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Letter from the publisher

Mother's Day musings

I've been watching this wonderful series on PBS that airs on Sunday nights with the title "Call the Midwife." It takes place in the east end of London in the 1950s and reflects the changing experience of birthing and parenting as the war years dimmed into the past. It's one of the most socially relevant shows I've ever seen about being a Mother and birthing a child and the network of community.



Reliving all the pregnancies and the births every week has rekindled my own maternal experience from the first fluttering I felt in the bath one night, to the hours of labor and birth, to the 23 years since that moment when my daughter at last

emerged after an exhausting 13 hours.

Being a Mother is not always fun. In the early weeks after birth there are the every few hours wake-ups, feedings and a baby sometimes crying and you don't know why. There is the frustration of the teen years and the loss of control over the child you had that is now often taller than you and more influenced by friends and the media than by you.

But most of it is sheer bliss. The tiny infant that suddenly develops a personality; the first steps; the first time you hear your child say Mama; the first day of preschool; the graduations; the growth spurts that make yesterdays clothes and shoes a thing of the past; the young adult

that matures out of the adolescent that drove you crazy and wouldn't listen anymore and the mutual bond of adults who happen to be parents and their children.

It's an amazing miracle and whether you're a natural Mom or an adoptive Mom or a Step-Mom, the miracle is the same. To watch the development of another human being is truly awesome. To have a major role in that development is a privilege and a gift and it's hard to imagine a role in life that could be quite as satisfying, quite as fulfilling over a lifetime.

The celebration of Mother's Day offers an opportunity for our children to make us a breakfast or buy us a meal in a restaurant or at the very least to recognize our constant love in their lives and say thank you. For us, it's a day to be grateful for a

miracle that changed our lives forever. I, for one, can honestly say that it was the best thing that has every happened to me.

Wishing all of you the Happy Mother's Day you most likely generously deserve. Enjoy all the memories and all the milestones, those that have passed, and those yet to come. Let someone pamper you a bit this Mother's Day if it comes your way, and enjoy the best part of all, the fact that there is someone in this world who calls you Mother.

Thanks for reading.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,
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The science of *momms*

Six surprising
things you
may not
know about
mothers

BY KIKI BOCHI

Mothers may be the glue that holds many families together, but no two mommies are alike. Still, there are some things moms do have in common — and at the top of that list is the huge impact they have on the lives of their children. To get to the core of these very important family figures, moms are the subject of scientific studies all over the world. Here is the good news in some of the findings.

Good moms have smarter kids

School-age children whose mothers nurtured them early in life have brains with a larger hippocampus, a key structure important to learning, memory, and response to stress, according to research in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

The research, by child psychiatrists and neuroscientists at Washington University School of Medicine, was the first to show that a mother's nurturing is linked to this critical region of children's brain anatomy.

"This study validates something that seems to be intuitive, which is just how important nurturing parents are to creating adaptive human beings," research author Dr. Joan L. Luby, said when the study was released. "I think the public health implications suggest that we should pay more attention to parents' nurturing, and we should do what we can as a society to foster these skills because clearly nurturing has a very, very big impact on later development."



Being an empathetic mom goes a long way

Nurturing mothers have always garnered accolades for kissing boo-boos and soothing children to sleep with lullabies. Now they're getting credit for their offspring's physical health in middle age.

In a long-term study published in the journal *Psychological Science*, psychologists found that even among groups that would have higher rates of chronic illness in adulthood, adults who had nurturing mothers in childhood fared better in physical health in midlife. It's just more proof of the huge impact good moms can have.

Attentive moms help keep kids off drugs

Through daily interactions, good moms help children understand healthy boundaries, learn self-control and make good decisions. But it goes beyond that.

A strong mother-child bond in childhood, especially in the first three years of life, develops the brain chemistry that can help people resist drug and alcohol addiction later in life. The research, conducted in Australia, found that some people's lack of resilience to addictive behaviors may be linked to poor development of their oxytocin systems.

“The public health implications suggest that we should pay more attention to parents’ nurturing, and we should do what we can as a society to foster these skills because clearly nurturing has a very, very big impact on later development.”

The antidote? A loving and nurturing mom, of course.

Moms teach their children without even trying

Scientists have discovered that babies only hours old are able to differentiate between sounds from their native language and a foreign language. This finding indicates that babies begin absorbing language while still in the womb during the last 10 weeks of pregnancy, earlier than previously thought.

“The mother has first dibs on influencing the child’s brain,” said Patricia Kuhl, co-author and co-director of the Institute for Learning & Brain Sciences at the University of Washington. “The vowel sounds in her speech are the loudest units, and the fetus locks onto them.” Now, if we could just start training them to pick up their room while in the womb.

Mom’s voice is as comforting as a hug

A simple phone call from mom can calm frayed nerves by sparking the release of a powerful stress-quelling hormone, according to researchers. The study, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, looked at a group of 7- to 12-year-old girls who were challenged to answer math questions in front of a panel of strangers. A third of the girls were comforted by their mothers in person with a hug or pat on the back, a third were given a neutral video to watch, and a third were allowed to talk to their mom on the phone.

The results were dramatic: the children who got to interact with their mothers had virtually the same positive hormonal response, whether they interacted in person or over the phone. The girls’ levels of oxytocin, often called the “love hormone” and strongly associated with emotional bonding, rose significantly among the girls who had contact with their moms,

while the stress-marking cortisol washed away. The video-watching group did not experience the same benefits.

Sometimes, less mom is more

When you plop on the floor to play with your child, there’s more going on than just a game. In a study that looked at the dynamics of play, researchers found that the more moms tried to control the content and pace of the game, the more children pulled away. Children in the study also expressed more negative feelings toward their mothers when the mothers were highly directive. For example, during play with her child, a highly directive mother might make her toddler put the plastic cow in the toy barn through the barn’s door instead of through its window. While mothers often think they are helping their children by correcting them, they are limiting the children’s creativity and taking the fun out of the game, said Jean Ispa, lead author of the study.

“Children flourish when they have opportunities to make choices about what they do, particularly in play situations,” said Ispa, and professor of human development and family studies at the University of Missouri. “Mothers who are highly directive do not allow that kind of choice.”

Moms can counter that effect with affection, however.

“Children take in the meaning of what their mothers are trying to do, so if a mom is being very directive and is generally a very warm person, I think the child feels, ‘My mom is doing this because she cares about me, and she’s trying to do the best for me,’” Ispa said. “If that warmth is missing, then the child might feel, ‘My mom is trying to control me, and I don’t like it.’”

KiKi Bochi is a mother of two who still marvels at her power. A long-time journalist, she writes about family health.

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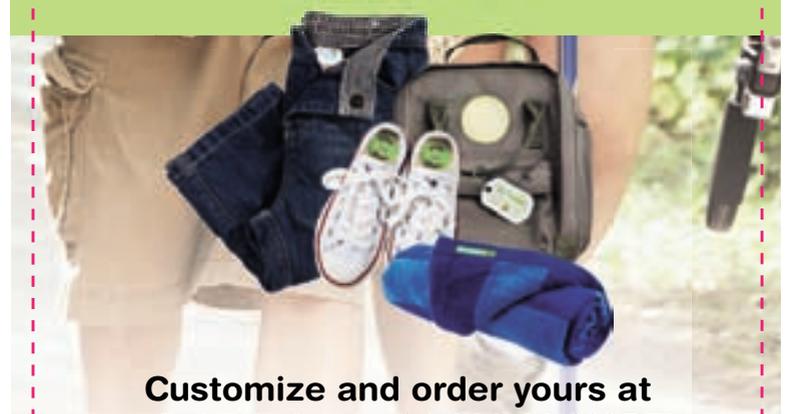


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Circle of friends

Thirty days to a healthier social life

BY CHRISTA MELNYK HINES

Relocations, new babies, and other life transitions can throw a wrench in your social network, leaving you feeling disconnected and lonely. Use the adjustment period as a chance to make a fresh start. Carefully consider your priorities and build connections that support your personal health and the well-being of your family.

Women who feel a balanced sense of connection are healthier and more resilient to stress, anxiety, and depression. According to a recent Gallup poll, stay-at-home moms are more vulnerable to depression compared to women who work outside of the home, and isolation could play a factor. Overall, women are twice as

likely to suffer from depression compared to men.

“When there is a lack of social interaction and a decrease of peer-to-peer contact, there is great potential for depression, which is a combination of sadness and anger,” says Lisa Bahar, a marriage and family therapist and professional counselor.

One day at a time, rev up your social engine for increased happiness and satisfaction. Here are a few suggestions.

- Join a mother’s group. Your sense of self-worth and sense of belonging increases when part of a group of supportive friends.

- Call an old friend. Reconnecting helps you rebuild your confidence as you meet new moms.

- E-mail a mom you’d like to know

better. Arrange a time to meet with you and your kids for a play date at the park or the mall play area.

- Send a Facebook friend request to a mom you’ve met recently. Initiating friendships shows you welcome new friends and boosts your self-confidence.

- Volunteer. Your efforts will positively impact others, and you’ll derive satisfaction and joy from helping out.

- Shake out the welcome mat. Greet your new neighbors with a plate of warm cookies. They’ll appreciate your thoughtfulness and a friendly face in a new neighborhood.

- Strike up a conversation. Kids are great icebreakers. Even a casual conversation with another mom can cheer you.

Stay-at-home moms are more vulnerable to depression compared to women who work outside of the home.

•Brighten a friend's day. Send a card to let her know you're thinking about her or call just to chat.

•Click into an online moms' group. Find comfort knowing your situation is not unique. Reaching out to other moms online who can relate can help you feel less isolated.

•Text a friend with a new baby. The first few weeks can be a rough adjustment. By reaching out, you'll help her feel less alone. If possible, arrange a time to stop by with a meal.

•Coordinate a meet and greet. Got school-aged kids? Invite other classroom moms to a "seasoned moms" lunch to build a sense of community.

•Sign up for a yoga, zumba, or jazzercise class. Exercise releases mood-boosting endorphins and wards off stress. Group fitness helps you feel a sense of accountability.

•Spring for a girls' night out! You may feel a little tired the next day, but recalling all the laughs and stimulating conversation will put a skip in your step.

•Surround yourself with positive people. Move away from draining one-sided friendships that zap your energy.

•Seek balance in your yeses. Stress less by saying "no" to requests that aren't a priority or don't interest you. Your family will thank you.

•Go on a mini-adventure. Explore another part of town, discover a local museum, or take a class that interests you. Stepping out of your normal routine juices your creativity.

•Make time to play. Carve out 15 or 20 minutes to pursue an activity you love. Playing is candy for the soul.

•Start a walking group. Walking and talking for an hour is great exercise and like free therapy!

•Dine and play. Invite other moms, whose husbands travel or work late, for a two-hour afternoon play date and potluck dinner.

Dinner done, kids sleep well, and you're rewarded with a quiet evening ahead!

•Coordinate a group outing at the zoo or a children's museum. Both you and your kids will appreciate the social interaction, exercise and education these venues offer.

•Check out the library. Libraries often feature interesting presenters, book clubs, and other activities. Attend a few discussions to meet others with shared interests.

•Organize a game night or book club with your friends. You and your friends will love the excuse for a lively evening escape!

•Reach out to a receptive member of a group of moms. If she is an active volunteer at your child's school in activities that interest you, ask how you can get involved.

•Rejuvenate at the spa. Soothing for the mind and body, a study at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center found Swedish massage in particular reduces the stress hormone cortisol, boosting immunity by increasing white blood cells, which fight infection and disease.

•Reconnect with your spouse. Find a sitter, get dressed up, and head out for a date night. Feeling sociable? Invite another couple to join you.

•Throw a neighborhood backyard BBQ. Provide outdoor games like badminton, horseshoes, volleyball, chalk, bubbles and hula hoops for the kids to play together.

•Support a friend who sells makeup, jewelry, cookware, or candles by accepting an invitation to one of the parties. Go with a budget and enjoy hanging out with other women.

•Take a break. Schedule time alone to head to a pottery place and paint; go clothes shopping; or watch a movie.

•Regroup with your kids. Set aside a relaxing afternoon to reconnect with your kids. Head to the park for a picnic lunch, play a board game, try ice skating, or go bowling.

•Touch base with your family around the dinner table. Communication builds stronger families. Talk about your day's highs and lows, discuss frustrations, and celebrate successes.

Freelance journalist Christa Melnyk Hines is the author of "Confidently Connected: A Mom's Guide to a Satisfying Social Life." Join her in the "Confidently Connected Moms" discussion group on Facebook.

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Photo by Don Pollard

Maria Cuomo Cole (second from right) with her mother Matilda, nieces and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand.

Lessons in volunteering from mom

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

Kids learn about helping others at home. As a mom, you have the ability to inspire your children through positive actions, such as volunteering in your community.

It can turn into a family activity and is a great way to get your kids and teens away from their phones and computers.

And for kids, interacting with other young volunteers is cool, especially for kids and teens who would like to make new friends or boost their social skills. They can also learn about a field they might be interested in as they head off to college, and even advance their career goals while they're in college, by helping out with an organization that matches their interests and passions. They may even get a job offer.

Helping those less fortunate also puts things in perspective: when kids are feeling down or sorry for themselves, they can appreciate what they have when they're exposed to someone who is truly needy or homeless.

Take it from the Cuomos — one philanthropic family with volunteerism in its veins.

Inspiring mother-daughter duo — former first lady of New York State Matilda Cuomo and daughter Maria Cuomo Cole — have made a big difference in the lives of many New Yorkers.

Maria and her husband, popular fashion designer Kenneth Cole, have three daughters: Amanda, Catie, and Emily. Maria's father is former Gov. Mario Cuomo, and she is the sister of Gov. Andrew Cuomo, CNN journalist Chris Cuomo, Margaret Cuomo and Madeline Cuomo.

Growing up, Maria learned the value of giving back by watching her mother, a teacher. Matilda has always championed important causes in her community and beyond. She founded Mentoring USA, a leading national, one-to-one, site-based mentoring program that provides caring, trained mentors to young people ages 7 through 21 — including children from foster care programs — to enable them to realize their full potential.

Maria, who says she is still inspired by her mother, has followed

in her footsteps.

As an active, hands-on chair of HELP USA — a leading provider of homes, jobs, and services to homeless families, veterans, and victims of domestic violence — Maria, who is also a film producer, shares with NY Parenting's readers why the work HELP USA does for the homeless and at-risk community, nationwide, is so important.

Tammy Scileppi: Why did you embrace HELP USA?

Maria Cuomo Cole: When my brother, Andrew, became involved with solving homelessness in the mid-1980s, our friends were all excited to be part of his important mission. My father had completed his first term as governor and we were now working in the private sector, but pining for more public service. Andrew and my father's mission inspired me.

The issue of homelessness is growing at an alarming rate. For children, homelessness can be traumatic at so many levels.

Across the top 13 major cities in the US, there was an increase of three percent in homelessness last year, according to the US Conference of Mayors 2013 report on homelessness.

TS: Please describe a family's or single parent's experience, and how they benefited from HELP USA's services.

MCC: I could name numerous families; mothers, fathers, children, who have gained a fresh living in HELP USA's quality and caring shelter environment, and in our permanent housing, with an array of supportive services. Many of our facilities have extensive and customized programs for families and single mothers, including early childhood education, daycare, after school programs, mentoring, and many others.

Perhaps, part of the reason HELP USA has been so effective is due to their innovative strategies in addressing the alarming problem of homelessness. They address all aspects of life. HELP USA offers job training, employment counseling, and after-school care. They even have a street soccer program.

TS: How do you celebrate Mother's Day?

MCC: Despite our busy schedules, we make family a main priority. We try to spend the holidays together.

A second interview with Matilda Cuomo will be coming next month.



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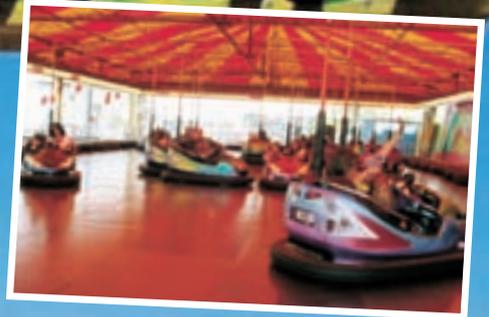
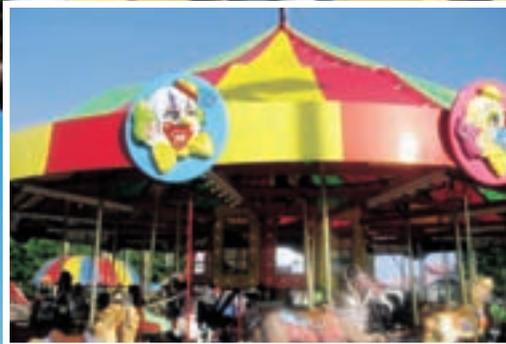
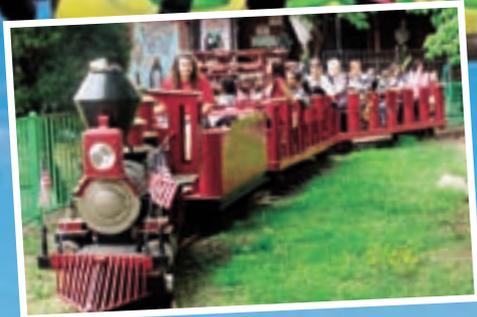
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DANIELLE SULLIVAN

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Moms owe themselves the love they give

For years on Mother's Day, many of us have enjoyed being lavished with cards, gifts, and love from our family to show their gratitude to us for all we do, day in and day out, all year long.

It is sweet, and any of us who are lucky enough to enjoy such appreciation should feel cherished and respected. Wouldn't it be nice if we did that for ourselves — everyday?

It is a fact that for many women, myself included, becoming a mother became synonymous with becoming a caretaker, an unelected fixer of all things, and a selfless being. Many times it is a self-imposed sentence placed on us by societal demands because what is a good mother other than always there for her family? And don't get me wrong, I firmly believe that we need to attend to our children's needs and recognize them for the complicated individuals they are, but somewhere along the way (and preferably as soon as we get home from the hospital), we need to keep ourselves in the mix.

When was the last time you spent a whole day doing exactly what you liked doing? Or had a beauty night the way you used to when you were single, or simply curled up with a good book or movie? When was the last time you delegated one of your endless responsibilities to your spouse or kids? When was the last time you said "no" to a friend?

Too many of us have become so absorbed in building a family that we have forgotten we owe it to ourselves to build a happy person from the inside out. A mar-

tyr is the very opposite of who we want to model to our children, and after a while we can't help but feel overburdened and exhausted, and then no one is happy — not us, our spouse, or our kids.

It might be difficult, hell, it IS difficult. I am in the process of doing this right now. But I know it CAN be done because, like you, I know many women who never relinquish their vitality to the role of mother. They deliver a baby and still keep up with friends, museum exhibitions, parties, and hobbies that make them feel good. They delegate and don't put it upon themselves to have to do everything. They take turns with childcare with their spouse and friends. In other words, they treat themselves with regular doses of T.L.C., and that is just as vital as nutrition and vitamins for good mental and physical health.

I am not saying it is easy, but if I were to mentally tack up my female friends, the majority of them put themselves last behind their spouse, children, and even relatives and friends. We need to ask ourselves if that is what we want our own daughters to do because what they live, they will duplicate.

It is that age-old airplane analogy: put your own oxygen mask on first so you can save your kids; but in this case we need to put our own happiness first so we can foster enough of it to share with those in our life that mean the most. So, while you are enjoying that half-cooked breakfast in bed and scribbled crayon cards, and after you thank those special people, try to take a minute to thank yourself for doing a fabulous job — right after you promise to treat yourself with all the compassion and love you heap upon those gorgeous little people that made you a mother in the first place!

Danielle Sullivan, a mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for more than 10 years. Sullivan also writes about pets and parenting for Disney's Babble.com. Find Sullivan on her blogs, Just Write Mom and Some Puppy To Love.





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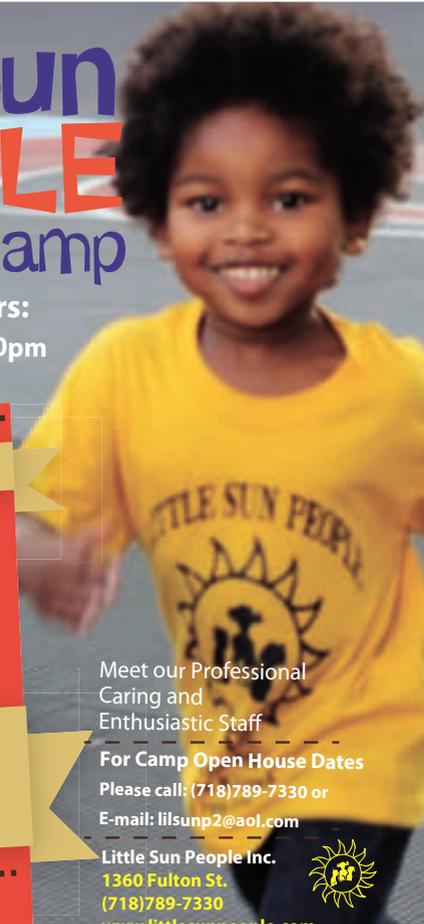
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MOMMY 101

ANGELICA SEREDA

Avoid lashing out

I've been home with both of my children now for a little over two months on maternity leave and, for the most part, it's been great. The other part? The terrible twos. Olivia is not just whiny and mildly annoying (do all toddlers sound like broken records?), but she's also increasingly defiant. At times I wonder

if she just says something because it's the complete opposite of what I've said.

Like most parents, I've made judgmental comments like, "I would never let my child..." It's true; I never thought in a million years that I would have a child that talks to me the way Olivia does or tests my patience as much as she does. Never did it occur to me that my sweet

little girl would bully me. At times I think she's adorable, but when she misbehaves and I know it's a learning opportunity, I have to fight back my laughter. On occasion, she

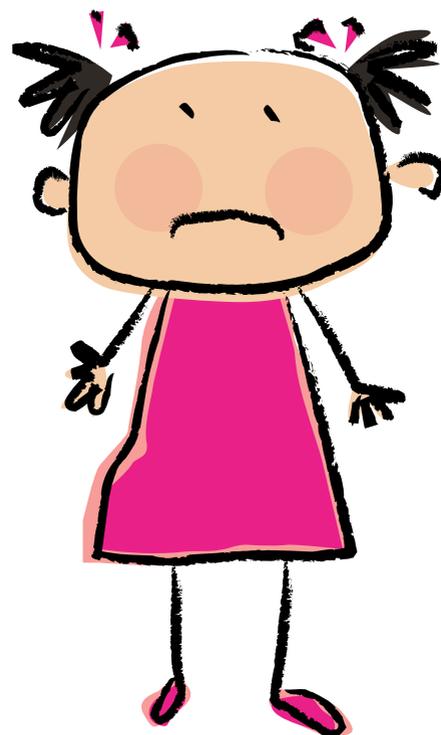
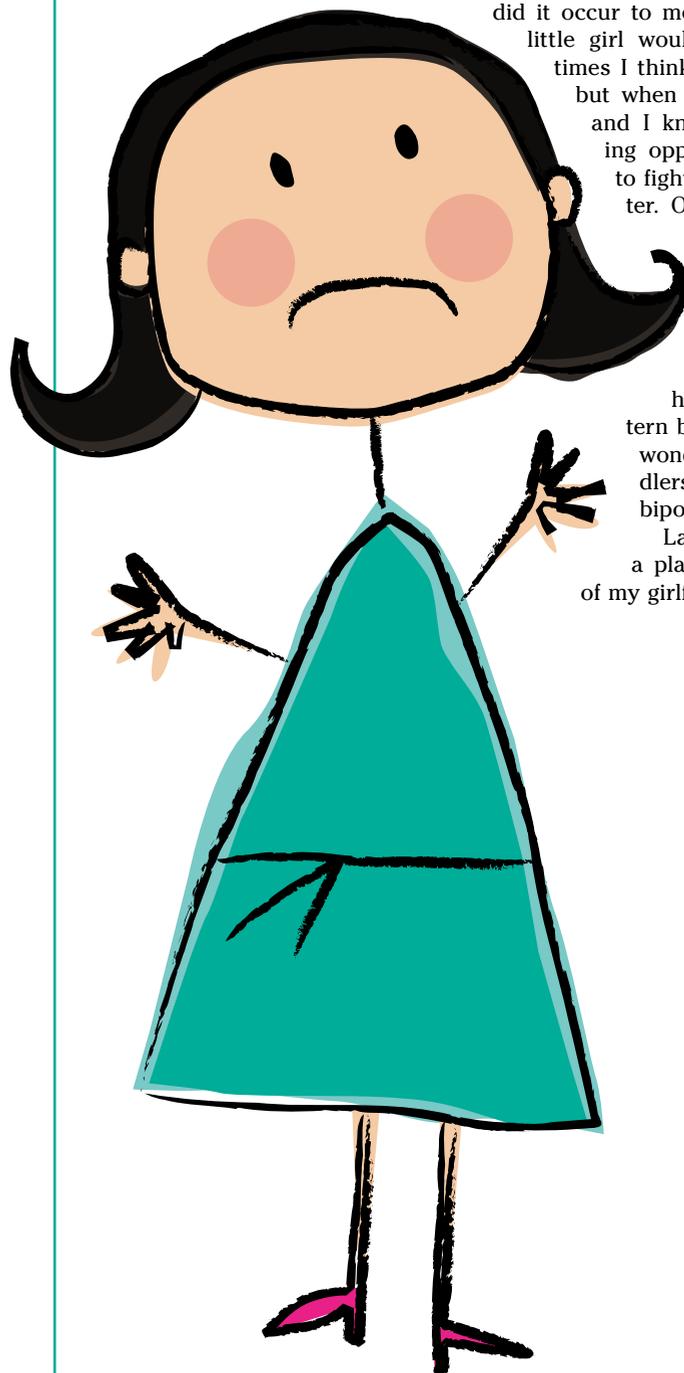
has hit me, followed quickly by, "I'm sorry, M o m m y ."

This sour-and-sweet behavior has become a pattern between us and I wonder, are all toddlers naturally a little bipolar?

Last week we had a play date with two of my girlfriends and their

toddlers. They both told me, after witnessing Olivia's behavior, that I was too laid back with her. On the same day, after being at my wit's end and scolding Olivia for not picking up her toys, my husband told me that I'm too harsh with her. When I spoke to my mother for guidance she assured me that it was normal. Olivia and I were spending all day together and most of that time I was caring for a newborn. It was completely natural for her to act out and more importantly, for me at least, it was also completely normal for me to feel frustrated.

I know that the terrible twos will pass but I admit, there are days when I'm almost reduced to tears. I've taken the advice of many and am paying extra attention to Olivia. I've added a lot more structure to our days, and I've noticed that distracting her when she's frustrated is best for all of us. We play games and practice our alphabet. Even cleaning up is a chance for her to learn something and for us to be silly together. It's helping a lot with her tantrums and for the most part, I try to focus on the sweet and ignore the sour.



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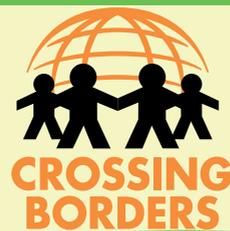


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FABULYSS FINDS

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Mother's Day ideas

On Mother's Day, Sunday, May 11, treat the mom in your life to a FabULyss day in New York.

Scheduling the perfect Mother's Day will take some work, but with our DivaMoms suggestions below, Mother's Day planning can be made a little easier!

Brunch. Take the special mom in your life to a beautiful, special brunch spot! Aureole on W. 42nd Street — the city's famous theatre district — is a gorgeous and DeLys-scious option for a Mother's Day brunch, and one of my personal favorites! Dining at the contemporary Aureole is staged in two venues: the formal dining room and more casual bar room. In the dining room, terra-rich colors and golden lighting combine to create a comfortable environment and opulent warm glow, reminiscent of Aureole's original townhouse intimacy. The menu is FabULyss-for American food, and even the DivaKids will be able to find something they like! The Arlington Club, Sarabeth's, Laconda Verde and Gina La Fornarina are also great suggestions.

[135 W. 42nd St. between Seventh and Sixth avenues, (212) 319-1660, charliepalmer.com]

Not to mention, the location segues perfectly into our second Mother's Day celebration suggestion:

A Broadway Show! Taking the special, hardworking mother in your life — whether she be your wife and the mother of your kids or your own mom — is a treat that will inevitably result in wonderful memories for years to come. There are such FabULyss shows out on Broadway right now that the whole family can enjoy, including "Matilda," "Wicked," "If/Then," "Newsies," "Aladdin," "Rocky," or, if she is into the more unique and less mainstream shows, something like "Stomp," "Lady Day," or "Act One" may be something she would enjoy. Either way, you cannot beat the quality and thoughtfulness of a Broadway show on Mother's Day!

Shop. There isn't a DivaMom out there who doesn't enjoy a day or two out of the year shopping for little luxuries! If you are stuck on what to buy her, make hunting for her gift part of the fun of the day! Strolling around Barney's, Bergdorf Goodman, or any of the shops on

Madison Avenue on a sunny spring Sunday is something all moms enjoy — and need every once in a while for all their hard work! When mom picks out something special, hand her a card from you and the kids — and signed by other family members — to go along with her new gift she handpicked and will cherish.

Top of the Rock. Living in New York, we seldom visit tourist attractions. Taking the kids and mom to the Top of the Rock is a sweet way to show her she deserves only the most beautiful things; if you haven't seen it, the view is breathtaking! This is also a great spot to snap a few family photos that will go in your most precious family photo albums. Tickets are \$20 for an adult, but completely worth it!

[30 Rockefeller plaza between W. 50th and W. 49th streets, (212) 698-2000, www.topoftherocknyc.com]

Elizabeth Arden Red Door Spa (or the spa of her choice!). End the day by treating the hard-working mom in your life to a premium spa in the city — like Elizabeth Arden Red Door, which is absolutely wonderful and luxurious — and hand her a gift certificate to use for a massage, facial, or whatever her favorite treatment is! This will let her unwind from the day's fun activities and let her know that her family appreciates everything she does! Show her how much you love her.

[663 Fifth Ave. between W. 53rd and E. 52nd streets, (212) 546-0200, reddoorspas.com]

Lyss Stern is the founder of DivaLysscious Moms (www.divamoms.com).



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6-10
Year Olds

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Sign up for 1 week or all 8!

6/30-7/3

Artist's Studio

Children will be inspired by the works of famous artists while creating unique pieces of art! Students will enjoy creating their own cartoon story, interacting with digital art, making several sculptures and illustrating books.

7/7-7/11

Trip around the World

FasTrackKids will travel to and explore Italy, Egypt, China, Mexico, and Brazil, while learning how children in those countries live.

7/14-7/18

Natural Science

Children participate in a variety of scientific experiments including magnetism, flotation, molecular change and buoyancy. The children gain an understanding of the scientific method through these experiments and games.

7/21-7/25

Zoology: Genus or Genius?

Learn about life in the animal kingdom.

7/28-8/1

Lost in Space

Explore our galaxy and the concepts that hold it together.

8/4-8/8

Anatomy: Body Language

Through the exploration of major body systems such as the skeletal, respiratory, digestive, and circulatory & nervous systems, your child will explore the human anatomy and learn to develop healthy habits along the way.

8/11-8/15

Dinosaurs - Young Scientist, Old Bones

A trip to the Pre-Historic Ages and back, to discover the dinosaurs and the fossils they left behind.

8/18-8/22

Earth Science

Children explore climate, geology, and forces of nature while taking an imaginary world journey to examine and understand the composition of the Earth from its surface to its core.

8/25-8/29

Entrepreneurship

The business world becomes real as children examine products from around the world. Children participate in an imaginary marketing survey and create an advertising strategy.

3-8
Year Olds

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2-3.5
Year Olds

FasTrackKids Explorers *

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Themes

July - Lets Play, August - Out & About

Schedule:

Tues & Thurs from 10:00 - 12:00pm

3.5-5
Year Olds

FasTrackKids Discoverers *

Fun enrichment for the young mind.

See weekly themes on the left

Activities include: Smart Board, hands-on projects, arts & crafts, experiments, role-playing, videotaping & more!

Schedule: Mon, Wed, Fri, from 9:00-11:30am

6-10
Year Olds

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Take note

How to tell
when your
child is ready
for music
lessons

BY LEILA VISS

Not every person is destined to be a concert musician, but everyone can be a music maker, enthusiast, and supporter. Giving your child the gift of learning music on any instrument is something to treasure, but finding the answers on how to provide this gift is not always easy.

You may be unaware of your youngster's readiness for making music, but there are some signs that should help you make that assessment.

Here are some steps toward unlocking your child's innate musicality and readiness.

How can I tell when my child is ready?

Encourage exploration

- Purchase a keyboard instrument (a portable digital keyboard may do the trick, but plan to upgrade when lessons begin) and let your child explore sound before enrolling in lessons.

- Once this exploration begins, notice how your potential musician gravitates and experiments at the keys.

- Download some music game apps such as Piano Dust Buster 2.0, The Most Addicting Sheep Game or Magic Piano and invite your child



to explore. It won't take long for a youngster to be drawn into these magical games that also teach music fundamentals.

- If the keyboard and favorite apps receive regular visitation, this is strong evidence that your future maestro is ready to engage in lessons.

Prime the potential

Some basic skills are involved in learning any instrument, and it's important that these fundamentals

are developed before enrolling in lessons.

An ideal candidate for instrumental lessons can:

- Say and sing the alphabet.
- Count at least to 20.
- Match pitch and sing songs with ease.
- Identify the left from the right hand.
- Cut with scissors.
- Color and draw with markers, pencils, etc.

•Dance and move freely to music.

•Clap and march with a steady beat.

Consider early music education groups, which are perfect for young learners.

How do I know what instrument is right for my child?

The piano is the easiest instrument to begin exploring and eventually making music. Therefore, enrolling your child in piano lessons may be a place to begin her music education.

Once your budding musician is introduced to other instruments in school around fourth or fifth grade, a shift in interest may occur.

How do I choose the right teacher?

Referrals from friends and acquaintances are your best bet for a good teacher. If they are happy with a teacher, there's a good chance that you will be as well. Also, ask to arrange an interview with several teachers, and you'll discover that each owns a unique studio. It's important for you to determine what your priorities are for your child's music education. Here are some things to consider:

•Some teachers may excel at preparing students to compete, while others may lean toward a more relaxed approach with fewer opportunities to compete or perform formally.

•Some may remain set in a traditional approach with standard repertoire, and others may emphasize lessons in creativity beyond the page and various styles other than classical.

•Group lessons are a popular social setting which may best suit those who are still on the fence about studying an instrument. Private lessons usually accommodate schedules more easily and offer one-on-one instruction.

•Music should be shared, so ask if the teacher offers encouragement and opportunities to perform, even casually. Although difficult, performing instills discipline, motivation, confidence and good experience for public

speaking.

•Teachers usually use a method book or series to teach an instrument. A good question to ask during your chat with a teacher is "What methods and tools will you use to help my child progress in his/her music skills?"

How do I balance being a supportive parent without becoming overbearing?

Here are a couple of tips to help you maintain a healthy attitude:

1)Some teachers may require you to be present at lessons to take notes, so consider this as a free lesson for yourself and learn right along with your child. You will re-

alize that building musical skills is a long-term process with peaks, valleys, and plateaus.

2)Regardless of whether you attend lessons or not, it is important for you to remember that this is your child's endeavor and not yours. Allow your budding musician to:

- Learn how to learn
- Read all assignments
- Take charge and ask the teacher questions themselves when they forget a concept
- Be responsible for collecting books prior to the lesson, etc.

3)The best support you can offer your child is providing a structure.

•Make daily practicing a priority, so it becomes a habit by setting up a schedule.

•Instead of setting the timer and demanding practice, ensure that the teacher's instructions are understood and completed during practice time by reviewing the assignment with your musician. The amount of daily time at the instrument may vary, as consistent practice will make the assignment easier to play by the end of the week.

•Arrive promptly for each lesson and be on time for pick-up.

•Show teachers the respect they deserve by following all studio policies and submitting timely payments.

Music lessons are a worthy investment toward a gift that lasts a lifetime. Happy music making!

It's important for you to determine what your priorities are for your child's music education.

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Continued on page 22



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Arts

DIRECTORY

Continued from page 20

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Three ways to nurture creativity

Ignite their imaginations with these helpful tips

BY MICHELE RANARD

"Creativity is a lot like looking at the world through a kaleidoscope. You look at a set of elements, the same ones everyone else sees, but then reassemble those floating bits and pieces into an enticing new possibility." — Rosabeth Moss Kanter

The ability to see "floating bits and pieces" comes more naturally for some than others, yet parents play a vital role in enhancing their child's ability to do so.

Nurturing creativity may not only improve your child's achievement in academics, but as author of "The Creative Family" Amanda Blake Soule explains, it creates deeper connection with family members.

"You'll make meaningful connections with your children in large and small ways; your children will more often engage in their own creative discoveries; and your family will embrace new ways to relax, play, and grow together."

Consider these three ideas for

nurturing creativity and connecting with your child:

• **Model a creative life.** Nurturing your own creative spirit will not only improve the quality of your own life, but according to Soule, "It will also serve as a guide and model to your children on finding their creative selves." Many avenues exist to explore your artistic side, but a good start is an excellent read. Soule recommends "The Starving Artist's Way" (2004) by Nava Lubelski, which offers 100 "far-out, appealing, and interesting" suggestions. For instance, have you ever made felt from cat hair?

• **Prioritize unstructured time.** Watching television rarely helps the imagination to bloom. Blogger Tracy O'Connor warns, "Television not only encourages children and adults to be passive consumers of entertainment, but it can also promote materialism and obesity." Conversely, unstructured time allows children to engage. Dr. Markham says, "Kids need practice with unstructured time, or they will never learn to manage it." She suggests parents focus on play and

process, not productivity.

Unstructured time does not mean boring or unentertaining time. Do make it fun — the process of creating should be joyful, not necessarily the end product. O'Connor says to choose toys promoting creative play, such as LEGO bricks and blocks. These are superior choices to toys that only do one thing.

If kids know where to find materials for creating, they will use them. Have an organized storage system, and teach them how to properly take care of art items. Soule recommends buying quality art supplies such as a few good quality crayons over a box full of hundreds of mediocre ones.

"It's much more satisfying to work on something when the materials you are using actually 'work' and assist in what you are doing, rather than hinder and slow you down."

Make basic instruments available at home (hand drums, whistles, maracas, harmonicas, recorders, triangles, shakers) so as Soule writes, "They'll naturally discover and play with them as they do with their toys."

• **Head into the kitchen.** There are so many opportunities for creative cooking beyond Tollhouse cookies. Soule recommends "Fairy Tale Feasts" by Jane Yolen (2009), featuring 20 stories, each with at least one recipe (the recipe for "Very French Toast" accompanies the French folktale "Diamonds and Toads"). Another fun option is Georgeanne Brennan's "Green Eggs and Ham Cookbook" (2006) filled with silly recipes for Cat in the Hat pudding and Moose Juice. (You've got to love that the pages of this cookbook are laminated!)

Creativity's pay-off is huge. If improved academic achievement and deeper connection were not reward enough, all of these nurturing experiences are pure fun!

Michele Ranard has a husband, two sons, and a master's degree in counseling. She is a creative dynamo who blogs as a hobby at hellolovelystudio.com.

Resources:

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Recycling into the classroom

Learning about creative reuse through Materials for the Arts

BY ALLISON PLITT

Are you a parent or teacher and would like to teach your children or students about helping the environment by reusing resources?

If your answer is “yes,” then there is no better place to take them in New York City than to Materials for the Arts, the Department of Cultural Affairs’ reuse center based in Long Island City, Queens.

Materials for the Arts practices the art of creative reuse, which is so much more than recycling. The organization receives excess supplies and passes them on to those who want to find a new way to use it. If you’re an artist or a teacher, the main recipients of Materials for the Arts’ donated materials, creative reuse concerns seeing possibilities in what others throw away.

“We collect donations of unneeded supplies from businesses and individuals and distribute them for free to thousands of non-profit arts organizations and public schools, helping the city divert more than 1 million pounds of materials from the landfill every year,”

says Rachel Kuo, Communications Coordinator at Materials for the Arts. Some of the companies that donated unused supplies to Materials for the Arts include Google, Marc Jacobs, and Macy’s.

The organization has a 35,000-square-foot facility in Long Island City with a warehouse, two classrooms, and an art gallery. Its operations occupy an entire floor of a building, but its beginnings 36 years ago were more humble.

Antonio Pontón-Núñez, director of development, recounts the early days, which started in 1978.

“An artist named Angela Fremont was working at the Central Park Zoo. Basically, she needed to get a refrigerator for the animals, but the

zoo didn’t have the funding. She put out a public radio announcement for a refrigerator and the phones started ringing off the hook,” he says.

“That’s when she realized we have people who have stuff and people who need stuff, so that is where the idea of reuse started,” Pontón-Núñez continues. “With a pen and a phone, she literally became a broker between artists and donors.”

The City’s Department of Cultural Affairs immediately saw the value in this operation and made it part of its programs. Materials for the Arts is also now supported by the Departments of Sanitation and Education.

Beginning in 1998, teachers were able to access Materials for the Arts to receive free supplies. Harriet Taub, the executive director, started as the first director of education, a role in which she literally went into the city streets and put out a table to show people how to reuse materials.

“Harriet realized that when teachers came to Materials for the Arts, they saw a diverse amount of materials and had no idea what to do with them,” Pontón-Núñez



Fifth-grade social studies students at PS 209 sketch state flowers and birds along with rivers, lakes, and mountains to be added as a template to design a mosaic bead map of the United States.



If you're a teacher, creative reuse concerns seeing possibilities in what others throw away.

said. "The teachers were asking, 'Where are the watercolors?' 'Where are the canvases?' 'Where are the crayons?' As you can see, that's not what we have."

The education program at Materials for the Arts has expanded enormously since its inception. John Kaiser, the current director of education, however, still believes in the same mission.

"We are, first and foremost, part of the Department of Cultural Affairs, so we're really promoting art and art-making," Kaiser explained. "Our goal is to give away free supplies, so the goal of any of our workshops and professional development classes — where we're instructing teachers — is how to reuse these supplies."

Throughout the year, the organization also offers professional development workshops for Department of Education teachers as well as P-Credit courses, in which they can earn credits from the Department of Education's After School Professional Development Program. Teachers learn ways to make hands-on and project-based learning possible by reusing materials, and they develop lesson plans aligned with the new Common Core Standards.

During the month of July, Materials for the Arts will be offering four week-long courses to teachers for their professional development. From July 7 to 12, there is an introductory course to creative reuse called "Creative Infusion: Art & Reuse in the Classroom." The second class, titled "Raw Fibers," is about fiber art and examines the history, production, and uses of fiber, and runs from July 14 to 19. The following week, from July 21 to 26, is "Project-Based Learning: Reuse in ELA," and the last week, July 28 to Aug. 2, is "Paper: Pulp to Fiction."

Besides professional development workshops for teachers, the organization offers public schools in grades kindergarten through

12th field trips to the facility, where students can tour the art gallery and warehouse. The students are then guided by Materials for the Arts teaching artists into classrooms to engage in art projects reusing materials from the warehouse.

Materials for the Arts also provides "Family Engagement Nights" for schools, which are usually arranged through the Parent Coordinator or Parent-Teacher Association. The event involves the teaching artists coming into a school for an evening workshop where students and their families learn about creative reuse by making art projects with donated materials.

Materials for the Arts also offers in-school residencies, in which its teaching artists are embedded in the classrooms of public schools throughout the city. Residencies model hands-on techniques for teachers that help improve classroom instruction through the arts as called for by the new Common Core Standards. Teachers learn to integrate project-based learning into the classroom and students get to create amazing mosaics, sculptures, costumes, and more that help them in their studies of social studies, science, and English language arts.

The education department also has community-based learning depending on the requested situation. They do their workshops all around the city to try to promote what they have to offer as a resource for teachers, artists, community centers, and teaching artist organizations across the city. As Kaiser sums it up, "We want to teach the citizens of New York that creative reuse means that they always have art supplies available to them as long as they're willing to be resourceful with those materials."

Visit *Materials for the Arts* at materialsforthearts.org. To donate, e-mail the *Donations Team* at donations@mfta.nyc.gov. If you're a teacher, e-mail education@mfta.nyc.gov to find out if your school has an active account to receive free materials. For arts organizations and city agencies, call (718) 729-3001 to find out if your organization is eligible for a recipient membership.

Allison Plitt is a freelance writer who lives in Queens with her husband and young daughter. She is a frequent contributor to *New York Parenting*.

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Singing to learn

Boosting
your child's
literacy skills
with music

BY CINDY HUDSON

Remember all the times you sang the “Itsy-Bitsy Spider” to your baby while walking your fingers together up the water-spout? Maybe you took her hands and guided her in a game of “Patty-Cake” while singing the rhyming verses.

Perhaps you sang out of instinct, because your parents sang to you. Or maybe you were desperate to engage your crying child in something fun to distract him and dry his tears. You probably didn't realize that your simple song, along with the movement, was also setting the stage for him to learn how to read years down the road.

Research and educators say that using music with children can give them a boost when it comes to reading. And having the ability to read well can help kids succeed in school. What can you do to help your kids get a literacy boost from music? Here are a few simple suggestions that are easy to incorporate into your daily routine.

Sing in the car

Pop in a CD and crank up the volume as you drive to the grocery store or run errands. Children don't care if you sing off key or out of tune. They do love to see their parents having fun, acting silly, and playing along with them. Children learn from repetition, so you may want to have a few tried and true standby CDs along every time you are in the car. To increase the variety, and possibly save your sanity, look for new tunes to try in the children's section of your local library.

Move when you sing

It's not just about getting the wig-



Music benefits teens' literacy skills, too

Music benefits teens' literacy skills, too

Young children aren't the only ones who may see an improvement in reading because they make connections with music. Teens can benefit, too.

High school teacher Kim Culbertson is the author of several teen books, and she often uses music as part of writing exercises for students.

"I think music helps with connection," says Culbertson. "Often, we listen to music with our hearts, we feel the music. I encourage students to do the same with reading. I like to play songs that thematically support what we're reading and have the students write about it."

Culbertson also says that what you read or listen to isn't as important as we may sometimes think it is.

"People get really snobby

about, 'Oh, well, I've read (insert fancy book name here),' and I want students to understand that being an informed, intuitive reader can happen when you read the comics, when you read a magazine, a cereal box, anything."

As Culbertson explains, she hasn't found one type of music to be more encouraging than another. The key, as with books, is letting teens lead the way with what they find interesting.

You obviously won't be playing silly music games with your teens or giving them writing assignments, but you can take an interest in the songs they connect with. You can ask what your kids listen to and talk about what it means to them. If they are willing, you can even look up lyrics online together and watch videos of their favorite bands performing.

gles out. Musician, author, and child development specialist Jim Gill says moving to music also helps kids "regulate themselves from being active and excited to a calmer and more focused state to be successful at a task." He cites moving to the "Carnival of the Animals," St. Saens' classical music piece, as an example. When children and parents play along, he says, "They will find themselves moving slow like turtles, galloping like horses, stomping like mules," and more.

Extend the music to other activities

Words to songs can have more meaning when you tie them in to other activities, like drawing or painting. It also helps children hone their creativity. Songs that mix things up can be especially good at sparking the imagination. Just think about what your kids can do with crayons and paper when they listen to the Raffi song "Down By the Bay" with its silly words, "Did you ever see a goose, kissing a moose?" and "Did you ever see a whale with a polka-dot tale?"

Talk about the lyrics

Songs often use words we don't hear in everyday life, which means children can expand their vocabu-

lary. Take that waterspout in the "Itsy-Bitsy Spider" for instance. You can point out a downspout on your home and say that reminds you of the song, then sing it. Gill says music can also help "accentuate rhyming patterns, helping children to begin listening and predicting those." He recites a verse from his song "My Ups and Downs" as an example of a song that brings it all together: "As I ascend/ my arms extend/ and I intend/ to stretch my body straight/ as I elevate."

"Many children aren't exposed to that type of vocabulary in their everyday actions with parents and caregivers," says Gill, "but music play provides an opportunity for children to hear those words and to bring meaning to them through the play."

Once you start adding music into regular interactions with your child, you're likely to find even more opportunities to sing and dance and play musical games that help your children see learning as fun, rather than work. Now there's a spoonful of sugar that can help the medicine go down.

Cindy Hudson writes about reading, family literacy, and books for kids and their parents at MotherDaughterBookClub.com. She lives with her husband and two daughters.

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DEATH BY CHILDREN

CHRIS GARLINGTON

Focused and fearful

A tale of traveling with an insane daughter

My daughter has ADD. When I say she has ADD, I mean she can't finish a sneeze without starting a new art project. Her mind is an endless rollercoaster that only stops for princess-level emergencies and shiny doodads with which she lines her nest.

The flipside of ADD is powerful, unwavering, laser-like focus, which, when joined with fear, makes for a splendid day of cave diving in Mexico, which is where (my attorney) and I decided we'd take our kids during August (the month wherein your shoes melt).

On our way to this cave, or *cenote* in Spanish (death hole in fear-english), the sun tried every trick in the book to make our skin bubble and melt our jeep. So when we finally arrived at the *cenote* and crawled haltingly down the rickety wooden walkway into its gaping mouth, we were kind of on fire. Getting our kids to jump off the end of that rickety walk into crystal-clear water was slightly mitigated by our impending immolation, and with a splash and a lot of screaming we found

ourselves floating in the cool, cool blue water with a bunch of other pale gringos.

We paddled our family up to the rest of the group where the guide was whispering important instructions about avoiding the needle-sharp stalactites aimed for heads, how to make sure our flotation device stayed tight, not to drop the waterproof flashlight, and to please be quiet so as not to disturb the thousands, and thousands, and thousands of sleeping bats hanging from the ceiling only inches from our faces, to which my daughter replied: "AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!"

A couple of stalactites broke off and killed a guy from Wisconsin. We all slowly looked up at the ceiling, only 20 or so inches away, which was wriggling with snoring, leathery, winged rodents. Batman would have pooped in his tights. Our daughter, however, could not take her eyes off them. She kept a running, whispering monologue of exactly how close

we were to them, a monologue that began to rise as the bat-coated ceiling dipped toward us

as we drifted toward a stalactite-toothed cavern entrance designed by the "Lord of the Rings" special effects crew to look creepy. As we got closer, her voice got higher and louder — and though I can't understand a lot of Spanish, I do know the major curse words and *gordo* (which means fat man), and I can translate the glares we were getting without even looking at a book.

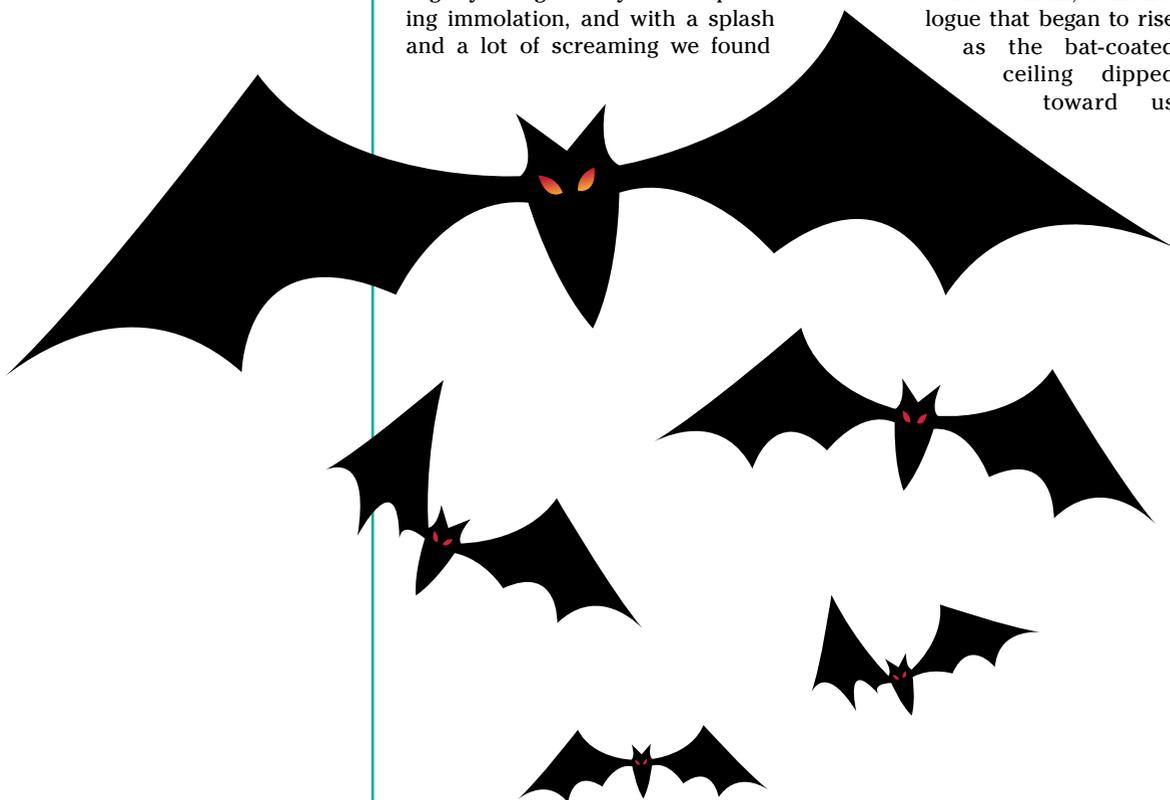
Breaking off from his scowl, our guide informed us we'd need to be careful as the water got shallower because the bottom of the *cenote* was cushioned by about nine feet of pure *guano*.

"What's *guano*?" my daughter asked, between screams.

Before I could say, "Don't tell her!" the guy closest to us said, "It's bat poop," and the girl morphed into some kind of top-lure imitation as she tried to float between the leering ceiling fangs, the hungry bats, and a watery carpet of poop.

I learned a lot from our recent vacations. I now know how much waterproof flashlights cost in pesos. I know what cave bats smell like. I know how it feels to step onto the cruise ship and realize you got back 17 pesos from the \$200 bill you used to buy \$3 of ice cream. And I learned that all my future vacations will occur at home. We'll watch the Nat Geo channel. It's almost the same — and much safer.

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





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THE BOOK WORM

TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Kentucky Derby from A to Z

So you've got a couple of horse lovers around, but they want different things from the books they read. And that's why you'll love giving them "D is for Derby," by Helen L. Wilbur, illustrated by Jaime Corum.

Just two minutes.

That's about how long it takes for the Kentucky Derby, from opening gate to finish. You probably can't think of a quicker sport, because there probably isn't one. And in this book, the very first letter of the alphabet stands for the very first Kentucky Derby winner, Aristides, a thoroughbred horse ridden by an African-American jockey. When Aristides raced in 1875, most jockeys were black, in fact.

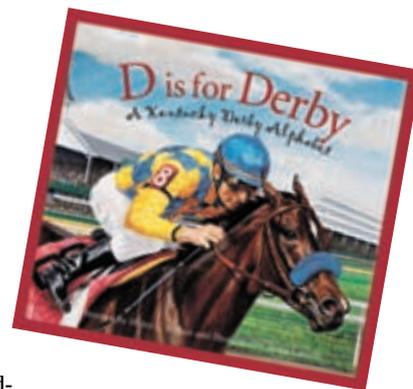
You might wonder why Kentucky is the "horse capital" of the world. It's because the state's "limestone-rich soil" grows grass that gives the horses good bones and strong muscles: B is for Bluegrass, which is what it's called because the buds of the

grass have a bluish tint.

Those powerful horses need people to care for them, so G is for Groom, which is the person who brushes the horse, works with him, gives him baths, and makes sure he's "happy, healthy, handsome, and ready to race." Of course, no horse can race without a jockey in the saddle, so J is for Jockey.

Long before the horses get to the opening gate, there's a great celebration in Louisville. D is for Derby Festival, which includes boats, parades, fireworks, and concerts. Everyone's excited and on race day they gather by the spires. The Derby attracts celebrities and royalty; even Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip have attended, which is why Q is for Queen. And wouldn't you know that H is for hat because wearing wild, colorful hats is a Derby tradition for women, just as wearing splashy ties and flashy clothing is tradition for men who attend the festivities.

But then comes the most impor-



tant part of the day: the race. The horses line up, their owners hoping for the Triple Crown: P is for Preakness, and together with the Derby and the Belmont Stakes, it could mean a big win!

Author Helen L. Wilbur wrote this book to appeal to two age groups on the same page: children who enjoy a good picture book and need the basics, and older readers who want solid information and a chance to really understand horse racing. Add in amazingly life-like illustrations by Jaime Corum (my favorite part!) and you've got something that kids will enjoy and that adults won't mind reading, too.

"D is for Derby: A Kentucky Derby Alphabet," by Helen L. Wilbur [32 pages, 2014, \$16.95].



Big book of vehicles for little drivers

You call your son your little back-seat driver.

That's because he likes to sit in the back in your car, and keep an eye out for anything he might like to drive someday.

Or haul. Or dig. Or float, run, lift, pump, and tow. Anything with wheels, that's what he notices.

He can't wait until he grows up. But, if he has "The Ultimate Book of Vehicles From Around the World" by Anne-Sophie Baumann and Didier Balicevic by his side, he can pretend to drive, dig, or haul right now.

Let's say he loves construction equipment. Big trucks that haul and dump. Gigantic machines that bust up buildings and dig holes in the ground. Machines that move dirt — that's what he loves and he'll find them all on the first pages of this book. Have he ever seen a scissors lift? If he hasn't, he'll get an idea of what it's like by mov-

ing the one in this book. He'll also see what happens when recycling trucks and garbage trucks pick up their big loads.

Or maybe he's a fan of farms. Does he love tractors and combines? Then he'll like the ones in this book, because he'll see how the insides of some machines work.

Does your child and his grandfather share a love of trains? Then he'll want to show grandpa what's here: two big pages of trains complete with a chance to peek inside to see what they haul.

There are even more big trucks inside this book. Your child will see ambulances and fire trucks and a fire lift so he can help save someone's life. He can look inside a great big freight ship, a luxury cruise ship, a medium-sized fishing boat, and a fancy yacht. If he wants to be an airplane pilot someday, then he'll like seeing the inside of a jumbo jet, a cargo plane, and a glider. Be sure to spin the helicopter propeller!

And finally, if his need for speed is

out of this world, check out the last page of this book. It's going to send him over the moon!

So you say you've got a wheel-wild youngster in the house — one who can't get enough of big machines that go? Then you're going to want to go find "The Ultimate Book of Vehicles From Around the World."

There's more!

On just about every page, there are tabs to pull and flaps to lift. Your kids can deliver cargo, roll a cement mixer, raise a scissor truck, dump garbage, make hay, feed their neighbors, douse a fire, and captain a ship.

And what 3-to-5-year-old wouldn't love all of the above? "The Ultimate Book of Vehicles From Around the World," by Anne-Sophie Baumann and Didier Balicevic [23 pages, 2014, \$19.99].

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

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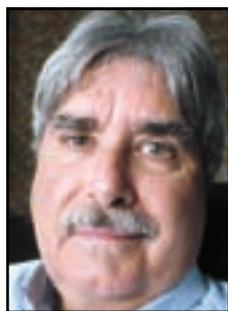
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FAMILY JOURNAL

ROBERT MORTON

Process, not product

Praise kids for effort to keep them motivated

Dear Mr. Morton,

I am a professional woman and admittedly put too much pressure to achieve on my son, age 10. I love him and he knows it, but I'm a perfectionist and my stomach goes in knots if he doesn't make mostly A's and B's on his report card.

This school year his grades dropped to the B-C range, and in math he has a D average. I had him evaluated by the school psychologist and learned that his abilities and current academic skill levels are in the average range.

How can I keep him achieving without putting too much stress on him?

Dear Parents,

When parental expectations are too high or too perfection-istic, children easily grow anxious and hypersensitive to criticism. I have witnessed some students attempt to get even with overly demanding parents by committing "academic suicide" — purposefully underachieving. Others develop poor self-esteems and relinquish their natural zest for try-

ing in school, and life.

If your son feels he cannot meet your academic expectations, he may eventually throw in the towel or exert only minimal effort in school. And, why not? If effort doesn't earn your parental appreciation, he'll rationally conclude the less effort, the less to lose, emotionally.

Let me offer some ideas that may help. First, try realigning your beliefs about perfectionism as it relates to your son, and add a bit of humor. We learn from our mistakes, so those who don't make mistakes won't learn much. Growth comes from flaws so why would you expect perfection from your son? In actuality, most of us are ideal, completely trustworthy, flawless, and picture perfect during job interviews or while filling out job applications or income tax forms. Otherwise, forget it!

Next, here's a best-kept secret about reaching the preponderance of children who aren't gifted, flawless or perfect. It's an approach that enables parents and caregivers to reach out to the normal, ordinary

and even the middling and mediocre children in their lives — to boost their intrinsic motivation. It is accomplished by focusing on process, not product. Begin by appreciating and encouraging your son's day-to-day efforts and improvements in school, no matter how small (process) and focus less on future test, quiz, exam and report card grades (product).

For example, you mentioned he has a D average in math. Suppose a math exam is two weeks away. Each day, when you find him studying and completing math homework, let him know you appreciate his effort. If he scores a 69 percent on the exam after this effort, you can't very well praise him, but you can show him how much you value his effort and improvement, no matter how small: "Johnny, I really like how you brought your math book home and completed all the homework assignments. You got a 63 percent on the last exam and 69 percent on this one — that's six percentage points higher — you're getting better!"

If Johnny had to wait two weeks before getting parental praise for an A or B on the math exam (product), his motivation would suffer, and if he earned a C or below on it after a Herculean effort, his enthusiasm would eventually fade away.

Hank Aaron and Babe Ruth struck out at the plate many more times than they hit home runs. I believe their motivation endured because they focused intensely on process (day-to-day practice) and minimally on product (the home run). By using this best-kept secret, your son will feel your unconditional love and appreciation for his daily efforts and improvements, regardless of the outcomes. Everything else will follow, for he'll learn the true nature of winning, and that no one is a loser until they give up.

Robert Morton is a retired school psychologist and adjunct professor in the School of Leadership & Policy Studies at Bowling Green State University. Contact him at the Family Journal (www.family-journal1.blogspot.com).



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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

Taste the rainbow

After the darkness of this year's brutal winter, we welcome the first bright burst of spring and look forward to adding color back to our wardrobes. It's also a good time to colorize our diets.

But how exactly is that done without breaking the bank and spending loads of time on cooking? What are the myths about eating the colors of the rainbow? And how do you appeal to your picky eaters?

'White foods aren't good for you' and other myths

For years we've heard the message to eat the colors of the rainbow. But where does that leave white and brown foods?

"While it's true that deeply pigmented produce is especially healthy, there are plenty of foods that aren't colorful in the traditional sense that are still incredibly good for you," advises registered dietitian nutritionist Frances Largeman-Roth, author of "Eating in Color: Delicious, Healthy Recipes for You and Your Family."

She points to black and tan ingredients "like chia, hemp and flax seeds, as well as barley, coconut and chocolate," as being healthful. White foods such as cauliflower,



onions and mushrooms also hold incredible nutritional power.

You can still add color to your family's diet while staying on a budget. Don't forget frozen fruits and vegetables are picked at the peak of freshness with a nutritional value just as good as fresh. Largeman-Roth, a mother of two (with one on the way), recommends Community Supported Agriculture shares to obtain lower-cost, high-quality, local fresh produce.

Isn't it time consuming to cook healthy? Not necessarily. Largeman-Roth suggests making a weekly date with your kitchen.

"If you're ready with ingredients and have blocked out time in your calendar, you'll find that you can prep enough food for three to four meals plus snacks," she says.

Picky, picky, picky

Playing up the fun factor of colorful and nutrient-packed foods can help kids with even the most discerning palates dig into what's good for them.

Even picky eaters (kids and adults, alike) can be tantalized with beautiful-looking food. And don't be afraid to serve veggies with cheese on top or with a dip. A little bit of extra flavor can go a long way toward encouraging little ones to try new things.

Vibrantly colored foods found in nature can be healthful and taste yummy, too. So add a pop of spring color not only to your wardrobe this month, but also to your family's meals.

Christine Palumbo is a Naperville-registered dietitian nutritionist who is a new Fellow of the American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Follow her on Twitter @PalumboRD, Facebook at Christine Palumbo Nutrition, or Chris@ChristinePalumbo.com.

Salad in a Jar

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS:

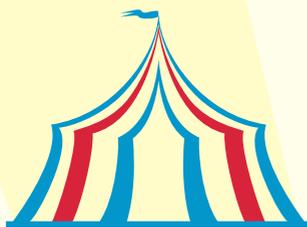
- ¼ cup walnut oil
- ¼ cup cranberry juice
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon agave nectar (light or dark)
- 2 teaspoons red wine vinegar
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1-15 ounce can garbanzo beans, rinsed and drained
- ½ cup crumbled feta cheese
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- 1 head radicchio, sliced crosswise into ribbons
- ½ head red leaf lettuce, chopped

DIRECTIONS: In a medium bowl, whisk together the oil, cranberry juice, mustard, agave nectar, vinegar, salt, and pepper. Place the beans in the bowl with the dressing, stir to coat, and set aside. Place ¼ cup of the bean mixture in the bottom of a tall mason jar. Follow with 2 tablespoons feta, 1 tablespoon cranberries, one-quarter of the radicchio, and one-quarter of the red leaf lettuce. Repeat with the remaining jars.

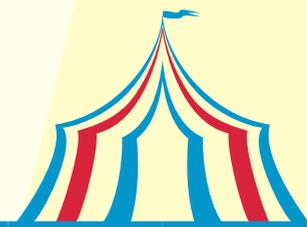
NUTRITION FACTS: 330 calories, 32 g carbohydrates, 5 grams fiber, 7 grams sugar, 9 g protein, 18 g fat (4 g sat fat), 17 mg cholesterol, 428 mg sodium

Used with permission from Eating in Color: Delicious, Healthy Recipes for You and Your Family, Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2014





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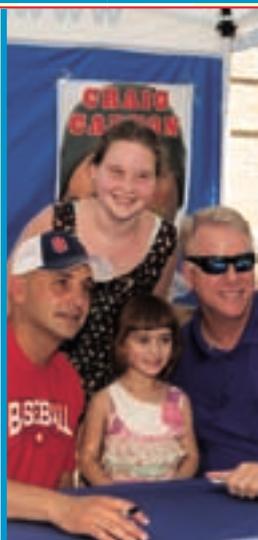
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GROWING UP ONLINE

CAROLYN JABS

Peer pressure online

Has your child been nominated? Not for class president or team captain. The new way to nominate is to post something outrageous online and then “tag” friends who are expected to top the performance. Some of these so-called “nek nominations” are silly, harmless fun, but many involve alcohol, drugs or sex. And kids who don’t want to participate may find that they are teased or even bullied.

Peer pressure is nothing new, of course, but new research indicates that social media can exacerbate the problem, making young people more likely to engage in risky behaviors in the hope of winning attention and approval from other teens. One study, by researchers in Belgium, confirmed that peer pressure often plays a role in sexting. Even kids who know it isn’t a good idea to exchange explicit photos may get involved because the short-term boost in popularity seems more important to adolescents than the long-term damage to reputation and self-esteem.

Decisions about drugs and alcohol are also heavily influenced by what happens in online friendship networks according to research done recently at the University of Southern California.

Even parents who have Facebook accounts aren’t likely to see much of what goes on in social media, partly because teens are migrating to other sites such as Vine, Snapchat, Instagram and What’s App. Rather than

trying to monitor everything a child does on and offline, parents need to be proactive, equipping teens with information and skills that will help them set appropriate boundaries and live up to their own ideals regardless of what their friends do. Here are some suggestions:

Assume your child is under pressure. In its annual survey of substance use, the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University reported that 45 percent of teens have seen social media pictures showing other teens getting drunk, passed out or using drugs. Teens don’t necessarily talk about these photos because they don’t want to get friends in trouble, but the images have an influence. The same report found that 47 percent of teens who had seen such photos were convinced the participants were having a terrific time.

Talk often about values. Be sure your child has a clear sense of your expectations. Just as important, talk about the reasons behind the rules you make. “Because I said so” may be adequate for younger children, but your teenager deserves a deeper explanation of what kind of life you hope he or she will lead and why you think drinking, drug use, and casual sex might interfere with his or her prospects.

Clarify consequences. Researchers now know that the part of the brain that is able to anticipate long-term consequences doesn’t develop until late in adolescence. Social media reinforces short-term thinking with photos that show the fun of partying without the aftermath, which can be unpleasant and even tragic. Parents have to compensate by making the dark side of teen sex and substance abuse equally vivid. Be sure your child understands that there can be lifelong consequences from driving drunk, being arrested while under the influence, distributing pornography, and having unprotected or underage sex.

Rehearse refusal. Teens are often convinced that, if they don’t do what a friend wants, they’ll lose the friendship. They will be better prepared to resist pressure if they have thought ahead about things they might say

or post when they want to turn down a request. Humor helps. So does changing the subject or suggesting an alternative activity. Remind your child that true friends don’t push each other into situations that are uncomfortable, much less dangerous.

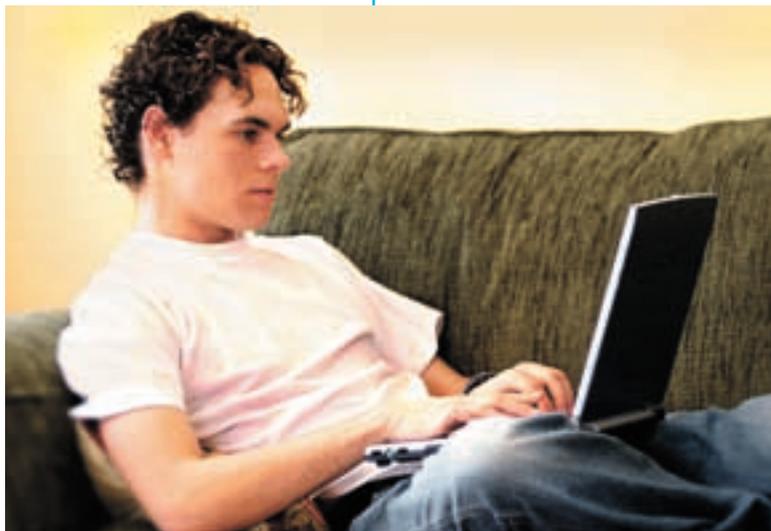
Be willing to argue. Even when you start with the best of intentions, conversations with teenagers are likely to become confrontational. That’s OK. Researchers at the University of Virginia found that kids who had the confidence to stand up to their parents and argue their point of view were also more likely to resist peer pressure. Even when it seems that your child isn’t listening, keep calm and stay focused on the issue of the moment rather than getting distracted by attitude.

Use the tools to take control. Facebook’s untag feature is a highly effective way to eliminate posts from people who are pressuring a teen to do something stupid or dangerous (to untag, go to the activity log by clicking the downward arrow at the top of any Facebook page. Click Photos and select the problem photo. Select “Remove Tags.”). Encourage your child to activate the ability to “Review posts friends tag you in before they appear on your timeline.” (Click on the gear icon in the upper-right corner and then choose “Settings.” Select Timeline and Tagging and choose “Review posts.”)

Harness peer pressure for good. After analyzing more than a billion status updates on Facebook, a research team from the University of California, San Diego, found that positive posts inspired positive responses. Encourage your kids to engage in good deeds and random acts of kindness. Then they can nominate friends to top those accomplishments.

Talking frankly about online pressures enables kids to think ahead so they are better equipped to make decisions they won’t regret.

Carolyn Jabs raised three computer-savvy kids, including one with special needs. She has been writing Growing Up Online for 10 years and is working on a book about constructive responses to conflict. Visit www.growing-up-online.com to read other columns. Copyright, 2013, Carolyn Jabs. All rights reserved.



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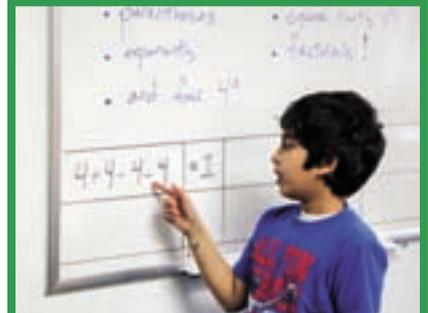


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A NEW MONTESSORI PRESCHOOL COMING TO BROOKLYN IN 2015!

Montessori's future sense

Building 21st-century skills for more than a century

BY MARTHA HAAKMAT

Iwon't pretend to know what 21st-century education really means. Predicting how to best prepare our students for citizenship and leadership in a quickly changing world is not an exact science.

The task of educational leaders today is to sculpt teaching and learning to best meet demands about which we can only hypothesize. We know at best that our students must be skilled in working both independently and collaboratively. In order to innovate and move us firmly into the future, they must be able to think critically, be comfortable with constructing knowledge as opposed to relying on proscribed ideas, and they need to

be creative and flexible problem solvers who care about making life better for themselves and others.

Montessori schools are ahead of the curve. While other schools are adding components to their programs to meet the demands of being academically excellent and building upon these 21st-century skills, these are inherent parts of what Montessorians already do. Because independent thinking and learning, creativity, collaboration, grace and courtesy, and practical life skill building are all major outcomes of a Montessori education, 21st-century learning is not a far away trend that we need to build into our program.

The Montessori philosophy is transcending founder Maria Montes-



Maria Montessori developed a timeless educational philosophy.

sori's time and is our grounding for much of where we're headed next.

Montessori was a cutting-edge educator in her time. She framed her life's work around observing child development and creating an educational philosophy grounded in the very specific and scientific stages of growth from infancy through adolescence. She did what no others had done before her, and that is to study the child at each stage and come to understand the best way to tap into that child's natural curiosity in order to build not only skills and knowledge, but also a love of learning that would become a necessary skill for life. Montessori discovered that given the right tools, materials, time, space and guidance, children are capable of extraordinary thought and problem solving. She proved that such an educational grounding would prepare the child for a life of learning and great possibility.

Montessori inspired a school of educational thought, and she brought a unique tradition of child-centeredness to education that continues to guide the practices of educators in progressive schools all over the world. Her work is timeless and echoes of her philosophy haunt the chambers of educational movements through the ages, including our recent forays into 21st-century education.

Montessori tenets connect with today's rhetoric about skills necessary to prepare our students for life in this century and beyond. Maria Montessori's ideas from more than 100 years ago still resonate in today's conversations about teaching and learning.

Martha Haakmat is the new head of school at Brooklyn Heights Montessori School. You can reach her at mhaakmat@bhmsny.org.

21st-century skill	Maria Montessori's teachings	Examples
Critical thinking and problem solving	Unencumbered by standard patterns of thought, children are free to rejoice in trial and error and to innately innovate.	Higher-level thinking skills promoted by extended work periods with time to conceptualize, evaluate, and analyze.
Creativity and curiosity	Children are innately creative and curious — schools must be designed to allow time and space for both.	The uninterrupted work cycle and encouragement for intellectual risk taking and experimentation.
Independence and executive function	Given the right environment, carefully prepared to allow freedom within limits to discover and construct understanding, children thrive as independent learners.	Weekly goal setting with advisors promotes independence, time management, and organization. Prepared environment with tools and materials within reach to foster independent choices and decisions.
Collaboration	Children naturally seek to explore and share what they learn with their peers — learning spaces must be designed to facilitate this communication.	Team-based learning in mixed-age programs with suites and common areas. Service learning.
Leadership	Given the opportunity to interact with younger and older peers, children learn to play roles as leaders and followers, and understand their responsibilities for each.	Three-year cycle provides distinct markers for personal, social, and emotional growth. Leadership and social responsibility through service learning.
Cross-cultural competence	Children must see themselves as connected to others within and across cultures — the study of cultures then becomes an exploration of humans across similarities and differences.	Culture studies and global studies. Linked social studies and science units.
Social Responsibility	Through articulated practical life, grace and courtesy, and service learning curricula, children learn to care for themselves, others and their environment.	Stewardship through service learning. Community service. Overnight trips.

Resources: Gardner, H. (2008). "5 Minds for the Future." Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.
 Jerald, C.D. (2009). "Defining a 21st Century Education." http://www.cfsd16.org/public/_century/pdf/Defininga21stCenturyEducation_Jerald_2009.pdf
 Partnership for 21st Century Skills. (2007). "Framework for 21st Century Learning." <http://www.p21.org/our-work/p21-framework>.
 Pink, D.H. (2005). "A Whole New Mind: Moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age." New York: Riverhead Books.

Montessori Schools

DIRECTORY

Brooklyn Heights Montessori School

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At BHMS students ages 2-14 learn in three-year mixed age groups developing collaboration and leadership skills, compassion, and mastery of the academic subjects.

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Our students thrive in an environment that supports individual learning styles and the freedom to learn at their own pace. BHMS nurtures each child to encourage compassion, respect, and independence of thought.

A recent expansion added 11,000 square feet to the existing campus, including a new library, learning kitchen, a new Middle School suite with a math and science lab, larger outdoor terraces, and a state-of-the-art performance space.

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In early summer 2013, some Brooklyn parents contacted us and asked us whether we'd be interested in opening a LePort Montessori preschool program in Brooklyn. They had toured many of the Brooklyn preschool options for their son, and found long wait lists at the better programs, and few programs that consistently implemented an authentic Montessori environment – one where teachers have AMI Montessori training (the gold – standard in Montessori), where the facilities are beautiful, and where children have the luxury of time to purposefully explore the rich Montessori activities freely accessible to them on the low classroom shelves.

We are excited to announce that we plan to launch a LePort Montessori program in Brooklyn in 2015. In parallel, we're investigating other sites

in different Brooklyn neighborhoods. Our goal is to open an elementary program within two years starting the preschool, so families don't have to switch schools until middle school or beyond.

If you are looking for an excellent infant, toddler or preschool program for your child and would like to learn more about our plans to offer Montessori programs in Brooklyn please call or visit our website.

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A green thumbs up

PS 146 wins Green Flag for eco-friendly achievements

The Brooklyn New School, PS 146, was recognized with the Green Flag by the National Wildlife Federation's Eco-Schools USA program on March 25 for conserving natural resources and integrating environmental education into the curriculum.

"We at National Wildlife Federation and Eco-Schools USA are proud of the example set by the students and teachers at PS 146," said Emily Fano, New York City outreach manager for the Eco-Schools USA program. "The Green Flag award places PS 146 among an elite group of schools across the country that are improving their schools by reducing energy costs and waste, greening school grounds, and nurturing student-scientists through hands-on learning."

To win the Green Flag, PS 146 students tackled a host of sustainability initiatives that included forming an Eco-Action team, increasing green space and biodiversity on school grounds, saving energy, and implementing award-winning waste reduction measures. The school recycles and composts 75 percent of its cafeteria food waste, turns hard-to-recycle items into art projects, and is an official city Compost Project demonstration site.

This year, PS 146's school's garden, which includes a "pollinator palace" and bug hotel, met the criteria for certification with the Federation's Schoolyard Habitats® program. The program recognizes schools that have created havens for wildlife, providing essential elements like food, water and cover.

"I applaud the students and faculty at PS 146 for their exemplary efforts in promoting environmental and social sustainability," said local Councilman Brad Lander. "The school's composting and recycling program is another great example of how innovative ideas are helping our district move toward a greener tomorrow. The students and faculty's resourcefulness can serve as a tremendous model for other schools in our district and across the country," he said.

Led by science teacher Barbara Taragan and Sustainability Coordinator Johanna Esteras, PS 146 students learn about an impressive array of globally important issues across the



Photo by Cynthia Carris Alonso

Staff and students at PS 146 in Carroll Gardens, Brooklyn celebrate receiving the Green Flag from Eco-Schools USA, National Wildlife Federation, on March 25.

grades and curricula:

First graders raise crops in the school garden, use the compost they produce from their cafeteria scraps on their raised beds, and harvest and serve their produce. During the course of this work, the students explore green spaces in and around the school community — including parks, community gardens, and other urban farms.

"They learn what green space means to the health and well-being of humans, and the positive (as well as negative) impact humans can have on green spaces," says Taragan.

Second graders learn about the importance of water as they engineer ways to collect water, including: designing a water filtering system, creating rainwater catchment systems, and building pipe systems to meet a variety of challenges. This spring, they will create pipe systems to irrigate the school's gardens.

Fifth graders study weather and climate change and the benefits of alternative energy sources. They demonstrate what they learn at the school's yearly sustainability "science fair" — Ecorama. The school has a blog by the same name that highlights students' green activities and accomplishments.

In keeping with their commitment to nurturing socially responsible citizens, PS 146 students and staff have also gone out into their community to plant and care for trees, participate in ecological restoration and cleanups at nearby Plumb Beach,

and raised and released native pollinators like monarch butterflies.

"Since we have instituted a strong focus on teaching an eco-based curriculum, our students have shown increasingly sophisticated answers to questions dealing with the negative and positive impact humans can have on the environment," said PS 146 principal Anna Allanbrook. "They write about storm water runoff, flooding, ground water pollution, and the balance of nature. We're nurturing a generation of environmentally literate citizens and are proud of the outstanding work our staff and students have done to achieve the Eco-Schools Green Flag award," said Allanbrook.

PS 146 is the fourth school in New York City, and only the 24th in the country, to achieve "Green Flag" status.

Teachers, student Green Team members, Lander, and the National Wildlife Federation celebrated these accomplishments with an award ceremony at the school. The event included a tour of the Green Studio — a room devoted to sustainable projects and activities, the cafeteria recycling stations, the outdoor composting center and garden, and the Eco-Casita — an outdoor classroom in a converted shipping container, outfitted with a green roof. The city's Department of Education Sustainability Initiative presented PS 146 with a \$5,000 grant as a reward for their achievements and to expand their sustainability programs.

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DEAR
DR. KARYN
DR. KARYN GORDON

Teens and dating

Dear Dr. Karyn,

I have a 19-year-old son who is attending university. He has decided to go back out with an old girlfriend who is not good for him and doesn't treat him well. Is there anything I can do?

Dear parent,

The simple answer: there is nothing direct you can do. Since your son is 19, you obviously cannot control who he chooses to date. But you can be an incredible support for him, which is very powerful. The interesting thing about dating is that we choose who we want to date. So, when I coach teens through their relationships, I get very curious about what it is about their partner that they are attracted to.

What does it say about your son that he is drawn to a girl who does not treat him well or who is not "good for

him?" I've coached teens for nearly 20 years and when I see this pattern, there is often a common theme, which comes back to self-esteem.

There are three different kinds of self-esteem. There is low self-esteem, or people who put themselves down, which I call the "blind." There is false self-esteem, or people who put others down, which I call the "disguised." And there is healthy self-esteem, or people who treat themselves and others with respect, who I call the "lifers."

The fascinating aspect of self-esteem is this attitude that we have of ourselves radically impacts every decision we make, including the kind of person we choose to date. Often, the blind are attracted to the blind or disguised while the lifers are often attracted to the lifers. When parents don't like who their son or daughter is dating, it is often because the partner is the disguised or blind.

The real issue is that your son may be struggling with a self-esteem issue, and until this is addressed, my concern is that he will continue to choose partners that don't treat him well or who are not good for him. My number one encouragement for you is to be a safe place for him to talk. Share with him your concerns and ask him what you can do to be helpful for him through this time. If he is open, ask him if he would like to see a counselor to help him sort through his relationship. Relationships are tough and the more help, wisdom, and support we can get, the better!

Youth and the psychology of music

Dear Dr. Karyn,

I can't stand the music my son is listening to — it all sounds so angry. Is this just a phase? How can I put restrictions on my son's music without being too controlling? Out of frustration, last week, I told him to turn down his music, because it's disgusting. As you might suspect, he got extremely angry. I'm confused with what my role as a parent should be in this.

Dear parent,

I've got a few suggestions. First, it's important to understand the psy-

chology of music for youth, and even adults for that matter. We all choose music because we are drawn to it for one reason or another. When I coach youth, one of the first questions I ask them is, "What kind of music do you listen to?" What youth choose to listen to speaks volumes of who they are. After all, music is an expression of personal taste and values. Therefore, putting down your son's music is often misinterpreted as a personal attack.

The worst thing you could do is put down your son's music, or say it's disgusting because, chances are, your son interpreted that comment as you saying he was disgusting. Very few youth can differentiate between who they are and what choices they make. I'm not saying parents should be silent on this issue. But how parents raise this topic is equally, if not more important, than what they say.

My second suggestion is to use your son's music as a tool to open up dialogue with him. What kind of music he listens to reflects a lot about where he is at emotionally. Many youth I've coached listen to angry-sounding music, because they can relate to it; they also feel a lot of anger inside of them. So learn to ask the right questions. Really seek to understand where your son is coming from. Ask questions such as: What is it you like about this music? What does it mean to you? Why are you drawn to it?

Third, talk about the issue of respect as it relates to his music, specifically content and volume. Obviously, if there is content that puts down other people, I would encourage you to not let it be played in the home. As it relates to volume, discuss with your child what is a respectful volume he can play in his room, so it doesn't bother others. The key is to discuss this with him.

Dr. Karyn Gordon is one of North America's leading relationship and parenting experts. She is a regular contributor to "Good Morning America," founder of dk Leadership, best-selling author of "Dr. Karyn's Guide To The Teen Years" (Harper Collins), and motivational speaker to a quarter of a million people. Visit her at www.dkleadership.org and on Twitter: @DrKarynGordon.



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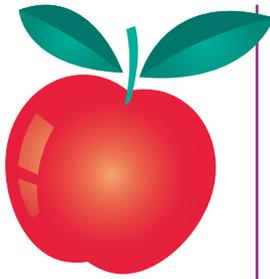
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DEAR TEACHER

PEGGY GISLER AND
MARGE EBERTS

Summer learning

Dear teacher,

I truly understand how important it is to have my children engaged in summer learning activities so they'll start the next school year successfully. I have them enrolled in a variety of programs in our community. How can I be sure that they are in good programs that will stop them from suffering a learning loss this summer?

Dear parent,

All educators will applaud your efforts to keep your children involved in learning activities this summer. The Summer Matters campaign (www.summermatters2you.net) has highlighted the following 10 ways for you to know if your children are in a great summer learning program. If your children are in a quality program, you should see:

- Kids who are happy and engaged.
- Kids who feel safe.
- Kids learning by doing.
- Kids being creative.
- Kids moving and playing.
- Kids showing off their learning.
- Kids engaged in a wide array of meaningful activities (the arts, sports, science, service, learning, etc.) that are purposeful about learning, complement (but don't repeat) school-day learning, and leverage community, city, and school district resources (nonprofits, parks, libraries, museums, universities, etc.).
- Staff who are positive and involved.



- Staff welcoming parents.
- Summer camp spirit.

You should definitely try to give them more summer learning opportunities through enriching experiences. According to the Summer Matters campaign, this means:

- Reading to your children or encouraging them to read books recommended by their teachers, your local library, and online summer reading lists. And signing them up for your library's Summer Reading Program, which offers incentives for summer reading.
- Visiting free local resources that are both entertaining and educational, such as libraries, parks, museums, universities, and community centers.
- Playing fun math and word games that turn everyday activities into learning opportunities.
- Asking your children's teachers, if possible, to recommend online educational worksheets and activities that can be downloaded for free.
- Turning off the TV (or at least limiting the amount of screen time). And keeping your children moving with activities that encourage learning as well as physical activity.

The checklists are reprinted with permission from the Summer Matters campaign.

Encouraging reading through play**Dear teacher,**

I'd like some suggestions about ways to encourage my young children to read through play.

Dear parent,

Rachel Payne, coordinator of Children's and Family Services for the Brooklyn Public Library, has these great suggestions of activities and books to accompany each activity: Playing with your child is not only fun, it's one of the most important ways you can encourage development, she claims. As your children's first teacher, you are helping him develop literacy skills. You don't need expensive toys, just imagination and your children's favorite playmate — YOU!

A recent study of 1- to 2-year-olds found that those who played with blocks with their parents for 20 min-

utes a day scored 15 percent higher on language-development tests and were 80 percent less likely to watch television. The more a child plays with the shapes found in blocks, Play-Doh, and other materials, the better able he will be to understand the shapes of letters and words. Below are some fun activities and books to help get you started:

Cereal box blocks: Use empty cereal and food boxes by stuffing them with newspaper and taping the flaps closed. Line them up like Dominoes to knock down or build a tower. You also can talk about the pictures and letters on the boxes.

• Book pairing: "Not a Box," by Antoinette Portis

Let's go shopping!: Use empty food boxes to set up a grocery with children who are ready for pretend play. Get shopping bags or baskets, play money, and a shoebox for a cash register. Take turns being the cashier or customer.

• Book pairing: "Feast for 10," by Cathryn Falwell

Edible Play-Doh: Mix one part flour, two parts oatmeal, and one part water in a bowl. Give your child a small piece to explore. Label the shapes your child is making ("You made a circle ...").

• Book pairing: "Clay Boy," by Mirra Ginsburg, Jos. A. Smith (illustrator)

Teaching measurement without a ruler**Dear teacher,**

My first-grader's teacher said that students will not be using rulers this year. I am definitely puzzled about how my child can learn to measure without using a ruler.

Dear parent,

When people first measured objects, they used non-standard units of measure, such as the length of a king's foot or the span of a person's hand. Your child could learn about measurement by counting the steps across his bedroom or the number of paper clips long a pencil is.

Parents should send questions and comments to dearteacher@dearteacher.com or ask them on the columnists' website at www.dearteacher.com. © Compass Syndicate Corporation, 2013. Distributed by King Features Syndicate.

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DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

Unsettling mistakes

How misunderstandings can stall a divorce

The Hacketts were divorced: on January 12, 2006, the parties settled their divorce action and executed a written settlement agreement.

Then why, eight years later, in March, 2014, was another court issuing a decision and order related to the 2006 divorce settlement?

In January, 2008, Mr. Hackett brought an action “seeking to reform the settlement agreement on the ground that an alleged mutual mistake had resulted in the unequal division of the marital assets.”

“Mutual mistake” refers to a misunderstanding involving every party (in this case, the spouses) in a contract (here, the divorce settlement).

Mr. Hackett’s argument to the court was that the 2006 agreement between him and his former wife contained a “computational error.” Whereas the parties had intended that each receive an equal share of the property, the former Mrs. Hackett ended up with a windfall “in excess of \$100,000.”

In the end, the Appellate Division of the Second Judicial Department rejected Mr. Hackett’s claim.

One factor that the court apparently relied on was that, “The parties acknowledged in open court that they had read and understood the terms of the settlement agreement, and had not been forced” to sign it.

The court cited earlier case law stating that “marital settlement agreements are judicially favored and are not to be easily set aside,” and that the mutual mistake must be “so material that it goes to the foundation of the agreement.”

Additionally, the court said that “to overcome the heavy presumption that a deliberately prepared and executed written instrument manifested the true intention of the parties, evidence of a very high order is required.”

Here, Mr. Hackett “failed to meet his high burden of proof of demonstrating that, as a result of a mutual mistake, the settlement agreement did not reflect the true intent of both parties with respect to the distribu-



tion of the marital estate.”

Our judicial system likes finality, but doesn’t always provide it. It is a tough road to prove that there was a mutual mistake and to set aside a settlement agreement, but that doesn’t mean that someone won’t try to get there.

The Hackett case is evidence of this.

Other mistakes:

How long will it take?

The Hacketts had already settled back in 2006. They may have litigated before then. Did the wife, or even the husband, imagine at that time that their settlement would be challenged, leading to more years of litigation?

Many parties hire litigators and then are shocked, even after hearing the horror stories, to find that they themselves are spending years of their lives in a legal battle.

The law is clear, I am right, and the judge will find in my favor.

Basically, whenever a case is “reversed,” it means that a judge (or panel of judges) disagrees with what another judge decided earlier about the same case.

Often, a client meets with a law-

yer and says, “Tell me what will happen in my case.” But the law is much too nuanced for this. Litigators spend their professional lives arguing about how the law should be applied in one case after another. Many would happily argue either side of a matter, and there is nothing unethical about this.

The point is that even judges can and do disagree with one another at times. How then, can you as a (potential) litigant, be so certain of the outcome? Certain that a judge will agree with you?

Even if the judge does rule in your favor, might the other party return to court? Might an appellate (“higher court”) judge decide against you? The only certainty is that it will take years to find out.

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

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

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FAMILY HEALTH

DR. PRAMOD NARULA, MD
Chairman of Pediatrics
New York Methodist Hospital



All safe in the sun

My husband and I enjoy being outdoors with our children in the warm weather, but we often worry about sunburn. What are the risks and what precautions do we need to take?

In moderation, sunlight is quite good for your health. That glowing star 93 million miles away provides the fuel that turns our bodies into vitamin D factories, which encourages bone health, and has been shown to lift the moods of children and adults, alike. However, as you've indicated, there can certainly be too much of a good thing when it comes to the sunlight.

The sun emits ultraviolet light, or UV rays — electromagnetic radiation that is invisible to the human eye. When it comes to sunburn, these rays are the culprit, and over time, excessive exposure can harm the body's skin cells and increase a person's risk for skin cancer, premature ageing, eye damage, and immune suppression.

The UV rays are strongest between 10 am and 4 pm, so try to plan your

outdoor activities with this in mind. If you plan to be outdoors during that time, liberally apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30, half an hour before going outside. Once outside, no matter what, sunscreen should be reapplied at least once every two hours. It is best to use a variety of sunscreen that is waterproof and sweatproof, but no matter how long the label says that sunscreen lasts, reapplying sunscreen directly after swimming or during athletic activities is a good idea as well. No matter what time of day, the skin is never entirely immune from the damaging effects of the sun, so sunscreen is still advisable even outside these peak hours.

Remember to also wear appropriate clothing and accessories, such as wide-brimmed hats, UV-protection sunglasses, long-sleeved shirts, or specially designed UV-protected clothing that already has SPF built in. Ultraviolet light-protection laundry detergent that adds sun protection factor 30 to clothing when washed is also available.

Even if you are taking precautions, do not stay in the direct sunlight for hours at a time. If you are playing outside with your children, take breaks during which you sit in the shade and cool down. You will be less likely to burn and also less likely to become dehydrated.

In the unfortunate event that sunburn does occur, apply a cold compress and aloe vera gel to the area; both of which can relieve some of the sting. Drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration, and stay out of the sun until your sunburn heals. If your children have a high fever, blisters, nausea, headache, or signs of dehydration, like reduced urination and dizziness, call your pediatrician.

Take comfort though: given the appropriate precautions and protection, there's no hot place on earth that's off limits, whether the Sahara Desert, to Zion National Park, to Coney Island on a 90-degree day. After a long winter, summer is finally right around the corner, so stay safe and have some fun in the sun.

Don't miss wildlife adventure 'Bears'

Out in theaters now, Disneynature's new film, "Bears," showcases a year in the life of a bear family in the Alaskan wilderness.

I thought this documentary would be like a usual educational lecture-like film about bears and the life of a Mama-bear. Boy, was I completely wrong. "Bears" is a fantastic and inspirational wildlife adventure that many people will adore and watch, again and again.

The movie has a mix of action, thrills, adventure, education, comedy and, of course, adorable human-like cubs.

They make you fall in love the



BY GERRY O.

second you see them on the screen.

The story begins when a brown bear, named Sky who lives in Alaska's national park, gives birth.

She is planning to leave her winter nest soon with newborn cubs Amber and Scout. Then, she begins her big and hard journey trying to store enough food through the season.

She meets a couple of friends and protects her little ones from predators.

This film has crazy close-ups on the bears. At one point I swore the bear was less than an inch from the camera.

Unlike other documentaries, this

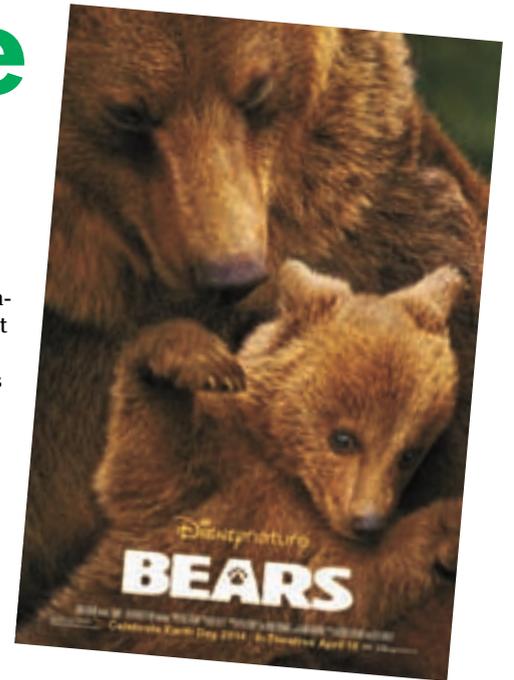
one has a storyline. Honestly, I thought that this fit better as a movie.

The narrator makes us believe that the bears have feelings. I would love to know how the cameramen got so close to the bears and watched Sky when she was in her winter den. That was perfect and nearly impossible. Kudos to Disneynature for bringing us this unforgettable experience.

My favorite scene is when they search for salmon. Scout and Amber go to the beach for the first time. While Amber keeps close to mommy, Scout is in the water getting clams stuck to his claws. The scene shows that there is some family fun time anywhere in the world. Even with bears.

This movie has some thrills and some violence, remarkable since it is unscripted. I recommend this for ages 9 to 18 and give it five out of five stars.

Gerry O., age 13, is a KIDS FIRST! film critic. To see his video review, visit <http://youtube/3kTcYEhKy9s>.



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The missing

Renew your commitment to safety this Missing Kids Awareness Month

BY JAMIE LOBER

As May is Missing Kids Awareness Month, this is the prime time to renew your commitment as a family to safety.

This past year the number of kids reported missing in New York State increased slightly, from 21,390 to 21,656. It is a very real issue in our community, and many families are surprised to learn that all missing kids cannot be lumped into one category.

“There are family abductions, non-family abductions which include stranger abductions, runaways, throw-aways and the issue of lost or missing children for short periods of time,” said Pam Weaver, director of community education with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, New York Regional Office.

The predators are not always who you may think.

“It is important for people to understand that children are more at risk of being abducted by a family member or someone they know instead of a stranger,” said Weaver.

There are about four times as many family abductions as non-family abductions.

“A child is usually taken because of custody issues or issues with divorce or hurt feelings between people, but it is not always in the best interest of the child,” said Weaver. A parent may be able to rationalize his choice to take the child away, but that does not mean that there are no consequences. “Even if a child is taken by a family member they still could be unfortunately a victim of physical, emotional or sexual abuse in the hands of the parent who takes them,” said Weaver.

There is no stereotypical child that predators approach.

“Research is telling us that chil-

dren that are by themselves walking or playing outside are more at risk because it is a crime of opportunity,” said Weaver.

One of the most valuable safety rules you can instill in your child is to always take a friend with you because there is safety in numbers.

“There are more attempts of abductions when children are going

to and from school or school activities,” said Weaver.

Kids who are unaccompanied are logical targets because they are more vulnerable and look like easy prey.

“Usually it is children between the ages of 10 and 14 that are more likely to be abducted in those situations because the reality is that



One of the most valuable safety rules you can instill in your child is to always take a friend with you because there is safety in numbers.

younger children usually are supervised," said Weaver.

Teaching the concept of stranger danger in the schools has become a thing of the past since kids are at greater risk of being abducted or sexually abused by someone they know.

"Ninety percent of sexual abuse occurs by someone the child knows," said Weaver. There are a few basic ground rules you can set with your child. "The first rule is to check first, which means that children should always check with a grown-up that is in charge of them before they go anywhere," said Weaver. This applies to anyone who stops them or tries to get them to go in the car. "The second rule is to take a friend if they are riding a bike or playing and if they are real young, it should be a grown-up friend like mom, dad or a teacher," said Weaver.

One of the hardest things for kids to do can be to say no but they must figure out how.

"If anyone is making them scared, uncomfortable or trying to take their hand to take them somewhere and they know that is not the person they should be with, they should yell no," said Weaver.

The final rule is for kids to always tell a grown-up what has happened if they ever feel uncomfortable so the grown-up knows about the potential danger.

You can talk about the fact that some kids wind up missing in our community at an age-appropriate level with your child, but it can be more constructive to empower them with safety skills rather than fear tactics.

"Instead of saying, 'Look at all these bad people in the world,' instead, say that 'mom and dad love you and want to make sure you are safe just like you wear a seat belt when you are in the car

or bike helmet when you are riding your bike,'" said Weaver.

It can complicate things that kids are trusting.

"They might think it is okay to get in the car with a teacher or coach because they know them, but the reality is that they should not get in the car with someone even if they know them unless the adult in charge of them says it is okay," said Weaver.

Runaways are a huge issue in our state.

"Sometimes kids run away because home does not feel like a safe place or they are being victimized, parents have drug or alcohol issues, an adult coming into the household that might be touching them inappropriately or just because they do not like the rules," said Weaver.

It is a good idea for kids to reach out to an adult that can help them.

"Often times once they are out in the community the people that befriend them may take advantage of them or get them involved in prostitution, pornography or selling drugs," said Weaver.

Online relationships are another reason that kids may run away and that is particularly concerning because the person on the other end of the computer could be an online predator. Speak up. Parents need to monitor what their kids are doing online and see if they are talking to strangers or making poor choices.

"If you are having issues with your child, quarrels or your child does not want to obey the rules, you may want to reach out and get some help from school," said Weaver. "It is really about parent communication and talking to kids about safety in the real world and online world as well."

If your child were to go missing, the first thing you should do is call 911.

"There is no waiting period if a child is missing," said Weaver. It is also wise to call the National Center at 1-800-THE-LOST as they can help with the investigation as well. "It is important that parents always have a current, updated, close-up picture of their child's face," said Weaver.

Jamie Lober, author of Pink Power (www.getpinkpower.com), is dedicated to providing information on women's and pediatric health topics. She can be reached at jamie@getpinkpower.com.

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HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Synthroid trouble?

Hashimoto patients go natural to find relief

If you have Hashimoto's disease, an autoimmune disease that causes low thyroid function along with a host of often debilitating symptoms, you may have been told to take a thyroid replacement pill, typically Synthroid or the generic Levothyroxine, and you will be just fine — or that it might just be all in your head. That is just what Lorraine Carapola was told a few years after she diagnosed.

"After being treated with Synthroid for years, my T.S.H. (thyroid stimulating hormone) levels regulated, but I was still miserable. I was freezing all the time, had incredible digestive issues, migraines, brain fog, and heart palpitations. My doctor even suggested I was making it all up and treated me like I was crazy," she says.

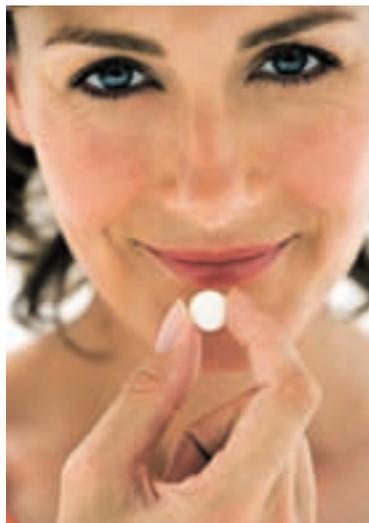
Unfortunately, Carapola's experience is not uncommon. Quick chats with Hashimoto patients will all relate the same story, but why is this happening?

For starters, many endocrinologists are primarily focused on treating diabetes and for those that do treat thyroid disorders, most were trained on the simple and incorrect preface that Synthroid is a fix-all, when in reality it is not beneficial for all patients, and does not address the autoimmune present in the body; it simply regulates the thyroid stimulating hormone.

Pharmacist and author of "Lifestyle Interventions of Finding and Treating the Root Cause," Izabella Wentz explains how despite lifestyle modifications and natural supplements being stressed as helpful treatments for nearly every other disease, that has not been the case with Hashimoto's disease:

"The only intervention recommended by physicians was a pharmacological one, I didn't feel that medication alone was the answer," she says.

Leading Hashimoto specialist Dr. Datis Kharrazian says that normal thyroid stimulating hormone levels mean very little. In "Why Do I Still Have Thyroid Symptoms? When My Lab Tests Are Normal: A Revolution-



ary Breakthrough In Understanding Hashimoto's Disease and Hypothyroidism," Dr. Kharrazian explores the reasons behind the mismanagement of the disease under today's old-fashioned medical standards, chiefly taking a synthetically generated Synthroid pill daily:

"It has been staggering the number of stories of we have received from patients whose medical doctors disregard their complaints once T.S.H. is normalized with thyroid hormones. They still feel awful and have symptoms, but are told to quit complaining, to start exercising more, to get a hobby, or to take antidepressants," says the physician.

After seeing four endocrinologists in five years, Carapola saw an integrative specialist who switched her from synthetically produced Synthroid to Armour, a natural desiccated hormone (N.D.T.) taken from a pig's gland. He also put her on vitamin D and B12 supplements along with Cytomel, a T3 specific medication.

"It changed my life. I forgot what it felt like to feel human again," she says.

Thyroid patient, advocate, and author of the book, "Living Well With Hypothyroidism: What Your Doctor Doesn't Tell You That You Need To Know," Mary Shomon explains why natural works better:

"A normal thyroid gland produces

primarily T4 (the storage hormone) and some T3, and the T4 is converted into T3, the active hormone, for use by the cells and tissues of the body," she says.

Synthroid targets T4, which in some people can convert to T3 but a healthy thyroid makes many hormones: T4, T3, T2, T1 and calcitonin. Synthroid works on the premise of conversion from T4 to T3, which many Hashimoto patients' bodies cannot do, and even if it does convert, patients miss the other necessary hormones for healthy thyroid functioning.

In "What Every Patient Should Know About Synthroid," Dr. Ronald J. Grisanti explains, "Only a thyroid hormone preparation that contains T3 will accelerate these patients' metabolism. Hence, when T4 therapy normalizes T.S.H. blood levels of many patients, it leaves their metabolism subnormal."

He continues, "Evidence indicates that financial incentives from the marketers of Synthroid have influenced endocrinologists to endorse the product. Synthroid has a history of manufacturing, stability, and potency problems, and it has not met F.D.A. criteria for effectiveness and safety. These problems with product quality led to F.D.A. action against Synthroid. Many alternative medical physicians report that treatment results with Synthroid are inferior to those with products containing both T4 and T3, or T3 alone."

The best a patient can do is to learn about the various treatments and supplements available. Often, doctors who practice a more holistic approach to treatment are more knowledgeable in the disease.

Coming next month: Natural supplements, vitamins, and lifestyle changes that help improve Hashimoto's disease.

Danielle Sullivan, a mom of three, has worked as a writer and editor in the parenting world for more than 10 years. Sullivan also writes about pets and parenting for Disney's Babble.com. Find Sullivan on her blogs, Just Write Mom and Some Puppy To Love.



PARENTS HELPING PARENTS

SHARON C. PETERS, MA

Parent friendships

Dear Sharon,

Do you have any suggestions for creating a network of other parent friends here in the city? This is our first child and I'm feeling lonely and cut off. We haven't been living in New York very long and I don't have a network established yet of close friends. Any advice would be appreciated.



Dear new mom,

Congratulations on your new little one and welcome to New York!

One way to meet other parents is by regularly visiting neighborhood playgrounds and parks. These are good places to make friends and gather information about local resources. If you are shy, encourage yourself to say "hello" to a friendly looking mom or dad, he or she will probably be more than happy to get to know another parent and share helpful ideas. One of my nieces met her closest mom friend when her baby was an infant in a playground a few blocks from her house. The now-8-year-old boys are still best buddies today.

Online groups are also a great way to gather information, receive support, and find out about or organize mothers groups in your

area. If you search the internet for "parent groups in New York City," or your borough or neighborhood, you will find a wealth of listings to check out. Joining an online parent group can give you a regular opportunity to be in contact with many other moms and dads. Some have thousands of members while others, representing an assortment of neighborhoods or focused on different commonalities, (i.e. parents of teens, single parents etc.), are smaller. Each group usually discusses common parent questions and local resources for families. For example, this magazine group has NYParenting.com on both Facebook and Twitter.

Many neighborhood cafes also welcome new moms and their babies. If you look around your area in the afternoon there could well be gatherings of parents and children getting together for company while sharing a snack or cup of coffee or tea together.

Local libraries also often sponsor children's book readings and

other events. Stopping by the library in your neighborhood could produce some new ideas and some new friends.

Of course as you can readily see, this magazine is a wealth of information about music, dance, exercise classes, and much more that you can attend with your child. Choosing something in your neighborhood can increase the likelihood of meeting other parents who live nearby.

Watch for street fairs close to home as well. Organizations and family centered businesses often have tables with helpful information.

New York has so many people "hurrying" around that it can seem hard to find kindred spirits in the hustle and bustle, but there are lots of neighborhood pockets that are a lot like small towns. If you keep yourself reaching out to people you are likely to find openhearted parents who will be thrilled to have you join their circle of friends.

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 Family@cnglocal.com.



LIONS AND TIGERS AND TEENS

MYRNA BETH HASKELL

Be the 'cool' parent

Advice for staying connected with your teen

Have you watched “Mean Girls” with your teen daughter? There is a memorable line in the movie when Mrs. George states, “I’m not like a regular mom. I’m a COOL mom.” Of course, Mrs. George is a caricature of a mom trying too hard to be “one of the girls.” She makes mocktails for “happy hour,” wears skimpy clothing, and allows her daughter to occupy the master bedroom suite.

Are “cool parents” more in tune with their teens? What does it really mean to be a cool parent?

Cool parents are truly connected

A cool parent is someone who can relate to teens, but still establishes a position of respect and authority. Cool parents know that the key to staying on the same page as their teenagers is to stay involved and interested in their dreams and goals.

Dr. Ilene Val-Essen, author of “Bring Out the Best in Your Child and Your Self: Creating a Family Based on Mutual Respect” (Quality Parenting, 2010) and creator of the “Quality Parenting Program” (www.qualityparenting.com), believes that teens want to stay connected with their parents.

“Respect is the link,” she explains. “Respect yourself, your children, and



those with whom you interact.”

Dr. Christina G. Hibbert, a clinical psychologist, mother of six, and author of “This is How We Grow” (Oracle Folio Books, 2013), points out, “One of the worst things parents can do is try to be their teen’s friend. They have plenty of ‘cool’ friends. Instead of trying to be like your teen, focus on being open to your teen. Do activities with them that they enjoy. Make time to listen whenever they need you.”

Dr. Grace Malonai, a psychotherapist specializing in parenting and family relationships, explains, “It is common for people to think that in order to connect with their teens, they need to get down on a teen’s level by wearing similar clothing or talking the lingo. However, parents are older and different than their teens, and trying to look and sound like them may seem fake. Parents can connect with teens by being authentic and empathetic.”

Val-Essen describes, “Cool parents are parents teens can be proud of. Parents engaged in meaningful activities — those that keep them alive and passionate about life — are cool parents teens admire.”

Parents should be aware of the latest teen trends. Educate yourself about new social networking sites, music, movies, as well as anything illicit or unhealthy teens might be exposed to. You can’t advise your teen if you don’t know what is going on.

Staying connected with your teen also means that you are familiar with

his current circle of friends and his social activities. Allow your teen to have friends over regularly, so you can get to know them on a more personal basis. Take your teen on regular outings doing something he loves.

What’s the buzz?

Teens don’t always talk to their parents about what is going on, but parents must keep trying to break that barrier.

Malonai, recommends, “Listen to your teen with all that you have, and make sure you are available when the time is right.” She also advises parents to show interest in their teen’s feelings without using accusatory language. For instance, a parent might say, “The words in that song tell a sad story, yet you are smiling. This makes me curious.”

Being a cool parent shouldn’t mean that you haven’t forgotten what it is like to be carefree, and you can still find your sense of humor. Understand your teen is changing and desires more independence, but still insist that he follows your rules and expectations.

Tips and tales

“I try to remind my son that I was his age once and have ‘been there’ — even though it was during the age of the dinosaurs!”

Lori Ann Jones, Salt Point, NY

“To stay connected with my teen daughter, I get up to take her to the bus. It’s when we talk without interruptions from siblings, pets or the phone.”

Lynda Radano, Berlin, NJ

Share your ideas

Upcoming topic: Tips to encourage your teen to have healthy sleep habits.

Please send your full name, address, and brief comments to myrnahaskell@gmail.com or visit www.myrnahaskell.com. Myrna Beth Haskell is a feature writer, columnist and author of “Lions And Tigers And Teens: Expert Advice and Support for the Conscientious Parent Just Like You” (Unlimited Publishing LLC, 2012).

‘Cool parent’ dos and don’ts

Here are some more tips for being a “cool” parent.

- Do don a “Walking Dead” costume for Halloween.
- Don’t drink alcohol in front of your teen and his friends.
- Do try waterskiing with your teen.
- Don’t mimic teenager banter on social networking sites.
- Do host a party for your teen and her friends at your house, but don’t leave the premises.

Top
Tips



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A LETTER FROM COLLEGE

AGLAIA HO

Dealing with stress

As a full-time college student, I can attest to the tremendous pressure that is placed on today's youth. Students are sometimes pushed to achieve lofty goals from family and educators, but the worst burden may be their own drive to succeed. In a competitive world that values a prestigious career and a top-notch education, students push themselves to meet high expectations in a cutthroat race to the top.

This passionate motivation of young people is definitely encouraging. However, everything comes at a price. Trying to make it in a challenging world filled with go-getters and dreamers alike can be stressful. College life is extremely overwhelming. Between the hundred pages or so of reading for class, multiple problem sets, responsibilities for extracurricular activities, and daily errands, there never seems to be an escape in sight for today's students. With time being precious, they often find themselves in a rut of monotonous schedules, chugging away nonstop from one task or chore to the next.

Unfortunately, stress is just an inevitable part of life. According to a 2012 study by the American Psychology Association, three-fourths of Americans claim to have experienced the same

or increasing amounts of stress for the last five years. The survey also reported that people are stressed by a variety of factors, including money, work, relationships, family responsibilities, and even the economy. With stress clearly being omnipresent, it is important for students to understand both the benefits and hazards of stress in their lives.

To begin with, stress is not necessarily a bad thing. Stress, in moderation, is often crucial to anyone's success. Sometimes, we need a little stress in our lives in order to keep us on our toes. It gives us the ability to care about our current situation. Growing up, I always stressed over exams. Looking back, I realize that the stress meant that I cared about my own personal success. And while the stress definitely made me uneasy, it spurred me on to graduate high school and be accepted to college.

Additionally, stress can help build character. Sometimes a little bit can motivate us to push through the hardship or work harder. There are even certain people who function at their best when they are stressed. I tend to be more productive, more alert, and more efficient when I am under a little bit of stress. When I have a lot of schoolwork, I do get a bit stressed out about how I am going to finish all my work on time. I find that this type of stress is motivational. To deal with it, I always make a "game plan," schedules and to-do lists to organize myself. Thus, assignments that would have been completed a lot slower if I hadn't been under stress

are finished much faster. Furthermore, it is often rewarding when you overcome a stressful situation.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that an extreme amount of stress is detrimental. Chronic stress has been shown to lead to eating disorders, disruptive sleep patterns, a weak immune system, and other health complications. (My mother always knows when I am under a lot of stress just by counting the zits on my forehead!) Being able to pinpoint the cause of your stress, finding solutions to limit it, and coping with difficult circumstances are skills everyone should develop. Learning how to alleviate stress can help you lead a more productive and fulfilling life.

There are many ways to "de-stress" when the going gets tough. If possible, try to remove yourself from the stressful situation temporarily. Some people find their comfort in nature, taking walks outside, or sitting at the park. Others discover their solace in solitary, calm activities like reading, listening to music, or watching movies. There are even those who turn to physical activities like exercising to help alleviate their stress.

I often find the best way for me to deal with my stress is to talk to someone. Look for a support group, people who care about you and that you can trust. I found my listening ears within my family. Don't be afraid to reach out to professionals, if you feel like too much is going on. Most schools offer mental health services free of charge and will be more than happy to schedule an appointment for you with the campus psychologist. I have made a couple visits to my school's psychologist and found it extremely helpful.

Everyone needs to take a break once in a while. A break might entail five minutes for some and might mean a few weeks for others.

Experiment to find out what is the most effective way for you to deal with stress.

You will find that it can greatly improve your happiness and your ability to deal with life's ups and downs.

Aglaia Ho is a freshman at Williams College and a native New Yorker.





ASK AN ATTORNEY

ALISON ARDEN BESUNDER,
ESQ.

Changes to tax laws

I have heard reports that the new state budget includes changes to the estate tax laws. How does this affect my planning? Do I need to redo my will?

You heard correctly. Gov. Cuomo commissioned a task force to examine the impact of taxes on New Yorkers and to propose reform. The Commission concluded in December 2013 that many New Yorkers were fleeing the state to places like Florida that do not have an estate tax. Until recently, New York imposed an estate (or “death”) tax on assets in a decedent’s estate exceeding \$1 million. The tax was imposed only on the excess. New York also did not impose a gift tax on lifetime transfers and has not done so since 1999. After a flurry of activity, the powers that be in Albany included estate tax reform in the Executive Budget, which was passed at 11 pm on March 31, effective April 1. Among other provisions (pre-K funding!) the estate tax reform will exempt almost 90 percent of all New York estates from estate tax. This will provide relief to those whose estate value is largely made up of their homes, or for the nearly 2,800 farms in downstate and upstate New York, many of which would otherwise not have been able to be passed down

to the next generation, because it would have had to be sold to pay estate taxes.

On the positive side: New York will allow a higher estate tax exemption, raising it immediately from \$1 million (the third lowest exemption in the nation) to \$2,062,500. Starting April 1, 2015, the exemption will annually increase by \$1.0625 million through Jan. 1, 2019, until it reaches the original federal exemption of \$5.25 million on Jan. 1, 2019. At that point, the exemption will be annually adjusted for inflation as is the federal exemption.

However, “grave” dangers lurk.

Cliff-hangers and phaseouts: Decedents have a narrow window to escape, pushing the entire estate off a tax “cliff” into an abyss. Before April 1, a New Yorker’s estate paid tax only on assets above the \$1 million threshold, not on the entire taxable estate. Under the new law, if an estate exceeds the exemption amount by less than five percent, the tax is between 6.5 percent and eight percent on the excess above the threshold. Once the taxable estate exceeds the five percent, the full value of the estate is subject to the tax, not just the amount exceeding the exemption. The tax is then computed on a sliding scale from 3.06 percent to as high as 16 percent for estates exceeding \$10 million.

This translates into what is being referred to as the “marginal 164 percent tax.” For example, in June 2017, a decedent with a New York taxable estate of \$5,512,500 (five percent more than the then-\$5.25 million exemption) would pay New York estate tax of \$430,050. That is effectively a tax of \$430,050 on the extra \$262,500 in the decedent’s estate, as opposed to the roughly \$26,250 that would be due if the tax was imposed solely on the amount exceeding the exemption. This can pose serious problems for New Yorkers with assets exceeding five percent of the exemption, inclusive of any gifts.

Gift tax: The new law increases

the overall exemption, but claws back lifetime gifts into the gross taxable estate. Now, the gross estate of a New Yorker will include any taxable gifts made on or after April 1, 2014 but before Jan. 1, 2019 if they were made within three years of death, and made while the donor was a New York resident.

Taxes on trusts: The law closes loopholes on trusts that were previously not subject to New York tax. First, distributions of accumulated income on or after June 1, 2014 to New York beneficiaries of non-taxable New York resident trusts are now taxable. This does not change to income accumulated before Jan. 1, 2014 or to non-resident trusts created by a non-New Yorker. Second, the law targets Incomplete Non-Grantor Trusts. These are trusts established in another jurisdiction by a New Yorker who is the grantor and remains a beneficiary. The law now treats these trusts as “grantor trusts” for New York income tax purposes, taxing all income to the grantor.

In addition, New York still lacks “portability,” allowing spouses to automatically pass exemptions between each other.

The reform is expected to save New Yorkers \$380 million over three years. Yet, the state expects overall state tax revenues to increase by \$1.4 billion this year based on expected economic growth.

It is always important to review your estate plan every year to ensure that it continues to meet your needs in light of changes to the tax laws, as well as changes to your family or assets.

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



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Calendar

MAY



Earth in the shadows

“The Earth and Me” celebrates Mother Earth in a flowing tapestry of song, dance, and puppetry at Kumble Theater at Long Island University on May 19, 20, and 21.

The beautifully presented puppet play by Shadow Box Theater inspires children with hope and empowerment. The children learn how to help protect our Earth and

its delicate balance of harmony, tolerance, and peace.

“The Earth and Me,” on May 19, 20, and 21, at 10 am and 11:30 am. Tickets are \$10 in advance and \$15 at the door.

Kumble Theater at Long Island University [DeKalb and Flatbush avenues in Fort Greene, (212) 724-0677; www.shadowboxtheatre.org].

Submit a listing

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

Send your listing request to brooklyncalendar@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!

SAT, MAY 3

IN BROOKLYN

Walk for Bladder Cancer:

Cadman Plaza Park, Cadman Plaza East near Prospect Street; nathanieljonathanbrown@gmail.com; BrooklynWalk.kintera.org/bcan/brooklynwarriors; 10 am; Free.

Walk over the Brooklyn Bridge and back, from Cadman Plaza Park.

Craft fair: Bartel-Pritchard Lot, 15th Street at Prospect Park Southwest; 10 am–5 pm; Free.

PS 154 fair hosts a wonderful selection of gifts for Mother's Day. Rain or shine.

Learn to ride: Brower Park, Prospect Place and Kingston Avenue; www.nycgovparks.org; 10 am–1 pm; Free.

Rangers help children ride their bikes, including balancing, starting, stopping and steering. Own bike and helmet required. Pre-registration required.

NYPD Career Day: Lafayette High School, 2630 Benson Ave. at Bay 43rd Street; 11 am–4 pm; Free.

Learn about working for the NYPD from officers in different areas and specialties.

Sing back: Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St. at Clinton Street; (718) 222-4111; www.brooklynhistory.org; 11 am; Free.

Sing along features family-friendly songs, stories, skits, movies and more. Lloyd Miller sings songs about sports greats.

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 learn all about patterns.

Family Festival: PS 15, 71 Sullivan St. and Van Brunt; Noon–3 pm; Free
Puppetry arts presents the fair that



Walk through history

Come and celebrate the Children's Garden's 100th anniversary on May 3, 10, 17 and 31 at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

Families can enjoy an amiable amble through the dazzling green space, and take an interactive tour with hands-on activities and

loads of fun.

The garden tour is available on May 3, 10, 17 and 31 from 3 to 4 pm. Free with garden admission.

Brooklyn Botanic Garden [1000 Washington Ave. at Eastern Parkway in Crown Heights (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org].

includes, flea market, juggle shows and a performance by Dancewave.

Meet the author/illustrator:

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

Brian Biggs shares his colorful characters. For children 3 years and older.

Picture book time: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718)

694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 2-4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Educator James Giovan leads a tour of Borough Hall. Suggested for children 9 years and older. Pre-registration required.

Family walk: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave., at Eastern Parkway; (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org; 3-4 pm; Free with admission to the gardens.

Celebrate 100 years of the children's garden with an interactive walk and hands-on activities.

Dance festival: Actors Fund Theater, 160 Schermerhorn St. and Hoyt Street; (718) 640-1843; www.brooklyndancefestival.org; 7 pm; \$25 (\$20 seniors and students).

Presentation of unique dances, challenging routines, and contemporary choreography.

FURTHER AFIELD

Citizen Science Series: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Noon-4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Citizen Science Series introduces audiences to a range of science projects.

SUN, MAY 4

IN BROOKLYN

"Step Into Yom Ha'atzmaut":

Hannah Senesh Community Day School, 342 Smith St. at First Place; (718) 858-8663; smallcity@hannahsenesh.org; www.hannahsenesh.org; smallcity@senesh/step-into-yom-haatzmaut; 9 am-Noon; \$5.

Celebrate Israeli independence with live music, art, an archaeological dig, games, and food! Ages 2-10.

Suzy Shelton Band: Bell House, 149 Seventh St. at Third Avenue; (718) 643-6510; www.thebellhouse.com; 11 am; \$10 (\$5) \$15 at door (\$10 children).

Celebrate the release of the new album, "Smile in My Heart," watch her new video, and do a fun hands-on craft. For children 1 to 10 years old.

Story time: powerHouse on 8th, 1111 Eighth Ave. between 11th and 12th streets; (718) 666-3049; www.powerhousearena.com; 11:30 am; Free.

Frann Preston-Gannon, author of "Hot Dog, Cold Dog" hosts this weekly event. RSVP requested.

Blooming Babies: 11:30 am–12:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, May 3.

Meet the author/illustrator: 1:30 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, May 3.

Dance festival: 3:30 pm and 6 pm. Actors Fund Theater. See Saturday, May 3.

FRI, MAY 9

IN BROOKLYN

"Ai Weiwei: According to What?": Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy. at Washington Avenue; (718) 638

Continued on page 60

Calendar

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

Continued from page 59

–5000; www.brooklynmuseum.org;
4:45–6:45 pm; Free with RSVP.

Planned for teens for teens, the museum is filled with art, friends, food and fun. RSVP required.

SAT, MAY 10

IN BROOKLYN

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

Children enjoy erecting new buildings with an assortment of blocks.

Freshwater fishing: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287–3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Noon; Free.

Catch and release fishing. Rangers teach ethics of fishing and water ecology. Must be 8 years and older. Equipment provided.

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

Children of all ages view a dance of traditional Chinese dancers in authentic costumes. Onstage demos and audience interaction.

Picture book time: 2–4 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, May 3.

Handmade history: Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St. at Clinton Street; (718) 222–4111; www.brooklynhistory.org; 3 pm; Free.

Children learn about the 200th anniversary of the Fulton Ferry by viewing paintings, followed by a painting craft where children create their own works of art using the waterfront and boats as inspiration.

Family walk: 3–4 pm. Brooklyn Botanic Garden. See Saturday, May 3.

FURTHER AFIELD

Quilts – The Memory of the US Civil War: New-York Historical Society DiMenna Children's History Museum, 170 Central Park West at 77th Street, Manhattan; (212) 873–3400; nyhistory.org; 2 pm; Free with museum admission.

Through the exhibition children will learn the importance of fabrics, quilts, garments, and other artifacts, then go to the classroom to make your own quilts. Workshop is in Spanish.



Singing with Suzi

Put a bounce in your step by celebrating the release of Suzi Shelton's new album "Smile in My Heart," on May 4 at the Bell House.

Award-winning recording artist Suzi and her band celebrate this third album that includes hit songs "Fire Truck" and "Cinnamon Bear." Special guest Mike Messer of The Dirty Sock Funtime Band joins Suzi on stage. There will also be a special viewing of

her new music video before the show.

Suzi's interactive brand of indie rock is suitable for families with children from 1 to 10 years old, but moms and dads enjoy it too!

The Suzi Shelton Band on May 4 at 11 am. Tickets are \$5 to 15.

The Bell House [149 Seventh St. at Third Avenue in Gowanus, (718) 643–6510; www.thebellhouse.ny.com]; sugarmountainnews@msn.com].

SUN, MAY 11

IN BROOKLYN

Mother's day brunch: Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy. at Washington Avenue; (718) 638–5000; www.brooklynmuseum.org; 11 am; \$58 (\$46 members; \$28 children).

Brunch, museum admission, guided tour and a discount to the shop.

Block Party: 11:30 am. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, May 10.

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

Children celebrate moms for Mother's Day.

THURS, MAY 15

IN BROOKLYN

Thursday night: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735–4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 3 pm; Free.

Enjoy the museum after hours and have fun exploring.

SAT, MAY 17

IN BROOKLYN

Viking fest: Owl's Head Park, 68th Street and Narrows Avenue; (718) 748–5950; 10 am–5 pm; Free.

The East Coast Scandinavian hosts this annual event featuring a Viking Fillage, half-size replica of a Viking ship and crew.

(Sheep) Fleece Festival: Prospect Park Zoo, 450 Flatbush Ave. at Ocean Avenue; (718) 399–7339; www.prospectparkzoo.com; 11 am–5 pm; Free.

The Zoo's sheep lose their wooly winter coats at the hands of a master sheep shearer. Live music, fleecy fun crafts, barn animal demonstrations and keeper talks.

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

Pre-school tots learn counting and discovering how much fun shapes are.

Spring Carnival: St. Saviour Catholic Academy, 701 Eighth Ave.; (718) 768–8000; ssca.pa.secretary@gmail.com; www.stsaviourschool.org; Noon–5 pm; Free.

St. Saviour Catholic Academy's spring party with live music, magic, soccer clinic, fire truck, rides games, and more.

Read aloud day: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789–2822; www.prospectpark.org; 1–4 pm; Free.

Book giveaway sponsored by the Brooklyn Reading Council, dedicated to children who love to read.

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

MetLife Early Learner Performance presents a Force Majeure Quintet Family concert. Learn all about wind instruments.

Family walk: 3–4 pm. Brooklyn Botanic Garden. See Saturday, May 3.

SUN, MAY 18

IN BROOKLYN

(Sheep) Fleece Festival: 11 am–5 pm. Prospect Park Zoo. See Saturday, May 17.

Math Mania: 11:30 am. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, May 17.

Hip Tot family day: Greenwood Park, 555 Seventh Ave. at 20th Street; (718) 499–7999; www.greenwoodparkbk.com; Noon–5 pm; Free.

I love my mama dance party with DJ Misbehaviour and a special story

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

time with Jen Monsen reading from "Penny Made It." The fun never stops with crafts, sing-a-longs and so much more.

Fleece fair: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; 1-4 pm; \$3.

After visiting the sheep being sheared stop on by and see how wool was used on a colonial farm. Participants can brush the wool with carding paddles, spin yarn and make a felt ball to take home. There will also be a spinning demonstration by Catherine Conrad.

Norwegian Constitution Day Parade: Kick off at Third Avenue at 81st Street; (718) 745-6653; www.may17paradeny.com; 1:30 pm; Free.

Celebrate the 62nd annual event — this year Norway's history celebrates 200 years of the signing of its Constitution.

MON, MAY 19

IN BROOKLYN

The Earth and Me: Kumble Theater at Long Island University, DeKalb and Flatbush avenues; (212) 724-0677; www.shadowboxtheatre.org; 10 am and 11:30 am; \$10 (\$15 at the door).

A child celebrates the Earth through dance, music, and puppetry.

TUES, MAY 20

IN BROOKLYN

The Earth and Me: 10 am and 11:30 am. Kumble Theater at Long Island University. See Monday, May 19.

WED, MAY 21

IN BROOKLYN

The Earth and Me: 10 am and 11:30 am. Kumble Theater at Long Island University. See Monday, May 19.

SAT, MAY 24

IN BROOKLYN

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

What makes a circle unique? Discover the structure of the amazing shape.

Build a bird feeder: Salt Marsh Nature Center, 3302 Avenue U; (718) 421-2021; 1 pm; Free.

Children learn about nature and how to build a bird feeder to take



Family fun in the park

It's back for another season of fun sing-a-longs, story time, crafts and giveaways. It's the Hip Tot Family Day at Greenwood Park on May 18.

The crowds will be bigger, the music hipper, and the fun more enjoyable at this year's family-friendly event.

The Love My Mama Dance Party features spinning master DJ Misbehaviour, a great story

time with Jen Monsen Lech who will read "Penny Made It," face-painting, arts and crafts, and lots of free giveaways. The best part is it's all free.

The Love My Mama Dance Party, Family Day on May 18 from noon to 5 pm. Free.

Greenwood Park [555 Seventh Ave. at 20th Street in Greenwood Heights, (718) 499-7999; www.greenwoodparkbk.com].

home.

Flip books: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

All sorts of books are on the agenda for children 4 years and older.

NYC Atlas: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 2-4 pm; Free with museum admission.

Children 5 years and older learn about maps, then make a map of their own.

SUN, MAY 25

IN BROOKLYN

Circle secrets: 11:30 am. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, May 24.

Flip books: 1:30 pm. New York

Transit Museum. See Saturday, May 24.

NYC Atlas: 2-4 pm. New York Transit Museum. See Saturday, May 24.

MON, MAY 26

IN BROOKLYN

Potato Planting: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; Noon-5 pm; \$3.

Join with rangers and learn what life was like 200 years ago on a farm. Plant this year's crop of the spuds and enjoy potato sack races.

Blooming naturalist: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Noon-4 pm; Free.

Children use fun games and activities to learn what makes birds so special. A different lesson each day.

TUES, MAY 27

IN BROOKLYN

Blooming naturalist: Noon-4 pm. Prospect Park Audubon Center. See Monday, May 26.

WED, MAY 28

IN BROOKLYN

Blooming naturalist: Noon-4 pm. Prospect Park Audubon Center. See Monday, May 26.

THURS, MAY 29

IN BROOKLYN

Blooming naturalist: Noon-4 pm. Prospect Park Audubon Center. See Monday, May 26.

Children's Book Fair: Kings Bay Y, 14 Hope St. between Havemeyer and Roebling streets; (718) 407-6388; info@northwilliamsburgY.org; www.northwilliamsburgY.org; 3-6 pm; Free.

Used books for \$1 each; book donations welcome starting April 1.

FRI, MAY 30

IN BROOKLYN

Blooming naturalist: Noon-4 pm. Prospect Park Audubon Center. See Monday, May 26.

Children's Book Fair: 3-6 pm. Kings Bay Y. See Thursday, May 29.

SAT, MAY 31

IN BROOKLYN

Learn to ride: Brower Park, Prospect Pl. and Kingston Avenue; www.nycgovparks.org; 10 am-1 pm; Free.

Rangers help children ride their bikes, including balancing, starting, stopping and steering. Own bike and helmet required. Pre-registration required.

Meet the authors: New York Transit Museum, Boerum Place at Schermerhorn Street; (718) 694-1600; www.mta.info/mta/museum; 1:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Poets Paul Dubois Jacobs and Jennifer Swender share their prose with children 3 years and older.

Family walk: 3-4 pm. Brooklyn Botanic Garden. See Saturday, May 31.

SUN, JUNE 1

IN BROOKLYN

Seining: Marsh, Burnett Street and Avenue U; www.nycgovparks.org; 11

Continued on page 62

IDing your treasures

It's Identification Day at the American Museum of Natural History on May 10.

Do you have a treasure? Everyone's favorite museum is inviting visitors to bring in their own specimens and objects to be identified!

Bring in shells, rocks, insects, feathers, bones, artifacts and more to be identified by Museum scientists, then explore

rarely seen objects from the museum's collection. Scientists will attempt to identify your discoveries and even provide a certificate of identification!

Identification Day on May 10, from noon to 4 pm. Free with museum admission.

American Museum of Natural History [Central Park West and 79th St, on the Upper West Side (212) 769-5100 <http://www.amnh.org>].



American Museum of Natural History / R. Mickens

Continued from page 61

am; Free.

Children learn about the ethics of fishing, ecology and fishing programs. Mandatory safety review prior to event.

LONG-RUNNING IN BROOKLYN

Sensory room: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St.

Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 11:30 am-12:30 pm and 2:30-3:30 pm, Now - Sat, May 31; Free with museum admission.

For children with autism spectrum disorder and their families. Space limited, first come first served.

"The Seeds of Abraham: Part Two of the Prophet's Cycle":

Billie Holiday Theatre, 1368 Fulton St. between Marcy and Brooklyn avenues; (718) 636-0918; www.thebillieholiday.org; Thursdays and Fridays, 8 pm; Saturdays, 3 pm, 8 pm; Sundays, 4 pm, Now - Sun, June 29; \$15-\$25 (children and seniors \$12-\$15).

Family drama for teens and up, written by Angelica Chéri.

Art Kid: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Fridays, 11:30 am, Now - Fri, May 30; Free with museum admission.

Children 5 years and older explore a new style each week.

Little Kids, Big Stars: MCU Park, 1904 Surf Ave. at W. 17th Street; (718) 37-BKLYN; info@brooklynclones.com; www.brooklynclones.com; Saturday, April 12 - Saturday, June 7; Free.

Baseball is back and the Cyclones want the little ones to experience the game. Coaches of little league and softball leagues throughout the boroughs can nominate one player their team to be named Little Kids, Big Stars of the week. For boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 14 years old. The child should have a passion for baseball/softball, serve as a leader to the team and be helpful to the coaches. The winners will receive an invitation to a baseball clinic with the Cyclones a chance to throw out a first pitch and a commemorative T-shirt.

Kids' Discovery Stations: Brooklyn Botanic Garden, 1000 Washington Ave. at Eastern Parkway; (718) 623-7220; www.bbg.org; Tuesdays and Saturdays, 10:30 am-12:30 pm, Now - Fri, June 6; free with admission to the grounds.

Each week children explore different topics. No classes May 1, 24, and 25.

Touch tank: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 11:30 am-12:30 pm and 2:30-3:30 pm, Now - Sun, June 1; Free with museum admission.

Children of all ages touch a starfish, a horseshoe crab, or a sea snail.

The Art of Math: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 12:30 pm, Sat, May 3 - Sun, June 1; Free with museum admission.

Children learn all about shapes, triangles, squares.

Art therapy: The Carmine Carro Community, 3000 Fillmore Ave. at Marine Parkway; (718) 869-0100; Saturdays, 1-2:30 pm, Sat, May 3 - Sat, June 28; Free.

All ages are welcome to express their feelings through art. Every other Saturday.

Urban gardening: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1:30 pm, Now - Sun, June 1; Free with museum admission.

Children 4 years and older learn about seeds, planting, and how to make a garden more efficient.

Arty facts: Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy. at Washington Avenue; (718) 638-5000; www.brooklynmuseum.org; Sundays, 11 am and 1:30 pm, Now - Sun, May 18; \$10 materials fee plus museum admission.

Children 4 to 7 years old explore the galleries, enjoy an activity and take an art class.

Bug out!: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St.



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Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Tuesdays, 11:30 am-12:30 pm and 2:30-3:30 pm, Now - Tues, May 6; Free with museum admission.

Children of all ages meet grasshoppers, worms, and Madagascar hissing cockroaches.

Ballroom dance classes: FIAO Beacon Community Center at IS 96, 99 Avenue P between W. 11th and W. 12th streets; (718) 232-2266; Wednesdays, 6-9 pm, Now - Fri, June 20; Free.

For beginners of all ages.

TheatreSports: The Gallery Players, 199 14th St. between Second and Third avenues; (718) 595-0547; Sunday, May 18, noon; Sunday, June 15, noon; \$10.

Competition improvisational show for children of all ages.

Blooming naturalists: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Thursdays and Fridays, 1-2 pm, Thurs, May 29 - Fri, July 25; Free.

Play games and activities and learn all about birds.

Nature on the Go: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Thursdays, 2-3 pm, Fridays, 2-3 pm, Thurs, May 29 - Fri, July 25; Free.

Explore the flora and fauna in the Park and discover nature all around.

Animal Encounter: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Thursdays and Fridays, 3-4 pm, Thurs, May 29 - Fri, July 25; Free.

Curious about Snappy the turtle? Learn all about the little creatures at the park.

Wonderful Warblers: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Saturdays and Sundays, 2 pm, Sat, May 31 - Sun, July 27; Free.

Nature on the go is for young ones to explore the park and learn about birds.

History workshops: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 2-4 pm, Fri, May 30 - Sun, July 27; \$3.

Fleece fun is offered weekly — children learn how to use wool and make a felt ball to take home.

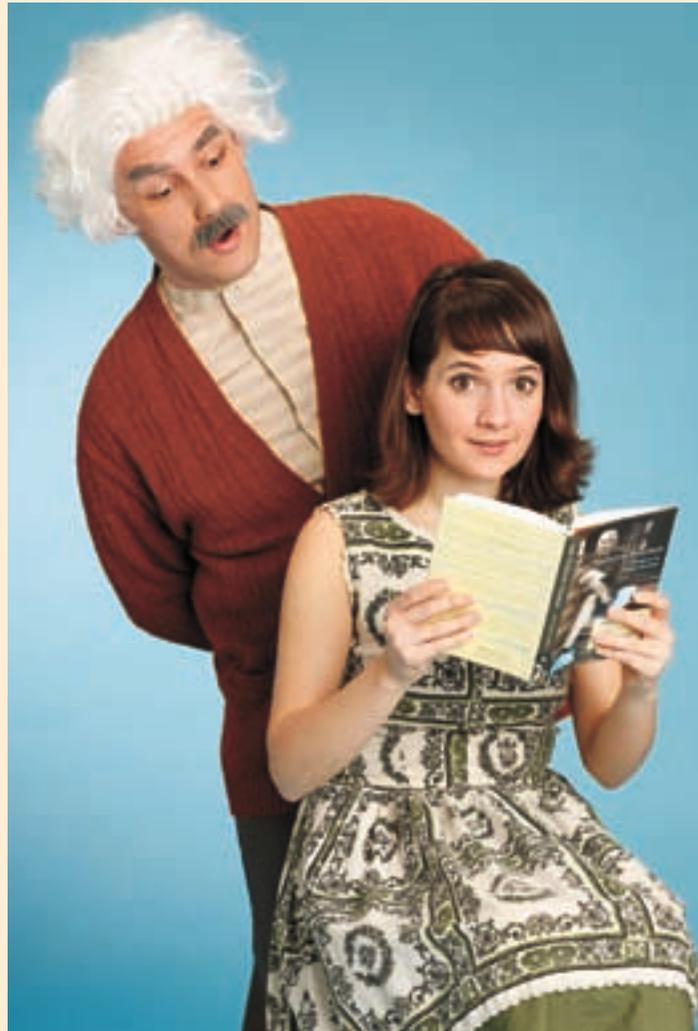


Photo by Carol Roseggi

Advice from a genius

Making Books Sing makes math fun in its latest musical production at Theatre 3, from May 3-18.

"Dear Albert Einstein" tells the story of a young girl who struggles with the choice to be like everyone else or stay true to herself — with a little help from her imagination.

The 70-minute show combines early rock-n-roll, swing, and clas-

sical music, and is great for children 8 and up.

"Dear Albert Einstein," May 3-18, Wednesdays at 10:30 am, Thursdays and Fridays at 10:30 am and 7 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm and 7 pm, and Sundays at 2 pm. Tickets are \$25.

Theater 3, [311 W. 43rd St., at Eighth Avenue, 3rd floor, (646) 250-1178, www.makingbookssing.org].

Wonderful Warblers: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Saturdays and Sundays, 3 pm, Sat, May 31 - Sun, July 27; Free.

Natures Helpers lets little ones take a tour, help keep the park clean and have outdoor fun.

Wonderful Warblers: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Saturdays and Sundays, 4 pm, Sat, May 31 - Sun, July 27; Free.

Bird Watching is fun for the whole family — take a stroll on the Lullwater and look for colorful and

unique visitors.

FURTHER AFIELD

Science Playground: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Weekdays, 9:30 am-5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am-6 pm; \$4, plus museum admission.

Children are encouraged to explore science through slides, seesaws, climbing webs, a water play area, sand boxes, and more, weather permitting.

Rocket Park Mini Golf: New York Hall of Science, 47-01 111th St., at Avenue of Science, Queens; (718) 699-0005 X 353; www.nyscience.org; Weekdays, 9:30 am-5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am-6 pm; \$6 (adults,) \$5 (children and seniors,) plus museum admission.

Golfers of all ages can learn about key science concepts such as propulsion, gravity, escape velocity, launch window, gravitational assist, and more!

Dinosaur Safari: Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd. at Boston Road, The Bronx; (718) 220-5103; www.bronxzo.com; Weekdays, 10 am-5 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am-5:30 pm.; \$20.95 (\$16.95 children; Free for children under 3; \$18.95 seniors).

Mysteries Revealed features more than 30 dinosaur species and how scientists reconstruct the fossil pieces. The ride runs through the zoo and has fully animatronic dinosaurs as they move and snarl. The 40 foot T-Rex is joined by deinonychus, prodohadros, stegosaurus and edmontonia.

The Butterfly Conservatory: American Museum of Natural History, Central Park West at 79th Street, Manhattan; (212) 769-5200; www.amnh.org; Daily, 10 am-5:45 pm; Now - Mon, May 26; \$27, \$16 (children).

This annual favorite features up to 500 live, free-flying tropical butterflies from Central, South, and North America, Africa, and Asia.

"Bessie's Big Shot": Swedish Cottage Marionette Theater, 79th Street and West Drive, Manhattan; (212) 988-9093; Tuesdays - Fridays, 10:30 am & Noon, Saturdays and Sundays, 1 pm, Now - Sun, June 29; \$10, \$7 (children under 12).

It's a bird, it's a plane, no — it's Bessie the cow! Based on the PuppetMobile show of the same name, this popular production is making its debut at the Swedish Cottage Marionette Theatre.

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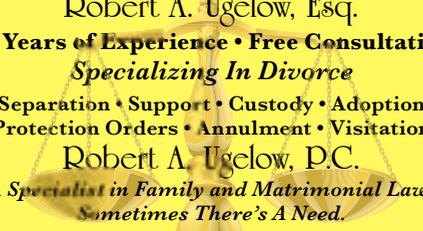
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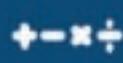
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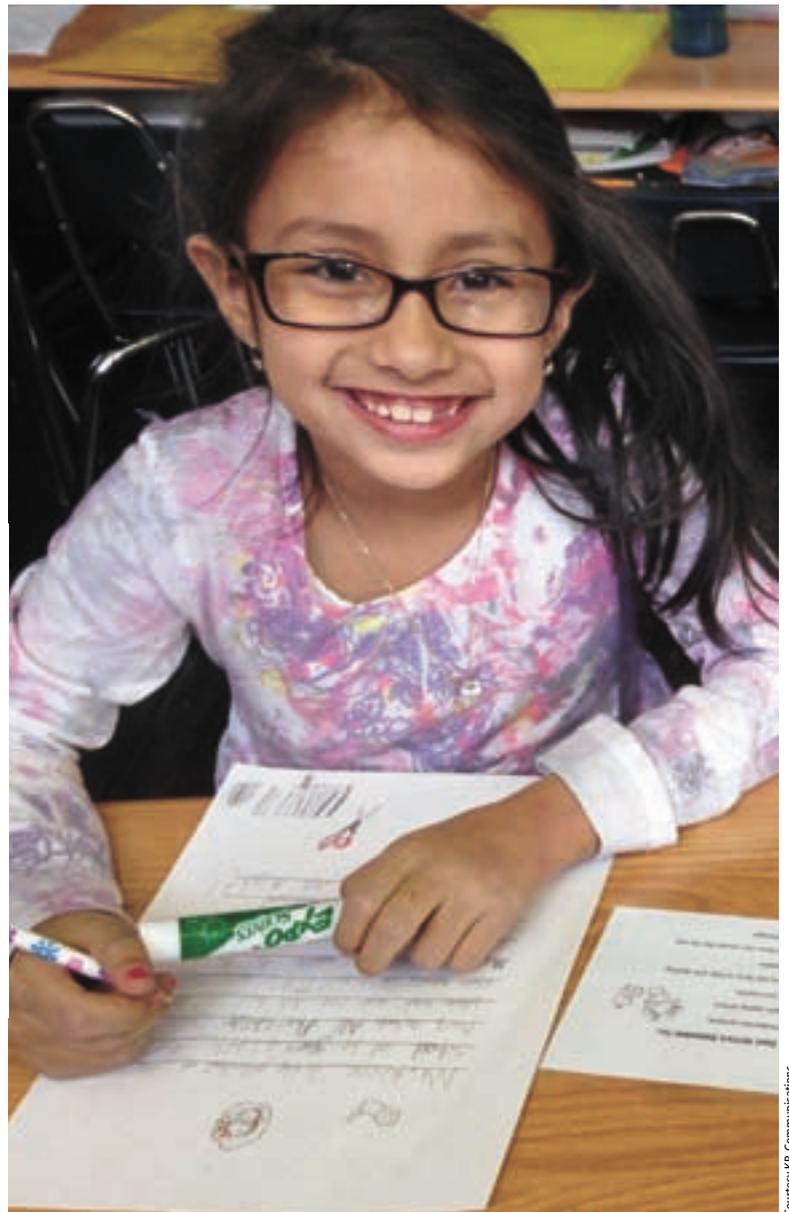
This Queens essay contest winner is in a class of her own

BY SHAVANA ABRUZZO

It pays to be nice. Flushing first-grader Isabella Taxilaga discovered just how much when her sweet masterpiece about kindness won first place in a national student essay-writing contest, earning the budding PS 122 writer a jackpot of prizes, including a cool grand for her school.

The pint-sized philanthropist's stirring composition, capped by a colorful drawing of two smiling girls with a large red heart between them, aced the competition — from Delaware to California — in the Be Kind People Project's "Kindness is the Key to Unblocking Good Character" competition for students in kindergarten through eighth grade.

Isabella's essay tugged on heartstrings with such golden nuggets of wisdom as "Kindness is everything!" "Being kind is important, because when you do something kind to people they do it back," and "Kindness is important because if you've been mean to someone, you could change it with kindness!"



Courtesy: KB Communications

Congratulations to PS 122 first-grader Isabella Taxilaga from Queens for winning first prize in the national Be Kind People Project's essay-writing contest about the importance of kindness.

Kind acts are routine for the big-hearted 6-year-old, who recently pulled off a gem for her little brother, Noah, 5.

"He had a hard time getting to sleep, so I let him sleep with me," said Isabella, who won a personalized, congratulatory Be Kind Pledge banner for her school, Amazon gift cards for herself and her teacher Stephanie Lupoli, and a chance for her classmates to chat online with members of the Be Kind Crew.

The Arizona-based organization helps grade-schoolers thank their teachers, and build healthy and positive relationships with character-empowering tools, including the Be Kind Pledge.

Students who take the oath com-

mit to be encouraging, supportive, positive, helpful, honest, considerate, thankful, responsible, respectful, and friendly citizens, claimed the group's CEO.

"This is a powerful lesson that can spread from one student to the next, from the classroom to the community, and ultimately, to the nation at large," said Lisa Hartsock.

Williamsburg student Noah Fequiere was also named a winner.

The PS 196 fifth-grader, who won a gift card, reflected, "You must be kind to others, so they will be kind to you."

View Isabella's and Noah's entries, and other winning submissions, at TheBeKindPeopleProject.org.

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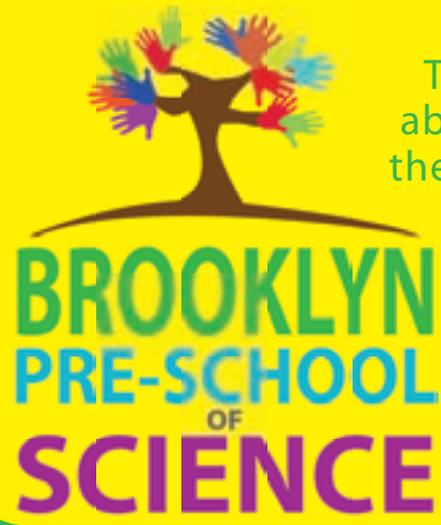
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