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Family December 2015

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The end of another year approaches

Thanksgiving is over and so is the first of the big fabulous holiday meals. Now we have the December festivities and a month long of more festive eating to look forward to. We're very big on food at New York Parenting and in fact earlier in November sent out an e-blast to our subscribers with our staff member's memories of their favorite part of the Thanksgiving meal. It was so interesting to reminisce and to share family holidays of long ago.



We would welcome any of your family eating stories by the way, and any recipes you might want to share with our readers. Enough said about food, at least for now.

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We also have a number of articles and columns in this issue that address the pressures and realities of the December holidays from a parent point of view. But it's not strictly light weight. We like to approach all angles regarding the parenting experience in a big city like NYC and there are some serious articles as well that may be risk taking and provocative. Time will tell.

In addition, our calendar reflects the great events that are going on around town and without a doubt there are many of them. Of course!

This is New York! Every borough has great celebrations taking place throughout December. If you want to get the full picture, again, go to our website and see what's going on around the whole city.

A personal recommendation, if you've never been there before, and don't mind fighting the crowds, there are the amazingly decorated houses of Dyker Heights, Brooklyn. Every year they go all out to create a magical world in their community and truthfully one has to wonder how, between the lights, the crowds, and the noises of the displays themselves, they get any sleep in these weeks before the new year.

The end of the year is a great time to give thanks and I certainly do. Most of all I'm thankful for my family, great friends, and for good

health. I'm also grateful to have a job I enjoy and a staff of people to do it with who are all not only talented, but funny and entertaining. Thanks to our editorial staff, our art department, our distributors, and to our contributing writers. We are blessed to be able to do a job we can feel proud of at the end of the day. It is an honorable thing to be a parent and honorable for us too.

Happy holidays to all and thanks so much for reading.

Susan Weiss-Voskidis,
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Districts 13 - 15
Magnet Schools Assistance Program
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P.S. 15

Theme: Magnet School of the Arts
 Address: 71 Sullivan Street
 Brooklyn, NY 11231 (District 15)
 Telephone: 718.330.9280

December 17th, 2015 9:00 am
 January 12th, 2016 2:30 pm

P.S. 307

Theme: Magnet School of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Studies
 Address: 209 York Street
 Brooklyn, NY 11201 (District 13)
 Telephone: 718.834.4748

December 7th, 2015 6:00 pm
 December 17th, 2015 9:30 am
 January 7th, 2016 9:30 am
 January 11th, 2016 6:00 pm

P.S. 46

Theme: Magnet School of Communications and Media Arts Through Applied Learning
 Address: 100 Clermont Avenue
 Brooklyn, NY 11205 (District 13)
 Telephone: 718.834.7694

December 17th, 2015 8:30 am
 January 5th, 2016 8:30 am
 February 4th, 2016 8:30 am

P.S. 54

Theme: Magnet School for Environmental Science, Technology and Community Wellness
 Address: 195 Sandford Street
 Brooklyn, NY 11205 (District 13)
 Telephone: 718.834.6752

December 7, 2015 9:00 am
 December 18, 2015 5:15 pm
 December 23, 2015 4:30 pm
 December 23, 2015 10:30 am
 January 15, 2016 12:30 pm



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Protecting your child against HPV

The vaccine can make a huge difference

BY ALEXA BIGWARFE

The human papilloma virus is a sexually transmitted infection that is so common, nearly every sexually active person will eventually contract one of the 40 types at some point in their lifetime. Yet, the vaccine is not always being enthusiastically recommended by doctors, despite the proven safety of the vaccine. Less than 42 percent of those eligible to receive the vaccine got it last year, and of those girls that received the first vaccination, less than a third of them received all three.

But here's the scary truth: the Center for Disease Control estimates that more than 80 million people in the United States have the virus, and another 14 million people will contract it in the next year. Even worse, more than 17,000 women and 9,000

men will develop cancers caused by it in a given year.

Why should you talk to your doctor about human papilloma virus vaccinations for your teen or tween?

It's so common: This virus is incredibly prevalent, with more than 40 strains that cause a variety of issues, from genital warts to cervical, anal, penile, and oral cancers. In some cases, it will go away on its own. However, not generally so in the strains that cause cancer.

It's safe: The vaccine has been tested and proven to be safe. More importantly, immunization can significantly reduce rates of human papilloma virus-related cancers later in life for women and men. The Center for Disease Control estimates the US could reduce 50,000 cases of cervical cancer if the vaccination rate of girls rose to 80 percent. As with all vaccines, some people should

not get the vaccine. Be sure to read the vaccine information sheet for more information. (www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/hpv-gardasil.pdf)

Boys benefit, too: Recent studies show men benefit indirectly when girls are immunized. Boys still need the immunization to prevent them from developing related cancers, but an increase in girls vaccinated would actually help in the reduction of related cancers. A study by the Dutch in May 2015 provided statistical data predicting how cancer levels would change if more girls and boys are vaccinated. An increase in the vaccination of girls (at a rate of 90 percent vaccinated girls) would reduce the number of related cancers in men by about 37 percent. The numbers would drop even more drastically if more boys receive the vaccination.

The risk of cervical cancer: The overwhelming amount of related cancers in adults is cervical cancer. The Center for Disease Control recommends girls ages 11 to 12 get the vaccine to help prevent cervical cancer.

So many human papilloma virus-related issues can be prevented if parents and doctors are talking about the vaccination and starting the vaccination program when their children are 11 or 12 years old. According to the Centers for Disease Control, the goal of the vaccine program is to prevent infection of the cancer causing strains of human papilloma virus. To do this, it's necessary to immunize teens and tweens before they become sexually active.

The United States has three vaccines available: Cervarix, Gardasil, and Gardasil 9. The vaccine program includes a series of three shots over six months. Data from research shows that Gardasil and Gardasil 9 have been shown to protect against genital warts and anal cancer in both men and women.

More information for you and your tween/teen on the HPV vaccine:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/hpv/>
- <http://www.gardasil.com/hpv-and-your-child/what-is-hpv/>
- <http://www.cancercenter.com/cervical-cancer/cervical-cancer-vaccine/>

Alexa Bigwarfe is a freelance writer and mother of three children. Her area of expertise is infant and children's health topics.

SOURCES: Karen Canfell, D.Phil., director, cancer research division, Cancer Council NSW, Sydney, Australia; Dr. Hans Bogaards, research scientist, National Institute for Public Health and the Environment, Bilthoven, the Netherlands; May 12, 2015, BMJ, online.

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Silent nights

Helping kids
sleep well
during the
holidays

BY MALIA JACOBSON

Parents' holiday wishes are simple: children tucked snug in bed, dreaming of sugar plums. But for families with small children, the winter holidays aren't always sleep-friendly. From late-night parties and holiday travel to school performances and visiting relatives, the holiday season is packed with sleep disruptions. Unfortunately, this can leave children tired and cranky during holiday celebrations — just when parents are looking forward to relaxed family time.

Happily, parents can support sounder sleep during this hectic time of year, and doing so can make the holidays more enjoyable for all family members, says Dr. Charles Shubin, pediatrician with the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore. Read on for age-appropriate tips to keep holiday nights silent and restful, so kids can enjoy a merry season:

Tuckered-out traveler

When holiday travel spans the nighttime hours, plan ahead for a smooth bedtime on the airplane or in the car. An on-the-go bedtime routine should mimic your child's at-home bedtime routine, Dr. Michael Hobaugh, president of



the medical staff at La Rabida Children's Hospital in Chicago, says. Familiar bedtime rituals serve as cues for sleep, easing a child into peaceful slumber.

"Bring a child's regular pajamas, toothbrush, storybooks, and anything else used in the bedtime routine at home," Hobaugh says. "On an airplane, go to the bathroom and brush teeth and wash up, and read bedtime stories as usual. This

serves as a transition to bedtime and helps children understand that it's time to sleep."

Sleepy scene

Similarly, if a holiday trip has your family sleeping at a hotel or relative's home, create a familiar sleep scene for your child by bringing a few bedroom elements from home, like a special blanket, pillow, nightlight, even a special framed

Travel means new faces and new places, which can equal stress and poor sleep for little ones; surrounding a child with familiar comforts at bedtime reduces the stress of travel and helps children fall asleep more quickly — and wake less often.

photo for the nightstand. Children crave routine and familiarity, says Shubin.

Travel means new faces and new places, which can equal stress and poor sleep for little ones; surrounding a child with familiar comforts at bedtime reduces the stress of travel and helps children fall asleep more quickly and wake less often.

Cabin fever

Don't expect children to bed down easily at night when they've spent the day cooped up in a vehicle or airplane, particularly if they've been napping during the trip, says Hobough. Kids need around 60 minutes of physical activity per day to help prepare for restful sleep at night.

Take every opportunity to let kids burn off energy en-route: walk up and down airplane aisles, do a loop around the airport terminal when switching planes, and on car trips, stop at a rest stop and allow kids a 15-minute play break every 90 minutes.

Comfort cues

When kids sleep fitfully in the winter, check the temperature. During the winter, bedrooms are flooded with stale, dry, overheated air — this is especially true in hotel rooms — and parents often dress children in footed fleece pajamas, pile on warm blankets, and dial up the heater in an attempt to keep kids cozy at night. This can backfire, because sleeping in a room that's too hot can result in poor-quality sleep and nightmares; per the National Sleep Foundation, sleeping in an overheated bedroom is a contributing factor in Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

The ideal temperature for sleep is on the cooler side: around 20-degrees Celsius or 68-degrees Fahrenheit. Dry, heated air can worsen coughing and snoring; some children may benefit from

a bedroom humidifier to ease nighttime breathing.

Bedtime bend

Attending a long-awaited holiday party that you don't want your child to miss? It's okay to bend bedtime rules on special occasions, says Dr. Gary Feldman, medical director of the Stramski Developmental Center at Miller Children's Hospital in Long Beach, California.

"It's not fair to ask children to miss out on the excitement of the holidays, but you don't want them to stay awake to the point of exhaustion, either," he says. Keep the party fun for all, and a child's daily routine intact, by altering a child's bedtime slightly without completely disregarding it.

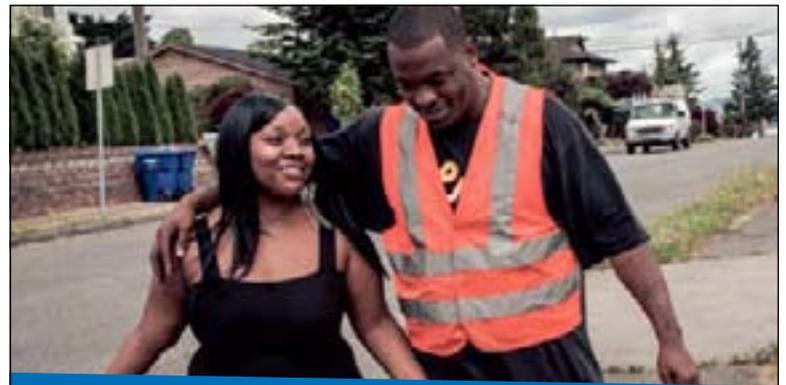
For children under 10, set a "party" bedtime up to an hour later than a child's normal bedtime. Bend bedtime by two hours or more, and you may be asking for a meltdown.

Morning after

When children stay up later than normal, parents may be tempted to let them "sleep it off" the following morning, says Hobough. But allowing children to sleep in hours later than normal can throw off that night's bedtime, resulting in a routine that's off-kilter for days.

The morning after an exciting holiday party, let children sleep in up to 30 minutes later than normal, and accept that they'll be tired that day. Plan for an appropriately early bedtime that evening; a good night's sleep will help children bounce back from party-induced over-tiredness quickly — and help everyone enjoy all the season has to offer.

Malia Jacobson is an award-winning health and parenting journalist and mom of three. Her latest book is "Sleep Tight, Every Night: Helping Toddlers and Preschoolers Sleep Well Without Tears, Tricks, or Tirades."



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Welcome to the neighborhood

Ten useful details for your new neighbors

BY SARA MARCHESSAULT

Once you have kids, moving can be hard. If your kids are several years old, and you've lived in the same place since they were born, you had time to find the perfect medical care, preschool, favorite parks, grocery stores, and

coffee shops that are kid friendly.

U.S. Census Bureau data shows that couples with young children are the most likely demographic to move. It makes sense. Kids and careers tend to grow alongside each other as parents work hard both in and out of the home.

The challenge is that with a move

to a new city, we might not have the luxury of exploring lots of options before making choices. Schools have to be selected. In many cases, families need childcare quickly. In all cases, families need to know a few basic things about their new city: where are the parks, grocery stores, and kid-friendly restaurants?

Newcomers can spend hours perusing the internet for resources available in their new neighborhood. After spending all of that time researching schools, doctors, and pediatricians, new parents still might not get the answers they really want. That's because the surface-level information that we can find online is a helpful place to get started, but there is nothing like talking face-to-face with people who know the community resources.

The surface-level information that we can find online is a helpful place to get started, but there is nothing like talking face-to-face with people who know the community resources.

The next time you're at the playground or a school event, and you meet a family that's new to your city, here are 10 pieces of information you can share with them that are both great conversation pieces and could be immensely helpful to them:

Pediatrician info. Not just the most popular pediatrician; the pediatrician with the shortest wait times. Or the office with a separate waiting room for sick kids.

Groceries. Some families are on the lookout for specialty products. You can help them out by letting them know where and when they can find farmers' markets or health food stores that carry specialty products and options for kids with food allergies.

Playtime. Where are the best playgrounds? What playground is next to an ice cream stand? Or a place they can grab lunch? What playground has something unexpected close by? It absolutely happens that a website might highlight a fun playground, but what it doesn't mention is that the playground is right next to a lake or beach. Parents like to know these things before they head out for playtime.

Preschool. A lot of families will want to know what the best preschools are for getting kids ready for kindergarten. What some newcomers might find valuable to know is which preschools are the ones where the kids learn through play all day long. Where are the kids making art and cooking?

Sports. Where are the places that kids are going to learn a sport with a level of intensity that prepares them for competitive sports as they grow? Alternatively, where are the organizations that are more focused on kids having fun?

Schools. It can be frustrating for

parents to arrive in a new city and have people tell them how great the schools are, but not back it up with any details. A new parent is looking for reasons to get excited about the schools and appreciates hearing specifics about why you like it.

Weather wise. If the new family has recently changed climates, like moved from a hot place to a cold place, mom and dad want to know what they need to survive. Instead of telling them to get ready for the winter, let them know what they will need to buy and when they'll need it, so that they are literally not left out in the cold.

Family-friendly places. Many parents of young children face challenges with going out to eat, shopping, or enjoying activities in public, such as movies. Your new neighbors will appreciate knowing the names of the places where kids can be kids. Is there a restaurant that has so much background noise that it doesn't matter how loud the kids are? A movie theater that runs specials for kids on certain days?

Kid-friendly coffee shops. Sometimes mom and dad just want to head out to grab a bagel and a coffee. Where can they bring the kids? What are the places that won't mind if the kids run around and which places (if any) should they save for adult-only time?

Gym or fitness center with reliable childcare. Lots of gyms offer childcare. Which one in your city staffs the childcare with employees who will play with and engage your children? Which one hires high school students that are allowed to play on their phones while they are with your kids?

When families move, what they really need is a sense of community and an opportunity to build new relationships. Mom and dad need new friends just as much as the kids do. People they can share dinner or play dates with or even just someone to meet up with for a drink. Being the person who moves is hard. Finding people in your new city who are welcoming and willing to share information and resources can make it a whole lot easier.

Sara Marchessault is a writer, life coach, and dedicated diarist. She is 110 percent dedicated to helping her clients and readers create a life full of joy. These days, journals are getting lots of details about playing with her kids and the awesome ups and downs of being a mom. Learn more about her work at saramarchessault.com.

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JUST WRITE MOM

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Not quite sold on the Elf on the Shelf

Our Elf on the Shelf only arrived in time for my youngest child. The older ones were past the watch-keeping stage when the good old elf made his debut. I found a Christmas photo from a couple of years ago in which our elf was smugly propped up behind our five-gallon fish tank. In our family, the routine was that I place him in strange places, not exactly in compromising positions as much as unexpected places, because my son just did not fall for the whole “elf is watching out” thing at all.

Ever since we got the elf years ago as the result of a public relations gift, it remained little more than a decorative plush. If anything, we found him ... unsettling. It was mostly his expression, I think. That peculiar painted smile and unnerving eyes reminded me more of Halloween than Christmas.

My son never believed in the elf, and only told me how creepy he looked and to stop moving it around. So, of course, I purposely put it in odd places that might creep him out, and when he found it, he laughed and laughed.

The elf was found upside-down and tightly stuffed through the handle of our kitchen cabinet, popping his eerie head out from behind my son's school picture that hangs in the dining room, and in the porch, just waiting for one of us to let the dogs out in the yard and get a good fright.

Admittedly, it isn't the way you're supposed to utilize the good-old elf, but that's how we had

fun with it. The original idea of the elf's purpose from the accompanying storybook is cute enough: the elf watches over the kids and reports their activity back to Santa, as long as the kids never touch him.

Although after writing that, to me, he sounds more like a whiny tattler with a built-in protection plan (hence the hands-off policy).

Yet, there are hoards of parents who love the elf and tons of kids who can't wait to wake up and look for him. And that's great. It just didn't work out for us that way.

Perhaps the fact that we didn't name him (which, according to the book, is how the elf gets his magic so he can fly back and forth from the North Pole to report on the goodness — or I suppose, “badness” — of the kids he's watching) is the reason why he held no special place for us. More likely, though, I think it's just that I was skeptical from the get-go, and my kids picked that up. C'mon, a scary-looking, cotton-filled elf holding the power over what lies beneath the tree on Christmas morning? Sounds pretty outlandish to me.

I mean, if I ever get the chance, I'll ask Santa what he thinks of that one. After all, we all know it's the big, bearded, white-haired guy who really counts! Oh yeah, and Rudolph, too.

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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A parent's transition

Transgender moms and dads are becoming more visible.

PART ONE OF A SERIES

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

When Kardashian parent Bruce Jenner revealed his true identity during that moving television interview, a firestorm of controversy was ignited. Then when a striking Caitlyn Jenner emerged, reactions ranged from shock to thumbs up.

In July, an E! docu-series titled "I Am Cait" gave viewers an intimate look into Caitlyn's private world and revealed all the challenging issues she had to deal with as a transgender woman. It became clear that it wasn't just about the long hair and make-up, or wearing pretty clothes.

Holly Maholm now feels quite accomplished as a transgender person and says she isn't content with just that superficial stuff either. Married twice, she actively co-parented her three daughters (now adults) from her first marriage.

Born John S. Oney, at 67, Maholm says she has fully embraced her change. Like Jenner, she began her transition to living full-time as a woman, later in life (in 2013), and it has been a rough journey getting there.

Holly has experienced rejection, loneliness, and being ignored by family, friends, and acquaintances. One day, she decided to capture some of her feelings in a story, and express them through the transgender character, Connie, in her new book "Brave in Ribbons." Inspired by Charles Dickens's classic tale, "A Christmas Carol," Holly's humorous version has a modern, unexpected twist.

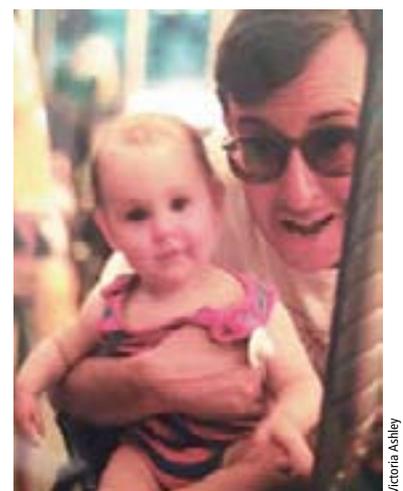
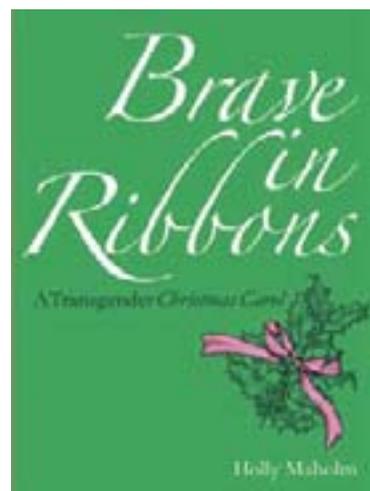
Maholm, who is a Yale graduate, practices law in Cleveland, Ohio, where she's a longtime resident and an active member of the local LGBTQ community. She also has ties to New York, having had a best friend (now passed), who once lived in Brooklyn, and has visited Gotham many times.

She shared her story with New York Parenting:

"I had great accomplishments before my "change" and since my change. I have written "Brave in Ribbons" as a kind of extension of my earlier book "When Once I Lived." Now I am Holly, and I see so many things differently, and so many the same. I hope to demonstrate that



Shaker Photo Studios, Limited



Victoria Ashley

Holly Maholm is a transgender woman who penned a new book, "Brave in Ribbons." (Above right) Holly with her youngest daughter Emily when she was a baby.

transgender people can accomplish great things, and being transgender is no great barrier to achievement.

"I have so many more friends than before. I have a much deeper sense

of sympathy for others, and I am so much more interested in the emotions of others. Becoming Holly has opened up a new and more loving world for me.

"When I became Holly at 64, there was no celebration, believe me! It was a shock, and I struggled to understand what was happening." Even when she was younger, Maholm insists she never felt like a girl, as her transgender friends had, and was always comfortable being male.

The transitioning process

"Like most transgender women, I started hormone replacement therapy as early as I could. For me, this was January, 2014. I have taken the female hormone every day since. I let my hair grow and recently had it colored. This past May, I had a boob job (breast augmentation). It really gives me a better shape and gives me confidence. I will not get the sexual reassignment. I just don't want to face such a radical surgery at my age. If I were 21 I would do it in a heartbeat. I will also not (for the same reason) get any facial surgery (I really shudder to think how much pain Caitlyn Jenner has gone through, with all the surgery she has had)."

Marriage and family

"At the time of my first marriage I had no idea about Holly. Victoria and I had three daughters. We got divorced in 1992, and had joint custody of the girls. I loved taking care of them and spent many weekends taking them to the mall, to the movies, and roller blading with their friends. Today, Vicki and I are on good terms and talk now and then about the girls and their issues.

"Each of my daughters reacted to the news differently. When I changed, Stephanie (now age 31), Meredith (age 26), and Emily (age 25) were already out of the house and living in other cities. I disclosed my change using a long letter (11 pages), so that I could tell them the whole complex story, and because they were all in different cities. So, I couldn't do it in person. Also, I didn't want to leave anything out, and I wanted each of them to get the same facts and feelings from me.

Stephanie accepted me from the first. It wasn't easy, but she did. Both Meredith and Emily at first, would not speak to me, and this lasted for almost a year. Then Emily went to a therapist; she has accepted me and we talk often — we have the same loving father-daughter relationship we had be-

fore. Recently, she invited me to go to Chicago to see her — which means she would finally see me dressed as Holly.

"Meredith will not speak to me and in Dec, 2013 sent me a one-line email telling me not to contact her in any way, for any reason. I haven't spoken to her since. She started therapy in July, but no results yet. But I have my hopes."

The second marriage

"I got re-married (to Barbara) in 2005. My change to Holly came during this marriage, and I told her about Holly in November, 2013. She was at first supportive (maybe hoping I would change back), but in three months gave up on that and became unbelievably angry and hostile. She was very hurt. I do not feel a moral responsibility, since being Holly was never a choice I made. On the other hand, I did (and do) love her, and it hurts me that she is suffering. She thought we were going to grow old together, and now that is all gone. So my heart goes out to her. We're divorced and do not speak, nor do I expect to.

"I focus on my daughters and on my friends. I became Holly very late in life, and I expect I will not have very many years to enjoy seeing the world through her eyes. So, every day is important to me. I have a rewarding life and feel very, very lucky."

...

What does all this mean to you, as parents raising children in 2016? How do you feel about telling your young children: Uncle Johnny is now Aunt Mary? And explaining to them what it means to be transgender? Or, if you happen to be the parent of a "questioning" teen, what do you do?

You'll get more insight into these complicated topics and others, in Part 2 of this series, which will feature an interview with a local filmmaker, who is the daughter of a transgender woman.

"*Brave in Ribbons*" is currently available on NetGalley and on Amazon.

Tammy Scileppi is a Queens-based freelance writer/journalist and parent and a regular contributor to *New York Parenting*. Interviewing hundreds of *New York City's movers and shakers* has been an amazing adventure for her. Scileppi's work has appeared in a variety of media outlets. She has also written book cover copy for Simon and Schuster.



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Road risks

Distracted driving can be deadly. What kind of example are *you* setting?

BY KERRIE MCLOUGHLIN

We hear all the time about teens getting into a car crash because they were texting while driving. We've seen the heartbreaking public service announcements about a teen's last text before running down a pedestrian. Teens get such a bad rap for texting and driving, yet I see so many adults who are driving while trying to dial a phone number, texting, putting on makeup, holding their pet — often with small children in the backseat. What are we teaching our children and teens about distracted driving?

So many of us are multitaskers by nature. Everyone is busy, and some of us are in our car more often than we would like to be. It's tempting to want to pop off a quick text message to let someone know you are running late. It's easy to make a fast phone call to the doctor's office from the car to ask a question you might forget about by the time you get home. And we have to check in with work, don't we?

According to Distraction.gov, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's website, "Distracted driving is any activity that could divert a person's attention away from the primary task of driving. All distractions endanger driver, passenger, and bystander safety. These types of distractions include: texting; using a cellphone or smartphone; eating and drinking; talking to passengers; grooming; reading, including maps; using a navigation system; watching a video; adjusting a radio, CD player, or MP3 player."

So how do you keep your teenager from texting or talking on her cellphone while driving? For starters, you have to be a good example. A teenager recently told me her mother drives with her knee while applying lipstick



and talking on the phone at the same time. It's possible that observing a bad example will make this teenager go the opposite way; maybe not.

One mom I know says, "Oh I'm horrible — I text, but with my voice app more now. I always put on makeup in the car. It's a horrible habit I have, I'm a terrible example; in fact, I have talked to [my kids] a lot about what I do [that] they shouldn't."

Another option is to get a cool app to help you out. Privus Mobile® is a Dallas-based application developer that has come up with a caller ID app that says out loud who a text is from. This way, a person can decide to ignore the text or to pull off to the side of the road to check the text or answer it. With this app, drivers won't have to look at their phone to see who is sending a text and then try to read it and respond while driving. To learn more about this app to help end texting while driving, go to <http://privus-mobile.com/eyesontheroad>.

Realize that being late to your destination is better than not arriving at all, because you had to do last-minute things in your car, instead of at home, and you caused an accident. Thinking, "I can just call or text my friend back while I'm driving the kids to dance class" could be deadly and is something you can make a note

about and do later.

Keep track of when your child is driving places and check it against the phone bill to see if there were any calls or texts during that time. If it turns out your child is practicing distracted driving, decide on the consequences, such as taking away driving or other privileges, etc.

More ideas include:

- Keep snacks and bottles of water in the car for the kids to get into if they need them instead of you digging around for them and passing them back.

- Pull over to soothe your baby instead of reaching back and trying to get a pacifier or bottle in his mouth.

- Rather than adjusting the radio or CD player endlessly, leave it where it is or turn it off entirely.

- Stow your phone somewhere in the car where you can't reach it and won't be tempted to answer it. Turning it off is also a good idea, so you won't hear the ringing or dinging of it and get stressed out thinking it might be something urgent. Even using a headset is not necessarily safer, as your mind is still focused on the phone call and not on the road.

Kerrie McLoughlin is the mom of five and author of "Fun, Frugal and Green Christmas." Come and see her at TheKerrieShow.com.

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Talk with your kids about cyberbullying

Tackling the
new frontier
in cruel
behavior
among teens

BY SHNIEKA L. JOHNSON

The advances that have occurred over the past five years in the design and creativity of online platforms offered — whether used on a computer, tablet, or cellphone — is staggering. There are a number of benefits to social media, and it is a way of life for many teens. In fact, for the first time, there is a generation that has not experienced a world without the internet. This constant access to the internet is not only used for research and chatting with friends, it is also used for harm.

Teens now find their personal relationships and their actions being exploited online for the world to see by peers. As a result, many teens (and their parents) are left wondering how best to handle cyberbullying.

Before the internet, bullying often occurred on the playground, in the hallways, or on the school bus — all places that an adult is present and can assess a situation quite quickly with notification. Now, this same type of bullying behavior has spread to the greater public via the web, mostly on social media.

In many instances, the adults that could easily monitor face-to-face bullying or verbal teasing are not as knowledgeable of social media, and therefore, cannot successfully identify, monitor, or deter this behavior.

“According to a lot of different data, and depending on age and gender, it looks like young people are getting a mix of phone and text cyberbullying as well as on social media, and likely in tandem with these forms of communication,” says Yoko Liriano, director of Citywide Teen Programs at the YMCA of Greater New York.

Like bullying, cyberbullying occurs amongst school-aged children

typically entering or in the midst of adolescence (e.g., pre-teens and teens) and involves a power imbalance between peers. Kids who are bullied are intimidated by the use of power — such as physical strength, knowledge of embarrassing information, or simple popularity. The bully uses that power imbalance over time and in different situations to control a situation or hurt the other victim’s feelings, which can include a combination of in-person bullying and cyberbullying.

“Cyberbullying is a type of bullying, but it is done via social media in the form of comments and damaging pictures, texting, or using any type of communication device to perpetuate the bullying,” Liriano says. “I would venture to say that the effects of cyberbullying are more lasting than most physical bullying, because anything done on the internet is on the internet forever.”

This bullying behavior is repeated over time and can occur during or after school hours. Cyberbullying typically occurs among young people, but there are instances in which the person on the other side of the computer or device is an adult.

When an adult is involved, this type of conduct — which is often referred to as cyber-harassment or cyberstalking — there are potential for legal consequences. In all forms of cyberbullying, it can include harassment, threats, and embarrassment.

So how can parents protect their children? Pre-teens and teens are socializing online and using mobile devices at a greater rate than ever before, so it is hopeless to attempt banning access, especially as these tools become more integrated with typical personal and school interactions. Because cyberbullying can negatively affect a person’s self-im-

age and behavior, one of the best steps to counter these consequences is to provide positive in-person interaction with adults and peers, which can reduce the negative impact of cyberbullying.

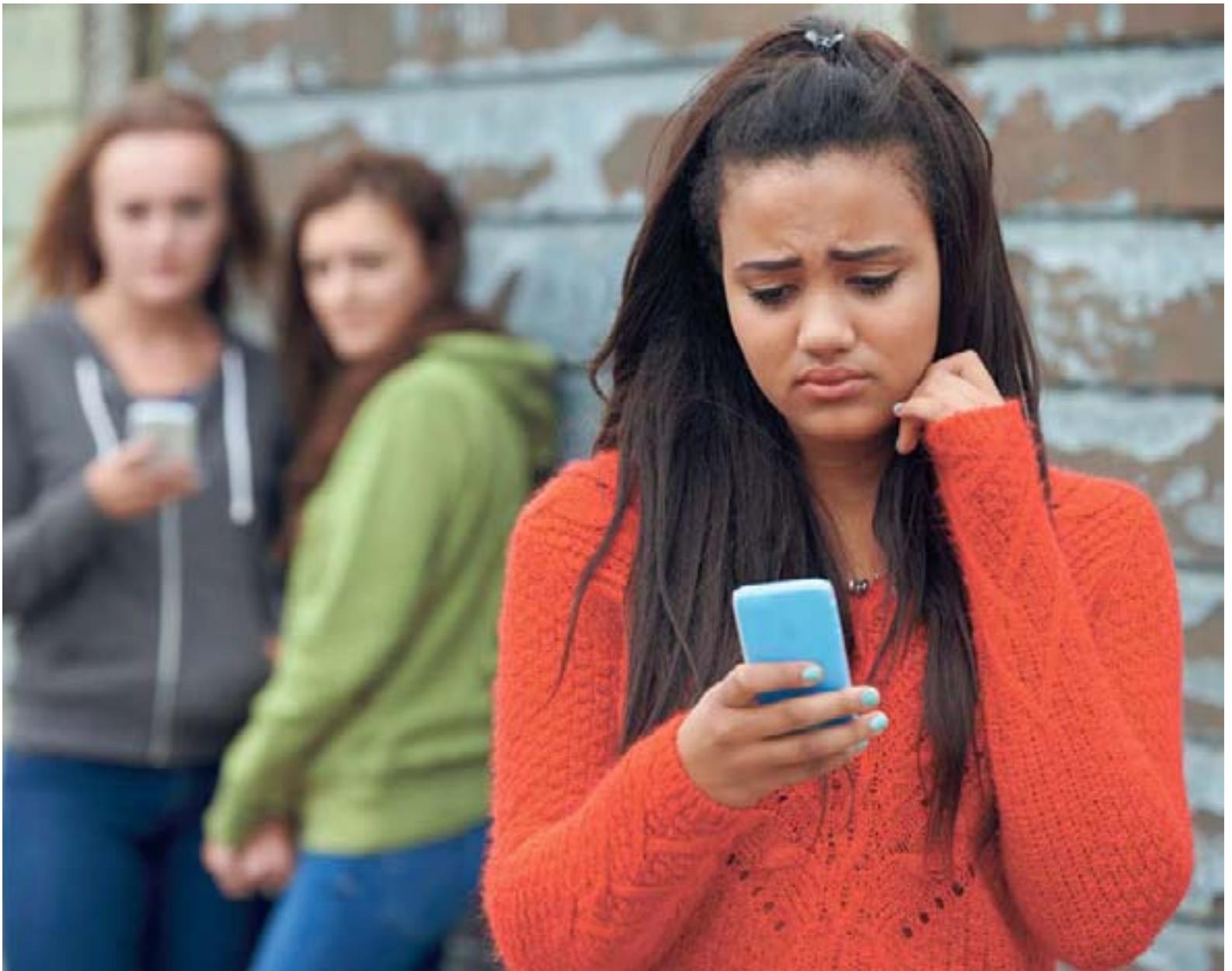
“I would say that we want our young people to feel like we trust them, because we do. Being ‘Big Brother’ could push teens away. Practice being on social media WITH young people — befriend them on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or whatever they are using. Ask them to help you with social media, so it feels like you are learning together. Make it a family affair!” says Liriano.

As parents, we are often protective, but early on, we must let our children take the lead.

“I am a firm believer that young people should be shown how to work out conflicts between each other first,” says Liriano. “[To prevent bullying from being] pervasive in a school setting, most school administrations have strict policies against cyberbullying. Depending on the severity, the police may also be notified and brought into the situation. The more we work on building strong relationships and strengthening our communities, the less likely cyberbullying will occur. Let’s start there.”

If you suspect that your child is the victim of cyberbullying, the first step is to examine the many ways your child interacts with others online. Cyberbullying can be easy to spot when carried out through a text, tweet, or response to a status update on Facebook. Other, less obvious, forms of cyberbullying include antagonizing someone through fake online accounts and tagging the person on posts of embarrassing information, photos, or videos.

“Cyberbullying could happen in many forms, there have been cases



of young people (and even parents) posing as 'love interests' and tormenting young people to the point of suicide, college students outing their roommates for being gay (also resulting in suicide), as well as young people who share nude photos via text or online," Ms. Liriano says. "They need to understand that 'nudes' are a form of child pornography, so taking a photo, sending it, or re-posting is all illegal — and very, very damaging. There have been too many cases of suicide due to cyberbullying, so it is increasingly important that we educate and advocate for our young people."

The YMCA of Greater New York also provides great guidance for examining whether your child is the victim of cyberbullying, and some tips to help protect her from it:

Make face time with your kids —

the old-fashioned way. Spend time with your kids every day and give them your full, undivided attention. Turn off cellphones, televisions, and computers to create a conversation-friendly environment.

Learn the signs. A child who is being bullied may have a loss of appetite, may lose interest in favorite activities, and may withdraw socially and emotionally in other ways. Watch for changes in behavior and seek help if you suspect something is wrong.

Be available to talk — but don't force it. Kids may feel embarrassed, ashamed, angry, or confused about being bullied, and it may be difficult for them to talk about it with you. Give them time to open up, and let them know you are there and will be supportive if they need your help.

Let them know it's not their

fault. Never blame a child for being bullied or for not "fighting back." It can be helpful to share one or two of your own personal stories so your kids know they're not the only ones to experience this kind of behavior or feel the way they do.

Help find positive ways for them to feel empowered and regain self-esteem. Show that you are committed to helping them resolve the issue, and talk through ways to address or cope with the bullying behavior.

Parents need to be proactive in monitoring their children's behavior in response to their online interactions, because they cannot rely on their children coming to them once the bullying has occurred. Many pre-teens and teens are hesitant to report being bullied, and recent studies have found that one in four teens

have been the victims of cyberbullying, and one in six admit to having cyberbullied someone else. In fact, girls are more likely than boys to be bullies and victims on the internet.

Use of the internet and social media is inevitable in the day-to-day socializing of pre-teens and teens. Parents should keep a close eye on children's social media accounts and be aware of what is posted and made public. Also, reading the comments made by others will give parents a better understanding of interactions between their children and peers online. If your children are on social media, you should have an understanding of social media yourself.

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



Photo by Rosalie O'Connor

Rosie's Theater Kids co-founders Rosie O'Donnell and Lori Klinger with students from the program and gala honoree Kristin Chenoweth on the red carpet.

On with the show!

How Rosie's Theater Kids gives children a moment in the spotlight

BY TAMMY SCILEPPI

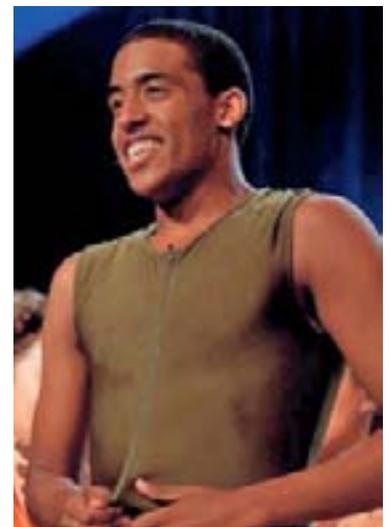
Rosie O'Donnell may not like Donald Trump, but she loves kids and can't do enough for them. The wisecracking, outspoken actress and comedian is co-parenting five children and has her hands full, but she has always made time for her other kids — the students in her Rosie's Theater Kids arts organization, many of whom happen to live in underserved communities here.

Back in early November, O'Donnell hosted a star-studded gala event at the Marriott Marquis on Broadway, which featured a special performance by her super-talented Rosie's Theater Kids students. Thanks to the arts organization she co-founded in 2003, the lives of more than 50,000 city students' lives have changed for the better.

Honoring Emmy and Tony Award-winning actress Kristin Chenoweth, and raising more than \$800,000 to benefit the city's public school students, Rosie's Theater Kids' 12th annual Gala recognized Chenoweth for her ongoing dedication and focus on arts education. One hundred percent of the proceeds from the benefit will be used to support the organization's academic and artistic programs, which more than 2,000 local



Zi-Ying Cao, 17, performed at a recent gala event honoring Kristen Chenoweth. She is a senior at Stuyvesant High School and lives in Chinatown, Manhattan. She won a scholarship at Rosie's Theater Kids and is now a Scholastic and Artistic Merit Scholar.



Rosie's Theater Kids graduate Daniel Estrella, now 22, first joined the program in the fifth grade. He's currently a student at the University of Michigan, received a scholarship from the university and is expected to receive a degree in musical theater in the summer of 2016.

students utilize annually.

Chenoweth spoke to the importance of the organization, and how O'Donnell has inspired her.

"My love for kids who love the arts is never ending! I am simply

here to help inspire them to follow their dreams, whatever they may be. When a child finds their purpose, they have no bounds. That combined with self-esteem, of course," said Chenoweth. "My job and Rosie's

job is to keep them on their path. She has inspired me to start my own theater arts camp in the summer in my home state of Oklahoma. Giving back really inspires the one doing the GIVING. We are proving [that] the arts in schools and summer camps can change lives."

It was an evening to remember. Many Broadway celebs were there to celebrate Rosie's Theater Kids, among them actor BD Wong, comedian Fran Drescher, singer Orfeh, and actresses Jessie Mueller and Tatum O'Neal. But the real stars were the kids themselves. After welcome remarks by O'Donnell, the kids performed "RISE" (with music and lyrics by Stevie Wonder and Sara Bareilles), "A Little Medley," and "Me, You, We," inspired by the book, "I Am Malala," by Malala Yousafzai, the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate.

"We are grateful to all of those who were able to join us at the gala," said Rosie's Theater Kids Co-Founder Lori Klinger. "It is through everyone's continued support that Rosie's Theater Kids has been able to provide such meaningful experiences and ultimately enriching the lives of students through the arts. For many of our students, Rosie's Theater Kids is so much more than an afterschool program — it is a family, a second home. The lessons they learn during their time with us are not just preparing them for the stage, they are preparing them for life."

Rosie's Theater Kids has teamed up with expert staff and guest Broadway professionals, so students can benefit from classes in music, dance, and drama, life skills development, academic guidance, and if needed, additional funding for higher education.

As one of the largest arts-in-education programs serving grades pre-K through 12, it is one of the only organizations that provide all of its core services free of charge to students and schools.

Thanks to O'Donnell's vision, the organization helped creative students like Stuyvesant High School senior Zi-Ying Cao from Chinatown get a jumpstart in life. The rest was up to her.

Zi-Ying, now 17, is currently with the program. (She was one of the gala performers who sang "Me, You, We.")

After winning a scholarship at Rosie's Theater Kids, she became a Scholastic and Artistic Merit Scholar and is now applying to Ivy

League schools. The scholarship assists students in need of "gap funding," which is the remaining balance of funds needed to fill the gap between a student's financial aid reward and the cost of tuition. The funds will be used to cover tuition, room and board, books, and other necessary items that come with the cost of higher education.

Zi-Ying's parents were born and raised in small villages in China. She moved with her family to the US when she was 2. Because her parents knew very little English upon arrival, they were forced to work low-paying, laborious jobs.

Despite her modest upbringing, Zi Ying's family always placed an emphasis on the importance of education. Her mother valued education so much that she made sacrifices in order to pay for tutoring for Zi Ying and her younger sister.

In addition to her many academic achievements, she is also an incredibly talented performer, having channeled her inner artist during her time at Rosie's Theater Kids.

Daniel Estrella, now 22, is a scholarship student studying at the University of Michigan, as a member of its prestigious Musical Theatre program. He's a Rosie's Theater Kids graduate. He explains his involvement in the program:

"It was more than 10 years ago that I was introduced to RTKids' PS Broadway program, which provided me, an overjoyed fifth grade student from the Bronx, who loved Motown, with an outlet to perform. My weekly RTKids classes at PS 153 introduced me to Broadway — a place accessible by way of a handful of subway stops, yet seemingly worlds away. This introduction to musical theater ended up truly changing my life.

"In addition to a multitude of unforgettable and professional experiences, Rosie's Theater Kids helped me get into one of the top performing arts high schools in New York, provided me with SAT classes and tutoring, and offered intense, personalized assistance as I applied to colleges," said Estrella. "I would not have had access to these resources otherwise."

For more about Rosie's Theater Kids [445 West 45th St., Manhattan], visit www.rosiestheaterkids.org.

Tammy Scileppi is a Queens-based freelance writer and parent. Interviewing hundreds of New York City's movers and shakers has been an amazing adventure for her. Scileppi's work has appeared in a variety of media outlets.



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What's the best emergency care?

Deciding between pediatrician vs. urgent care vs. the emergency room

BY JAMIE LOBER

The decision of whether to take your child to the pediatrician, an urgent care clinic, or the emergency room when he does not feel well may seem like common sense, but for some parents, it raises some questions on what the right choice would be.

Parents should have a pediatrician that they like and trust for their child and who has a relationship with your family and knows the child well, including his past medical history and allergies. An urgent care center caters specifically to patients with ailments that can't wait for an appointment with a physician several days out, but that aren't severe enough to merit an emergency-room visit. The drawback to an urgent care center and emergency room is that the doctor will not know your child as well or have the same kind of follow-up as the pediatrician.

At this time of year, one of the most common complaints is the seasonal cold, which can be treated at home unless a child is having difficulty breathing, a high fever, or it goes on for more than three to five days.

"There is something called croup, which is when kids make a bark-like cough and have noisy breathing which, if it is mild, you can be put in a steamed shower or come to the pediatrician's office. But if your pediatrician's office is closed, it is a time you must go to either an urgent care center or to an emergency room," said Dr. Blair Hammond, assistant professor at Mt. Sinai Hospital. If your child is more extreme looking and working hard to breathe, he should be monitored more closely, making the emergency room a better option than the urgent care center, which is a quick in and out.

Other frequently seen issues at this time of year are strep throat,

with which your child could have a fever. The pediatrician can handle it, but after doctor's hours, it would be great to go to the urgent care center and have a strep test.

"One of my concerns about urgent care centers and emergency rooms is that they do not have pediatric-trained doctors. Medicines are dosed differently in children, and the common types of diseases children get can be different than an adult," said Hammond. For issues like ear infections, ear pains, or colds, many adults get antibiotics, whereas in kids, it is not always suggested.

"There is new data about not giving antibiotics for children with ear infections after age 2 unless there is moderate ear pain, it looks like it is bulging, and you have a fever with it," said Hammond.

The emergency room is for medical emergencies like if your child is turning blue, has a seizure, or has difficulty breathing. Doctors can do blood tests, take X-rays, and offer oxygen if needed. Kids can usually get admitted right away if necessary. The downside is that there is a large copayment.

"For most insurances, it is \$150, and there is often a long wait where you are exposed to other germs from sick people," said Hammond. When you are discharged from the emergency room, you cannot expect someone to check on you, whereas the pediatrician may ask you how things are going. Follow up is extremely important in children's healthcare.

"Many illnesses in children are caused by viruses and close observation is often the best management, but over several days is not possible in urgent care and emergency room settings," said Hammond.

If your child will stress out at the thought of the emergency room, it may be avoidable.

"We can handle 80 percent of the cases in the urgent care that we see

in the emergency room, but what we are not able to handle or handle well are people with life-threatening illnesses manifested by severe difficulty breathing, obvious injuries and conditions where it looks like a kid may need to be hospitalized," said Dr. Judah Fierstein of Mt. Sinai Hospital Urgent Care. Urgent care is a nice option for weekends and holidays as well as minor injuries or illnesses.

"We see cold, flu, earaches and a lot of gastrointestinal illnesses, respiratory illnesses, asthma, sore throats, and injuries like cuts, sprains, and fractures from the playground," said Fierstein. There are clear advantages to urgent care.

"Patients appreciate the speed, and how we run more quickly and efficiently than an emergency department, the lower cost, and that it is a safer and friendlier environment for kids," said Fierstein.

While it is often overlooked, do not ignore the existence of urgent care.

"It is a great and convenient place to get care that fills a really important gap when you have two choices, to wait until tomorrow or go to the emergency room — and there is not a good choice other than the urgent care," said Fierstein. Urgent care doctors are not replacements for their alternatives, but rather partners in good health.

"We have a specific role and are there when pediatricians are not and do things they cannot do. We do not try to take care of the emergencies, because they need to go where they belong, but when people come in who need real emergency care, we stabilize them and arrange the transportation to get them attended," said Fierstein.

An urgent care center is easy and great when you want a quick diagnosis like a urinary tract infection or strep throat. With bacterial infections like strep throat, a child will



usually start to feel better after being on an antibiotic for 24 hours and will no longer need to be seen. Sometimes parents go to an urgent care for reassurance when something can be managed at home.

“For vomiting and diarrheal illness, most are caused by viruses and the recommendation is to try to keep the child hydrated by giving small amounts of liquid and make sure he is peeing enough,” said Hammond. If a child is not urinating for long periods of time, the urgent care or emergency room might be necessary for rehydration or getting IV fluids. While you may feel a rash should be seen right away, you can usually wait and follow up with the pediatrician. For complicated rashes, you

may be referred to a dermatologist.

Do not be scared of fever unless your child is younger than 2 months, in which case he should be seen.

“Fever is the body’s way of fighting infection, and children, unlike adults, have not been exposed to as many viruses, so they have less immunity,” said Hammond. Kids also tend to put more things in their mouth and touch everything.

“They may get eight to 10 infections a year, and when a child is done with one cough he may get a new cough, but that is classic and typical, especially between ages infancy to 3,” said Hammond.

Obviously, broken bones should be evaluated in the emergency room and deep wounds should be cleaned

and seen as soon as possible to decrease risk of infection. Do not panic.

“There is good data that if children fall from a height of less than two feet and there is no loss of consciousness and they appear completely well, they can usually be observed at home for any signs of vomiting, severe headache, neurological changes, or balance problems,” said Hammond.

Particularly if you go to an urgent care or emergency room, ask questions.

“You want to make sure the doctor explains exactly what medicine he is giving and why and get the results for any tests or cultures that were done,” said Hammond.

Sometimes results are not available right away so you want to follow up and be sure the information is sent to your pediatrician’s office, so he is aware of what was done. Be sure that you think through your decision on where to go and when. Remember that in little kids, the immune system is not that great, so you want to stay home and talk to your pediatrician when you can, so your child is not exposed to unnecessary viruses and bacteria at the urgent care center and emergency room.

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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The hidden risks of antibiotics

BY DR. WILLIAM B. MILLER, JR.

The discovery of the antibacterial activity of penicillin by Alexander Fleming in 1929 represents one of the singular moments in human history. The number of lives saved is beyond calculation. Medicine was revolutionized by that discovery.

The success of antibiotics is based upon their ability to interfere

with a bacterial growth, metabolism, or reproduction. The manner in which they work means that many types of bacteria are affected at the same time by any particular antibiotic, which is termed “broad spectrum.”

Antibiotics are often miraculous and life saving, but people need to be aware that the use of them has negative effects.

Deep associations between gut

microbial composition and diabetes and obesity are now being discovered. A recent surprise has been strong evidence between the administration of antibiotics and increasing childhood obesity lasting into and through adulthood. It appears that the more antibiotics you get as a child, the stronger the effect. The antibiotics seem to be wiping out beneficial populations of gut bacteria and replacing them with others that are less so. The possibility that this might also link to the increasing incidence of Type II diabetes is being further explored.

Antibiotic resistance

In the last few decades, the problem of antibiotic resistance has become an increasingly reported clinical experience. Some antibiotics that had been effective against a certain type of bacterial infection have become less so, requiring a higher dosage or more prolonged treatment. In some cases, they might now demonstrate near complete ineffectiveness against a bacterial strain against which they had been highly potent previously.

What led to this unexpected outcome? Commonly, it is stated that the bacteria have mutated in response to antibiotics. However, that is largely incorrect. Antibiotic resistance is ancient. All common antibiotics are based on chemicals found in nature and used by other organisms to ward off bacteria. Over eons and long ago, bacteria themselves evolved to counter this form of defense by developing resistance to those defenses. What is occurring in our modern era is that our current antibiotic resistance is leading to an increase in the number of naturally resistant bacteria that become more common within bacterial populations. It is, in essence, a form of selective breeding for bacteria, for the wrong type.

Part of the problem is the pressure felt by physicians to offer antibiotics to their patients. The belief in the power of antibiotics can be very high among patients who are suffering. Many times, even though the treating physician might assume that it will not be effective, the default can be towards satisfying that demand with the consideration that “no harm will be done.”

The danger of overuse

What we are now learning is that this attitude has been an incor-

A recent surprise has been strong evidence between the administration of antibiotics and increasing childhood obesity lasting into and through adulthood.

rect assumption. There are other forms of inadvertent harm beyond antibiotic resistance that can occur and these directly relate to the "broad spectrum" capacity of almost all antibiotics. Since they are active against many bacterial types, there is the suppression or eradication of many populations of bacteria at the same time, apart from the specific pathogenic bacterial type that is actually being targeted.

When antibiotics are used improperly, the critical balance of many essential bacterial partners in our body tissues is being upset. We do this every time we overuse antibiotics by administering them for the wrong indication.

Permitting their use in our food supply compounds these types of errors.

Crucial microbial cells

This enlarged understanding stems from the fact that all creatures on this planet, including humans, are actually vast collaborations between microbial cells, viruses, and our own innate cells. In fact, for us humans, microbial cells outnumber our own cells by more than 10 to one and are present in all of our body tissues. So when an antibiotic is administered for the wrong reasons, an exquisite balance between an enormous array of microbes and our own cells is being altered for no productive reason.

These partnerships between the microbial realm and our own cells serve vital purposes in our health.

The range of that interaction can be very surprising. They are intimately connected with our growth and development, metabolism, and even our neurological function and moods.

What happens then if there is

a breakdown of these crucial microbial partnerships? It is now known that there are very significant consequences. This has become a well-recognized issue, termed "dysbiosis."

There are now a wide range of examples of these types of effects. An increasing number of diseases are now either being directly attributed to dysbiosis or linked to them. For example, the incidence and intensity of inflammatory bowel disease is now known to be associated with intestinal dysbiosis. Cases of a particularly nasty gut pathogen, *Clostridium difficile*, are now being actively treated by re-establishing the proper balance of the intestinal flora. Not surprisingly then, antibiotics use is now considered to be one risk factor for the incidence of both of these conditions.

It has been shown that the incidence of both childhood and adult allergy and asthma is on the rise and some research suggests that this, too, is related to antibiotic exposure.

Other reports suggest associations between dysbiosis and other extra-intestinal diseases such as autism, schizophrenia, rheumatoid arthritis, colorectal cancer, and even a tentative association with breast cancer.

Use with caution

What should we do with this new information? Clearly, despite some risks, antibiotics remain essential wonders of our modern medical palette. However, their use should be carefully tailored by physicians for only strict indications.

Patients and parents must be willing to accept that antibiotics should not be reflexively requested for many infectious illnesses. And surely, the use of antibiotics in our food supply should be very carefully regulated and restricted.

Dr. Bill Miller has been a physician in academic and private practice for more than 30 years. He is the author of "The Microcosm Within: Evolution and Extinction in the Hologenome." He currently serves as a scientific advisor to OmniBiome Therapeutics, a pioneering company in discovering and developing solutions to problems in human fertility and health through management of the human microbiome. For more information visit, www.themicrocosmwithin.com.

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Delicious ideas

The perfect homemade gifts — for everyone on your list

BY MALIA JACOBSON

Making a homemade holiday gift is a fun way to get kids involved in gift-giving — but finding the perfect handmade present can be tougher than last year's fruitcake. If your list includes some hard-to-please folks, and you're running low on time and creativity, don't throw in the towel. Instead, choose from this collection of culinary gifts for everyone on your list. These tasty treats are thoughtful, easy on the wallet, and usually come together in less time than it takes to go the mall. Give them a try, and you'll be rewarded with heartfelt thanks and cherished family memories.

The foodie: Herbed salts

Give the gourmet in your life the gift of perfectly seasoned meals. Make an herb salt blend by mixing one part crushed or ground herbs and five parts salt. For cumin, marjoram, or thyme salts, use ground herbs; for others, such as basil or rosemary, let kids help crush the herbs with a mortar and pestle or a rolling pin. Use single herbs, or experiment with different combinations.

Pour the finished mixture into a salt-shaker, and be sure to label your custom blend.

The snow bunny: Hot cocoa mix with marshmallows

Send warm wishes to friends and family in cold climates with this charming chocolaty twosome. Whip up a dry hot cocoa mix and combine it with powdery, fluffy homemade marshmallows (locate recipes online).

Package the cocoa in a small tin, and seal the marshmallows in a plastic bag if they'll be shipped. Add a large cocoa mug for an extra-thoughtful touch. Kids will love making and tasting this sweet pair of treats, but be warned: once they taste hot cocoa perfection, they may not go back to the store-bought stuff.

The film buff: Popcorn and homemade seasoning mix

Cold weather calls for cozy movie

nights at home, so give your favorite film fanatic a couch-worthy snack. Begin by filling a large mason jar to the top with bulk popcorn kernels and fastening the lid. Next, have kids help prepare the seasoning mix and scoop it into small mason jars.

To finish, tie the pair of jars off with twine or ribbon, and present with a new DVD or a popcorn bowl. Try this sweet-and-salty combo: mix a quarter cup sugar with one teaspoon each of ground cinnamon and ground salt.

The coffee connoisseur: Vanilla bean syrup

Treat a coffee-lover to homemade vanilla syrup that will add layers of flavor to her morning java. This project is best for older kids, who will be fascinated by the funny-looking vanilla bean and the aromatic flecks inside.

First, bring one cup water to a boil. Once the water is boiling, add one to two cups of sugar (more sugar will yield a thicker syrup) along with the vanilla bean and stir constantly until

the sugar dissolves. Remove the pan from the heat and allow the syrup to cool. Take out the vanilla bean, and pour the syrup into a glass jar with a tight-fitting lid. In addition to flavoring coffee, this sweet concoction can be added to sparkling water, lemonade, cocktails, or poured over ice cream or yogurt.

The calorie-counter: Infused vinegars

With sugary treats as far as the eye can see, the holiday season can be trying for those on restricted diets. Herb-infused vinegars make an attractive gift that fits anyone's diet plan. To start, scout discount stores and craft stores for pretty glass bottles. Remove the bottles' lids and insert herbs from your garden or the grocery store.

Using a small funnel, pour in warmed (not hot) distilled white vinegar and seal the lid with hot wax. Some combinations to try: oregano, thyme, and basil; lemon balm, nasturtium, and dill; and sage, thyme, basil, and rosemary.

Malia Jacobson is an award-winning health and parenting journalist and mom of three. Her latest book is "Sleep Tight, Every Night: Helping Toddlers and Preschoolers Sleep Well Without Tears, Tricks, or Tirades."





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Talking about touching

Yes, it can be embarrassing. But there are good reasons to talk to your children about masturbation

BY JAMIE LOBER

Topics that used to turn heads and evoke giggles are now coming to the forefront as New York parents get involved with their kids' sexuality. Talking to children about masturbation can be uncomfortable, but it is an important conversation to have.

"The reality is that most parents and teens do not bring it up on a regular basis when they come to see a doctor — unless it is causing them problems," said Dr. Caroline Barangan, assistant professor of pediatrics and adolescent medicine specialist at Mount Sinai. A big reason is that either the patient or physician may not feel comfortable broaching the topic.

"How we educate our parents in regards to how to approach masturbation at home would be in the bigger context of how they bring up sexual behaviors and sexual activity in general," said Barangan. Some parents are comfortable bringing it up while others may not know how to begin. "The vast majority are not comfortable unless something came up to instigate the conversation — like a parent coming home and finding their teen with another teen making out on the sofa unexpectedly," she says.

Find an avenue to approach sexuality. Timing is everything.

"Bring up the conversation about sexual behaviors once kids start asking questions or if they see something on television or a reference in music," said Barangan. "It should be brought up at 9 years old, before puberty starts, to see what your kid knows or what he has heard from friends."

Some kids may not even know what masturbation means.

"You can see masturbation in young kids even before the age of 5, even though they do not realize that is what

they are doing. The reason you see it in kids between 4 and 8 years old is because they are exploring their body," said Barangan.

Giving your child time and respect can be helpful. "Curiosity can be normal because they do not realize what social norms are and the meaning of privacy."

The American Academy of Pediatrics defines masturbation as self-stimulation of the genitals.

It is your job as a parent to talk about what should be done in private and what is socially appropriate.

"When a kid in the kindergarten, first, or second grade is doing public masturbation, exposing himself, or trying to touch other people's genitalia, you think about autism spectrum disorder, developmental delay, or conditions where a kid cannot control himself or grasp it is inappropriate and should not be done in public," said Barangan.

From a medical standpoint, it is a concern whether or not the behavior is a sign that the child has been abused or neglected. Some forms of masturbation are unacceptable.

"If they are inflicting harm on themselves, inserting foreign objects into their genitalia, or forcing themselves on other kids, those are red flag signs that should be brought up with the doctor to see if more assessment needs to happen," said Barangan. By ages 10, 11, and 12, kids should be aware that masturbation should only occur in private.

When you have an older child, give him space.

"I want to advocate for the adolescent person with regards to making sure parents know they should not walk into anybody's room without knocking first in order to respect the adolescent's privacy," said Barangan.

Your child knows best when he is cognitively and emotionally ready to have sex if that is his choice.

"It is also cultural and depends on religious background, where kids may get messages that masturbation is bad and if you do it you will go blind, grow hair on your palms, or will hurt yourself in some way, and those things are false," said Barangan.

Encourage your child to ask questions of the doctor and make sure his provider is comfortable answering and reassuring him of what is healthy and safe.

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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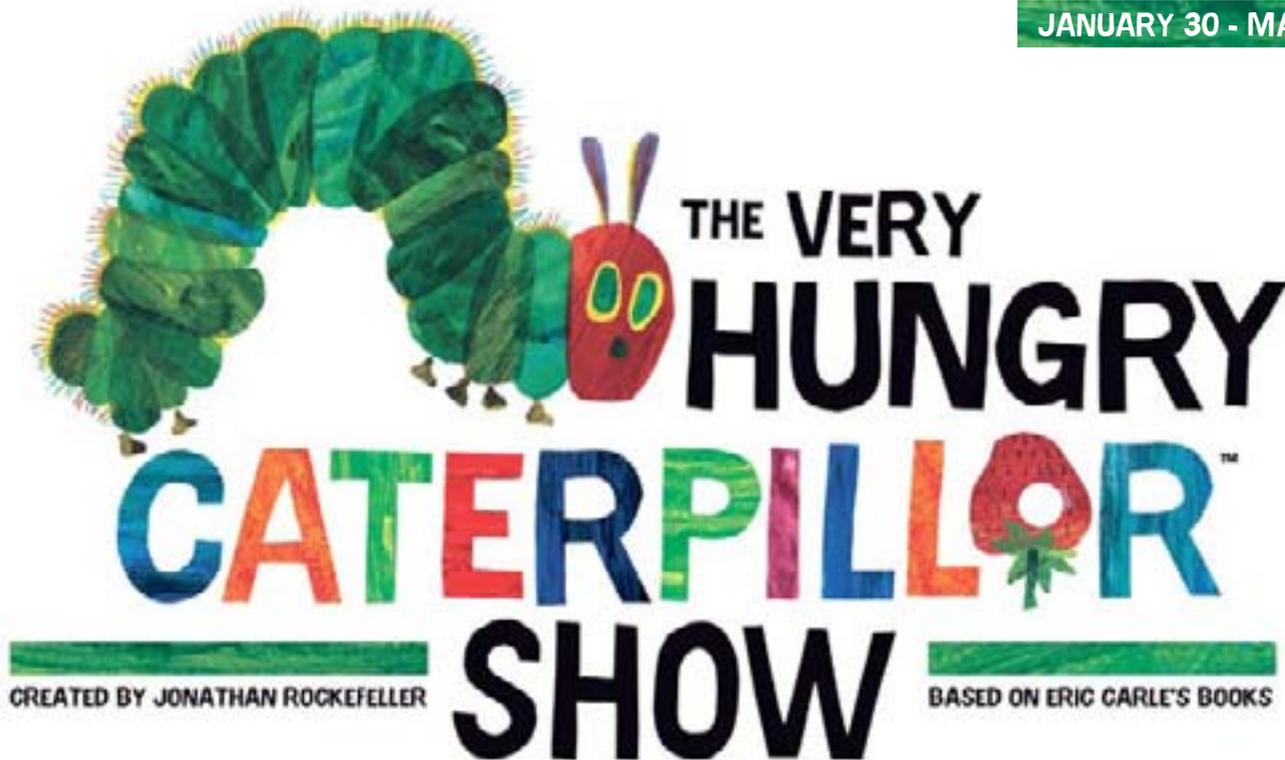
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DEAR
DR. KARYN
DR. KARYN GORDON

Help your teen find a dream career

It's that time! High school students are going to career conferences, checking out college and university campuses, and having stressful conversations with their parents about "what to do with their life." My sister just shared with me today that she's taking my niece on a college campus tour. Where did the last 18 years go?

Some parents know how to help their kids make these huge decisions. Most parents tell me they feel ill-equipped. There are too many choices today, and secretly, many parents say they are dissatisfied with their own career. (The Globe & Mail puts this number as high as 77 percent!) So how can they possibly give direction and provide hope to their kids?

But what would happen if you knew there was a proven, secret formula to discover your dream career? And once you knew your direction, what if there were concrete strategies you could follow to navigate and build your career? Well, I have some exciting news! The "secrets" of career success are going to be revealed as we launch my new television series this month "Success Stories With Dr. Karyn." Here is a link: <http://www.dkleadership.org/successstories/signup>.

This 10-week series features up-close and personal interviews with 10 top industry leaders (National Basketball Association, National Hockey League, chief executive officers) about their entire life — from childhood through to their successful careers today. The stories of what each person experienced are unique, as they share their individual opportunities, obstacles, and triumphs. But when they talk about how they kept moving forward, we see some powerful patterns emerging. The undercurrent for all of these leaders is that they developed their Emotional Intelligence as they navigated their career!

When you hear their stories, you realize it's less about luck and more



about taking risks, learning from failure, building exceptional relationships, delaying gratification, working extremely hard, and being wise decision makers. We often look at successful people once they have "arrived" at their destination, and we tend to focus on their achievements. This series will show you the back story — and how these leaders got to where they are now.

While we were filming in April 2015, I was in the middle of a speaking tour that took me to several elementary schools and high schools, and as I described what I was working on to the teachers and principals I was interacting with, I noticed there was a lot of interest in this topic. They explained that schools and individual teachers are desperately in need of current resources. One teacher sheepishly told me her textbook for teaching her 10th-grade career students was from 2003, while other teachers said they were randomly going to YouTube to try to find material that could fit the new curriculum. Yikes!

We need to properly equip our

young people for the workforce — and as I've worked and trained in hundreds of organizations in North America over the last decade, the message I am constantly hearing is that the next generation is not prepared. They are lacking the Emotional Intelligence they need to succeed in the workplace!

So we got to work! This summer, we put an incredible team of educational consultants together (directors of education, superintendents, guidance counselors, and teachers) to create a Turn-Key and Affordable Educational Resource Kit to accompany the television series. This kit turns each episode into a classroom teaching tool, and for every episode it includes discussion questions, classroom activities, and additional videos from myself highlighting the Emotional Intelligence skills being illustrated (risk-taking, goal-setting, resilience, confidence, taking initiative, passion, assertiveness, etc.).

For parents: if you want your kids to be learning these crucial skills, make sure you pass this info on to your school's guidance counselor or principal! For teachers: if you are interested in current, inspiring classroom content that will help your students connect to their IPP and make your careers and health education classes relevant, get in touch with us: karyn@dkleadership.org! The full program will be available starting in 2016.

So how can parents help their teens find their dream career? Here are my top three tips:

Know yourself

This may seem like a loaded question, but who are you? Are you an introvert or an extrovert? Dreamer or detail-oriented? Thinker or feeler? How do you manage your time? Do you perform better in structured environments or in more spontaneous environments while working under pressure?

According to the Myers-Briggs Personality Assessment Program,

there are 16 personality types (defined by different combinations of four distinct parts of our personality), and depending on your type, you will likely answer these questions in very different ways. But did you consider these questions before you applied for your last job? Before we can even begin to think about figuring out our dream career, we need to know who we are! When I interviewed industry leaders last year for our Strategic Career course, nearly 75 percent of them said the first step to finding your dream career is to know yourself! This is the foundational question!

The interesting thing is that while emotional intelligence is 100 percent learned, personality is more fixed. I did my first personality assessment when I was 21 years old and, to be honest, I was skeptical. How could answering 100 standardized questions tell me anything about myself? But I was wrong! When I read through the 20-page custom document, it nailed me! It explained how I get my energy, how I make decisions, how I manage my time, and even described how I respond to conflict. I love anything that saves time — so yes, we could spend our entire lifetime trying to get to know ourselves, or we could do high-quality assessments that do it for us! Once you know your personality and industry interests, you are much closer to finding your career path.

Learn our 'secret' formula

Dream career = personality + industry + values.

I have learned personally — and through working with hundreds of leaders — that finding your career is a combination of knowing your personality (what naturally energizes you) plus knowing the industries that you are personally interested in plus knowing your values!

More than 90 percent of the adults that have taken our course say it was the values component that gave them their “aha moment.” Suddenly, they realized that why they do not like their current job is because their values are not aligned (ex. they value family, but they are traveling two-to-four times per month). I have learned that the people who are the happiest and have discovered their true dream career understand these three components and stick

to them as closely as possible!

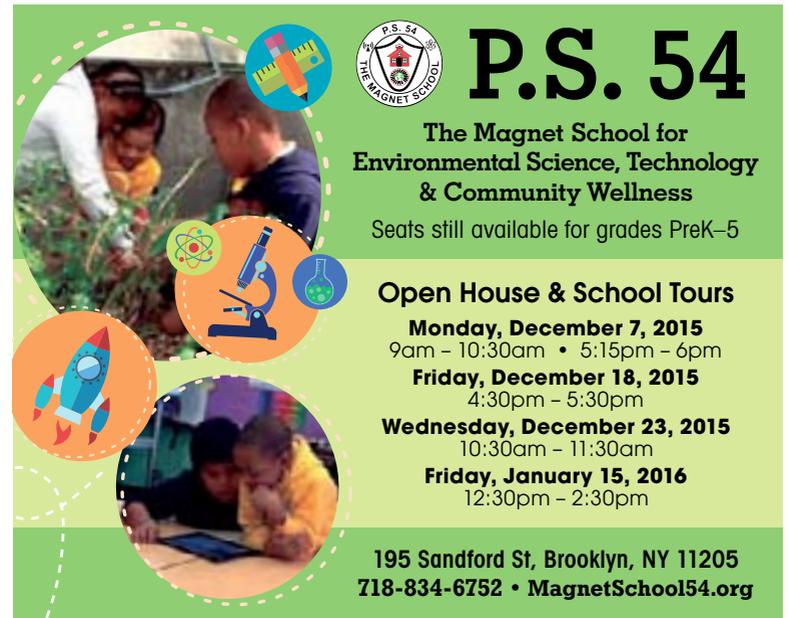
Four years ago, I was offered a very cool opportunity to do regular consulting in a well-known and respected large organization. Everything looked great on paper, and my friends and mentors were all encouraging me to go for it. But when I assessed my values, I realized it was not a good fit, and I declined the opportunity. (My friends were shocked!)

Know where the jobs are

Once you know your career direction, the next step is to do your research. Talk to industry experts in your field to hear their perspectives, insights, suggestions, and tips. What education would they recommend? What is a realistic pay expectation? Is college or university better? What should a person do to give herself a competitive edge in her industry? What schools would they recommend? If you are an adult, ask them specifically about your situation. Would they recommend you go back to school OR start working right away in your industry? What is the best way to break into your field? What part of this industry has more job opportunities? What will be the career trend in the next five years, from their perspective?

I've learned that no one can be an expert in all industries and yet each industry has their superstars. You need to track these people down and then take initiative, pick up the phone or send an e-mail, and ask for their input. I find the most outstanding industry leaders have such a sense of confidence and security that they are happy to share their insight. When I interviewed industry leaders for the podcast portion of our course, I was amazed at how many practical tips and suggestions these leaders shared — everything from how to get a job interview, to which country to do a Master of Business Administration in, to how to network if you are an introvert. Remember: information is powerful, and every piece you gather will bring you one step closer towards reaching your dream career.

Dr. Karyn Gordon 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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A season that's truly wonderful

Some special Christmas moments with my daughter

BY PATRICK HEMPFING

Life is hectic enough with the day-to-day stuff. Each day, I add more items to my to-do list than I check off. Will I ever catch up? It's unlikely. And then it happens — Christmas rolls around. Shopping, decorating, traveling ... collapsing. I sarcastically sing, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year."

Conversely, my daughter, Jessie, plays Christmas music in July. Around September, she asks, "How many days until Christmas?" So I need to take off my "Bah Humbug" hat and find my joyous one.

Right after Thanksgiving last year, Jessie asked, "When can we decorate for Christmas?" A few minutes later, Jessie again inquired, "When are we going to get a tree?"



CHERISH THE MOMENTS

Since we weren't going to be home for Christmas, I suggested we forego the tree and just put out the nativity set. Not to mention, it's a hectic time for my wife's work, so I knew Mattie would be unavailable to assist.

I decided to get into the Christmas spirit. (This sounds better than "I gave in.")

Jessie and I set up the nativity set first, one that took my wife more than 10 years to select as she wanted to find the perfect one. It's fragile. But Jessie wanted to arrange all the pieces. I think I said, "Be careful," with each piece I handed to her. She did a fantastic job organizing it. At the end, she tucked her battery-operated disco ball behind the angel as, she wanted the scene to be spectacular.

I think it's safe to say that not too many households' nativity scenes contained Joseph, Mary, Baby Jesus, and a rotating disco ball. However, I agreed that the colored lights rotating behind the manger scene did add a certain flare without detracting from the beauty and symbolism of the display.

The next day, Jessie and I went tree shopping. We walked down one aisle and up the next. I pulled out four or five 5- to 6-foot trees and stood them up for Jessie to inspect.

"We need a bigger tree, Dad." Jessie and I moved to the row with 6- to 7-foot trees. Just when I thought, "This is going to take forever," Jessie said, "It's perfect!" to a Douglas fir just under 7-feet tall. Jessie immediately named our tree "Sally." I left home with Jessie and returned with Jessie and Sally.

The following day, I retrieved all the boxes marked "Christmas" from the garage. Jessie immediately went to work decorating. Once, I came in from the garage to find five red-velvet bows hanging from the light fixture above my desk. The bows' tails were almost touching my computer and were within two feet of my nose when I typed. Still, I had to admit my new work environment brought a smile to my face.

Next, Jessie and I wrapped Sally in lights, another memorable experience. Jessie did not quite grasp the concept (or maybe she did but chose not to apply it) that lights need to gradually descend from top to bottom. It had to be a Christmas miracle, because, somehow, Sally ended up with lights covering her.

Then, Jessie enthusiastically unwrapped the ornaments, which we had carefully packed away the previous year. One special and fragile ornament recorded Jessie's tiny footprint in plaster. It had taken great effort for Mattie and me to hold her foot still enough to make it for her first Christmas. I asked Jessie to hand it to me. The imprint was only three inches long and one-and-a-half inch wide. Where did my baby go? I know it wasn't a grenade, but I handled it like one.

As Sally became full of ornaments, Jessie concluded, "We need a bigger tree."

We finished decorating and then sat in the dark admiring our work. The bright parts with an abundance of lights and the dark spaces without lights all looked good behind the scores of handmade ornaments and souvenirs of our travels and past Christmases together.

As we packed things away in January, I smiled, happy I had invested the time, energy, and expense. Something tells me we'll do it all over again this year. Before too long, I'll hear Jessie say, "Dad, it's time to get a tree. Let's get a real big one this year."

But whether we bring home a Peggy, Jane, Susan, or another Sally, I'll remember Christmas just might be "the most wonderful time of the year."

Until next month, remember to cherish the moments.

Patrick Hempfing had a 20-year professional career in banking, accounting, and auditing before he became a father at age 44. He is now a full-time husband, stay-at-home dad, and writer. Follow him at www.facebook.com/patricklhempfung and on Twitter @PatrickHempfung.

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BEHAVIOR & BEYOND

DR. MARCIE BEIGEL

On good behavior during the holidays

There is a bustle in the city! A hum of excitement! Regardless of whether you are staying home through December or traveling, the excitement of time with family, presents, and yummy food can be felt with every breath.

The impact that this time of year has on behavior can also be felt through each and every family. The stress, being off schedule, and juggling too many late family parties will be clear in the behavior of your kids. Let's minimize the distress that you and your children go through this holiday season.

In order to avoid extra tantrums and increased whining, I have a few proactive solutions, just for you:

First, take care of yourself! I know, this is often the last thing on your list. Trust me, move it up to the top five. When you are healthy, your ability to be the parent you want to be increases.

Among the holiday parties, schedule a night at your favorite yoga class or meet a friend to go spinning early one morning. The small moments of self care will have a huge positive impact on your family's happiness. Acknowledging that everyone is more on-edge can also be a great model of the behavior you are looking for from you kiddo. Showing them that when you are frustrated, you are going to count to 10 or walk away, is not only a fabulous way to take care of yourself, but also a priceless model to your kids about how to act when frustrated.

Second, recognize that your kids are going to be excited. Embrace it! Get excited with them, rather than yelling at them to calm down. Find times to talk about what is happening over the next couple of days or weeks (depending on the age of your child) and get really jazzed about it. When they are excited at inopportune times, remind them that you will celebrate the upcoming celebration at another time. Name that other time and make sure it happens. Knowing there is a specific



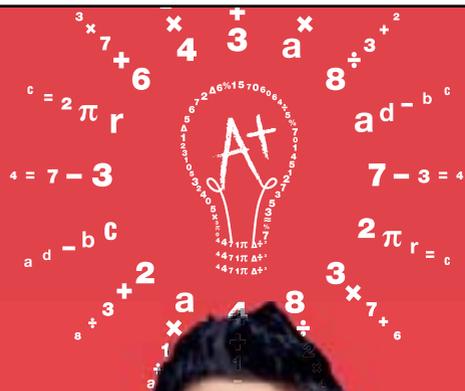
time to be excited makes it easier to stay calm.

Third, acknowledge that the rules are going to change during vacations and holiday visits. Bedtimes might be later or desserts might be eaten all day instead of just after dinner. These changes are part of the celebrations and need to be talked about. Don't expect your child to just understand these are the holidays, so everything is different. Talk about it. Explain that the rules are different than a typical day and explain why.

Use age-appropriate language to provide the explanations.

Don't let problem behavior get in the way of your celebrating this year. Take a few steps to embrace the excitement, take care of your own being, and talk about the special changes that come with this time of year. Happy holidays!

Dr. Marcie Beigel is a behavioral therapist based in Brooklyn. She has worked with thousands of families for more than 15 years. For more on her, visit www.BehaviorAndBeyond.net.



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GOOD SENSE EATING

CHRISTINE M. PALUMBO, RD

Time to slim down Santa?

Chances are your children put out the same snacks for Santa that you did when you were their age. Perhaps you left cookies and milk or similar types of goodies. But is it time to leave Kris Kringle a snack that aligns with the healthful eating habits you foster in your children at other times of the year?

Even the kids know that Santa and Mrs. Claus could lose a few pounds. After all, in “The Night Before Christmas,” he’s described as being “chubby and plump” and having “a broad face and a little round belly that shook when he laughed, like a bowl full of jelly.”

Along with obesity, Saint Nick may be at risk for sleep apnea, heart disease, stroke, cancer, and type 2 diabetes. Uh oh.

Children can help the jolly old elf be healthier and learn good eating habits by leaving him — and his reindeer — a more nutritious snack on Christmas Eve. Or is that going too far?

A fan of providing Santa some options on Christmas Eve is registered dietitian nutritionist Christy Wilson.

“I think Santa enjoys the sweets,”

she said. “But it’s probably a good idea to give him a little variety.”

She says it’s perfectly fine to leave some cookies and a cup of milk for Santa plus a few oats or carrots for the reindeer.

“They have a long night, so they need keep up their energy,” said Wilson.

Consider changing the tradition and providing something festive, yet nourishing for Santa, who has a long night ahead of him. On Christmas Eve when you put out snacks for Father Christmas, why not give him a high-energy snack so he has the stamina to travel ’round the world — without contributing to his round belly?

Twelve better-for-Santa snacks:

- Whole-wheat pita bread wedges and hummus.
- Cranberry muffins.
- Dark chocolate-dipped strawberries.
- Spiced pecans.
- Whole-wheat biscotti.
- Roasted butternut squash wedges.



Almond cocoa-cherry chia bites

Serving: 1 bite

Recipe makes: 35 one-inch sized bites

Total Time: 20 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 ½ cup rolled oats (sometimes labeled as Old Fashioned Oats)
- ½ cup almonds, roughly chopped
- 2 tbsp. unsweetened shredded coconut
- 1 tbsp. chia seeds
- ¼ cup 72 percent cocoa dark chocolate, roughly chopped into small pieces
- ½ cup dried cherries, roughly chopped
- 1/3 cup honey
- 2/3 cup almond butter



DIRECTIONS: In a large mixing bowl, add first six ingredients into the bowl (oats to cherries). Stir all ingredients together until combined. Add honey and almond butter to bowl, and mix all ingredients together until

combined. Place mixture into the refrigerator for about 10 minutes, as this will allow it to harden and make it easier work with. Shape mixture into one-inch, round balls and place on a platter or cookie sheet. Serve immediately or refrigerate in an airtight container up to five days. You can also freeze and take out as needed.

NUTRITION FACTS: 80 calories, 9 g carbohydrates (4 g sugar), 2 g protein, 4.5 g fat (1 g saturated), 0 cholesterol, 2 g fiber, 2 percent DV vitamin A, 2 percent DV calcium, 4 percent DV iron.

Recipe used with permission from Christy Wilson Nutrition.

- Homemade cereal-based party mix.
- Cheese and crackers.
- Seedless black grapes, cheese wedges, and French bread rounds.
- Dried figs dipped in chocolate.
- Hot cocoa in an insulated mug.
- Hot spiced cider.

Wilson, who has a daughter who still believes in Santa, says last year her family put out some choices.

“We left him a few homemade cookies and something warm to drink along with a few carrots for the reindeer. It’s good for us and for Santa.”

Christine Palumbo is a Naperville-registered dietitian nutritionist who swears by a mug of homemade hot chocolate with a candy cane stirrer for Santa. Find her at Christine Palumbo Nutrition on Facebook, @PalumboRD on Twitter, or ChristinePalumbo.com.



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TIPS FOR FEEDING KIDS

CHEF JOANNA DEVITA



Everyday meals in the holiday season

We all love a good holiday party. It is fun to indulge in all the traditional foods of the season and share these rich creations with friends and family. I always partake in these party favorites, but try to create balanced meals that are packed with nutrition on days when I am not at a party.

With a bit of weekend cooking, shopping, and planning, I can make sure that I have the staples I need on hand to create a healthful and wholesome meal in minutes. Keep your pantry stocked, so you can enjoy the holiday season!

Make a big batch of broth

A bubbling pot of soup on weekends was a constant in my house growing up. A hot bowl of soup dur-

ing the cold, dark months not only tastes and feels great, but is good for us, too!

I like to make a big batch of broth (recipe below) and portion it into pint containers. I freeze these containers, and then pull them out any time I feel like making a quick soup. You can add boiled tortellini and Parmesan cheese or puree with some roasted butternut squash. However you use your broth, you will have a restorative, healthful meal for the whole family.

Stock up on quick-cooking grains

Grains such as bulgur and pearled barley cook quickly and make the base of a great meal. Add lemon juice, chopped parsley, chopped tomatoes, and lots of olive oil to hydrated bulgur wheat for a tabbouleh salad.

Boil pearled barley with mushrooms and beef broth for a hearty beef and barley soup. The more stocked you are during those busy weeknights, the more likely you are to create something healthy!

Utilize party leftovers

Get creative with your party leftovers. Make potato cakes with leftover mashed potatoes by adding an egg and some extra seasoning to cold mashed potatoes. Form into small patties using your hands. Heat some oil in a pan until shimmering and brown the

cakes for about three minutes on either side. Finish the cakes in the oven until the centers are hot. Serve with a piece of seared fish and a bright salad for fun dinner on a dreary night.

It's citrus season, take advantage

Citrus fruits are at their best in the winter months. Try fun varieties of citrus such as blood oranges and pomelos. Cut segments of different citrus fruits and make a citrus salad. You can even invest in a citrus juicer and have the kids do the juicing!

Try making your favorite takeout at home

Steam some sushi rice and add seasoned rice wine vinegar. Cut nori seaweed into sushi wrappers. Cut up cucumbers, carrots, avocados, cooked shrimp, raw sushi-grade tuna or whatever else your family may like in sushi. Keep a bowl of hot acidulated water nearby to wet your hands.

Experiment with different rolls and shapes. It won't come out perfect, but the family will take pride in creating their own customized meal!

Joanna DeVita, executive chef at Léman Manhattan Preparatory School, is the mother of two children and loves nothing more than spending time with them outdoors and sharing her love and respect for nature, good ingredients, and the joy of cooking with her family.

Basic roasted chicken stock

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 chicken carcass (Can substitute beef or veal bones)
- 1 large onion
- 1 carrot
- 1 celery stalk
- 1 bay leaf
- 10 peppercorns
- 2 parsley stems

DIRECTIONS: Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

Roast the chicken with the vegetables in the oven until well browned. Place all ingredients in stockpot and add water just to cover. Bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer. Simmer on low for 4–12 hours. A Crockpot works very well for overnight simmering. Strain.

Serve immediately or cool and store for later.

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FABULYSS FINDS

LYSS STERN

Make your holiday season FabuLyss

It's the most FabuLyss, wonderful time of the year in New York — our magical wonderland filled with the best of the best! Hopefully we will get some snow in Central Park this month and the kids can go out and sled, make snow angels, and, of course, build a snowman or two. There are many wonderful family events and happenings to explore this month all around the city.

Did you purchase your tickets yet to see the "Radio City Christmas Spectacular"? This is always a family favorite of ours.

My boys are already asking when they can go ice skating and have DeLysscious hot chocolate. We love ice-skating at the Bryant Park Winter Village Rink and the Standard Hotel rink in the Meatpacking district.

I will be taking my boys to see "School Of Rock" musical at the Winter Garden Theatre over the break. "Elf" will be at Madison Square Garden throughout the month of December.

Did you know that you can have tea with Santa? The Plaza Hotel has a yummy tea at the Eloise at the Plaza shop. You can have tea sandwiches, desserts, story time, and, of course, photos with Santa.

We love the magical holiday windows at all of the big department stores. I cannot wait to see the beautiful Bergdorf Goodman windows, and I know my boys just love the holiday windows at Bloomingdales.

If you and your husband are looking for a night out during the holidays, so you can see a show, take a

selfie in front of the Christmas tree at Rockefeller Center, or have a wonderful meal, make sure to check out Sitterycity's new app Hello Chime (www.hellochime.com). Babysitters on demand will engage and play with your children.

Visit the FabuLyss Chord Club with the kids over winter break. They can take a DJ class, a music lesson, or record a song. Your kids will never want to leave this beautiful, new, state-of-the-art recording studio. Parents can also enjoy this facility (www.thechordclub.com).

Wishing everyone a happy and healthy new year! Hug your loved ones closely and enjoy the beautiful holiday season!

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

DeLysscious Gingerbread Recipe

via Food Network.com

<http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/gingerbread-house-recipe.html>

INGREDIENTS:

1/2 cup (1 stick) butter, at room temperature
 1/2 cup dark brown sugar
 1/4 cup light molasses or dark corn syrup
 1 tablespoon cinnamon
 1 tablespoon ground ginger
 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cloves
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 2 cups all-purpose flour
 2 tablespoons water
 For assemblage and decoration:
 Melted white chocolate or Royal Icing (recipe follows)
 Gumdrops, licorice, and peppermints, as desired

ROYAL ICING:

1 pound (3-3/4 cups) powdered sugar, sifted if lumpy
 1 to 2 large egg whites, or substitute 4 teaspoons packaged egg whites and 1/4 cup water
 1 teaspoon almond extract, vanilla or lemon juice

DIRECTIONS:

Gingerbread House:

In a large mixing bowl, cream the butter, brown sugar, molasses, cinnamon, ginger, cloves, and baking soda together until the mixture is smooth. Blend in the flour and water to make a stiff dough. Chill at least 30 minutes or until firm.

Preheat oven to 375-degrees Fahrenheit.

Cut out the following paper patterns for the gingerbread house template: two rectangles, 3-by-5 inches, to make the front and back of the house; two rectangles, 3-by-5 1/2 inches for the roof; two pieces for the ends of the house, 3 inches wide at the base, 3 inches to the roof line, and slanted to a peak 5 1/2 inches from the bottom; four smaller rectangles, 1 1/2-by-1 inch for the roof and sides of the entryway; and one piece, 2 inches wide at the base, 1 1/2 inches to the roof line, and slanted to a peak 2 1/2 inches from the bottom for the front of the entryway.



Roll gingerbread dough out to edges on a large, rimless cookie sheet. Place paper patterns onto the rolled out dough. With a sharp, straight-edged knife, cut around each of the pieces, but leave pieces in place.

Bake at 375-degrees Fahrenheit for about 15 minutes until dough feels firm.

Place patterns on top of the gingerbread again and trim shapes, cutting edges with a straight-edged sharp knife. Leave to cool on baking sheet.

Place royal icing into pastry bag with a writing tip and press out to decorate individual parts of house, piping on decorations, windows, door, etc., as desired. Let dry until hardened.

Glue sides, front and back of house together at corners using royal icing. Place an object against the pieces to prop up until icing is dry. (It only takes a few minutes.)

Glue the two roof pieces to the pitched roofline of the house. Then, similarly, glue the sides and roof of the entryway together with icing. Attach the entryway to the front of the house.

Continue decorating the house, gluing on gumdrops, licorice, and peppermints, as desired.

Royal Icing:

Mix all of the ingredients together using an electric hand mixer, until the icing is smooth and thin enough to be pressed through a pastry bag with a writing tip. Add more lemon juice, if necessary.

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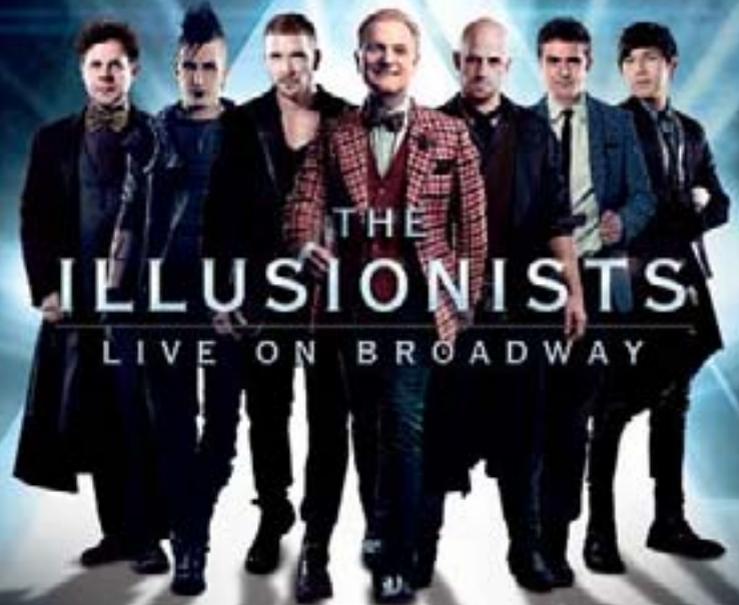
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FAMILY HEALTH

DR. PRAMOD NARULA, MD
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How to treat your kid's kitchen burn

This past Thanksgiving, I was in the kitchen cooking for our family dinner. The house was full of people, there were many pots on the stove, and the oven was hot. In the midst of the chaos, my 6-year-old daughter knocked against a saucepan on the stove and hot liquid splashed and scalded her arm. My mother said to put butter on the burn, my sister handed me ice cubes, and my mother-in-law told me to wrap it in a wet towel right away. It was overwhelming! I wound up doing what everyone told me to do at once, but what should I have done? What is the correct way to treat a burn?

Burns and scalds can happen in a second, even under the most attentive parent's watch. But I am glad you asked this question because treating a burn is definitely the subject of many an ill-informed — and potentially harmful — “old wives’ tales.”

As with most accidents, an ounce of prevention can go a long way towards preventing burns in the kitchen. Enforce a three-foot (or as much space as your kitchen area allows) “safe zone” around the oven and range when you are cooking. When you have pots on the stove, be sure that the handles face inwards so that a child cannot pull them off. Never hold a baby while you are stirring hot items on the stove or taking dishes out of the oven or microwave. When in use, the kitchen should be a “no-play zone,” and if children must be in the kitchen, they should stay away from any hot appliances.

But accidents can still happen. When a burn occurs, run cold water over the area immediately — submerging the skin in the water, if possible. Never apply butter, powder, or ice to the burn, as they may aggravate it. Keep the burn area under cold water for five to 20 minutes. That may seem like an impossibly long time for a baby or toddler; however, it will significantly reduce the subsequent pain. During that time,



give the appropriate dose of acetaminophen, or if the child is older than 6 months, ibuprofen, if needed. Then gently pat the area dry with a clean, cotton towel and assess the burn.

Burns are classified into three degrees that indicate their severity:

First-degree: This is the mildest of burns; the skin is red and tender. While there may be slight swelling, there is no blistering.

Second-degree: This is often the most painful type of burn; the skin is red with blisters. *Never* break the skin of a blister, as this invites bacteria and infection.

Third-degree: This is the most

serious type of burn; the skin appears dry and can look white, waxy, or charred. There may be little or no pain at first because of nerve damage.

If the burn is first-degree, wrap the burn area with sterile gauze and call your physician to see if further action is necessary. If blisters appear or if you suspect the burn is third-degree, wrap the burn in sterile gauze and immediately take the child to the nearest emergency room. If you are unsure of the next step, call your pediatrician. Burns can be serious, but with the right information, your next holiday should be worry free.



HEALTHY LIVING

DANIELLE SULLIVAN

Foods to keep away from the family dog

The holidays are hectic. The shopping, the dinners, the packed living rooms and the variety of foods available, and the general sheer chaos of it all are a recipe for our pets to consume things they should not. Little fingers passing treats under the table and pups that help themselves to whatever drops to the floor can make your dog sick to her stomach, or worse.

The following foods, which can cause afflictions in dogs, ranging from mild tummy distress to death, are seemingly innocent

and mild foods that might easily be considered harmless. This makes it all the more important that these foods stay on your radar.

Here are eight foods that dogs should not eat:

Chocolate

Luckily, many of us already know that chocolate is highly toxic for dogs. It's the chemical theobromine that causes the distress. All types of chocolate are harmful. The worst offenders are dark chocolate, unsweetened baking chocolate, and chocolate mulch.

Coffee

Ok, so what dog is gonna drink coffee? Well, that would be our lab, Django. If you have a coffee cup, she will try to get in your lap and lick it every time. Large consumptions of any caffeine (including those in energy drinks, sodas, cocoa, and even some medications) can cause death. And there is no antidote for caffeine overdose.

Grapes

Seemingly harmless, grapes and raisins can cause kidney failure. Even a small amount can make dogs sick. Repeated vomiting is a telltale sign.

Salt

Just like in humans, too much salt can cause heart, kidney, and liver problems in dogs. Dogs do not need additional salt added to their diet if they are consuming a nutritious dog food, which will already have a small amount of sodium included.

If your dog gets into a bag of chips or another salty snack, it's OK, and there is no need to panic. Just replenish your dog's water bowl to ensure that she has enough water to flush out the excess sodium. A dog would have to ingest a great amount of salt to get sodium iron poisoning.

Symptoms include excessive

drinking, vomiting, and diarrhea. Too much sodium on a regular basis can also throw off a dog's electrolyte balance.

Candy and gum

...but probably not why you think. Any foods sweetened with xylitol can be damaging. Xylitol causes a dog's blood sugar to drop and might also cause liver failure. As a result, many low-fat, diet snacks are off limits for dogs!

Macadamia nuts

This seemingly natural food can be fatal to dogs. Just a few can make them sick, and if they eat cookies with chocolate in them, that ups the chance of the consumption being fatal.

Onions and garlic

A little won't do any long-term damage, but prolonged consumption of onions and garlic breaks down a dog's red blood cells, which can lead to anemia.

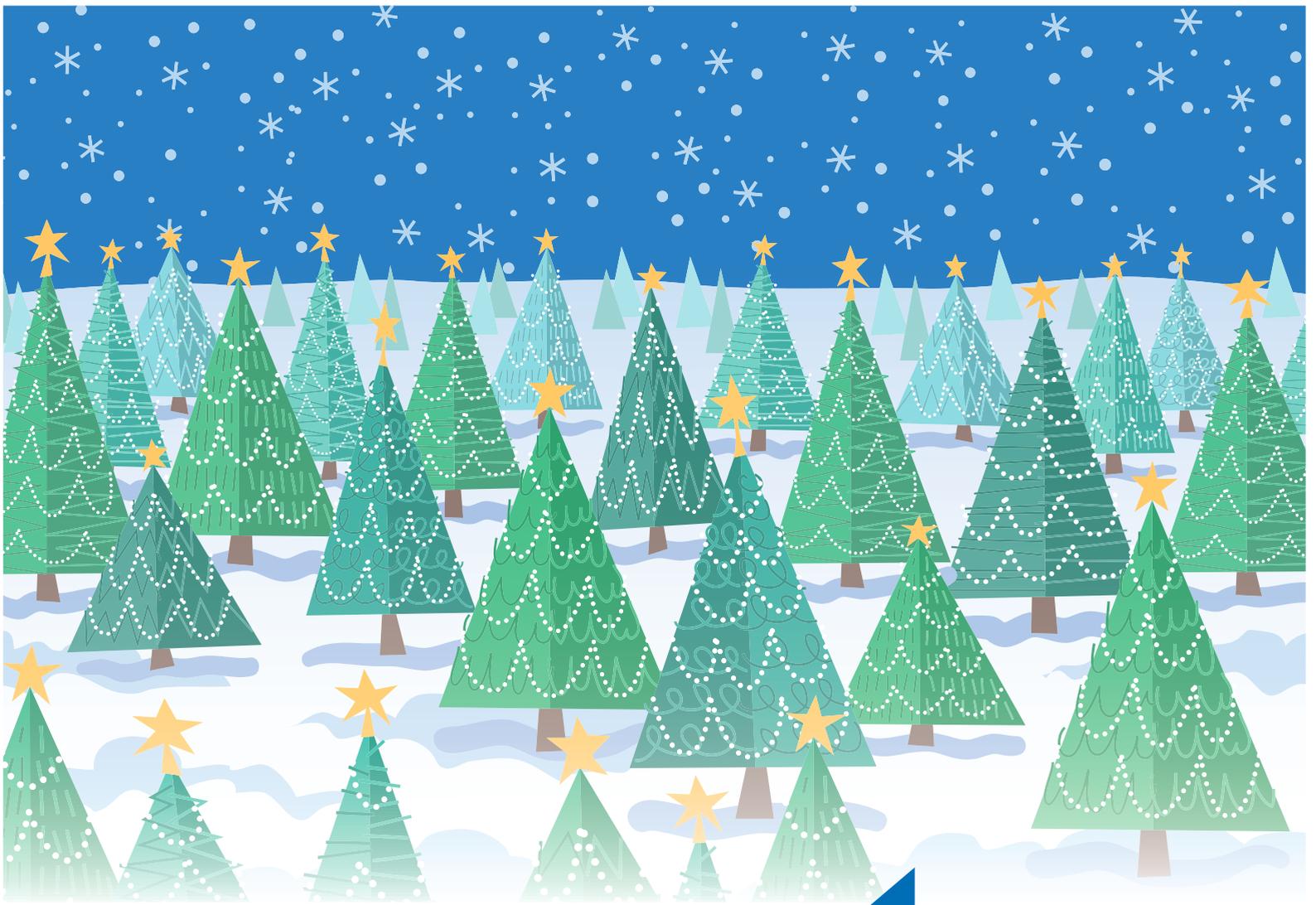
Yeast dough

Just like in an oven, if it ends up in a dog's tummy, it will rise and expand, causing your dog's belly to swell — and experience a lot of pain. Oddly enough, when the yeast ferments the dough, it produces alcohol, which might also cause alcohol poisoning.

All dog owners want to safeguard their dog's health, and accidental ingestion of harmful foods often occurs as an oversight. If your dog starts experiencing vomiting, diarrhea, panting, sluggishness, or just doesn't seem right, please call your vet. It's also a good idea to keep the phone number of your local, 24-hour emergency vet in a handy place in your home.

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.





Seeing art in the holidays

BY CAROLYN WATERBURY-TIEMAN

My office window looks out over the neighborhood park. I have logged hundreds of miles in laps around that park over the past 20 years, and yet, there is something magical about walking through it during the first snow of the season.

I savor the quiet stillness created

by the gently drifting flakes. No other form of precipitation creates this effect. Only snow. My senses are heightened. Sounds are crisper. I hear the flakes falling on the dry, frozen leaves. Images are clearer. Every tree and branch, the detail of every house, is outlined. Edges are softened. I can actually smell and taste the cold. As part of the landscape in nature's painting, I am merely a figure on the master art-

ist's vast canvas.

I have a habit of viewing everything in terms of relationships and the arts. Perhaps it is an occupational hazard of my professional training in the former and my passion for the latter. Or it may be because it is through relationships and the arts that we communicate who we are, what we believe, what we value, what we need, want, desire, and who we want to become. Then again, it might be the result of my deep conviction that both relationships and the arts are essential to our survival.

As we approach the celebrations taking place over the next couple of months, with all of the associated sights, sounds, scents, flavors, and feelings, I find myself wondering, what would the holidays be without the arts? Would there even be holidays without the arts?

Holidays are an outgrowth of our beliefs, but how would we express and perpetuate those beliefs without the arts? Would it be possible without the oral tradition of

Both relationships and the arts are essential to our survival.

storytelling or the written word? Can you even imagine celebrating without music? How would we know that something special is happening without visual symbols and cues? What about the dances, the dramas, the preparation and presentation of food? I cannot think of a single aspect of the holidays that is not steeped in the arts.

Through the arts, we convey what is being celebrated and why. The arts provide an outward expression of our beliefs and values. It is through our interactions, in relationship to one another, that these outward expressions gain meaning and significance.

The arts allow us to define and perpetuate our identity. Sue Monk Kidd wrote that, "Stories have to be told or they die, and when they die, we can't remember who we are or why we're here." The arts communicate our stories through literature, music, dance, theatre, culinary, and visual art. They are integral to our holiday celebrations.

Consider what the holiday you celebrate means to you. Recall your earliest memories of this holiday. What traditions did your family practice? What was their significance? How did you know? What feelings were inspired by the celebration? What beliefs were preserved? How do those beliefs impact you daily? How did participating in this holiday affect the person you have become?

Explore how the arts allow you to express the meaning of this holiday. Look around your home. What symbols are displayed? What stories are told? What books or passages are read? Will you listen to music composed for this holiday? Will you attend dance or dramatic performances that are specific to this holiday? Are there special dishes that will be prepared? How would your experience of this holiday change without these artistic elements?

Determine whether or not you are effectively communicating the meaning through your celebration. Do your children know what you are celebrating and why?

Ask them. If they are unsure

or confused, explain the significance of this holiday. Identify the symbols and what they represent. Clarify the beliefs underlying your celebration. Children of all ages enjoy the telling, and over the years, will come to understand more with each retelling. Be aware of how the arts help make this holiday come to life for your children.

We are in the midst of a season intended to inspire us to reaffirm our beliefs, become improved versions of our former selves, honor and strengthen our significant relationships, and dedicate ourselves to making a meaningful contribution in whatever corner of the world we reside. Each of us is endowed with the power to do these things. But we have to recognize and choose to do so. Like Scrooge, we are challenged to wake up and discover that human-kind is our business.

Every day we have chances to make real, beneficial, lasting differences in the lives of others in both discreet and obvious ways. But first, we have to notice. We have to be paying attention. Through the arts and in our relationships, we are challenged to use all of our senses to fully appreciate and participate in life.

We must:

- Look closely
- Smell intently
- Taste discerningly
- Listen carefully
- Feel deeply

So that we can:

- Think clearly
- Speak thoughtfully
- Act wisely
- Touch gently
- Love graciously
- Live purposefully

Whatever holiday you observe, may love, peace, and joy be at the center of your celebration and last throughout the coming year.

Carolyn Waterbury-Tieman is a resident of Lexington, Kentucky. She has degrees in Child Development, Family Studies, and Marriage and Family Therapy. Waterbury-Tieman has been married for 29 years and has two sons, ages 24 and 14. She spent 15 years in various agencies and clinics as a family therapist and parent educator and has written extensively on the topic of parenting. After six years as Arts Facilitator for the School for the Creative and Performing Arts, she chose to return to her favorite place of employment – home. To contact her, please e-mail parent4life@yahoo.com.

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TEETH TIPS

**DR. LAVANYA
VENKATESWARAN**
Pediatric Dentist

Bottle weaning and your baby's teeth

Baby bottles are great. They allow your baby to drink milk or formula in a manner that mimics natural feeding. They are easy to take on the go, and easy for your baby to use. However, as your baby approaches her first birthday, it's no longer the best option for your soon-to-be toddler. By age 1, she usually has at least one or two teeth, and it's a good idea to wean her off of the bottle.

There are many reasons why it's important to transition your baby off of the bottle. First, continued use of the bottle once your baby starts getting her first teeth can lead to dental decay, depending on how and when she uses the bottle.

Secondly, prolonged use of the bottle can lead to malposition of the teeth, leading to an open bite. It can also lead to certain speech issues, such as a lisp.

Finally, as your baby grows, you want her to get more of her daily calories from solids versus milk. Prolonged use of the bottle can sometimes lead to a toddler being a picky

eater or refusing solids in favor of milk.

So, let's go over some healthy dental habits to begin as your baby turns 1, including some strategies to wean her off of the bottle.

Once your baby's teeth start to erupt, start brushing them with a soft, infant toothbrush. You can find one at any local pharmacy or drugstore, and you can use a very minimal amount of fluoride toothpaste. Since your baby likely won't be able to rinse and spit at this point, I suggest lying your baby down in your lap to brush her teeth. You can brush one or two teeth at a time, and then wipe the paste off with a wet gauze or washcloth as you go. This prevents her from swallowing the toothpaste.

If your baby drinks milk at bedtime, make sure to brush her teeth after she finishes her milk. When a baby goes to sleep drinking milk, it puts her at high risk for dental decay due to the posture she uses while drinking from the bottle — it causes a continuous pooling of milk over her front teeth. When your baby falls asleep without brushing her teeth, the milk residue left behind breaks down into carbohydrates that bacteria thrive on, leading to dental decay. This phenomenon is commonly known as “baby bottle tooth decay.” For many babies, it's a comforting practice to go to sleep while drinking milk, so it can be difficult to break the habit. That's why transitioning her away from the bottle before her teeth erupt — or soon after — is helpful. An ideal age to start is around 8 months.

Introduce a straw with her cup of water or milk a few times a day. Demonstrate to your baby how to drink from the straw and keep your baby practicing. She will keep watching you and trying on her own, and soon learn how to use the straw.

I usually don't recommend trying a sippy cup spout, because it's another thing that you have to wean your baby off of later. Sippy cups can have adverse effects on your baby's teeth and speech very similar to the

bottle, because of the way the tongue gets positioned while sucking on the tip. My suggestion is to go straight to the straw.

Some bottle companies also provide an adapter kit that allows you to keep using the same bottle but with a straw tip. This way, your baby still feels as though she has her bottle, but it has an age-appropriate tip. Using a straw keeps your baby upright as she drinks, making it harder to fall asleep drinking her milk. It's easier to enact a routine of brushing after drinking milk. Once she becomes comfortable with the straw, you can even move onto a regular cup with a free-standing straw, or just a plain cup.

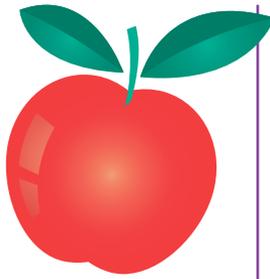
If your baby has teeth and has been falling asleep drinking milk from a bottle, it's a good idea to have her seen by a pediatric dentist to rule out dental decay. (In general, for all babies, it's recommended by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry that the first dental checkup is completed by age 1 or soon after the eruption of the first tooth.)

When you decide to wean your baby off of the bottle, remember to stay consistent. As soon as your baby gets the hang of using a straw, stop using bottles completely. Otherwise, some babies tend to continue using a bottle when they know it's available to them, and it gets harder to give up as they get older.

And if you need another reason to wean baby off the bottle — transitioning to a straw means no more bottle washing and sterilizing for you, and more time playing with your beautiful little one!

Dr. Lavanya Venkateswaran is a board-certified pediatric dentist. She practices downtown at Tribeca Smiles as well as uptown at Park Ave Smile. She is an assistant professor of Clinical Dentistry at Columbia University Medical Center and is an attending dentist in the department of Pediatric Dentistry. She spends her time enjoying New York City with her husband and baby boy, and she is an avid runner and a student of Indian classical dance and music.





DEAR TEACHER

PEGGY GISLER AND
MARGE EBERTS

How to boost spirits after that lousy day

Dear teacher,

How do you boost children's spirits when they are feeling low because something bad happened at school?

Dear parent,

You want to avoid pooh-poohing what happened at school by saying things like, "That was nothing." The child obviously thought that it was a big deal at the time. At the same time, avoid blaming the child by asking, "What did you do or say that caused the teacher or another student to upset you?" If you do, it may stop the child from communicating with you in the future.

The best approach is to let your child vent. You can agree with the child that what happened was upsetting to him. Quite often, this is sufficient to calm the child. At this point, you can ask the child to consider what he might do in the future when faced with a similar situation. Together, you can discuss the his ideas. Plus, you can build the his confidence by bringing up that he has handled many unpleasant situations successfully in the past.

Finally, if a situation is truly a serious one that is likely to continue, like bullying or a barrage of criticism from a teacher, it is time to step in and ask the teacher for help.

Resolutions to improve communication with children and teachers

Dear parents,

One of the best ways to help your children succeed in school is to have good communication with them and their teachers. Obviously, the more you know about what your children are doing at school, the easier it will be to help them to do their best. In addition, you will be able to praise them for their very real accomplishments, which makes for a win-win situation.

Every year at this time, we make suggestions for New Year's resolutions that can help parents do things to make their children be even more



successful at school. Here are some recommendations that will help you have great communication with your children and their teachers:

Resolutions to improve communication with your children:

- Resolve to turn off the television and all other electronic devices as much as possible when you are with your children. This will help everyone focus on what is being said. This is especially important at meal time.

- Resolve to look at your children when you are talking to them. The secret of good communication lies in eye contact between both speaker and listener.

- Resolve to wait until your children have finished speaking before chiming in with what you have to say.

- Resolve to ask open-ended questions to your children. Questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" decidedly limit communication.

- Resolve to set up a message board to enable everyone to learn what other members of the family are doing. Good communication is not just verbal communication, but also written communication.

- Resolve to avoid over-correcting your child. A barrage of constant

correction turns children away from listening to what their parents have to say.

- Resolve to praise your children for their good work at school. Compliments enhance communication.

- Resolve to be a good model in speaking to your children. Using correct grammar and words will enhance their communication skills.

Resolutions to improve communications with your children's teachers:

- Resolve to be positive and courteous. Good manners always open up the lines of communication.

- Resolve to attend all parent and teacher conferences. This is your best opportunity to learn what your children are doing in school.

- Resolve to be respectful of a teacher's time. The best communication occurs when it is convenient for the teacher to talk to you.

- Resolve to keep the lines of communication open all year. Read all notes and e-mails that come from teachers, and check the teachers' and school's websites frequently.

- Resolve to reply as soon as possible to all teachers' notes and e-mails. This keeps communication going back and forth in a timely manner.

- Resolve to limit your notes and e-mails to teachers to serious concerns. Overwhelming the teachers with trivial concerns can close the door to a teacher communicating with you.

- Resolve to communicate with teachers to keep them informed of significant changes in your children's lives. It helps teachers to better understand your children's behavior.

- Resolve to meet your children's teachers. Face-to-face meetings contribute to better communication.

Parents should send questions and comments to dearteacher@dearteacher.com or ask them on the columnists' website at www.dearteacher.com.

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GROWING UP ONLINE

CAROLYN JABS

When Google isn't the best search engine

Searching online is a basic skill that every adult — and child — needs to master. Everything you might want to know — and some things that are pretty dubious — can be found online, but you have to be able to locate what you need when you need it. Google, of course, dominates the field so completely that “googling” is synonymous with searching.

That dominance worries some people, including the Federal Trade Commission, whose staffers prepared an internal report about how Google search favors Google services over services provided by competitors. Google also depends upon a proprietary algorithm — set of rules about searching. Google shares some of what it is doing behind the scenes on its own website (search for “how search works” on the Google website). Still, critics point out that there are inevitably assumptions and biases into the search process.

Some of these assumptions work to the advantage of parents. You really don't want adult material to show up even if your child searches for an innocent word that has a double meaning. On the other hand, Google also makes assumptions about what information is reliable based in part on how often other sites link to it. This can make popular sites seem more reputable than they really are.

Google is also vulnerable to Search Engine Optimization, an entire industry built around trying to get material from clients to show up on the first page of a Google search. People who use Search Engine Optimization are skilled with keywords, meta tags, and other identifiers that Google uses to decide which of all the millions of websites will be most relevant to you after a specific search.

Finally, Google customizes search results based on what you've searched for in the past. That means there's nothing “objective” about Google results. You and your neighbor can search for the same term but come up with different results if previous searches show that you have



different opinions and preferences.

None of this means that families should abandon Google or the many websites where search is powered by Google. At the same time, it's good to be aware of alternatives that may be preferable under specific circumstances:

When children are young. Elementary-age children who are just beginning to search are likely to be confused and overwhelmed by what they find on Google. Kidclicks.org produces a limited number of results, vetted by librarians. Each item is ranked by reading level, so it's easier to pinpoint the material that will be useful to a child who is trying to master the intricacies of tornados or dinosaurs.

When you want a different spin. The Bing.com search engine, designed by Microsoft, uses its own proprietary algorithms so the results are a little different. Comparing the harvest on Bing and Google can be illuminating, especially for controversial topics. Bing also sweetens the pot with a rewards program that allows users to earn points that can be redeemed on websites like Amazon and Fandango.

When you want privacy. Google keeps track of searches, so its database includes information about everything from your health issues to your purchasing preferences. If you'd

rather keep your search history private, you can use duckduckgo.com or ixquick.com. Both websites promise that they won't record anything about you or your searches.

When you want reliable health information. Looking for health information on Google can be contradictory and even scary. For the kind of research-based information you'd get from your family physician, turn to curated medical sites like Medline Plus (nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus) which is managed by the National Library of Medicine, or Kidshealth.org, which has been providing family-friendly health information for more than 20 years.

When you want context. Yippy.com collects information from a variety of other search engines and quickly files what it finds into folders that appear on the left-hand side of the screen. Sometimes seeing sub-categories for your topic makes it easier to zero in on the information you need.

When you want the human touch. Dmoz.org is a directory of the web, developed and maintained by an enormous network of volunteers. It won't return millions of results, but each site has been reviewed by a person instead of a robot.

No matter what search engine you or your kids use, you'll get better results if you follow a few simple rules: put words that go together in quotes. Link words that are equally important with “and.” Use a plus sign (+) to indicate words that are crucial to your search and a minus sign (-) to rule out words that aren't relevant.

Most of all, teach your kids that what they find online is only as good as its source. Kids who can think critically as they search will have a huge advantage in a world awash in information.

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.

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DIVORCE & SEPARATION

LEE CHABIN, ESQ.

A powerful message for divorcing parents

“In custody battles ... children lose.”

So begins the trailer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv-DaOkQP7o>) for “Talk to Strangers,” a film that “tells the story of a sister and her younger brother struggling to navigate the child custody evaluation process typically used in family courts throughout the United States,” according to the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers.

The trailer starts with a shot of a courthouse in winter. A few seconds later, there is another shot of the courthouse, with a statue of parents sitting next to each other in the foreground. Each parent has an arm around the other, and together they hold their young child; they appear to be a loving couple not at all bothered by the snow on the ground.

Next, we are in the courthouse, observing parents whose words, tone of voice, and body language tell us that they are anything but together.

Powerfully depicting the ordeal from the point of view of the children, “Talk to Strangers,” written and directed by Larry Sarezky, is unique and serves as a cautionary message to parents and lawyers on the brink of traumatic child custody battles.

Accompanying the film is a guide written by Sarezky with contributions from the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers, a prominent organization, to help parents avoid those battles and other high-conflict divorces.

“This film is undeniably moving and offers an invaluable portrayal of the ways in which a custody battle directly impacts children who are caught in the middle,” said James T. McLaren, president of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers. “It is truly one of the most powerful tools I have seen that can encourage parents and professionals to pause and more thoughtfully consider how custody battles affect children.”

The Academy says professionals in the United States and abroad are already using the film, as are cer-



tain public and private institutions. It is being screened by “law schools nationwide,” which offers the hope that matrimonial and family lawyers will be more aware of and sensitive to the emotional damage that often result from custody battles.

Additionally, the film “is scheduled to be in service throughout the Massachusetts family court system at the beginning of next year,” said McLaren.

The more people who are exposed to the movie’s message, the better.

Some parents who think — or who try to convince themselves — that fighting it out in court won’t have much of an impact on their kids may well make different choices after watching this 25-minute film.

Similarly, a lawyer who has represented one parent against another in nasty child-custody cases, never having raised the issue of the harm that children may suffer due to these battles, may have a harder time ignoring the question after seeing the film.

Imagine how many more parents would think twice, and then a third time, before deciding to litigate custody questions, if lots of other parents and the lawyer at a consultation

for the divorce were to tell them, “a custody battle is probably going to cause your children harm; and, it wouldn’t be pleasant for you either. Some people have to engage in a bruising court fight; but, maybe you’re not one of them. What about trying a different approach to begin with? If it doesn’t work, you can litigate it then.”

I’ve only seen the trailer for “Talk to Strangers,” and cannot fairly critique the film, but if its hugely important message resonates with parents and others, it will be a big success.

If Sarezky’s efforts interest you, you may want to read my blog post titled “Considering a custody battle? Ask yourself — and your spouse or partner — the following” at <http://bit.ly/1QfSFId>.

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.



A LETTER FROM COLLEGE

AGLAIA HO

Conquering the fear of missing out

FOMO — an acronym for “fear of missing out” — is not only the latest addition in a teenager’s arsenal of slang, but an indicator of a lifestyle trend. It reflects young people’s obsessive desire to stay in the loop, though not exactly in a good *carpe-diem-sort-of-way*. Instead, this term speaks to our deepest worries that we will become irrelevant or lose out if we pass on any opportunity. For teenage students treading fragile ground in an increasingly competitive and high-pressure world, a fear of missing out can be their worst enemy — and divert attention away from what is truly important.

Generally, the term is used to describe anxiety of missing out on social engagements or activities. Teens often feel pressured to accept any invitation to a social gathering regardless of time constraints or their priorities. They often feel uncomfortable saying “no” because they fear that they will regret the decision in the future, and they worry about others passing judgment on the quality of their social lives.

The avid use of social media has only exacerbated the problem, providing an extra outlet for connecting and sharing. I am invited to quite a few events on Facebook and definitely more than I can attend. Declining

is often difficult, but what is harder is scrolling through my Facebook feed and seeing all the good times my friends are having without me. It can be disheartening and also feed my deepest social insecurities.

In the high school and college world, FOMO turns into a different, intrusive monster, wagging its ugly head into the world of academics and career preparation. Teenagers are often so stressed out about their futures that they worry constantly about the decisions they make and the consequences. Despite their overbooked schedules, they will cram in more extracurricular activities, sports, information sessions, and internships because they are terrified of losing a competitive edge. One notable example would be the review sessions my professors often hold before big exams. The auditorium is completely packed with students, but only a few people ever raise questions. Everyone else is there because they worry about missing out on any important tips or hints the professor might provide.

Yet, trying to do it all for the sake of FOMO clearly does seem a bit unnecessary and inefficient. When we exhaust all of our energy trying to keep up with all the social events and

academic opportunities around us, we wind up missing more than we realize. When we spend our time dwelling on the fun we could have had with our friends, we could be actively making more memories or enjoy the moments we do have. There is no point living a life of regrets.

We also waste a lot of time when we try to do it all. The time spent at all of those review sessions waiting through the entire lecture for one piece of useful information could have been better spent studying independently and fully grasping the material. If we do miss that one piece of information, that is okay. What is missed is missed. Focus on what you can do in the future instead.

One way to tackle FOMO is to find creative alternatives that allow you to stay in the loop and do what you want without having to waste time. When it comes to social engagements, suggest alternative dates that might work better with your schedule. Also, consider swinging by a party for a half hour and then leaving to accomplish your other goals. In school, divide and conquer those information and review sessions with your friends. Ask friends to fill you in on a study abroad information session, while you provide notes and tips from a review session.

Nevertheless, the real trick to fighting this fear is realizing that life is neither a competition nor about comparisons. Know your own ability and learn to prioritize what is really important. Do not be afraid to turn down invitations when you have to — even if everyone else is going. Your self-worth and social relationships are more than one or two Facebook events. Be careful with your load and do not be afraid to lighten it when you have to. Our life is what we make it, and should never be measured by the yardstick of others.

Aglaia Ho is a junior at Williams College and a native New Yorker. She also writes for her own blog at www.aglaiaho.weebly.com.



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ONCE UPON A MATTRESS

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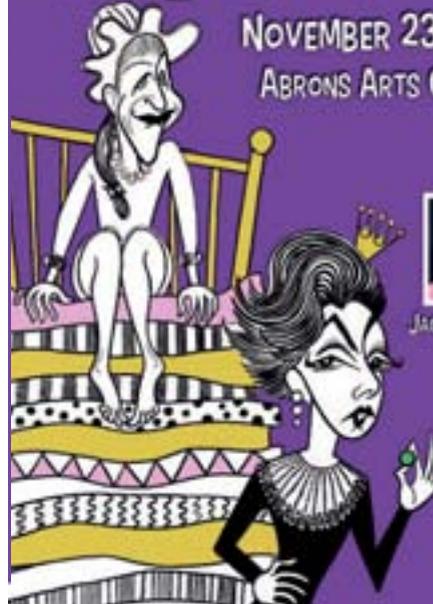
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Book gift guide

What to give EVERYONE this holiday season

BY TERRI SCHLICHENMEYER

Looking for a cost-effective gift your loved one will use again and again? Here's a great gift idea: books! How about one of these?

Little kids' books

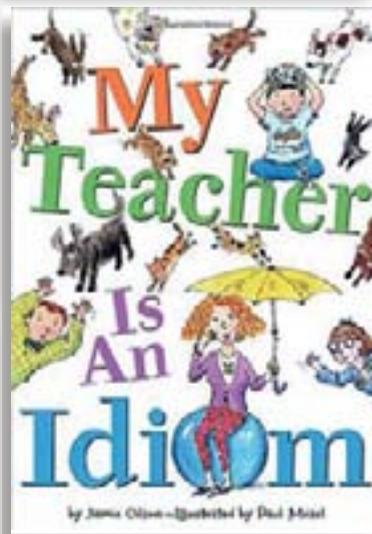
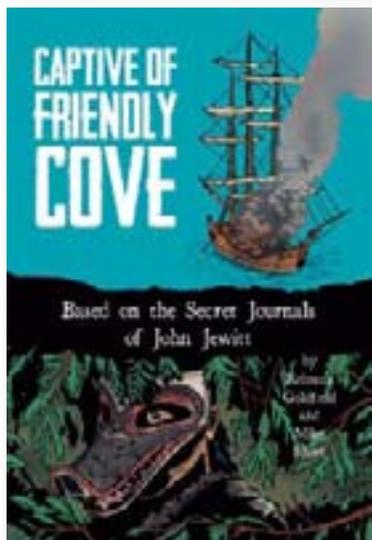
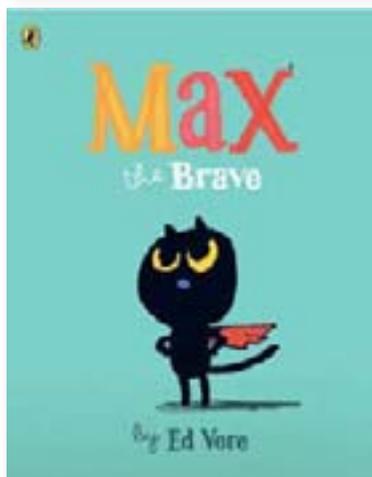
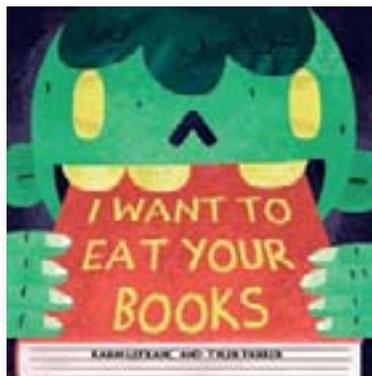
If there's someone on your list who just started school this fall (or will soon), then **"School Days around the World"** by Margriet Ruurs and Alice Feagan would make a nice gift. It is a kid-friendly look at the school days of kids in other countries. Wrap it up with **"I Want to Eat Your Books"** by Karin LeFranc and Tyler Parker, a cute story of a monster at school who's determined to make literary mischief.

For the child who desperately wants to be a mermaid, you'll get lots of hugs when she opens **"Tallulah, Mermaid of the Great Lakes"** by Denise Brennan-Nelson, illustrated by Susan Kathleen Hartung. It's the story of a little mermaid in search of a gemstone that gives her mermaid powers — but where could it be? For another twist on a classic — and for the child who dreams of becoming a princess — look for **"Interstellar Cinderella"** by Deborah Underwood, illustrated by Meg Hunt.

Every kid needs a dose of bravery now and then, and **"Max the Brave"** by Ed Vere is the gift to wrap and give it. It's the story of a fearless kitten in a not-so-fearless search for a mouse. I loved the illustrations! Wrap it up with **"Leopold the Lion"** by Denise Brennan-Nelson, illustrated by Ruth McNally Barshaw, for more fearlessness (and plenty of cute!)

Middle-grade readers

For the 9-to-12-year-old who loves language, **"My Teacher is an Idiom"** by Jamie Gilson, illustrated by Paul Meisel, is a good choice to give. It's the story of a boy who befriends a new classmate whose first language is not English. That leads to a lot of miscommunication — and laughs. Wrap it up with something a little more serious (but no less smart): **"National Geo-**



graphic Book of Nature Poetry," edited by J. Patrick Lewis, former U.S. Children's Poet Laureate. It is a gorgeous book of pictures and poetry to accompany them.

Your young fantasy fan will love unwrapping **"Milo Speck, Accidental Agent"** by Linda Urban. It's the tale of a boy who's rather small — in comparison, of course, to the ogres that stomp around the town where Milo lives. In with the fantasy is a bit of a mystery, too, and your

10-to-13-year-old will love it.

The kid on your list who loves to make messes and experiment will love unwrapping **"Junk Drawer Chemistry"** by Bobby Mercer. It's a book filled with things your young giftee can do with things lying around the house. Don't tell them, but they might learn a thing or 50.

I can't think of any kid who doesn't like fun facts and trivia, and if there's such a child on your list this year, then **"National Geographic Ultimate Weird but True! 3"** is the just-right thing to give. This highly illustrated book is full of fun facts, graphs, tidbits, and things that will impress your youngster, as well as his friends. Wrap it up with any of the **four Smithsonian Readers books:** **"Early Adventures"** for the youngest readers; **"Seriously Amazing"** for kids who are a little more confident in their reading skills; **"World of Wonder"** for children who can read well; and **"Endless Explorations,"** for kids who love books best.

The child with her head in the stars will love **"Welcome to Mars"** by Buzz Aldrin with Marianne J. Dyson. It's a photo-and-art-filled book about what life could be like, once we colonize the Red Planet. Science-minded kids might also like **"Stuff You Need to Know!"** by John Farndon and Rob Beattie. It's a richly-illustrated how-things-work-kind of book that's a lot of fun to read.

Kids this age love tales of superpowers, so why not wrap up **"Treasure of Norse Mythology"**

by Donna Jo Napoli, illustrations by Christina Balit. It's a wonderfully illustrated anthology of mythology, folk tales, and ancient superpowers. Readers of fables might also like the books in the "Top Secret Files" series: **"Gangsters and Bootleggers"** and **"The Cold War."** Both by Stephanie Barse, they will give kids a behind-the-scenes peek at life during those times.

Young adult

For the dog-loving romantic on your gift list, you'll get a lot of smiles when you wrap up **"Whippoorwill"** by Joseph Monninger. It's the story of a tender-hearted teen who falls in love with a throwaway dog at about the same time that she

falls for a throwaway boy. Another book your teen might like: **“Honey Girl”** by **Lisa Freeman**. It’s the story of a surfer girl who tries hard to fit in with an established crowd in her new hometown. Her efforts are complicated by the year (1972) and the fact that she really likes girls.

Who doesn’t love a good, juicy scandal? Your giftee does, so why not wrap up the novel **“Conacademy”** by **Joe Schreiber**? It’s the story of a con-kid who goes away to boarding school, but that’s not all he’s running. (Think: scam!) Pair it with **“Denton Little’s Deathdate”** by **Lance Rubin**, a funny story of a boy who knows when he’s going to die. Yeah, and it just happens to be the same date as the senior prom.

The comic book lover on your list, if he likes history, too, will like owning **“Captive of Friendly Cove”** by **Rebecca Goldfield and Mike Short**. Based on the journals of a real-life British sailor, this is a tale of adventure and high seas, written in a graphic novel format he’ll love.

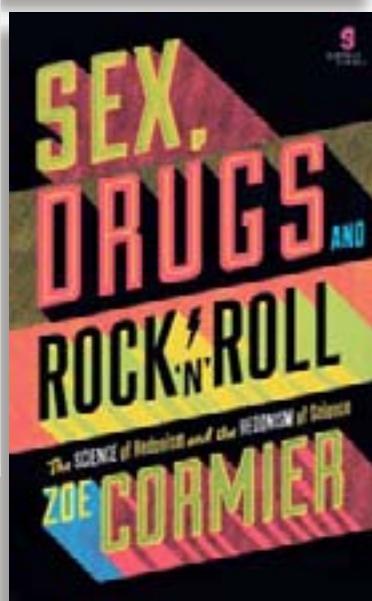
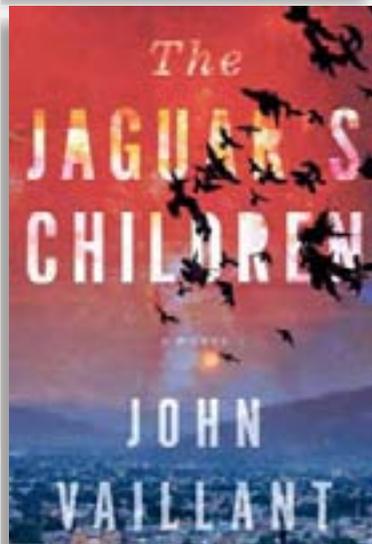
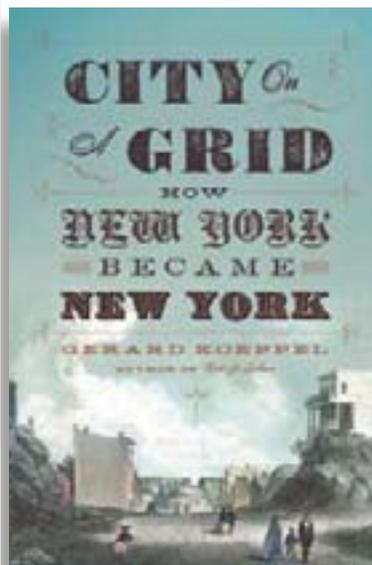
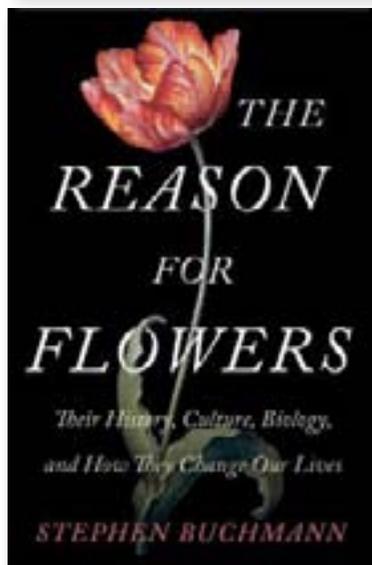
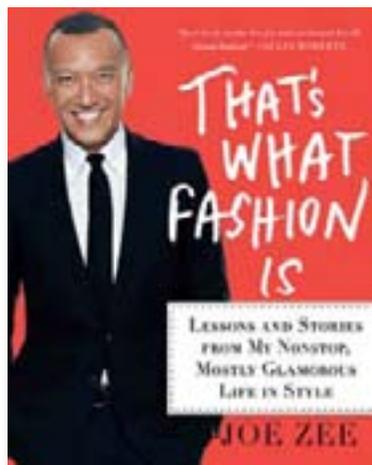
Surely, there’s a teen on your list who dreams of someday shaking up the world — and for him (or her), there’s no better gift than **“Rockin’ the Boat”** by **Jeff Fleischer**. It’s an anthology of mini-biographies of 50 people throughout history who made the world a different place. Wrap it up with **“The Next Big Thing”** by **Richard Faulk**, a book about things that shaped the world and the way we look at it.

For the teen who’s a born skeptic, **“Debunk It!”** by **John Grant** is a just-right gift. It’s a book about misinformation: specifically, several topics are picked apart here, and teens who like to examine issues and current events will love that. The book to pair it with, naturally, is **“Speak Up”** by **Halley Bondy**, a book that will give your giftee tips on firmly speaking out on the issues he (or she!) has debunked.

Fiction

Who doesn’t want a thriller for mid-winter reading? For sure, your giftee will, and **“The Jaguar’s Children”** by **John Vaillant** is the one to wrap. It’s the story of Hector, who’s being smuggled into America from Mexico when the truck he’s in breaks down. He’s sealed inside and the smugglers have left, but he has a cellphone — and your giftee will have a page-turner. Wrap it up with **“A Free State”** by **Tom Piazza**, a thrilling novel of a former slave who, in conjunction with the leader of a minstrel troupe, concocts a dangerous ruse so that he can make music on stage with white performers. Oh, did I say that a slave hunter is on his trail?

No doubt, there’s a tender heart on your gift



list — someone who’s always sunny and smiling. **“100 Days of Happiness”** by **Fausto Brizzi** is the book you want to give her (or him). It’s the story of a down-and-out man who learns that he’s going to die, so he spends his last 100 days on Earth doing good for the people around him. Wrap it up with **“The Best Advice in Six Words,”** edited by **Larry Smith**. What a

really great gift idea! (Count ‘em — there’s six!)

Mystery lovers who like a touch of the frontier will thank you profusely when you’ve wrapped up **“The Last Midwife”** by **Sandra Dallas**. It’s 1880 and the midwife of a small mining town is accused of the murder of a baby — but though she’s been privy to too many things, murder isn’t one of them. Wrap it up with **“Mothers, Tell Your Daughters,”** a delightful book of stories by **Bonnie Jo Campbell**.

For the Western aficionado, there’s no better gift than **“Buffalo Trail”** by **Jeff Guinn**. Set in the Arizona Territory, it is ... well, I shouldn’t have to say more except “wrap it!”

General non-fiction

If Beatlemania has hit someone on your gift list, then the gift to give this year is **“The Complete Beatles Songs”** by **Steve Turner**. This book is full of lyrics from the Fab Four, as well as stories of how the songs came to be, and plenty of photos of John, Paul, George, and Ringo. It could be the “Ticket to Ride” this holiday. Wrap it up with **“Sex, Drugs & Rock ‘n’ Roll”** by **Zoe Cormier**. It’s a scientific book about our impulses and what makes us par-tay!

Does your giftee (heart) New York? Then **“City on a Grid”** by **Gerard Kneppel** is a must-give this year. It’s the story of how the City That Never Sleeps became what it is; specifically, how swampy, agricultural fields became the Big Apple in only a few centuries. Toss **“Life in New York”** by **Laura Pedersen** — a personal love story to the Big Apple — in the box and make it merrier.

The gardener on your list will plant her fanny down and read, once you’ve given her **“The Reason for Flowers”** by **Stephen Buchmann**. It’s all about flowers, their history, the places they’re grown — even the critters that help them bloom.

The giftee you know who loves things that go stomp in the night will also love opening **“The Bigfoot Book”** by **Nick Redfern**. It’s a book about large, hairy creatures: Yeti, Bigfoot, Sasquatch, Little Red Men, and other critters you don’t want to meet on a dark and stormy night.

No doubt, the fashionista on your list will be overjoyed to unwrap **“That’s What Fashion Is”** by style-maker **Joe Zee**. It’s a little memoir,

a little how-to, and a whole lot of ideas and gossip. What’s not to love, ‘specially when you pair it with **“Polish Your Poise with Madame Chic”** by **Jennifer L. Scott**, a genteel book on looking, dressing, and acting elegant.

Calendar

DECEMBER



Photo by Joana Marcus

Leapin' Lizards, it's 'Annie!'

It's a hard-knock life, but not for the brand-new incarnation of the award-winning play "Annie" at the Kings Theatre from Dec. 15 through Dec. 27.

"Annie" is on the stage and just in time for the holidays. This production features all the songs of the Tony-winning original.

Children will delight in this age-old story of a spunky orphan and her Daddy Warbucks, and let's not

forget Sandy, too!

"Annie" from Dec. 15 through Dec. 27, Tuesdays through Thursdays at 7:30 pm, Saturdays at 2 pm and 8 pm, and Sundays at 1 pm and 6:30 pm. Special showtimes for Christmas week. Check schedule. Tickets range from \$30 to \$75.

Kings Theatre (1027 Flatbush Ave. between Beverly Road and Tilden Avenue in Flatbush, www.kingstheatre.com).

Never miss a great event!

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

Calendar

Submit a listing

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

Send your listing request to manhattancalendar@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!

TUES, DEC. 1

IN BROOKLYN

Tree lighting: Parkhouse in Owl's Head Park, 68th Street between Bliss Terrace and Narrows Avenue; www.facebook.com/owlsheadvolunteers; 7 pm to 8 pm; Free.

Join the Owl's Head Park Horticulture Group for hot cocoa, seasonal songs from the chorus from the Guild for Exceptional Children, and more.

FRI, DEC. 4

IN BROOKLYN

Michael Lee: Ft. Hamilton Army Base, Seventh Ave. and Poly Place; (718) 630-4771; www.hamiltonmwr.com; 2 pm; Free.

The mentalist and death-defying escape artist will make an appearance at the annual Christmas celebration, for a fun-filled family day. Civilians entering the base must provide proper ID.

Tree Lighting: Belarusian Church, Atlantic Ave. and Bond St.; www.atlanticavenuebrooklyn.wordpress.com; 6 to 8 pm; Free.

Local schools, PS 38 and PS 261, along with various cultural organizations light the tree with a special visit by Santa. Tasty treats follow. Please bring a new toy or book for the annual Toy Drive.

SAT, DEC. 5

IN BROOKLYN

Winter jamboree: Families First Brooklyn, 250 Baltic St. between Court and Clinton streets; (718) 237-1862; www.familiesfirstbrooklyn.org; 9:30 am – noon; \$25 per family (\$20 for members).

Celebrate the season with the third annual fund-raising event featuring face painting, tattoos, arts & crafts, a bake sale, snacks and balloons! Special appearances by City Stomp and Erin Silber, along with a visit



Photo by Jeremy Daniel

SkippyJon Jones takes the stage

SkippyJon and his mighty chihuahuas start the quest at On Stage at Kingsborough for a magical good time on Dec. 12.

Who is the bravest cat of all? SkippyJon Jones, of course. TheatreworksUSA presents "SkippyJon Jones Snow What (and the 7 Chihuahuas)." This musical, based on the children's book by Judy Schachner, is the story of Skip-

pyJon Jones, the Siamese cat who thinks he is a chihuahua. While his sisters listen to "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," Skippy heads off for adventure awaiting him in his closet. There, as his alter ego Skippito Friskito, and with the help of his friends the Seven Chimi-changos, he finds a beautiful frozen princess, faces an evil dragon, and enters a make-believe forest.

The story is a twist on the classic fairy tale "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" and is suitable for children 4 years and older.

"SkippyJon Jones," Dec. 12 at 2 pm. Tickets are \$12; a meet and greet follows the performance.

On Stage at Kingsborough [2001 Oriental Blvd. at Oxford Street in Manhattan Beach; (718) 368-5596; www.onstageatkingsborough.org].

from Santa.

Melanie Hope Greenberg: Grace Church Book Fair, 254 Hicks St.; 11:30 am – noon; Free.

The author reads and signs copies of her book.

Hunt & forage in the Park:

Grand Army Plaza, Union Street between Flatbush Avenue and Prospect Park West; (914) 835-2153; www.wildmanstevebrill.com; 11:45 am; \$20 (\$10 children under 12).

Join Wildman Steve Brill for a day of hunting fresh root edibles in the park. This week you will look for Sichuan pepper.

The Evergreens Cemetery Holiday Event: The Evergreens Cem-

etry, 1629 Bushwick Ave. at Conway Street; (718) 455-5300; vmwillis12@gmail.com; www.theevergreenscemetery.com; Noon-2 pm; Free.

Come bring your children to sit with Santa, enjoy hot chocolate, cookies, and Christmas carolers. The Santa Express train ride will travel through the Evergreens landscape.

St. Nicholas Day Celebration: The Wyckoff House, 5816 Clarendon Rd. at E. 59th Street; www.wyckoffmuseum.org; 1-4 pm; \$5 for adults, \$3 for children.

The Wyckoff House Museum presents the 13th annual St. Nicholas Day celebration! Families are invited inside the city's oldest house for traditional live music, Dutch treats, holi-

day crafts, and a special visit with St. Nicholas as he arrives on horseback. Experience the Dutch tradition of Sinterklaas, which evolved into the American tradition of Santa Claus, with colonial music, treats, stories, and crafts.

The Solar System: Fort Greene Park Visitor Center, Enter park at Myrtle Avenue and Washington Park; (718) 722-3218; 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Children learn all about the stars as urban rangers lead an informative discussion on the science, history, and folklore of the universe.

Rabbit Days and Dumplings: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145

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Calendar

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Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 1 pm to 1:30 pm and 2 to 2:30 pm; Free with museum admission.

Come join Elena Moon Park and friends as they perform music from Rabbit Days and Dumplings, a cross-cultural celebration of East Asian folk and children's music, ranging from northern Japanese sea shanties to Tibetan jump rope rhymes, joyous Korean harvest sing-a-longs, and Taiwanese train songs.

Tree lighting: Our Lady of Grace Church, E. Third Street and Avenue W; 5 pm; Free.

Tree Lighting ceremony after the 5 pm mass with character visits from Olaf and Princess Elsa, guest speakers, as well as hot beverages and snacks. Plus, a visit from Santa with gifts for kids, a laser light show, and music.

SUN, DEC. 6

IN BROOKLYN

Melanie Hope Greenberg: Jalopy Theatre, 315 Columbia St. between Hamilton Avenue and Woodhull Street; (718) 395-3214; www.jalopy.biz; 11 am to 1 pm; Free with general admission.

The author reads and signs copies of her book at Little Laffs.

Hanukkah party: Kings Bay Y at North Williamsburg, 14 Hope St.; (718) 407-6388; www.northwilliamsburgY.org; 11 am - 1 pm; Free.

Celebrate the Festival of Lights with music from Adam Blotner, singing with Tkiya, face painting with Kristen Mahoney and food and refreshments.

Arty Facts: Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy. at Washington Avenue; (718) 638-5000; www.brooklynmuseum.org; 11 am; Materials fee plus museum admission.

Families enjoy a day at the museum with hands-on activities, and explore the works of artists.

Dumbo Family Holiday Party: PowerHouse Arena, 37 Main St. at Water Street; (718) 666-3049; www.powerhousearena.com; 3-5 pm; Free.

Three children's books illustrators compete to draw holiday-inspired suggestions from the audience. With a visit from Santa!

"Oy Chanukah": On Stage at Kingsborough, 2001 Oriental Blvd. at Oxford Street; (718) 368-5596; www.onstageatkingsborough.org; 3 pm; \$32-\$35.

Yiddish Theatre Star Eleanor Reissa and Grammy Award-winning Trumpeter Frank London with The Klezmer Brass All Stars.



Sweets that dance

Will Clara rescue the prince and save the day? Find out when the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College presents "The Colonial Nutcracker" on Dec. 13.

The production, performed by the Dance Theater in Westchester and geared for children ages 5 to 10, is based on Tchaikovsky's classic ballet and set in colonial Yorktown during the Revolutionary War. It features classic movements, including "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" and "Waltz of

the Snowflakes." Of course there is the red-coated mouse army, an enchanted nutcracker prince, and the timeless story of childhood innocence and happy fairy-tale endings.

"The Colonial Nutcracker," Dec. 13 at 2 pm; \$18. Running time is approximately two hours plus intermission.

Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College [Campus Road at Hillel Place in Midwood, (718) 951-4500; www.brooklyncenteronline.org].

Melanie Hope Greenberg: Brooklyn Museum, 200 Eastern Pkwy. at Washington Avenue; (718) 638-5000; www.brooklynmuseum.org; 3 pm to 5 pm; Free with general admission.

The author reads and signs copies of her book at Little Laffs.

Family Holiday Party: Power-

House Arena, 37 Main St. at Water Street; (718) 666-3049; rsvp@powerhousearena.com; www.powerhousearena.com; 3 pm to 5 pm; Free.

Vin Vogel, Paul Zelinsky and David Ercolini and a special visit from Santa make this a festive fun day with books, drawing and more. RSVP appreciated.

Concerts: Good Shepherd Church, Avenue S and Brown Street; (718) 998-2800; 6 pm; Free.

The talented soprano Emily Donato shares her talents in this week's installment of the concert series.

MON, DEC. 7

IN BROOKLYN

Free Speech and Language Screening for Children: MKSA, 1318 60th St. between 13th and 14th avenues; (516) 731-5588; 10 am-3 pm; Free.

MKSA, a subsidiary of HASC, is offering free speech and language screenings for children up to age 4. If you have any concerns or questions about your child's speech and language development, call today to schedule an appointment with a licensed Speech-Language Pathologist.

WED, DEC. 9

IN BROOKLYN

"Walking with 'Trane": BAM Harvey Theater, 651 Fulton St. at Rockwell Place; (718) 636-4100; www.bam.org; 7:30 pm; \$20, 25, 30, 40, 55; (\$30, 35, 45, 60 Saturday).

Celebrating 30 years of performing, the Urban Bush Women present this work inspired by the life and work of legendary jazz saxophonist John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme." Urban Bush Women explore the use of cultural expression as a catalyst for social change. Drawing strength and solidarity from each other, this troupe celebrates its African roots. Appropriate for older teens.

THURS, DEC. 10

IN BROOKLYN

Grand Menorah lighting: Jewish Children's Museum, 792 Eastern Pkwy. at Kingston Avenue; (718) 907-8833; www.jcm.museum; 3:30 pm; \$13 (\$10 seniors).

Join us at our Public Menorah Lighting with singing, Hanukkah gelt, and a souvenir. 3:30 pm.

"Walking with 'Trane": 7:30 pm. BAM Harvey Theater. See Wednesday, Dec. 9.

FRI, DEC. 11

IN BROOKLYN

Tree lighting: The Human Compass Garden, Columbia and Sackett streets; (718) 243-9302; 6 pm to 7:30 pm; Free.

Celebrate the holiday season with your neighbors! Enjoy live music and food and drink from local businesses. Santa will be giving out donated toys

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

to children in the community.

"Walking with 'Trane'": 7:30 pm. BAM Harvey Theater. See Wednesday, Dec. 9.

SAT, DEC. 12

IN BROOKLYN

A visit from Santa: Old Stone House, Third Street between Fourth and Fifth avenues; (718) 768-3195; www.theoldstonehouse.org; 10 am to 12:30 pm; \$10.

Come and take pics with the jolly old elf himself, have a cup of cocoa, do some crafts and celebrate the ho, ho, ho.

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

Come and celebrate with traditional activities including singing the "Dreidel Song," practice spinning a real dreidel, and make a project to take home.

"SkippyJon Jones Snow What (and the 7 Chihuahuas)": On Stage at Kingsborough, 2001 Oriental Blvd. at Oxford Street; (718) 368-5596; www.onstageatkingsborough.org; 2 pm; \$12.

Join SkippyJon, the Siamese cat who thinks he's a chihuahua, on a musical journey that draws in the beautiful frozen princess, an evil dragon, the forest of make-believe, and his friends the Seven Chimichangos.

"Walking with 'Trane'": 7:30 pm. BAM Harvey Theater. See Wednesday, Dec. 9.

The Vienna Boys Choir: Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, 2900 Campus Rd. between Amersfort and Kenilworth places; (718) 951-4500; www.brooklyncenteronline.org; 8 pm; \$36-\$45.

Christmas in Vienna features young musicians performing holiday standards.

SUN, DEC. 13

IN BROOKLYN

Sounds of the Season: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11 am to noon; Free with museum admission.

It's holiday time! Listen to music from Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa traditions and create your own percussion instrument to carol in the streets or play at home. This hands-on program builds confidence



Photo by Jeff Bachner

Ring out the old

Ring out the old and welcome in the new on Dec. 31 at Grand Army Plaza in Prospect Park.

The annual tradition now hosted by Borough President Adams features live entertainment and refreshments — including a very good cup of hot cocoa.

At midnight the fireworks go off in the Long Meadow and ev-

eryone shares a bit of "Auld Lang Syne."

Come early to get the best spot.

New Year's Eve celebration on Dec. 31 from 11 pm to 12 am. Free

Grand Army Plaza (Union Street between Flatbush Avenue and Prospect Park West in Prospect Park).

in music-making and appreciation. RSVP requested.

Arty Facts: 11 am. Brooklyn Museum. See Sunday, Dec. 6.

Happy Hanukkah: 11:30 am to 12:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 12.

"The Colonial Nutcracker": Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts at Brooklyn College, 2900 Campus Rd. between Amersfort and Kenilworth places; (718) 951-4500; www.brooklyncenteronline.org; 2 pm; \$18.

The Dance Theatre in Westchester performs its full-length version of Tchaikovsky's ballet set in wintry colonial Yorktown, complete with a red-coated mouse army, an enchanted nutcracker prince, and narration to help young audience members enjoy this timeless classic.

Grand Menorah lighting: 3:30 pm. Jewish Children's Museum. See Thursday, Dec. 10.

Concerts: Good Shepherd Church, Avenue S and Brown Street; (718) 998-2800; 6 pm; Free.

The series concludes with a perfor-

mance of Handel's "Messiah" with choir, soloists and orchestra.

THURS, DEC. 17

IN BROOKLYN

Holiday Toy Drive: 41st Ad Democrats Club, 2952 Avenue R and Haring Street; 7 pm to 9 pm; Free.

Bring an unwrapped toy to the annual Toys for Tots Drive. Light refreshments served.

FRI, DEC. 18

IN BROOKLYN

Christmas Oratorio: St. Paul's Church, 199 Carroll St; www.gracechorale.org; 7 pm to 9 pm; \$15 (\$12 students and seniors).

Grace Chorale of Brooklyn presents Johann Sebastian Bach's movements in Parts 1, 3 and 6 with soprano Maria Masters, mezzo-soprano Rachel Arky, tenor Michael Kuhn, and baritone Peter Clark.

SAT, DEC. 19

IN BROOKLYN

Family Day: The Wyckoff House, 5816 Clarendon Rd. at E. 59th Street; www.wyckoffmuseum.org; 10 am to 4 pm; Free.

Kid friendly tours, hands-on activities, scavenger hunts, and more.

Red Hook Story on the Quad Holiday: Red Hook Recreation Center, 155 Bay St. at Clinton Street; (718) 722-3211; www.nycgovparks.org; 11 am to 3 pm; Free.

Celebrate Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Christmas, and the Three Kings Day with stories about the days, toy giveaways for children up to age 13, and light refreshments.

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

Children explore the traditions and create a Christmas craft to take home.

SUN, DEC. 20

IN BROOKLYN

Birding - Waterfowl: Salt Marsh Nature Center, 3302 Avenue U; (718) 421-2021; 10 am to 11:30 am and 1 pm to 2:30 pm; Free.

Children visit the wetlands and take a tour with urban rangers to learn all about the variety of waterfowl and their migration south.

Merry Christmas: 11:30 am to 12:30 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 19.

Christmas Oratorio: St. Ann & the Holy Trinity Church, 157 Montague St.; www.gracechorale.org; 3 pm; \$15 (\$12 students and seniors).

Grace Chorale of Brooklyn presents Johann Sebastian Bach's movements in Parts 1, 3 and 6 with soprano Maria Masters, mezzo-soprano Rachel Arky, tenor Michael Kuhn, and baritone Peter Clark.

Winter festival of lights: Call for location; (718) 857-1343; cityshaman@aol.com; 4:30 pm; \$30 for one parent and one child; (\$10 additional child; \$25 additional adult).

Join with the Urban Shaman Mama Donna and hear the stories from around the world about the birth of the sun and light the holiday lights of many cultures! Advanced registration required.

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Calendar

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

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MON, DEC. 21

IN BROOKLYN

Winter solstice: Grand Army Plaza, Union Street between Flatbush Avenue and Prospect Park West; (718) 857-1343; cityshaman@aol.com; 11:30 pm; Free.

The winter solstice is as dark as it gets! The light will now begin its slow return to the Northern Hemisphere. Join with the urban shaman and drum back the sun and reignite the light in our hearts. This is a family-friendly event. Kids and dogs are welcome. Please bring a candle in a glass container, drums, percussion instruments, and lots and lots of spirit. Rain or shine.

TUES, DEC. 22

FURTHER AFIELD

"Elf": The Theater at Madison Square Garden, 4 Penn Plaza at Eighth Avenue, Manhattan; (800) 901-4092; www.newyorkcitytheatre.com/theaters/madisonsquaregarden-theater/elf.php; 7 pm; Starting at \$51.

Santa accidentally picks up an orphaned baby boy and brings him to the North Pole. The little boy grows up and realizes he is really not like the other elves. What is an elf to do? Buddy goes on search to find his real parents and winds up in NYC where he meets a host of characters, including his dad, stepbrother, and true love. Along the way he saves the Big Apple by bringing joy and the Christmas spirit.

SAT, DEC. 26

IN BROOKLYN

Kwanzaa with Cumbe: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 10 am to 5 pm; Free with museum admission.

Join us to learn about the holiday of Kwanzaa and the Nguzo Saba, the seven principles of African heritage, through the arts of music and dance in an exclusive presentation by Brooklyn's own Cumbe: Center for African and Diaspora Dance.

SUN, DEC. 27

IN BROOKLYN

Kwanzaa with Cumbe: 10 am to 5 pm. Brooklyn Children's Museum. See Saturday, Dec. 26.

THURS, DEC. 31

IN BROOKLYN

Happy New Year: Brooklyn Chil-



Dance rooted in Africa

The Urban Bush Women celebrate 30 years of dance at the BAM Harvey Theater with "Walking with 'Trane" on Dec. 9, 10, 11, and 12.

The group presents this work inspired by the life and work of legendary jazz saxophonist John Coltrane's "A Love Supreme."

Urban Bush Women explore the use of cultural expression

as a catalyst for social change. Drawing strength and solidarity from each other, the troupe celebrate its African roots. Appropriate for older teens.

"Walking with 'Trane," Dec. 9, 10, 11, and 12, at 7:30 pm. Tickets \$20, 25, 30, 40, 55; and \$30, 35, 45, 60 for the Saturday performance.

BAM Harvey Theater [651 Fulton St. at Rockwell Place in Fort Greene, (718) 636-4100; www.bam.org].

dren's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; 11 am to noon; Free with museum admission.

Toddlers 2.5 to 5 years old celebrate with a countdown to New Year's Day and learn about the traditions behind the cultural event.

Fireworks & concert: Grand Army Plaza, Union Street between Flatbush Avenue and Prospect Park West; 11 pm to 12 am; Free.

Come and celebrate the old year and the new year with this annual tradition hosted by Beep Eric Adams. Entertainment, refreshments, and of course fireworks. Come early and get your spot.

LONG-RUNNING

IN BROOKLYN

"Little is Big": PS 3 – The Bedford Village School, 50 Jefferson Ave. at Franklin Avenue; (212) 724-0677; Weekdays, 10:30 am, Now – Wed, Dec. 23; \$8.

Through the power of theatre children learn how they can face up to bullies, find courage in friendship, work together, and prevent discrimination with colorful fish puppets and

the enchanted landscape deep beneath the sea. The musical is suitable for children in pre-K to second grade. Presented by the ShadowBox Theatre. Reservations required.

"Here. There. Everywhere.": gallery505, 505 Court St. between Huntington and W. Ninth streets; www.lizholly.com; Daily, Noon–9 pm; Now – Thurs, Dec. 31; Free.

Abstract painter Liz Holly's watercolor works are exhibited in "Here. There. Everywhere." With a blend of calligraphy and watercolor paints, Holly's work represents the landscapes of everywhere from Pennsylvania to Brooklyn.

Teen pass: Red Hook Recreation Center, 155 Bay St. between Otsego and Court streets; www.nycgovparks.org; Weekdays, 3 pm and 6 pm; Free.

Clubs that focus on the areas of city parks, arts, environmental science, and sports that are tailored to the interests and talents of sixth to eighth graders.

Heart and Seoul – Korea: Brooklyn Children's Museum, 145 Brooklyn Ave. at St. Marks Avenue; (718) 735-4400; www.brooklynkids.org; Tuesdays – Sundays, 10 am to 5 pm,

Now – Sun, Jan. 3, 2016; Free with museum admission.

The Brooklyn Children's Museum will ride Hallyu (the Korean Wave) with a new exhibit that brings modern-day South Korea to New York City.

Craft Room: Jewish Children's Museum, 792 Eastern Pkwy. at Kingston Avenue; (718) 907-8833; www.jcm.museum; Sundays – Thursdays, Noon to 5 pm, Tues, Dec. 1 – Thurs, Dec. 31; Free with museum admission.

Get creative with a variety of materials and make a Jewish-themed project.

Toys, Games, and Puzzles: Gerri-ritsen Beach Public Library, 2808 Gerri-ritsen Ave. between Bartlett Place and Gotham Avenue; (718) 368-1435; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Fridays, 10:30 am–11:30 am, Now – Thurs, Dec. 31; Free.

Playtime for kids up to age 5.

Reading is Fundamental: Gerri-ritsen Beach Public Library, 2808 Gerri-ritsen Ave. between Bartlett Place and Gotham Avenue; (718) 368-1435; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Fridays, 2 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 31; Free.

Kids receive a free book when they sign up, on their birthday, and every third week if they checkout two books per week.

Game On! Board Games: Sunset Park Public Library, 5108 Fourth Ave. at 51st Street; (718) 965-6533; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Fridays, 3:30–5 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 31; Free.

Kids play games such as Connect 4, Uno, Clue, and Monopoly.

Tween Teen Tech Time: Sunset Park Public Library, 5108 Fourth Ave. at 51st Street; (718) 965-6533; www.brooklynpubliclibrary.org; Fridays, 3:30–5 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 31; Free.

Twens and teens enjoy books, Nintendo and Playstation videogames, and music while participating in Reading is Fundamental.

Grand Army Plaza Greenmarket: Grand Army Plaza, Union Street between Flatbush Avenue and Prospect Park West; www.grownyc.org; Saturdays, 8 am–4 pm, Now – Thurs, Dec. 31; Free.

Families can pick up fresh produce and artisanal items.

Art, Movement, Music, Pretend: Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St. at Clinton Street; (718) 222-4111; www.brooklynhistory.org; Saturdays, 11 am.; Free with museum admission.

Family program provides a sing-along with Lloyd H Miller, crafts, and

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

a Together in Dance segment.

"Beauty and the Beast": Puppetworks, 338 Sixth Ave. at Fourth Street; (718) 965-3391; www.puppetworks.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 12:30 pm and 2:30 pm, Now – Sun, Dec. 20; \$9 (\$10 adults).

Presented by Puppetworks, this production is suitable for children 4 years and older. The hand-carved, wooden marionettes in costumes and settings are typical of 15th-century French design. Reservations suggested.

Fishing Fun: North end of Esplanade, East Drive and Ocean Avenue; www.nycgovparks.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 2 pm and 3 to 4 pm; Free.

Families with children 15 and younger learn about aquatic ecology, fishing safety, and collect their own bait.

Bird Watching: North end of Esplanade, East Drive and Ocean Avenue; www.nycgovparks.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 2 pm and 3 to 4 pm; Free.

Families with children 15 and younger join a ranger and identify the more than 250 species of birds in the park.

Needlework and games: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; Saturdays and Sundays, 1-3 pm, Now – Mon, Dec. 28; \$3.

Join in with staff and make a small sampler and play board games.

Family Day: Brooklyn Historical Society, 128 Pierrepont St. at Clinton Street; (718) 222-4111; www.brooklynhistory.org; Sundays, 11 am.; \$5 per child plus garden admission.

Lloyd Miller, Together in Dance, and the staff provide a fun Sunday with crafts, singing, and moving and grooving. Suitable for families with children that are 3 to 7 years old.

Menorah lighting: Grand Army Plaza, Union Street between Flatbush Avenue and Prospect Park West; Sunday, Dec. 6, 6 pm; Monday, Dec. 7, 6 pm; Tuesday, Dec. 8, 6 pm; Wednesday, Dec. 9, 3:30 pm; Thursday, Dec. 10, 6 pm; Friday, Dec. 11, 3:30 pm; Saturday, Dec. 12, 7 pm; Sunday, Dec. 13, 6 pm; Free.

Come to the lighting of the world's largest menorah every night of Hanukkah. Celebrate with live music, hot latkes, and gifts for children.

"The Hard Nut": BAM Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. between Ashland Place and St. Felix Street; www.bam.org; Saturday, Dec. 12, 7:30 pm; Sunday, Dec. 13, 1 pm;



A visit from Sinterklass

Santa is riding in on horseback and visiting with children at the 13th annual St. Nicholas Day Celebration at the Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum on Dec. 5.

Families can enjoy a day of Dutch treats at New York City's oldest house with holiday craft making, traditional stories, colonial music, goodies, and, of course, that special visit by

Wednesday, Dec. 16, 7:30 pm; Thursday, Dec. 17, 7:30 pm; Friday, Dec. 18, 7:30 pm; Saturday, Dec. 19, 2 pm; Sunday, Dec. 20, 1 pm; Tickets start at \$25.

Based on the book by E.T.A. Hoffmann, "The Nutcracker and the Mouse King," the Mark Morris Dance Group presents this different take on the holiday classic. Appropriate for children 4 years and older.

"Annie": Kings Theatre, 1027 Flatbush Ave. between Beverly Road and Tilden Avenue; www.kingstheatre.com; Tuesdays – Thursdays, 7:30 pm, Fridays, 8 pm, Saturdays, 2 pm and 8 pm, Sundays, 1 pm and 6:30 pm, Tues, Dec. 15 – Sun, Dec. 27; \$30-\$75.

Directed by original lyricist and director Martin Charnin, this production of "Annie" is a brand-new incarnation of the iconic Tony-winning original.

Nature Exploration: Prospect Park Audubon Center, Enter park at Lincoln Road and Ocean Avenue; (718) 287-3400; www.prospectpark.org/audubon; Daily, Noon-4 pm, Sat, Dec. 26 – Fri, Jan. 1, 2016; Free.

Join the Prospect Park Alliance

Santa.

Experience the Dutch tradition of Sinterklass on Dec. 5 from 1 to 4 pm. Adults \$5 and children 2 to 10 years old \$3; children under 2 years old get in free.

The Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum [5816 Clarendon Rd. between E. 59th Street and Ralph Avenue in Canarsie; (718) 629-5400; www.wyckoffmuseum.org]

for nature education programs at the Prospect Park Audubon Center, the first urban Audubon Center in the nation. Children enjoy bird nerd games; nature on the go and animal encounter.

Historic crafts & games: Lefferts Historic Homestead, 452 Flatbush Ave. between Empire Boulevard and Eastern Parkway; (718) 789-2822; www.prospectpark.org; Daily, 1 pm to 3 pm, Sat, Dec. 26 – Fri, Jan. 1, 2016; \$3.

Join us at the Lefferts Historic for our last week of the season. Make and play 9-Man Morris, a historic board game, and try your hand at creating a small needlework sampler to take home.

FURTHER AFIELD

Annual train show: Grand Central Terminal, 42nd Street and Park Avenue, Manhattan; web.mta.info/mta/museum/#general; Weekdays, 8 am to 8 pm, Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am to 6 pm, Now – Sun, Feb. 21, 2016; Free with standard admission.

Zip through tunnels, see familiar skyscrapers; and visit subway stops by viewing model trains. The layout Lionel Metro-North, New York Central

and subway trains along with a miniature replica of Grand Central Terminal is a great way to spend the holidays.

Astolat Castle Dollhouse: The Shops at Columbus Circle (second floor), 10 Columbus Circle at W. 59th Street, Manhattan; (212) 823-6300; www.theshopsatcolumbuscircle.com; Daily, 10 am – 9 pm, Now – Tues, Dec. 8; Free.

The most valuable dollhouse ever and the finest miniature in the world will be on display this holiday season. Come and visit the house that contains more than 30,000 miniatures including beds, pianos, and even champagne buckets. The house was designed and built by miniaturist Elaine Diehl and took more than two years to create.

Holiday Train Show: New York Botanical Garden, 200th Street and Kazimiroff Blvd., The Bronx; (718) 817-8700; www.nybg.org; Daily, 11 am – 5 pm, Now – Mon, Jan. 18, 2016; Included with an All Garden Pass.

The annual event returns with more trains and more tracks with an additional 3,000 square feet of exhibition space. Displays include: Grand Central Terminal, Radio City Music Hall, the historic Hudson River Valley houses, Brooklyn Bridge, and Rockefeller Center.

"The Commedia Rapunzel": The SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. at Spring Street, Manhattan; (212) 691-1555; www.sohoplayhouse.com; Saturday, Nov. 28, 11 am; Saturday, Dec. 5, 11 am; Saturday, Dec. 12, 11 am; Saturday, Dec. 19, 11 am; Saturday, Dec. 26, 11 am; Monday, Dec. 28, 11 am; Wednesday, Dec. 30, 11 am; Thursday, Dec. 31, 11 am; \$39 (\$25 children under 13).

Back by popular demand, this version adds a seasonal twist to the perennial classic. Fun for the entire family.

"Elf": The Theater at Madison Square Garden, 4 Penn Plaza at Eighth Avenue, Manhattan; (800) 901-4092; www.newyorkcitytheatre.com/theaters/madisonsquaregardentheater/elf.php; Wednesdays, 7 pm, Thursdays, 11 am, 3 pm and 7 pm, Fridays, 11 am and 7 pm, Saturdays, 2 pm and 7 pm, Sundays, 1 and 6 pm, Wed, Dec. 9 – Sun, Dec. 27; Starting at \$51.

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New & Noteworthy

BY LISA J. CURTIS

Stocking up

If Santa is looking for a useful item or two to fill the children's — and Dad's — stockings, he should check out Pair of Thieves's whimsical collection of father-and-child sock sets.

The Pair of Thieves team (Alan Stuart, David Ehrenberg, and Cash Warren) offers a wide range of colors and patterns including the particularly festive Pa Paul (a Scandinavian-style design of navy blue, white, and hot pink that's named for Ehrenberg's dad).

Pair of Thieves men's socks fit shoe sizes 8–12, and the kids' socks come in small (18 months–3 years), medium (4–7 years), and large (8–10 years). To maximize moisture-wicking and comfort, the kids and dads' socks are a blend of cotton, polyester, and nylon, and



the dads' socks also have natural latex rubber and spandex.

With these socks, Santa will help your family put their best feet forward.

Father-and-son sock set by Pair of Thieves, \$16, www.pairofthieves.com.

Three great shakes

The do-it-yourself trend has finally come to snow globes! In the new kit from Creativity for Kids, families can create three of their own snow globe scenes using clay and adorable, tiny resin figurines:

Santa, a snowman, and a reindeer. The kit includes three plastic snow globes, clay, clay-sculpting tools, the figurines, a funnel, and glitter! (Parents supply the distilled water.)

The kit also includes wonderfully detailed instructions to encourage success (such as illustrated ideas for those stymied about what to do when presented with a lump of clay), and how to prevent water-related mishaps. These globes also look sweet without water.

The kit makes a great gift for children ages 6 and older, and when the three handcrafted snow globes are complete, they'll make three precious gifts for a few special recipients. This engrossing activity that will keep hands and minds occupied while they wait with breathless anticipation for a visit from Saint Nicholas!

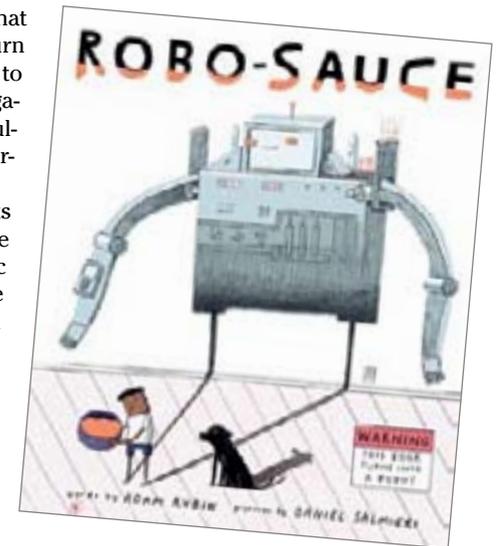
Make Your Own Holiday Snow Globes, \$20, www.barnesandnoble.com.



Domo arigato Mr. Rubin-to

"Robo-Sauce" is a book that children have to hold and turn its physical pages in order to be amazed by the Mad-magazine-esque gatefold that culminates in the ultimate surprise ending.

"Robo-Sauce" (Dial Books for Young Readers) is the brainchild of the dynamic duo behind "Dragons Love Tacos" — author Adam Rubin and Brooklyn illustrator Daniel Salmieri — and centers on a child who's sporting a cardboard robot costume and is failing in his attempts to garner the attention of his father reading a book, his mother at work on her laptop, or his sister playing with her cars and trucks. Luckily, the narrator has the recipe for "Robo-Sauce," a top-secret, fluorescent orange formula that transforms people, places, pets — and even this book — into robots, which, by the way, is ideal, because everyone loves robots, and 'bots don't need



to eat their veggies, take baths, or go to sleep.

The imaginative, humorous plot twist makes "Robo-Sauce" an utterly original experience, and a great holiday gift idea for a 4–8-year-old child.

"Robo-Sauce" book by Adam Rubin, \$18.99, www.penguin.com.

Score with 'The Nutcracker'

For those who think "The Nutcracker" ballet can only be appreciated by little girls taking dance classes, a new audio recording from Maestro Classics will be a wonderful surprise.

ETA Hoffmann's story is narrated by Jim Weiss. Act I is positively thrilling as Clara receives her gift on Christmas Eve — the Nutcracker — which comes to life as a Prince and battles the Mouse King. In Act II, the Prince takes Clara to the Land of Sweets to watch dancers from around the world perform, and marvel at Mother Ginger and the Sugar Plum Fairy.

Excerpts from Pyotr Ilyich Tchai-

kovsky's beloved ballet score, performed by the London Philharmonic Orchestra under the baton of Stephen Simon, are played to suspenseful effect.

The CD comes with a booklet listing the scenes (tracks), word puzzles, and child-friendly essays about the history of ballet, the harp, and Tchaikovsky.

Listening to this CD — recommended for kids ages 5 and older — and completing the activities will certainly serve to make the time magically fly by during your holiday travels.

"The Nutcracker" CD from Maestro Classics, \$16.98 (\$9.98 digital download), www.MaestroClassics.com.



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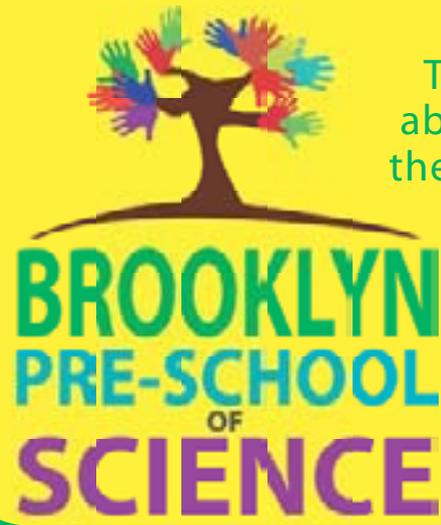
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