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Letter from the publisher

A parent for always

Someone recently remarked to me that when they think of parents, they think of someone with little kids, not pre-teens, or teens, or young adults. I disagree. I think being a parent is for always, and in fact, gets more challenging and often more interesting as the years go by.

Sometimes there is role reversal and that's a part of it too. When one is very old the roles can shift and the caregiver of yesterday is the now the needy recipient of today's loving care. I've been thinking a lot about the economics of our time and the reemergence, often due to necessity, of the multi-generational houses; something more reminiscent of the



40's or 50's than more recent decades.

Society now experiences the dilemma of young people, fresh out of college, heavily loaded with student loan debt and no jobs to be had. Many are opting to live at home with

parents rather than take on extra burdens of household overhead. Many have no choice. The jobs they trained for aren't hiring and the jobs they can get are not paying enough to support independent living.

Then there is the phenomenon of even older adults, mature aged men and women who have lost their jobs, homes and self-esteem, who are moving in with very aged and mature parents who probably thought

their days of living with their kids were far behind them. It's a new phenomenon, or rather, an old one. Kids used to stay at home until they got married and even then, in many cultures, after being married, still went on living with other members of an extended family, maybe bachelor uncles, or unmarried aunts, and in-laws.

I grew up with a large extended family all living together. For me, it was normal, and mine was not the only house like that. There were many others. This was when marriage came earlier in the life cycle than it does now and was prior to the welcome liberation of women and women's rights to equal education and equal job opportunities, all of which has largely changed the landscape.

I'm happy my daughter is still at

home living with me. There are times I'm not happy, but for the most part, I cherish the days she is still there close by for me to enjoy, observe, and experience. This morning, I went to her room to see if she was awake, and she looked just like the little girl she used to be. She yawned and that yawn was the same yawn that newborn baby had 20 years ago. We change, but we are always the same. We are always ourselves, and our children are always our children no matter how tall they get, or how powerful. The responsibility and joy is always there.

Thanks for reading. Happy New Year!

Susan Weiss-Voskidis, Publisher

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Seen and not heard?

Managing toddler etiquette in public

BY RISA C. DOHERTY

When my children were toddlers and elderly neighbors would greet us in the elevator, my son would confidently answer “hello” with a smile. My daughter was the one who would grab onto me before responding timidly. Granted, some children are more reserved, but I always thought it was important that my children knew how to interact socially at a young age. Little did I realize that the skills I was teaching them, starting at the age of 2, would be invaluable life tools.

Children often follow a parent’s lead. Savvy parents are aware of that, and as they greet neighbors, relatives or friends, they model this skill for uninitiated toddlers. Still, not all toddlers are willing to conform. When a child hesitates to greet someone she knows, I give more credit to the parent who tries desperately to goad the recalcitrant child into responding civilly than to the parent who cavalierly gives up and accepts the child’s refusal to respond, quickly dismissing the child’s silence with an excuse.

Once these children are old enough to walk around unaccompanied, they are often the ones who stare at you blankly when you greet them in passing, knowing full well who you are.

Lyudmila Bloch, international etiquette expert and author of “The Golden Rules of Etiquette at The Plaza,” is not accepting of parental apologies. She believes that toddlers should be capable of a civil greeting, despite their parents’ claims that the child is tired, in a bad mood, or painfully shy. She told me that it is a matter of “self-regulation,” and that even a very shy child can overcome his shyness.

She does not believe that it is ever the child’s fault for failing to respond

to a greeting, stating that “the parents are 100 percent responsible for their child’s behavior: there are no ‘bad children.’”

Helayne Cohen, director of the Early Childhood Center at Temple Beth Sholom in Roslyn Heights, Long Island, holds a master’s degree in Early Childhood Leadership and Advocacy, and takes issue with the word “shy” to describe a 2 year old, questioning whether or not a 2 year old can actually be shy. She believes that it is “a matter of temperament” and that “sometimes the parents need to wait a little.” Still, she says she would encourage parents to model proper behavior for their child, be aware that “there is a readiness factor,” and work with a child, once he is ready.

“[Learning] proper manners starts at home,” she says. She agrees that teaching young children how to properly interact in social situations is an important and valuable life skill, and that even 2 year olds can learn to properly greet others. “[They] are so impressionable, [and can often learn this skill] if the directions are stated [simply], using a two word command.”

Restaurant manners

When my relatives came to New York with their young child, they were wary about heading into a restaurant, lest their active son disturb others. Unfortunately, this awareness and consideration for others is not shared by all parents. I assured my cousins that I would select a family-friendly venue, and my insightful cousin knew to bring small toys as a distraction for her son. It is important to know your child and know how long he can remain somewhat subdued in a public setting.

That is not to say that young children need to remain totally silent in public at all times. A friend of mine used to comment the moment a young child let out a yelp in public, as if the parents should have been incarcerated immediately for permitting any noise. That friend had long forgotten what it was like to be the parent of a young child.

Still, many diners can probably recall the not-unfamiliar sight of parents engrossed in adult conversation while their toddlers continue to scream at an unbelievably high decibel level. Some mothers seem so desperate to engage in adult conversation that they tune out their children, as they are tired of being interrupted, and crave adult socialization. At the same time, their children are desperately vying for their attention and creating an unpleasant dining experience for everyone else.

Both Bloch and Cohen stress the importance of preparing children for a restaurant experience. This may involve working with your child so that he is ready for the experience.

“[Young children] cannot share a public space if you did not teach them about [proper] behavior,” explains Bloch. She recommends doing a rehearsal at home, purchasing little utensils and seating your child at a small table where he can eat and rehearse good table manners. As the child progresses, he can practice at the big table with adults.

Bloch reminds parents to praise the child as he learns to hold and use each utensil properly and manage his cup and napkin. The teachers in



Cohen's Early Childhood Center have the children practice using "restaurant voices" when they eat lunch at school. She tells me that a lot of positive modeling takes place in preschool, as well.

Bloch points out that the parent's physical proximity to the toddler in the restaurant is key and that preparedness includes providing diversions to keep your toddler "as busy as possible." Cohen advises parents to bring "an arsenal of stuff."

I, personally, always went to restaurants with a bag full of surprises, from a tabletop puppet stage with a wide array of puppets, to a small, snap-together train track, and a wind-up plastic train.

Of course, experts agree that if all else fails, and the child's behavior continues to be disruptive to other diners, then the parent needs to remove the child from the environment.

Shopping etiquette

Young children have always demanded instant gratification. Stores provide them with lots of stimulation, and they are often vocal about things they want. Many parents prefer not to disappoint their little darling by saying "no," so they appease their demands and rip open everything from

Hot Wheels to Cheez Doodles, leaving food remnants and toy parts in their wake on the way to the register.

Not only does Bloch warn that opening merchandise before paying is modeling poor behavior, but these parents are depriving their children of some critical skills. These children are not learning any coping skills, nor understanding that they sometimes need to wait. According to Bloch, these children are used to getting whatever they want, and as they get older, it becomes problematic when their demands are not immediately satisfied.

Even near the register, impulse items beckon the youngest shoppers. Cohen advises parents that use the opportunity to teach their young children about choices, instead of acquiescing to every plea, perhaps even causing the parent to buy something she would not otherwise buy. She also believes that parents should enter stores armed with small treats and toys, in case their toddler gets hungry or bored.

Life skills

Bloch told me that the social skills needed to properly interact with others and navigate the world are "taught in incremental steps from [age] 2 to 22." Basic skills, including coping skills and patience, taught by creating boundaries for young children, will serve these children well throughout their lives.

"Once [they] know the rules, [they] develop confidence and self-esteem," she adds. We are, in essence, empowering them by acquainting them with basic social conventions and fostering the creation of essential interpersonal communication skills.

Parenting requires a certain amount of work. Bloch says "[it's] all about effort" and insisting on good behavior. Although some children need more attention and guidance than others, a minimum amount of effort is necessary to teach them how to interact in our world. It is a parent's job to prepare them for eventual adulthood, and teach them proper manners and social skills from the time they are young, as an investment in their future.

Risa C. Doherty is an attorney and freelance writer. She was honored in 2011 with a Silver Investigative Reporting Award from Parenting Publications of America (now known as Parenting Media Association).



HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Want some cereal with your sugar?

How much sugar does your child eat on a daily basis? Would you ever let her have dessert for her first meal of the day? You may be doing just that, if you feed her certain cereals.

We all know that popular kids' cereals can be loaded with sugar. The words "frosted," "maple," and "honey" often tend to masquerade for sugar, sugar, sugar. So, many of us buy cereals that contain oats and bran, but that doesn't necessarily guarantee a healthy breakfast.

In fact, according to the Environmental Working Group, a nonprofit research and advocacy organization, the amount of sugar in most cereals nearly assures that your child might be eating the equivalent of a sugary dessert each morning.

When children eat cereal for breakfast, many are getting considerably more sugar than the daily-recommended amount. The American Heart Association recommends that children consume less than three teaspoons of sugar per day — which is much less than what is found in some single servings of these cereals.

"I was really surprised when I read the EWG report," says Jean Sanderson, a mom of three from Chelsea in Manhattan. "I think I am being very careful when I shop, and I learned that two of the cereals that I regularly buy are on the list. Ironically, every time my kids ask for a box of cookies, I say no, but then let them eat cereal. Who knew?"

The worst offenders are Kellogg's Honey Smacks, Post Golden Crisp, and General Mills Wheaties Fuel. Each contains approximately 20 grams of sugar (five teaspoons). This amount is actually more than one Hostess Twinkie. In addition, three Chips Ahoy cookies (11 grams) have less sugar than one serving of Honey Nut Cheerios (12 grams).

However, there is no need for parents to stop buying cereal altogether, because many good-tasting cereals



do meet federal guidelines for nutritional health. Among the top healthiest cereals are Kellogg's Mini-Wheats: Unfrosted Bite-Size, Frosted Big Bite, Frosted Bite-Size, Frosted Little Bite, General Mills Cheerios Original, and General Mills Kix Original.

Just remember, supermarkets know that kids will naturally gravitate toward the brightly colored sugary cereals, so they place those boxes on the lower shelves at just the right level to catch a child's eye. You just have to be one step ahead.

"Parents have to be investigative

and make sure that what their kids are eating is of good value, because the companies and stores certainly aren't doing it," says Sanderson.

To read the Environmental Working Group report in its entirety, visit www.ewg.org.

Danielle Sullivan, a Brooklyn-born mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for more than 10 years, and was recently honored with a Gold award for her health column by the Parenting Media Association. She also writes for Babble.com.

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Value of Catholic schools

Why parents choose this effective alternative

BY CANDI SPARKS

At a time when the New York City public school system is under so much criticism and revision, working families have found an alternative in the Catholic school system. These schools have historically been the ones to reach out to and support communities in need.

Years ago, hundreds of thousands of immigrants came to the New World to have a fresh start. They put in long hours at low-level jobs, striving for greater opportunity and a better life for their children. It was a financial sacrifice for these immigrants to send their children to Catholic schools, rather than through the public school system, but to them, it was well worth it.

The public schools in their working-class neighborhoods were largely overcrowded and not necessarily providing top-notch education. In order to be more assured that their children would be taught their values — including discipline, which was a rigorous part of their children's life at home — they decided to send their children through a parochial school system, even if it meant struggling to find the extra money to pay for it.

In the early days of the immigration wave, it was primarily Irish and Italian immigrants that sent their children to Catholic parochial schools. As the years went by and new immigrants came from more



countries and continents, the demographic shifted and one didn't necessarily have to be Catholic to choose this educational option. As a result, many Catholic schools throughout the city have continued as an integral part of our citywide school landscape.

Currently, Catholic schools serve more than 160 nationalities. With each wave of immigration — Hispanic, Asian, Slavic and many others — Catholic schools offer diversity. These schools are not just racially diverse; there is also religious diversity in the Catholic school system. In fact, non-Catholics comprise about one quarter of the student body.

"Catholic schools are not just meant for the faithful. We are here to grow faith by building community and reaching out to those in need," says Tom O'Brien, of the Brooklyn Diocese, which is involved in raising scholarship funds to help families offset tuition. "But not every Catholic school family is in great economic need. Our demographic is changing. We have seen an influx of middle income families who choose Catholic school because of the class size, excellence in education, and for a safer environment than what most par-

ents think the neighborhood public school would offer."

Patty, a public school teacher from the Bronx, sends her son Ronald to a Catholic elementary school.

"The environment stresses academics and doing the right thing," she says. "The teachers set high standards for the children. They are expected to do well and they rise to the occasion."

Many Catholic school students are the first ones in their families to graduate from college. In low-income neighborhoods, this means that the school is providing the lion's share of educational support for children who do not have access to private tutoring or help at home.

There is a 99 percent graduation rate for Catholic high schools, followed by a 97 percent college graduation rate for those who graduated Catholic high school. Compared to the 41 percent public high school graduation rate, Catholic school students have a better success rate. They are guided up the ladder of growth and achievement, making a real difference for present and future generations. Overall, Catholic school seems to outperform public school and is a viable, less-expensive sys-

tem of education in the private sector.

In fact, the only two private schools in New York State that were designated by the U.S. Department of Education as Blue Ribbon — a program that honors public and private elementary, middle, and high schools whose students achieve at very high levels, or schools that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap — in 2011 were both Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of New York. The honorees were St. Ignatius Loyola School on E. 84th Street in Manhattan and St. Ignatius on Mott Street in Manhattan. This year's honorees show the excellence in education and the diverse population served by Catholic schools. The incentives for getting a Catholic school education are different than what they used to be, and this is changing the demographics of Catholic school students.

"Families that don't have money don't usually have many choices. We needed to find a school with the right mix for Benny. He really wanted to play baseball. The only school that we could find to bridge the gap was a Catholic school. We are all very happy with the switch," says Elizabeth, a Brooklyn mother of two, who chose to send her son to a Catholic school with solid academics and a baseball program.

Likewise, Patty, of East Harlem, sends her daughter Amber to a bilingual Catholic school.

"My daughter goes to a school that gives her [education] in both languages," says Patty. "Sure, they speak the same languages in the public school around the corner, but it is unofficial. The public school does not have the same structure." Amber's Catholic school is also closely related to other parish activities and offers bilingual masses, events and service projects for the community. This makes the Catholic school a great way for Patty and Amber to meet people of similar backgrounds and build a community. Parochial schools celebrate the tradition of faith, family and community.

Unfortunately, keeping these schools open has become a challenge. The Catholic school sector is no different than any other, and closings have been publicized. In response, Catholic schools are researching and developing new educational business models. Some Catholic schools have closed their

doors, only to reopen as academies. For example, in South Ozone Park, the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary School and St. Stanislaus Bishop and Martyr School closed their doors, only to be succeeded by the Divine Mercy Catholic Academy. Because the school involves more than one parish, the school is called an academy to differentiate it from a single-parish school. Since 2005, the Brooklyn Diocese has opened many Catholic academies in Brooklyn and Queens.

The Brooklyn Diocese has also implemented the program "Preserving the Vision." The name means exactly what it says: preserving what has always been an integral part of Catholic life: the education of children. This vision includes developing schools that will be better able to meet the diverse and changing needs of students and parents, and providing competitive compensation and benefits to teachers and staff.

Even though two schools in the Archdiocese of New York have won the 2011 Blue Ribbon Award, the organization is still committed to improving. The Archdiocese has initiated the "Pathways to Excellence" program, aimed at professional development for principals, teachers and staff at schools that already do outstanding work. Because of the diverse population, there is still more than can be done to close the achievement gap. The program is aimed at raising standardized test scores and providing teachers with new classroom tools, such as the digital teaching program for fourth and fifth grade math, "Time to Know," which provides online learning, data collection and feedback for the school.

Personally, I am proud to share that my fondest childhood memories revolve around a humble beginning, in a humble neighborhood. My siblings and I attended a Catholic elementary school, Our Lady of Victory, for eight years. I am pleased that Catholic schools are committed to remaining vibrant institutions for generations to come.

Candi Sparks is the author of children's books about money including "Can I Have Some Money? Educating Children About Money," "Max Gets It!" and "Nacho Money." She is a Brooklyn mother of two and is on Facebook (Candi Sparks, author) and Twitter (Candi Sparks, author). Her website is www.candisparks.com.



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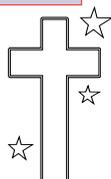
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A failing grade for nation's gifted education

Resources are in need of major improvement

BY NATASCHA M. SANTOS, MA, MS

The report card is out on the nation's gifted education classes, and it is not good. The National Association for Gifted Children published its annual State of the Nation in Gifted Education report for 2010-2011. Poignantly subtitled, "A Lack of Commitment to Talent Development," the data shows a lack of dedication and attention given to our nation's brightest students.

Accountability

- Gifted and talented programs are not monitored in 20 states.
- Fourteen states do not collect information on gifted and talented students.
- Fourteen states have reduced

their funding for gifted programs since the Association's previous report.

- While 12 states require districts to have administrators for gifted education, only four states require them to have gifted and talented certification.

Grade: Poor

Teacher Preparation

- Only six states require all teachers to receive pre-service training in gifted and talented education.
- Twenty-four states do not require credentials in gifted and talented education for teachers in these programs.
- Only five states require professional development for these teachers.

Grade: Poor

Summary: Gifted education in the United States is in need of

major improvement.

...

Research has shown that gifted programs are associated with a myriad of benefits. Students identified as gifted and talented adolescents who received services through the secondary level pursued doctoral degrees at more than 50 times the base rate expectations. (The base rate is only 1 percent for the general population, according to Lubinski, Webb, Morelock, & Benbow in their article for the Journal of Applied Psychology.) Further, gifted students' involvement in their interests, along with their creative productive work, continued well after college and graduate school, according to K.L. Westberg in the Association's Creativity and Curriculum Division Newsletter.

The United States Department of

The focus in our educational system has veered away from gifted education, in part, because the system is primarily focused on special education.

Education regarded it as a “quiet crisis,” and it is right in doing so. With so many cuts to school funding, it is understandable that administrators view some areas as more dispensable than others.

What isn't understandable, however, is the historical lack of accountability and funding given to gifted and talented education. The focus in our educational system has veered away from gifted education, in part, because the system is primarily focused on special education.

Federal legislation, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 mandates that special education services be given to all students with a disability at no cost to parents. While the act provides funds to state and local agencies for students with a disability, to date, there is no federal mandate for gifted education.

Giftedness is local. What does this mean? This means the definition of giftedness is highly idiosyncratic, and that along with funding, can be decided on at the state and local level. A student may be defined as gifted in one district or state and not another. In New York State, for example, information is not collected on gifted students and zero funding has been provided for gifted programs as far back as 2006. The identification of gifted students is not mandated nor is the provision of services for gifted and talented education. In other words, there is no legislation such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act that requires districts or schools to seek out and identify students who may be gifted and place them in gifted programs. Despite the lack of federal accountability, the NYC Department of Education does aim to identify and place students in gifted programs if they meet eligi-

bility requirements. While the city offers this, suburban schools, such as in Long Island, have fewer opportunities available. Parents may need to relocate or travel further to place their child in a district or school with a gifted program.

So, imagine the bell curve. Mainstream education targets the majority of students which fall within the bell. The left, outermost portion of the bell is two standard deviations below the mean. These are students who may require special education for reasons such as autism or learning disabilities, which is provided via the disabilities act.

What about those students that fall in the right, outermost portion of the bell? At two standard deviations above the mean, these are the exceptionally bright students. They are the future Steve Jobs and Bill Gates of the world. Would we have denied these now, ever so prominent figures enrichment opportunities if we knew of their potential? Probably not.

While it is of obvious importance to provide educational curricula for students who need additional support, we cannot forget about those who are exceptionally bright. In doing so, we may be letting the best and the brightest our nation has to offer get lost in the bell.

Parents interested in having their child tested can visit the New York City Department of Education website at <http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/GiftedandTalented/default.htm> for more information. Gifted and talented testing will take place between Jan. 3 and Feb. 10.

Natascha M. Santos is a certified, bilingual school psychologist finishing her doctoral dissertation on the disproportionality in gifted education. She has also been an adjunct instructor of psychology on Long Island for several years and a behavior therapist at the BioBehavioral Institute, where she specializes in the treatment of mood and anxiety disorders. Her blog is www.nataschasantos.com.

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Brooklyn Kids is a progressive early childhood education program in Park Slope, Brooklyn. We provide half-day and full-day pre-K programs. We believe that children learn by playing. Brooklyn Kids utilizes elements of Music, Theater, Dance, Art, Active Play, Gardening, and Healthy Cooking to teach Reading Readiness, Science and Math organically.

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Continued from page 18

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Learning from Asian-Americans

What can be learned from immigrant families about being better students — and educators

BY ALLISON PLITT

Asians have moved to the U.S. to own homes, enroll in American schools, and take jobs in the U.S. work force, and their presence is quiet and understated, yet competitive and high achieving. At impressively high rates, Asian students are entering gifted and talented classes in elementary schools and advanced placement classes in high schools. Many go on to attend Ivy League universities, receive advanced degrees, and easily find work at international companies that rely upon Asia for manufacturing needs, purchasing power and lending credit.

Clearly, Asian-Americans have a lot to be proud of and their fellow Americans — especially parents and educators — should take the time to get to know them and learn what they're doing right when it comes to the educational arena.

In 2009, students from 65 countries participated in an international standardized test for reading, math and science given by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Called the "Programme for International Student Assessment," the exam is given every three years to 15-year-olds in the leading industrialized nations to evaluate the knowledge they have acquired throughout their schooling.

When the test results were announced in December 2010, U.S. educators were shocked at the findings — students in Shanghai had the highest scores in all three categories, while the United States placed 17th in reading, 31st in math and 23rd in science.

Despite the high academic marks from Chinese schools and the robust economy in China, more Asians than ever are coming to the United States to live, study and work. As indicated by data from the 2010 U.S. census, Asians are the ethnic group with the largest population increase in the U.S. within the past decade. From 2000 to

2010, the population of Asians (which includes more than 20 different countries, including China, Japan, Korea, India, Pakistan and the Philippines) has grown 43.3 percent in the U.S. and now comprises 4.8 percent of the country's population.

One such Chinese immigrant is 29-year-old Ming, who was born, raised and educated in Shanghai. Brought up by parents who believed education would open doors to her future, Ming respects the values her family instilled in her.

"Because we were not very wealthy, I was told by my parents, 'Don't ever compete with others [over] shoes, the digital gadgets, the beautiful hair or whatever. Compare with that person your test score. Which college would you go to? Like, who laughs in the end?'"

Although her parents ingrained in Ming a competitiveness that gave her "that fire and desire," she doesn't regret the impact this mentality has had on her life.

"It can be very devastating for kids, but also it's very practical. It teaches us how to be competitive in the future in the work force," she said matter-of-factly. "If you look at the work force nowadays, Asians and Chinese are doing very well, and the reason they are doing very well is because they are very educated — most of them."

Ming moved to the U.S. two years ago with her American husband. At the time, she was teaching Chinese at an international school in Shanghai that was run by Americans. Although Ming and her husband both had good jobs there, they ultimately decided to move to New York City at the urging of her husband's family, who missed their only son. She is now a teacher at a New York City private school

Mastery of test-taking skills

Since Ming has been a teacher

and student in China and the U.S., she is familiar with the educational systems in both countries. According to Ming, Chinese students are well-versed in test taking, as it is what they have been taught to do since elementary school. She attributes Shanghai's high 2009 test scores to the Chinese educational focus on standardized tests.

In the U.S., however, there has been a recent backlash toward standardized testing after, in 2001, Congress passed the "No Child Left Behind Act," which requires all public schools to administer state-wide standardized tests. If the test scores are low at a particular school, it receives less federal funding than a higher-performing school. Consequently, many U.S. teachers and school administrators now feel they spend so much time preparing their students to take this test, there is less classroom time for students to engage in more creatively stimulating tasks.

"Taking [a standardized] test is a skill. It doesn't really necessarily test how smart you are, how innovative you are," Ming remarked. "It's a lot about your skills. Could you sit there for half an hour or concentrate for half an hour taking that test? We started getting that discipline when we were very young."

Ming believes so strongly in her current students' ability to pass standardized tests that she is now teaching a club at her school called "Test Prep."

"Many times, it's not really about the content," she noted. "I think if you give any American kid extra time, they can finish it. They can do a very good job, but they just can't do it in a testing setting — like in a classroom — quiet, taking the test by yourself, independent. [American students] just can't do that."

Within the past five years in New York City, there has been a proliferation of tutoring centers for math, reading and writing, such as E.nopi and Kumon, which are based on the Asian philosophy of repetitive exercise until a student achieves a perfect score and can advance to the next level.

Although E.nopi is a Korean company and Kumon is Japanese, Ming sees both instructional approaches as "very Chinese. It's just repetitive. You just do that within five minutes, within 10 minutes, just again, again,

Focus on Asia
PART 1



Illustration by Alina Ananyeva, 13, from Brooklyn

again, again. Just, practice makes perfect. It's based on that philosophy."

Respectful behavior in classroom

Ming, who is currently enrolled in a master's degree program in bilingual education, said that the main topic discussed in her classes is classroom management, which she believes is the most apparent difference between Chinese and American schools.

"We have to discourage [American students] from moving too much, and we have to sort of let them know that 'this is a class. We're not going to be talking about something that has nothing to do with what we're talking about,'" Ming said. "So I always tell the students like, 'You know, in China we have 70 kids or 60 kids in one class, and no one would talk back to an adult, let alone a teacher, just someone who is older than them.'"

While Ming thinks the U.S. students are too restless and outspoken in the classroom, she also feels that Chinese students are too reserved.

"Like, our side is too quiet. We have to encourage [the Chinese students] to answer questions, encourage them to be active, be moving around."

As an educator, Ming is always trying to find a compromise between Western and Eastern teaching philosophies.

"I feel like both are a little to the extremes," she reflected. "Like the Asians are always doing homework. [The Americans are] always on play-date. They should just come to the middle. The kids would benefit from it."

Ming ascribes the difference in the students' attitude to the level of respect teachers receive in China.

"In China, teachers make the same [amount of money] as a brain surgeon. We have the highest social status. We're the top of the food chain. Parents, faculty — everyone — respects you, because you're the educator. The same in Korea, the same in Japan, the same in many Asian countries."

On the other hand, Ming thinks Americans view teaching as a second option to other professions.

"I feel like, here, it's sort of like, 'I don't want to do other jobs.' I mean, for sure there are a lot of amazing, good teachers. There are so many, but I don't feel [U.S. teachers] are being respected by the society, and the unfortunate part of it is, parents don't show that respect, so they pass that to the kids," Ming stated. "When

Her parents told her, "Don't ever compete with others over shoes, the digital gadgets, the beautiful hair or whatever. Compare with that person your test score. Which college would you go to? Like, who laughs in the end?"

any student doesn't respect his teacher, how could they respect the content the teacher is teaching?"

Ming credits the respect teachers receive in China to their "very hierarch[ical] type of society."

"As long as that person is older, you need to show the respect... you should not be challenging that person even though, probably, you know whatever he's saying is wrong or is not truthful. You should find a private moment, not challenge him or her in public."

Importance of assertiveness

This tendency for Asians to be reticent and withholding in public has proved difficult for them in America, where citizens are more openly outspoken about their views. Ming describes the Chinese as being "not very confrontational," and when they are placed in compromising situations, she says they tend to internalize their feelings, instead of vocalizing them. When others recognize that Asians are less apt to express their grievances, Asians sometimes find themselves being taken advantage of.

For example, at the international school in Shanghai where Ming taught, the American administrators paid the French and Spanish teachers more than the Chinese teachers. Ming spoke of another instance when a Chinese teacher in the U.S. was given more work than her non-Asian co-workers, because her boss told her she was "highly qualified."

Why immigration boom

Ming thinks there are three moti-

vating factors for Chinese to immigrate to the United States, despite the booming economy back home. First, she thinks the Chinese have always felt themselves "inferior" to Americans and Europeans after many years of lagging behind the economies and technologies of the Westernized world.

Second, Ming says many Chinese are still very poor and have a glamorized view of the United States.

"Because of all these penetrating shows, movies, celebrities, beautiful people, it gives the poor country back in China this false image like, 'everything there is better than us. Health care is better than us. Education is better than us,' instead of thinking, 'maybe it's not for everyone.'"

Lastly, Ming thinks that the majority of the Chinese who immigrate to the United States are wealthy and view the United States as a place where they can safely put their money into banks without the fear that the communist Chinese government will take it away from them.

Noticing that many of these Chinese immigrants frequently return to China to visit their families, Ming thinks they don't see the U.S. as a "home," but simply a place to secure their assets and educate their children.

For her part, Ming wants to one day feel like she can call the U.S. her "home," yet there are times when she, as an Asian immigrant, senses she is being excluded from the culture around her.

"I want to be more included. I notice in many work places or schools, you tend to see Asian kids together, you tend to see Chinese kids together, Chinese co-workers together," observed Ming. "For example, like the [American] co-workers, when they're having lunch, they close the door. Maybe they have four or five in there, and they would never say, 'You want to come and join us?' And we're not going to knock on the door, because you already closed the door."

Allison Plitt is a contributing writer for New York Parenting Media and a mother living in Queens with a 5-year-old daughter. If you have any ideas you would like to share with her about topics for articles or resources for families, please feel free to contact her at allisonplitt@hotmail.com.

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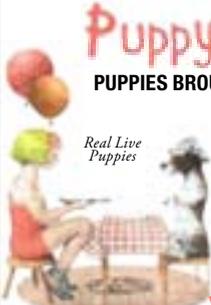


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Living better with winter asthma

My daughter suffers from asthma, and each year it is worse in the winter. She gets sick often and has trouble breathing if she is outside for too long. However, I don't want to keep her cooped up inside while her friends and classmates get to play in the snow. What can I do to reduce her winter asthma symptoms?

As you noted, there is some truth to what our grandmothers told us as children — cold air can affect our health. It is natural for a thin lining of mucus to coat the inside of the lungs. In more moderate temperatures, the lining protects and helps the lungs flush out particles that are breathed in. However, cold air can thicken this mucus lining and slow down the removal of particles, thus increasing the risk of infection. When the lungs come into contact with cold air, they release histamine. Histamine causes inflammation in the lungs, and wheezing in asthmatics.

That said, there are many ways to effectively manage asthma and help your daughter enjoy playing outside during the winter months. A simple solution is to wear a scarf over the mouth and nose — this warms the air that is breathed into the lungs.

It is also important to manage the indoor air quality of your home to improve your family's respiratory health. When the weather is cold, we tend to spend more time indoors and are less likely to open windows for air circulation. As a result, we breathe in poorer quality air in the winter. This is especially problematic for those with asthma.

To improve the quality of indoor air in your home, identify what "triggers" your daughter's asthma. Indoor triggers can often include mold or dust mites.

To get rid of mold, clean with a mold and mildew remover, to ensure that all of the mold has been removed. HEPA air filters are also a worthwhile investment for asthmatics;



ics; they remove 99 percent of molds and particles in the air, making it easier to breathe indoors. It is also a good idea to change shower curtain liners frequently, as bathrooms are moist and more prone to mold.

Dust mites may also be an issue for asthma sufferers. The best way to avoid dust is to clean on a regular basis; however, it is important to make sure you are cleaning effectively. Many cleaning products simply push dust and dirt particles around.

Use electrostatic dust cloths and a HEPA-filtered vacuum to be sure that you are eliminating dust mites from your home. You can also add allergen detergents to your washing

machine when washing towels and sheets to remove dust mites from items that are frequently in contact with the face. Finally, if you have a dog or cat, wipe down your pet with pet-friendly cleansing wipes once per week to manage pet dander.

Every asthmatic has different triggers, so it is important to pay attention to your daughter's condition and make adjustments accordingly. If symptoms worsen significantly, make an appointment with your pediatrician. Your daughter may need a different prescription or treatment plan. For most, asthma is a manageable condition, and with some diligence, many asthmatics find that they can enjoy activities in any season.

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Discover a 'Snowy Day' in a museum

Renowned
illustrator Ezra
Jack Keats is
on display at
the Jewish
Museum

BY LAURA VAROSCAK-
DEINNOCENTIIS

Now that the holidays are over, and the streets of Manhattan are less congested, there is no excuse to miss "The Snowy Day and the Art of Ezra Jack Keats," which runs through Jan. 29 at the Jewish Museum. The exhibition celebrates the 50th anniversary of Keats' beloved Caldecott Medal-winner, "The Snowy Day," and pays tribute to a pioneer in children's literature.

Curated by Claudia Nahson, the show highlights the iconic picture book and features more than 80 original works by the artist. Visitors will enjoy viewing Keats' preliminary sketches, storyboards and dummy books, as well as final illustrations

and paintings. Letters and photographs also provide insight into Keats' life and art. Before the end of the exhibit, readers — young and old — can settle down in a Keats-inspired urban landscape and browse through his many books.

Jacob "Jack" Ezra Katz was born in Brooklyn in 1916. His parents, Eastern European Jewish immigrants, were poor, and the family lived in an East New York tenement for most of Keats' childhood. Exposed to poverty and anti-Semitism, Keats developed an early sympathy for others suffering from deprivation and prejudice. He understood what it felt like to be an outsider, and this social isolation became a common theme in his work. As a young boy, he used art as a means of escape and learned that his talent could help

Ezra Jack Keats' work expresses the hope, joy and beauty that exist even in an impoverished, dilapidated world.

him overcome obstacles in life.

Primarily self-taught, Keats spent his early years drawing and painting. He doodled at home, and his mother supported his artistic talent. His father discouraged it. It wasn't until Keats sold a painted sign to a store for 25 cents that his father accepted that his son might make a living doing what he loved.

During the 1930s, Keats worked as a comic book artist and a mural painter for the Works Progress Administration. While serving in World War II, he reacted to anti-Semitism by legally changing his name to Ezra Jack Keats. He spent a brief, but productive, period studying painting in Paris in 1949, and in the next decade, worked as an illustrator for several publications including Reader's Digest, the New York Times Book Review and Colliers.

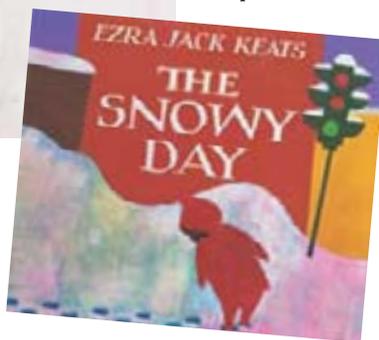
Keats co-authored his first book, "My Dog is Lost," in 1960. This story features a youngster named Juanito who searches for his lost dog in the streets of New York. In his memoirs, Keats mentions a 9-year-old Puerto Rican boy who he spent time with in the 1950s. The main character is based on this boy, although when the story was written, multiculturalism in children's books was not mainstream.

Two years later, "The Snowy Day," was published. This full-color pic-



Copyright Ezra Jack Keats Foundation.

An illustration for "Penny Tunes and Princesses," by Myron Levoy, 1972



You can see Ezra Jack Keats' artwork (including illustrations for "A Letter to Amy," above and groundbreaking "The Snowy Day," left) at the Jewish Museum's "The Snowy Day and the Art of Ezra Jack Keats."

ture book came out at the height of America's civil rights movement, and depicted an African-American boy named Peter enjoying the snow for the first time.

In 1962, picture books featuring minority children were still rare. Other than a few publications that were not widely distributed, African Americans were mostly represented in racist caricatures. Keats' gritty urban settings were also new to picture books.

Despite the overall groundbreaking success of "The Snowy Day," Keats' book also received criticism. In a 1965 essay in *The Saturday Review*, Nancy Larrick described Peter's mother as a stereotypical mammy and attacked Keats for not addressing Peter's race in the text. The author responded to Larrick's comments with a sarcastic remark at the end of his letter: "Might I suggest armbands?" Keats achieved his goal

of representing a black character equally to a white one and did not feel the need to apologize for his work.

Overall, "The Snowy Day" was widely embraced by the public. Since its publication, it has been translated into 10 languages and has sold millions of copies. (A letter of praise from Langston Hughes is on display at the museum.) Every child, regardless of race, ethnicity or social background can relate to the character of Peter, and readers celebrated this.

Keats masterfully used his personal experiences to tell powerful stories through the use of simple language and rich, vivid illustrations inspired by haiku poetry and Asian art. In "Goggles!" (1969), Keats' first autobiographical book, he drew on his run-ins with bullies. When he was

a child, one of his drawings spared him a confrontation with an older boy who was impressed by his work. The author called "Goggles!" a "triumph of brains over brawn."

Keats described his next book, "Apt. 3" (1971), as "closest to me in personal experience and one of the most important things I have ever done." This book, along with "Dreams" (1974), a mood piece, is based on his memories of tenement living.

Between 1975 and 1981, Keats wrote a series of picture books with another African-American protagonist named Louie ("Louie," 1975; "The Trip," 1978; "Louie's Search," 1980; "Regards to the Man in the Moon," 1981). Louie struggles with feelings of isolation and invisibility — as did Keats early in his life. The four stories are modeled after Keats' own experiences, as well as significant people in his childhood. Despite the deep connection between Keats' life and work, his art transcends the personal and reflects the universal concerns of children.

By the end of his life in 1983, Keats had illustrated more than 85 books (and authored 22), most of them for children. His work expresses the hope, joy and beauty that exist even in an impoverished, dilapidated world. Keats' memories also helped to shape his view of humanity.

"If we could really see ('see' as perceive, understand, discover) each other exactly as the other is, this would be a different world," he said.

Indeed, Keats has influenced the way many see by sharing his inner world and talent with readers all over the globe.

"The Snowy Day and the Art of Ezra Jack Keats" at the Jewish Museum [1109 Fifth Ave. at 92nd Street in Manhattan, (212) 423-3200] is on display through Jan. 29. For more, visit thejewishmuseum.org.

Teacher and freelance writer Laura Varoscak-DelInnocenti is a regular contributor to New York Parenting Media. She has won numerous editorial awards from the Parenting Media Association. She holds master's degrees in fiction writing, education and psychology. She lives in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn, and is the proud mom of two sons, Henry and Charlie. Visit her webpage (www.examiner.com/parenting-in-new-york/laura-varoscak) for more articles on parenting.

Room for art

The benefits
of letting
kids decorate
their spaces

BY MARY TOMASULO-
MARIANO

When my daughter Gabriella was 11 and a budding Picasso, I wanted to find something new to inspire her artistic talents. After much thinking and consideration, I hired a local muralist to create a tapestry of color in Gabriella's room.

Gabriella worked side by side with the patient and talented artist, and was left with both a solid love for the arts and a room with quite a view. It took three days and a few cans of paint to complete the masterpiece, but together, they transformed a dull, beige wall into a beautiful window sill garden.

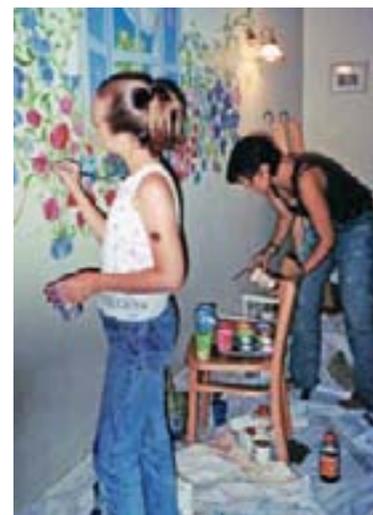
"Creating a mural was an interesting experience," Gabriella, now 22, recalls, smiling. "It was so empower-

ing to work with a professional artist while only in middle school. It was exciting, and the end result gave the room much more personality."

Her room, which is now shared by her two teenage sisters, became happily alive with the new artwork. She even added her hand prints to the wall as her signature.

Looking back on the experience, Gabriella's advice to other budding artists is to pick a theme, and let your imagination run wild. In her case, she used the lamp on her wall as a focal point, and created a cascade of flowers around it. The window scene added a vivid landscape of color and brightness to an otherwise plain wall.

"It's important to give children a world of their own to experience a retreat from everything else," Gabriella says. "My room has always been a reflection of my personality. This



The author's daughter working on her mural at age 11.

artistic freedom has given me confidence, independence, and a sense of pride." Her siblings share this philosophy and add that, "Decorating is self-expression."

More recently, my teenage daughters have experimented with chalkboard paint in their rooms. This special paint allows you to write on the walls with chalk and clean by just dampening it. For Christiana and Angelica, the walls have become message centers, and when friends come over, they write and doodle on the chalkboard. My 9-year-old daughter Jacqueline and her friends play tic-tac-toe on her walls.

In addition to, or instead of, painting a room, you could try adding bulletin boards. Sometimes a fresh coat of paint is all you need. Many local home stores offer workshops with decoration tips and projects to bring out anyone's inner creativity.

"Furniture can be moved around if you get bored," says Gabriella, who feels that children's rooms are works in progress. "The room should grow and evolve with your child as they grow and evolve. It should be a favorite place to wind down from a busy school day."

In just one weekend, you can experience a room makeover. This fall, why not bring out the budding Picasso in your family and transform her room into a winter hideout? A few colors, brushes, and a bit of imagination can bring a springtime garden to your bedroom, too! And, like Gabriella and I, years later, you can recall the sense of accomplishment that your child experienced.

Mary Tomasulo-Mariano is a freelance writer and mother of four daughters. She resides in Brooklyn and recently became a grandmother.



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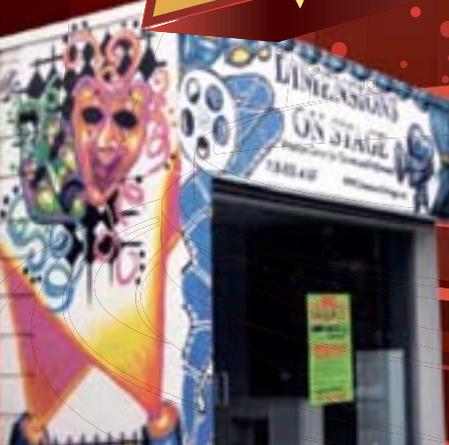
*- Leah Horowitz,
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Helping children develop their self-esteem

Advice
from a child
psychiatrist

BY MARINA DOULOVA

Self-image is the single most important factor in the development of mentally healthy children. It also plays a large role in their achievements and interpersonal relationships.

While still very young, children's self-esteem depends on their perceptions of how they are being judged and valued by the adults who have

importance in their lives. Contrary to popular belief, young children are unlikely to have their self-esteem grow stronger from excessive praise or flattery from adults; rather, it may raise some doubts in children and subsequently cause them to mistrust the person who is doing the praising.

Young children are more likely to benefit from tasks and activities that offer a real challenge, and earn them real appreciation, rather than fun activities that are rewarded with superficial praise.

To help children establish healthy self-esteem, one should treat children with respect, ask their views and opinions, and give them meaningful and realistic feedback. You can also help your child develop and maintain healthy self-esteem by helping to cope with defeats, rather than emphasizing constant successes.

As children grow older, they become increasingly sensitive to feedback from their peers. You can help your child maintain self-confidence during this difficult time by being supportive of his values, accepting him when others may not, and encouraging him to keep an open mind about experiences outside of his home.

A child can become vulnerable and unstable when he carries a psychiatric condition. Many mental illnesses influence low self-esteem formation, which is secondary to emotional disturbance. In such cases, it is important to treat the psychiatric symptoms first.

Treatment of primary mental conditions will help a child preserve a healthy self-image. Children with emotional disturbances need to be evaluated by mental health professionals specializing in child psychiatry. If a child is diagnosed with a mental condition, it is important to receive treatment, even if the condition may be of a temporary nature.

Early intervention is one of the most important keys to successful treatment and subsequent recovery.

Depending on the psychiatric issues and the child's personality, certain treatment methods provide better outcome than others. For example, different types of psychotherapy, such as supportive, interpersonal, and cognitive-behavioral, are used to help the child by not only talking, but also by helping him develop strategies to recognize his symptoms and how to deal with them in a social environment. Art and play therapy may be used by professionals in treating child psychiatric disorders. While complete remission may not be obtained, therapy will enable the child to boost his self-confidence and maintain a more fulfilling lifestyle.

For children with moderate to severe symptoms, offering medication treatment in combination with psychotherapy can be effective. However, receiving medication can also put a child at risk for lowering self-confidence due to the stigma associated with it. It can be prevented by a gentle approach and psycho-education offered by a child psychiatrist.

Preventative measures need to be taken in approaching a child struggling with self-esteem development. Early intervention, with the help of a mental health specialist in child psychiatry, is one of the most important keys to successful treatment and subsequent recovery. Just as it is important to treat diabetes, hypertension, and other health issues to prevent long-term health complications, it is also important to treat the kinds of mental conditions that will inhibit the development of sound self-esteem affecting that child for life.

Marina Doulova is a child and adult psychiatrist at ABC Psychiatric Services in Forest Hills, Queens. For info, visit www.abcpsychiatric.com or www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OZK4c5fdYw.



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The trials and tribulations of resolutions

BY MEAGAN J. MEEHAN

New years are associated with new beginnings, prompting people to promise themselves that they will not repeat last year's bad behaviors. Often, they know when they are lagging in certain goals — they want to shed 10 pounds, or become a better cook, or get higher grades in math — but identifying a problem that's worth solving can be more difficult than finding a solution to it.

Motivation is needed to overcome obstacles, as well as realistic plans for reaching desired goals. The most

detrimental action someone can do is push herself too hard, which often ends in failure. By taking small steps, and achieving goals over a period of time, there is a much greater likelihood of success.

Making resolutions and reaching goals are not simple tasks. Dedication is required to pursue them, along with sequential steps of progress, which will (hopefully) ultimately equal success.

First, one must be willing to identify the aspects of their lives that they would like to change. It's easy to succumb to peer pressure and decide to change behaviors in order to

conform, but resolutions should be made to better yourself and should be a personal decision. Thus, a resolution made on behalf of a fad or what's "in fashion" is not as valuable, or as healthy, as those made purely to better oneself.

For example, vowing to lose weight is one of the most common New Year's resolutions in the world, especially among women. Being overweight can be a serious problem, and it is important to be aware of its risks. However, one must strive to lose weight for the right reasons, such as health, not merely being motivated by societal pressures. A person's weight depends

It's easy to succumb to peer pressure and decide to change behaviors in order to conform, but resolutions should be made to better yourself and should be a personal decision.

on numerous factors, including bone structure and height. Therefore, not everyone is going to be super-model skinny, nor should she feel she has to be. We are all different, and even those who tend to be plus-sized can be confident and secure. Unfortunately, the messages the media promote as society's accepted standards are not necessarily realistic. Individuality is precious and should be a source of pride, not shame.

Yet, no one is perfect, and there are legitimate things that every person seeks to change about herself. Do you procrastinate? Are you prone to interrupting others? Do you lose your temper more than you should, or are you slow to help out around the house? These are real problems that many people seek to fix. Often, people are well aware of their shortcomings, yet are not sure how to deal with them. Other times, one might not realize how much her negative actions affect those around her.

Family and friends are good sources of behavior identification. If your mother, spouse, or even your child, points out something that you do which bothers them, don't become defensive. Instead, listen to them. Chances are they are merely voicing an opinion many others share.

This should not be taken as an attack, but should be viewed as a loved one's attempts to help you change a damaging behavior that you may not even have been aware you were guilty of. Identify the real issues that you need to work on, and then will yourself to research ideas for how to alter the undesirable behaviors. In today's "Google age," it is simple to research methods to help you achieve your resolutions.

On the other hand, if you don't

succeed in your plans and fall behind on your goals, do not be overly hard on yourself. Emotions such as self-deprecation are negative and unhelpful — and even harmful — behaviors. Our expectancies can be violated, but they can also be reevaluated, readjusted, and reinstated. Failing to succeed is an unpleasant part of life that everyone has experienced. It is how we handle these setbacks that counts most.

January is generally considered the best month for new beginnings, all times of the year are suitable for starting anew and striving to make yourself a better person. Remember: if you fail the first time, you do not need to wait a year to try again.

Overall, it is every functional person's job to take responsibility for her own behaviors, whether positive or negative. This system of mental checks and balances is usually referred to as self-modification, and it is a key factor in changing behaviors.

Part of being a mature person is knowing what is expected of you and what constitutes acceptable behavior within society. This is not to say you must conform to every "norm" or abandon creativity or individuality. Rather, concepts like self-modification and maturity serve as a reminder that it is OK to be different, but it's never OK to behave in ways which harm, harass, intimidate, or disturb others. So if you are going to set goals and make yourself a better person, think of ways to help yourself and make the world a slightly brighter place at the same time. If reaching your goals makes you smile more, that automatically makes you more pleasant to be around, and everyone you encounter will enjoy your company more.

Emotions create a sense of atmosphere which directly influences society. When you set goals to be happier and healthier, you are removing negativity from your world and, subsequently, making everything connected to you more positive as well.

When you make your resolutions for this year, determine what you need to improve on and why you wish to follow through on that promise to yourself. Do not let others choose your path for you. Instead, strive to make healthy choices, and you will be surprised by how small changes can make a world of difference.

Happy New Year!

Meagan Meehan is an author and modern artist.

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MOMMY 101

ANGELICA SERADOVA

Finding your new mom confidence

Being a mom is supposed to come naturally, right? Maybe, but for me, the first couple of weeks as a new mom had me feeling like a freshman on the first day of high school. I felt lost, awkward and terrified that this tiny person depended solely on me for her survival. Wouldn't that terrify any new mom?

I remember my first outing with my daughter, Olivia. She had her first pediatrician appointment about a week after she was born, and it was the first time I had left the house with her. Saying that I was a nervous wreck is an understatement. I couldn't remember the last time I felt so apprehensive.

To help calm my "first-day jitters," I gave myself three hours to prepare. A simple 15-minute drive had now become a production of epic proportions. I had to prepare the baby bag, dress myself and dress an infant. This was a huge task. I've always been a bit anxious, but on this occasion, leaving the house was about to give me a major meltdown.

Then I started the dreaded "What If" game. What if I drop her going down the stairs? What if I forget something? What if we get into a car accident? All these thoughts flooded my mind and made me doubt myself as a mother. This must be normal, I thought to myself. It has to get easier. But all I could do was worry.

Pulling up to the doctor's office in one piece was a relief and also felt like a huge accomplishment. Arriving to the doctor unscathed: check!

But just as I celebrated our milestone, something happened that made me doubt myself again. As I sat in the waiting room and prayed that my little one wouldn't start crying, I noticed that I was sitting next to an obviously well-controlled Super Mom. I wondered if I could ever be like her, and felt like such an amateur sitting next to her.

As I fantasized about ever having my own Super Mom qualities, I



realized she was once in my shoes — a clueless new mom who slowly learned how to care for a baby and finally got it together. Just like everything else in life, I'm sure parenting takes practice. Besides, I must be doing something right. Olivia and I made it through her first doctor's appointment and more importantly, she got a clean bill of health.

When I look back at those first few weeks as a new mom, I feel like a completely different person. Nowadays, it doesn't take so much of a production to get out of the house. I know what to pack, try to prepare as much as I

can the night before, and can manage to get both me and my daughter ready and out of the house in a decent amount of time. I don't get as flustered as I did in the beginning. Thankfully, Olivia and I have celebrated plenty of milestones together, no matter how small, because not only is she learning and developing, but I am, too. And with each milestone we achieve, comes a boost of motherly confidence.

Angelica Sereda is a working mother and freelance writer covering career and parenting issues. She is the proud mom of a happy little baby girl.

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Over the river and through the woods

Fostering a bond between kids and grandparents helps both

BY JENNY CHEN

My grandparents' house was small and had only one floor. It smelled like clothes that had been hung in the back of the closet and been forgotten — worn and comfortable, remnants of a more vivacious time. My brother and I loved kneeling on the floor of my grandfather's cluttered office and peering at the black-and-white likenesses of my parents without worry lines.

My grandmother would tell us stories about how she would harvest water chestnuts with the neighborhood kids, as we loudly slurped her hot and spicy noodle soup.

Our visits to our grandparents' house were rare, but treasured. It was a place where we were transported to a seemingly magical past, a slower-paced life, and, of course, a place where we were spoiled rotten.

Imagine my surprise when a family friend came over, pre-teen daughter in tow, and informed me that she was having trouble getting her daughter and mother to connect.

"I feel like a telephone pole," she

said. "Without me, they'd never talk to each other."

Her daughter, meanwhile, was texting away furiously on her cell-phone, not paying us any attention. Or, maybe she was, and was relaying our entire conversation to her friends in texts. Who knows?

"All she does is text, surf the Web, or hang out with her friends. And my mother thinks I've failed as a mom," my friend continued. Apparently, this was the first time grandmother and granddaughter had met since the girl was born. When the grandmother relocated closer to her family, it was like having an extra arm — awkward and disconnected.

My friend and her daughter are not alone. A 2009 Pew Research study found that 79 percent of Americans see major differences between younger and older adults in the way that they look at the world. Couple that with the fact that many grandparents live farther away from their grandchildren than before, as well as dramatic differences in culture, and the result is that many kids don't have the same connection with their grandparents as previous generations.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Gary Drevitch, editor-in-chief of Grandparents.com, says that there's every reason to believe that today's grandparents are more receptive to new technologies and connecting with youth culture.

"These are kids, now grown up, who rebelled against their parents' culture, but, in doing so, they remade our society, permanently establishing youth culture as mainstream culture in ways that resonate today," he says.

Both kids and grandparents can benefit from a strong and meaningful relationship. For kids, this relationship broadens their horizons. They

can learn about a time different than their own, and they learn to communicate with someone who has different worldviews. Tiffany Murray, the executive director at the Macklin Intergenerational Institute, says that kids who have spent more time with older adults tend to be more accepting of classmates who differ from them.

For grandparents, spending time with younger people keeps one active — both mentally and physically. It helps them stay connected with the world and feel included.

Believe it or not, the most crucial ingredient to a strong grandchild-grandparent bond is you, the parent!

"[The parent] sets the stage. They facilitate everything," says Amy Goyer, a grandparent expert at AARP, formerly the American Association of Retired Persons.

After my conversation with my friend, I sat down to talk to the foremost experts on intergenerational relationships — Goyer, Drevitch, Murray, and Tamar Landes from DOROT, a not-for-profit that aids homebound and homeless elders and fosters friendship between the generations. I asked them for some tips on creating that special bond, and believe it or not, it's not that difficult.

• **Create a family website.** The common belief that older adults are technology averse doesn't hold true for the boomer generation. In fact, adults 50 and older are the fastest growing demographic on Facebook and Twitter today. Grandparents are ready and willing to learn new technology, so use that to your advantage! You can also create a family website with a calendar, photos, and videos. A good place to start is familydetails.com. Webcams are a great way for face-to-face time even when grandparents live far away. Goyer

RESOURCES

• **Grandparents.com:** This website has scores of activity ideas, from celebrating half-birthdays, to turning your house into a restaurant when the grandkids visit, to making backyard carnival games with them, to making up new holidays, to paying them to help you "clean" out the attic, while they look at old family photos and take old collectibles and heirlooms home.

• **AARP.com/grandparents:** This site has everything from conversation starters to booklists. It

also has articles for grandparents raising grandchildren.

• **Familydetails.com:** You can start a free family website with a family calendar and photo and video options.

• **Oovoo.com or Skype.com:** These are both terrific video chatting services for long distance grandparents.

• **Onetsp.com:** An online recipe box where grandparents and grandkids can record recipes that they've tried together. Or you could make one out of old-fashioned cardboard and index cards!



says that the most important thing for a strong grandparent-grandchild relationship is time together, whether it is virtual or in real time.

- Tell bedtime stories. One thing that all grandparents have is stories — and a lot of them. No one else can tell a child who has misbehaved, “Your father did the same thing when he was a kid,” and reassure them that he will turn out alright. Grandparents assure the child that he is part of something bigger than his own nuclear family, says Drevitch. Kids especially love hearing stories about when their parents were younger.

- Have a ball. Sports are timeless. Ask Grandma or Grandpa to show your son how to pitch a baseball or play a short game of wiffle ball. Both grandparent and grandkid will get some fresh air and much-needed exercise. (If the grandparent has physical limitations, tell the child about it beforehand.)

Landes, associate executive director of community relations at

DOROT, says that prepping both the child and the grandparent is one of the most important things a parent can do.

- “Let them learn about the challenges of an older person, teach them about respect,” he says. “How to slow down, and how to show kindness and politeness.”

- Cook. Of course, the other universal topic is food, and who better to teach kids family recipes than a grandparent? Cooking is a great hands-on activity, and gives grandparent and grandchild a lot of quality one-on-one time.

- Start a book club. Goyer says she remembers when countless grandparents and grandkids bonded over the Harry Potter books. Set aside some time for grandparents and grandkids to read together. You could even get together other grandparents in the community and form a “Grand Book Club.” Have refreshments and alternate homes for meeting places. Talk about the books that grandparents read when they were

younger, and how they are similar or different from the books today.

- Just spend time together. Any time spent together is time well spent, says Goyer. Furthermore, parents are the best role models for their kids. If you spend time with your parents or parent-in-laws, your children will naturally follow suit. Try to have an open relationship about child-rearing and respect differences in opinion.

A child’s relationship with a grandparent is one of the most valuable relationships she can have. It may take some extra effort to start, but the benefits are invaluable.

- “Grandparents can be an oasis of acceptance, building self-esteem for kids as they go through changes in their appearances and the stress of middle and high school,” says Drevitch. “Absolutely no one provides unconditional love the way a grandparent does.”

Jenny Chen is a freelance writer. She has written previously for Washington Parent and Parent Connection.

Believe it or not, the most crucial ingredient to a strong grandchild-grandparent bond is you, the parent!



THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Book captures tween angst

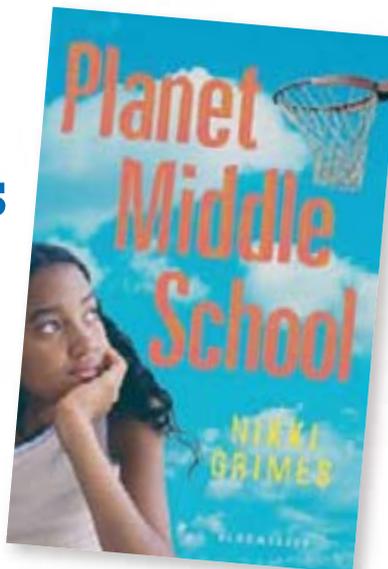
Imagine that you are 12 years old, and aliens have kidnapped your best friend.

At least that's what it seems like. The two of you used to do things together all the time. You'd hang out, watch TV, shoot hoops, or climb trees. You liked the same activities, and you knew each other's secrets.

But now, sometimes, you feel like you barely know her any more. She never wants to do the things you used to do and everything's different. It's almost like your best friend got kidnapped and replaced with someone who just looks like her.

In the new book, "Planet Middle School," by Nikki Grimes, 12-year-old Joylin knows the feeling. Both of her best friends are acting weird.

Joylin really hates it when people call her a tomboy. But what else can be said? She dresses in navy, baggy jeans, she's got a killer jump shot, and she hates girly things. Her dad is secretly happy about it all. Her mother just rolls her eyes.



Although Joylin despises the tomboy moniker, she doesn't mind when her best friend KeeLee teases her about sports and her lack of fashion sense. They've been BFs since they were nine, and they've always done everything together...until middle school started.

When Joylin tried out for the basketball team, KeeLee joined the school choir. They don't have the same classes very often. Sometimes, they don't sit together in the lunchroom any more, and that makes Joylin sad.

It makes her even sadder when KeeLee starts boy-watching.

And speaking of boys, even Jake, Joylin's best male friend, is acting

weird now that they're all in middle school. He treats Joylin like a girl, instead of the way he used to when he didn't notice things like the bumps on her chest. And those bumps interfere with her jump shots, too!

Then a new boy, Santiago, shows up on the court one day. He smiles at Joylin and things change even more. How can she get Santiago to see her? Would a skirt and heels make him notice? Would make-up make a difference? And would Jake stop being such a jerk about this whole thing?

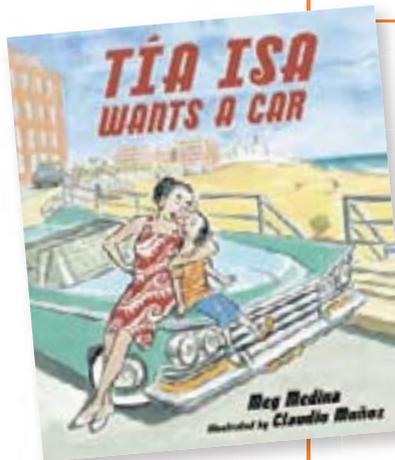
Why can't things just go back to the way they were?

Remember how hard it was to stand with one foot in childhood and one foot in "Grown-up Land?" Author Grimes brings all that confusion and those mixed feelings to life in this perfect little novel.

Using free-form story-poems of different lengths, Grimes gives voice to a smart, young character who is also wise beyond her years.

There's no reason a boy can't read this book, but I think 11-14-year-old girls will think "Planet Middle School" is out of this world.

"Planet Middle School" by Nikki Grimes [155 pages, Bloomsbury Kids, 2011, \$15.99] is recommended for girls ages 11-14.



Teach kids how to save

The other day, while your child was playing outside, he found something small on the ground. It wasn't much, just a penny.

There's not a lot he can do with a penny anymore. It's not enough to buy candy or gum, and it takes bunches of them to buy a toy. Even more for a new video game.

But his Abuelita (Spanish for "Grandmother") always says he should save his money for a rainy day, and since a penny is money, he puts it away. (He has always wondered what rain has to do with anything, but, oh, well.)

In the new book, "Tía Isa Wants a Car," by Meg Medina, illustrated by Claudio Muñoz, a little girl learns that her pennies can take her anywhere, no matter what the weather.

More than anything, her aunt, Tía Isa, wants a car.

She says so after work, when she gets home from the bakery. It should

be a green car, the color of foamy water on the beach. That color would remind Tía Isa of the ocean that lapped outside her bedroom window when she was a little girl. Maybe she should get a car with wings in the back, like sea gulls.

But Tío ("Uncle") Andrés laughs at her. The family's not rich, he reminds her. Besides, she's got more to worry about, like cooking dinner for him. Tía Isa tries to ignore him, but she knows that cars are expensive and that most of her money must be sent back home to Mami and Papi.

Yet, Tía Isa wants a car and her mind's made up. She speaks to the man who sells cars, but he tells her that she doesn't have enough cash. She says they'll have some soon, but "soon" can take forever.

Still, there are always other ways. Señor Leo might have a few odd jobs he'd pay to finish. La vieja ("elderly") Maria might need someone to help feed her windowsill cats. Miss Amy at la biblioteca ("the library") has been asking

for español ("Spanish") lessons.

Tía Isa wants a car, but she's getting sad. Why does saving money take so long? Will she ever have enough to "vamos" on her own four wheels?

She might — with just a little help. Like most of us, kids enjoy getting new possessions. And, like many of us, they have a hard time saving up for a big want. What they'll see in this book just might inspire them.

"Tía Isa Wants a Car" tells the cute story of doing something difficult to make a dream come true, even though it takes a long time. I loved the way Medina gives her little heroine a can-do attitude in helping her Tía, along with the satisfaction of seeing her efforts make a difference. Muñoz's illustrations are wonderfully expressive, further allowing the love between Tía and her niece to shine through.

Little spendthrifts, ages 3 to 7, will want to save time to hear this story read aloud. For them, "Tía Isa Wants a Car" is a good book, rain or shine.

"Tía Isa Wants a Car" by Meg Medina, illustrated by Claudio Muñoz [32 pages, Candlewick Press, 2011, \$15.99] is recommended for children ages 3-7.

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

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Past meets present

The New York Historical Society opens a children's museum

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

New York City is a fascinating place with a rich history. To start your child on the path to learning about his hometown, there's no better spot than the newly renovated New-York Historical Society's mini museum, the DiMenna Children's History Museum, on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

In November, the groundbreaking museum opened its doors and welcomed curious young visitors and their families. The first ever of its kind, the museum provides a unique, multi-dimensional experience, aimed at kids ages 7 to 13. It's where youngsters can learn about history in a non-traditional, fun way.

It takes parents of younger children to come up with such an innovative concept. The museum is the brainchild of Diana DiMenna and her husband, Joseph, who have two little ones. They helped fund its construction. Their main goal: they didn't want kids thinking history was just about a bunch of old men.

Through interactive games, a virtual time machine, and a myriad of surprise adventures, kids who

visit the museum — which is on the lower level of the New-York Historical Society — can find a connection with children who lived, played, and sometimes worked in New York City a couple of hundred years ago, or more. Here, kids' imaginations can soar as they enter and explore an amazing new world like no other.

"We have seen grown-ups and children 'digging' into the exhibition together. Some are longtime fans of the Historical Society who are happy to have a place to go for their children to learn about history, and some are first-time visitors looking for a new experience," said Alice Stevenson, director of the museum. "Overall, they really appreciate the hands-on design of the museum — it keeps children of different ages and interests engaged, and brings the past to life."

As visitors enter the museum, they immediately get a sense — thanks to bright graphics — that this is a child- and family-friendly place. The characters on the stairs will lead you back through time — beginning in the Great Hall with recent history, passing such well-known New Yorkers as Arthur Ashe and the Marx

Brothers — and ending at the base of the stairs in a recreated environment devoted to the Lenape people, who lived in the New York area before Europeans arrived.

Families are then welcomed by a dramatic but fanciful recreation of the New-York Historical Society's new façade, linking this experience to the Historical Society as a whole.

The History Detectives kiosk introduces questions that visitors may never have considered, or may have answered for themselves in a very limited way: How do historians work? How do they draw meaning from the surviving remnants of earlier times? How do we know what we know about the past? This prepares kids and their families to think about the characters they'll encounter in the museum.

For instance, at the Historical Viewfinder kiosk, visitors can compare current images of neighborhoods in the five boroughs with photographs from the past, and can experience being a part of history at the American Dreamers kiosk, where photographs of New Yorkers from the past and present flash by with their names, birthdates and



Your kids will have a blast at the DiMenna Children's History Museum.

occupations. Kids can then take their own photos and add what they wish to be when they grow up. Their picture will then join the photo stream, where they can see themselves as part of the narrative of history. That's pretty powerful stuff!

Your child might ask, "What does it feel like to participate in a democracy?" Future voters can check out the Cast Your Vote and First President pavilions, and find out how voting rights have changed over time; they may also wish to recite the presidential oath of office. (You never know.)

When your kids experience the narrative pavilions, they'll surely begin to wonder if there are similarities between their everyday lives and those of kids from long ago. The pavilions delve into interesting backgrounds of historical figures, like Alexander Hamilton, who came here from the Caribbean as an orphan around 1700, and who would become the Secretary of the Treasury; a Dutch girl, Cornelia van Varick, who was the daughter of a 17th century textile worker. Her wooden linen chest is an antique treasure trove of artifacts she collected during her childhood, and kids can sift through her stuff to get a sense of how life was during that period of time.

Then there's James McCune Smith, who became an abolitionist and America's first African-American doctor; Esteban Bellán, a Cuban immigrant, who grew up to become the first Latino to play pro baseball; and what was it like to be a child on the Orphan Train?

What did these children wear? How did they learn? What might life have been like for the newsies,

kids who sold newspapers for a penny on city street corners? Why didn't they go to school? Why were they allowed to work?

"In particular, Orphan Train riders and newsies have had a real resonance with visitors," Stevenson said. "At the end of their visit, when we have asked children 'which was your favorite?' inevitably, it is one of those two pavilions, and the students can recount the stories with great detail. The idea of childhood throughout the centuries has really emerged as a dominant theme for our visitors."

Finally, at the adjacent Barbara K. Lipman Children's Library, children can explore the printed world of New York. Digital images of four rare texts — "Sander's Pictorial Primer," "The Story of Dam Trot and her Comical Cat," the "New York Gazette & Weekly Mercury" newspaper, and the "Hieroglyphic Mother Goose" — are on display, as well as an interactive atlas, maps of old New York, books, and drawers full of artifacts. Plus, every Sunday at 11:30 am, the Lipman Library hosts a free story hour, where kids can hear the stories of New York.

Don't miss this special adventure that takes place on the lower level of the New-York Historical Society.

DiMenna Children's History Museum at New-York Historical Society [170 Central Park West at 77th Street in Manhattan, (212) 873-3400]. Open Tuesday through Thursday and Saturday, 10 am–6 pm; Friday 10 am–8 pm; Sunday 11 am–5 pm; closed Monday. Adults, \$15; seniors and educators, \$12; students, \$10; kids (7-13) \$5; children under 7, free. Admission is pay-as-you-wish on Fridays, from 6 to 8 pm. For more, visit www.nyhistory.org/childrens-museum.

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DEATH BY CHILDREN

CHRIS GARLINGTON

Driving Miss Crazy

Surviving with my daughter behind the wheel

I have stared into the gaping, drooling maw of death. I have teetered on the brink of imminent demise. Now every day is a gift. I take time to smell the cappuccino. I live in the moment, not worrying about tomorrow, because yesterday, I tried to teach my ADD daughter how to drive.

I prepared myself for this ordeal like any pragmatic father of a girl who can't pay attention to an entire commercial: I dialed "91" on my cell; I hugged my wife and told her where

to send a search team; I made an ice-cold, dirty martini.

I didn't want her to drive. This is a girl who can get distracted while tying her shoes. Letting her pilot a 5,000-pound hurtling tank of flammable gas through our neighborhood strikes me as unpragmatic. It makes me wish we were Amish.

For the sake of other parents in this predicament, some pieces of advice:

Closed course

We used a forest preserve lot. No one goes there except forest preserve cops and the escaped convicts they're looking for.

•**Pro:** No oncoming cars.

•**Con:** Deer. They're pretty, so brace yourself for sudden screeching halts, followed closely by a barrage of "oh my god, that deer is soooooo gorgeous" moments.

Midnight run

Like this kid sleeps. Might as well take advantage of the deserted, well-lit streets and clock some time while everyone else is watching the "Late Show."

•**Con:** The adrenaline making your heart spaz out like a highly caffeinated chihuahua as your daughter drifts into the other lane to see the couple in the next car will keep you awake till 3 am.

•**Pro:** If you get a flat, you can lift the car with one hand.

Catch phrase

Once she sees that one kid with the long hair and the nose pierced slouching on a bus bench as you hurtle past, a lengthy explanation about lane obedience will most likely be punctuated by death. Better to have a short, punchy catch phrase. Ours was "color in the lines," which works best when delivered in all caps, thusly: COLOR IN THE LINES! COLOR IN THE LINES! OH MY GOD WE'RE GOING TO DIE!

•**Pro:** Short, easy to scream.

•**Con:** Whiplash.

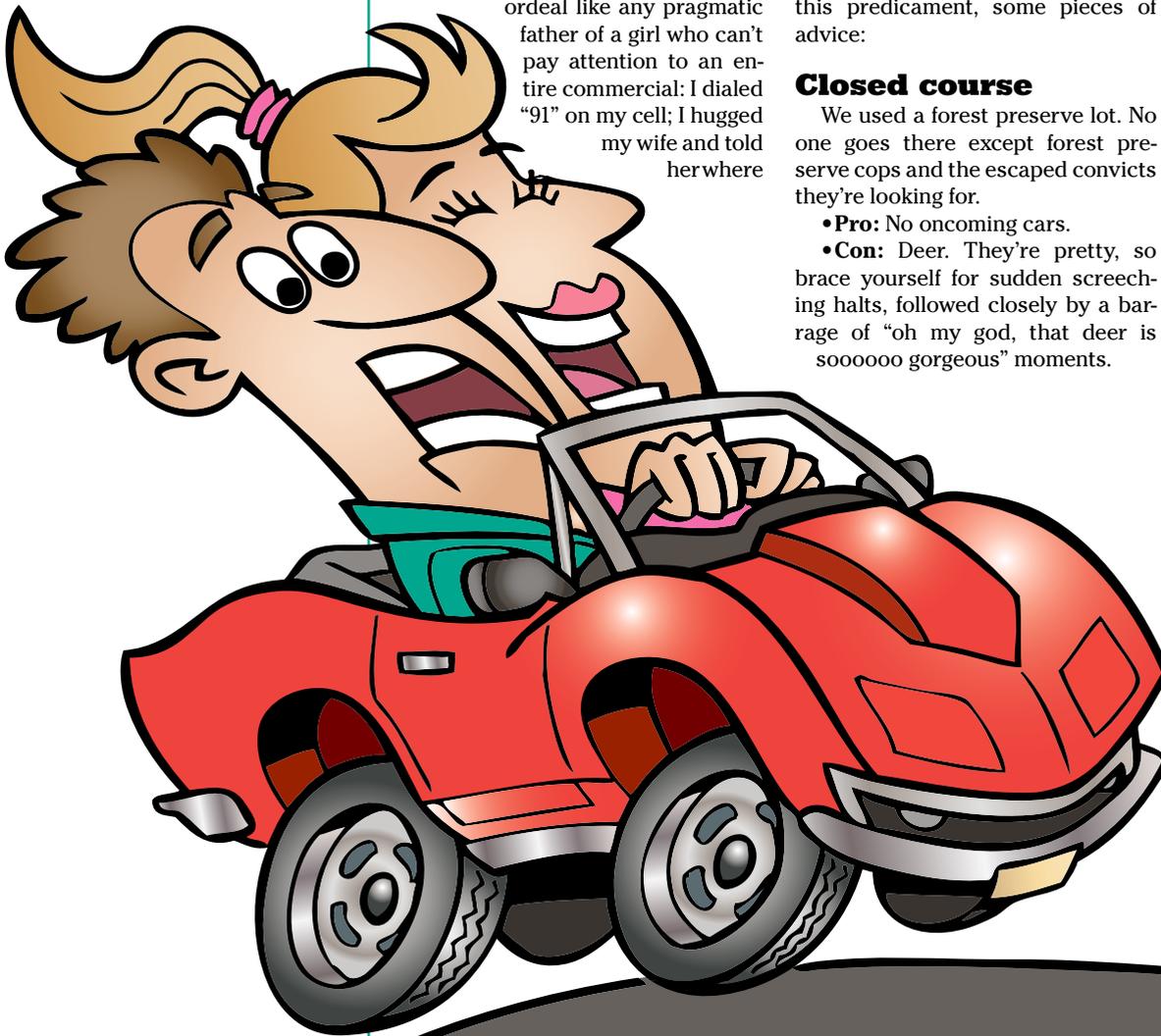
Frank Sinatra

The sheer bravado and élan in a good Sinatra song soothes nerves and bolsters confidence. Might work on the kid, too.

•**Pro:** Goes well with the martini.

•**Con:** Goes well with the martini.

These are just a few ideas, of course. I'd give more, but my nerves are shot, and I'm still in the middle of calling close relatives and letting them know I'm alive.





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Medical mistakes busy moms make

No matter your schedule, you can't forget to look after yourself

BY SANDRA GORDON

Every day, you make dozens of decisions about your health that can impact your wellbeing, such as whether to tough out the flu or see the doctor; go for a power walk after work, or watch TV instead; take a medicine or skip it. You do the best you can.

But, let's face it — you're juggling your own responsibilities along with your kid's health, school stuff, home life, employment, and sports activities. And your husband and your parents are probably in the mix, too. With so much going on, it's easy to get distracted and make micro- and macro-judgment calls about your own healthcare that can do more harm than help.

Where do you go wrong? Here are some of the biggest medical mistakes multitasking women (that's you) make — that doctors wish they wouldn't — and what you can do to remedy the situation.

Medical mishap: You've got an OB/GYN, but not a primary care doctor

If you have a gynecologist, but not a primary care doctor, it's time to go doctor shopping.

"Women should have both an ob/gyn and a PCP [Primary Care Physician]," says Michael Roizen, MD, division chair at the Cleveland Clinic and co-author of "You: The Smart Patient."

Primary care doctors have broad-based medical knowledge and training in the prevention area.

"There are so many nuances in drug therapy and drug interactions that PCPs are expert in," Roizen says. If your blood pressure is creeping up, for example, your gynecologist shouldn't be the one to write a prescription for

blood pressure medication.

You'll also need a primary care doctor to make sure you undergo age-appropriate screening tests. And if you should need a specialist, a primary care doctor is invaluable for coordinating your care.

To-do tactic: To choose a primary care doctor, interview two or three until you find one you're compatible with. Clues a doctor is right for you: The waiting room has patients similar to your age, and the doctor isn't near retirement (a sign that she won't be able to care for you long-term). She's also up-to-date on what's likely to happen to you.

"If you have a family history of heart disease, for example, you want a physician who focuses on heart disease prevention," Roizen says.

Medical mishap: You take your kids to check-ups like clockwork, but you haven't seen a physician in years

Sure, your kids come first. But you need regular check-ups, too, even if you feel fine. If you don't have your blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose tested regularly — preferably every five years if you're in your 20s and 30s and otherwise healthy, and yearly after that — you don't know if you're at risk for a major condition such as diabetes, heart attack or stroke.

"Denial can be deadly," says Nieca Goldberg, MD, a cardiologist and medical director at the NYU Women's Heart Program in New York City.

To-do tactic: Stay on top of your own health. Schedule a physical every five years if you're healthy and under 40, so you know where you're at in terms of blood pressure (goal: less than 120/80), total cholesterol (less than 200), LDL or "bad" cholesterol (less than 70 to 160, depending

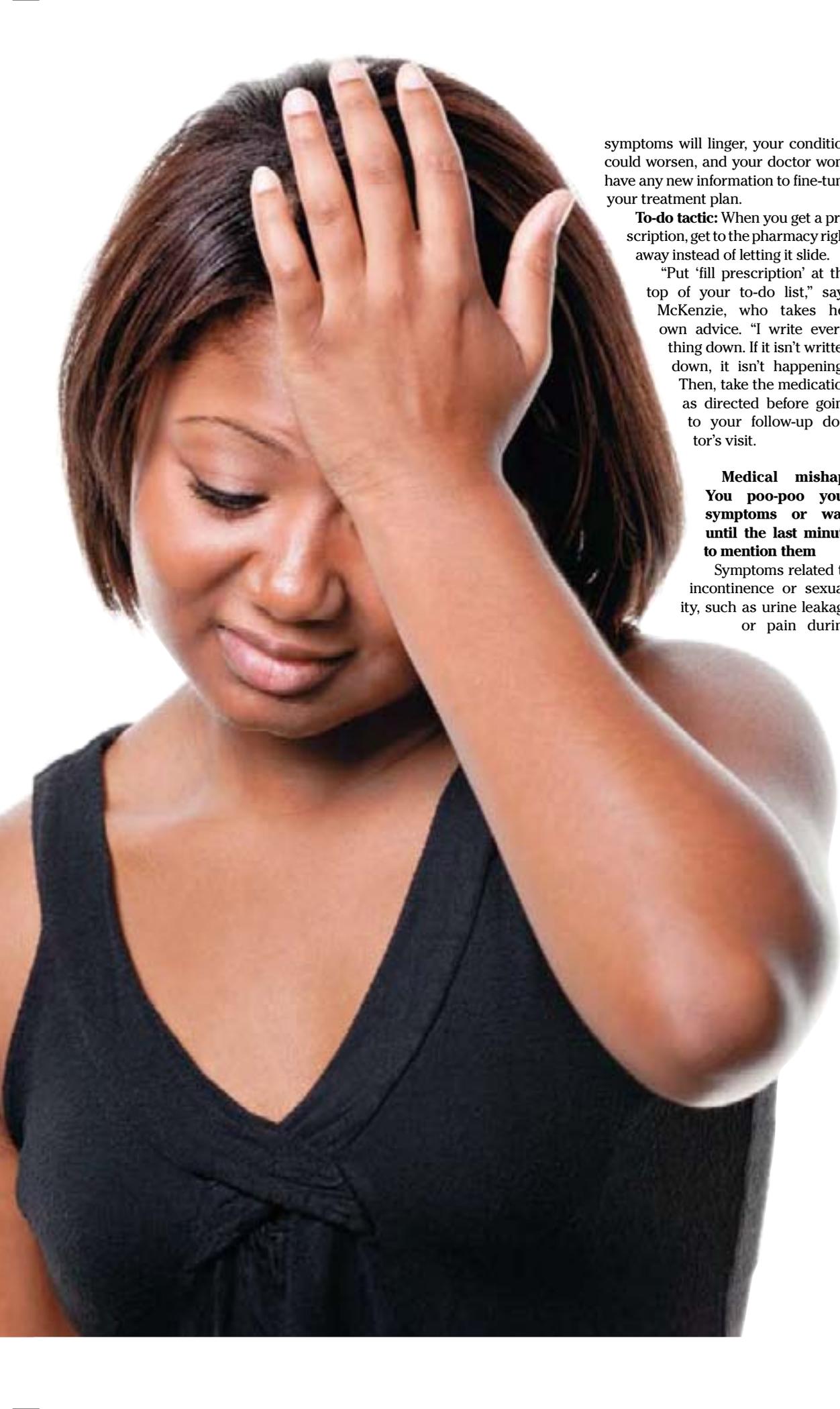
on your heart disease risk), HDL or "good" cholesterol (50 or higher for women), triglycerides (less than 150), fasting blood glucose (less than 100), body mass index (less than 25), and waist circumference (35 inches or less for women).

If you're over 40 or you're younger, but have a strong family history of cancer, heart disease, or diabetes, or have had an abnormal mammogram, a breast biopsy, a history of an abnormal Pap test, or a history of an ovarian cyst, get a well-adult checkup every year. Depending on your situation, you could start with your internist or your gynecologist.

Schedule your annual appointment near a memorable date — such as your birthday — so you don't forget.

Medical mishap: You forget to get your prescription filled but go to your follow-up appointment anyway

"It's a waste of time to go to your follow-up appointment, if you haven't even taken your medication in the first place," says Margaret McKenzie, MD, a physician with the Cleveland Clinic Women's Health Institute. That's because the path to getting well is a process that often goes like this: You come in with symptoms; your doctor writes a prescription; and you take the medication until your next appointment, at which point, your doctor assesses if the medication is working and whether you're getting better. If you don't get your prescription filled, you will still be at square one. Your



symptoms will linger, your condition could worsen, and your doctor won't have any new information to fine-tune your treatment plan.

To-do tactic: When you get a prescription, get to the pharmacy right away instead of letting it slide.

"Put 'fill prescription' at the top of your to-do list," says McKenzie, who takes her own advice. "I write everything down. If it isn't written down, it isn't happening." Then, take the medication as directed before going to your follow-up doctor's visit.

Medical mishap: You poo-poo your symptoms or wait until the last minute to mention them

Symptoms related to incontinence or sexuality, such as urine leakage or pain during

intercourse or a decreased sex drive, are the big ones that patients often fail to bring up during medical appointments unless the doctor asks.

"Or, they'll mention these or other symptoms as they're walking out the door of my office, and then a whole new visit starts," says McKenzie. Embarrassment is part of it, but again, so is just being busy. "Women are multitasking so much that in the whirlwind of just getting to my office, they forget about their symptoms," she says.

To-do tactic: To make the most of your next doctor's visit, prepare by making a list of troublesome signs and symptoms, and bring them up yourself, no matter how embarrassing or minor you think they are. If you're uncomfortable mentioning them, practice saying them out loud at home or in the car on the drive over, as in "I feel pain when I pee," "I leak when I laugh," or "My periods last forever." When the doctor asks the reason for your visit, put it out there, so you don't miss an opportunity to get treatment.

Medical mishap: You don't hear back about test results, so you just assume they're normal

No news isn't necessarily good news. Doctors are especially pressed for time these days, so things can fall through the cracks.

To-do tactic: Don't let your doctor drop the ball. After you've taken medical tests and don't hear from your doctor's office when you thought you would, it's your responsibility to call the doctor or the doctor's nurse to follow-up.

"Just like in school, you've taken the test, so you deserve to get the grade to see how well you've done," says Dawn Calderon, DO, FACC, a cardiologist and director of the Women's Wellness Program at Deborah Heart and Lung Center in Browns Mills, NJ.

What's a reasonable length of time to wait? For a Pap test, allow a month for turnover for lab results. For blood tests and X-rays, give it three days before dialing your doctor or your doctor's nurse.

"You're not bugging the doctor," says McKenzie. "You're helping her to stay on task and on time. Healthcare is a partnership."

Sandra Gordon is the mom of two in Weston, CT. She writes about health and nutrition for major magazines, websites and books. For more about her, visit www.sandrajgordon.com.



A TEEN'S TAKE

AGLAIA HO

My first date with Facebook

Social networking sites have become a phenomenon with teens since websites like Facebook came online — and having a presence on them has become a must for most teenagers. Well, except me. Until now.

I recently got my Facebook account — after choosing not to have

ents, and together we decided that if I used good judgment, Facebook would help me stay in the loop.

I created my account, and because I was just about the last person in my school to be on Facebook, the deluge began.

I was bombarded with friend requests. As I scanned the page, I noticed that half of the people were mere acquaintances. Some were just kids who went to my school, though we shared none of the same classes. One of my friends even teased, “OMG, you actually exist!”

To add to my headache, many people were hiding behind various pseudonyms and monikers (obviously, “Harvard Lightning” and “CeeJ” aren’t actual names). The anonymity of identities give teenagers the liberty to fantasize about the perfect person. Still, it is particularly confusing — and dangerous.

Screening through friend requests was time-consuming.

After an hour, I was still filtering

requests. Much

care is needed in order to connect with the right people, not those with villainous motives.

If I thought “friending” people was rocket science, I was faced with a whole new challenge when I began to explore the site further. All users have their own profile, which they can edit to express their likes, dislikes, and even personal information. As I skimmed the profiles of my friends, I learned that Facebook was like a sounding board. My friends continuously posted random quotes, complaints, and exclamations on their profile “wall.” Some were nearly as trivial as “[name] flop like a fish,” and “why am I the fish?” I couldn’t help but cringe at the pure stupidity of it.

Still, I found that Facebook had practical benefits, despite my ini-

tial shock. For one, the site allows students to discuss class lessons and homework. I found a group of students from my house with whom I could discuss math homework and the discussions were mostly productive.

Rather than just posting the answer, some students explained the solutions.

Facebook also provides an outlet for students to collaborate on group projects. Passing around documents and discussing how to organize the work is much easier over the Internet. Messaging one another makes each exchange more informative and resourceful.

Facebook makes it much easier to plan events. I’ve learned that hosting large events is an arduous chore. Making individual phone calls leaves you without a voice, and mass e-mails often go unread. However, discussing details for a get-together is more convenient on Facebook. RVSPs are built into the system, so no one has to pull teeth to get a response. This is a great feature for teenagers, because getting out and about is a big part of our lives.

Overall, I would say that having self-control is the key to utilizing Facebook to its potential without sacrificing time and safety. Keep a private account free from personal information and connect with people you actually know. Join class groups to understand lessons and homework. Ignore any rude and pointless comments. And don’t be afraid to let your parent being involved in your online life.

Even after realizing the benefits of Facebook, I still believe that it is not the center of our lives! What’s wrong with face-to-face communication? Our society lacks many real-life experiences because technology is so deeply ingrained in our world. An instant message will never have the same emotional or memorable capacity as a direct conversation or even a hand-written letter. Real life is on the line, but not online!

Aglaia Ho is a 16-year-old student from Queens who enjoys writing. Her work has been published in Creative Kids, Skipping Stones, Daily News-Children’s Pressline, and The State of the Wild.



one for years — because it was the only way I could access one of my teacher’s notes that she began posting online. Still, my decision to do so wasn’t an easy one: I was well aware of the consequences of overuse. I have friends who are obsessed with updating their status. I also know friends who have been cyber-bullied. I didn’t want to become a victim of the social network.

So I talked it over with my par-

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DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

Transitioning your child to a new home

Divorce is hard on adults and children alike. But, unlike adults, children have little or no say in what happens. Even if you were not the one to initiate the divorce, undoubtedly there are many decisions you will make, perhaps including whether to remain at your current job, and which neighborhood you will live in. Our kids, on the other hand, will live and attend school where we (or a judge) decides.

None of us likes to feel out of control, and where we can, it is wise

to grant our children the power to make their own decisions — up to a point.

Let's take the example of a new home.

Pretend that you have agreed to move from the marital home. As the adult, where you live has to be up to you. It is your job to know your finances — or to get help in understanding them if you don't. What neighborhoods can you afford? Will you rent a home, or buy one? How close to work or public transportation do you need to be? Where are the schools, doctors, and houses of worship that you deem best for your family? The list of considerations can be lengthy.

Then there are other matters — ones that children (depending upon their ages) can decide, within the boundaries that you define.

Here are some of the things that I did to help my daughter (then 6) feel that the new home we were moving into was hers, and not just mine:

Before actually moving in, I asked my daughter if she wanted to see the apartment before furniture arrived. Not only did she say "yes," but her mother joined us for the initial visit, implicitly giving our daughter a message of support regarding our new home.

My daughter led us around the apartment, showing us the different rooms. She wanted to play hide-and-seek, and the premises being safe, we did. She asked if a particular closet could be used as our "art closet" — a home for markers, crayons, and construction paper — and I enthusiastically agreed; seven years later, it continues to serve that purpose.

I gave my daughter the opportunity to choose the color for the carpet in her room, and she was happy to do so.

(She would have chosen for the entire apartment, but that was too much for me.)

She decided on the bed she wanted, again, because she wanted to do so. My daughter also helped to make decisions on what pictures and posters would adorn the walls of her room, our refrigerator, and the inside of the front door. We picked up a shower curtain that she liked — colorful and fun with an aquatic theme, another imprint of hers on our new home.

The games and books that remained at her mother's house stayed there for the most part, because those were the ones she chose to keep there; the ones she wanted by us, we brought.

Additional factors eased the transition. The then-new apartment was in the same neighborhood as the old; in fact, only a block away. My daughter was able to go to the same school, keep the same friends, and continue to visit her grandparents frequently. If something is forgotten or wanted from the other home, a phone call and a short walk take care of the problem. Being Sabbath observers, the close proximity of our daughter's two homes allows her to be with both Mom and Dad on the same Saturday, and on other religious holidays, when we don't drive.

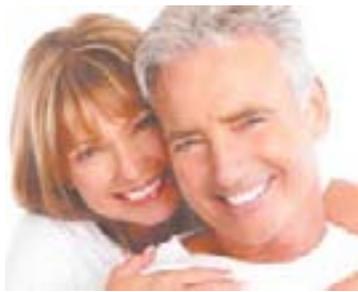
We are all individuals, and our children are unique. The steps that I took might not be possible or desirable in your situation. Still, the bottom line is that we, as parents, can do a great deal to make the transition from living in one home to two homes more comfortable and less scary for our children. Part of this unquestionably difficult experience can even be fun and empowering for them, if we are thoughtful and creative, and plan well.

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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

Sugar overload?

“Honey.” “Sweetie.” “Sugar.” They’re all terms of endearment for the people we love. Yet, when it comes time to eat, we feel guilty about serving sweets.

If it seems that children eat a lot of sugar, they do. They slurp it in soft drinks and sweetened fruit drinks and gobble it in yogurts, candy, cookies and commercial smoothies.

But, surprisingly, consumption of added sugars is decreasing for people age 2 and older, according to data published in the September 2011 issue of the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. Why? It’s mainly because we’re drinking less soda. The sugars in energy drinks, however, are increasing.

Why do kids crave sweets?

It’s for the survival of the species! If you nursed a baby, did you ever taste your milk? It is sweet. Mother Nature created baby’s first food to taste wonderful to ensure baby would like it and thrive. Also, naturally occurring sweet foods, such as berries, grapes, apples, plums and other fruit, are rich in nutrients.

Finally, it may be a combination of learned desire for sweets and a genetic predisposition, according to New York City-based dietitian

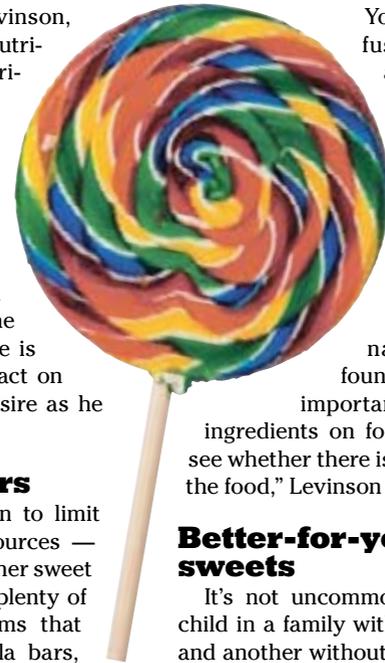
Jessica Fishman Levinson, MS, RD, founder of Nutritiouslicious, www.nutritiouslicious.com.

“Some studies have shown a genetic predisposition for sweets based on the mother’s diet while the baby is in utero. However, what a child is fed and the food he is exposed to once he is born has a large impact on the flavors he will desire as he gets older.”

Sneaky sugars

Parents know when to limit the obvious sugar sources — candy, cookies and other sweet treats. But there are plenty of so-called healthy items that contain sugar: granola bars, sports drinks, ketchup, salad dressings, cereals, pasta sauce, tomato soup and smoothies.

Here’s a tip on how to determine the amount of sugar in a food or drink. Take the amount of sugar in grams, divide by four, and you have the number of teaspoons of sugar in a serving. Then, be sure to multiply the serving size by the number of servings your child actually consumes.



You may be confused by the amount of sugar listed on a label. For example, it may seem that a cup of milk is high in sugar because it has 12 grams.

“That is the natural sugar found in milk. It’s important to read the ingredients on food packages to see whether there is added sugar in the food,” Levinson says.

Better-for-you sweets

It’s not uncommon to have one child in a family with a sweet tooth and another without. How to handle the one with the sweet tooth? Try fruit.

“Fruit is a naturally sweet food and most children don’t get enough servings of fruit per day, so it’s a great option when kids want a sweet snack,” recommends Levinson, whose new recipe book for children is “We Can Cook.”

But for those whose day simply isn’t complete without a sweet treat?

“There is nothing wrong with children having sweetened foods like cookies or cake in moderation. The key is watching how much a child is having and limiting the ‘treats’ to a small portion no more than once a day,” she says.

Finally, a little honey or real maple syrup can offer sweetness with a bit of nutrition. Both have small amounts of naturally occurring antioxidants. In fact, a study reported at the 2011 American Chemical Society meeting found polyphenols in maple syrup.

Keep in mind that any sugar should be brushed away (or rinsed if a toothbrush is not available) to reduce risk of caries.

Christine M. Palumbo, RD, is a dietitian in Naperville, IL, and a mother of three. She is on the faculty at Benedictine University. Follow her on Twitter at @PalumboRD. She can be reached at Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.

Baked apples

Apple pie, apple crisp, apple tart — all these desserts are delicious, but they are definitely special-occasion treats. Not so with baked apples, which still have the same warm, delicious flavors, and are a great way to fit a fruit serving into your child’s daily intake.

Makes four servings

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cooking apples
- ½ lemon
- 2 tbsp brown sugar
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- ½ cup water
- 1 tbsp maple syrup

DIRECTIONS: Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Peel the top of the



apples, and show your child how to core them using an apple corer (or use a paring knife to remove the stem area, and use a spoon to remove the rest of the core). Make sure to leave the bottom intact.

Have your child rub the lemon on the tops of the apples where they were

peeled. She can also squeeze some juice in the core area that is now empty.

In a small bowl, she can then combine the brown sugar and cinnamon, and spoon equal amounts of the mixture into each of the apples.

Pour water into the baking pan and place the apples in the pan. Let your child drizzle the syrup over all of the apples.

Cover with aluminum foil and bake for about 50 minutes.

NUTRITION FACTS: 120 calories; 33 grams carbohydrate; 0 protein, fat, cholesterol and sodium; 26 grams sugars (10 grams are added sugars); 5 grams dietary fiber; 6 milligrams vitamin C.

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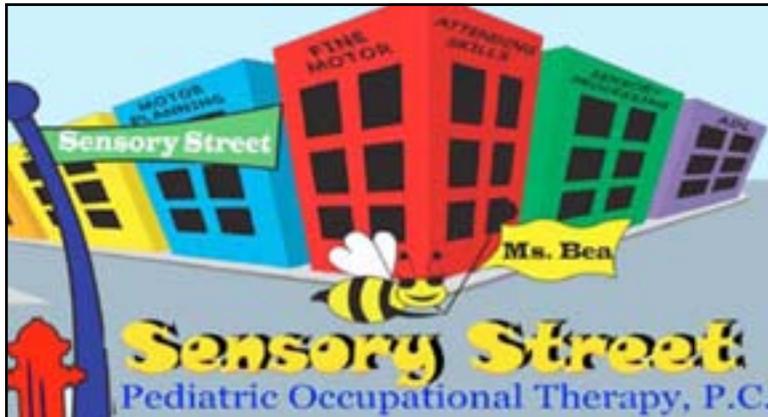
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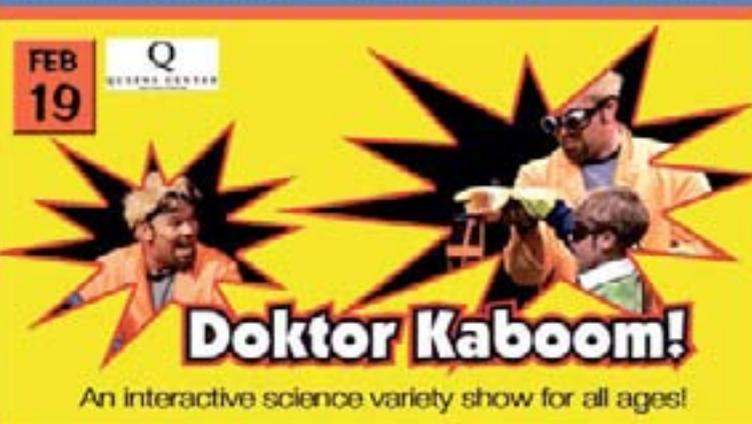
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GROWING UP ONLINE

CAROLYN JABS

Loving legal music

Young people are passionate about music and parents are, understandably, worried about what's appropriate for young ears. Today, however, parents need to look beyond lyrics to think about how kids are getting their music. Downloaded music is so readily available that teens can easily slip into behavior that is both unethical and illegal.

The issue of music piracy is serious enough to have inspired the Stop Online Piracy Act, a law that was supposed to update rules about copyright and fair use. Congress failed to pass the bill, so it continues to be up to parents to keep kids on the right side of laws that were admittedly designed for simpler times. The basic

rule is that artists are entitled to compensation for what they do. This is confusing territory because some musicians — especially those who don't have lucrative record contracts — are perfectly willing to give their music away. And many websites lure kids in with claims that the music they provide is free and legal.

Unfortunately, most of the websites that claim to offer "free" music are actually peer-to-peer file-sharing sites. Downloading the software on these sites allows your child to rifle through what's on the computers of others — and vice versa. This isn't necessarily illegal, because some of what people share through these sites is in the public domain. Much of the material, however, is copyrighted, so it's being distributed without authorization

from the people who own it. Downloading music without permission is theft, pure and simple. Point out to your kids that they show respect for the artists who create the music they love when they download files in a way that works for those artists. Perhaps the best analogy is a supermarket where it's perfectly OK to take the free taste of lasagna or the sample cookie being offered by the bakery, because the store decides to make these freebies available. It's not OK to steal a package of cookies, even if you intend to share them with your friends.

With that in mind, parents can guide kids to legitimate sources for their favorite tunes. Here's a list of alternatives:

Public libraries. Some libraries subscribe to Freegal, a service that allows patrons to download music legally. The program is controversial, because it violates the traditional library practice of borrowing materials and then returning them. Still, if your local library offers the service, get your kid a card.

Direct from artists. Many musicians distribute music for free, because they figure it's a good way to build a fan base that will pay for sales of tickets and merchandise. This is especially true for independent artists, though sometimes even the big names release free tracks to their fans. The best way to be sure the artist has authorized distribution of the music is to go directly to his or her website.

Streaming. Some websites function like radio stations by streaming music from their files to your speakers. Lastfm.com, Pandora.com and Spotify.com make it possible to legally listen to thousands of songs without actually downloading them. Like radio stations, the free versions of these websites play commercials. For a few dollars a month, the commercials go away.

Subscription. At subscription sites, a monthly fee allows your child to listen to anything on the website. The music can't be burned to a CD, but it can be downloaded to an MP3 player. Once a month, the player must be synched to the website and, if you end your subscription, the

music goes away. Some subscription services like Napster also offer a fixed number of downloads per month. This can be an ideal solution for teens, because they can listen to as many songs as they like, but they have to be choosy about what they actually download.

Pay-per-song. Sites like iTunes or Amazon sell licenses for music that becomes a permanent part of your child's personal collection. The price per song varies depending upon two factors. First, you pay a little more for higher quality, which is measured in kbps — a higher number means better fidelity. Second, cost increases as you buy more rights. Digital rights management determines the number of times a song can be copied, and you pay more for unlimited copies.

Peer-to-peer. Most adolescents aren't savvy — or patient — enough to figure out how to use peer-to-peer sites legally. These sites evade the law by claiming that they don't distribute anything. They do, however, make it possible for people to share unlimited copies of files that don't belong to them, so they put those who use them in legal jeopardy.

Peer-to-peer sites are also notorious for passing on viruses. By some estimates, more than 20 percent of the downloaded files include nasty codes that will, at the very least, mess up your system and, worse, may give others access to information that shouldn't be shared.

For all these reasons, peer-to-peer sites are much more expensive than they seem, and they should be off limits for teens.

Talk about which online format best matches your child's tastes and budget. If possible, provide a music allowance, or help your child figure out how to earn the money needed to purchase music legally. Teaching your child to do the right thing will take more effort and money, but it's every bit as important as keeping track of which songs include X-rated lyrics.

Carolyn Jabs, MA, is the mother of three computer-savvy kids who has been writing about technology for more than 20 years. Other Growing Up Online columns appear on her website www.growing-up-online.com.

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LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL

On content ratings

Checking advisories for films, music and games

I don't believe in strictly following industry ratings for numerous reasons. Among other things, I take into consideration the maturity of my kids and the message of the film. My son, for instance, watched "Stand By Me" (Columbia Pictures, rated R), well before the age of 17. In my opinion, this is a quality film with a great message for teens. However, it might not sit well with parents who don't want their teens exposed to profanity.

What's appropriate for one 13 year old might not be appropriate for another. Therefore, parents should interpret rating systems as a set of loose

rational behavior, drug abuse, and other elements that most parents consider off-limits.

Entertainment Software Rating Board:

- T (Teen: For ages 13 and older): violence, suggestive themes, crude humor, simulated gambling, or infrequent use of strong language.

- M (Mature: For persons ages 17 and older): intense violence, blood and gore, sexual content or strong language.

- A (Adults ONLY, 18 and over): prolonged, intense violence or graphic sexual content and nudity.

Recording Industry Association of America:

In 1990, the Association implemented a uniform Parental Advisory logo. The industry claims that the Parental Advisory Program effectively "allows record companies and their artists to exercise their rights of free expression, while fulfilling their social responsibilities to consumers." The logo "voluntarily" appears on the cover of music recordings because of sexually explicit or violent material.

Help or hindrance?

Douglas A. Gentile, PhD, an associate professor of psychology at Iowa State University, led a national study (published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, June 2011) of nearly 2,400 parents which found that 76 percent of parents wanted to see more detailed content ratings. The study also found that parents do not agree at what age it is acceptable to view different types of content.

"I believe that our culture has become so skewed in terms of what is acceptable for children and adolescents to be exposed to that the ratings should only serve as a guide for parents. Whenever possible, parents should also preview the material, read watchdog group reviews online, and talk to other parents about their impressions," asserts Michael Osit, PhD, a licensed psychologist and author of "Generation Text: Raising Well Adjusted Kids in an Age of Instant Everything" (Amacom, 2008).

Tara McNamara, a family film commentator for Fandango and founder of KidsPickFlicks.com, says it's up to the parents to decide what kids can watch.

"Parents cannot rely on just the [Motion Picture Association] rating. I can think of plenty of examples when I thought a movie was not rated appropriately; but, to be fair, the organization's guidelines are unreliable, because every parent and child is different when it comes to how they will interpret content," she says.

One size doesn't fit all

Parents make decisions based on many factors, including family values, a teen's maturity level, and religious beliefs. Therefore, there is no substitute for previewing material before a teen is exposed to it.

"It's a myth that parents can treat each child in a family exactly the same way," says Osit. He suggests that parents assess each teen's ability to handle mature material by considering things like maturity, responsibility, character, and coping skills.

Tips and tales

"I have taken my daughter to PG-13 movies and cringed at some of the language and scenes. Sometimes I think today's PG-13 is like the R rating when I was growing up."

— Mirra Cesario McLain,
Salt Point, NY

"I check them out first and use my own judgment."

— Kelly Behorik-Molyneaux,
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Myrna Beth Haskell is a feature writer and columnist specializing in parenting issues and child and adolescent development. She is the mother of two teenagers.



guidelines, rather than an absolute authority on what is appropriate.

Rating details

The following is a list of entertainment industry ratings and advisories.

Motion Picture Association of America:

- PG-13 (May be inappropriate for children under 13): drug use, brief nudity that is not sexually oriented, mild violence, and single use of one of the harsher sexually-derived words.

- R (Children under 17 require accompanying parent or guardian): adult themes, hard language, intense or persistent violence, sexually-oriented nudity, or drug abuse.

- NC-17 (No one 17 and under admitted): extreme violence, sex, aber-



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JAN. 5 - 8



Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
JAN. 5	JAN. 6	JAN. 7	JAN. 8
	10:30 AM	11:00 AM	1:00 PM
	7:00 PM	3:00 PM	5:00 PM
7:30 PM*	7:00 PM	7:00 PM	

JAN. 12 - 16



Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.	Mon.
JAN. 12	JAN. 13	JAN. 14	JAN. 15	JAN. 16
		1:00 PM	2:00 PM	1:00 PM
7:30 PM*	7:30 PM	5:00 PM		

JAN. 19 - 22



Thu.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
JAN. 19	JAN. 20	JAN. 21	JAN. 22
	10:30 AM	11:00 AM	1:00 PM
7:30 PM*	7:30 PM	3:00 PM	5:00 PM

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OUR RELATIONSHIPS

JOAN EMERSON, PhD

Am I in or am I out?

What can we do if we're not sure we want our marriage to last? Some of us really know that we're through, but kids, lack of money, logistics, or fear of the confrontation make it seem too hard to begin dealing with separation and divorce right now. However, although we're just not ready or able to take action at this point, we know that we're rationally and emotionally done.

Others have mixed feelings. Part of us really wishes things could be different, so we could be a happy couple again. The other part of us has given up, because there just doesn't seem to be any hope...nothing seems to work anymore. All of our attempts at improvement seem to backfire or, if there are good moments, they don't last; trust seems to be gone; it just doesn't feel safe to reach out or hope anymore; perhaps we ourselves are even acting out in destructive ways, which puts even more distance between us. So we're stuck in a totally ambivalent place that feels miserable inside, and we don't know if we have the desire, or the energy, to keep working at things.

If we were to go for couples counseling at this time, the ambivalence would be precisely the issue that would first need to be addressed.

Do we each really wish enough that the relationship could last to give it one final, sincere, full effort toward positive change, even though — since nobody can predict the future — all we know for sure right now is that at least we'd be able to say that we tried?

The effort required for something like this needs to really be thought about for a while, because reviving the relationship won't work unless both partners are 100 percent committed to the effort. Behaviors and patterns would obviously have to change, so we each need to take time to really do some soul searching: am I willing to take the risk and whole heartedly do this work?

For partners who have come to

the conclusion that they want to try, what would this work entail? It's likely that the help of a professional couples' therapist will be necessary, since old patterns of interacting have become so automatic by now that it usually takes a neutral observer to help recognize and adjust them. The healing process would begin by telling and hearing from our partner what unmet needs or upsetting behaviors have set off the unhappy distancing that has occurred. Both will have something to say about this, and each will be asking for change in the other.

Since old ways of talking about these problems didn't work, new ways of communicating will have to be used. And, since old reactions to hearing this stuff usually led nowhere but down, there will also have to be new ways of listening and responding.

Because the outcome is so unpredictable, why would it even be worth going through all the effort to try these changes? The reason to go through this process is all about us; we need to get our needs met. If our partner says something like, "I feel controlled when you're demanding my attention and if you back off, I can be more present," this is definitely worth a try. You're thinking, "I didn't even know what your problem was, now it turns out that it's something I'm doing wrong? That can't be, but, I'm willing to experiment with change and see if you'll come through with what I need."

So, once we hear the details of what "backing off" looks like, we try it, and if we actually see our partner becoming less guarded or resentful and more emotionally available, it's an "aha" moment: so this is what it takes! Ideally, we begin to recognize



that making some small changes in how we conduct ourselves brings us more gentleness and appreciation. So the first reason to make these efforts at personal and behavioral change is to get more of what we need.

The second reason is also for us, and probably more important than the first. We need to learn what it takes to be a good partner. Whether this is the relationship that has what it takes to last or not, we need to make sure that we don't repeatedly find ourselves in a relationship where our needs are unmet yet again. We all know people who were always looking — but never found — a good partner to settle in with and commit to because of a nonfunctional style of relating which they have, but of which, they are unaware. We don't want that to be us!

So, we commit to giving it our best. Experts say that about a six-month period will yield an answer: "Yeah, it's working;" or, "Well, I really tried, but this can't work for me." This is almost a no-lose situation. Hopefully, the marriage will begin to feel hopeful and rewarding, and the love will be experienced again. If not, the personal growth will be something that cannot be taken from us and will help us move on to a better place.

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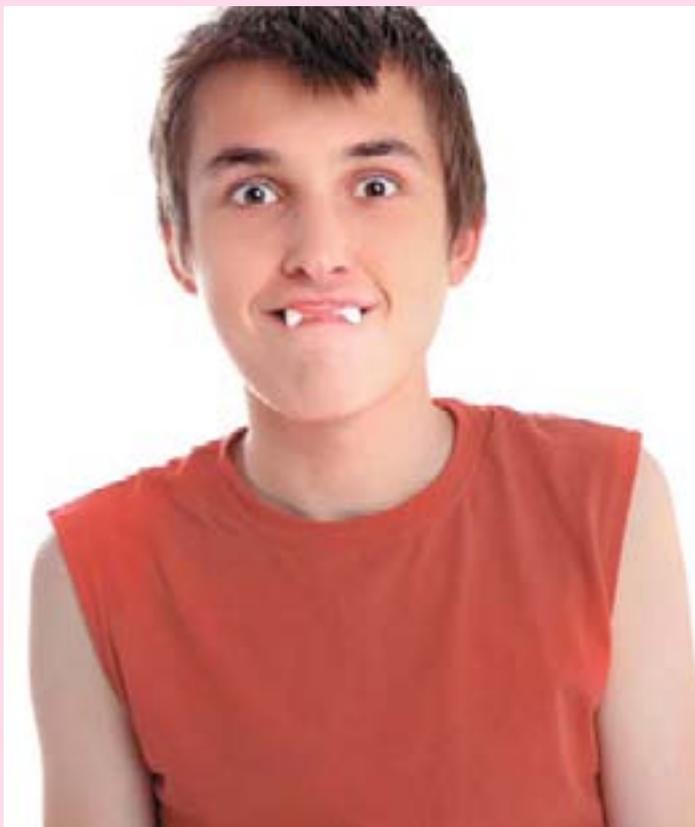
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PARENTS HELPING PARENTS

SHARON C. PETERS, MA

Cursing to provoke



Dear Sharon,

I read your article about the 13-year-old boy who wants a tattoo. I also have a 13-year-old who likes to curse. It is very upsetting to me, and I don't know what to do to make him stop. I think he does it to make me upset; he knows that I don't like it. What can I do?
— *Piera*

Dear Piera,

Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for teens and pre-teens to seem almost "eager" to fight with their parents. Cursing is one of many ways such arguments can begin.

I think it is important for all parents to be aware of the underlying issues in their adolescents' daily lives before tackling problematic behaviors that can "push Mom's or Dad's buttons."

It can be helpful to remember that

hormonal, peer and academic pressures usually increase for 13 year olds. These, and other stressors, can accumulate over time. Since many teens are reluctant to share the details of their days with their parents, they can end up keeping their personal tensions to themselves.

Unfortunately, the internal stress of adolescents usually finds its way to the surface. Since home, even for a moody teen, is often the safest place to express how things are going, upsets can get communicated in a variety of ways, including seeming "eager" to start fights on a regular basis.

Here are some ideas that I have offered to other parents of 13 year olds to help reduce underlying tensions

and improve communication:

A teen who is eager to upset his parents can be looking for attention and can be willing to settle for a fight to have his parents "all to himself." If a parent can find a way to spend ample relaxed time with her teen, this can substitute positive attention for fights — and can help. This could mean watching a show together, going for a walk, or hanging out in a teen's room while listening to music.

I suggest that parents try hard to talk less than their teen during this time. Staying quiet and supportive can help an adolescent feel comfortable enough to begin opening up about what is really going on. Common topics on the minds of most 13 year olds are the details of their classes, how their friends are treating them, how they are feeling about being "popular" or "unpopular," and even crushes they might have. There are countless more.

If a teen starts talking, it is often more important for a parent to listen and empathize rather than make suggestions and offer advice. As many adolescents want to be fully adult as soon as possible, they can be quite sensitive to frequent adult opinions. Even if a young person doesn't talk readily, quiet support can go a long way toward letting him know that he is loved and not alone; very helpful things to remember at this important age.

If and when a teen manages to push his parents' buttons — a common occurrence — it is important for parents to stay calm, clear and concise while explaining rules. Parents I know have often needed to take a deep breath, step into another room, address the behavior at another time, or get help from another adult to maintain their calm responses. Whenever this is done, it can make a big difference. Unfortunately, an upset parent usually creates an upset teen, something that rarely benefits anyone or reduces problematic behaviors.

Helping teens is often a time- and patience-consuming task, but I know many parents who have persisted and helped their child sort through a variety of problematic behaviors.

Sharon C. Peters is a mother and director of Parents Helping Parents, 669 President St., Brooklyn (718) 638-9444, www.PHPonline.org.

If you have a question about a challenge in your life (no issue is too big or too small) e-mail it to Dear Sharon at SWeiss@cnglocal.com.

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Keeping the peace

Queens teens' Model UN experience becomes a documentary

BY KRISTINA JOSEPH, SHERLANA ROOPLAL AND SYMONE SIMON

Sixteen Model United Nations students from John Adams High School got the thrill of a lifetime when they were chosen to be in a documentary produced by National Geographic.

The students in Michael Budhu's role-playing class — which simulates the work of the United Nations, while honing the students' public speaking and research skills — were picked out of 140 schools from around the world to appear in the film "Decorum: A Model UN Documentary Series." The students represented Sudan, Guatemala and India during the May Model UN conference at the Grand Hyatt Hotel in Manhattan where the documentary was filmed.

On Oct. 5, the students from the Queens school returned to the hotel to attend a screening of the film. They were greeted by hotel representatives, reporters, and the direc-



tor of the film, Matthew Bardocz. They were also informed that the documentary would be shown on the Times Square Jumbotron, as well as on the small screens inside taxis for the following three weeks.

More rewarding than their 15 minutes of fame, however, was the students' sense of pride.

"I felt important. I felt as if people out there wanted to hear from us. It's wonderful knowing that we come from a local school here in Queens, and now, so many people outside of our own community can become aware of all of the hard work that we put in," said Model UN student Anil Drepaul, 17, who was interviewed in the documentary.

Megan Aguirre, 17, another student appearing in the film, said she gained much more out of the experience than she expected to.

"From the conference, I was able to demonstrate the ability to stand up and speak my mind. I used to be scared of what

people thought about me and what I had to say. But the conference boosted my confidence, and it gave me a sense of what life will really be like as I get older. I now feel so much more comfortable to express my thoughts."

Student Ayah Innab, 15, who earned an "Honorable Mention" award during the May conference, agreed.

"I was ecstatic and surprised. I felt that there was such a high level of competition. This was, indeed, a significant accomplishment."

When the students returned to the school after viewing the documentary, they were pleasantly surprised to find that numerous teachers were showing their students the video clips of the "Decorum" stars; in fact, many of the Model UN students said they were approached by teachers and students who complimented and applauded them.

"It's a great tribute to them. It shows that students can do anything, if they put their minds to it," Principal Grace Zwillenberg said of the students. "They have gained important skills in life that they can keep and build on when they enter into college."

To watch the first three episodes of the documentary, visit the website of the United Nations Association of the United States of America, www.unausa.org/decorum.



The class had a great time when they went to the Model UN Conference last May.

It figures

BY CYNTHIA WASHAM

BABY BITS

More than 92

Percent of mothers in the U.S. who've posted photos of their children ages 2 and younger on social media.



34 Percent who posted sonogram photos before their babies were born.

7 Percent who created an e-mail address for their babies.

\$57 to \$109

Cost of an Exmobaby biosensor kit and pajamas, released in 2011, which enables parents to monitor baby's heart rate, movement and emotions from a computer or mobile phone.

More than 500

Number of military moms given baby showers by Operation Showers of Appreciation since former Marine Kimberly Felshaw of San Diego founded the charity in 2008.

60 Percent of military families who need financial aid.

\$25,000–\$35,000

Average payment to surrogate mothers for bearing a baby for an unrelated couple.

99 Percent of surrogate mothers who say they're motivated by compassion and not money.

3 More years of education completed by children raised by bookworms over children raised in homes with few books.

.9 Percent of births in the U.S. that take place at home.

30 Percent in the Netherlands.



15 days

Minimum age that California law allows babies to be filmed commercially, prompting critics of the movie "Babies" to claim a violation in filming San Francisco baby Hattie.

20 Maximum minutes per day California infants are allowed to be on camera.



Sources: PC Magazine Online, dcTechSource.com, Psychology Today, Women's Health Weekly, People Weekly, OperationShowersofAppreciation.org, PersonalMoneyStore.com, CNN.com, ABCNews.go.com

Going Places

LONG-RUNNING

Christmas Show: Radio City Music Hall, 1260 Ave. of the Americas between 50th and 51st streets; (212) 247-4777; www.radiocity.com; Daily, check for times, Now – Mon, Jan. 2, 2012; \$45-\$125.

The world famous Rockettes, new music, dazzling new costumes and state-of-the-art technology make this year's show the greatest ever. And of course a visit from the jolly old elf himself, Saint Nick.

"Peter Pan": The Theater at Madison Square Garden, 2 Pennsylvania Plaza; (866) 858-0008; www.theateratmsg.com; Daily, check for times, Now – Fri, Dec. 30; \$35-\$99.

Pixie dust, captain hook and Wendy. Cathy Rigby as the boy that doesn't want to grow up flies through the air and creates magical moments that delight young and old.

Dinosaur display: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th Street; (212) 769-5000; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am–5:30 pm, Now – Mon, Jan. 2, 2012; \$24 (\$18 students, \$14 children).

Children learn about the largest dinos, the long-tailed sauropods by examining the innovative model.

Big Apple Circus: Lincoln Center, 62nd St. between Amsterdam and Columbus avenues; (888) 541-3750; www.bigapplecircus.org; Sundays and Mondays, 10 am–6 pm, Tuesdays – Saturdays, 10 am–8 pm, Now – Sun, Jan. 8, 2012; \$15-\$95.

The Big Top returns featuring the Flying Cortes, magician Scott Nelson and Muriel Brugman, aerialist Anna Volodko and the mistress of the horses Jenny Vidbel on her fiery Arabian and pet pooches.

Gingerbread Adventure: New York Botanical Garden, 200th St. and Kazimiroff Blvd. (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Daily, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Mon, Jan. 16, 2012; \$20 (\$18 seniors and students; \$10 children).

Children explore the spices that make up a classic gingerbread recipe.

"Polar Express": New York Aquarium, 602 Surf Ave. between W. Eighth and W. Fifth streets; (718) 265-3448; www.nyaquarium.com; Daily, 10 am, Now – Mon, Jan. 2, 2012; \$5 plus zoo admission.



On the right track

Step aboard and ride the rails at the New York City Transit Museum. Children ages 4 and older learn all about the system that moves hundreds of thousands of people every day with fun, hands-on workshops and performances.

Take a journey through time with the first female conductor, Mabel Kline, and enjoy an interactive, imaginary ride on the IRT on Jan. 7 and 8 at 1:30 pm.

Willie Maeby takes you on a ride on the BMT through the 1920s, where you will experience the magic of subway travel from long ago on Jan. 14 and 15 at 1:30 pm.

On Jan. 21 and 22 at 1:30 pm, children visit the technology lab and learn about the subway's public address system. Then they

can make their own announcements. Suitable for children 5 and older.

Have you ever wondered about the people that help to keep the subways running? On Jan. 28 and 29, at 1:30 pm, children of all ages examine artifacts, explore special areas of the museum, and make a badge for the subway job they would most like to have.

All events are free with museum admission of \$7 for adults; \$5 for children, ages 2 to 17, and seniors; free for museum members. All children under 17 must be accompanied by an adult.

New York City Transit Museum [130 Livingston St. at Boerum Place in Brooklyn Heights, (718) 694-1600]. For info, visit www.mta.info/mta/museum.

Submit a listing

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

All you have to do is send your listing request to calendar@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!

Come and take the adventure of a lifetime and view the movie in 4D.

"The Three Bears Holiday Bash":

Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre, 81st St. and Central Park W. (212) 988-9093; www.cityparksfoundation.org; Weekdays, 10:30 am and noon, Saturdays and Sundays, 1 pm, Now – Fri, Dec. 30; \$5 (\$8 adults; group rates available).

Celebrate Hanukkah, The Night Before Christmas and Kwanzaa with song, dance and puppetry. Reservations required.

Storytime: The Moxie Spot, 81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks Street; (718) 923-9710; themoxiespot.com; Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, Noon, \$2.50.

Come hear a few stories with a simple craft to go with it.

Holiday show: Puppetworks, 338 Sixth Ave. at Fourth Street; (718) 965-3391; www.puppetworks.org; Monday, Dec. 26, 12:30 pm; Tuesday, Dec. 27, 12:30 pm; Wednesday, Dec. 28, 12:30 pm; Thursday, Dec. 29, 12:30 pm; Friday, Dec. 30, 12:30 pm; Saturday, Jan. 7, 12:30 pm; Sunday, Jan. 8, 12:30 pm; \$7 (\$8 adults; \$6 group rates).

Puppetworks presents "Nutcracker Sweets" (about 10 minutes), based on Tchaikovsky's classic ballet, featuring candies and sweet fruits dancing; and "The Steadfast Tin Soldier" based on Hans Christian Andersen's Toy Story, the tale of a Jack in the Box competing with a tin soldier for the affections of a dancing doll. Suitable for children 3 years and older.

Needlecraft: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Em-

Going Places

pire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; Daily, 1–3 pm, Now – Mon, Jan. 2, 2012; Free.

Try your hand at knitting, or write with quill and ink.

“A Christmas Carol, Oy! Hanukkah, Merry Kwanzaa (Happy Ramadan)”: Clockwork Puppet Theater, 196 Columbia St. between Sackett and DeGraw streets; (212) 868-4444; www.smarttix.com; Monday, Dec. 26, 4 pm; Tuesday, Dec. 27, 7 pm; Wednesday, Dec. 28, 4 pm; Thursday, Dec. 29, 4 pm; Friday, Dec. 30, 4 pm; Saturday, Dec. 31, 4 pm; Sunday, Jan. 1, 4 pm; \$20 (\$12 children).

Presented by the Czechoslovak-American Marionette Theater this adaptation of Dickens’ classic with an old world accent features over 30 puppets and holiday songs in Czech, English, Hebrew and Swahili. Suitable for children 5 and older.

Singalong: The Moxie Spot, 81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks Street; (718) 923-9710; themoxiespot.com; Tuesdays, 11:00, \$2.50.

Come clap, dance, sing or just watch!

Holiday train show: New York Botanical Garden, 200th St. and Kazimiroff Blvd. (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Mon, Jan. 16, 2012; \$20 (\$18 seniors and students; \$10 children).

The annual event features model trains that zip over bridges and past replicas of New York landmarks.

“The Amazing Max and the Box of Interesting Things”: The MMAC Theater, 248 W. 60th St. between Amsterdam and West End avenues; (212) 239-6200; www.telecharge.com; Tuesday, Dec. 27, 11 am; Saturday, Dec. 31, 4:30 pm; Saturday, Jan. 7, 4:30 pm; Sunday, Jan. 8, 4:30 pm; Saturday, Jan. 14, 4:30 pm; Sunday, Jan. 15, 4:30 pm; Saturday, Jan. 21, 4:30 pm; Saturday, Jan. 28, 4:30 pm; \$29.50 (\$49.50 VIP seating).

The magic show with a mind of its own. Magician Max Darwin makes objects appear out of thin air.

Dance-around: The Moxie Spot, 81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks Street; (718) 923-9710; themoxiespot.com; Thursdays, 11, \$2.50.

For children.

Movie night: The Moxie Spot, 81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks Street; (718) 923-9710; themoxiespot.com; Fridays, 6:15, Free!

Shorts and a full length family appropriate movie.

Mini-golf: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., between Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X353; www.nyscience.org; Fridays, 2–5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Sat, Dec. 31; \$4 (plus museum admission).



Let's dragon dance

Gong Hei Fard Choy! Celebrate the Year of the Dragon at the Brooklyn Children's Museum's "Dragon Dance" program. The Chinese New Year falls on Jan. 23 this year and celebrates the dragon. According to Chinese lore, the Year of the Dragon will be marked by excitement, unpredictability, exhilaration and intensity. On Jan. 2 and 21,

museum admission).

Putt your way through a nine-hole course and learn about spaceflight along the way. Weather permitting.

Science playground: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., between Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X353; www.nyscience.org; Fridays, 2–5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm, Now – Sat, Dec. 31; \$4 (plus museum admission).

The nation's largest playground featuring 60,000 square feet of exhibits, with

slides, seesaws, climbing webs, drums, mirrors, sand boxes and more, weather permitting.

from 1:30 to 3:30 pm, children 6 and older learn about the iconic dragon dance and create a paper dragon to take home.

The program is free with museum admission of \$7.50.

The Brooklyn Children's Museum [145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue in Crown Heights, (718) 735-4400]. For info, visit www.brooklynkids.org.

Science themed 3-D show about the ocean and ecosystem. The movie is ap-

Wild Ocean: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., between Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X353; www.nyscience.org; Fridays, 3:30 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 1:30 and 3:30 pm, Now – Sat, March 31, 2012; \$6, (\$5 children, students and seniors, plus museum admission).

proximately 30 minutes long and is suitable for children 6 years and older.

proximately 30 minutes long and is suitable for children 6 years and older.

Teen time: Greenpoint Public Library, 107 Norman Ave. at Leonard Street; (718) 349-8504; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Fridays, 4 pm, Now – Fri, Dec. 30; Free.

Get together with friends and read books, play games and listen to music.

“Snow White”: Bond Street Theatre, 303 Bond St. at Union Street; (800) 838-3006; www.companyxiv.com; Fridays, 7 pm, Saturdays, 3 and 7 pm, Sundays, 3 pm, Now – Sun, Jan. 15, 2012; \$35 (\$30 seniors and children under 17).

Classic fairy tale with a modern twist blending opera, circus, dance, and theatre.

Family disco night: The Moxie Spot, 81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks Street; (718) 923-9710; themoxiespot.com; Saturdays, 6 pm, Free!

Eat, drink and shake your groove things!

Bingo night: The Moxie Spot, 81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks Street; (718) 923-9710; themoxiespot.com; Sundays, 6, Free.

Prizes and fun for the whole family.

Sunday singalong: The Moxie Spot, 81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks Street; (718) 923-9710; themoxiespot.com; Sundays, 12:15 pm, Free.

Come sing, clap, dance or just watch.

Thomas and Friends: New York Botanical Garden, 200th St. and Kazimiroff Blvd. (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Daily, 11 am, 1:30, 3:30 and 5:30 pm; Mon, Jan. 2 – Mon, Jan. 16, 2012; \$20 (\$18 students/seniors; \$10 child).

Join Thomas and Driver Sam on a fun filled sing along mini performance.

Dinosaur Petting Zoo: Eisner & Lubin Auditorium of the Kimmel Center, 60 Washington Square S. (212) 352-3101; www.skirballcenter.nyu.edu; Wednesday, Jan. 4, 7 pm; Thursday, Jan. 5, 4:30 pm; Friday, Jan. 6, 4:30 pm; Saturday, Jan. 7, 11 am; Sunday, Jan. 8, 11 am; Wednesday, Jan. 11, 4:30 pm; Thursday, Jan. 12, 4:30 pm; Friday, Jan. 13, 4:30 pm; Saturday, Jan. 14, 11 am; Sunday, Jan. 15, 11 am; \$20-\$30.

Interactive puppet performance. Recommended for children six and up.

Craft day: Charles A. Dana Discovery Center, Central Park; (212) 860-1370; www.nycgovparks.org; Fridays, 3–4:30 pm, Fri, Jan. 6 – Fri, March 30, 2012; Free.

Create a different nature inspired masterpiece every week. Families only, no groups.

“Little Miss Muffet's Monster Sitting Service”: The Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre, West Dr. at 79th Street Transverse; (212) 988-9093;

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Going Places

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cityparksfoundation.org/swedishcottage.html; Tuesdays, 10:30 am and noon, Wednesdays, 10:30 am, noon and 2:30 pm, Thursdays and Fridays, 10:30 am and noon, Saturdays and Sundays, 1 pm, Tues, Jan. 17 – Sun, Feb. 19, 2012; \$8 (\$5 children under 12).

Based on the nursery rhyme, "Little Miss Muffet", this version tells the story of Molly Muffet, the descendent of the original Miss Muffet. Run time is approximately 50 minutes and is suitable for children 3-9.

Wii and Ntendo: The Moxie Spot, 81 Atlantic Ave., between Hicks Street; (718) 923-9710; themoxiespot.com; Saturday, Jan. 21, 6 pm; Saturday, Feb. 18, 6 pm; Saturday, March 17, 6 pm; Saturday, April 21, 6 pm; Saturday, May 19, 6 pm; Saturday, June 16, 6 pm; Saturday, July 21, 6 pm; Free.

Prizes, games and food.

MON, DEC. 26

Teen time: Ulmer Park Public Library, 2602 Bath Ave. at 26th Avenue; (718) 265-3443; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Children 13 and up read books, play games and listen to music.

"Pingu": Cobble Hill Cinema, 265 Court St. between Butler & Douglass streets; (718) 596-9113; www.cobble-hilltheatre.com; Mondays, 4 pm, Dec. 26; \$7.

A "Big Movies for Little Kids" favorite.

TUES, DEC. 27

Holiday celebration: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., between Avenue of Science; (718) 699-0005 X353; www.nyscience.org; 9:30 am–2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Re-make the holidays by bending, twisting, sculpting and tasting.

Story play: Borough Park Library, 1265 43rd St. between 12th and 13th avenues; (718) 437-4085; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; 3 pm; Free.

Children birth to five years old play with toys and hear stories.

Story and play: Leonard Public Library, 81 Devoe St. between Manhattan Avenue and Leonard Street; (718) 486-3365; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Infants to 5 years old hear stories and listen to songs.

Toddler time: Kings Highway Public Library, 2115 Ocean Ave. at Avenue R; (718) 339-2783; Http://www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Mondays and Tuesdays, 11 am; Free.

Children 18 to 36 months play games and hear stories.

Reading RIF: Ft. Hamilton Public Li-



Post-holiday 'Sweets'

It's not too late to catch the holiday show at Puppetworks, "Nutcracker Sweets." Based on Pyotr Tchaikovsky's classic ballet, it features candies and sweet fruits dancing; the companion story, "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," is based on a Hans Christian Anderson tale. Both plays feature the wonderful puppets

of Puppetworks and are suitable for children ages 3 and up. Performances are Jan. 7 and Jan. 8, at 12:30 pm.

Tickets are \$7 for children and \$8 for adults.

Puppetworks [338 Sixth Ave. at Fourth Street in Park Slope, (718) 965-3391]. For info, visit www.puppetworks.org.

brary, 9424 Fourth Ave. at 94th Street; (718) 748-6919; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Tuesdays, 2:30 pm, Free.

School age children earn free books by reading.

WED, DEC. 28

Holiday celebration: 9:30 am–2 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Tuesday, Dec. 27.

Winter camp: Prospect Park Zoo, 450 Flatbush Ave. at Ocean Avenue; (718) 399-7327; www.prospectparkzoo.com; 10 am–3 pm; \$125 (\$150 non-members).

Children 6 to 9 years old enjoy winter break with hands-on activities including live animal encounters, scavenger hunt, crafts and more. Snacks provided, children bring their own lunch. Pre-registration required.

Read and Play: Saratoga Public Library, 8 Thomas S. Boyland St. at Macon Street; (718) 573-5224; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; 10:30 am; Free.

Children with special needs make friends and play.

Story time: Ulmer Park Public Library, 2602 Bath Ave. at 26th Avenue; (718) 265-3443; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Noon; Free.

Children 3-5 years old enjoy classic songs and books.

Word Up!: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1 pm; Free with museum admission of \$7.50.

Kwanzaa reading event with NYC Councilman Albert Vann.

Toy workshop: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1:30–2:30 pm; Free with museum admission of \$7.50.

Children 5 and older learn the basics of toy rockets.

Babies and books: Borough Park Library, 1265 43rd St. between 12th and 13th avenues; (718) 437-4085; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; 1:30 pm; Free.

From birth to 18 months with a caregiver.

Tutoring: Eastern Parkway Public Library, 1044 Eastern Pkwy. at Kingston Avenue; (718) 778-9330; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; 4:30 pm; Free.

Children get homework help after school.

THURS, DEC. 29

Holiday celebration: 9:30 am–2 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Tuesday, Dec. 27.

Winter camp: 10 am–3 pm. Prospect Park Zoo. See Wednesday, Dec. 28.

Teen time: Bushwick Public Library, 340 Bushwick Ave. at Seigel Street; (718) 602-1348; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Noon; Free.

books, games and music with friends.

Arts and crafts: Gravesend Public Library, 303 Ave. X between West First and West Second streets; (718) 382-5792; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; 3:15 pm; Free.

For children.

Story play First RIF: Bedford Public Library, 496 Franklin Ave. at Fulton Street; (718) 623-0012; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; 4 pm; Free.

Read to get free books, for all ages.

FRI, DEC. 30

Holiday celebration: 9:30 am–2 pm. New York Hall of Science. See Tuesday, Dec. 27.

Fossil workshop: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1:30–2:30 pm; Free with museum admission of \$7.50.

Children 4 and up learn about paleontology and how to unlock the mysteries of the past.

Kids Kicking Cancer: Maimonides Medical Center, 4802 Tenth Ave. at 48th Street; (718) 765-2678; 5–6 pm; Free.

Martial arts program for children with cancer and support group for parents.

SAT, DEC. 31

Tim and the Space Cadets: Leonard Nimoy Thalia, 2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street; (212) 316-4962; www.symphonyspace.org; 11 am; \$20 (\$17 members; \$13 children; \$11 member).

Heartwarming lyrics and pop tunes to get you up and rocking.

New Year's Eve party: St. Finbar Msgr. Scanlon Center, Bath Ave. at Bay 20th St. (718) 236-3312; 8 pm; \$40 (\$20 children 12 and under).

Ring in the new year with friends at the annual gala. Hot buffet, BYOB and dj music. RSVP required.

New Year's Eve celebration: Grand Army Plaza, Union Street between Flatbush Avenue and Prospect Park West; 11 pm–12:30 am; Free.

Come and enjoy this annual firework's display at Grand Army Plaza.

Going Places

MON, JAN. 2

Dragon dance: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1:30–2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 6 and older learn about the Chinese zodiac year of the dragon through dance and making a paper dragon.

WED. JAN. 4

Kick-off Wednesday: St. Ann's Parish House, 157 Montague St. at Court Street; (718) 522-3649; www.montaguebid.com; 5–8 pm; Free.

The Montague Street BID is hosting a family event with live entertainment performed by the Lucas Dedmon quartet; complimentary hors d'oeuvres and hot spiced apple cider; children get to play chess on a giant chessboard.

THURS, JAN. 5

Workshop: Children's Museum of the Arts, 103 Charlton St. at Hudson Street; (212) 274-0986; www.cmany.org; 2–6 pm; \$10.

Artist Tranqui Yanqui visits the museum and children 7-12.

Workshop: Children's Museum of the Arts, 103 Charlton St. at Hudson Street; (212) 274-0986; www.cmany.org; 3:30, 4:30 and 5 pm; \$10.

Children 7-14 focus on painting and color mixing.

"Mickey and Minnie's Magical Journey": Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum, 1255 Hempstead Tpk. (800) 745-3000; www.nassaucoliseum.com; 7 pm; \$28.50-\$153.50.

Presented by Disney on Ice.

FRI, JAN. 6

"Mickey and Minnie's Magical Journey": 10:30 am and 7 pm. Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum. See Thursday, Jan. 5.

Blooming Babies: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am–12:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 18 months to 2 years old listen to a story and make an age appropriate craft to take home.

Three Kings Day: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 2:30–3:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 5 and younger enjoy the fest of the Three Kings and create a jeweled crown to take home.

"Rumple-Stiltskin": The Duke Theater, 229 W. 42nd St. at Seventh Av-



More music, Peas!

Children love their veggies — when it's Hot Peas 'N Butter. The jammin', slammin' musical group performs live at Brooklyn Center for Performing Arts at Brooklyn College on Jan. 29 at 2 pm.

Children, 4 and up, enjoy the interactive program, in English and Spanish. The group incorporates

Latin and Afro-Caribbean rhythms, jazz, folk and rock that has the adults stomping their feet, too.

Tickets are \$7.

Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College [2900 Campus Rd. between Amersfort and Kenilworth places in Midwood, (718) 951-4500]. For info, visit www.brooklyncenteronline.org.

enue; (646) 223-3010; 7 pm; \$25 (\$17 members).

Enchanting fantasy classic with storytelling and music. For children 8 years old and up.

SAT, JAN. 7

Reading is fun: Brooklyn Public Library's Brooklyn Heights branch, 280 Cadman Plaza West at Tillary Street; (212) 677-4650; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/branch_library_detail.jsp?branchpageid=117; 10 am; Free.

Children enjoy stories.

Reading is fun: Brooklyn Public Library's Brooklyn Heights branch, 280 Cadman Plaza West at Tillary Street; (212) 677-4650; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/branch_library_detail.jsp?branchpageid=117; 10 am; Free.

Teens enjoy stories.

"Aga-Boom": Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. at West End Avenue; (212) 864-5400; www.symphonyspace.org; 11 am and 2 pm; \$25 (\$21 members; \$15 children; \$13 member).

Clowning around with slapstick, physical comedy and outrageous zaniness.

"Mickey and Minnie's Magical Journey": 11 am, 3 pm and 7 pm.

Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum. See Thursday, Jan. 5.

Workshop: 11 am–5 pm. Children's Museum of the Arts. See Thursday, Jan. 5.

Workshop: Children's Museum of the Arts, 103 Charlton St. at Hudson Street; (212) 274-0986; www.cmany.org; 11:30 am, 12:30, 2:30, 3:30 and 4:30 pm; \$10.

Children 6 and older focus on large scale drawings using a variety of distress drawing techniques.

Blooming Babies: 11:30 am–12:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Friday, Jan. 6.

"My Baby is a Hero": Repertorio Espanol, 138 E. 27th St. between Lexington and Third avenues; (212) 225-9999; www.repertorio.org; Noon; \$12; (free for parents).

Bi-lingual puppet show tells the tale of Prince Azulito and Princess Perlita and their newborn baby; presented by Scaramouches Latino Puppet Theater. For children ages 3-8.

Journey to the past: New York Transit Museum, 130 Livingston St. at Boerum Place; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm; Free

with museum admission.

Children 5 and older take a journey back in time with Mabel Klein the first female conductor and in imaginary ride on an IRT local. Performance is 30 minutes.

"Rumple-Stiltskin": 2 and 7 pm. The Duke Theater. See Friday, Jan. 6.

SUN, JAN. 8

Workshop: 11 am–5 pm. Children's Museum of the Arts. See Thursday, Jan. 5.

Workshop: Children's Museum of the Arts, 103 Charlton St. at Hudson Street; (212) 274-0986; www.cmany.org; 11:30 am, 12:30, 2:30, 3:30 and 4:30 pm; \$10.

Children 6 and older study color mixing through weaving.

Blooming Babies: 11:30 am–12:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Friday, Jan. 6.

"Rumple-Stiltskin": Noon and 5 pm. The Duke Theater. See Friday, Jan. 6.

"Mickey and Minnie's Magical Journey": 1 and 5 pm. Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum. See Thursday, Jan. 5.

Dino-Mite: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1:30–2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children four and older journey through time and discover the dinosaur.

Journey to the past: 1:30 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 7.

Clifford the Big Red Dog: Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, 2900 Campus Rd., between Amersfort Place and Kenilworth Place; (718) 951-4500; www.brooklyncenteronline.org; 2 pm; \$10.

The lovable storybook character live on stage. For children four and up.

THURS, JAN. 12

Workshop: 11 am–5 pm. Children's Museum of the Arts. See Thursday, Jan. 5.

Workshop: Children's Museum of the Arts, 103 Charlton St. at Hudson Street; (212) 274-0986; www.cmany.org; 3:30, 4:30 and 5 pm; \$10.

Children 7-14 create self-portrait.

FRI, JAN. 13

"Miss Ophelia": The Duke Theater, 229 W. 42nd St. at Seventh Avenue; (646) 223-3010; 7 pm; \$25 (\$17

Continued on page 70

Going Places

Continued from page 69 members).

Stage adaptation of "Ophelia's Shadow Theatre" by Michael Ende. For children 6 years old and up.

SAT, JAN. 14

Reading is fun: 10 am. Brooklyn Public Library's Brooklyn Heights branch. See Saturday, Jan. 7.

Reading is fun: 10 am. Brooklyn Public Library's Brooklyn Heights branch. See Saturday, Jan. 7.

Key Wilde and Mr Clarke: Leonard Nimoy Thalia, 2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street; (212) 316-4962; www.symphonyspace.org; 11 am and 2 pm; \$20 (\$17 members; \$13 children, \$11 member children).

The duo performs quirky tunes against a backdrop of animations filled with dogs, and frogs and fish that fly. Fun for all ages.

Workshop: Children's Museum of the Arts, 103 Charlton St. at Hudson Street; (212) 274-0986; www.cmany.org; 11:30 am, 12:30, 2:30, 3:30 and 4:30 pm; \$10.

Children 6 and older create artworks that portray emotion using hands as the medium.

"Miss Ophelia": Noon and 5 pm. The Duke Theater. See Friday, Jan. 13.

Journey to the past: New York Transit Museum, 130 Livingston St. at Boerum Place; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Willie Maebly, a conductor from the 1920's show children five and older around his favorite subway cars. Performance time is 30 minutes.

Martin Luther King Jr. celebration: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 2:30-3:30 pm 1:30 am-12:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Let's join hands allows children 6 and older to learn about the Civil Rights leader, tolerance and peace. Create a hand wreath to take home.

SUN, JAN. 15

Workshop: Children's Museum of the Arts, 103 Charlton St. at Hudson Street; (212) 274-0986; www.cmany.org; 11:30 am, 12:30, 2:30, 3:30 and 4:30 pm; \$10.

Children 6 and up make 3D wire sculptures using plants as the theme.

"Miss Ophelia": Noon and 5 pm. The Duke Theater. See Friday, Jan. 13.

Best Nest contest: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400;



Photo by Gerry Goodstein

Ready to 'Laugh'?

Laugh yourself silly at the Peter Jay Sharp Theater when the Paper Bag Players come to town on Jan. 28 and 29 to perform "Laugh, Laugh, Laugh."

Children ages 4 to 8 will enjoy this show of non-stop funny stories, amazing paper bag sets and costumes, and dance. Parents will hold their sides and feet will tap to the merry mix of new music and standards. Be prepared to be

tickled pink, stretch your imagination and smile from ear to ear.

The Paper Bag Players perform "Laugh, Laugh, Laugh" on Jan. 28 at 11 am and Jan. 29 at 3 pm. Tickets are \$15-\$30 (\$11-\$26 for members).

The Peter Jay Sharp Theater [155 W. 65th St. at West End Avenue on the Upper West Side, Manhattan; (212)-864-5400]. For info, visit www.symphonyspace.org.

www.brooklynkids.org; 1:30-2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 4 and older use twigs and mud bubbles and everything else to make a next.

Journey to the past: 1:30 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 14.

Martin Luther King Jr. celebration: 2:30-3:30 pm 1:30 am-12:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 14.

MON, JAN. 16

Best Nest contest: 1:30-2:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Sunday, Jan. 15.

WED, JAN. 18

Winnie the Pooh's birthday:

Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11:30 am-12:30 pm and 2:30-3:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Help Winnie blow out the candles at this celebration and then create your own teddy-bear inspired craft to take home. For children 5 and younger.

THURS, JAN. 19

Workshop: Children's Museum of the Arts, 103 Charlton St. at Hudson Street; (212) 274-0986; www.cmany.org; 3:30, 4:30 and 5 pm; \$10.

Students 7-14 mix colors and then paint still life as accurately as possible.

SAT, JAN. 21

Reading is fun: 10 am. Brooklyn Public Library's Brooklyn Heights branch. See Saturday, Jan. 7.

Reading is fun: 10 am. Brooklyn Public Library's Brooklyn Heights branch. See Saturday, Jan. 7.

"Hands Up": The New 42nd Street Studios, 229 W. 42nd St. at Seventh Avenue; (646) 223-3010; 10:30 am, 12:30 and 2:30 pm; \$20 (\$14 members).

With an animated soundtrack, these hilarious hand puppets form a finger-munching monster, a high strung pianist and other funny friends. For children 3-6 years old.

American folk rock: Leonard Nimoy Thalia, 2537 Broadway at W. 94th Street; (212) 316-4962; www.symphonyspace.org; 11 am; \$20 (\$17 members; \$13 children, \$11 member children).

Rani Arbo and Daisy Mayhem play original music as well as traditional tunes that span 200 years of Americana.

Workshop: Children's Museum of the Arts, 103 Charlton St. at Hudson Street; (212) 274-0986; www.cmany.org; 11:30 am, 12:30, 2:30, 3:30 and 4:30 pm; \$10.

Children 6 and older define cross section and use it as a tool to create works.

All aboard!: New York Transit Museum, 130 Livingston St. at Boerum Place; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 5 and older learn the history of the subway's public address system and then create their own announcements.

Concert: The Morgan Library and Museum, 225 Madison Ave. at 36th Street; (212) 685-0008; www.themorgan.org; 2-3 pm; \$15 (\$10 members; \$10 children).

Amir Vahab and his ensemble perform traditional Persian and Turkish music.

Dragon dance: 2:30-3:30 pm 1:30 am-12:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Monday, Jan. 2.

SUN, JAN. 22

"Hands Up": 10:30 am, 12:30 and 2:30 pm. The New 42nd Street Studios. See Saturday, Jan. 21.

Workshop: Children's Museum of the Arts, 103 Charlton St. at Hudson Street; (212) 274-0986; www.cmany.org; 11:30 am, 12:30, 2:30, 3:30 and 4:30 pm; \$10.

Children 6 and older create their own mini-quilts.

Wonder Why workshop: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1:30-2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

What is a fossil? for children 4 and older.

All aboard!: 1:30 pm. New York Tran-

Going Places

sit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 21.

THURS, JAN. 26

Workshop: Children's Museum of the Arts, 103 Charlton St. at Hudson Street; (212) 274-0986; www.cmany.org; 3:30, 4:30 and 5 pm; \$10.

Students 7-14 examine Op-Artists then make their own color op-art project.

FRI, JAN. 27

Writing workshop: Barnes and Noble Park Slope, 267 Seventh Ave. at Sixth Street; (718) 832-9066; 5 pm; Free.

Teens get helpful hints from author Sarah MacLean.

SAT, JAN. 28

Reading is fun: 10 am. Brooklyn Public Library's Brooklyn Heights branch. See Saturday, Jan. 7.

Reading is fun: 10 am. Brooklyn Public Library's Brooklyn Heights branch. See Saturday, Jan. 7.

Camp fair: Church of St. Paul the Apostle, Columbus Ave. at W. 60th Street; (212) 677-4650 X34; www.re-

sourcesnyc.org; 11 am-3 pm; Free.

Representatives from over 60 summer programs serving children and teens with special needs will be present to answer questions. Presented by Resources for Children with Special Needs. Visitors receive copy of Camps 2011-12 director. Pre-registration required.

The Paper Bag Players: Peter Jay Sharp Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. at West End Avenue; (212) 864-5400; www.symphonyspace.org; 11 am; \$30-\$15 (\$26-\$11 members).

Laugh, Laugh, Laugh is funny stories, thrilling paper bag sets and costumes with dances from around the world. For children 4 through 8 years old.

Workshop: Children's Museum of the Arts, 103 Charlton St. at Hudson Street; (212) 274-0986; www.cmany.org; 11:30 am, 12:30, 2:30, 3:30 and 4:30 pm; \$10.

Children 6 and older create art project using straws.

Subway tour: New York Transit Museum, 130 Livingston St. at Boerum Place; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Explore artifacts and explore special areas of the museum and learn all about

the people that keep the underground rail system running. Suitable for all ages.

SUN, JAN. 29

Workshop: Children's Museum of the Arts, 103 Charlton St. at Hudson Street; (212) 274-0986; www.cmany.org; 11:30 am, 12:30, 2:30, 3:30 and 4:30 pm; \$10.

Children 6 and older use various braiding and layering techniques with fabrics to create unique jewelry designs.

Excavation station: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1:30-2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 4 and up learn how scientists unlock the mysteries of the past.

Subway tour: 1:30 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Jan. 28.

Hot Peas 'N Butter: Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, 2900 Campus Rd., between Amersfort Place and Kenilworth Place; (718) 951-4500; www.brooklyncenter-online.org; 2 pm; \$7.

Musical group combines an interactive concert blending jazz, R&B, folk rock and Afro-Caribbean tunes. For children

four and up.

The Paper Bag Players: 3 pm. Peter Jay Sharp Theatre. See Saturday, Jan. 28.

SAT, FEB. 4

"Inside Outside Book of New York City": New York Transit Museum, 130 Livingston St. at Boerum Place; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

After reading the book, children 5 and older express their own vision of subway travel.

"The Amazing Max and the Box of Interesting Things": The MMAC Theater, 248 W. 60th St. between Amsterdam and West End avenues; (212) 239-6200; www.telecharge.com; 4:30 pm; \$29.50 (\$49.50 VIP seating).

The magic show with a mind of its own. Magician Max Darwin makes objects appear out of thin air.

SUN, FEB. 5

"Inside Outside Book of New York City": 1:30 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, Feb. 4.



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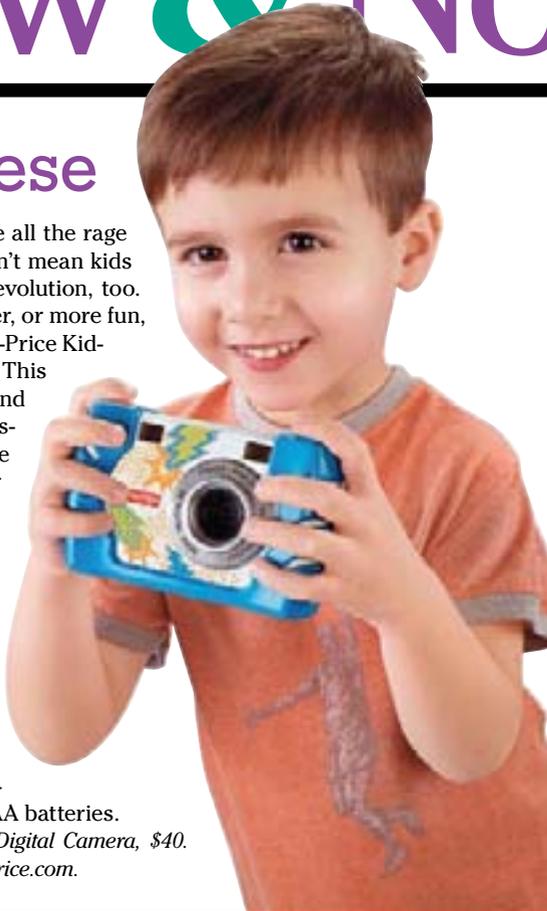
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New & Noteworthy

Say cheese

Electronic gadgets are all the rage for adults, but that doesn't mean kids can't enjoy the digital revolution, too. And it's never been easier, or more fun, than with the new Fisher-Price Kid-Tough Digital Camera! This camera is built to withstand some serious roughhousing, and has a two-eye view to make it easier for children to peek through the viewfinder. It's got extra-big buttons for tiny fingertips, and dual-hand grips to keep the camera steady and focused while your amateur photographer explores her new hobby. Plus, it comes in a variety of colors, has a four-time zoom, and takes AAA batteries.

Fisher-Price Kid-Tough Digital Camera, \$40. For info, visit www.fisher-price.com.



The power of three

There's nothing cooler than a set of wheels — even if you're 15 years shy of actually getting a driver's license. That's where the new Harley Davidson Motorcycles Lights and Sounds Trike comes in. Perfect for toddlers, ages 2-6, this heavy-metal tricycle sports real-life motorcycle sounds, flashing blinkers, rock 'n' roll music and walkie-talkie phrases. Your child will want to hit the open road in no time. And because this trike has easy-grip handlebars; slip-resistant pedals; a wide, stable wheel base; and oversized

front wheel for faster pedaling, the experience of riding will be a smooth one for your tot, and a worry-free one for you!

The Harley Davidson Motorcycles Lights and Sounds Trike from Fisher-Price, \$50. For info, visit www.fisher-price.com.



New kid on the blocks

Alphabet blocks are an essential toy for any baby, whether yours is a newborn or a teetering toddler. These blocks, with letters and numbers applied on each side, encourage recognition of these characters — all while your child has a blast building structures of all shapes and sizes. But who says blocks have to be stiff, heavy and made of wood? Not Mary of Lovin' Ewe, an online

boutique shop that sells hand-sewn, plush alphabet blocks that are made to order based on color, texture and pattern preferences. Each block is 4-inches by 4-inches, and includes one side coated in chenille, to make your baby's blocks extra soft.

Lovin' Ewe baby blocks, \$5 per block up to first seven, then \$3 for each additional block. To order, visit www.etsy.com/shop/LovinEweToo.

Whoo's got style?

A new mother wanted to decorate her daughter's nursery, and her goals were to make it an extra warm, loving and friendly place — so she decided to make her own stuffed animals to keep her new baby company.



Lucky for you, she turned her expertly crafted and adorable stuffed woodland creatures — including owls, lovebirds, raccoons and other forest critters — into an online business so other moms and dads can

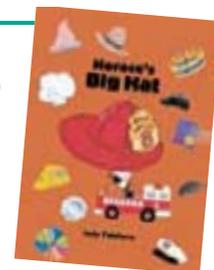
enjoy these soft, beautiful toys. The creatures come in a wide array of colors and shapes, and because each is made specially to order, customers are encouraged to specify color schemes and patterns. There's no better

way to decorate a child's room than with a unique, homemade toy, even if you're not the crafty type!

Bellamina plush owl stuffed animals, prices vary. For info, visit www.etsy.com/shop/karensagez.

Dressing up

The hero of Judy Palaferro's latest book, "Horace's Big Hat" (Umbrage), actually wears many different hats. And each transports him — along with his imagination, of course — to a new, lavishly illustrated environment. While there are the hats you would expect — like a firefighter's helmet or chef's toque — Horace also sports a turban while riding a majestic elephant in India and an astronaut's helmet while floating



in space. Parents can make story time more engaging for their 2- to 5-year-old tots by encouraging them to choose and learn the

names of the many objects in these dense, vibrant pictures. Hats off to Palaferro for a fun read!

"Horace's Big Hat" by Judy Palaferro, \$16.95. For info, visit www.umbragebooks.com.



Open House Dates

Saturday, January 21
Saturday, February 11

339 8th Street, just below 6 Avenue
Presentations begin at
1pm & 2:30pm

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