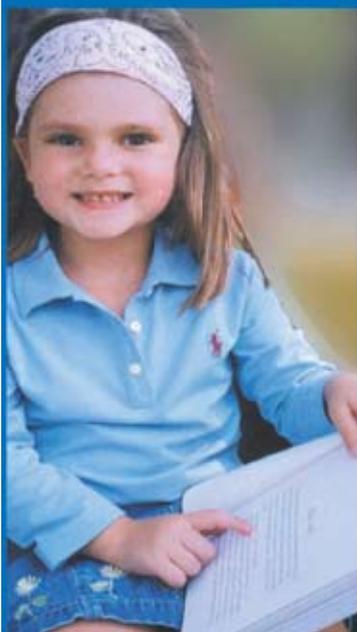
### Trial

Suggest the nanny candidate you are interested in start working with your family on a trial basis so you can ensure you find the right fit for your family.

A trial period of a few days, a few weeks, or even a month is a good way to find out if your nanny's personality and style fit well with your family's. Remember that a happy child makes for a happy parent!

*New York-based working mother Kristen Duca and her husband are the parents of two girls. Duca has worked in the financial services industry for two decades in addition to serving as a contributing writer for New York area publications. She is the author of "Ultimate Nanny: How to Find, Interview, and Manage the Most Important Person You Will Ever Hire – Your Child's Nanny" available on amazon.com now. Get the inside scoop on how develop the right criteria, identify, and select the ultimate nanny.*

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# Mediation tackles equity distribution

In previous articles, I have written about different stages of a mediation case: The decision to try mediation, and the consultation (Part 1); discussions on parenting (Part 2); and dealing with income and expenses (Part 3). I continue here as the mediator assists Angela and Bill, a hypothetical couple, in regard to their assets and debts, and child support.

## Feb. 16th – Session 3

The next session takes place almost a month after the previous one. Meeting earlier hadn't been possible or practical, because Bill and Angela had a lot of financial information to gather in regard to assets and debts.

The mediator asks about what has been happening since the last session. Learning that there haven't been what either party considers significant changes or problems, the mediator asks Angela about the clothing expenses discussed at the last session. Angela gives a new (and lower figure), which Bill accepts as accurate.

With income and expenses taken care of, the mediator works with the couple on their assets, again writing the figures on a flipchart. Angela and Bill both say that the numbers are correct. They quickly agree on how to deal with the bank accounts, retirement money, and other investments. There is a small dispute over the cars they own, which the couple quickly resolves.

The big issue is the house. Angela would like to keep it, but buying out Bill may be impossible. Bill says that Angela can have the house, but she'd need to pay him a fair price. There is some discussion regarding the house.

The mediator asks whether Angela has checked into getting a mortgage. Angela says she hasn't. Bill suggests that since a buyout may not even be possible, maybe it would be best to go on to the next issue; Angela can do some investigating, and then they can come back to the house question. Angela agrees to Bill's proposal.

Having reviewed the asset information, and having reached many tentative agreements, the mediator begins helping them share information on debts and liabilities for the remainder of the session.

## Feb. 28 – Session 4

The spouses arrive. They continue sharing information on debts, and then review it with the mediator.

They reach a decision on how to handle the credit cards, the biggest debt, aside from the mortgage on the house. They agree on several other debt-related issues as well.

Angela begins to talk about the house, saying that she would be able to get a mortgage. Discussion continues, and then a disagreement arises concerning the



## DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

value of the house. Two disagreements, actually, dealing with:

- The fair market value of the house.
- What percentage of that value should go to Bill. (Angela had assumed that they each had an equal share, but Bill is asking for more.)

Angela's surprise quickly turns to anger. The mediator intervenes when it becomes clear that a productive conversation about the matter isn't possible at the moment. He helps the spouses turn their attention to finding out the house's value, a task that both agree is necessary. After a lengthy and heated discussion, Bill and Angela agree on how to have the house valued.

The spouses want to talk about child support. They've managed to discuss this issue on their own and have a plan. The mediator asks for the details, which Angela and Bill share with him.

The mediator tells them about the Child Support Guidelines. (New York State requires parents to learn what amount of child support the guidelines would require, even if parents decide not to follow the guidelines.)

Bill and Angela decide that their own agreement is better for their family than what the guidelines provide.

## Next time: Agreements reached and reviewing the costs

*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](mailto:lee_chabin@lc-mediate.com), (718) 229-6149, or go to <http://lc-mediate.com/>. Follow him on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/lchabin](http://www.facebook.com/lchabin).*

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

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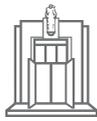
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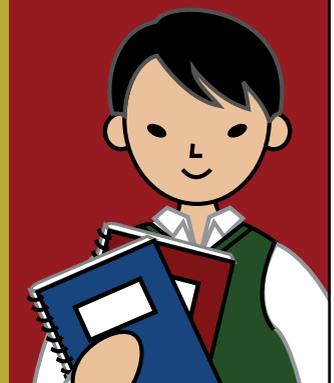
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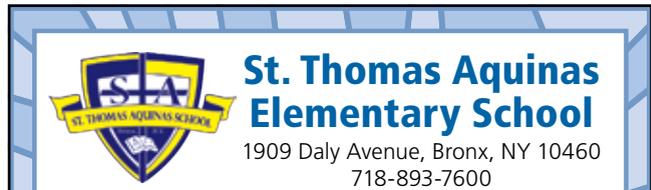
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# Healthiest you ever

## How to achieve your health goals well into the new year

BY GOLDA SMITH

**T**his is about the time where the newness of the new year is starting to wear off. The goals you set a month ago still have your undivided attention OR they have started to lose their luster. The best example that I think everyone can relate to is the new-year gym membership. Most gyms are packed in January, and by February the crowd has begun to disappear ... until around May when there is the mad dash to develop the bikini body or get ready for a wedding.

Now, certainly, I am not talking about you. Rather, it's someone you know, like your sister, co-worker, or bestie. If it is you, there certainly is no judgement from me, because I was right there. That's why I would like to share some tips that have helped me, and I think will assist you in remaining consistent with your health goals.

Let's make a plan together. Are you ready for a FIT? No, I don't mean an episode when your child has a complete meltdown in the cookie aisle but a Focused Intentional Transformation.

I'm not talking about the over-used "new year, new you." Instead, let's work towards a better you! In a few steps, I would like to show you how you can easily remain consistent with your health goals once and for all.

The first and most important step is to decide what your core determining motivation is. Really take time to figure this out and dig deeper than the knee-jerk response of "I just want to lose weight" or "I want flat abs," because your response is what will push you to keep going when you are ready to give up.

**DO NOT** skip this step.

Once you have determined your core determining motivation, the next step is to share it with someone you love. It is one thing to write a goal down or to cut it out and post it on your vision board, but to speak it out loud and

share it with someone else takes it to another level. You have now given your goal life and you have given that person permission to hold you accountable. Scary? Yes, sometimes change can be scary, but if you want something different, you must do something different.

The third stage is to be consistent with **SMALL** daily steps. You want to know the reason why many people start and then give up on their health goals? Good, because I'm going to tell you. They set themselves up for failure by trying to do too much too soon. For example, they may overhaul their diet or commit to going to the gym five days a week, when, in reality, they may work full time and have small children to take care of. A more realistic goal is to commit to working out three to

four days per week at home or at the gym with a workout plan.

Working on your nutrition? Focus on what you can add instead of what you are subtracting. Let's say your goal is to increase the amount of greens in your diet. Look at your current diet and see where you can add greens. Maybe you can start having a simple green smoothie or adding greens to a morning omelet. You could also commit to having a green salad with dinner at least four or five nights per week. What you will soon discover is that, as you continue to add things, you just naturally stop doing other things.

The next step is to have an easy-to-implement plan. Yeah, I know, you don't like plans, because you're the spontaneous type. Well, how has that worked for you? As I stated before, if you want something different, you must do something different.

Creating a plan will not only create consistency, but will also save time. Do you want to eat better? Decide to begin meal planning and prepping. What day and time will you commit to this activity? Get it on your calendar. Do you want to use your gym membership beyond January? Predetermine what days and times you can realistically commit to this activity, put it on your calendar, and make it a non-negotiable appointment with a very important person. (HINT: That very important person is you.)

These are some simple, yet tried-and-true things you can implement right now to help you remain consistent with your health goals. Remember, the key is consistent, small daily steps and simplicity. I dare you to make this **YOUR** best year on purpose and become the best version of yourself.

*Golda Smith, a mom of two, is a certified personal trainer and health coach living in Brooklyn. She blogs at [FitMommyBlog.com](http://FitMommyBlog.com)*



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# Mercury poisoning

## An advocate lays out the danger to your children

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

**A**lbert Wilking's "toxic" past was riddled with a series of weird, and at times, "poisonous" experiences. Growing up, he was plagued by relentless illnesses and a puzzling assortment of maladies. But after years of questioning, rigorous self-discovery, and extensive research into harmful toxins, this amazing New Yorker finally found himself in a place of healing and wellness — and knew he had a calling: To educate the public about the dangers of mercury poisoning, with a goal of having all children mercury-free by the year 2020.

Imagine a perfect, toxin-free world in which kids everywhere can live, play, and learn — forever safe and protected from all of the bad stuff that can harm them, such as lead, free radicals, hormone-filled and pesticide-laced meats and produce, as well as genetically modified foods. They'd even be safe from potential mercury poisoning due to leakage from amalgam dental fillings.

What would this awesome, environmentally friendly utopia — where parents don't ever have to worry about what their children consume or inhale — look like?

It's fun to imagine, but let's face it, the harsh reality is that no matter how hard we try to protect them, kids can't live in a bubble. And if they could, they'd break free!

Still, that's the kind of wonderful world wellness expert and mercury-free advocate Wilking, 53, dreams of and hopes for (in theory). Like the hundreds of parents he educates, he's especially concerned

about the potentially harmful effects of mercury in children, but says he can actually imagine a time, in the not too distant future, when moms and dads may worry less about toxins.

His motto, "mercury-free kids," describes a life-long wellness mission that he has embraced since his younger days, after dealing with a wide range of diseases and medical illnesses that he believes were mostly due to mercury poisoning.

The parent of 15-year-old son Felix says when he's not teaching mercury poisoning and recovery, he's studying it, and believes, "It's a tragedy that modern-day healthcare continues to administer to unwitting consumers — mercury in dental fillings, and vaccines, and that much of the 'science' they give us is misinformation."

His website [www.mercuryfreekids.org](http://www.mercuryfreekids.org) is chock full of helpful information and suggestions based on Wilking's own personal journey and fascinating findings. (Mercury Free Kids and Mercury 101 do not offer medical advice. Parents and caretakers should consult their child's pediatrician and dentist if they suspect mercury poisoning, which may turn out to be something else entirely.)

Wilking's past was often riddled with a series of strange, toxin-related experiences that compelled him to investigate the connection between those and his ongoing health problems. For a while, that past would define him. But in time, he found himself in a much better place, and he knew he wanted to help others.

On his site he writes, "I have a history of living and working in toxic environments. When growing up, my family home had a

photography studio, and a painting studio with toxic artist paints. The family regularly adventured into abandoned factories, industrial sites, and ghost towns. It was exciting but toxic.

"During my middle school years, playgrounds included the town dump and climbing over mounds of brightly covered chemicals at the Middlesex Chemical factory. I played with mercury from broken thermometers, and remember losing the mercury beads into the floor boards of our house. Wounds were occasionally treated with Mercurochrome, and vaccines were administered."

Young Albert had chronic ear infections, severe allergies, and almost constant colds. As a teen, his emotional problems became more apparent.

"As an adult, I regularly worked with toxic paints," he writes. "I soldered copper pipes with lead, refinished furniture with toxic chemicals, and renovated two dentist offices. I had a very expensive sushi habit, was a tuna sandwich junkie, regularly drank Gatorade (bromine), and used cold medicines (bromine)."

"My life-long, severe allergies and emotional instability continued. I cried almost every day of my life until my mid-20s. I could fly into a rage for the smallest of reasons."

Wilking has started an important conversation about this crucial but mostly forgotten issue, mercury poisoning, and in this in-depth interview, provides NY Parenting readers with his valuable input. He says he has consulted with other mercury experts, including dentists, chemists, scientists, and policy experts, like Michael



T. Bender, director of the Mercury Policy Project <http://mercurypolicy.org>.

**Tammy Scileppi:** Is a mercury-free USA a realistic goal? And what about other countries?

**Albert Wilking:** My mission has all children mercury-free. I have my work cut out for me to get enough adults educated to protect all of our beautiful babies going forward.

Some countries like Norway and Sweden are mercury-free in dentistry. Unfortunately, countries like the Philippines have a huge problem with mercury from mining.

The U.S. is now allowing coal fly ash to be used in household products like sheet-rock and carpet backing. Another hidden place for mercury is in high fructose corn

syrup. About 20 percent of fructose is mercury tainted. Mercury poisoning isn't going away any time soon. The best thing we can do is to educate ourselves.

I've made a comprehensive list of mercury sources on my website ([www.mercurymercurypolicy.org/hg-poisoning-sources](http://www.mercurymercurypolicy.org/hg-poisoning-sources)).

**TS:** Dentists still use fillings with mercury, so how do parents get around that?

**AW:** Unfortunately, the American Dental Association still requires those on social services, including little children, to have mercury fillings placed, or they will have to pay for services out of pocket. There are dentists that have been in the business for a long time, who claim a small amount of mercury is harmless. You may notice I call amalgam dental fillings mercury fillings, and that's because they are

50 percent mercury. There is only nine to 12 percent silver in the filling, so they should never have been called silver fillings. They should be called what they are, mercury fillings.

**TS:** So, why is mercury potentially harmful to kids and adults?

**AW:** Mercury interferes with our proper usage of the essential elements. These elements can protect us from mercury, but only to a certain extent. Our systems and bodies can become deranged in the presence of mercury. To get our systems in top shape, we need to get the toxins out of our bodies by making sure we are flush with needed elements. It's a balancing act.

**TS:** Regarding those elements, how does your site's two-hour interactive workshop with Q & A sessions work? How can

parents access it?

**AW:** My current workshop is called “The Building Blocks of Life” and is at [www.mercuryfreekids.org/life-building-blocks](http://www.mercuryfreekids.org/life-building-blocks).

I use lots of easy-to-understand stories and metaphors to explain the essential elements and vitamins we need for survival. Let’s compare a brick building to that of a human body. You may have heard we need lots of calcium. However, most of us have all the calcium we need. If we view calcium as the bricks in our building, what we need more of is the mortar between those bricks to make our walls solid. Magnesium is that mortar. It’s needed in more than 300 of our vital cellular processes. It gives our bones and teeth strength.

Iodine makes the longest bonds known to man. Seventy percent of a thyroid hormone is made up of iodine. Iodine is the architectural plan for our bodies. It tells us where to put our walls, how tall we will grow, what goes in the rooms, and when the garbage is taken out. Without enough iodine, the body loses direction and order. We can see that when the thyroid starts backing up, growing into a goiter. Without iodine, the thyroid starts swelling up with half-baked hormones; it’s as if the service staff in our building has gone on strike.

**TS:** Talk about your “mercurial” past and your leaky dental filling.

**AW:** My entire life, I had some kind of constant chronic infection: Lyme disease, conjunctivitis, allergies, constant colds. I was on antibiotics for two years for Lyme disease; I couldn’t get rid of it. Because of that leaking filling, I learned about bacteria and methylate mercury. When the body or the antibiotic kills off the bacteria, the mercury is released, and then the body has to deal with the mercury. So there is this chronic level of inflammation, and the body doesn’t get better. The bacteria will not die off until the mercury is removed. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercury\(II\)\\_reductase](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mercury(II)_reductase).

Today, I’m one of the healthiest people I know. My knees and joints had ached since I was a child. No more. You can see a list of my problems, at [www.mercuryfreekids.org/about](http://www.mercuryfreekids.org/about).

**TS:** How did your “toxic” past define you for a while?

**AW:** At one time in my life, I had a problem with self-medicating, whether it was drinking too much alcohol, taking a bunch of vitamin supplements, or spending too much money on sushi. Think of these common sayings, “I really tied one on last night” or “he/she really knows how to hold their liquor.” I thought I was fearlessly, heroically approaching life. Now I see it for what it is: ego, and putting myself in a constant state of stress through toxic

## **Bromine: Toxic and pervasive**

Children’s health advocate Albert Wilking claims that some of his health problems stemmed from exposure to mercury and bromine which could be found in his Gatorade and cold medicines. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Bromine works by directly irritating the skin, mucous membranes, and tissues.

“The seriousness of poisoning caused by bromine depends on the amount, route, and length of time of exposure, as well as the age and preexisting medical condition of the person exposed,” states the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

The Centers describe Bromine as “a naturally occurring element that is a liquid at room temperature. It has a

brownish-red color with a bleach-like odor, and it dissolves in water.”

Bromine can be found in a number of places in your everyday world, including:

- Pesticides (specifically methyl bromide, used mainly on strawberries, predominantly in California).

- Bakery goods and some flours often contain a “dough conditioner” called potassium bromate.

- Soft drinks (including Mountain Dew, Gatorade, Sun Drop, Squirt, Fresca, and other citrus-flavored sodas), in the form of brominated vegetable oils.

- Medications such as Atrovent Inhaler, Atrovent Nasal Spray, Pro-Banthine (for ulcers), and anesthesia agents.

- Fire retardants used in fabrics, carpets, upholstery, and mattresses.

ingestion. I think it’s addictive. Mercury poisoning is actually called mercury intoxication.

**TS:** What about emotional issues stemming from mercury poisoning?

**AW:** The phrase “emotional lability” was first coined in reference to mad hatters. They were quite common in Danbury, Conn. and Newark, N.J. In the hatting business, mercury nitrate would steam the felts for hats, rise up to the ceiling, condense, and drip back down onto the heads of the workers, staining their hair and skin orange. Johnny Depp played it quite well in “Alice and Wonderland.” Many hatters were off their rockers and their emotions would flip on and off. About 60 percent of the deaths in the industry were men under the age of 30! [www.mercuryfreekids.org/mercury101/danbury-shakes](http://www.mercuryfreekids.org/mercury101/danbury-shakes).

We all know people who can fly into a rage or start crying over the smallest things. I was one of them. (Emotional lability is also listed as a symptom of acrodynia: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acrodynia>)

**TS:** What should parents do to avoid mercury exposure?

**AW:** The best way is to be educated on the subject. I have a great page with almost all the sources of mercury possible: [www.mercuryfreekids.org/hg-poisoning-sources](http://www.mercuryfreekids.org/hg-poisoning-sources).

Mercury is 500 times more dangerous than lead. It has an affinity for sulfur, and we are loaded with sulfur. If a thermometer breaks inside a school, the entire school can be closed while men in clean suits do remediation. The amount of mercury in a thermometer is about equal to the amount of mercury in a large dental filling!

Old-school dentists that drill mercury

out of people’s mouths, with very little in the way of safety precautions, are in denial of putting the health of themselves and their patients at risk.

Today, conscientious, educated dentists are using clean-room technology to protect themselves, their staff, and their patients from mercury.

If you go to [www.dentalwellness4u.com/layperson/symptoms.html](http://www.dentalwellness4u.com/layperson/symptoms.html), you can read about holistic, mercury-free dentistry of Dr. Tom McGuire. He has been a mercury-safe, holistic dentist for more than 35 years, and is an innovator and leader in holistic dental wellness, having spent the last 20 years researching mercury amalgam fillings and studying their effects on overall health.

In addition, the doctor’s extensive research into mercury detoxification has resulted in the development of his mercury detoxification program. (Click on, “Mercury Detoxification: The Natural Way to Remove Mercury from Your Body,” to review the book and read chapter excerpts.)

And you can also check out this video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AO\\_6W-Hnt64](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AO_6W-Hnt64).

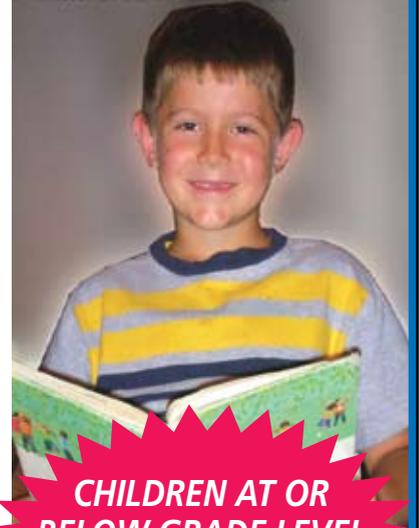
Once a parent or anyone else sees the safeguards these dentists use in this video, good luck going back to an old-fashioned dentist.

•••

For additional reading, check out this 2014 article on [forbes.com](http://forbes.com) about other harmful toxins, titled “11 Toxic Chemicals Affecting Brain Development In Children” [www.forbes.com/sites/alicegwalton/2014/02/15/11-toxic-chemicals-affecting-brain-development-in-children/#75c4001e79e3](http://www.forbes.com/sites/alicegwalton/2014/02/15/11-toxic-chemicals-affecting-brain-development-in-children/#75c4001e79e3).

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# Go places

## Discover museum family programs for winter break

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

**T**he New York City public school mid-winter break is fast approaching. If you are looking for ideas on how to fill those days without leaving town, then consider spending time at the city's acclaimed museums, where your children can experience art, history, and have a bit of fun.

A little-known fact is that many museums offer family programming tailored to kids, such as art classes, performances, or special tours. During your next visit to any museum, ask if it offers a family guide, booklet, or pamphlet. Also, keep an eye out for touch carts or teaching carts in the galleries. For example, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum has a Family Activity Kiosk where families can request a pack of materials to help navigate the exhibits throughout the space.

Some museums also offer designated spaces for children's exploration of the arts or content on display. From digging for dinosaurs in the Discovery Room at the American Museum of Natural History to drawing in the Uris Education Center at the Metropolitan Museum of Art to building sculptures in the Art Lab at the Museum of Modern Art, families can bring their children to not only see what is on display, but discover it in a multimodal way. All of these spaces are run by trained educators familiar with the content and child development, ensuring your child is engaged and learning.

Need more help figuring out which museums to visit and exhibits to see? Here's a list of 15 museums and their best family-friendly attractions for this exhibition cycle:

### **American Museum of Natural History**

*Central Park West and 79th Street on the Upper West Side, [www.amnh.org](http://www.amnh.org)*

**Suggested exhibit:** Cuba! is a vibrant exhibit that offers various pockets of information on the country. From food to sports to nature, your children will enjoy this interactive exhibit that runs through

Aug. 13. The museum also offers an expansive permanent collection and Discovery Room for children.

### **Brooklyn Museum**

*200 Eastern Pkwy in Prospect Heights, [www.brooklynmuseum.org](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org)*

**Suggested exhibit:** Offering a large permanent collection and a full calendar of public and family programs, the museum stays buzzing. Currently on display, Beverly Buchanan — Ruins and Rituals (closing March 5) has around 200 objects on display, including sculpture, painting, photography, drawing, and notebooks of the artist. Take advantage of Creativity Lab drop-in class the first Sunday of the month.

### **Bronx Museum**

*1040 Grand Concourse in Concourse, [www.bronxmuseum.org](http://www.bronxmuseum.org)*

**Suggested exhibit:** The museum offers a vast permanent collection and various temporary exhibits. For teens, consider *The Neighbors, Part Two*, in *Two Parts: Sanctuary: Andrea Bowers and Home: Andrea Aragón*, which addresses immigration through the work of American artist Bowers and Guatemalan photographer Aragón and closes Feb. 12. Also, take a look at the events calendar to register for Family Affair, a hands-on workshop provided on select Saturdays.

### **Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum**

*2 E. 91st St. in Carnegie Hill, [www.cooper-hewitt.org](http://www.cooper-hewitt.org)*

**Suggested exhibit:** Teens may like the current exhibit *Scraps: Fashion, Textiles and Creative Reuse*, an exhibit on sustainability and design, open through April 16. The museum also offers workshops for families, children and teens. Target Family Day(s) will be offered throughout the mid-winter break.

### **El Museo del Barrio**

*1230 Fifth Ave. in East Harlem, [www.elmuseo.org](http://www.elmuseo.org)*

*elmuseo.org*

**Suggested exhibit:** Teens may enjoy Rotative Repository of Latin American Video Art: *Mono Cana*, which is a collection of works by video artists, on display through April 30. ArtExplorer Activity Cards are available for families and mark the third Saturday of the month for "Super Sabado!" which includes performance, storytelling, and art making.

### **The Jewish Museum**

*1109 Fifth Ave. in Carnegie Hill, <http://the-jewishmuseum.org>*

**Suggested exhibit:** Families will enjoy programming offered for various ages. Currently on view is *Masterpieces and Curiosities: Memphis does Hanukkah*, an exhibition of objects closing Feb. 12. Remember, Sundays are for families at this museum. Kids can participate in hands-on activities.

### **Long Island Museum**

*1200 Route 25A in Stony Brook, NY, [www.longislandmuseum.org](http://www.longislandmuseum.org)*

**Suggested exhibit:** Opening on Feb. 24, *Colors of Long Island* is an exhibit that showcases student work. Check the calendar for Drop-In Days for families, and you can join a Museum Educator for art making and other activities.

### **The Metropolitan Museum of Art**

*1000 Fifth Ave. on the Upper East Side, [www.metmuseum.com](http://www.metmuseum.com)*

**Suggested exhibit:** The expansive permanent collection takes more than one hour to cover everything that you would need to see, especially since the admission includes entry to the Met Breuer, as well as the Cloisters. A current exhibition that may interest young artists and art lovers is the *Velazquez Portraits: Truth in Painting* which includes several riveting portraits of 16th-century children. This exhibit is on display until March 12. Don't forget to ask for information for families and stop by the



Scenes from the American Museum of Natural History. There's plenty for families to see at the city's museums this winter break.

Uris Education Center.

### **Museum of the City of New York**

1220 Fifth Ave. in East Harlem, [www.mcny.org](http://www.mcny.org)

**Suggested exhibit:** Through April 23, the architecture buff in your family may enjoy the exhibit *Mastering the Metropolis: New York and Zoning 1916–2016* which showcases the formation of the city's neighborhoods. Kids may also like watching "Timescapes," a 28-minute film of the history of New York. Check the calendar for family-friendly workshops.

### **Museum of Modern Art**

11 W. 53rd St. in Midtown, [www.moma.org](http://www.moma.org)

**Suggested exhibit:** The extensive permanent collection of the MoMA is enough to fill your day, and a visit to the family-friendly interactive space will make your child's day. Teens may like the current exhibition *Francis Picabia: Our Heads Are Round so Our Thoughts Can Change Direction*, which is open through March 19.

### **New York Historical Society**

170 Central Park West on the Upper West Side, [www.nyhistory.org](http://www.nyhistory.org)

**Suggested exhibit:** The DiMenna Children's Museum, housed in the lower level, is a can't miss for families. However, kids and grownups alike will be intrigued by the two Muhammad Ali exhibits currently on display on floor 2. Muhammad Ali, LeRoy Neiman and the Art of Boxing showcase watercolor portraits of the historical

figure. "I Am King of the World: Photographs of Mohammad Ali by George Kalinsky" showcases the famed boxer from his youth to late adulthood, and is open through March 26.

### **Queens Museum**

NYC Bldg – Flushing Meadows Corona Park in Flushing, [www.queensmuseum.org](http://www.queensmuseum.org)

**Suggested exhibit:** The panorama of the New York City skyline is a favorite for kids and adults alike. Currently on view through Feb. 19 is *Mierle Laderman Ukeles: Maintenance Art*, an exhibit that includes 50 years of the artist's portraits and multimedia works that document the indispensable workers and city agencies that keep our city clean and running smoothly. The exhibit closes Feb. 19. If visiting on a Sunday, families can participate in drop-in art workshops.

### **Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum**

1071 Fifth Ave. on the Upper East Side, [www.guggenheim.org](http://www.guggenheim.org)

**Suggested exhibit:** *Visionaries: Creating a Modern Guggenheim* is an exhibit that includes works from artists Vasily Kandinsky and Hilla Rebay. It opens Feb. 10. Just a few weeks later, *Jackson Pollack: Exploring Alchemy*, opens on March 1, and will offer video footage and interactive kiosks related to the famed artist. Don't forget to request a family pack!

### **Staten Island Museum**

1000 Richmond Terrace – Snug Harbor

*Campus, Building H, in Snug Harbor, www.statenislandmuseum.org*

**Suggested exhibit:** *Of Human Feelings: Portraits by Warren Lyons* is a powerful series of paintings of figures from American history and the arts, opening Feb. 18. The exhibit features portraits of Frederick Douglass, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Sojourner Truth. The museum offers family workshops on the first Saturday of the month.

### **Whitney Museum**

99 Gansevoort St. in the Meatpacking District, <http://whitney.org>

**Suggested exhibit:** The Whitney's permanent collection offers opportunities for families to request a copy of the Family Guide to aid children's exploration and interaction with the works on display. Current exhibits will have staggered closings throughout February and the Biennial show opens in March. Keep an eye out for family weekend activities led by educators and artists.

Please remember that stroller policies vary from museum to museum. If applicable, check museum websites to research services for visitors with disabilities or special needs. Contact the museums you plan to visit to arrange access accommodations.

*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.*

# Calendar

FEBRUARY



## Setting the stage ablaze

The stage is ablaze with “Winter Blaze” at the Herp Albert Center on Feb. 4 and 5. The dance concert is presented by the Harlem School of the Arts Dance Ensemble and hosted by Shahadi Wright Joseph. It features the ensemble and junior ensemble students.

“Winter Blaze,” Feb. 4 at 7 pm and Feb. 5 at 3 pm. Tickets are \$25 for adults, and \$15 students and seniors.

*The Herb Alpert Center (645 St. Nicholas Ave. in Harlem, [www.hanyc.org](http://www.hanyc.org)).*

Christine Butler

## 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, FEB. 1

#### IN THE BRONX

**Toddler time:** Kingsbridge Library, 291 W. 231st St.; (718) 548-5656; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 11 am; Free.

Stories, songs, fingerplays, and puppets for toddlers 18 to 36 months with parent or caregiver.

**First Wednesdays Bronx Culture Trolley:** Bronx Council on the Arts, 450 Grand Concourse; [www.bronxarts.org](http://www.bronxarts.org); 5 pm to 8:30 pm; Free.

Hop on the trolley and enjoy attractions at some of the hottest cultural spots along the lower Grand Concourse. Trolley riders meet at Hostos Community College on the first Wednesday of each month. For trolley reservations and information, call (718) 931-9500 X 33 or e-mail [trolley@bronxarts.org](mailto:trolley@bronxarts.org). The First Wednesdays Bronx Culture Trolley is a free activity of the Bronx Council on the Arts.

### THURS, FEB. 2

#### IN THE BRONX

**Story Time:** Kingsbridge Library, 291 W. 231st St.; (718) 548-5656; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 10:30 am; Free.

Stories, songs, fingerplays, and puppets for children birth through 18 months with parent or caregiver.

### SAT, FEB. 4

#### 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.

Hear about the folklore surrounding two wonderfully mysterious and enchanting creatures, the owl and the coyote. Learn about these local animals and their habits and special attributes. Then, join visiting Wave Hill Winter Workspace artist Yeon Jin Kim to create a fanciful wintery tableau of simple paper puppets and shadowy scenes that capture your own make-believe owl and coyote mythology.

**Coyote nature walk:** Wave Hill, W.



## A musical of Dr. Seuss

The fantastic imaginations of Dr. Seuss comes alive in "Seussical Jr." at the Bronx House on Feb. 24, 25, 26, 27, and March 3, 4, and 5.

In collaboration with the Riverdale Children's Theater, Bronx House presents this fun musical where Dr. Seuss's fantasies come to life on stage.

The production, featuring more than 30 child actors, centers on Horton the Elephant who must guard an egg abandoned by Mayzie La Bird while trying to protect his friend JoJo,

a Who from Whoville.

The show's heartwarming message is about family, friendship, and loyalty.

Recommended for families with children 3 years and older.

"Seussical Jr.," Feb. 24, 25, 26, 27, March 3, 4, 5. Show times are Fridays 7 pm, Saturdays 2 pm and 7 pm, and Sundays 2 pm. All seats \$10.

*Bronx House Auditorium [990 Pelham Parkway South in Riverdale, (718) 792-1800; [www.bronxhouse.org](http://www.bronxhouse.org)].*

249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org); 11 am to noon; Free with admission to the grounds.

Coyotes are resilient creatures that have settled quite comfortably into the wilder areas of New York City. Dr. Mark Weckel of the American Museum of Natural History and his team of high school student-scientists have been gathering information about these clever canines as part of the Gotham Coyote Project. Find out where our local coyotes live, what they eat, and how they coexist with humans in one of the most densely populated areas of the country. Ages 12 and older welcome with an adult.

**Owls:** Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org); 11 am to 1 pm; Free with admission to the grounds.

Owls swallow their prey whole. During digestion, parts of the prey, such as bones, feathers, and fur, are bound up into a tight pellet, which the owl regurgitates. Drop in for this exploratory workshop, and discover the origins of the owl's diet. Ages 8 and older are welcome with an adult.

**Read Aloud:** Kingsbridge Library, 291 W. 231st St.; (718) 548-5656; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 1 pm; Free.

Read Aloud with The Rotary Club of Riverdale for child with parent or caregiver.

#### FURTHER AFIELD

**"Winter Blaze":** The Herb Alpert Center, 645 St. Nicholas Ave., Manhattan; [www.hanyc.org](http://www.hanyc.org); 7 pm; \$25 (\$15 students and seniors).

The dance concert is presented by the Harlem School of the Arts Dance Ensemble — featuring the ensemble and junior ensemble students and hosted by Shahadi Wright Joseph.

### SUN, FEB. 5

#### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am to 1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Feb. 4.

**Owls:** 11 am to 1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Feb. 4.

**Coyote nature walk:** 11 am to noon. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Feb. 4.

# Calendar

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

## FURTHER AFIELD

**"Winter Blaze":** 3 pm. The Herb Alpert Center. See Saturday, Feb. 4.

## TUES, FEB. 7

### IN THE BRONX

**Scratch coding club:** Kingsbridge Library, 291 W. 231st St.; (718) 548-5656; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

Design and animate your own story with Scratch! Coders of all skill levels are welcome to drop in to our coding club. Laptops are limited so registration is required. For ages 5-12.

## WED, FEB. 8

### IN THE BRONX

**Toddler time:** 11 am. Kingsbridge Library. See Wednesday, Feb. 1.

**Five senses:** Kingsbridge Library, 291 W. 231st St.; (718) 548-5656; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

Get ready for some ooey goeey family fun in the new five-session workshop, offered at 30 library locations! A family program designed for preschool children and their caregivers, these sessions will be a hands-on exploration of the five senses hearing, touch, smell, taste and sight. Space is capped at 12 children, so please register in advance at the library.

## THURS, FEB. 9

### IN THE BRONX

**Story Time:** 10:30 am. Kingsbridge Library. See Thursday, Feb. 2.

## SAT, FEB. 11

### 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.

Layer an abundance of hearts in circular formations to create joyful and rapturous flowery cards and gifts. Today, we also give some love to the majestic manatees. With their populations at record lows, these wonderful "sea cows" need our support. Hear touching tales about these marine creatures and make a stuffed-manatee valentine gift or card. Valentine's weekend event.

## SUN, FEB. 12

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am to 1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Feb. 11.

**Victorian Valentine Workshop:** Bartow-Pell Mansion Museum, 895 Shore Rd.; (718) 885-1461; [www.bartowpellmansion-museum.org](http://www.bartowpellmansion-museum.org); 11 am to 12:30 pm; \$10 (\$8

members).

Show that you care — not with a boring store-bought card but with a handmade, full-of-charm, sure-to-woo original creation. Learn about the history of valentines and the printed "scraps" used to make them in the 19th century while you craft your own memorable card. A fun workshop for the whole family. Registration required.

**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.

Join naturalist and educator Gabriel Willow on a family-friendly walk through the gardens or woodlands. Ages 6 and older welcome with an adult. Severe weather cancels.

## MON, FEB. 13

### IN THE BRONX

**Craft day:** Kingsbridge Library, 291 W. 231st St.; (718) 548-5656; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

Valentine's Day crafts for children 5 to 12 years old.

## TUES, FEB. 14

### IN THE BRONX

**Scratch coding club:** 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library. See Tuesday, Feb. 7.

## WED, FEB. 15

### IN THE BRONX

**Toddler time:** 11 am. Kingsbridge Library. See Wednesday, Feb. 1.

**Five senses:** 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library. See Wednesday, Feb. 8.

## SAT, FEB. 18

### 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.

Gain inspiration from the Pacific Northwest Indians, who used fallen trees to create totem poles detailing the history of family and tribe members. Using colorful paper and vibrant, bold designs, we'll sculpt the characters around us, and then step into a "photo booth" to make an interactive family totem.

**Youth job internship:** Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd. at Boston Road; (718) 220-5103; [www.bronxzoo.com](http://www.bronxzoo.com); 11 am to 4 pm; Free.

Good news! The Wildlife Conservation Society Youth Advisory Council will host the very first WCS Youth Job, Internship, and Volunteer Expo. If you're between the ages of 14 and 24, join us in Schiff Family Hall Youth to learn about the vari-

ety of paid and unpaid positions available throughout WCS this season. We'll also provide skill-building workshops focused on resume building, interview tips, and careers in conservation.

**Culinary Kids Weekend:** New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Blvd. at Fordham Road; (718) 817-8700; [www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org); 11 am to 3 pm; Free wit garden admission.

Celebrate the relationship between plants and your favorite foods with culinary programming, hands-on activities, and plenty of tastings. Enjoy a kid-friendly cooking demonstration every day at 1 pm.

## SUN, FEB. 19

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am to 1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Feb. 18.

**Culinary Kids Weekend:** 11 am to 3 pm. New York Botanical Garden. See Saturday, Feb. 18.

## MON, FEB. 20

### IN THE BRONX

**Culinary Kids Weekend:** 11 am to 3 pm. New York Botanical Garden. See Saturday, Feb. 18.

**Kids Week – Orienteering:** Pelham Bay Ranger Station, Pelham Bay Park, Bruckner Boulevard and Wilkinson Avenue; (718) 885-3467; [www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers](http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers); 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

The Urban Park Rangers will teach you how to navigate to hidden objects placed around the park using a map and compass.

## TUES, FEB. 21

### IN THE BRONX

**Kids Week – Nature Exploration:** Van Cortlandt Nature Center, W. 246th St. at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; [www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers](http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers); 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

The natural world is the best playground in New York City. Join the Urban Park Rangers on a hike through the wonders of Van Cortlandt Park.

**Vacation week:** Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org); 1:30 pm to 3 pm; \$25 (\$15 members).

Winter snow softens the shapes of the outside world and adorns trees and buildings with delicate flakes and icicles. Drawing inspiration from the shimmering winter weather, weave a tapestry of soft yarn, puffy snowball pompoms, and crystalline beads, and hang it from a found twig to evoke the textures of a snowy day. This program is geared towards families with children between the ages of 5 and 10. Space is limited. Registration required.

# Calendar

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

## WED, FEB. 22

### IN THE BRONX

**Toddler time:** 11 am. Kingsbridge Library. See Wednesday, Feb. 1.

**Kids week – Birds of Prey:** Crotona Nature Center, Charlotte Street and Crotona Park East; (718) 378-2061; [www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers](http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers); 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Red-tailed hawks are the dominant raptors in New York City. The Urban Park Rangers will show you a fantastic example of an active red-tail nest and discuss the life cycles and habits of these urban predators. Binoculars will be distributed to better view these majestic animals.

**Vacation week:** Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org); 1:30 to 3 pm; \$25 (\$15 members).

Sculpt a soft, wintry creature of your own imagining with fleecy fibers, warm water, and soap. Then add beads, baubles, and natural materials to embellish your cool creation. For families with children ages 5 to 10. Space is limited. Registration required.

**Five senses:** 4 pm. Kingsbridge Library. See Wednesday, Feb. 8.

## THURS, FEB. 23

### IN THE BRONX

**Kids Week – Urban exploration:** Pelham Bay Ranger Station, Pelham Bay Park, Bruckner Boulevard and Wilkinson Avenue; (718) 885-3467; [www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers](http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers); 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Pelham Bay is the largest park in New York City. Explore the areas where Native American settlements existed centuries before our great city existed. Walk through one of the most bio-diverse forests in NYC, including the majestic 450-year-old “Granny Oak.”

**Vacation week:** Wave Hill, W. 249th Street and Independence Avenue; (718) 549-3200; [www.wavehill.org](http://www.wavehill.org); 1:30 to 3 pm; \$25 (\$15 members).

Memorialize your favorite winter scene in a 3-D painting using an icy palette and layers of acetate sheets to give your scene depth. Finish your work with a sparkly, snowy frame. For families with children ages 5 to 10. Space is limited. Registration required.

**Pajama night:** Kingsbridge Library, 291 W. 231st St.; (718) 548-5656; [www.nypl.org](http://www.nypl.org); 4 pm; Free.

Read aloud, crafts, and light refreshments for children 4-12 years old.

## FRI, FEB. 24

### IN THE BRONX

**Kids week – Winter Scavenger Hunt:** Van Cortlandt Nature Center, W. 246th

Street at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; [www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers](http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers); 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Winter season is unpredictable, but animals and plants adapt to the changes. Let's find some of these adaptations on a scavenger hunt through the trails in the park.

**“Seussical Jr.”:** Bronx House Auditorium, 990 Pelham Parkway South; (718) 792-1800; [www.bronxhouse.org](http://www.bronxhouse.org); 7 pm; \$10.

In collaboration with the Riverdale Children's Theater, Bronx House presents this fun musical where Dr. Seuss's fantasies come to life on stage. Selections include “Horton Hears a Who.” The play includes a cast of more than 30 children. Recommended for families with children 3 years and older.

## SAT, FEB. 25

### 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.

Join visiting artists Adam Frezza and Terri Chiao, past participants in Wave Hill's Sunroom Project Space, on a visit to Wave Hill's Cactus and Succulent House. Sketch these exotic desert dwellers, then, using papier-mâché, bendable wire, paint and paper, make an exotic paper plant of your own.

**Fire skills:** Van Cortlandt Nature Center, W. 246th Street at Broadway; (718) 548-0912; [www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers](http://www.nyc.gov/parks/rangers); 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Urban rangers teach participants primitive and modern ways to make fire safely and responsibly while exploring the outdoors. For tweens and teens.

**“Seussical Jr.”:** 2 pm and 7 pm. Bronx House Auditorium. See Friday, Feb. 24.

## SUN, FEB. 26

### IN THE BRONX

**Family Art project:** 10 am to 1 pm. Wave Hill. See Saturday, Feb. 25.

**She's On Point:** West Bronx Recreation Center, 1527 Jessup Ave. and W. 172nd Street; 11 am to 3 pm; Free.

Join NYC Parks for a celebration of girls and women in sports. Sports demonstrations, and clinics for girls and women to participate in. All ages welcome.

**“Seussical Jr.”:** 2 pm to 3:30 pm. Bronx House Auditorium. See Friday, Feb. 24.

## LONG-RUNNING

### IN THE BRONX

**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, Now – Wed, March 29; Free.

Have fun creating cute items out of recy-

clered materials. Suitable for all ages.

**Creative 3D Arts:** Poe Park Visitor Center, 2640 Grand Concourse; (718) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Thursdays, 2:30 to 4:30 pm, Now – Thurs, March 30; 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.

**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, Now – 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) 365-5516; [www.nycgovparks.org](http://www.nycgovparks.org); Saturdays, 2-3:30 pm, Now – Sat, March 25; Free.

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

**The Orchid Show – Thailand:** 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 6 pm, Sat, Feb. 18 – Sun, April 9; \$20 (\$8 children).

The show features thousands of orchids in a classic Thai garden setting. The grand centerpiece of the design will be the façade of a sala, a traditional pavilion used for shade and relaxation, with a signature sweeping gabled roofline festooned with exquisite orchids.

### FURTHER AFIELD

**Wonders of the Arctic:** American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at W. 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769-5200; [tcoppens@amnh.org](mailto:tcoppens@amnh.org); [www.amnh.org](http://www.amnh.org); Daily, 10:30 am; Now – Thurs, March 2; \$27 (adults), \$22 (students/seniors), \$16 (children); Member discount: \$13.50 adults; \$8.50 children; Free for Voyager-level members and above.

This exhibit tells the story of survival in one of the most unforgiving environments on earth. Through compelling stories told by scientists and Inuit leaders, viewers will discover the impact of ice on the Arctic's inhabitants, both animals and humans.

**“Sesame Street Live”:** The Theater at Madison Square Garden, 4 Pennsylvania Plaza, Manhattan; (212) 465-6741; [www.box-officetickets.com/madison/newyork](http://www.box-officetickets.com/madison/newyork); Thursdays – Mondays, call for times, Thurs, Feb. 16 – Sun, Feb. 26; \$15-\$147.

Celebrate the universal joy of friendship in this fun-filled, interactive live stage show! Sing and dance along with your favorite characters — Elmo, Grover, Abby Cadabby, and Big Bird — as they welcome Chamki, Grover's friend from India, to Sesame Street.



# Go to sleep!

## Tips to shorten your nightly routine

**Y**ou've heard all the standard bedtime behavior strategies: keep walking your child back into bed or let him cry it out. When your child was in a crib, these strategies might have worked, but for your kiddo in a toddler bed, they are useless.

You dread bedtime, not only because the process takes more than 75 minutes, but also because once you say “good-night” and walk out the door, you know it is not the last time you are going to see your small one. In less than five minutes, your child will be in the doorway of your kitchen where you are frantically trying to have dinner while catching up on work e-mails that piled up while you were in the middle of an insanely long bedtime routine.

There's a way out of this mess.

The first step to change any behavior is to handle the most extreme parts first. You want to immediately reduce the yelling, screaming, crying, and fighting. The best way to get rid of these problem behaviors is to preemptively deal with what causes your child to lose control. This could be demanding a glass of water, an extra story, an extra bathroom trip, or an extra five minutes with you. Make sure you give him

all of these, preferably before he asks.

The bedtime routine will still take a long time at this point — but that's okay. The trick is to make all bedtime tasks streamlined and predictable.

Now that the small being knows what to expect, you can start shortening the routine by removing one element at a time. You could, for example, remove the extra book and only read what you say you are going to read. It is important that you only take out one element at a time. If you do too many at once, it won't work.

If you find yourself trapped in the bedroom, waiting for your small one to fall asleep, it is now time to change the routine so you can get out fast. Again, you want to take small steps. Let's say that your small being asks you to lie down next to him while he falls asleep. Your first step would be lying down but not touching his body, or sitting up in his bed. Once you can do that for five or six days in a row without any pushback from your small being, then start sitting on the floor right next to the bed as he falls asleep. Then you might want to move to a chair. Each move gets you closer and eventually outside the door.

Creating an ideal bedtime routine is a



## BEHAVIOR & BEYOND

DR. MARCIE BEIGEL

slow process that will take time, but once it is in place, you will have a short and efficient bedtime ritual for the entirety of that child's time with you. The extra time up front is minimal compared to that long-term reward!

If you're ready for more proven behavior tips and strategies for a better bedtime, check out the Better Bedtime program here: [www.behaviorandbeyond.net/bedtime-package](http://www.behaviorandbeyond.net/bedtime-package).

*Dr. Marcie is a behavior specialist based in Brooklyn. She has worked with thousands of families for more than 20 years and has condensed her observations into her private practice and online programs. Her book “Love Your Classroom Again” was a bestseller. You may have seen her as a guest expert on WCBS and Fox.*



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